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Exploring the Special Education Classroom Context and Experiences Before and During COVID-19

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Exploring the Special Education Classroom Context and Experiences Before and During

COVID-19

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Abstract

During the last two and half years, school districts and special education programs have experienced a situation that turned the world of education upside down: the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the pandemic, teachers, administration, families, and students had to maneuver a new way of education and achieving student success with different learning modalities, such as remote learning. This thesis focuses on a functional life skills classroom and how the context of the classroom changed after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic using autoethnographic methods. This paper was written to display how students in special education and their teachers adapted to a changing educational environment.

To my students and their families – you are amazingly brilliant, resilient, and are capable of so many things.

Acknowledgement

During the time of writing and after, I would like to extend and express my gratitude to my students, their families, and my classroom staff for working so hard during the entirety of this pandemic and for learning how to navigate this new world of special education alongside me. I would also like to say thank you to my parents and my significant other for constantly pushing me to finish this project during two of the hardest years of my teaching career. Finally, I would like to express gratitude towards Dr. John Bickford for teaching me that I could either have a perfect thesis or a completed thesis, and for his guidance and commitment in helping me with this project.

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Preface

I have been teaching for less than 10 years as a special education teacher. Special education, just like general education, is an evolving piece in our world. When the pandemic first hit, it truly was an unknown thing. I figured that I would not see my students for maybe two weeks, let alone for over six months. I have witnessed both regression and growth over the last two years from students, their families, fellow teachers and staff, and especially myself. Growth happened in the form of awareness and working together, and growth also happened professionally. Saying that I teach children with special needs always gets the reaction of someone saying they could never do what I do or that I have a lot of patience. If anything, these past two school years proved to me that I am where I am supposed to be in education. Education is evolving and with the help of teachers and administrators, it can adapt to the students that it serves. This pandemic showed all of us in education a new side to technology, remote learning, in-school learning, and teacher-family relationships.

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Introduction

When a person enters into the world of special education there are many things they need to have knowledge of, such as individualized education plans, legal implications, behavior management, and the range of disabilities and eligibilities. Many people are given the chance to work in different special education classrooms such as self-contained, behavioral and emotional disorder, and life skills. An individual is able to receive the experience of working with different students and grade levels, and in a lot of ways it opens their eyes to truly see how these children and young adults operate and function. Students in special education need adaptability in an ever-evolving world of education to meet their specific needs as they progress in the world. Special education teachers are constantly modifying and accommodating both academic and functional situations for individual students to be able to succeed once they are out of the classroom. Nothing tested these tenacious skills more than encountering the global COVID-19 pandemic which began in March 2020 and is still ongoing.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the context of any classroom, regardless of being special education or not, consisted of structure, routine, and consistency. The classroom studied is an elementary functional life skills class with students who are in second, third, and fourth grades. This particular group of students have been with their classroom teacher since kindergarten, save for two students. One student joined the classroom as a fourth grader during the 2021-2022 school year after being in the essential life skills program at a different school in the school district. The other student, a second grader, joined the classroom in February 2022 after being in an autism classroom at a different school, also in the same school district.

With this class being one of nine classrooms in the functional life skills program in the serving school district, the classroom teacher and paraprofessionals not only implement and teach basic academic skills, but they also teach and work on functional life skills such as sitting with a group, participating in group activities, hygiene skills, and social skills. The students in this class have varying disabilities including developmental delays and cognitive delays. There are currently eight students in this classroom whose disabilities range from cognitive to physical, or a combination. A majority of the students in the class who have cognitive disabilities were either born with the disability or was the result of a trauma. About one-half of the students in the class have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) whereas others have developmental delays or multiple disabilities which give them secondary eligibilities in their Individualized Education Plans (IEP). Due to the individualized nature of each student's disability, the context of the classroom has to be consistent and as adaptable as possible. Consistency is necessary in the event that a student can have a semi-predictable schedule and day; adaptability is necessary in the event that there is a disruption in the schedule and the day can still be completed with as little stress as possible.

Literature Review

Realities of Teaching Special Education Prior to COVID-19

With teaching in a special education classroom, the students and staff both thrive on structure, routine, and consistency. These three principles are what can drive a special education classroom to be a successful environment. Prior to the global pandemic, the context of the studied classroom was based on whole and small group schedules, sensory breaks, the adult to student ratio, communication, and support. In the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year the studied classroom started with twelve students and five staff members, including the classroom

teacher. Due to students' individual needs, some of the adults were assigned as one-to-one paraprofessionals and there is also a classroom aide.

To assist with the structure and routine the classroom used visual schedules, both as a class and for individual students. Visual schedules assist students with understanding what comes next throughout the day. Visuals and pictures can mean so much more to students who are non-verbal or unable to read. These types of schedules can show or communicate the sequence of the day or activities through pictures or icons. They are useful for breaking down tasks to improve on-task behaviors as well as reducing anxiety. These visual icons can also assist students in communication and behavior management as well.

Behavior management in the studied classroom is based on utilizing student self-awareness and recognizing emotions in themselves and in others. Self-management interventions do have potential to address issues with compliance, but there is little research in seeing how effective they are in regular education school settings (Imasaka et al., 2019). With the varying range of disabilities and developmental delays, students in the classroom are not able to recognize their emotions. This also ties in with communication delays; not being able to fully communicate needs and wants can result in frustration and behaviors. Some of the students in the classroom have a designated augmentative and alternate communication (AAC) device or they use a Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) to assist in their communication. In regards to self-awareness, the school speech therapist and classroom staff are able to model for the student "I feel…" and then show them the corresponding icon that can possibly relate to how they are feeling. Self-awareness is not a strong skill amongst individuals with ASD, which has increased the teaching of self-management skills to students with ASD. Self-management has been identified as a critical skill that may enable individuals with ASD to improve their

functioning in a variety of ways (Mruzek et al, 2007), such as increasing positive social interactions and behaviors.

Students with ASD have difficulty in daily living than students without ASD at any particular age or cognitive/developmental level (Hayek et al., 2019). Adaptive behaviors are a collection of skills that are learned by people that enable them to be able to function in their every day lives. Adaptive functioning scores are low, which attributes to a lack of self-management skills. Students' adaptive and social skills can be measured using adaptive behavior scales. Social skills groups are being introduced to students with ASD as an intervention strategy where within a small group, they are being taught appropriate social behaviors. This is done through social stories, speech and language therapy, and role-playing. There has been a trend towards full inclusion for students with ASD to be in the general education classroom, which indicates educators are seeing more children with ASD (Ostmeyer & Scarpa, 2012). As there is improvement in adaptive behaviors, there is hope for an increase in positive behaviors in the classroom. When a student is struggling with self regulation and self awareness which could cause maladaptive behaviors, an intervention can be recommended.

