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Best Practices to Build Relationships between Students with Exceptionalities and General Education Students in a Unified Dance Class

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BEST PRACTICES TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONALITIES AND GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENTS IN A UNIFIED DANCE CLASS

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ABSTRACT

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The goal of this study was to analyze various studies or curriculums, which included both general education students and students with exceptionalities to find best practices to build relationships in a unified dance class. For this study the researcher analyzed ten pieces of literature which focused on inclusive movement classes. These sources included five studies and five curriculums. More specifically, the researcher created the following essential questions to examine sources which included students with and without exceptionalities.

Q1 What strategies and activities best foster growing relationships in a unified dance class?

Q2 What creative dance content best fosters building of interpersonal relationships between exceptional students and general education students?

The purpose of the study was to aid the researcher in finding best practices in building relationships in order to create a custom curriculum that could meet the needs of all students the researcher's teaches. The researcher had three goals for the unified program she wished to create that influenced this study. First, the researcher wanted to provide students with exceptionalities an appropriate dance education. The researcher also saw a need for the general education students to have more interaction with students with exceptionalities. Finally, for all students, the researcher wanted to create a curriculum that included a peer buddy system, in order for both sets of students to build lasting relationships.

Quantitative and qualitative data for all ten sources was collected and analyzed utilizing a survey. Survey questions were organized into three groups: general information, strategies and activities which foster growing student relationships, and developing curriculum content. General information data revealed commonalities in the novelty of each program and true commonalities. The researcher found the following seven strategies were discussed in numerous sources: 1) allowing students to explore and create their own movement modifications, 2) making all students responsible for one another by using safe movement practices, 3) cultivating nonverbal communication, 4) valuing each person's contributions to choreography/class, 5) using students' first language, 6) pairing students, and 7) including peer feedback. Five activities appeared in multiple sources as well. These five activities are: 1) circle activities, 2) rhythmic activities, 3) mirroring, 4) leading and following, and 5) floorwork. Finally, the researcher found four parallels in curriculum content: 1) creating movement, 2) including the elements of dance, 3) the structure of the class, and 4) performances.

This study had three major limitations. First, the sources chosen were selected with the researcher's goals for her own class in mind. The study was also limited by the small sample size. Finally, the study could have been swayed by the survey used to collect data. Exploring best practices for building relationships in a dance class can expand literature on inclusive dance education. This study and future studies like it, can also support all educators in creating inclusive environments that strengthen students' relationships and teach the whole child.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Goal of Thesis

For many centuries, dance was viewed as an art form that should be experienced only by particular groups of people. For example, in the Renaissance period, many dances were reserved for people of the nobility. More recently, in the twentieth century, codified dance genres such as ballet seemed to be considered appropriate for only those with a physically able body who had a specific physique. In the past decades, as the world has become more connected, dance has become more inclusive for all types of people. As dance education grows in the public school more students with exceptionalities are now able to participate in dance programs.

Dance is changing as it becomes more inclusive, meaning that dance is including students with and without exceptionalities. “Unique movement abilities have been embraced by the dance world. This cultural shift in thinking opens the door to another world for dancers with disabilities” (Campbell 16). As dance began to reach students with exceptionalities, dance educators have begun to document the benefits dance can have for these students. Research has found that dance can help students with exceptionalities in many ways.

Research and anecdotal evidence suggest that participating in dance activities can lead to improved physical fitness, socioemotional gains, and academic gains for students with and without exceptionalities. In regard to physical ability, many people with exceptionalities struggle to master motor skills and have poor control of their body due to slow reaction times (Munsell & Davis 129). Students with exceptionalities usually meet developmental milestones but take

much longer and it can sometimes be a frustrating process (Munsell & Davis 129). Many studies have found that dance can help ease meeting these milestones.

A dance class that explored Laban's movement framework improved an exceptional student's motor skills and coordination. This program focused on teaching the concepts of space, weight, time, and flow (Munsell & Davis 129). The teachers involved in the study found that the students' physical ability improved in the aspect of body awareness and respect for personal boundaries (Munsell & Davis 130). The researchers also stated that the program was created for students with Down Syndrome but could be easily modified for any student with exceptionalities.

Improving students' motor skills is not the only way dance can help students with exceptionalities' physical movement development. Dance can also serve as a way for students with exceptionalities to better explore and understand the way their body can best move. In an article titled "Using a Principle-Based Method to Support a Disability Aesthetic," Bailey Anderson wrote about the importance of allowing students to explore movement using their body. She said that teachers should encourage the learner to find meaning and movement potential for oneself (Anderson 89). Anderson insisted that teachers must focus on movement instead of form (89). In this context, Anderson described form as the technical aspect of movement (89). Finally, Anderson indicated that it is important to allow students with exceptionalities to choreograph on their own bodies (89).

Students with exceptionalities can also struggle with socioemotional skills. Students with exceptionalities can have a lack of social awareness and a hard time noticing social cues. These difficulties with social emotional skills can lead to nondisabled peers viewing them in a negative light (Munsell & Davis 130). While students with exceptionalities may struggle with social

emotional skills, evidence has suggested that working in pairs in dance class can increase exceptional students' cooperative skills, conflict resolution abilities, and enhance self-esteem (Munsell & Davis 130).

Karen Schupp, who conducted a study of students' social-emotional skills, also found that dance can have social benefits for students. The purpose of Schupp's study was to evaluate the fulfillment of the three basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and social relationship through participation in programs in which Greek traditional dance was taught to male and female students in three high school grades (521). After the traditional Greek dance class, the students were surprised about their response to the experience. Based on the students' responses, Schupp found that dancing is an activity that allows for satisfactory fulfillment of two of the three factors of social-emotional learning (524). The two factors that were fulfilled included building relationships and competence.

Finally, by integrating dance with academic curricula, it was discovered that exceptional students' instructional freedom increased, depth was added to the lesson content and student engagement increased (Munsell & Davis 131). According to the authors, instructional freedom referred to students being able to choose how they explore an academic subject. These outcomes were based on artist-in-residence activities, their exhibits, and culminating events such as performances (Munsell & Davis 131). This study was promoted by the vision of an inclusive community and the strengths of shared resources because their belief was that artistic expression can unite all (Munsell & Davis 131).

The National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) also has documented that dance can have cognitive benefits for students. On the NDEO site it was stated that movement provides the cognitive loop between the idea, problem, or intent and the outcome or solution (NDEO).

The NDEO site also included the following relevant content. “The relationship of movement to intellectual development and education is an embryonic field of study that has only recently begun to be explored” (NDEO).

A dance classroom, which integrates students with and without exceptionalities, may teach both groups of students much more than dance steps. While there are many studies that focus on the benefits of dance classes for students with exceptionalities as noted above, little to no studies have included data on the potential benefits of such classes for general education students when they are in class with exceptional students.

For example, the article “Dancing with Down Syndrome: A Penomenological Case Study” focused on the benefits a community dance class had on adults with Down Syndrome. The following information was collected after an interview with one student’s mother and the instructor:

> Several key findings were revealed from Luke’s lived experiences of participating in a community dance class. Over the course of the program, it appeared that Luke’s self-confidence, body-awareness, self-esteem, and encouragement to dance were bolstered. He may also have increased balance and coordination within class, as observed by the dance instructor; however, this was not observed by his parents outside of the class. Regardless, the class provided Luke with the opportunity to expand his social circle and become more engaged in the community. After each class, Luke’s parents noticed that he was more sociable, engaged with his peers, and willing to participate in conversations. (Reinders 303)

In the article, “Always Being on your Toes; Elementary School Dance Teachers’ Perceptions of Inclusion and their Roles in Creating an inclusive Dance Education

Environment," the author outlined a study in which six themes emerged that were connected to the teachers' perception of an inclusive dance classroom. When discussing the students' relationships, the author stated that the dance class appeared to teach all students responsibility. The author also noted that all teachers described how other classmates helped students with disabilities remain on task or learn dance steps or routines (Zitomer 435). One teacher commented, "I also had opportunities to observe students help peers with disabilities numerous times without being prompted" (Zitomer 435). Although this research focused on both the students with exceptionalities and general education students in the class, it still failed to pinpoint the true benefits for the general education students.

The study described in this thesis was conducted with the intent to analyze various curriculums or programs, which included both general education students and students with exceptionalities to find best practices to build relationships in a unified dance class. More specifically, the researcher created the following essential questions to examine curriculums which included students with and without exceptionalities.

Q1 What strategies and activities best foster growing relationships in a unified dance class?

Q2 What creative dance content best fosters building of interpersonal relationships between exceptional students and general education students?

To study several curriculums and program reviews, the researcher created a survey to find commonalties throughout all sources. From this data, the researcher will create her own curriculum which she believed would best foster learning and relationships between the two groups of students. Thus, the intent was to examine the best practices to build relationships between the two types of students (general education students and those with exceptionalities) in a creative environment.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to aid the researcher in finding best practices in building relationships in order to create a custom curriculum that could meet the needs of all students the researcher's teaches. The researcher noticed some general needs from different demographics of students that she interacted with. First, there were several students with exceptionalities who were not receiving any type of dance education, because they were unable to participate with a general education dance class. These students were unable to participate in dance because of staffing storages. However, the exceptional students displayed a need to be included. As part of their disabilities, many of these students lacked gross motor development, which a creative movement class might improve. Many of these students also lacked social skills because they had little to no interaction with general education students their own age since they were taught separately. Again, including these students in dance experiences might provide them with a means for developing self-expression and learning social skills (Zitomer 428).

The researcher also saw a need for the general education students to have more interaction with students with exceptionalities. The researcher noticed that many general education students did not understand how to interact with the exceptional students. This issue was especially true if the exceptional students had a disability that could not be seen. Many times, when general education students asked questions out of curiosity about exceptional students, the questions sounded offensive. At other times, the general education students would try to interact with the exceptional students and the outcome would frustrate the exceptional students because the general education students did not understand how to communicate with them. Overall, the researcher found that many general education students did not frequently interact with students with exceptionalities, and therefore they did not understand how to

properly interact. The researcher believed that developing these relationships could later build the general education students' ability to empathize with the exceptional students.

The problems seen by the researcher were similar to problems described in additional articles. In "Integrated Dance as a Public Pedagogy of the Body" the author, Anne Hickory Moody, attributed prejudice toward people with disabilities to medical discourse that defined how the human body is supposed to appear or function. Moody believed that if these definitions were the root of the problem, they could also be the root of the solution and dance pedagogy might play a role in the solution. In her article, Moody stated:

> Models of knowledge that operate through negative definitions of, and abstracted definitive positions on, the human body have become the primary way students with intellectual disabilities are known in school. They are dominant public pedagogies of disability. As such, medical discursive construction of a normal human body—and the limits placed on thinking embodied differences by such discourses—can both be read as discursive markers of the unthought. Taking the political work of integrated dance theatre seriously is one way that we can model new knowledge systems for understanding intellectual disability. We can deface the negative white wall/black hole semiotic of 'disorder' and 'retardation' through integrated dance to make new systems of relation that do not focus on bodily limits. (12)

The researcher saw that the needs of these two different groups of students might be solved with a common solution in the form of a dance class that paired a general education student with a student with exceptionalities. The plan was to have the two students work together to improve the exceptional student's abilities in dance and the general education student's ability

to develop and build relationships with students with varied abilities. To deliver and sustain this program, the researcher believed a customized curriculum would need to be created.

Significance of Study

As stated earlier, public school teachers' focus has been on teaching academic subjects such as reading and math, but rarely on developing the students' socioemotional skills. However, behaviors are a form of literacy and for many students the public-school setting is where they learn appropriate social behaviors. Many states and districts are starting to realize this fact and have begun to adopt philosophies that focus on teaching children more than academics. Recently lawmakers have started to pass policy that promotes education of the whole child.

In the past several years, the South Carolina Department of Education has been committed to the education of the whole child. The state has shown this commitment by creating the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. This document outlines the knowledge and skills that all students should have acquired when graduating from high school. The concepts outlined in this document were chosen after feedback was received from large businesses about the knowledge and skills they are looking for in employees (Profile of the South Carolina Graduate 1).

