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Supporting Students in Inclusive Settings

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Strengths-based Learning to Support All Students
Professional Learning Communities
by
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Abstract

Inclusion provides students in special education the opportunity to learn alongside their same-aged peers to the greatest extent that is appropriate. Although many special education students are included in general education classrooms, it is common that teachers do not practice an asset-based approaches during instruction. Understanding and recognizing student strengths will help educators organize teaching strategies to equip students with the skills to identify what they learn well and what areas they have challenges in. It is crucial for teachers to provide meaningful learning opportunities that allow students to use their assets throughout the learning process. It is important for teachers to provide lessons that aim to maximize student strengths by focusing on their positive traits.

Using funds of knowledge and strengths-based teaching practices will help teachers advance student strengths and academics with appropriate classroom supports. Strengths-based learning is a solution that will positively affect student motivation, self-confidence, and enjoyment of learning. Additionally, using funds of knowledge is an approach to asset-based instruction, and this teaching practice will encourage students to feel connected to their learning. Strengths-based learning encourages teachers to appreciate student strengths and passions instead of focusing on the disability and impairment. When students apply their strengths and interests to their learning, they will succeed autonomously. When students are given the freedom to be their authentic selves while learning, they view their education as meaningful and will experience deeper understanding throughout the learning process. Teachers are more likely to maintain high expectations for these students and execute a curriculum that maintains rigorous expectations when they are prepared and given the tools to support students in special education.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement

General education teachers are held responsible for utilizing a curriculum that aims to teach and prepare all students to be independent and successful in college and their careers (Joyce et al., 2020). To effectively support all students, it is necessary for teachers to differentiate and provide lesson plans that "ensure multiple entryways to rigorous expectations" (Joyce et al., 2020, p. 181). A problem within schools is there is an emphasis on deficit areas, specifically with students with a diagnosed disability. During the 2020-21 school year, it was reported that 66% of special education students spent 80% or more time in the general education classroom (IDEA). It was reported that through the 2020-21 school year, 15 percent (7.2 million students) were served by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Although many special education students are included in general education classrooms, it is common that teachers do not practice an asset-based approaches during instruction. Flint and Jaggers (2021) inform us that when deficit-based perspectives are utilized in the classroom, a student's culture, experiences, and background knowledge are disregarded. When a student's deficit area is the focus, it results in teachers lowering their expectations of student performance. It is essential that teachers gain the knowledge and skills to appropriately implement asset-based learning approaches and classroom supports. This will positively impact a student's school experience, improve their independence, and increase their exposure to the general education curriculum.

Significance of the Problem

When students with disabilities are placed in the general education classroom, teachers are required to implement the Individualized Education Program's (IEP) identified

accommodations and modifications through differentiated instruction. Inclusion provides the opportunity for students to learn with their same-aged peers, but "there is a concern that this adds additional responsibilities to general education teachers, who currently have minimal time to spare, working with students with disabilities in inclusive settings" (Joyce et al., 2020, p. 183). Joyce et al. (2020) mention that due to the lack of training, general education teachers adopt a negative mindset toward inclusion. Skill development is necessary for general education teachers to feel confident in their ability to educate all students and to be knowledgeable about differentiated instruction that focuses on strengths.

The greatest impact an educator can have on student learning is understanding the whole child. If teachers do not take initiative in identifying appropriate learning strategies, they will solely rely on a curriculum that strongly focuses on deficit areas, delaying talent development (Joyce et at., 2020). Unfortunately, this results in lowered expectations of student performance and limits the efforts of appropriately servicing students with unique learning needs (Joyce et al., 2020). When teachers have lowered expectations, they are contributing to the negative stigma of special education, not working to de-stigmatize it (Kirby, 2017). "Deficit based approaches to supporting students with disabilities have very real consequences including lower income potential, higher rates of unemployment, and increased rates of incarceration" (Sanford et al., 2011 as cited in Elder et al., 2018, p. 27). Kirby (2017) declares that the education system should reduce the impact a disability has on a student's educational performance. When students experience deficit-based learning, they are denied opportunities to use their unique abilities and talents to master the general education curriculum (Flint & Jaggers, 2021). A student can experience hopelessness when associating an educational failure to the disability (Kirby, 2017). This is important because most school staff have different backgrounds and privileges

than their students, and it is imperative to provide opportunities for students to use their skills (Flint & Jaggers, 2021). "If there is an inherent shift in the thinking of general education teachers, students with disabilities may be thought of as their students, their responsibility" (Kirby, 2017, p. 188).

Foley-Nicpon and Kim (2018) affirm that developing strengths is beneficial for all students. Through strengths-based learning, teachers can advance academics with appropriate classroom supports. "In an inclusive environment the more efficacious general education teacher becomes a partner with the special education teacher in differentiating and delivering quality instruction" (Kirby, 2017, p.188). Hiemstra and Van Yperen (2015) state the importance of supporting students to become self-aware of their learning, gain intrinsic motivation, and continuously grow throughout the educational journey. Wehmeyer (2022) encourages educators to appreciate strengths, passions, and abilities instead of focusing on disability and impairment. Accepting these strengths and areas of need will help teachers guide classroom instruction.

Background of the Project

Exclusion in education reinforces stereotypes and inequality of individuals with a disability (Kirby, 2017). Reinforcing negative and exclusive education practices will interfere with an individual's ability to participate in civic opportunities and continued education (Kirby, 2017). Kirby (2017) states that current and past special education public policy and legislation reflects the assumptions society has of individuals with disabilities. Kirby (2017) insists that "the medical model, which posits that disability is an inherent flaw within a person, is used as a justification for legislative decisions and initially created a public policy that favors placement in special education as a means to remedy a perceived area of weakness" (p. 176). During the mid-

nineteenth century, individuals with exceptionalities were viewed as threatening to society, resulting in limited opportunities for vocational training. Anthony et al. (2011) informs us that intelligence testing in the mid-twentieth century impacted the way intelligence was viewed. They continue to explain that intelligence was seen as fixed and inherited once universal intelligence testing was used to plan and deliver academic instruction. This negatively impacted individuals who received a lower IQ score and were generally defined as feebleminded and "uneducable" by local school leaders (Martin et al., 1996).   In addition to intelligence testing, public schools refused to enroll students with disabilities (Martin et al., 1996). If students were accepted into the local school, they received no special services while in the general education classroom. Other students that were accepted into the local school were placed in special programs that were ill-equipped to serve the student population, leaving several students unserved or underserved by the school. "Through most of the history of public schools in America, services to children with disabilities were minimal and were provided at the discretion of local school districts" (Martin et al., 1996, p. 26). Martin et al. (1996) continues to explain that the civil rights movement strongly influenced the fight for educational rights.

Before The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) was established, only one in five children was educated (IDEA). Many individuals who had a diagnosed intellectual disability or mental illness were sent to state institutions, and families had little say in placement decisions (IDEA). Once this act was passed in 1975, it was guaranteed that all students with a disability received a free appropriate public education (FAPE) (Anthony et al., 2011). Throughout this time, it was made known that "3.5 million children with disabilities in the country were not receiving an education appropriate to their needs, while almost one million more were receiving no education at all" (Martin et al., 1996, p. 29). Later, The Education for

All Handicapped Children Act was later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA regulates how states provide early intervention and special education-related services, committing to breaking down barriers that exclusionary practices created (Kirby, 2017). Based on a student's needs, special education is provided in a variety of settings and ways. As of the 2020-21 school year, more than 7.5 million individuals with disabilities received special education services (IDEA). A free, appropriate education (FAPE) and learning in the least restrictive environment (LRE) are two fundamentals that are included in this act (Pizana, 2022). In addition, it was mandated that all children with exceptionalities receive an individualized education program (IEP). This document is reviewed annually and outlines the needs of a student with a disability. An IEP lists the programs and services the student needs to make educational progress. These programs and services can be school special education programs, social work, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy. Joyce et al. (2020) explain that when an IEP is developed, the multidisciplinary evaluation team selects LRE. A multidisciplinary team is a group of professionals that evaluate an individual that is suspected to have a disability (IDEA). The multidisciplinary team includes the general education teacher, a special education provider, a school district representative, an evaluation team representative, and a parent or guardian. Joyce et al. (2020) continue to clarify that LRE means that to the maximum extent appropriate, students with a disability have the opportunity to learn with their typically developing peers. Depending on the individual's identified needs, supports and services may be provided for the students in general education classroom or other integrated areas.