Positive and Negatives Aspects of the Special Education Classroom

The teacher and paraprofessional shortage was not as defined in early years as compared to current teacher shortages nationwide. This included paraprofessional positions, classroom positions, and student support positions (such as a school social worker or resource teacher). Many employees stayed within the realm of education and were eager to learn more and apply their knowledge by working individually with students and with classroom staff. Support by both building and district administration was positive and reliable. This included needing assistance with classroom supplies or tools, technology, professional development, and funding. In the

research setting, special education administration and coordinators were able to visit classrooms, observe, and stay in contact with classroom teachers to provide support if needed, as well as take suggestions to be able to improve the different programs in the district.

When discussing the positive aspects, the negative aspects must also be discussed. Despite there being positive administration support, there also at times was a lack of administration support especially when it came to class sizes and student placement. When teaching special education, a teacher is given a caseload and this caseload at times can be filled to the max or is barely half full. The classroom studied prior to the pandemic could be maxed out at 13 students, and at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, it had 12. With a class this large the students were very diverse in their needs and abilities, which at times can be difficult to manage without appropriate assistance. The large class size typically can be due to numbers of students in the program, but it was not equal across the district. Some life skills classrooms were filled to almost capacity whereas other life skills classrooms (teaching the same grade level) had less than seven students. Another negative impact with large class sizes can be having students placed incorrectly. Based on the district's special education program, there are different types of special education classrooms. At times what may seem like the best placement or least-restrictive environment (LRE) is not the case, and then the sequence of events, observations, and IEP meetings to potentially change placement can be a process that can last almost an entire semester. A foundation in special education is providing students the least-restrictive environment, or the most appropriate integrated setting, which is known as the mainstreaming concept (Stone, 2019).

Parental or guardian involvement is key in education and there typically is both a positive and negative impact. Parental or guardian involvement can include consistent teacher

communication in where the teacher is communicating and involving the parent or guardian in their child's education. In special education, parents and guardians are a vital part of a child's IEP team and at times their strongest educational advocate. Consistency between the home environment and school environment is key, which is where strong communication with the parent or guardian comes into play. If a parent or guardian is not fully involved in their child's education, then the teacher has to work around those barriers. These barriers can include a parent or guardian's work situation, lack of transportation, an inability to connect and talk with the parent or guardian (such as no phone or email), and more. A frustrating aspect with this is that teachers know that they cannot change a home environment; teachers cannot change or expect change to happen unless the parent or guardian accepts and adapts to better themselves or their child's home environment.

Half of the schools in the serving district receive Title I funding. According to the United States Department of Education (2018), "schools in which children from low-income families make up at least 40 percent of enrollment are eligible to use Title I funds to operate schoolwide programs that serve all children…in order to raise the achievement of the lowest-achieving students." (para. 2) The Title I program develops procedures, policies, and is able to provide support for school and district personnel to be able to utilize their Title I funds for best practice. With the Title I program, this school district is able to have a parent educator and family engagement liaison for each Title I building and Title I funding to utilize for instruction and supplemental materials.

The clearest impact – for better or for worse – rests on the students. When a student is eligible to receive special education services, they can receive these services at their home school or they can be placed at a school that houses the particular program they need. The students in

the studied classroom are placed in this particular class based on their educational needs as well as their academic and adaptive scores. A student placement is typically reflective of meeting different criteria which involves academic scores, functional skills and behavior, adaptive behavior scores, and their eligibility. These placements are made during a child's IEP meeting, so the IEP team (which includes a case manager, parent or guardian, classroom teacher, and related services) works together to decide on the appropriate placement for the student. Observations are typically done so that the student can be seen in action, per se, to also assist with placement.

For a student to be placed in the functional life skills program, they qualify under the following categories: intellectual disability, developmental delay, traumatic brain injury, autism, and multiple disabilities (Student Support Services, 2021). At times a student's behavior can impact their daily academic and functional skills, so a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) can be requested to see if a behavior intervention plan (BIP) should be implemented to better assist their placement. When students are struggling with behaviors in the classroom, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports are used. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports is a multi-tiered framework that is used to improve and integrate all forms of data and practices that are affecting students (Center on PBIS, 2021). The three tiers are titled Tier One, Tier Two, and Tier Three, and are known as Multi-tiered Systems of Supports. Tier One is considered primary prevention, which includes school- and classroom-wide systems for all in the building address behaviors in the classroom, teachers and other staff in a building; Tiers Two (secondary) and Three (tertiary) become more specialized towards small group and individual interventions for students with at-risk behaviors, respectfully (Center on PBIS, 2021).

When a student's behaviors continually increase past Tier One and Tier Two they will receive Tier Three intervention, which can include a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA). An FBA is an individualized process for problem-solving relating to student behavior. It is a formal process to ensure a student's behavior plan will center around the reasons why that student is behaving the way they are (Center on PBIS, 2021). FBA's are commonly used to reduce maladaptive behaviors by increasing those positive behaviors as well as problem solving around the behaviors instead of punishing the student. Functional behavioral assessments are created to better assist and implement a behavior intervention plan (BIP), so there is never a need to complete an FBA without a BIP following it.

In summary, COVID-19 made everything more difficult, particularly for teaching and learning in a special education context. When Illinois schools closed on March 13, 2020 it was expected that everyone was to be back in person by the end of the month. Teachers sent home packets and school technology (like iPads and Chromebooks) with enough work to last two weeks. When it was made known that no one would be entering the buildings for the rest of the school year, then it was a struggle and a scramble to connect with parents, fellow teachers, and especially students. For students in special education, they lost the majority of their academic and functional supports as well as a consistent routine and schedule. One of the difficult questions that was asked was would special education services still be required? The United States Department of Education stated:

> If a [local agency] continues to provide educational opportunities to the general student
> population during a school closure [i.e. by providing online learning], the school must
> ensure that students with disabilities also have equal access to the same opportunities,

including the provision of free appropriate public education (FAPE), (as cited in Gavin,

2020, p.1).

This meant that if a school is providing instruction, then special education services would be

provided. If learning is completely stopped for general education students across a school

district, then the district had no obligation to provide IEP services (Gavin, 2020).

For the students in the life skills classroom, they need routine and structure provided for

them to succeed. Routine and structure in the classroom is different than routine and structure at

home and the students in the studied classroom know that difference. The teacher-researcher,

along with many other special education teachers, did not know how she was going to be able to

teach children with who are nonverbal, with multiple disabilities and developmental delays,

without in-person instruction. It was a complete endeavor into the unknown and education felt

interrupted.