In the above document, the desired skills and knowledge are broken down into three parts: world-class knowledge, world class skills, and life and career characteristics (Profile of the South Carolina Graduate 1). The world-class knowledge section of the above profile addresses which subjects should be taught in school. Along with academic subjects, the profile stated that the Arts, technology, and multiple languages should also be taught throughout a child's K-12 education. The second section of the profile in which world class skills are discussed, outlined skills that students will need to enter the work force. Some of these skills included critical

thinking, collaboration and teamwork, and creativity. The final section, life and career characteristics, described character traits that all successful people need. These include work ethic, interpersonal skills, integrity, and perseverance. This profile promoted learning that involves the whole child because it explained that lesson content should not only improve a child's intellectual ability but their interpersonal skills as well.

South Carolina is also focused on making all students college or career ready. To accomplish this goal state standards are being re-written to meet the requirements found in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. First, the new standards are being re-written in student friendly language. They are also being written using "I can" statements and to include world class skills. This means that students are not just being asked to learn academic content, but they are expected to work collaboratively with others to create their own content. Finally, the standards were written to address the whole child because students are also being asked to connect their learning to their lives, people around them, and their economic environment.

The South Carolina Dance Standards were revised in 2017 to meet all the knowledge and skills outlined in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate document. These dance standards can enrich students' socioemotional skills in many ways because students are expected to work together and explore various cultures and dance genres.

The South Carolina dance standards are broken into four parts: creating, performing responding, and connecting. Under the creating standards, students must create individually and with each other. According to the performing standards, students are expected to memorize movement sequences they create and those created by others. The goal of this standard is to help students learn how to collaborate. The responding standard asks students to analyze works created by themselves and others. The skill of sharing one's opinion in an appropriate way is a

skill students will find helpful for the rest of their lives. In the final section of the dance standards, connecting, students must be able to examine and perform works from various historical periods and cultures and make connections between dance and other disciplines. Having a better understanding of other cultures helps students relate to all people.

A unified dance curriculum could provide a unique experience for both students with and without exceptionalities and allow students to build knowledge and skills that would meet both the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate and the revised college and career ready standards. Creating a curriculum and program that would meet the requirements of both documents would allow general education students to grow social emotional skills in regard to students with exceptionalities.

In the article "Challenging Disabling Attitudes, Building an Inclusive Society: Considering the Role of Education in Encouraging Non-Disabled Children to Develop Positive Attitudes toward Disabled People," the author, Angharad Beckett, wrote that there has been a long-standing debate focused on the educational system's part in creating inequalities between students. According to this article, some theorists believed the education system has the potential to rise above these social inequalities and help reduce them, while other theorists thought education actually perpetuates the inequalities that exist within society (317). For example, when a student is identified as needing a self-contained classroom, they usually miss out on extra-curricular activities such as dance. This can sometimes give other students the idea that the exceptional students are not able to dance based on their exceptionalities.

The premise in the above study was that dance can be an expression of human emotion and create a strong bond between dancers—a-human connection which could lend itself perfectly to teach young students about empathy. This study could also prove to be significant by adding

to research that promotes the idea that dance can educate the whole child whether or not they have disabilities. Making this connection could be significant because it might prove that dance can improve and align with current educational philosophy.

In addition, this study could help educators find best practices on how integrated arts classes can benefit all students, not just students with exceptionalities. By collecting this data and creating a curriculum based on it, the researcher may be able to find overlaps in academic research that may fill in gaps. For example, the article "Enhancing Empathy and Theory of Mind" focused on how the arts can improve empathy. There were two studies described in this article. One study included elementary students and the other one used one high school students as the subjects. However, the art forms of theatre and visual arts were the focus in both studies. After analyzing the data, the researchers learned that involvement with theatre curricula, improved the elementary age students' empathy. The authors attributed this improvement in empathy to participation in theater games, which put students in other people's shoes and taught them about how to interpret facial expressions. The following comments were made in this article when discussing the data analysis: During the course of 10 months of acting (but not visual art) training, children rated themselves as becoming more empathic despite receiving no explicit training in empathy. Spending a year stepping into the shoes of others and learning to pay close attention to those around them may have increased empathy in these children. (Goldstein & Winner 26)

While the curriculum created from this study will not include activities that put students into each others' shoes, comparing examples in studies completed by others on the topic of developing empathy in students may allow the researcher to create a dance curriculum with similar activities that includes the best strategies to grow students' relationships. Comparing and

drawing from many different sources could help the researcher create one curriculum including the best practices to build relationships and help the general education students better understand the struggles encountered by students with exceptionalities. Developing a close connection to an exceptional student, could put both types of students in the others students' shoes and produce the same outcome as the one described in the above article. Establishing this connection could provide added and significant evidence for including arts integration in school curricula.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Planning an effective curriculum is key to teaching a successful class so that students achieve maximal learning. When beginning to choose sources for this study, the researcher discovered that each curriculum was specifically designed with the goal or purpose in mind. While this finding will be discussed in a later chapter, this idea encouraged the researcher to review the purpose she had outlined for this study and her goals for the integrated dance program she wanted to create. As a result, the researcher solidified three major goals she believed needed further research in order to choose the most relevant sources to analyze in this study. For students with exceptionalities, the researcher wanted to create a curriculum that would improve their gross motor functioning. For general education students, the researcher wanted to design a curriculum that would improve students' empathy for others. Finally, for all students, the researcher wanted to create a curriculum that included a peer buddy system, in order for both sets of students to build lasting relationships.

Gross Motor Development

For students with exceptionalities, one major purpose of the curriculum that will be created from this study is to improve gross motor skills. In general, many exceptional students the researcher has taught are at various motor developmental stages, but most of them are behind their general education peers. The researcher believed that it was imperative to find more research on motor development to meet the needs of all her students. When teaching students with delayed motor skills, the researcher found that it was most important to understand the

significance of motor activities and learn about commonly accepted theories and stages of motor development.

Importance of Gross Motor Activities

The current education system in America prioritizes cognitive learning over kinesthetic learning. The amount of time focused on reading and mathematics is being increased, while time at recess and in dance or physical education classes is being reduced or eliminated. "Recent surveys show that more than 30 percent of the nation's elementary schools have eliminated recess time, and in those that still have recess time, it averages just twenty-seven minutes per day-including time for lunch" (Sousa & Pilecki 90).

While instructional time that focuses on motor development is decreasing, research showed motor development in young students is vital to improving cognitive development. Studies have shown that motor development can increase brain cells, increase student test scores, and improve other crucial skills to be successful as an adult.

Motor development is connected to brain development. It is usually believed the brain has central control of the rest of the body, but one must also remember that the brain is a muscle and it must be exercised to become stronger. Such exercise is not just mental but physical as well. Eric Jensen believed, "Research has revealed what may be the ultimate benefits of exercise: new brain cells" (Jensen 100). In the same study, it was revealed that running is one of the top brain cell producers (Jensen 101).

In "From STEM to STEAM: Using Brain Compatible Strategies to Integrate the Arts" the authors also provided evidence that motor development effects the brain. "As we learn more about the brain, we continue to find clues as to why the human activities required for the arts are so fundamental to brain function" (Sousa & Pilecki 12). When focusing on dance, Sousa and

Pilecki stated, ". . . that a portion of the cerebrum and most of the cerebellum are devoted to initiating and coordinating all kinds of learned movement" (Sousa & Pilecki 12). Finally, Sousa and Pilecki concluded that movement can engage the brain and create neural networks needed for successful learning (Sousa & Pilecki 17).

Focusing on motor development can also improve student academic achievement. Many sources have connected students' involvement in dance to high test scores and improved GPA's. In the book *"*Arts with the Brain in Mind,*"* the author, Eric Jensen noted the following in regard to higher test scores:

> There are some correlations with movement arts and higher college entrance scores. If dramatic arts contribute to cognition, more of such coursework (up to a point) might lead to higher test scores. The College Board reports that for the 1999 school year, there are differences between students' scores of those taking dramatic arts versus no dramatic arts. Students with four or more years in dance were 27 points higher, those in drama study 44 points higher, and those with acting or production experience were a whopping 53 points higher than nondramatic arts students on the averaged math and verbal scores. (College Boards 200; Jensen 76)

Sousa and Pilecki also reported the arts had a positive effect on GPA scores. The authors described the following in their article "From STEM to STEAM: Using Brain Compatible Strategies to Integrate the Arts."

> Researchers found a remarkably strong association between participation in the arts and a wide variety of outcomes. For instance, students who had rich experiences in the arts during high school showed higher overall grade point averages (GPAs) than students who did not have those experiences. They even had slightly higher than average GPAs in

> mathematics. Furthermore, the higher grades paid off because the high school students heavily involved in arts-related activities had a higher rate of enrollment in competitive colleges--71 percent compared to 48 percent enrollment for their peers who avoided the arts. Not surprisingly, those students in the top 25 percent of the socioeconomic scale also benefited from arts-rich experiences. They had significantly higher GPAs and enrollment rates in college than their low- or no-arts peers. (Sousa & Pilecki 21)

Finally, research shows major effects of movement on other crucial skills. These findings include things such as reading skills and survival skills. In the article noted above, Jensen explained how dance develops balance which in turns develops reading skills (Jensen 77). Both of these skills are developed by activation of the motor-cerebellar-vestibular system. Without stimulation of this part of the brain, problems in reading, emotional regulation, memory skills, reflex skills, discipline, and writing skills can develop (Jensen 78). Including dance in schools can prevent or decrease these problems by providing more stimulation to the motor-cerebellar-vestibular part of the brain through engagement in movement.

Survival skills are another crucial ability connected to motor development. The American culture has become increasingly more sedentary over time due to the rise of technology. Natural human survival skills decrease when pertinent movement patterns are not taught and regularly used. Sousa and Pilecki indicated that gross motor development is crucial at a young age because these skills are necessary for survival. “They help one jump out of the way of a speeding car or duck fast enough to avoid a punch” (Sousa & Pilecki 90). Dance in schools allows young students to have a dedicated time in their day devoted to improving these gross motor skills.

Theories and Stages of Motor Development

Finding literature on motor development was one of the researcher's top priorities because of the trend she saw in students with disabilities having delays in the development of their gross motor skills. While this was true for most exceptional students, the delays or levels of motor development the researcher noticed were not the same for each student. For this reason, the researcher believed it was pertinent to this study to understand today's accepted theories and stages of motor development.

Understanding a child's present motor development stage allows the educator to determine the appropriate steps to take to move a student to a higher level of development (McCutchen 66). Thus, the researcher studied the kinesthetic-motor stages of progression outlined in Brenda McCutchen's book *Teaching Dance As Art in Education* and the ecological theory of motor development described in Donna Krasnow and Virginia Wilmerding-Pett's text *Motor Learning and Control for Dance*. According to research on motor development, the two theories found in these works are highly accepted today.

The theory of kinesthetic-motor stages of progression breaks motor development into five parts because "Students must move through unsophisticated movement patterns to become more proficient performers" (McCutchen 66). McCutchen outlined these stages as stage 1:Prefuctional (beginning), Stage 2: Functional (Basic), Stage 3: Performance (Developing), Stage 4: Proficient Performance (Mastery), and Stage 5: Advanced Performance (Sophisticated) (66). In the first stage, students are still unable to consciously control all movement (McCutchen 66). In the third stage, students begin to develop isolated performance skills. In the last stage, students have advanced coordination to enable complex movement and motor patterns (McCutchen 66). McCutchen explained that these stages are similar to George Graham's four stages of motor

development and students will progress through these stages from kindergarten to twelfth grade (66). However, these stages, as described by McCutchen, seem to focus on development of students only in a dance environment, with an emphasis on performing in later stages.

While McCutchen's kinesthetic-motor stages of progress focus mainly on dancers starting at kindergarten, the Ecological Theory of Motor Development is broader and includes factors on motor development starting at birth. This perspective emphasizes the interaction between the individual, the environment, and the task (Krasnow & Wilmerding-Pett 18). This theory has two branches; the dynamic systems approach and the perception action approach. The dynamic systems approach focuses on motor coordination, and the perception action approach is concerned with perception or the state of becoming aware of input through the various senses (Krasnow & Wilmerding-Pett 18). For example, with the perception action approach an adult and a baby may approach and climb a set of stairs differently. Krasnow explains this is because of the individual's body rather than the obstacle (Krasnow & Wilmerding-Pett 20).