With knowledge and understanding of a student's IEP and evaluation data, the IEP team, which includes the parent or guardian, collectively decides the most appropriate setting for the student. When a student with an IEP spends the majority of their day in the general education

setting, services and instruction may be provided inside or outside the classroom setting. Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education (2022) produced information on the least restrictive environment (LRE) continuum. The continuum provides information regarding educational settings that are considered least restrictive to most restrictive when receiving special education services. When a student spends the majority of the day in the general education setting, that is where they receive most of the instruction. If a student requires additional support while in the classroom, the special education teacher may teach alongside the general education teacher in order to provide more individualized instruction. It may be necessary for a student to spend time outside the general education classroom. The student will spend time in a resource program. This type of program is when students spend some time in the resource room when needing specialized instruction (Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education, 2022). Sometimes the general education classroom setting may not be an appropriate setting. A student may receive an education through a special class or setting when supports and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily in the regular classroom (IDEA). When a student is placed in the most restrictive setting, the goal is to integrate them back into the least restrictive environment to the most appropriate extent possible.

Statement of Purpose

IDEA reported that during the 2020-21 school year, 66% of special education students spent 80% or more time in the general education classroom. According to Joyce et al. (2020), general education teachers feel they lack training on how to support students in special education. Supporting these students in the general education classroom includes differentiating instruction and adapting assignments while maintaining instructional rigor. Joyce et al. (2020) continue to inform us that the lack of skill acquisition can result in teachers adopting a negative

mindset toward inclusion. Education policy mandates that special education students are placed in LRE, it is important that teachers know strategies and learning framework that will support all students. Strengths-based learning and funds of knowledge will be addressed through teaching, independent practice, and reflecting on current classroom teaching practices. This project will provide teachers with information, tools and strategies to incorporate student strengths and passions into the curriculum.

The purpose of this project is to inform educators of strategies that will appropriately and effectively serve special education students while in the general education classroom. These professional learning communities will include information on how to implement asset-based teaching approaches and strengths-based learning into classroom communities and academics. It is important for educators to recognize and identify student strengths. This project will provide teachers with a student interest inventory. This tool will provide them with the opportunity to administer it to their students. Discussions will be held on how to administer the interest inventory, and how to take the results and implement them into lesson plans. Throughout the meetings, the instructional framework that will guide classroom instruction will be reviewed. Teachers will have the opportunity to collaborate and examine how student strengths and assets can be integrated into the instructional framework. In addition to discussing integrating asset-based pedagogy, classroom supports will also be discussed.

Objectives of the Project

Teacher responsibilities continue to grow (Joyce et al., 2020). Teachers will learn the importance of using strength-based practices, funds of knowledge and various supports in the classroom. Teachers will understand how to use Universal Design for Learning as a structural framework to guide instruction and create meaningful learning experiences for all students. This

project will inform teachers how to successfully administer an interest inventory and how to incorporate student strengths and interests into the curriculum. In addition, teachers learn about different classroom supports that can be used in the classroom. These supports will help remove additional barriers students experience while in the classroom.

- Teachers will successfully administer an interest inventory to their students.
- Teachers will create opportunities to integrate funds of knowledge and strengths-based learning in the classroom communities, reading and math.
- Teachers will complete a pre and post self-assessment survey and reflect on the answers of their survey.
- Students will recognize their strength-areas and apply them when learning.
- Through increased participation, students will experience academic success in the general education classroom.
- Students will complete an interest inventory with the teacher.

Definition of Terms

Accommodation: Can help students learn the same material as their peers. This support allows students to meet the same expectation.

Asset-based Pedagogies: "Asset-based pedagogies place value on students' insights, languages, and cultural practices, as well as seek to critique injustices, oppression, and other social-political issues" (Flint & Jaggers, 2021, p. 255).

Evidence-based Practice (EBP): "refers to any concept or strategy that is derived from or informed by objective evidence—most commonly, educational research or metrics of school, teacher, and student performance" (Great Schools Partnership).

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): "Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) Students with a disability are entitled to free appropriate public education (FAPE). Schools must provide a FAPE through programs and services. The FAPE must meet the student's unique needs and provide an educational benefit" (Michigan Department of Education).

General Education: A program that develops students' general knowledge, literacy skills, and competencies to equip them with the foundation for lifelong learning and advanced academic curricula.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): "The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

Individualized Education Program (IEP): "An individualized education program (IEP) is a written document for students with disabilities ages 3 through 25 that outlines the student's educational needs and goals and any programs and services the intermediate school district (ISD) and/or its member district will provide to help the student make educational progress" (Michigan Department of Education).

Inclusion: Inclusion is the teaching model that refers to students with disabilities in the same learning environment as their non-disabled peers.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): "Schools must place students in the least restrictive environment (LRE). That means students must be placed in the general education setting to the greatest extent possible and receive support and services as determined by the individualized education program (IEP) team" (Michigan Department of Education).

Modification: This support requires changes to be made to the curriculum or a test.

Professional Learning Community: A group of educators that meet regularly to improve their teaching skills and student academic performance (Great Schools Partnership).

Special Education: "Specifically designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and instruction in physical education" (IDEA).

Standards-Based: What students are expected to learn at a specific stage in their education (Great Schools Partnership)..

Scope of the Project

This project specifically targets how to support special education students in the general education classroom. The strengths-based teaching approaches are designed to make learning accessible to all students. Improving an educator's teaching practices will positively impact students' school experiences, increase engagement, wellbeing, and participation. The scope of this project relies heavily on teachers' understanding of funds of knowledge, strengths-based teaching practices, classroom support, and the importance of collaboration. This plan allows teachers to learn about funds of knowledge, and then apply the information to their own classrooms. The professional learning communities are designed for teachers to practice and reflect on implementing the practices within their classrooms. Teachers will also be able to share observations of student participation while engaging in strengths-based learning.

The attitude of teachers is a crucial aspect to implementing strengths-based teaching practices in the classroom. The limitation of failing to view all students as contributing members

of the learning community may cause implicit bias. Teachers must understand strength areas outside of academic areas and understand the importance of identifying students' strengths and providing opportunities for talent development. In addition, this requires teachers modeling acceptance and welcoming all students. It is crucial for students to learn in a safe learning environment. If students do not feel comfortable in their learning environment, it could negatively impact a student's ability to trust their teacher and their willingness to participate in learning activities (Galloway et al., 2020; Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020.).