As the first major part of quarantine passed, the students and teacher in the studied

classroom struggled together in maintaining relationships and monitoring student goals and

achievement. Families struggled due to lack of wireless internet, lack of technology knowledge,

and struggling to assist their children in their education. These were new barriers on top of

barriers that were already in place. During this time teachers were not only learning how to teach

remotely and utilize technology to best serve their students, they were also teaching parents how

to use technology and different apps. Attendance and participation was low during this time.

Parents had different experiences during this time; in an international context, students in the

United Kingdom had low attendance but schools were not sure if it was due to socioeconomic

status or the severity of a child's special needs (Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020). Districts

were forced to make decisions about how instruction was to be structured and delivered without

much guidance (Goldman et al., 2021). The new theme in education at this point was overcome and adapt; overcome new obstacles every day and adapt to what has changed.

Conclusion

The beginning of the 2020-2021 school year once again brought new challenges. Due to the school district being remote, all students with IEP's now had Individualized Remote Learning Plans (IRLP's). The IRLP's were now in place of a student's IEP. With the student being at home, they could not be provided full services and support. The IRLP focuses on a main IEP goal statement, the type of service that is being provided, how the instruction will be delivered, the amount and frequency of the service, and the provider. The teacher-researcher would provide instruction for IEP goals related to math, reading, and writing. Based on other services an individual student receives (such as vision, occupational therapy, etc.) they would also create and serve the student based on their goal. In the IRLP there are natural and parental supports noted, as well as minutes being adjusted if the district went into a blended or hybrid learning format. Due to the global pandemic and schools being shut down, all students with an IEP now have an IRLP that will be updated with every annual IEP in the event that there is another district shutdown.

The 2020-2021 school year started remote, which meant implementing the IRLP's, creating and recreating schedules, working with other service providers, meeting new students and families, all through a screen. Students later came back to the classroom in the middle of the year with classroom expectations being the same, but different. Classroom management was different due to students participating in remote learning at home and participating in hybrid or *hyflex* learning both at home and at school. Despite that the COVID-19 pandemic is still

ongoing, teachers and students in special education are continuing what they have always done: overcoming and adapting.

The methods used in this paper aligned with the following research question: how has the structure and context of a special education classroom changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic? By exploring the experiences of students and teachers in special education, this study will feature the truly lived learning experiences of students and a teacher during the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. The teacher and students had to transition multiple times from remote learning to either in-person or a hybrid method of learning from March of 2020 to this current time. This included working more in-depth with parents and families as well as finding new ways to collaborate with support service staff.

Methods

This study used autoethnography, a qualitative research method. After considering various theoretical frameworks (Dull, 2021; Poewandari, 2021), I selected Custer's (2021) approach as optics for my research inquiry. Custer's (2021) element of a transformative qualitative research method seemed particularly aligned to my study and informed my analysis of the data. I gathered and studied data from eight students in this classroom over the last two and a half school years. With approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in place, I was able to utilize the data to support my findings. The data used includes curriculum academic benchmarks, IEP present and functional levels of performance, staff and family interviews, and observations. These data sources have been collected and updated continuously since the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year through the time of this writing to determine student progress or regression and are either updated at the beginning of every school year, two to three times throughout the school year, or annually based on an individual student's IEP date. The focus of the study, however, is not quantitative data. The data and observations, instead, are used to illustrate *what happens* when students and teachers are thrust into pandemic-shaped teaching and learning environments. This study's focus is on the lived experiences of learners with special needs and educators throughout the COVID-19 context.

Participants

The participants in this study consist of eight students in second, third, and fourth grade in my functional life skills special education classroom. The group consists of six male students and two female students. All eight students have an IEP; three students have a primary eligibility of autism, one student has a primary disability of a traumatic brain injury and a secondary eligibility of a visual impairment, one student has a primary eligibility of multiple disabilities

and a second eligibility of a visual impairment, and three students have a primary eligibility of an intellectual disability. All of the students receive speech therapy services, seven students receive occupational therapy services, two students receive vision services, physical therapy, and nursing services, and one student receives hearing services based on their IEP and their primary eligibility. Four of the students are on medication for a diagnosis of ADHD. These students receive free-and-reduced breakfast and lunch at school; all but one student live in a single parent household.

Setting

The study took place in a grades two, three, and four functional life skills special education classroom in an elementary school in an urban school district in central Illinois. The majority of the students in this school district live at or below the poverty line, requiring two-thirds of the schools to receive Title I funding. This elementary school houses grades kindergarten through fifth grade and has two functional life skills classrooms for grades three through five. The school is small with less than 170 students for the 2021-2022 school year. According to the 2021 school report card, the school is 37% White, 48% Black, 1.7% Hispanic, 0% Asian, and 0.6% American Indian (Illinois Report Card, 2021). The school is a Title I school, meaning they receive federal funding due to the majority of their students being from low-income homes.

Data Sources and Research Materials

Data for this study was collected through multiple sources over a two year period. It was collected based on classroom and school staff and parent interviews, synchronous journaling both during and after interactions with students, classroom academic curriculum benchmarks, IEP present and functional levels of performance. These data sources are utilized between one

and three times a year. These data provide insight into students' responses to and experiences with both academic and social tasks. The academic curriculum being used, News2You and Unique Learning Systems, is data-driven and engages students and teachers to collaborate so that students are able to gain an independent path.

The News2You and Unique Learning Systems is a curriculum specifically designed for students with special needs. It is a curriculum that is data-driven and engages students and teachers to collaborate so that students are able to gain an independent path. Unique Learning Systems give teachers a space to create profiles for each student. These profiles include observational profiles (like the K-12 Student Learning profile and the Self-Help Skills profile), tracked skills, pre- and post-checkpoints for the monthly topics, and benchmarks.

The K-12 Student Learning Profile is completed by the classroom teacher at the beginning of the school year and focuses on the individual student's access and participation as well as their learning style. If need be, the learning profile can be updated during the school year. It is an observational profile, where the rating is based on current knowledge of the student. The purpose of this profile offers suggested levels of differentiation that are incorporated into instructional activities, providing a profile of an individual student's current abilities and skills related to standards-based tasks, assisting IEP goals, identifying present levels of performance in relation to standards-based learning, and more (Unique Learning Systems, 2013). This learning profile was able to show me student progress and regression in their learning styles, especially before the pandemic and during. Being at home greatly affected some students' learning styles and their participation level.

There are two parts to the K-12 Learning Profile: access and participation, and academic skills. The access and participation portion looks at physical access, both gross and fine motor

skills, vision, hearing, communication, sensory integration, and social and behavior skills (Unique Learning Systems, 2013). The academic skill area is cross-referenced with common-core state standards. Whoever is completing the profile, whether the classroom teacher or a team, is given a prompt and has to choose the description that best describes the student's highest level of current abilities.