This theory showed that there are more factors acting on motor development than just the body and its movement. This is true because an individual's interaction with their environment and involvement with tasks also play a role in student success. These theories and the distinctions between them were important to the researcher's study in discovering strategies and tasks that are best for all learners in the area of motor development.

Describing Empathy

This research will focus on finding best practice in a unified dance class in order to create a curriculum, which could develop students' empathy for one another. While the unified class the researcher would like to create will ideally include both students' with and without exceptionalities, the researchers second goal for the class is for general education students' to improve their ability to empathize with others. Before conducting this study, the researcher

found it imperative to dive deeper into various aspects of empathy. The three areas of content that the researcher found were most important to developing empathy were: 1) why empathy is an important skill; 2) how to cultivate empathy inside the dance classroom; and 3) how empathy and its development can be documented.

Why Empathy?

Since a child's intellectual ability can be improved through learning, many believe a child's socioemotional skills can also be improved through the teaching process. Our current educational leaders have always seen the importance of improving students' literacy and mathematical skills. Just recently, schools have also begun to include life skills in their curricula as well. Teaching socioemotional skills, especially empathy, is important in shaping the definition of appropriate behavior in our society, and many authors have described ideas on how teaching empathy could shape our society.

It is possible that teaching empathy skills could prevent the onset of callous and unemotional traits in students (Luby 1). Juan Luby wrote the article "The Importance of Nurturance for Social Development" in response to the study "High-Quality Foster Care Mitigates Callous-Unemotional Traits Following Early Deprivation in Boys: A Randomized Controlled Trial." In this article, Luby suggested that destructive human traits could be the root of much violent crime and the initiation and prolongation of harmful social conflicts (Luby 1). Luby also went on to claim the following:

> The ability to empathize with another human being requires a level of emotional maturation rooted in the ability to understand, process, and regulate one's own emotional states. It has been well established that these emotion developmental skills are modeled by caregivers, and that learning is enhanced in environments where sensitive caregivers

> can serve as emotion teachers and coaches for children early in development. Based on this, it would seem logical that the core deficit of the individual with CU (Callous-Unemotional) is a delay or alteration in emotion development potentially arising at least in part from a deficit in caregiver nurturance, responsiveness, and modeling of these traits. In this context, and supported by findings from Humphreys *et al.*, a greater focus on early caregiving sensitivity to enhance child emotional development in different areas would seem a highly feasible and tangible target in the prevention of psychopathy and other related disorders characterized by core emotion processing and competency deficits. (1)

In the study, "Teaching Empathy: A Framework Rooted in Social Cognitive Neuroscience and Social Justice" another author suggested that all evil acts come from a lack of empathy. "Lack of empathy underlies the worst things human beings can do to one another; high empathy underlies the best [human acts]" (Gerders 109). While both of these authors believed that tragedies caused by human hands come from the lack of empathy, they also thought that empathy can be taught. In the second article by Gerders, he wrote the following:

> We propose that a targeted and structured explication of empathy is an extremely useful, if not essential, foundation for all social work theory and practice. Moreover, recent advances in the analysis of subjective human experience and corresponding activity in the brain have helped define the components of empathy both as a subjectively experienced phenomenon and as an observable activation of identifiable "neural networks." We posit that both the analytical and physiological identification of empathy will be of great benefit to social work educators and practitioners. (109)

The authors of the above articles agreed that violence throughout our world can be attributed to lack of empathy in humankind. While a person's empathy can be affected by both nature and nurture, both articles alluded to the fact that teaching socioemotional strategies can improve a person's ability to empathize. With continuing violence throughout our country, educators must begin to see the importance in teaching empathy throughout the school day in all courses, including through the Fine Arts.

Cultivating Empathy in the Dance Classroom

Dance does not happen in a bubble. Dance is a type of human expression. Therefore, dance has always been influenced by the society in which it is created. Most types of movement, including dance, are also not created, or performed alone. Dance has usually involved a social interaction or a collaborative effort. Even when a dancer performs a solo, they must work with several people to produce that dance onstage. The collaborative nature of a dance class can, in the right environment, lend itself to improving a child's ability to empathize based on its collaborative aspects. Various dance activities have been shown to be beneficial to improving children's ability to empathize.

In her article "Kinesthetic Ability and the Development of Empathy in Dance Movement Therapy," Dita Judith Federman explained three approaches that have been used to improve students' empathy in connection with dance. The three approaches outlined in this article were the Marian Chance Approach, the Authentic Movement Approach, and Laban Movement Analysis. In this study the activities involved having dancers or the participants mirror and echo other dancers' movements. Federman concluded the following about the teaching techniques described in this article.

> Both echoing and synchrony are techniques that use mirroring to respond to another person's movement. As opposed to mere repetition, both techniques involve a reflection of the other's intentions through eye contact and reaction to muscle-tension flow (Kestenberg-Amighi et al. 1999; Loman and Foley 1996). Chace used mirroring and 'empathic reflection': she picked up the qualitative dynamics of the movements (Levy 1992; Sandel 1993; Shelly 1993). Thus, an atmosphere of cooperation developed to allow for the emergence of empathy. (Federman 140)

In this same article, the author explained that authentic movement was performed with a movement therapist as the participants explored their imaginations. When describing authentic movement, the following statement was provided to underline the connection between this type of movement practice and empathy:

> Authentic Movement [AM] may also advocate group interaction, within which individuals can participate in each other's imaginable realms, project onto each other and experience empathy from other group members (Payne 2001, 2006). The witness–mover relationship in authentic movement touches on the world of imagination, fantasy, values and the drive on the part of both partners to seek new experiences. In the AM approach (Chodorow 1991; Whitehouse 1979), the witness sits down, ready to absorb and contain the mover's emotions. Like in verbal psychotherapy, when the therapist and the patient sit in the same room and talk, a mutual flow of emotions between the mover and the witness evolves. (Federman 140)

The final approach mentioned in the above article was the use of Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) which is used in many elementary dance programs because it can help students learn the basic elements of movement before exploring various dance genres. This LMA

approach could also be very helpful when it comes to working with young students with exceptionalities. In the same article, Federman explained how LMA can help students learn how to empathize.

> The Laban Effort Actions [which are part of the LMA curriculum] express changes in one's attitude towards flow, weight, time and focus/space. Increased use of effort during therapy indicates a loosening of inhibitions and sense of security. The domain of relating to others includes aspects of movement, such as eye contact and echoing, related to interpersonal communication, 'body language', body movements and gaze (Burgoon 1994). (Federman 141)

Eye contact and echoing others through movement, as the author stated, are related to interpersonal communication, which can help develop a sense of empathy.

Documenting the Development of Empathy in the Dance Classroom

After the researcher has created her empathy-based curriculum, she may have a future opportunity to use it in an integrated classroom which includes both general education and exceptional students. Thus, it will be important to find the best way to measure the dance students' ability to empathize as this ability develops. This means the researcher also needed a tool that could be used to measure students' relationships or developing relationships over time in the dance classroom. The use of this assessment tool would allow the researcher to learn if the curriculum created in this study is beneficial to students. To create such an assessment instrument, the researcher had to find empathy measuring instruments that had been used in previous studies. After searching the literature, the researcher found that in many previous

studies, development of empathy was gauged or measured through use of an interview or a questionnaire.

In the article, “Assessing Empathy in Young Children: Construction and Validation of an Empathy Questionnaire (EmQue)” a questionnaire was used to assess students’ empathy by posing questions that gauged their reaction to a scenario. This test was meant to judge the level of empathy the students experienced. In the article, the writer noted the following about the questionnaire used in the study by describing the scales included in its design.

> The EmQue scale Emotion Contagion was expected to correlate positively with measures that indicate poor emotion regulation. The EmQue scale Attention to Others Feelings was expected to correlate positively with other measures indicating attention to other people’s emotions or emotion recognition. The EmQue scale Prosocial Actions was expected to correlate positively with other measures indicating prosocial behaviour, but also emotion understanding and attention to others’ emotions. Additionally, a positive correlation was expected for this scale with a measure for understanding the subjective nature of other people’s mental states, a so-called Theory of Mind task. (Rieffe 363)

In another article titled “Enhancing Empathy and Theory of Mind,” empathy was measured by using two types of questionnaires. One was called the Index of Empathy for Children and the other questionnaire was the Fiction Emotion-Matching Task. The first questionnaire was used to assess the extent to which children have a concurrent emotional reaction to an emotional situation experienced by another person (Goldstein & Winner 23). The second questionnaire was based on participants’ emotional reactions to short films in which they were asked to identify the feelings of the main character and then identify their own feelings in response to the film (Goldstein & Winner 23).

The Peer Buddy System

Using a peer buddy is a newer idea in education. Peer learning usually refers to students being paired with an older mentor. This mentor assists the student in learning new skills in the classroom. Research has shown that peer learning has been beneficial in many different ways. The researcher thought it was also important to learn about benefits others have found when using peer learning, especially those benefits accrued when using a peer buddy system in dance classes.

The Benefits of Peer Learning

When focusing on the benefits of peer learning, the researcher specifically found studies where the peer learning involved students with exceptionalities. The researcher also searched for studies where the peer mentors were older than their peer buddy. After reading several studies, the researcher found a few common benefits in each study. These studies showed that peer learning could motivate and engage students, develop social skills, and change student choice making.

The first study that described the benefits of the peer buddy system was the thesis titled *"The Benefits of Using Peer Buddies in Adaptive Physical Education"* written by Julie Cairone. In this thesis, the researcher studied the benefits of giving high school students a peer buddy in an adaptive P.E. class. A physical education classroom was the closet setting to a dance classroom that the researcher writing this thesis could find. The following is an outline of the curriculum taught in the adaptive physical education classroom. Some of the different concepts that the adaptive physical education class is based on are movement skills, sport skills and knowledge, and overall wellness. In this course, students also learn about the importance of

fitness along with the rules of recreational game activities and sports to encourage them to be lifelong learners of physical activity. (Cairone 25)

In this study, students' behavior was first monitored without a peer buddy to collect baseline data (Cairone 22). The students' behavior continued to be monitored and later analyzed after the student received their peer buddy to find how their behavior and achievement changed after acquiring a peer buddy. Several benefits were associated with including a peer buddy in the classes. These benefits included providing an environment that is more stimulating and motivating and an opportunity to develop social skills by engaging in age-appropriate activities with peers (Cairone 11). The following data described the benefits found for the students' with exceptionalities.

> All fourteen of the students' participation increased with the addition of the peer buddies. The overall percentage of participation was 48% and above from all of the students in class. Students in the class increased their level of participation with the addition of peer buddies 22% to 144% from their baseline scores. Each student made positive gains in their participation in varying degree levels. The expectations for this study were that students would increase their participation efforts with the increased level of peer buddy involvement in the class. (Cairone 37)

A post experience survey was also administered to the general education students in the same study (Cairone 35). This survey showed how pairing general education students with a student with exceptionalities could benefit both students. Results demonstrated both types of students could improve their understanding of each other and practice appropriate social interactions. The following is the data summarizing the outcome of the post survey.

> Thirteen peer buddies participated in the survey at the conclusion of the study. Eighty-five percent of the peer buddies strongly agreed that their comfort level has increased while working with students with disabilities. Seventy-six percent of the students strongly agreed that social interactions between peers with and without disabilities increases participation. One hundred percent of the peer buddies strongly agreed that working with students with disabilities has not only benefited the students with disabilities but benefited the peer buddies as well. Twelve out of thirteen, ninety-two percent of students strongly agreed that a peer buddy program would be successful at Jackson Memorial High School. (Cairone 35)

Another study that focused on the benefits of pairing students was "The Effectiveness of the Implementation of Healthy Buddies Peer-Led Health Promotion Program in Elementary Schools." This study focused on using peer buddies to influence students' choices when it came to healthy eating habits. The health program implemented in the study is the Healthy Buddies program (Campbell 183). The researcher in this study claimed that the use of peer buddies motived students to make good choices when it came to their health. Campbell stated the following: "Our study confirmed the important effect of the program on health knowledge, in both the older and younger students. This outcome showed that peer-led teaching is an effective tool to promote knowledge, even in children as early as kindergarten" (Campbell 185). The quotation below is a more detailed summary of the analysis of the data found in the study.