This in-service is not designed to train teachers on how to support students with disabilities or provide information about specific special education eligibility. Rather, this project focuses on how to use funds and knowledge and strengths-based teaching practices in the classroom. Utilizing these strategies in the general education classroom will ensure that students in special education have full access to the general education curriculum with supports, opportunities to learn with their typically developing peers, and opportunities to recognize and develop their strengths. The success of this project will be impacted by both administrator and teacher buy-in and willingness to put this information into practice within their own classrooms. In addition, success will be impacted by administrator support and if they allow teachers to collaborate with one another on how to implement asset-based instructional strategies. Support from the administration will affect whether teachers are willing to implement learning strategies that support all students.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

When teachers solely rely on the curriculum, it creates a learning environment that aims to fix students' challenging areas (Flint & Jaggers, 2021). This is problematic because deficit-based approaches disregard a student's unique identity, lived experiences, and culture (Flint & Jaggers, 2021). When educators emphasize deficit areas, this results in lowering the expectations of students with a diagnosed disability (Elder et al., 2018). In addition, deficit-based approaches negatively affect students' ability to recognize their areas of strength when they feel surrounded by peers who are seen as more competent (Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020). The following literature review will delve into research related to the impact of strengths-based learning, funds of knowledge, and classroom supports for special education students who participate in the general education classroom. Next, is the following chapter's organization. First, there will be an explanation of the theoretical framework and rationale that informs the research and evaluation of the project. The research will be presented under these specific topics: strengths-based learning, asset-based pedagogy, funds of knowledge, Universal Design for Learning (UDL*),* classroom supports, co-teaching, and assistive technology. Finally, the summary and conclusion sections will include the major findings and information that support this project.

Rationale

Deficit-based learning focuses on how to fix a student, disregarding their background history, prior knowledge, and personal experiences (Flint & Jaggers, 2021). When teachers come to learning from this lens, it can be problematic because most school staff have different background and privileges than their student students, and it is important to provide students

with opportunities to use their unique skills and abilities (Flint & Jaggers, 2021). When students experience deficit-based learning, they are denied the opportunity to use their unique abilities and talents to learn the general education curriculum. Effective solutions that address deficit-based learning are implementing positive psychology and strengths-based learning strategies (Gawas, 2022; Galloway et al., 2020; Terjesen et al., 2004; Siligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Positive Psychology

Psychology has utilized a deficit lens to fix problems. Siligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) explain that psychology had a large focus on healing to repair damage. Terjesen et al. (2004) reveal that the three main goals of psychology were, "(1) cure mental illness, (2) make the lives of all people more fulfilling, and (3) enhance and identify human excellence" (p. 163). Positive psychology commits to discovering an individual's fullest potential and promotes positive behaviors, values and concepts (Gawas, 2022; Terjensen et al., 2004). Siligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) say, "the field of positive psychology at the subjective level is about valued subjective experiences: well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present)" (p. 5). At the individual level, positive psychology aims to maximize a person's talent development by focusing on their positive traits. Lastly, at the group level, it focuses on civic virtues. Positive psychology encourages educators to work with children to build up positive effects on children to foster resilience (Terjesen et al., 2004). With positive psychology, an educator's view shifts from remediation to a preventative perspective while working with children. Jerjesen et al. (2004) point out that positive psychology grants educators the opportunity to transform remedial interventions into nurturing activities to build strengths such as hope, courage, flexibility, and

resilience (Gawas, 2022). "Positive psychology aims to study the conditions and applications that contribute to achieving optimal performance for individuals and organizations, in addition to improving the levels of happiness and psychological well-being of individuals and groups" (Gable & Haidt, 2005 as quoted in Gawas, 2022 p. 51). Positive psychology can be integrated into the educational field. Teachers can teach the concepts (hope, strengths, gratitude, and flexibility,) of positive psychology to students (Gawas, 2022). Teaching positive psychology concepts to students can impact the way students interact with teachers, it improves their creativity, and academic achievement, and results in feelings of friendliness and enjoyment (Gawas, 2022). These concepts can be transferred into lifetime habits and positive behaviors. For students to experience a positive learning process, it is important for teachers to recognize and acquire their own positive skills to pass them on to students (Gawas, 2022). When positive skills and qualities are developed, it helps individuals and communities endure, and flourish (Siligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Strengths-based Learning

Galloway et al. (2020) define the term strengths as the ways of thinking and character traits that a person does well. Galloway et al. (2020) and Brownlee et al. (2012) explain that strengths-based approaches are when the educational process applies student strength areas to enhance well-being and learning. Strengths-based approaches offer opportunities for students to identify their strengths and what they learn quickly (Galloway et al., 2020). Learning is trial and error. Zacarian and Silverstone (2020) urge educators to help students feel competent, capable, and safe in addition to creating meaningful learning activities to inspire these positive emotions. Using strengths-based approaches will improve academics, self-confidence, and foster growth mindsets (Elder et al., 2018). Strengths-based learning is when the educational process applies

student strength areas to learning activities (Galloway et al., 2020). When students acknowledge their strengths and apply them in the classroom, they succeed autonomously (Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020). Strengths-based learning will result in equity and a sense of belonging for all students, supporting talent development in order to scaffold deficit areas. Foley-Nicpon and Kim (2018) remind us that developing strengths benefits all students. Accepting these strengths and areas of need helps guide classroom instruction. In addition, it is necessary for teachers to provide enriched activities while including classroom supports for the identified challenging area.

<div align="center">**Research/Evaluation**</div>

Asset-based Pedagogy

Funds of Knowledge

Flint and Jaggers (2021) explain that funds of knowledge is one approach to asset-based instruction. The authors reveal that funds of knowledge is the assumption that all communities and individuals possess skills, beliefs, ideas, and resources that are valuable to teaching and learning. This culturally responsive practice will assist educators in creating activities that relate a student's assets to the learning content. When students feel connected to their learning, they experience motivation to overcome obstacles, achieve their goals, and are more likely to experience positive outcomes throughout the learning process (Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020; Brownlee et al., 2012). Diverse learners may be viewed negatively due to implicit bias and will experience negative effects when they engage in deficit-based instruction and perspectives (Flint & Jaggers, 2021). "In the classroom, then, a funds of knowledge approach centers learners' experiences, languages, culture, and intellectual capacities as resources to foster academic engagement, rather than problems to be remedied" (Flint & Jaggers, 2021, p. 256). Educators

create a safe and accepting learning environment when they acknowledge and value diverse learners in the classroom (Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020). Zacarian and Silverstone (2020) state when learners feel a sense of belonging, they will recognize their personal strengths and the strengths of their peers. They include the importance of recognizing a student's identity because educators may view certain behaviors or set of norms as normal or "better". Modeling acceptance will facilitate positive learning and collaboration among students and teachers (Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020). When teachers help students identify their strengths, they will experience an increase in engagement, hope, self-esteem, and life satisfaction (McLeod, 2019).

Strengths-based Learning.

When student strengths are applied to learning, it enhances their confidence and wellbeing (Galloway et al., 2020). Galloway et al. (2020) share the positive impact a teacher has when they assist students to identify their strength areas and what they learn quickly. Galloway et al. (2020) conducted a study at a primary school in New Zealand. For one year, the participants of this study participated in a school-wide strengths-based intervention program. This specific study included teachers, students, and their parent participants. Data revealed that most of the student participants felt that the relationship between their strengths and school positively impacted their ability to form friendships and make progress in the areas of reading, math, writing, spelling, art, and drama. These children stated that they felt proud, accomplished, and satisfied with their educational accomplishments when they engaged in a strength area. Next, Galloway et al. (2020) shared the data gathered from students' parents. The parent participants shared that having school-wide strengths-based interventions motivated, and increased joy and fulfillment throughout student learning. Another clear finding from the parent data was the level of participation in school, and the data affirmed parent support for acknowledging student

strengths to support learning. Lastly, Galloway et al., (2020) communicated the teacher data set. While engaging in the strengths-based learning program, teachers recognized an increase in student engagement and enjoyment. Teacher data from this study also revealed the challenges that teachers experienced throughout the study. Referring to the challenges, teachers shared the importance of educators encouraging students to self-reflect and assist students be able to recognize their strengths. Galloway et al. (2020) reveal that strengths can only be developed when they are recognized and applied. In addition, asset-based instruction includes a student's assets, such as their family, culture, language, and prior knowledge, and views all of these assets as intellectual resources (Flint & Jaggers, 2021). For students to experience learning that is meaningful to them, it is important that they are provided with opportunities to use their assets throughout the learning process (Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020).