The Self-Help Profile is an optional observational profile that is a part of an individual student's profile. Students who have significant cognitive disabilities demonstrate delays in self-help and functional skills; these are addressed in IEPs. With the Self-Help profile, multiple descriptors may be chosen as a response to the prompt sentence. The skills focused on include eating and feeding, toileting and using the restroom, dressing, and grooming (Unique Learning Systems, 2013). There is a prompting guide to follow when filling out the Self-Help Profile: minimal, moderate, full, and no response. Just like the K-12 Learning profile, the Self-Help Profile can also be updated during the middle of the school year if need be.

Family and staff interviews tie in together with IEP present and functional levels of performance. The present levels of performance focus on the individual student's present academic levels of performance. When these are written, the teacher looks at how the student functions academically and compares them to the previous year. IEPs are completed annually, and a full re-evaluation of skills is completed by the full IEP team every three years. A re-evaluation includes assessments and rating scales completed by the school social worker, school psychologist, a health history completed by either the social worker or school nurse, and the classroom teacher. The functional levels of performance are focused on an individual student's functional skills, which is where parent and staff interviews can coincide. Again, these pieces of

data are collected normally and are used to highlight students' responses to classroom tasks for research purposes.

Procedures of Data Collection

The time frame of this study took place over two and a half school years: the 2019-2020 school year, the 2020-2021 school year, and the first semester of the current 2021-2022 school year. This time frame is before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States of America. During these school years, students were in school in-person full-time, a hybrid of remote and in-person learning, or were remote learning full-time.

The K-12 Student Learning Profiles and the Self-Help Profiles were completed in August of 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 by the classroom teacher. The academic benchmarks were completed three times during each school year: the beginning of the school year, at the beginning of second semester, and the end of the school year. They are completed one-on-one with each student. The IEP data was taken over the course of each school year, and the parent and staff interviews were collected throughout each school year from conversations and observations. Regarding interviewing parents and staff, this portion of data collection was taken from notes taken during parent contact, such as a phone call or email, as well as parental education concerns. These concerns are stated in a student's IEP as well. These will all be utilized and compared to see if there are differences in contact regarding behavior and academics both at home and at school.

Students' overall progress and data will be compared from year to year when the teacher-researcher uses the data benchmarks and IEP goal progress from the Unique Learning System curriculum. The IEP goals can either change based on student progress or they will remain the

same with some modifications if the student's data proves to be inconsistent or no progress is made.

I will be using these resources to capture the lived experience of children and adults in my classroom during an ordinary one-month period. By providing this (figurative) peephole into the classroom, the teacher-researcher intends to highlight students' and teachers' struggles and successes as well as potential problems and possible pathways forward as the pandemic slows and a new reality emerges. The hope is to bring attention to this (changing) context from teachers and administrators, but also parents, politicians, and citizens.

Students' overall progress and data will be compared from year to year when I use the curriculum benchmarks from the Unique Learning System curriculum as well as the student profiles (see Appendixes A and B), and past and present IEP present levels in academic and functional performance (see Appendix C). The data will be compared by looking at if students have regressed in academic skills as well as social skills and general behavior. These will include IEP testing and classroom observations. The IEP goals can either change based on student progress or they will remain the same with some modifications if the student's data proves to be inconsistent or no progress is made. Classroom behavior will be observed daily (see Appendix D) utilizing an observation chart throughout the school day.

Findings

The selected methods shaped this study and its findings. The findings originate from the various measures detailed above. I have organized and examine the key findings next. The findings focus on the impact of instructional delivery and the dynamics between teacher, students, and families.

Impact of Delivery Modes

For the first stages of the pandemic and quarantine (March 2020 – June of 2020), students and teachers went full remote. Teachers and students did not have experience or the knowledge of teaching and working remotely. This was a new instructional context with limited focus in research and practice prior to the pandemic (Goldman et al., 2021). The biggest factor included effectively utilizing technology and working with families to make this remote learning effective. This was difficult in itself due to the fact that teachers could not go into the homes of students to work with families. The switch to remote learning also highlighted the discrepancy in students' and families access to support and resources (Goldman et al., 2021), especially those students who received services for special education

Educators' Responses

As the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic increased during the summer of 2020 and again in November of 2020, so did the usage of technology to deliver instruction. At the end of the 2019-2020 school year, I observed fellow teachers and staff members that were fully into helping each other, learning new aspects of technology, and how they could help and maintain their relationships with their students, including myself. The 2020-2021 school gave parents and teachers the opportunity to choose whether to be fully remote, hybrid, or *hyflex*. The beginning of this school year was fully remote, with both remote and *hyflex* teachers given the choice to

teach from their classroom. Special education instruction and services were going to have to rely on the parents and guardians of their students when it came to engaging their children in learning activities, implementation of interventions, as well as supervision during instruction (Steed et al, 2021). In other words, the parent or adult that would be at home with the student during remote learning would be the person fully implementing the lesson or task. This meant assisting with hand over hand work, redirecting students with visual or physical prompts, and having to facilitate structured breaks or bring the student back to their learning area. This frustrated many parents because they "were aware that their child needed help, but did not know it was that much," (Parent Contact Form, 2020). Along with teaching and providing instruction for students, the teacher's role also seemed to shift to provide instructional coaching for the families as well (Steed et al, 2021).

   The school week consisted of one asynchronous day – meaning that there was no teacher instruction, and four days of synchronous learning. I at first were hesitant because I did not know what it meant to be asynchronous versus synchronous. There were misunderstandings as well when it came to the instructional hours for synchronous days. Teachers had to teach for five hours; did this mean they were to be on Zoom for a continual five hours, or did they have to break up their instructional time into five hours? I as a special education teacher felt that five continual hours of zoom was absolutely impossible for students with developmental delays, so I had to create schedules that would meet IRLP minutes and instructional time. The days were also shortened as well (the regular school day is 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.); students in regular education were in school from 9:00 a.m. until 2:30 p.m., and the students in the functional life skills program had a shortened day starting at 9:30 a.m. and ending at 1:30 p.m.