> The majority of K- Grade 3 students had either a positive (P) or neutral (N) perception of the program. They liked having the program in their class (P 76%/N 19%), felt that they were a healthier person because of the program (P 84%/N 14%), liked working with their older buddy (P 76%/N 18%), and felt that having an older buddy helped them to learn

> more (P 85%/N 13%). Similarly, Grade 4-7 students liked the program (P 62%/N 24%), felt that the program was successful at equipping them to live a healthier life (P 85%/ N 8%), felt that they made better decisions about health (P 75%/ N 24%) and that they learned more because they were an older buddy (P 69%/N 23%). (Campbell 185)

The Benefits of Using Peer Buddies in Dance

Throughout her study of peer learning in public school, the researcher found there is little research that focuses on the use of peer buddies specifically in a dance class. However, the researcher discovered one program that focused on peer buddies in the dance classroom. The details of this program and its benefits were explained in the article "The Adaptive Dance Process" written by Bett Block and Peggy Johnson. In this article the authors explained why dance is the perfect place for peer learning and inclusion. They also discussed the benefits of peer learning in dance.

> Dance provides a wonderful opportunity to integrate persons with disabilities into a creative form of physical activity. It is not governed by strictly enforced rules and boundaries, but reflects the unique abilities of the participants. Dance is an interactive process that demands a great deal of trust and acceptance among fellow dancers—especially when the class is composed of dancers whose abilities are so different. Teachers who recognize the healing power of dance and who plan for integration in a holistic manner can create an atmosphere of acceptance that is transformative for all dancers and audiences. The goal is to help students move well within the creative and interactive process, and in the end create bonds of friendship and a sense of community that last a lifetime. (Block & Johnson 21)

Block and Johnson found two main benefits of using peer buddies in dance. The authors first found that having general education students and students with exceptionalities create and perform dance together helped students feel equal to one another. Just as dancers with disabilities have to learn to be accepted in the world of dance, dancers without disabilities must accept their partner as an equal. As both spend more time getting to know each other well, friendship often evolves and the physical differences diminish (Block & Johnson 19).

The second benefit outlined in the article was the students' ability to build movement empathy. The author explains movement empathy as:

> Movement empathy is the physical manifestation of a psychological connection between partners. The resulting movements are not planned but happen in real time when partners sense a change of some sort beginning to occur. Partners who are empathically attuned are capable of adjusting their movement patterns to the special needs of their partner while remaining true to the choreography—especially to the emotional theme (Block, 2001). Partners are also aware of changes that may affect the other person's performance and are able to react quickly before something unexpected happens. These choreographic changes typically happen during rehearsal and are built into the choreography so there are no surprises during the stage production. (Block & Johnson 21)

Along with describing the benefits of using peer buddies in the dance classroom, the authors also outlined information students must understand to make peer buddies beneficial. The researcher found this information influential because to effectively assess if peer mentoring can grow empathy, peers will have to be able to work well with their partner. The authors of the above article described two major points they felt affected the success of using peer buddies. First, they believed that students must understand each others' physical strengths and challenges

and the pairs must be able to share common emotions. The authors indicated the following with reference to the general education student in a pair knowing the exceptional student's strengths and weaknesses.

> Each dancer should have good knowledge of the strengths and challenges of the dancers with disabilities in order to communicate about how to make the necessary accommodations. Interacting with one another, and getting to know each dancer personally, contributes to the socialization of dancers. Knowing how to maneuver through space safely while following the choreography and communicating during choreography is important. This is typically done nonverbally and is a natural extension of partnering. (Block & Johnson 18)

The second major point that Black and Johnson made in regard to a successful partnership was that students must understand each other's emotional states or changes in those states. When discussing the process in which peers shared their emotions, Black and Johnson commented:

> Finally, socialization includes sharing common emotions and talking about them before, during, and after learning a difficult skill or giving a performance. These interactions could include making personal connections by dancing together, experiencing the same preformance jitters, sharing the excitement of opening night, being recognized in school and in the community for one's accomplishments, and dealing with jealousies and rivalries that exist in any social group. All of these contribute to bringing the dancer with disabilities into the social order. (18)

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Context

The researcher chose the topic for this thesis largely based on students' needs and goals of the program the researcher wanted to create. To better comprehend the study, one must understand the context in which the research topic was created. In the spring of 2019, the researcher's fine arts team evaluated all fine arts opportunities offered at the researcher's school. The team found that while these opportunities were rich in content, experiences were not offered to all students. One of the main populations not receiving appropriate arts experiences were special education students. Students with exceptionalities who needed extra assistance were not receiving the arts because of a shortage of paraprofessionals at the researcher's school. The fine arts team also found that some general education students could benefit socially from an inclusive arts classroom. To expand arts programs and meet all students' learning needs, the researchers' fine arts team applied for a grant that would allow them to receive professional development to create a unified arts class. The fine arts team defined unified arts as an arts class that includes both students with and without disabilities.

After the grant was received, these classes began in the 2019-2020 school year. In the fall of 2019, the Unified Arts program was piloted. Students received both dance and music for 25 minutes once a week. For the first semester, the class only included students with exceptionalities. This allowed the students to become comfortable with the new environment and activities before introducing peer buddies in the form of general education students. The class

included ten students with exceptionalities. These children were in grades from kindergarten to second grade. The music, dance, and special education teachers worked together to create individual learning and behavioral goals for each student. In both music and dance the teachers taught basic elements and tried to make connections between these two content areas as much as possible.

In January of 2020, the fine arts team began the process to introduce peer buddies to the class. First, general education students had to be chosen for the program. A team of teachers was put together to choose these students. This team included fine arts teachers, special education teachers, classroom teachers, and administration. The team was looking for 4th and 5th grade students who would be positive leaders to younger students but may also benefit socially from the experience. The team also considered who each peer buddy would be paired with and tried to choose students of the same gender for each pair. By mid-February the team chose ten students to be peer buddies, and the fine arts teacher received parent permission for their participation. The fine arts teachers met with the peer buddies twice before integrating them into the Unified Arts class. These classes were to help the buddies better understand people with exceptionalities and allow the buddies to learn strategies to better communicate with each other and with the exceptional students with whom they were paired. The last step before fully integrating the peer buddies was for the two groups of students to meet. The fine arts teachers brought the peer buddies to the self-contained classroom to meet their partner. Partners played together and got to know one another in a casual setting. The Unified Arts class should have started the following week, but no one knew at the time that this would be the last day of school. The following weekend the researcher was notified that the school would be closed due to the Coronavirus.

The researcher's school stayed closed throughout spring of the 2020 school year. The school reopened for both in person and virtual learning in the fall of 2020. With COVID-19 precautions in place classes from different populations were unable to mix. This rule made it impossible to implement the Unified Arts class as planned. To adjust, the fine arts teachers continued the class with no peer buddies. In the 2020-2021 school year the researcher's team was able to expand the program to include all artforms (dance, music, visual art, and theatre).

The researcher began this thesis study in 2019 around the same time the Unified Arts program was beginning. The original intent for the research was to study how relationships between students with and without exceptionalities could grow in the Unified Arts class at the researcher's school. Unfortunately, COVID-19 made this research impossible to complete. The researcher found while the virus had stopped the ability to have a unified class, it had given the gift of time. The researcher now had more time to study literature to find best practices on building relationships in an inclusive dance classroom. This extra time inspired the researcher to modify the essential questions of this study to focus on analyzing best practices for creating relationships in a dance classroom rather than observing students' relationships in her classroom. The following essential questions were explored in this study with the hopes that data gained would allow the researcher to create a customized curriculum to meet the specific needs of both sets of students at her school--the exceptional and general education students.

Q1 What strategies and activities best foster growing relationships in a unified dance class?

Q2 What creative dance content best fosters building of interpersonal relationships between exceptional students and general education students?

Selecting Literature

In order to choose the most relevant pieces of literature for this study, the researcher went through several steps before choosing the final sources included in the study. First, the researcher explored what kinds of literature could be found about inclusive dance. Once the type of literature to be researched was narrowed, the researcher went through a long process of finding multiple sources which addressed the desired content. Then, sources were compared to the essential questions in this study to select the information that would be the most pertinent to the study. Finally, ten pieces of literature were chosen for analysis.

In the spring of 2020, when this study shifted to focus on analyzing literature for creating an inclusive dance class curriculum, the researcher reviewed sources that had already been collected. These sources focused on dance for students with exceptionalities. At first the research on this topic seemed to be extremely slim and vary drastically in content. When continuing to review literature already collected, the researcher found there seemed to be two major types of sources that emerged. The first type were studies or reviews of programs. While many of the studies were not focused on growing peer relationships in an inclusive class, each study included vital information about participants, activities or content, and various outcomes. The second type of literature found was curriculums or review of content taught in inclusive dance classrooms. These pieces of literature did not have as much information about students but did offer more in-depth information on content and activities to use with various populations of students.

Moving forward the researcher divided the literature into these two categories: studies or curriculums. The next step was to find as many pieces of literature as possible that fit into these two categories. To find these many sources, the researcher explored various article databases. These included library databases provided through the University of Northern Colorado and

databases provided by the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO). The researcher also collected sources included in literature reviews and works cited pages from literature previously found. These searches were very valuable in finding more curriculum sources.

After finding many sources that fit into the researchers two categories, the sources needed to be analyzed in order to choose the most informative. The researcher reviewed the essential questions for the study and the research in the literature review to create criteria for selecting the sources that would be included in the study. The first and most important criteria was that the source needed to be focused on inclusion or an inclusive classroom. If the study or curriculum did not include students with and without exceptionalities working together, the information was not beneficial to analyzing how to cultivate relationships between the two targeted groups of students. The source would also not be beneficial in understanding how to help general education students grow empathy. Many informative sources were eliminated because they focused on programs or activities solely for students with exceptionalities. The researcher also wanted sources which included or addressed students with a variety of exceptionalities. The researcher found this to be important because she did not want the findings to include sources that described only a few types of disabilities. Finally, the researcher wanted to include literature focusing on a variety of age levels and content. This would allow the researcher to analyze which movement content was most beneficial for fostering relationships and how that content may vary due to age/ development of participants.

Using the three criteria listed above the researcher narrowed sources to ten pieces of literature that would be analyzed in this study. All pieces of literature included students with and without exceptionalities in some manner. Each piece of literature varied in student demographic, age level, and content taught to provide a well-rounded perspective of inclusive dance education.

After selecting the sources, each piece of literature was given a number. The table below reveals each piece of literature selected and the author or authors.

Table 1

Literature Included in Study

Source Number	Title	Author(s)
	Studies or Program Reviews	
1	Always Being on Your Toes: Elementary School Dance Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusion and Their Roles in Creating Inclusive Dance Education Environments	Michelle Zitomer
2	The Benefits in Using Peer Buddies in Adaptive Physical Education	Julie Cairone
3	Dancing Partners/Dancing Peers: A Wheelchair Dance Collaborative	Mirian Giguere and Rachel Federman-Morals
4	Dancing Around (Dis)Ability: How Nondisabled Girls Are Affected by Participation in a Dance Program for Girls with Disabilities	Amy Traver and John Duran
5	To Be or Not to Be – Able to Dance: Integrated Dance and Children's Perceptions of Dance Ability and Disability	Michelle Zitomer and Greg Reid
	Curriculums or Content Reviews	
6	Teaching Children Dance, 3rd Edition (Chapter 7)	Theresa Purcell Cone and Stephen Cone
7	Developing and Sustaining an Inclusive Dance Program Strategic Tools and Methods	Merry Lynn Morris, Marion Baldeon, and Dwayne Scheuneman
8	Making an Entrance: Theory and Practice for Disabled and Non-Disabled Dancers	Adam Benjamin
9	Rhythm Works Integrative Dance: Instructors Certification Manuel	Tricia Gomez, et al.
10	Inclusive Creative Movement and Dance	Karen Kaufmann

Research Survey

After sources were chosen for this study, the researcher needed to select an instrument that would be most efficient in analyzing the variety of literature selected. The researcher concluded a custom instrument would need to be created in order to address the very specific information needed to be gathered. The researcher would first go through a process of designing

this instrument. Later the researcher went through several steps to ensure that the instrument was used thoroughly and consistently.