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an instructional design that reduces barriers and ensures that learning is accessible to all students (Rao & Meo, 2016). Zhang et al. (2022) explain that UDL is a scientifically valid framework that aims to design an environment that brings authentic learning opportunities for learners, which include students with a diagnosed disability, as well as culturally, and linguistically diverse students (Rao & Meo, 2016). This is important because students come to school with a variety of learning styles, lived experiences, interests, strengths, and challenge areas (Al Hazmi & Ahmad, 2018). UDL provides flexible teaching and supports exposure to standards-based lessons to the greatest extent possible (Rao & Meo, 2016).

UDL methods provide flexibility for students in the way they participate in class, engage in learning, and show what they know. There are three main principles to the UDL framework.

CAST (2018) explains that the three principles to UDL are: provide multiple means of engagement, provide multiple means of representation, and provide multiple means of action and expression. Rao and Meo (2016) inform that these principles are based on research regarding cognition and learning. CAST (2018) defines the three principles and the importance of each. The first principle, engagement, is the "why" of learning. It is important for students to understand the purpose of learning to be motivated to participate. The second principle, representation, is the "what" of learning. This principle allows teachers the flexibility of how information can be represented to students. It is an opportunity for teachers to integrate student funds of knowledge to maximize the transfer and generalization of skills. The third principle, action and expression, is the "how" of learning. Students can strategize and set goals on how they learn best, and what skills they can use to express what they have learned. Rao and Meo (2016) advocate that "UDL framework presents a structure for designing instructional environments and activities that take into account the varied ways in which these learning networks function for each individual" (p. 2).

To increase access for all learners, teachers can use UDL when developing and delivering standards-based lessons. Rao and Meo (2016) explain that unwrapping a standard is the first step of this process. As students progress through their schooling, standards are used as expectations of what they should learn. When teachers identify "what" students should learn, they can use UDL to determine "how" the lessons should be designed (Rao & Meo, 2016). The process of breaking apart standards and applying UDL guidelines will allow teachers to integrate a variety of classroom supports to address students' learning needs (Rao & Meo, 2016). Educators break down a standard to identify the skills and concepts students are required to learn. Once the standard is broken apart, teachers can plan and develop lessons that support mastery of the grade-

level standard. It is important for teachers to know their students' strengths and needs when applying UDL guidelines (Rao & Meo, 2016). Teachers have the flexibility to use UDL for individual lessons or a series of lessons when targeting specific learning standards.

According to AlRawi and AlKahtani (2022), "UDL has become one of the most important programs supporting the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education" (p. 800). AlRawi and AlKahtani (2022) gathered multiple studies of schools that utilized the UDL learning framework, and the classrooms within the studies included students with disabilities. The authors reviewed each study and the results. The results of the studies report that using UDL principles to teach students with an intellectual disability positively impacted their ability to learn content such as literacy, science, social studies, peer interaction, and independence (AlRawi & AlKahtani, 2022). UDL is a solution that aims to provide inclusion that will fill the gap for students with diverse learning needs and challenges (Al Hazmi & Ahmad, 2018). UDL includes teacher feedback and student goal setting as checkpoints, which benefits students who experience test anxiety (Rao & Meo, 2016). Throughout the learning process, UDL provides scaffolds that support and challenge students in addition to offering choices for students to express their learning. It is beneficial for special education and general education teachers to collaborate on appropriate goals, scaffolds, and additional accommodations and modifications that are necessary for students with and IEP (Rao & Meo, 2016). Using UDL will reduce barriers, maximize exposure to standard-based lessons, and encourage all students to use their assets to reach the same high standards (Rao & Meo, 2016). When students use their assets, it is believed that they have something positive to contribute to the classroom and outside community (Flint & Jaggers, 2021).

Classroom Supports

Co-Teaching

Co-teaching is a teaching approach where two teachers, a general education teacher and a special education teacher, join their areas of expertise and work together with a group of students in an inclusive setting (Pizana, 2022). This is important because it allows students to learn outside of the special education setting (Kirby, 2017). There are six approaches to co-teaching. A benefit to co-teaching provides teachers the opportunity to provide more individualized instruction and attention to individual and small groups of students. An additional benefit to co-teaching is educators work collaboratively with one another and are able to bring their expertise to the classroom and exchange teaching practices (SERC, 2004). Together, educators work to design a learning environment. Dusty and Schneider Dinnesen (2012) reveal that co-planning, co-instructing, and co-assessing are required factors in order for co-teaching to be successful. They also state that in order to create an inclusive classroom, both teachers need to specifically state the roles and goals of each teacher when deciding which co-teaching approach to use. When teachers regularly co-plan, they are more likely to implement co-teaching strategies more frequently, and experience an increase in participation and sense of responsibility (Dusty & Schneider Dinnesen, 2012). Co-teaching supports inclusive education. This is important because inclusive education is a solution to supporting diverse learning needs by increasing engagement and decreasing exclusions (Ramatea & Khanare, 2021).

SERC (2004) explains the six approaches to co-teaching. Each strategy provides diverse learning options. One teach, one observe, is an approach to co-teaching. This approach provides teachers with detailed observations of student engagement. Before instruction begins, teachers identify specific information to gather data on. Afterward, the teachers analyze the data. Another

approach is, one teach, one assist. One teacher is held responsible for teaching while the other circulates around the room, aiding as needed. Parallel teaching is where both teachers simultaneously teach the same information, and the class is divided into two groups. Station teaching is another co-teaching approach where students and content are divided into groups. Each teacher teaches specific content, and students rotate between teachers. The fifth approach to co-teaching is alternative teaching. One teacher is responsible for teaching the large group while the other teaches a smaller group of students who demonstrate the need for small group instruction. Lastly, SERC (2004) lists team teaching as the sixth approach to co-teaching. This method of co-teaching involves both teachers delivering the instruction at the same time. Another name for this approach is tag team teaching, and it heavily relies on an educator's style of teaching.

Pizana (2022) conducted a study that assessed teachers' self-efficacy and the collective efficacy of the co-teaching team. It was announced that teachers who engaged in a co-teaching team shared the benefits of working in a partnership. Teachers expressed they can accomplish more in a partnership, possess more resources, and can better respond to behaviors (Pizana, 2022). Co-teaching involves identifying the roles of each teacher. The findings of this study acknowledge that when teachers collaborate and relate to one another, this welcomes each teacher to bring their unique skills and abilities to each task. Pizana (2022) states that "co-teaching is an attitude of sharing the classroom and the students" (p. 1823). It is important for co-teachers to understand that both are teaching and contributing to the classroom. This will result in positive collaboration and high levels of student achievement. It is important to recognize that special education students have equal access to the curriculum in order to reach academic and social-emotional goals (Ramatea & Khanare, 2021). When students with disabilities are included

in general education settings, it is important that appropriate support is provided for the student.
These specific supports will help students make progress on IEP goals and in the general
education curriculum when learning a general education setting.

Supplementary Aids and Services

Supplementary aids and services is a section of the IEP that the team is required to
include for each student. Supplementary aids are services are supports that help students with
disabilities participate with their same-aged nondisabled peers to the greatest extent possible.
These supports are used to help students participate in the general education classroom, make
progress on annual IEP goals, and participate in nonacademic tasks (MDE Office of Special
Education, 2020). Accommodations and modifications are supports that help students learn the
same material as their same-aged peers and provide changes to the curriculum depending on the
student's needs and IEP (Joyce et al., 2020). Darrow (2007) explains that an accommodation can
be seen as a remediation approach, meaning the teacher will implement supports to help a
student with their challenges to participate in the same activity as their non-disabled peers. She
continues to point out that a modification is used when the student is unable to participate or
complete a task the same way as their peers, to compensate for the individual's identified
disability. When a multi-disciplinary team creates an Individualized Education Program (IEP,)
this document includes the individualized supports to address the needs of the student. These
supports include accommodations and modifications to classroom activities and assessments to
increase access to the general education curriculum. When students with disabilities are placed in
the general education classroom, teachers are required to implement the IEP's identified
accommodations and modifications through differentiated instruction. To support all students,
teachers are held accountable to prepare and differentiate lesson plans that maintain rigorous

expectations (Joyce et al., 2020. Through strengths-based learning, teachers can advance academics with appropriate accommodations and modifications. It is necessary for teachers to provide enriched activities while including accommodations for the identified challenging area. Accepting these strengths and areas of need helps guide classroom instruction. Assistive technology is an example of an accommodation that students can access to gain access to printed information.