I chose to be hybrid or *hyflex*, meaning that I would be teaching both my hybrid and remote students at the same time when the hybrid students were in the building. This consisted of a lot of different schedules and making it consistent for all students, parents, and therapists. The schedules I created had to merge with parent work schedules, therapist scheduling, as well as making sure I met the required instructional time and IEP minutes for each week based in each student's individualized remote learning plan. This schedule alone changed three to four times during the 2020-2021 school year. These multiple schedule changes alone were not consistent for the students in the functional life skills classroom nor their families. School administration and teachers had difficulty when it came to communicating district guidelines and news effectively to parents and families. It was frustrating at times due to the health guidelines changing or the communication from the district office not coming quick enough for the families, which then led to frustration towards teachers and school administration. Communication was often a frustrating subject for me as the teacher. There were parents who were hard to contact due to either lack of a phone or email address, or who were not home when I would attempt a home visit. To help with tracking and observations, I documented all parent contact and home visits, especially if I was having difficulty with contacting a family. One family in particular I only spoke on the phone with twice during the first semester and the parents never responded to emails, Remind app messages, or home visits (when allowed). There were also families who constantly contacted me, such as messaging or emailing before and after school and were expecting me to answer them every single time. Boundaries were not being respected which was another source of frustration.

I spent a majority of the asynchronous school days preparing social stories, collaborating with fellow life skills teachers, and working with my classroom staff to prepare the classroom and schedule for the students' eventual return to the classroom. Social stories are a learning tool

that is created to support the exchange of information between parents, students, and professionals (Carol Gray Social Stories, 2015). The social stories assisted with showing students why they were learning from home, why people were wearing masks, and why they had to wear masks. During Zoom sessions, I would take students on tours of the school so they could see what was different, such as social distancing stickers on the floor, visuals with the proper way to wash hands, how the classroom was set up differently, and that all people in the school building were wearing masks. I hoped that seeing this early on would assist in the transition of students coming back to the classroom.

Student Responses

At the time of registration for the 2020-2021 school year, parents were given the option to have their student registered as either fully remote or hybrid for the first semester. Of the twelve students in my class for this school year, six students were registered as hybrid and six students were registered as remote. Parents were given the option to change their child's learning status at the beginning of the second semester. One family did change their child from a remote learner to a hybrid learner for the second semester, bringing the total to seven students as hybrid learners. The functional life skills classroom has maximum of 13 students, so having this number of students was familiar to me, who in previous years had between six and 13 students in my class.

If a student was fully remote, they would not come to the building unless it was to pick up work or for testing. Some families chose this option for their child because they knew that their child would have difficulties with the safety measures in place, such as wearing a mask properly. Students who were fully remote would have their instruction would be delivered fully online with the video-conferencing app Zoom, the interactive learning platform and app Seesaw,

and hand-delivered paper and pencil activities. Students who were fully remote in my class completed three whole group Zoom sessions a day and two individual zooms twice a week, along with assignments posted on Seesaw. For all students, they required adult supervision and assistance for their Zoom sessions, as well as assistance for Seesaw assignments. Zoom sessions were difficult for the students at home. The students needed adult supervision and redirection to focus. In a 20 minute Zoom session, I observed one student leave their learning area and iPad 10 times and required adult redirection from their parent and myself. I also recorded another remote student display physical aggression towards their parent and their iPad between five and seven times during fifteen 20-minute Zoom sessions. This particular student would not respond to verbal or visual prompts from their parent or myself. Some students were able to work towards being independent for their Zoom sessions, which was a great triumph for me as the teacher and the family. I observed a student over 16 Zoom sessions progress from needing adult supervision and a minimum of five to eight verbal prompts to sit and stay focused to being able to login to their Zoom session by themselves and complete an entire 20 minute Zoom session with less than two verbal prompts and no parent supervision or redirection. Some families who chose remote learning wanted to focus on paper and pencil tasks due to the aspect of using technology was extremely overwhelming. The paper and pencil work was collected every Monday and they were given a new set of work to complete. This was for the full school year for students who were fully remote. Hybrid learners could also choose this option as well for when they were learning from home. The paper and pencil work was difficult for me to use as instructional data for my students because I was not sure of the level of independence in completing the tasks. It was evident when a student did not complete the task by themselves, meaning an adult completed the work for the student instead of having them attempt independently or with moderate assistance.

In the beginning stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, school attendance became participation based or who the teacher was able to make daily contact with. With school in person from August 2019 to March 2020 the average class attendance for the year was over 60% for the year. During the 2020-2021 school year with the students being either fully remote or hybrid learners, the average class attendance for the year was 49%. Now with all students being in person for the 2021-2022 school year, the average class attendance is 87% (Student Attendance Report, 2022). This was a remarkable change in attendance from year to year and teachers had to adjust accordingly.

Family Responses

Families were also given the opportunity to have their children be hybrid learners. Hybrid learning included a schedule of both being in the building and learning from home. This schedule included being in the school building two days a week and the other three days hybrid learners would be learning remotely. To be a hybrid learner, students had to successfully be able to wear a mask in the building and classroom other than while eating or drinking. Wearing a mask the appropriate way meant wearing the ear pieces over their ears and the mask over their nose. Parents of students in my class who chose for their child to learn remotely felt that a major reason was due to having to wear masks. Sensory issues made wearing a mask difficult for students with autism and other disorders, and parents felt that it would be easier for their child to learn from home. Gaiter masks were not approved to wear per the school district, which some students were able to wear. With students having to wear masks, this did cause tension between parents and the school district.

Teachers and school administration had difficulty when it came to communicating the guidelines between parents and the district administration. It was difficult to ensure they were

communicating the appropriate and correct information so that there would not be any confusion. Schools and classrooms were provided with visuals of how to wear a mask appropriately. The district placed disciplinary measures in place if students continually chose to not wear their masks appropriately. If a student could not wear a mask the appropriate way, then they could not be in the building or they need to have a doctor's note stating a medical reason as to why they could not wear a mask. Those students could wear face shields instead of a mask. Most parents chose the hybrid option for their child in the teacher-researcher's classroom because they wanted their child in the classroom learning in person. The parents understood that if their child could not wear a mask appropriately, there was the possibility of their child being sent home from school or it be recommended by the IEP team the child be switched to remote learning.

One student could not medically be in school even though their parent wanted them to be for the 2021-2022 school year; this caused conflict between IEP team and parent. The team felt that they could not provide a safe enough plan for this student, especially since the student could not wear a mask for medical reasons. This student was placed in the functional life skills with their primary eligibility being multiple disabilities. This student had missed a lot of school in the past due to medical reasons; prior to the pandemic, this student had an attendance rate of 79.9% for the 2019-2020 school year (Student Attendance Report, 2020). During remote learning, this student had an attendance rate of 61.3% (Student Attendance Report, 2021). The student was able to be in school for the following school year with different guidelines in place, which also increased their attendance to 70.2% (Student Attendance Report, 2022).

Manifestations on Pandemic Pedagogy

The pandemic did push me to examine how I communicated and maintained relationships with families. The students in my class had been students in my classroom for more than three

years. This caused an already established relationship with one family to go deeper and flourish, and another established relationship with a family to almost cease. Constant communication and maintaining the relationship with parents helped not only students and their families thrive, but it has helped me to continue to reach out to parents and show them that they are a key in their child's education.