Designing the Survey

The researcher designed a survey which she could use to collect both qualitative and quantitative data to best serve and meet the needs of this study. The researcher began creating this survey by brainstorming questions that would allow her to collect information which would be helpful to creating relationships in her own classroom. After creating various questions, the researcher looked for a way to organize the content. The researcher found that all questions could fit into three categories. These categories were demographic information, strategies and activities that best foster growing relationships, and curriculum content. The questions were rearranged by category in order to make the survey flow efficiently.

After the questions were created and organized by category, the researcher edited each question. The researcher's first revision was to determine which question type would be best to use in writing each question. For example, some questions were best formatted as multiple-choice, while others needed to be short answer questions. Many of the questions were best formatted as multiple-choice questions or short answers. If the question was multiple choice, the researcher then created and revised multiple-choice questions to ensure all potential answers could be provided. This was particularly important in the demographic portion of the survey. The researcher also reviewed each multiple-choice question to evaluate if it needed a follow-up short answer question. In many of the questions formatted as yes or no questions, the researcher choose to include a follow-up with short answer questions to guarantee the most qualitative information could be collected. When the survey was completed, it included ten to eleven questions in each category.

The last step in creating the instrument was to create a place for surveys to be completed and stored. The researcher found the best way to do this was through Google Drive. The researcher created the survey in Google Forms on her personal Google Drive. Then the survey was copied two different times, which created three identical forms of the survey. This would allow the researcher to input sources that were surveys into one form, sources that were curriculum-based information into a second form, and the third form would include all ten sources. Dividing sources in this way, would allow the researcher to later locate content related to the two different types of sources used in this study.

Utilizing the Survey

When completing the survey for each of the sources, the researcher went through several steps to make certain all pertinent information was collected. First, the researcher read and annotated each source. When annotating the sources, the researcher created a google doc that outlined the sources and included any important information and quotes from the reading. While annotating and taking notes the researcher would keep the research questions in front of her as a reminder of information which might be helpful to completing the survey questions. If the researcher found an answer to a question while writing source notes the researcher would highlight it and write the question number beside it.

The researcher then utilized the source notes to complete the survey. The researcher would fill out all multiple-choice information that was already found. Then the researcher would review the literature notes and the source if needed to find all other answers. To find these answers the researcher would review the source notes and highlight information by categories. Demographic information was highlighted in yellow, strategies and activity information were highlighted in blue, and curriculum information were highlighted in purple. After information

was organized, it was integrated into the survey to answer the remaining questions. If an answer could not be found, the source was examined again before marking the answer as unknown.

When completing the survey, the researcher made sure to use the form for the correct type of literature, either study or curriculum. Once the answers to all questions were integrated, the Google Form was submitted in order to save the data on the researcher's Google Drive. The researcher would also copy answers into the identical form that was used to survey both types of literature. If information in a source was discovered after submitting the Google Form the researcher would simply edit the response in both forms.

When all ten surveys were completed, information could begin to be analyzed. Google Forms was utilized to analyze all quantitative data. Google Forms was also crucial in creating many of the tables that will present quantitative data in the following chapter. Short answer questions were analyzed by the researcher. To discover commonalties in qualitative data, the researcher examined data from each short answer question for common themes and language. The major themes that emerged after data analysis are presented in the discussion chapter.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The surveys the researcher conducted created a plethora of data with many commonalities. The researcher decided to organize this data based on the same categories in the survey utilized to collect information. The survey categories were general information, common strategies and activities utilized to cultivate relationships, and common content taught to cultivate relationships in a unified classroom. The major commonalities found in the data are presented in the following sections.

General Information

The general information collected from each source at first unveiled more variety than commonalities. As the researcher continued to analyze this data, trends were discovered regarding why content was so different as well as true commonalities throughout all sources. The researcher found the novelty throughout each source could be contributed to the goals of the study or curriculum. The students in the class and the educators' desired outcomes influenced the goals of each study or curriculum for those students.

Commonalities in Novelty

All five studies examined in this research focused on the impact students with and without disabilities could have on one another. Two out of the five studies focused specifically on how a unified dance class may change students' without exceptionalities perception of an able body and what kinds of people are able to dance. The study detailed in "Dancing Around (Dis)Ability: How Nondisabled Girls Are Affected by Participation in a Dance Program for Girls

with Disabilities" examined how pairing teenage girls in a community ballet class could change the able-bodied student's perception of those with disabilities. Exceptional students in this study had a variety of physical disabilities. Another source, "To Be or Not-- Able to Dance: Integrated Dance and Children's Perception of Dance Ability and Disability", was also a study of how a unified creative movement class could change elementary aged students' thoughts about students with disabilities and their ability to dance. This study also included students with a variety of physical disabilities. Both studies found at the end of the classes able bodied students' belief that anyone could dance had grown. The studies also found that students' appreciation and understanding of a variety of ways to move had increased.

Another two out of the five studies concentrated on how growing a relationship between students with and without disabilities could develop an understanding of or participation in class content. In *Benefits of Using Peer Buddies in Adaptive Physical Education*, the author studied if introducing peer buddies would improve students with exceptionalities participation in an adaptive physical education class. In the study outlined in "Dancing Partners/Dancing Peers: A Wheelchair Dance Collaborative", the researchers interviewed students without exceptionalities to find if the class gave them a deeper understanding of movement and that all people are able to dance. Findings in both studies indicated an increased participation and understanding of class content. Below, table two summarizes the goals of each study, the type of class, and the type of student with exceptionalities involved.

Table 2

Studies or Program Reviews Summarized

Source Number	Goal or Purpose	Type of class	Exceptional Students Involved
1	"This study aims to explore Canadian elementary school dance teachers' perception of inclusion and their perceived roles in creating inclusive dance education environments" (Zitomer 428).	Four dance classes for elementary school students	The study included students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Students with visual and hearing impairments, and other students with unspecified disabilities.
2	The study aimed to find if students with disabilities perform at a higher ability with their non-disabled peers compared to working with paraprofessionals in an adaptive PE class.	An Adaptive physical education class for high school students	The study included students with autism spectrum disorder, down syndrome, diplegic cerebral palsy, communication impairments, multiple disabilities, health impairments, and moderate intellectual disability.
3	Study focused on how volunteers' perception of disability changed throughout the experience.	A ballet class for teenage students	The study included students with a range of physical disabilities.
4	This study had several goals for both students with and without disabilities University buddies- 1. Broaden their understanding of dance as an art form and to see its connective power. 2. To develop their own capacity to develop therapeutic relationships. Students with exceptionalities- A therapeutic place for students to interact with people their own age therefore enriching their lives.	Creative movement class for teenaged students	The study included students in wheelchairs suffering from Cerebral Palsy.
5	Both sets of students fully engaged in class "The purpose of this study is to investigate children's perceptions of dance ability and disability as a function of their participation in an integrated dance program. More specifically, what are children's perceptions on dance ability and disability? Would participation in an integrated dance program change such perceptions?" (Zitomer & Reid 141).	Community creative movement class for elementary aged students	The study included students with a range of physical disabilities.

In addition to the five studies, five curriculums were also analyzed. All five curriculums analyzed in this study aimed to help teachers create, implement, and sustain unified dance classes. Each of these sources met their goal by outlining strategies and modifications when working with a variety of students. They also supported this goal by providing a variety of

movement activities and skills appropriate for students with and without exceptionalities. Table 3 summarizes the goal or purpose of each curriculum along with the type of class described and students involved.

Table 3

Curriculums or Content Reviews

Source Number	Goal or Purpose	Type of class	Exceptional Students Involved
6	The goal of this chapter was to provide information on creating and implementing an inclusive dance class.	Creative movement curriculum for elementary aged students	Source included modification for students with intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, and students with visual or hearing impairments.
7	The goal of this article was to provide information on developing and sustaining an inclusive dance class.	Creative movement curriculum for elementary aged students	Source included modification for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, physical disabilities, and students with visual or hearing impairments.
8	“The aim of this book might be summarized thus: to know how our bodies work, to understand and be comfortable with how they may differ, and to seek in everybody, the fullest possible expression of what it means to be human.” (Benjamin 29)	Improvisational curriculum for students of all ages	Source included modifications for students with intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, and students with visual or hearing impairments.
9	The aim of this curriculum was to provide training to instruct an inclusive hip hop curriculum.	Hip Hop Curriculum for students of all ages	This in-depth curriculum covered students with Down syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Cerebral Palsy.
10	" The Purpose of this book was to educate and empower teachers to use dance in inclusive classrooms" (Kaufmann IX)	Creative movement curriculum for students of all ages	The book includes autism spectrum disorder, hearing impairments, emotional disturbance, learning disabilities, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic disabilities (physical), other health impairments, speech and language impairments, Traumatic Brain Injury, and visual impairments.

True Commonalities

True commonalities were found between the ten sources as well. While each source had variety in the number of students and a large age range of students in each program, there were commonalities in the exceptionalities included in each source. Two out of ten sources included information on students with health impairments. Another two sources included students with multiple disabilities. Three out of ten sources included students with Down Syndrome. Half of the sources detailed working with students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, visual/hearing impairments, or intellectual disabilities. Finally, the most common exceptionality discussed throughout the sources was physical disabilities. Nine out of the ten sources included students with physical disabilities. Out of those nine sources five specifically discussed Cerebral Palsy. The majority of movement modifications given throughout the sources were also geared toward physical impairments such as physical disabilities or visual/hearing impairments. Included below is a visual representation of these findings. Figure one represents these findings. The percentages in the figure show the percentages of sources that included designated disability.

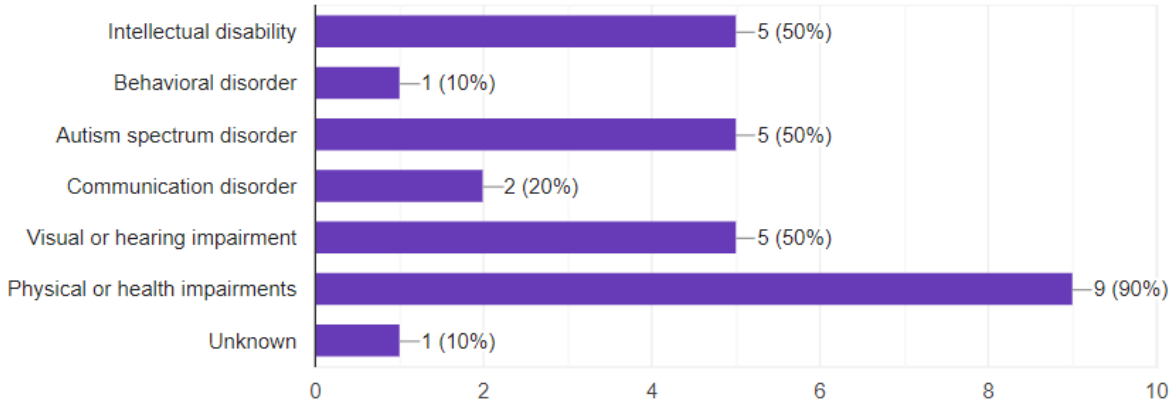

Figure 1: Types of Disabilities Discussed in Sources

There were also commonalities found in the descriptions of who taught in the inclusive classrooms. Most of the classes were led by dance teachers. Seven out of ten sources included dance teachers. The second most common type of teacher to be involved in unified classes were therapists. Four out of ten sources included a therapist. Out of the eight sources that included the number of teachers who taught the class, seven of those classes had more than one teacher in the classroom at a time. Sixty percent of sources had two to four teachers in the class at a time. Figure two illustrates the number of teachers in each unified class.