Assistive Technology

Many students who receive special education services have difficulties in the areas of reading, writing, or math. Students can also have challenges in the areas of communication, vision, listening, mobility, and physical education. Assistive technology (AT) is a resource that allows students to use their strengths to work around their challenges and increase participation in the general education classroom (Assistive Technology, 2020, Antanga et al., 2019). AT can positively impact learning and focuses on how instructional content is designed and delivered (Antanga et al., 2019). AT enhances instruction and positively impacts learning and student outcomes by allowing students to learn at their own pace. IDEA (2014) states the following:

> Assistive technology device means any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. The term does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted or the replacement of such device. (n.p)

Lindeblade et al. (2017) and Edyburn (2015) find that using AT will minimize the impact of an individual's disability, and empower them to live, learn and work more independently.

Incorporating assistive technology in the classroom can support students who have challenges in reading. Lindeblad et al. (2017) conducted a study to inform individuals about the impact assistive technology (AT) had on students who have challenges in the area of reading. The study examines students' ability to decode words after using assistive technology while engaging in an intervention program. Lindeblad et al. (2017) reveal that the participants had a similar reading progression as their non-disabled peers. Lindeblad et al. (2017) and Edyburn (2015) share that AT increases a student's text exposure, increases their ability to absorb text, and progresses their ability to manage technology quickly. Students were able to discover new genres, like fiction. Lindeblad et al. (2017) reveal that students experienced an increase in motivation, self-confidence, and independence while using AT. Increased motivation in the area of reading will impact a student's ability to participate in reading activities and facilitate learning in all academic areas (Lindeblad et al., 2017).

Summary

All students come to school with varying interests, skills, challenges, and knowledge (Al Hazmi & Ahman, 2018). Using funds of knowledge is an approach to asset-based instruction, and this teaching practice will encourage students to feel connected to their learning (Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020; Brownlee et al., 2012). When students feel connected to their learning, this provides positive learning that motivates students to overcome obstacles (Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020; Brownlee et al., 2012). When students are aware of their strengths, learning experiences need to be provided to foster talent development. Strengths-based teaching practices is a solution that will positively affect student academics, self-confidence, and enjoyment of learning (Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020). Universal Design for Learning is a scientifically valid teaching framework that reduces learning barriers and ensures learning is accessible to all

students (Zhang et al., 2022; Rao & Meo, 2016). In addition, Universal Design for Learning aims to fill the gap by providing scaffolds and additional accommodations and modifications for students with a diagnosed disability (Rao & Meo, 2016). When students with an IEP are provided with opportunities to use their strengths in school and provided appropriate classroom supports, this will greatly impact their exposure and progress within the general education classroom (Joyce et al., 2020; Roa & Meo, 2016).

Research shows the benefits of educators collaborating with one another, and participating in professional developments that make use of ongoing practice to create an inclusive classroom effectively. Galloway, et al., (2020) remind us that by providing proper training and opportunities to practice, teachers are more likely to utilize asset-based pedagogies. When students are given the freedom to be their authentic selves while learning, they view their education as meaningful and will experience deeper understanding throughout the learning process. Teachers are more likely to maintain high expectations for these students and execute a curriculum that maintains rigorous expectations when they are prepared and trained to support students in special education. When educators are given time to collaborate with one another, it enhances the inclusive environment in a general education classroom (Mohammed, 2022). Co-teaching is a way teachers use their resources and expertise and teacher partner. This approach allows a general education teacher and a special education teacher to use their resources and expertise in an inclusive setting (Pizana, 2022). Co-teaching and collaboration will ensure that a student's IEP is fully implemented and that they have access to the general education curriculum to the greatest extent possible. A classroom support that will help students with an IEP participate and be successful in the general education classroom is supplementary aids and

services. No matter what the educational setting is, all students' educational needs should be considered by educators (Lindner et al., 2021).

Project Conclusions

Teachers are held responsible for educating all students with their typically developing peers to the greatest extent possible (Joyce et al., 2020). The importance of asset-based pedagogy focuses on a student's positive attributes and strengths to help them reach their full potential. Deficit-based approaches negatively affect students' ability to recognize the areas of their strengths when they are surrounded by peers who are seen as more competent (Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020). Differences will negatively be interpreted, causing students to doubt whether they are a member of the school community. Foley-Nicpon and Kim (2018) remind us that developing strengths is beneficial for all students. As more special education students participate and spend most of the school day in an inclusive classroom, it is important for teachers to focus on their strengths and implement supports to scaffold challenge areas to maximize exposure to the general education curriculum (Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020). Students come to school with different backgrounds, and this affects the way they communicate, learn, and process information (Al Hazmi & Ahmad, 2018). Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an instructional framework that aims to support the learning of all students.

Using classroom supports such as coteaching, accommodations and modifications and assistive technology are solutions to supporting students in special education. These supports provide students with equal access to the general education curriculum, and allow students to learn with their non-disabled peers to greatest extent possible (Ramatea & Khanare, 2021). While students use their strengths in the classroom, they will also have access to classroom supports to scaffold their challenging areas (Joyce, et al., 2020; Darrow, 2007).

Chapter Three: Project Description

Introduction

Every student enters school with unique abilities, ways of processing information, and an individual's personal attributes influence their preferred ways of learning and completing tasks (Rao & Meo, 2016). When students qualify for special education, they are placed in the education setting with their nondisabled peers to the greatest extent possible (Joyce et al., 2020). As more students with a diagnosed disability are included in the general education classroom, it is common that teachers do not use asset-based pedagogy and may have negative attitudes toward inclusion due to limited preparation (Joyce et al., 2020). Using deficit-based approaches in the classroom that aims to fix a student's challenging area, disregarding their unique abilities. "Teachers miss opportunities to see beyond the limitations and challenges that their students may face, and instead, overly focus on the shortcomings of the student" (Elder, 2018, p. 117). This negatively impacts a student's motivation. Utilizing asset-based pedagogy and strengths-based learning will help a student's overall development and will improve the quality of their education experience (Al Hazmi & Ahmad, 2018).

When teachers help students identify their strengths, students will experience a positive learning experience that increases their confidence to overcome learning challenges in and outside of school (McLeod, 2019). Using asset-based pedagogy, such as funds of knowledge, in the classroom provides authentic learning opportunities that are meaningful to all students Using asset-based approaches in the classroom positively impacts a student's school experience and will increase their exposure to the general education curriculum (Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020; Brownlee et al., 2012). Asset-based pedagogy reassures students their classroom is a safe environment and will facilitate students to think creatively, and celebrate all victories (Zacarian

& Silverstone, 2020). When students have opportunities to use their strengths to learn the curriculum standards, general education, and special education teachers can identify and implement classroom supports according to a student's IEP.

In order for this project to be effective, it is important for teachers to understand the relevance of identifying student strengths. The goal of this project is to provide opportunities for educators to collaborate with one another on how to student interests into the curriculum, and how to integrate classroom support. This project allows teachers to learn about asset-based pedagogy and how to use it in the academics and classroom community. Teachers will receive handouts that support learning and will have opportunities to bring ideas and lesson plans on how to incorporate strengths-based learning into the curriculum.