Both students have been in my class as students since kindergarten and are now fourth graders in the classroom for the 2021-2022 school year). Both students dealt with traumatic family events right before the pandemic, and both students have developed differently both behaviorally and social-emotionally in the last two years. Their families each chose different learning modalities for the 2020-2021 school year, with both students returning to in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year. Both students were of the same socioeconomic status and came from single-parent households. Due to the school being a Title I school, they both received free breakfast and lunch from the district.

Harvey (pseudonym) and his family had a well-established parent and teacher relationship with the teacher-researcher prior to the pandemic. This student was fully remote for the 2020-2021 school year and returned for in-person learning. While doing remote learning, this student did very well depending on which adult was working with him. He did need adult supervision so that he would not leave his iPad or exit out of the Zoom. He was very responsive to many of the cause and effect activities and was able to complete his assignments on Zoom or Seesaw with less than 10 verbal or visual cues during a 20 minute Zoom session. In coming back to school in person, Harvey had gained a lot of independent skills while at home. He was opening food and drink containers with minimal assistance whereas before the pandemic he needed full hand-over-hand assistance, putting on his coat independently and almost being able

to engage his zipper on his jacket, and use the restroom independently. He has continued on to also start assignments and individual tasks independently in the classroom with minimal maladaptive behaviors or work avoidance behaviors. His prior behaviors included screaming, hitting himself, and hitting others. Remote learning for Harvey had a positive outcome in the fact that he gained independence in a lot of functional skills and it carried over to the classroom.

Felicia and her family also had a well-established family and teacher relationship with me prior to the pandemic. In October 2019, Felicia had to be removed from her home for safety reasons. I was worried that the teacher and family relationship would suffer due to the situation, but it instead continued on with her guardian. Felicia was placed back in her home in March 2020, which again caused concern due to have very little contact with her parent during the home removal and with school closing. Felicia's parent chose for her to be a hybrid learner for the 2020-2021 school year. Her parent worked with Felicia during remote learning to the point where Felicia was able to utilize her iPad independently and sit with minimal adult assistance or redirection for the duration of a 20 minute Zoom session. This independence continued throughout the rest of the school year. This showed tremendous structure at home and extreme tenacity on both Felicia and her parent's part.

In coming back to school in person for the 2021-2022 school year, Felicia showed progress in her academic skills, but her social and functional skills displayed major regression. Felicia began reacting negatively to staff members after being back in school for a semester. These behaviors included dropping to the floor, rolling around, and yelling and kicking objects or people. These behaviors increase throughout the first semester, with observations and recording the behaviors happening one or two times within a half hour of instruction, and then increasing four to five times within a half hour. She has also displayed frequent self-injurious

behaviors such as biting her arms and hands, and hitting herself in the head, face, and on her legs. These self-injurious behaviors were observed happening between one and three times a day during the school day, and has now increased to between five and seven times a school day. It has been documented that Felicia has had to be removed from the classroom for her safety and at times for others' safety at least two times a week due to her behaviors increasing. I have been unsure whether these behaviors were repressed from being removed from her parent's care (as well as prior trauma) or if they are attention-seeking behaviors. I have attempted to stay in constant contact with Felicia's parent regarding behavior concerns and wanting to help, and her parent has become so overwhelmed that they will barely respond to phone calls or emails. Prior to the 2021-2022 school year, I had it documented that Felicia's parent would respond to messages and emails between three and four times a week; this has now dropped to once a week or less. It has gotten to the point that the parent has had an educational advocate attend meetings for Felicia instead of herself.

Limitations

There were limitations to acknowledge during this time. The data collected was based on a single classroom, meaning there is no way to gauge how other special education classrooms in the district fared during this time. With the COVID-19 restrictions in place in the district, visiting other buildings, teachers, and classrooms was out of the question. The number of students in the life skills classroom is also a smaller sample compared to general education classrooms, which can have between 20 and 29 students, on average. The students in my class (like myself) did not have the experience or knowledge of remote instruction, so there was no prior data or research to support the cause and reason for remote learning and instruction.

Discussion

The lived experiences of the children and adult in the classroom illustrate important patterns for the learners, the teachers, and the leaders of school. There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic caused many changes in academia, but it was rather pronounced in special education. School and classroom structure can provide a sense of security and routine for students that they do not have at home. There is also a sense of structure and routine for the teachers as well. To have that completely disrupted and then have to rebuild an entire routine based off the unknown is a daunting task.

Despite numerous negative things surrounding the pandemic, there were changes that were positive for students. Students were, in a sense, had to become more independent. While being at home, students had to maneuver through technology and being home without their classmates and teacher. For some, their Self-Help profile scores through the Unique Learning System increased between .5 and 1.0 points (Unique Learning Systems, 2021). Students were able to carry over their independent functional skills from home over to the classroom when school began for the 2021-2022 school year. Social distancing was a way to also increase students' social awareness. It helped them to learn the boundaries of respecting others as well as learning about their own personal space and boundaries. That at times is a difficult task for students with special needs to understand, so knowing that if they stood to close to someone or if someone stood too close to them they were able to utilize communication and social skills to ask someone to not be so close to them. These are positive changes that can assist students in their lives at school, home, and work. A majority of parents also became more involved with their students and their education. Parents were able to see how their children work, how they think,

and how they function. They were also able to have a better understanding of their child's IEP and their present levels of functional and academic performance.

Not being in the classroom was one of the biggest impacts on students in the functional life skills classroom. It was difficult for students to differentiate that even though they were at home during remote learning, they still had to do school and complete school activities. It was difficult for the parents to create that structure and differentiation for their children. Being out of the classroom was meant for safety, but in a sense it was a detriment to students academically and socially.

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Appendix A – Unique Learning Systems Self-Help Profile

Self-Help Results

Eating/Feeding Skills

--- If the student is engaged in eating or feeding activities, he or she is most likely to...

- Independently obtain food.
- independently use age-appropriate eating and drinking utensils.
- require minimal prompts and assistance to use eating and drinking utensils.
- require minimal prompts and assistance to select appropriate nutritional choices and portions.
- require minimal prompts and assistance for basic mealtime manners (e.g., use of napkin).

Toileting/Restroom Skills

--- If the student is engaged in toileting or restroom activities, he or she is most likely to...

- recognize need to use the restroom and makes appropriate requests.
- independently attend to toilet flushing, hand washing and other related skills in the restroom.
- require supervision and/or supervised assistance when in the restroom.

Dressing Skills

--- If the student is engaged in dressing activities, he or she is most likely to...