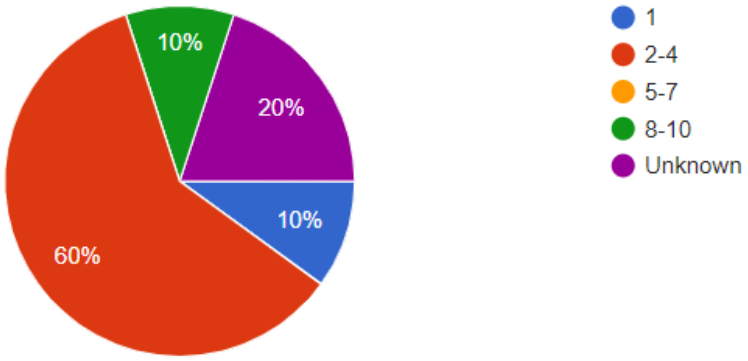

Figure 2: The Number of Teachers/Teachers Aids Involved in Each Class

Two of the sources spoke to the importance of having both able bodied and disabled bodies teaching the students. Adam Benjamin's curriculum began with his own exploration with a dancer named Celeste who was physically impaired after an accident. This duo then created the touring company CandoCO. The article "Developing and Sustaining an Inclusive Dance Program" explained the impact, including multiple teachers with different abilities can have on students. The article stated the following:

> We have also found it particularly important to have teachers with and without disabilities as a part of the teaching team. It is important for students to see a diversity of

> bodies as representative models for them to emulate as they explore their own unique bodies. The students with disabilities and, in particular, the students using wheelchairs, identify with the teacher with a disability differently than they do with the "able-bodied" teachers, and this must be recognized. (Morris 124)

No matter what type of teacher or teachers are included in a unified classroom, all teachers have an obligation to learn students' strength and be able to help each child succeed. Eight sources emphasized the importance of the teacher's role in a unified classroom. Cairone wrote, "The responsibility of the teacher is to provide all students with age-appropriate activities and tasks that will help promote the development of necessary, functional skills for the future" (5). Sources eight, nine, and ten also stressed the importance of understanding various disabilities and provided typical strengths and weaknesses of students with these disabilities. Each of these sources included at least one chapter about various disabilities, learning styles, and/or basic developmental movement categories. Ultimately success of a program is solely up to the teacher.

The final commonalties found in the general information was the frequency of the classes and how long each class lasted. The majority of classes met once a week for approximately an hour. Seven of the sources included information on frequency. Out of those seven, six met once a week.

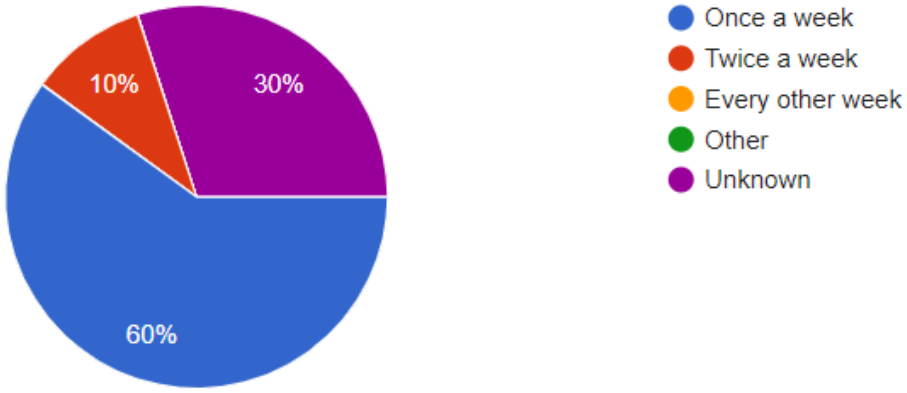

Figure 3: The Frequency at Which Each Class Occurred

These seven sources also included information on how long each class period lasted. Four of the seven classes lasted for an hour, two lasted for 30-45 minutes, and one lasted over an hour. The researcher found that the length of the class had a correlation to the age of the students. The class that lasted over an hour was for high school students, and both classes that were less than an hour were for younger mostly elementary aged students. The following figure summarized these findings.

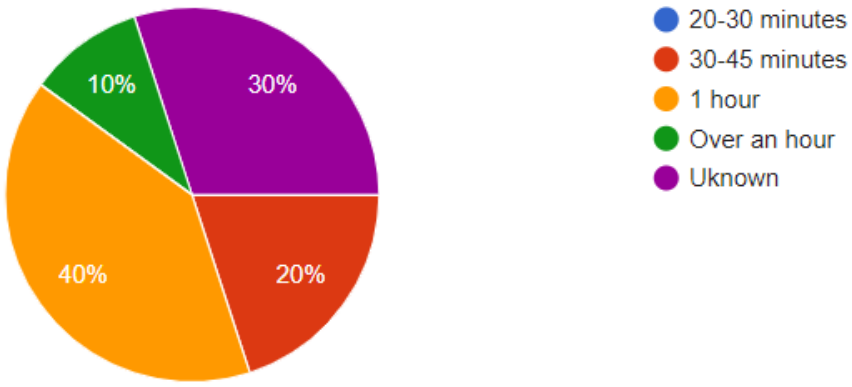

Figure 4: The Length of Each Class Period

Common Strategies and Activities to Cultivate Relationships in a Unified Classroom

The second section of data collected was used to summarize common strategies and activities found in inclusive classrooms that cultivated relationships between students with and without exceptionalities. Seven common strategies were found to be used by teachers to create relationships. These seven strategies are: 1) allowing students to explore and create their own movement modifications, 2) making all students responsible for one another by using safe movement practices, 3) cultivating nonverbal communication, 4) valuing each person's contributions to choreography/class, 5) using students' first language, 6) pairing students, and 7) including peer feedback.

In addition to the teaching strategies described in the sources, five common activities were outlined in multiple sources that supported building relationships. These activities included 1) circle activities, 2) rhythmic activities, 3) mirroring, 4) leading and following, and 5) floorwork. These findings addressed the first essential question which was: What strategies and activities best foster growing relationships in a unified dance class?

Strategies to Cultivate Relationships

Every person has their own way of moving and in a unified dance class that is even more apparent. Karen Kaufmann stated, "Diversity should be the norm, not the exception" (Kaufmann 3). This belief can be seen when it comes to teaching strategies used throughout the ten sources analyzed in this study. The authors of all ten sources explained in some way that for students to build understanding of each other as movers, they must be able to explore and create their own movement modifications. Adam Benjamin explained his discovery of this strategy in this statement; "For every solution I have found to the problems I have encountered, there have been

countless other dancers who have found different and equally satisfying ones, so this is therefore only one of many ways of looking at dance" (Benjamin 20).

It was also apparent throughout the sources that this strategy opened students' eyes to the possibility of movement and made "able bodied" dancers re-evaluate the "right" way to move. A student from the study "Dancing around Dis(Ability): How Nondisabled Girls Are Affected by Participation in a Dance Program for Girls With Disabilities" mentioned the following in her interview at the conclusion of the class. "Now I think of multiple ways to solve a situation instead of trying one way and I think of how the girls would resolve it if they were in the same situation" (Traver & Duran 1152). The author of *Teaching Children Dance* made a similar statement. "Each student's uniqueness contributes to everyone's learning experience. When students learn that there are many variations of a dance many different ways to perform a movement then acceptance of differences is valued, and stereotypes are dismissed" (Morris 24).

Also in the article, "To Be or Not-- Able to Dance: Integrated Dance and Children's Perception of Dance Ability and Disability", the author described a change in how elementary students without disabilities define dance after experiencing a unified dance class. Before the class, abled bodied students described dance as movement that is performed with your feet like jumping. After the unified class both sets of students explained that movement could be performed in many ways with different body parts. "I can dance with my walker, or I can roll or scoot on my bum, or turn on my tummy," one student said in a post interview (Zitomer & Reid 151). This strategy grew relationships because students learned to value all ways of moving.

The next strategy described most frequently was making all students responsible for each other to provide a safe environment when moving. This strategy was presented in nine out of the ten sources. Three out of these nine sources specifically explained that all students should be

responsible for movement safety when the class includes a child with visual impairments. Karen Kaufmann's book *Inclusive Creative Movement and Dance*, gave several examples of strategies that could be used with blind students. One example was to pair blind students with sighted students to teach them how to move through space. One exercise utilized was for blind students to count their steps to understand their relationship to objects (Kaufmann 84).

Six out of the nine sources that described making students of varying abilities responsible for one another, included having students manipulate each other's bodies or supporting one another. The study described in the article "Dancing Partners/Dancing Peers: A Wheelchair Dance Collaborative", explained that buddies should examine students' rhythm and movement partners and offer hands-on support and guidance at times. The Rhythm Works Integrative Curriculum, source nine, also included several ways for teachers to modify their students' movements by being assisted by a partner. Finally, in *The Benefits of Using Peer Buddies in Adaptive Physical Education* the author noted that peer buddies provide many strategies of support for students with exceptionalities such as positive reinforcement, assisting them when necessary, and helping the exceptional students stay on task (Cairone 11). Students grow closer to one another when they are responsible for another student and rely on one another to succeed.

It is important to note that many sources caution against moving other students' bodies. There is a right and a wrong way to move another person's body. Adam Benjamin, the author of source eight, specifically stated that all dancers in wheelchairs should always have control of their chairs (84). The most important point was to never manipulate someone's wheelchair from behind them. Karen Kaufmann, author of source ten, agreed with this statement and wrote that manipulating a wheelchair from behind puts the person in the chair in a passive position (128). *Teaching Children Dance* was the only source that stated no other child should manipulate

another child's body (Cone & Cone 102). This discrepancy may come from the fact that this curriculum focused on young students.

Eight out of ten sources discussed how cultivating nonverbal communication can grow students' relationships. Four of these sources explained how students learned to communicate through movements by embodying each other's actions and responding to them. "Dancing Partners/Dancing Peers: A Wheelchair Dance Collaborative" paired the same students for the entirety of the program. In each class students were asked to observe one another and at times embody each other's movement. The researcher found that each partnership developed their own way of communicating through detailed instructions presented by the teacher (Giguere & Federman-Morals 108). Karen Kaufmann called this type of activity variation on a theme. She explained that in the activity one person creates a movement, then the partner performs the movement in their own way. This means the movement begins to be tossed back and forth like a conversation (Kaufmann 132).

Four of the eight sources used nonverbal communication to build students' relationships during the warm-up or cool-down. *Teaching Children Dance* provided a gesture circle activity at the beginning of class where students were able to introduce themselves through movement (Cone & Cone 102). In "Developing and Sustaining an Inclusive Dance Program", the author described that during cool down she asks the students how they are feeling and what they see through others' movements and students respond both verbally and physically (Morris 126). These activities were described in studies about and curriculums for elementary aged students. Meeting together at the beginning and end of class to share allows the whole class to grow relationships rather than just relating in pairs.

Valuing each person's contribution to choreography was also touched on in eight out of the ten sources. In “Always Being on Your Toes: Elementary School Dance Teachers' Perception of Inclusion and Their Roles in Creating Inclusive Dance Education Environments”, Michelle Zitomer described six themes from the teachers' perception of a unified class. One of the six themes was establishing supportive relationships. Zitomer indicated that one way to do this is to make sure every student has a part in creating choreography (Zitomer 434). In *Inclusive Creative Movement and Dance*, Karen Kaufmann wrote the following on the topic. “When special education students’ strengths are recognized, they become contributing citizens in the classroom resulting in a feeling of accomplishment and improving self-esteem” (Kaufmann 4).

The fourth most common strategy used throughout source material to build students' relationships was teaching and using appropriate language. Seven sources included information about the importance of using appropriate language in a dance class. In all seven sources the authors explained that the students’ first language should be used in classrooms at all times. Using appropriate language also meant that a child should not be defined by their disability. For example, a teacher should say a child with Autism, rather than an Autistic child.

Also, sources warned against using the word disabled or disability. Many of the authors researched the history of the word disability and found it to hold meaning only in the confines of our society. Traver and Duran wrote, “As defined, impairment is understood as an embodied condition or characteristic of the individual, whereas disability is understood as a feature and function of the social world” (1149). It is interesting to note that Adam Benjamin reminded teachers in his book *Making an Entrance: Theory and Practice for Disabled and Non-Disabled Dancers,* that appropriate language may change depending on the country. “In the end we can

only be guided by what people want to be called and respect international, regional and personal differences" (Benjamin 36).