This project will include components that outline the resources teachers are provided to support their learning. The project will contain learning community guidelines and expectations. A pre and post-assessment will be attached to educators to monitor their current skills in utilizing asset-based pedagogy in the classroom. This project will review how to implement an interest inventory to students, and how to use the results of the interest inventories once they are completed. This project will provide agendas for each learning community meeting. These agendas will outline discussion topics and provide teachers with opportunities to collaborate with one another on how to implement student interests and personal assets within the curriculum.

Project Components

Providing teachers with information on utilizing asset-based pedagogy and strengths-based learning techniques will positively impact their teaching strategies and student learning outcomes. Zacarian and Silverstone (2020) emphasize the importance of providing students with

the space and resources required for engaging in social-emotional and academic skills to advance autonomy and collaboration skills. Diversity in classrooms continues to grow (Flint, 2021). Students have unique abilities and ways of learning new information. Teachers will continually experience educating students with learner variability influences the way they design classroom lessons (Rao & Meo, 2016). Galloway et al. (2020) suggest that when teachers are not informed of how to incorporate asset-based learning, they are less likely to make informed decisions concerning strength-based learning. *PLC: Meeting One Agenda* (Appendix A) and *Teacher Self-assessment Survey* (Appendix B) will provide a layout of what topics will be covered throughout the PLC meetings. It is important for students to feel safe in their learning environment, and it is also important for teachers to have a mutual understanding of how the PLC will also be a safe learning environment that welcomes all individuals and ideas. Creating a social contract will create a community that holds everyone accountable, viewing everyone as a valued member of the PLC. Teachers will also complete a pre-assessment to self-assess their current skills and what areas they would like to progress while collaborating with their professional learning community (PLC). To effectively implement asset-based pedagogy, it is important for teachers to understand and believe that everyone has valuable resources, skills, beliefs, and ideas (Flint & Jaggers, 2021). *PLC: Meeting Two Agenda* (Appendix C), *Funds of Knowledge* (Appendix D), *Strengths-based Learning* (Appendix E) highlight instructional frameworks that teachers can use to guide classroom instruction.

Developing student strengths is critical when supporting their success and confidence in school (Galloway et al., 2020). *Student Interest Inventory* (Appendix F) is a resource that grants teachers the opportunity to become familiar with students' interests. Galloway et al. (2020) explain that strengths are developed once they are recognized and applied. They also report that

positive impact students experienced when engaging in an area of strength while learning. Students made progress in the areas of reading, math, writing, spelling, art, and drama when given the opportunity to use their strengths. Once teachers review the student interest inventory results, they can discuss the results at the next PLC meeting. *PLC: Meeting Three Agenda* (Appendix G) will give teachers the opportunity to discuss how to incorporate student strengths into classroom communities. The second PLC meeting will provide teachers the opportunity to discuss ideas and strategies on how to incorporate strengths-based learning and funds of knowledge into the classroom community.

To enhance student confidence and well-being, it is important for teachers to incorporate their strengths and assets into the curriculum (Galloway et al., 2020). *PLC: Meeting Four Agenda* (Appendix H) and *PLC: Meeting Five Agenda* (Appendix I) will inform teachers of the instructional strategies that allow teachers to provide flexible teaching that supports inclusion and supports student strengths and challenge areas. make learning meaningful for all students including students with a diagnosed disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse students (Rao & Meo, 2016). These meetings will reference Universal Design for Learning, a learning framework that will reduce barriers and encourage students to use their assets to reach the same learning standards (Rao & Meo, 2016).

As a final self-reflection, teachers will come together for a concluding PLC meeting. *PLC: Meeting Five Agenda* (Appendix J) will refer to *Teaching Self-assessment Survey* (Appendix B) where teachers complete a post-assessment to compare their new answers to the answers of their pre-assessment. As a group, teachers are encouraged to share their experiences throughout the PLC's, and how they will continue to apply what they have learned in the classroom. *Sample Lesson Plan Using the Creative Process with Standards* (Appendix K) and

Sample Lesson Plan: Math (Appendix L) are lesson plan examples that incorporate student assets and strength areas.

Project Evaluation

The first step in implementing asset-based pedagogy is building strong relationships with students and becoming aware of their strengths and interest areas. *Student Interest Inventory* (Appendix F) will assist teachers in planning authentic and meaningful learning activities for all students. The teacher will be able to identify the benefits of strengths-based learning by observing student progress through formative and summative assessments. As teachers continuously integrate asset-based pedagogy, they will observe an increase in student engagement and progress in social-emotional and academic development (Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020).

The goal of this project is for teachers to be informed about how to utilize teaching strategies that make learning accessible to all students. Teachers who participate in the professional learning communities will be able to compare their pre and post-assessment results to determine if they improved their strength and challenging areas throughout the learning communities. By incorporating this project into professional learning communities, teachers will improve their teaching practices which will increase student learning accomplishments.

Project Conclusions

Throughout the school experience, students are preparing to be independent and successful citizens (Joyce et al., 2020). 61.8% of special education students spend 80% or more time in the general education classroom (Joyce et al., 2020). A problem is even though these students are placed in the general education setting, there is a strong focus on deficit areas. This lowers the general education teacher's expectation of these students, allowing the student's disability to

impact their educational experience (Kirby, 2017). This can cause a student to associate educational failure with their disability (Kirby, 2014). Deficit-based teaching strategies take away opportunities for students to bring their assets into the classroom (Flint & Jaggers, 2021).

Funds of knowledge is assuming that all individuals have the skills, beliefs, ideas and resources that are valuable to teaching and learning (Flint & Jaggers, 2021). Funds of knowledge is a strategy that incorporates asset-based instruction into teaching. It models acceptance and promotes a safe and positive learning environment (Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020). When teachers develop lessons that incorporate funds of knowledge, students will experience positive academic and social-emotional outcomes. To meet the unique learning needs of all students, incorporating funds of knowledge and strength-based learning into the classroom is a solution that will boost confidence and autonomy (Galloway et al., 2020). Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a strengths-based lesson plan framework that aims to integrate student interests and strengths into learning, providing authentic learning experiences for all students (Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020). UDL provides flexible teaching and learning, and opportunities for student goal setting. When students are aware of their strengths, they can reflect on their strengths and pinpoint challenging areas (Rao & Meo, 2016). When students with an IEP are provided scaffolds and appropriate classroom supports, this maximizes their ability to participate with their non-disabled peers (Al Hazmi & Ahmad, 2018). Proving students with opportunities to use their assets in the classroom will support their ability to understand the purpose of learning in addition to increasing their motivation to participate in the classroom (Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020). Funds of knowledge and strengths-based learning provide opportunities for students to be successful in the general education classroom.

Implementing classroom supports is crucial for students to have access to resources that support their induvial needs. Classroom support provides students the opportunity to succeed in the general education classroom. Co-teaching is one strategy to support special education students in an inclusive setting (Pizanan, 2022). Educators can plan and develop an environment that aims to maximize learning and achievement. When students with IEP's are included in the general education classroom, the IEP team works to implement supplementary aids and services to meet the needs of the student. These supports provide students resources and tools to increase participation in the general education classroom, make progress on annual IEP goals, and engage in nonacademic tasks (MDE Office of Special Education, 2020). Teachers can advance academics with strengths-based learning and organizing appropriate accommodations and modifications. It is necessary for teachers to provide enriched activities while including accommodations for the identified challenging area. Knowing student strengths and challenge areas will help teachers guide classroom instruction. Being mindful of different backgrounds and strengths prepares all students to learn, acknowledge their own strengths and the strengths of others.