- require minimal prompts and assistance to put on most clothing items.
- require minimal prompts and assistance to zip, button and/or tie clothing items.

Grooming Skills

--- If the student is engaged in personal grooming activities, he or she is most likely to...

- require minimal prompts and assistance to complete necessary steps for daily brushing of teeth.
- require minimal prompts and assistance to care for own bathing and hair care.
- require a checklist or symbol support to follow steps for hand washing, tooth brushing and other grooming processes.

Score	1.42
Date Started	Jan 13, 2021
Last Updated	Jan 13, 2021
Is Completed	Yes
Level	Participation

Appendix B – Unique Learning Systems K-12 Student Learning Profile

Reading	1	Participation
Descriptor / Suggested Strategies		

Decoding

[Tracking Skill]

- show beginning interest in sounds and letters within words.
- Present repeated readings of stories with rhyme and rimes. Build on purposeful student responses that show engagement.

Word Recognition

[Tracking Skill]

- recognize basic sight words when associated with a graphic symbol.
- Provide reading materials with text matched to a symbol across a variety of instructional activities. Ask student to read or point to selected words.

Vocabulary

[Tracking Skill]

- select a picture within the context of a story or instructional activity.
- Present pictures with a question related to a story read. Build on consistent response modes that indicate a specific choice (errorless) within reading activities.

Writing	1	Participation
Descriptor / Suggested Strategies		

Writing Process

[Track Skill]

- complete open-ended sentences and simple templates with pictures and words to complete a writing format.
- Provide a variety of writing opportunities with supporting starter questions or templates that include symbol/picture cues. May include pre-printed words and/or pictures for completing sentences.

Writing Conventions - Spelling

[Track Skill]

- contribute to a writing/spelling task by selecting letters, words or pictures.
- Model the writing process with continued verbalization of the letters and words being written. Watch for student engagement.

Writing Conventions - Grammar

[Track Skill]

- inconsistently shows a response to restate a prepared grammar form.
- Build on consistence response modes in errorless choice-making activities to create simple sentences.

Appendix C – Student IEP Present Levels of Performance (2021-2022 school year)

STUDENT STRENGTHS:

_____ is always happy to work with the Teacher for the Visually Impaired. She tries her best during their sessions.

Special Education Teacher: _____ is an energetic and happy girl. She loves coming to school and has created wonderful relationships with her peers and classroom staff. She loves to joke and be the center of attention. _____ is very independent and fierce.

PARENTAL EDUCATIONAL CONCERNS/INPUT:

Mom has expressed concerns that _____ behaviors could be due to her to being "too comfortable" and so used to the classroom routine after being with _____ for many years.

HEALTH INFORMATION/CONCERNS:

_____ had her g-tube removed during the first semester. She has maintained her weight since the removal.

STUDENT'S PRESENT LEVEL OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT (Include strengths and areas needing improvement):

Special Education Teacher: _____ is able to match pictures of familiar and unfamiliar objects with 83% mastery. She at times needs from a field of two instead of three to prompt scanning. She is able to match rhyming words with visuals with 94% mastery (again at times she needs from a field of two instead of a field of 3-4). _____ is able to recognize her first name with 94% accuracy, and can label the letters in her first name with 94% mastery. She is labeling the letters in her last name between 50-73% accuracy and can recognize her last name with 60% accuracy. She recognizes that it starts with the letters "___". _____ can match letters with 94% mastery, but struggles with letter recognition with less than 60% accuracy - I believe this is mostly due to her vision impairment. She is able to match uppercase letters with 83% accuracy and she can match lowercase letters with 88% accuracy. _____ can answer reading comprehension with visual supports with 90% accuracy. At times she needs verbal supports and the prompt to "stop and scan" for comprehension activities. _____ struggles to look for and locate basic sight words without any kind of support. She needs prompts to look for the beginning letter. She can trace her first name with moderate hand-over-hand assistance, but if you tell her to write her name independently or trace independently, she will focus but struggles to make letter formations. _____ can rote count to 14 without assistance and needs verbal cues to continue counting up to 20. _____ can count with 1:1 correspondence with up to 10 objects with some verbal cues and is able to answer correctly when asked how many she counted. _____ does well using manipulatives with all math activities and is able to complete most math tasks without them. _____ can recognize and label 10/10 basic colors and 5/8 basic shapes. _____ will display work avoidance or refusal behaviors when she is corrected during a lesson or task. These behaviors include putting her head down, crossing her arms, pushing her papers and slant board away, hitting the table, and saying "me mad, go away". These behaviors started in the fall.

Present Levels Of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance

Special Education Teacher: _____ is regularly using the toilet and letting staff know when she needs to use the restroom. After her g-tube removal, _____ has improved with her eating and purposefully choosing what she wants to eat during breakfast and lunch. She has a wonderful appetite and it has expanded at school. _____ is able to open her milk carton with minimal assistance and can open most food containers independently. She can feed herself with a spoon/fork independently. _____ has a very pleasant demeanor and is extremely happy to come to school. She enjoys the routine and has created positive relationships with students and staff at Laketown. In the last few months, _____ has displayed some concerning behaviors. These behaviors include putting her head down, crossing her arms, pushing her papers and slant board away, hitting the table, and saying "me mad, go away". _____ at times has hit herself in the leg when she was been redirected and said to staff "Ow, you hit me!" or "Ow, you kick me!". _____ has needed a lot of redirection in the classroom to listen the first time as well as in individual therapies. Due to her behaviors increasing, _____ was placed on a visual check-in/check-out with her classroom teacher at the end of November 2021. Her current percentage is at 84%. _____ does take into account when she has done something wrong, but she needs coaxing and time to process when she needs to apologize; she will laugh and think it is funny. _____ has gotten better with using her cane in the school building but needs redirection to keep her cane down and to focus. _____ is verbal and is able to advocate for herself through most situations in the classroom and school. She has great imaginative play skills. _____ will play with other students, but most times does prefer to play by herself. She loves coloring and playing with play-doh or therapy putty. _____ wears AFO's and a splint on her right wrist.

Appendix C (continued) - Student IEP Present Levels of Performance (2020-2021 and

2019-2020 school year)

Student's Strengths

[redacted]s a beautiful little girl with a very independent spirit. She loves talking with adults, imaginative play, and being outside. [redacted] has great relationships with all school staff and her peers.

Parental Educational Concerns/Input

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, [redacted] was placed back in her mother's care and has done very well. Mom is pleased with her progress in school.