All sources included peer mentoring in some way as a strategy to build relationships. As Julie Cairone detailed in her literature review, *The Benefits of Using Peer Buddies in Adaptive Physical* Education, there are many types of peer buddy systems. Seven of the ten sources included bidirectional partnerships. These are fluent partnerships that change frequently and do not rely on one student teaching the other but rather both students working together to learn from one another. In bidirectional relationships each participant has something to gain from the contact situation (Zitomer & Reid 150).

The final strategy supported through the sources analyzed, was that students' relationships benefited from viewing others' dances and providing feedback. Six sources analyzed spoke to this idea. The study presented in "Dancing Partners/Dancing Peers: A Wheelchair Dance Collaborative" encouraged students to reflect on how their partner moved and embodied postures, gestures, shapes, feeling tone, facial expressions, and body language to better understand how others are experiencing the class (Giguere &Federman-Morals 108). In each of the curriculum chapters in *Inclusive Creative Movement and Dance* Karen Kaufmann included information on performing and viewing each element of dance. Kaufmann described the benefits of viewing movement in the following quote. Dance sharing develops students' etiquette skills, encourages them to respect one another's work, and teaches them to become good audience members. These literacy skills extend dance learning and increase aesthetic development for students of all abilities" (59).

The sources also described how teachers can foster relationships by holding discussions after viewing students' movements. Rhythm Works Integrative Curriculum, source nine,

motivated teachers to have discussions with students about how great it is to be good at different things. Karen Kaufmann encouraged students to give each other feedback as a way to celebrate differences. “Creating and viewing dance encourages students to celebrate and encourage individuality” (Kaufmann 49).

Activities to Cultivate Relationships

After the sources were analyzed, the data presented common strategies used by teachers along with similar activities which could lead to fostering relationships between students with and without exceptionalities. The researcher found there to be five activities discussed frequently throughout the sources. These five activities were 1) circle activities, 2) rhythm activities, 3) mirroring, 4) leading/ following, and 5) floorwork activities. Each activity seemed to be utilized in a unique way and at various times throughout the dance classes. These activities will be discussed beginning with the activity that appeared most frequently throughout the sources to the activity that appeared the least frequently.

The activity mentioned most in the source material was the circle activity. This activity was included in six out of the ten sources analyzed. Cone and Cone described the educational value of forming circles in their book *Teaching Children Dance.* They stated the following, “In dance circle formations are inherently inclusive because everyone can be seen and has an equal place in the group” (97). Also, four out of these six sources outlined ways to use circles during the warm-up and cool-down to create a sense of community. Many of the exercises described in the warm-up and cool-down circles involved students introducing themselves or sharing their feelings. The following cool-down exercise is described in “Developing and Sustaining an Inclusive Dance Program”.

> The class often closes with a quiet cool-down circle holding hands and a guided imagery experience where the students have the opportunity to use their imaginations. They

describe what things they see or feel in the sky and under the sea. This experience heightens their listening skills and their internal focus while they learn the etiquette of taking turns to talk with their peers (Morris 126).

Rhythmic activities were also discussed several times in the source material. Five sources provided examples of rhythmic activities. In "Dancing Partners/Dancing Peers: A Wheelchair Dance Collaborative" the author discussed how partners can observes each other's rhythmic patterns and replicate them to better understand how their partner moves. Two of these five sources described using rhythmic activities or keeping the steady beat in a circle before performing more complex movements. The program Rhythm Works Integrative is based on the importance of using these kinds of activities in the dance classroom.

Mirroring was the third most common activity described throughout the sources. Five out of the ten sources included examples of mirroring activities. Karen Kaufmann suggested in source ten how mirroring can be made inclusive by vocalizing during mirroring activities for students with visual impairments. Also, Giguere and Federman-Morals eloquently explained how mirroring can be used to improve nonverbal communication in their study titled "Dancing Partners/Dancing Peers: A Wheelchair Dance Collaborative". "By mirroring movements, the dancers can reflect on how their partner might be experiencing the dance class, and learn an individual's movement repertoire, style of expression, and communication, thereby practicing empathetic listening" (108).

The authors expressed the benefits of leading and following activities in four of the sources. Being led by another person is a great way to build trust in a partnership. Adam Benjamin provided several leading and following activities in his book, *Making an Entrance: Theory and Practice for Disabled and Non-Disabled Dancers*. In many of these activities

Benjamin gave readers the option of having dancers close their eyes or be blindfolded which forces the dancer following to relinquish all control and trust their partner fully. In *Inclusive Creative Movement and Dance*, Kauffman also included leading and following activities. She explained that once students have built a relationship with one another the audience will not be able to tell who is the leader and who is the follower (Kaufman 132).

The final activity discussed frequently throughout the source material was floorwork. This activity was included in four sources. The floor was described to be a great equalizer for all students especially when classes included students with physical, visual, or hearing impairments. This activity was most commonly used to help students explore dance concepts such pathways or shapes. Karen Kaufman wrote a detailed description of a pathway activity in her book *Inclusive Creative Movement and Dance* in which students lay on their back and create pathways in the air with various body parts instead of going across the floor (90). Zitomer and Reid described how important floorwork was to their study in the following statement from the article "To Be or Not—Able to Dance: Integrated Dance and Children's Perception of Dance Ability and Disability".

> However, the notion that any body part can dance at different levels reoccurred throughout discussions. For instance, Ali (able-bodied) reflected: "I learned that when you dance, you can use all kinds of parts of your body and also, that when you dance, you can use the low level, the middle level, and the high level." Don (with disabilities) said: "I learned about making letters and shapes with our bodies. Also, we can dance with many parts of the body and breakdance" (Zitomer & Reid 147).

Commonalities in Content Taught to Cultivate Relationships in Unified Class

After analyzing data there were more strategies and activity commonalities throughout sources than content commonalities. This statement aligned with the conclusion presented in the general information section that each study or curriculum was designed by the teacher while keeping the intended outcomes for those students in mind. The researcher found four major commonalities in content that fostered building relationships between students with and without exceptionalities. These four commonalities are 1) creating movement, 2) including the elements of dance, 3) the structure of the class, and 4) performances. These commonalities are presented below from the most common to the least common.

Creating was found to be most common theme when analyzing which standards were most important in the studies or for curriculums. Creating movement was included in nine out of ten sources. Michelle Zitomer wrote in her description of the study "Always Being on Your Toes: Elementary School Dance Teachers' Perception of Inclusion and Their Roles in Creating Inclusive Dance Education Environments" that all four teachers she observed used creating movement in their elementary dance classes because creative movement and inclusion let students' choose how to move (433). Allowing a child to choose how they want to move can act as an equalizer in a dance classroom. The authors of "Developing and Sustaining an Inclusive Dance Program" also valued creating in their classes. The authors detailed how they incorporated Anne Green Gilbert's conceptual approach to movement in their class (Morris 123). In this approach the teacher chooses exploring and creating steps rather than replicating them. Figure five depicts how many sources included each standard.

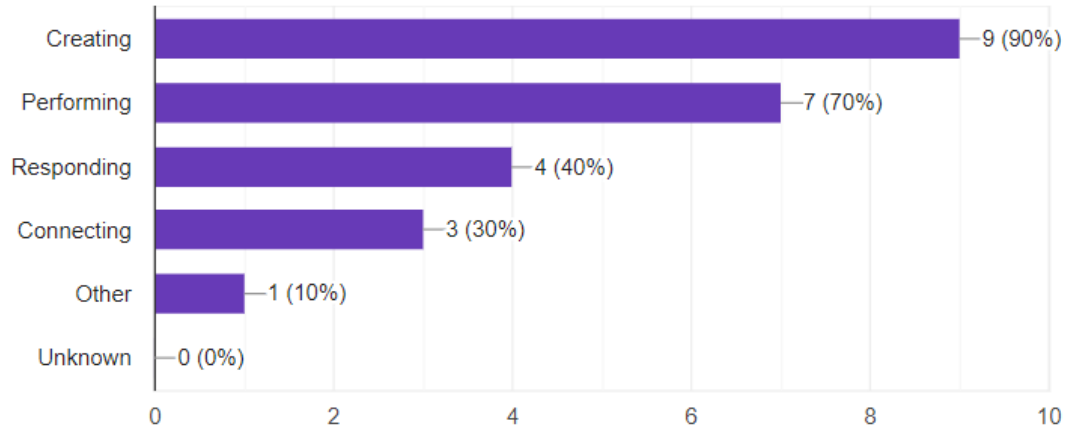

Figure 5: Content Addressed

When analyzing which elements of dance were included in each source no one element seemed to be favored as was true for the creating standards. All elements were mentioned in six out of the ten sources. The element of space was mentioned in seven of the sources, and body and timing were included in eight sources. The use of the movement elements is summarized in figure six. Adam Benjamin included his educational philosophy concerning movement elements in his book, *Making an Entrance: Theory and Practice for Disabled and Non-Disabled Dancers*. This philosophy informed the reader how the elements of dance can be used in a unified dance class and how they grow students' relationships.

> The process of teaching dance proposed here is not about providing 'moves' behind which we can hide, it is in fact quite the opposite. It is about learning to be present in our bodies without artifice; it is about understanding how we use our weight and our breath; how we balance movement and stillness, tension and relaxation. But it is about more than just what we do with our bodies; it is about how we negotiate decisions in time and space, how we empathize with others, while having the courage to develop our own ideas. It is about creativity and criticism. In short, it is about how we make best use of our physical

and mental resources. This is dance used as a true physical education; an education about the body and mind through the use of body and mind. (29)

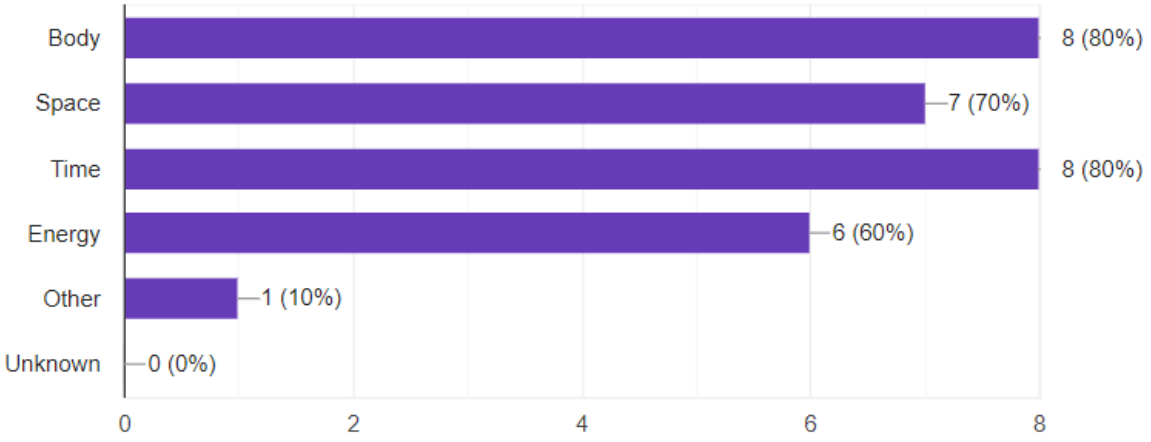

Figure 6: Dance Elements Addressed in the Sources

Six out of ten sources included information on the way class periods were structured. All six sources included some type of exploration time during the middle of class. Numerous explorations were shaped through play and many included using various props. Play is one of the most beneficial ways for students to build relationships with one another. Five of these sources included warm-ups and cool-downs. Three sources stated that warm-ups or cool-downs happen in circle formations since this time is seen as a great opportunity to grow the class as a community. Finally, four out of the six classes included time for teaching technique or activities that strengthen students' movement patterns. This content did not connect to fostering relationships as much as the previous content but was notable, considering that many students with exceptionalities need time to strengthen gross motor skills.