An effective approach to training teachers to best support students in special education while they are in the general education classroom is to provide opportunities for educators to engage in professional learning communities. Professional learning communities will equip teachers with the skills and knowledge to identify student strengths, provide opportunities to collaborate with special education team members, and have the skills necessary to implement interventions. "This should and can easily be addressed further in and pre-service teacher training by introducing new methods to teachers and give them space to get familiar with these practices" (Lindner et al., 2021, p. 8). The professional learning communities will address asset-

based instruction, model how this is done, and allow teachers the time to collaborate and plan lessons that support student strengths and support their learning needs. "Instructing those with learning difficulties poses challenges for general education (GE) teachers, and it is important for them to have the ability to work with others within their schools with expertise in special education to enhance the inclusive environment of the GE classroom" (Majoki, 2019 as quoted in Mohammed, 2022, p. 3). Mohammed (2022) continues to inform us that it is challenging for teachers to work alone when many students have unique learning needs within the general education classroom. It takes time to accommodate and modify lessons that meet the needs of every learner. In order for professional learning communities to be effective, there needs to be an ongoing process where teachers have opportunities to practice the new teaching skills and receive feedback before they are expected to utilize the new practice within their classrooms.

This project may leave some unanswered questions. Asset-based pedagogy and classroom supports are resources teachers can incorporate into the curriculum. They can take individual lessons and make minor changes and modifications to integrate student strengths and interest areas. This project aims to support elementary teachers, but the components can be utilized in older grades. This project provides teachers with information and resources regarding the educational framework for strengths-based learning.

Plans for Implementation

Asset-based pedagogy and strengths-based learning approaches can be implemented in any classroom. This project is intended to give teachers knowledge, resources, and opportunities to collaborate and use this information within their own classrooms. The documents and meeting agendas are intended for elementary teachers in a K-5 setting. However, these resources can also be utilized in a secondary education setting. Asset-based instruction is intended to support

individuals to use their unique abilities in the classroom, which will benefit their independence in college and careers.

Teachers who utilize strengths-based practices and classroom supports will be able to provide support and collaboration to other educators. When teachers improve their teaching strategies and techniques, this positively impacts a student's learning experience and learning outcomes. As a personal advocate for inclusion and providing appropriate supports and services, this teacher will use the resources in this project to present the case for how implementing asset-based instruction and classroom supports will positively benefit all students, specifically those who receive special education services.

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Appendices

Appendix A

PLC: Meeting One Agenda

Training	Content Covered	<mark>For next time:</mark>
PLC: Meeting One	• **Welcome!** • **Social Contract** • **Strengths-based vs. Deficit-based** • **Goals of this professional learning community** • **Complete self-reflective survey**	**Review the following questions for the next meeting:** **1. Do I recognize student strengths?** **2. Do I help students develop those strengths?** **3. How do I help students develop their strengths?** **4. What are strength areas outside of academics? (reading, writing, math)**

Created by Jordan Tucker, 2023

Appendix B

Teacher Self-assessment Survey

Directions: Complete the self-assessment survey. You will complete this at the start of our PLC meetings. You will complete the self-assessment survey at our final PLC meeting, and will have the chance to compare your scores. The ratings are listed below.

0- I am uncertain about what this means.
1-Not at all: I don't or can't do this, or this doesn't happen in my classroom.
2- Beginning: I do this infrequently, or this happens infrequently in my classroom.
3- Partially: I am quite certain what this means. I do this sometimes, or this happens sometimes in my classroom.
4- Completely: I am quite certain what this means. I do this regularly, or this happens frequently in my classroom.

Self-assessment Survey	Rating 1 Date:	Rating 2 Date:
I can explain what funds of knowledge means.		
I can explain the importance of using funds of knowledge in the classroom.		
I understand the impact funds of knowledge has on student learning outcomes when they can use their abilities to learn.		
I can describe how funds of knowledge is used in my classroom.		
I am familiar with Universal Design for Learning.		

I have experience administering an interest-inventory to my students to identify their interest areas.		
I know how to incorporate student interests into the curriculum.		

Created by Jordan Tucker, 2023

Appendix C

PLC: Meeting Two Agenda

Training	Content Covered	For next time:
PLC: Meeting Two	• **Introduce the following topics: funds of knowledge, strengths-based learning, interest inventory** • **Review student interest inventory**	• **Bring completed interest inventory results.** • **How can we integrate student interests and funds of knowledge into classroom community? We will discuss this question at the next PLC.**

Created by Jordan Tucker, 2023

Appendix D

Funds of Knowledge

Funds of Knowledge
What is it? An approach to asset-based instruction. It is the assumption that all communities and individuals possess skills, beliefs, ideas, and resources that are valuable to teaching and learning (Flint Jaggers, 2021).
Benefits: <table><tr><td>   - Recognizes students' identify   - Helps teachers create authentic activities that relate to student assets   </td><td>   - Makes learning meaningful   - Support teachers in creating activities that relate to student assets   </td><td>   - Students feel connected to learning   - Sense of belonging   - Models acceptance   </td></tr></table>
How to Incorporate in Classroom Community?
How to Incorporate in curriculum?

Created by Jordan Tucker, 2023

Appendix E

Strengths-based Learning

Strengths-based Learning
What is it? Strengths are character traits that a person does well (Galloway et al., 2020). Strengths-based learning is when students have the opportunities to use their strength areas throughout the educational process.
Benefits?   - Autonomy   - Equity   - Increase of engagement and enjoyment while learning   - Supports talent development   - Scaffold challenge areas   - Increases academic and social-emotional growth
How to incorporate in Classroom Community?
How to Incorporate in Academics?

Created by Jordan Tucker, 2023

Appendix F

Student Interest Inventory

Directions: This interest inventory will help the teacher find out what their students are interested in. If this is administered to lower elementary students, administer it individually or in small group sessions. Read one section at a time to the students and read each option aloud. Circle their answers in each area.

Math (Choose)

o Puzzles/Games	o Computer games	o Cooking	o Music
o Nature and math	o Building and taking apart objects	o Sports	o Arts and crafts

Reading (Choose 2)

o Comic books	o Movies	o Creative writing (make your own stories)	o Advertising (video games, restaurant, protect the planet, etc.)

Science (Choose 3)

o Space	o Animals (if chosen, ask which kind. Can include dinosaurs)	o Weather/ Natural Disasters
o Experiments	o Gardening	o How to help the planet

Social Studies (Choose 2)

o Our city and the people who live in it	o Holidays	o Inventors and what they invented	o Explorers and what they discovered

Appendix G

PLC: Meeting Three Agenda

Training	Content Covered	<mark>For next time:</mark>
PLC: Meeting Three	• **Review student interest inventory and identify any themes** • **How can we apply strengths-based learning and funds of knowledge into classroom community?** • **Brainstorm ways to incorporate funds of knowledge into a classroom community activity**	• **How can funds of knowledge and strengths-based learning be incorporated into math?** • **What classroom supports are necessary to remove learning barriers?** • **Optional: bring a math activity or lesson that can be altered to have student strengths and assets integrated**

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Appendix H

PLC: Meeting Four Agenda

Training	Content Covered	For next time:
PLC: Meeting Four	• **Review student interest inventory and identify any themes** • **How can strengths-based learning and funds of knowledge be incorporated into math?** • **What classroom supports are necessary to remove learning barriers?** • **Review math lesson or activity to incorporate student strengths and appropriate classroom supports**	• **How can funds of knowledge and strengths-based be incorporated into reading?** • **What classroom supports are necessary to remove learning barriers?** • **Optional: bring a reading activity or lesson that can be altered to have student strengths and assets integrated**