Student's Present Level of Academic Achievement (Include strengths and areas needing improvement)

[redacted] can match pictures with 84% mastery, but needs a prompt to look and scan all choices she is presented with. [redacted] is able to recognize her name in the classroom and hallway with some visual cues to keep her on task. She is able to match letters with 94% accuracy, which is an increase in progress over the year. [redacted] still struggles with both upper- and lowercase letter identification between 67% and 88% accuracy. This could be due to her visual impairment, or [redacted] will give you the answer she thinks the teacher is requesting. [redacted] is consistently able to recognize and locate the basic core vocabulary words "me", "I", "go", "stop", and "play" when in a sentence. She needs visual cues to stop and look. [redacted] distraction level has gone down since last year. She is able to get items she needs for activities and start a task independently with few prompts. She does need redirection when she gets over-excited. [redacted] is able to trace her name with adapted worksheets, but needs visual and verbal cues to independently write her name. [redacted] can match numbers with 88% mastery and can match a numeral to a given quantity with 80% accuracy. Her emerging math skills are at 83% mastery. [redacted] can rote count to 20 independently. [redacted] shape knowledge has increase with 83% mastery over the last year. She is able to match shapes to objects with 88% accuracy and well as matching and labeling shapes with 90% accuracy. [redacted] struggles with different concepts, [redacted] has maintained progress over the last year.

[redacted] has made wonderful consistent progress during remote learning and the hybrid model. She always participates in her Zoom calls, both individual and group.

Student's Present Level of Functional Performance (Include strengths and areas needing improvement)

[redacted] has started using the toilet and letting staff know when she needs to use the restroom. This is still at times inconsistent, but she has made progress. [redacted] is tube-fed twice a day and also receives 8 ounces of water with Miralax once a day. This schedule was put into place last school year, with the Miralax being added after a GI visit in November. [redacted] eats breakfast, morning snack, lunch, and an afternoon snack at school. She gets very distracted with the main meals and at times has to sit by herself or with an adult so she can focus on eating. She will just grab food instead of purposefully looking and making a choice. If [redacted] is given an amount of food where she can count the pieces, she will typically finish between 80%-100% of her food. [redacted] needs assistance with opening her milk carton and some food containers. She can feed herself, but I feel she would do much better with adaptive silverware so she is able to distinguish her silverware against the tray as well as being able to get more food in her mouth. At times she will resort to using her hands to feed herself, which we have been working on. [redacted] has a very pleasant demeanor and is extremely happy to come to school. She enjoys the routine and has created positive relationships with students and staff at [redacted]. At times [redacted] will become defiant with staff, but she has rarely displayed the self-injurious behaviors that she has shown at home. [redacted] does take into account when she has done something wrong, but she needs coaxing and time to process when she needs to apologize. [redacted] still will gallop or walk with her heels up, so she needs reminders throughout the day to walk with her heels down. We have also been working with [redacted] on personal space when talking with adults or peers, along with walking in the hallway. [redacted] is verbal and is able to advocate for herself through most situations in the classroom and school.

Appendix D – 2021-2022 Classroom Setup and Key
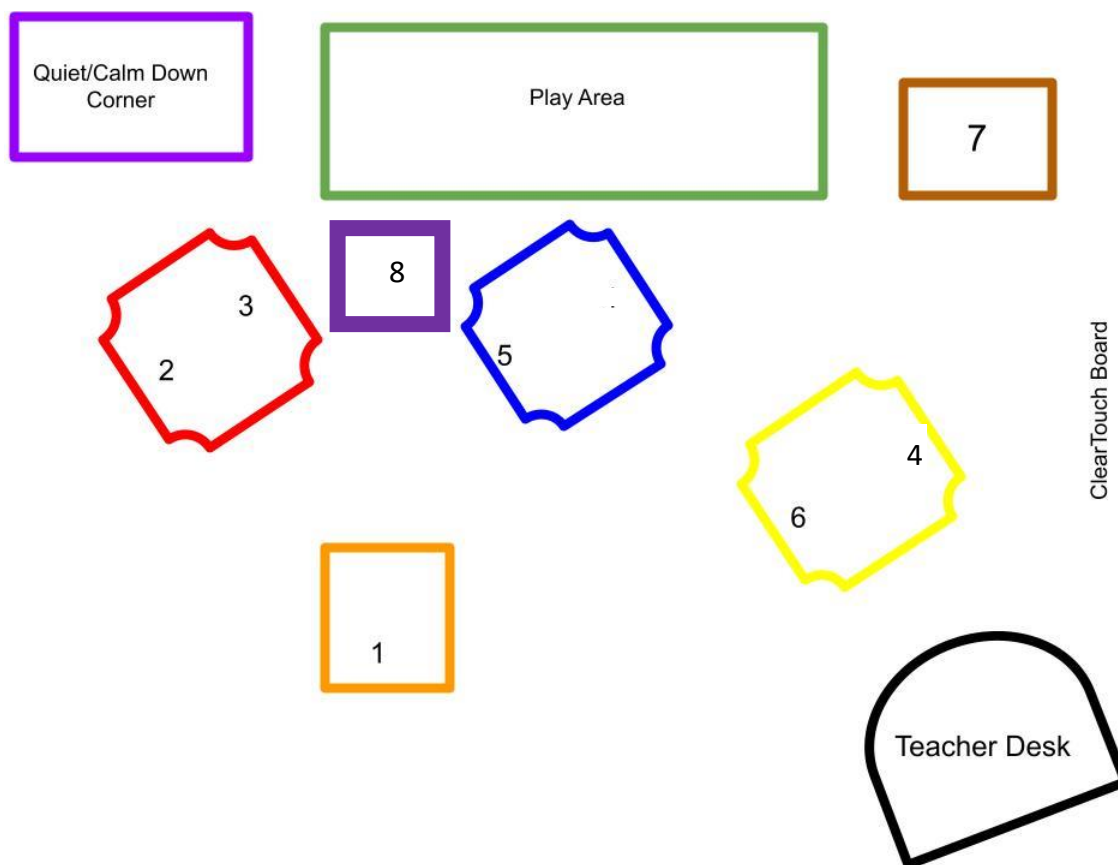
Instructional Context Key
W = Whole Group   Z1 = 1:1 Zoom
ZW = Zoom Whole Group
AV = Audio/Video
I = Individual Task
SG = Small Group
TW = 1:1 With Teacher
R = Remote

Student Description Key
S = Silent   A = Active F = Focused/On Task
WR = Work Refusal   D1 = Distracted
D2 = Distracting Others O = Out of Room
R = Receiving Services

Question Description Key
Q1 = Based on engagement
Q2 = Based on student response
Q3 = Redirection needed

Comment Description Key
C1 = Engages in lesson
C2 = Student has active participation
C3 = Student is distracted and needs redirection

Level of Prompting
MA = Maximum   MO = Moderate MI = Minimal
VE = Verbal   HOH = Hand Over Hand VI = Visual