Performing was the last similarity in content included as part of the studies or curriculums. Five sources included performance opportunities for students. In their article “Dancing Partners/Dancing Peers: A Wheelchair Dance Collaborative, Mirian Giguere and

Rachel Federman-Morals explained how students can grow a connection when preparing for a performance. They noted, “The goal of performing drives the participants to stay committed and to work together on a common goal” (108). Three out of ten sources included performance but stated that the performance format needs to fit the class and that while students might perform, the performance should not be the overall goal of a unified class. In their book *Teaching Children Dance*, Cone and Cone stated, “While a product may emerge, the experience of learning and creating is primary” (97).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Research Questions and Methods

For this study the researcher analyzed ten sources which focused on inclusive movement classes. These sources included five studies and five curriculums. The goal of this study was to find commonalities in instruction that assist teachers in building relationships between students' with and without exceptionalities in a dance class. The following questions were used to analyze each source.

Q1 What strategies and activities best foster growing relationships in a unified dance class?

Q2 What creative dance content best fosters building of interpersonal relationships between exceptional students and general education students?

The ten sources were analyzed utilizing a survey. This survey was created by the researcher. Survey questions were organized into three groups; general information, strategies and activities which foster growing relationships, and curriculum content. Quantitative data was collected and analyzed through the use of Google Forms. Qualitative data was also collected through Google Forms, then analyzed by the researcher looking for common ideas throughout source information.

Interpretations of Findings

The data presented many commonalities throughout the ten sources. The researcher organized the findings in the same categories as those used in the survey. General information data revealed commonalities in the novelty of each program and true commonalities. The data

collected in regard to strategies and activities which foster relationships uncovered similarities in both strategies and activities. The researcher found the following seven strategies were discussed in numerous sources: 1) allowing students to explore and create their own movement modifications, 2) making all students responsible for one another by using safe movement practices, 3) cultivating nonverbal communication, 4) valuing each person's contributions to choreography and to the class, 5) using students' first language, 6) pairing students, and 7) including peer feedback. Five activities appeared in multiple sources as well. These five activities were: 1) circle activities, 2) rhythmic activities, 3) mirroring, 4) leading and following, and 5) floorwork. Finally, the researcher found four parallels in curriculum content: 1) creating movement, 2) including the elements of dance, 3) the structure of the class, and 4) performances.

The findings from this study, will aid the researcher in creating a dance curriculum for the unified class at her school. The researcher hopes by implementing the findings from this study she can better achieve the three goals created for the unified class at her school. These goals include refining students' with exceptionalities motor skills, improving students' without exceptionalities ability to empathize when dealing with people who differ from them, and fostering relationships between both sets of students.

Limitations of the Study

This study had three major limitations. First, the sources chosen were selected with the researcher's goals for her own class in mind. The study was also limited by the small sample size. Finally, the study could have been swayed by the survey the researcher used to collect data. These limitations will be elaborated on in this section.

The researcher chose the ten sources that were analyzed in this study by reflecting on the goals for the class at the researcher's wanted to create as well as the essential questions for this study. Using this method narrowed sources to include only those that may have held the most influential information in regards to the researcher's goals and questions. Although this approach was effective in light of the researcher's primary purpose, it may have also limited the variety of sources analyzed in this study. For example, one of the essential questions focused on dance content in connection to building relationships. Therefore, nine out of ten sources focused solely on dance classes. The field of physical education has been involved in public education much longer than dance and analyzing more physical education sources could have led to more findings on movement strategies to build relationships between students as well as further teamwork activities to foster community between students.

This study was also limited by a small data pool. The researcher only analyzed ten sources. The researcher limited sources to ten because of time restraints as well as difficulty finding sources that met the researcher's specific needs. Analyzing more sources would have led to the data creating increased validity. Increasing the number of sources may have also revealed more data points that were not discovered in these ten sources.

Finally, the information discovered in this study could have been limited by the research instrument. The researcher found a survey would be the most effective research instrument in collecting information from each source. The survey was created by the researcher due to the unique and specific topic of the researcher. Similar to the limitations on source selection, survey questions were also created with the researcher's goals for her own unified class in mind. This restricted data to specific topics rather than including a broader sampling of information. For example, a question on the survey explored if sharing time was prompted by teachers. To widen

the scope of this question, the researcher could have asked about various ways students shared and communicated with one another. Broadening the questions could have led to more detailed information.

Recommendations

While the field of inclusive dance is rapidly growing in the current state of dance education and the society, there is still much research to be completed. There are many unified programs that are happening throughout the world, but they are not always being documented. Future studies could analyze unified classrooms based on the following suggestions. They could document curriculums being taught and strategies being implemented. Studies could also compare information to find and expand documentation and literature on best practices in a unified class. Expanding literature focused on relationships in unified dance classes would support educators looking to strengthen their ability to teach all kinds of students.

Conclusion

Throughout time dance has served as a form of self-expression. While there is little documentation, dance historians believe that dance was the very first artform and humans' first form of communication. Dance history also reveals how dance has been influenced by society. Dance and who has been able to dance has been restricted by society time and time again. On the other hand, dance has been a way for people to speak out against social injustice and make a difference in society.

Right now, especially in the United States, people are at unrest and looking for change. People are demanding equality in all aspects of life and after the social isolation created by COVID-19 people want more than ever to connect and be valued by others. Three of the ten sources in this study stated that simple proximity can create empathy, build connections, and

break stereotypes. In Kaufmann's words (source 10) "When dancers learn to relate to each other they are less likely to develop cliques and more likely to develop social skills with students of various disabilities" (127). Creative dance has the power to alter society for the better by creating a playful low risk environment, allowing young people to build these interpersonal skills. This is only true if these classes include ALL students. Dance educators must just continue to push for these environments to exist without exclusivity and support others in creating inclusive dance classrooms that teach the whole child.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

Institutional Review Board

Date: 03/01/2021

Principal Investigator: Charlotte Cook

Committee Action: **IRB Review Not Required**

Action Date: 03/01/2021

Protocol Number: 2102022557

Protocol Title: Best Practices to Build Relationships Students with Exceptionalities and General Education Students in a Unified Dance Class

Expiration Date:

Project does not meet the definition of human subjects research.

As noted above, the University of Northern Colorado IRB has reviewed your protocol and determined that your submission does not meet the federal definition of "human subjects" and/or "research" according to CFR 45 Part 46.

§46.102(e)(1)

Human subject means a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research:

(i) Obtains information or biospecimens through intervention or interaction with the individual, and uses, studies, or analyzes the information or biospecimens; or

(ii) Obtains, uses, studies, analyzes, or generates identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens.

§46.102(l)

Research means a systematic investigation, including research development, testing, and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. Activities that meet this definition constitute research for purposes of this policy, whether or not they are conducted or supported under a program that is considered research for other purposes. For example, some demonstration and service

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programs may include research activities. For purposes of this part, the following activities are deemed not to be research:

(1) Scholarly and journalistic activities (e.g., oral history, journalism, biography, literary criticism, legal research, and historical scholarship), including the collection and use of information, that focus directly on the specific individuals about whom the information is collected.

Project activities as set forth in this submission do not require IRB oversight and approval. However, if your procedures change and/or you decide to generalize your findings, please contact the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs to further discuss if IRB approval would be needed.

If you have any questions, please contact the Research Compliance Manager, Nicole Morse, at 970-351-1910 or via e-mail at nicole.morse@unco.edu.

Sincerely,

Nicole Morse
Research Compliance Manager

University of Northern Colorado: FWA00000784

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH SURVEY

General information

1) How many exceptional students are in the class?
    a. 1-5
    b. 6-10
    c. 10-15
    d. 15-20
    e. More than 20
    f. Unknown
2) How many general education students are in the class?
    a. 1-5
    b. 6-10
    c. 10-15
    d. 15-20
    e. More than 20
    f. unknown
3) What is the age of exceptional students involved in the class? (Choose all that apply)
    a. 3-5 years of age
    b. 5-7 years of age
    c. 8-11 years of age
    d. 12-14 years of age
    e. 15-18 Years of age
    f. Above 18 years of age
    g. Unknown
4) What is the age of general education students involved? (Choose all that apply)
    a. 3-5 years of age
    b. 5-7 years of age
    c. 8-11 years of age
    d. 12-14 years of age

e. 15-18 Years of age

f. Above 18 years of age

g. unknown

5) What exceptionalities are included in the class? (Choose all that apply)

a. Intellectual disability

b. Behavioral disorder

c. Autism spectrum disorder

d. Communication disorder

e. Visual or hearing impairment

f. Physical or health impairments

g. unknown

6) What kinds of teachers were involved in the class or creating the curriculum? (Choose all that apply)

a. Dance Teacher

b. Academic Teacher

c. Special education Teacher

d. PE Teacher

e. Teacher aid/ Para-professional

f. Physical Therapist

g. Other

7) How many teacher/teacher aids are involved in each class?

a. 1

b. 2-4

c. 5-7

d. 8-10

e. Unknown

8) Where does the class occur?

a. A School

b. Studios

c. Physical Therapy office
d. Community Center
e. Other
f. Unknown

9) How long does the course or class last?
   a. a quarter
   b. a semester
   c. a year
   d. Other
   e. Unknown

10) How long is each lesson?
   a. 20-30 minutes
   b. 30-45 minutes
   c. 1 hour
   d. Over an hour
   e. Unknown

11) How frequently do classes occur?
   a. Once a week
   b. Twice a week
   c. Every other week
   d. Other
   e. Unknown

Strategies and activities which best foster growing relationships

1) Is each general education student paired with a student with exceptionalities?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Unknown

    i. If yes; How were students assigned? (Fill in the blank)

2) How much free time are students given to interact without participating in a part of the class that include specific activities led by the instructor(s)?
    a. 1-5 minutes
    b. 5-10 Minutes
    c. More than 10
    d. Unknown
3) Is there any prompted sharing time?
    a. Yes
    b. No
        i. If yes; what kinds? (Fill in the blank)

4) How much time is allotted for structured exploration or group work?
    a. 1-5 minutes
    b. 5-10 Minutes
    c. More than 10
    d. Unknown
        i. How can these activities be described?

5) What team building activities are included throughout the curriculum? (Fill in the Blank)

6) Do general education students or peer buddies provide any strategies for students with exceptionalities?
    a. Yes
    b. No
        i. If yes; what type of strategies are used. (Fill in the blank)

7) Do general education students use any strategies to better communicate with their peer buddy?
    a. Yes
    b. No
        i. If yes, what type of communication is used? (Fill in the blank)

8) Did the general education students receive any instruction on students with exceptionalities before the class began?
    a. Yes
    b. No
        i. If yes; What did this instruction include? (Fill in the blank)

        ii. How many lessons?
            1. 1-3
            2. 3-5
            3. 5-10

4. Other
5. unknown

9) Does the reading or other instruction include any student accounts of the class/curriculum?
    a. Yes
    b. No
        i. If yes, what? (Fill in the blank)

10) What other activities other than the ones mentioned above allow students to interact? (Fill in the blank)

Curriculum content

1) What dance content standards are addressed? (Choose all that apply)
    a. Creating
    b. Performing
    c. Responding
    d. Connecting
    e. Other
    f. Unknown
2) What elements of dance are included in the curriculum?
    a. Body
    b. Space
    c. Time
    d. Energy
    e. Other

    f. Unknown

3) How are lessons structured? (List the steps of the lessons.)
4) Are folk dances incorporated in lesson?
    a. Yes
    b. No
        i. If yes; How are these dances used to build student relationships. (Fill in the blank)

5) Does the curriculum include instruction on life skills or social stories?
    a. Yes
    b. No
        i. If yes, what kinds? (Fill in the blank)

6) What materials are used throughout lessons? (Fill in the blank)

7) What strategies are used to accommodate exceptional learners? (Fill in the blank)

8) Is student's growth being assessed
    a. Yes
    b. No
        i. If, yes, which students?

1. Students with exceptionalities
2. General education students
3. Both

9) Is there any type of show at the end of the course? (This could be a parents day or a performance)
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unknown
        i. If yes; Are all students required to participate?
            1. Yes
            2. No
            3. Unknown
10) What other content was included in the curriculum that fostered relationships between students? (Fill in the blank)

What content was included in the curriculum that fostered developing empathy in the general education students for the exceptional students? (Fill in the Blank)