Created by Jordan Tucker, 2023

Appendix I

PLC: Meeting Four Agenda

Training	Content Covered	<mark>For next time:</mark>
PLC: Meeting Four	• **Review student interest inventory and identify any themes** • **What did you notice when you incorporated student strength and assets into the math lesson or activity? What would you have done differently?** • **How can strengths-based learning and funds of knowledge be incorporated into reading?** • **What classroom supports are necessary to remove learning barriers?** • **Review reading lesson or activity to incorporate student strengths and appropriate classroom supports**	

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Appendix J

PLC: Meeting Five Agenda

Training	Content Covered
PLC: Meeting Five	• **Share victories and challenges while utilizing strengths-based learning approaches in academics and classroom community** • **Complete post self-assessment survey (refer to Appendix B)** • **Teachers will have time to reflect on their pre and post self-assessment survey answers**

Created by Jordan Tucker, 2023

Appendix K

Sample Lesson Plan Using the Creative Process with Standards

Standards: • **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.1**: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.
Objectives: • I can explain why recess is important.   • I can explain to others what you can learn outside.
Instruction and Activity: • Students can remain in their seats or gather at the carpet together.   • *The teacher will ask the class, "Why is recess important?"*   • The teacher will create a telling brain frame, and students share out their opinions on why adding a third recess would be beneficial to their education (play with friends, fresh air, movement break, make new friends, learn new games, etc.)   • Students will share the challenges of being inside for long periods of time (hard to focus and sit still for long periods of time, more time with friends, etc.)   • Students will be given the opportunity to create an opinion piece   • that explains their point of view on why adding a third recess is beneficial or not beneficial. The opinion pieces will be presented to the principal.   • Students will have the option to express their point of view through a letter, drawing or painting a picture, creating a story, writing a poem or song.
Materials: • Paper for each student   • Writing utensils   • Paint or drawing utensils.
Assessment: • Students will be able to present their opinion pieces to their table groups.   • As students present their opinion pieces, the teacher will walk around and observes students as they present their ideas to one another.

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Appendix L

Sample Lesson Plan: Math

DIMENSION 3

Students will be extending or refining their understanding of: There are numbers and quantities in the real world. There is a relationship between a number symbol and number quantity. A group of objects can have the same amount of things no matter the order they are counted.

Classify- How are things organized?

Lesson: Where Does it Belong?

Related unit targets/goals:
- K.CC.B.4: Understand the relationship between numbers and quantities; connect counting to cardinality.
- K.CC.B.4.B: Understand that the last number name said tells the number of objects counted. The number of objects is the same regardless of their arrangement or the order in which they were counted.
- Share and explain their mathematical ideas with others. (D6)
- That spoken words connect to written numbers, number symbols and number quantities. (K3)

Objective:
- After counting a group of objects, I can match the correct number to the amount I counted.
- I can match a group of objects to the number it equals.
- I can create an item (toy, food, clothes, tool, etc.) to include in the class store.

Overview: After students are introduced to different ways numbers are represented, they will be asked to compare different outside objects and toys played outside. This will be a two day lesson.

Day 1:
- *The teacher says:* Who has been to a store before? What did you buy at the store? Stores are organized so you can find things easily. Most stores have a toys section, clothes section, food/grocery section. Together let's look at three store sections and decide where these items go."
- The teacher will display a graphic organizer. The teacher will review different sections in a store- food, clothes and outside toys. As a whole group activity, students and the teacher will categorize items into appropriate categories.
- *The teacher says:* "Today we will look at these outside toys and figure out how a store would organize them. When I dismiss you to your seat, you will pick up one of these

worksheets from my teacher table. At your seat, cut the pictures, and sort them into groups."
- The teacher displays the Outside Toys Visuals.
- Before students are dismissed, *the teacher says*: "What is the same about these objects? What is different about these objects? These thoughts will help you decide how to organize them."
- When students get their copy, they will cut and independently sort the visuals into groups at their seats.
- The teacher will walk around the room as students organize their visuals into groups. The teacher will answer questions and clarify confusion as needed.
- Once students are done organizing, the teacher will ask them to share and explain how they organized their visuals. The teacher will facilitate as necessary.
- Once the class is done organizing, students will have the opportunity to show how they grouped the outside toys.
- During the whole group discussion, *the teacher will ask:*
  - "Did anyone sort the objects by the number of wheels? How would we organize these objects by the number of wheels?"
  - "What object has the most amount wheels? What object has the least amount of wheels?"
  - "How many objects do you have in each category?"
- *The teacher says:* "Great job organizing today! This is helpful for when we help restock the shelves at the local convenience store. Now you will be given a piece of paper to glue your store plan. These plans will be handed into the manager so they can decide how to best organize the toys."
- Students will be given a blank sheet or paper where they can glue their objects to display their store organizing plan.

Day 2
- To prepare: The teacher will need to cut out one piece of chart paper for each table group. Each table group will work together to create their own store. The teacher will cut enough squares for students to create their own items to place in the store. The blank squares will be placed in a basket.
- The teacher will display chart paper at the front of the class.
- *The teacher says,* "Yesterday, you were able to think about experiences you've had while going to a store. You all created your own store displays for outside toys. Today, each table group will create their own store to display in the classroom. As a group, you will create your own items you want to be sold at your store. I want you all to think, *what is something you want to be sold at the store?* Who can give some ideas?"
- The teacher and students will share out answers of items to be sold at their stores. The teacher will share their own unique items so students understand they can do the same.
- *The teacher says,* "Today you will create your own item to place in your store. This item can be something that your family has at home, or something you think other people in class would like to buy. This item can be clothes you wear, a tool or toy you have at home, a snack or food items you use in a recipe to make at home. First, everyone will brainstorm and create items you want in the store. I will pass out paper for everyone to draw on. Use any colors you want to make this item special and unique."

- The teacher will pass out blank squares for students to draw on.
- ***The teacher says,*** "I have seen all of your items! Your stores will look fabulous. Now that you all have created your items, it is time to design your stores. Before drawing on the paper, as a group, sort your items into sections they belong in. What section of a store does your item belong in? Outside? Books? Clothes? Food? Games? Think about how you organized your items yesterday. As a group, layout your items on your paper. I will walk around to see your ideas. Once your items have been sorted, you can begin drawing your store layout. Then, glue your items in the correct sections. Don't forget to label your store sections so customers know where to go!"
- As table groups, students will work together to design their stores. When completed, the stores will be displayed in the classroom. Once completed, give all students the chance to view the other stores on display.

Assessment:
- The teacher will observe student conversations when asking the questions listed above. The teacher will ask these questions to the whole class and can repeat questions to groups/ individual students as he/she walk around the classroom.
- The teacher will monitor how students organize the visuals of the outside toys.
- The teacher will assess students working together as they create their own stores.

Materials:
- Projector
- Projector screen
- Store graphic organizer (1 for the teacher to use during whole group activity)
- Clothes, Outside, and Food Visuals (1 per student)
- Outside Toys Visuals (1 per student)
- Glue (1 per student)
- Blank paper (1 per student)
- Chart paper (1 per table group)
- Scissors (1 per student)

Store Graphic Organizer
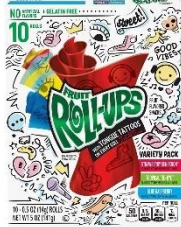
Clothes	Food	Outside

Clothes, Outside and Food Visuals

Outside Toys Visuals

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

The signature of the individual below indicates that the individual has read and approved the project of _____ in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's in Education..

Elizabeth Stolle   4/21/23
_____   _____

Elizabeth Petroelje Stolle, Ph.D., Project Advisor   Date

Accepted and approved on behalf of the   Accepted and approved on behalf of the

Educational Differentiation Program   Teaching & Learning Unit

K Margot   _Ellen Schiller_
_____   _____

Kelly Margot, Ph.D., Graduate Program Director   Ellen Schiller, Ph.D., Unit Head

        4/19/2023   4/20/2023
_____   _____

                Date   Date