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Procedural Checklist Intervention to Increase Math Assignment Completion Among Students with High Incidence Disabilities Martin Rios Calli Lewis Chiu	4
Parallel Conferencing: Co-Viewing And Co-Assessing Teacher Candidates' Videos Stephanie Kotch-Jester Elizabeth Soslau Vicki Goettel Bridget Duda Nicholas Bell Deirdre Lilly	22
Reflections: Exploring Student Writing Self-Efficacy In the Online Environment Sharonica Nelson	39
Engaging Education Majors To Embrace Diversity Through Expressive Arts Annette Mohan Grace Jepkemboi	56
Reshaping Practice: An Action Research Project Exploring Writing Instruction Kate Roll Margaret Vaughn	77
Writing in Mathematics to Increase Student Understanding Ashley Harlan	95
Perceptions of Flexible Seating Mary Ellen Sorrell	120



About the Journal

Founded in 2013, the Journal of Teacher Action Research (ISSN: 2332-2233) is a peer-reviewed online journal indexed with EBSCO that seeks practical research that can be implemented in Pre-Kindergarten through Post-Secondary classrooms. The primary function of this journal is to provide classroom teachers and researchers a means for sharing classroom practices.

The journal accepts articles for peer-review that describe classroom practice which positively impacts student learning. We define teacher action research as teachers (at all levels) studying their practice and/or their students' learning in a methodical way in order to inform classroom practice. Articles submitted to the journal should demonstrate an action research focus with intent to improve the author's practice.

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PERCEPTIONS OF FLEXIBLE SEATING

Mary Ellen Sorrell

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Abstract With flexible seating becoming more common in elementary classrooms, it is important to understand what participating parties think of flexible seating. This study looks at the perceptions of second grade teachers, students, and parents. Data was collected through classroom observations, questionnaires of parents, and interviews of students and teachers. The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents towards flexible seating, to see if perceptions changed after experiencing the new seating, and to understand what lessons were learned after implementing it for one year. The findings indicated that parents believed flexible seating to be good, if their child was learning. Teachers found many benefits for students, and students enjoyed the seating that allowed them to move. These findings will provide information for teachers who are implementing flexible seating.

Keywords: teacher action research, flexible seating, perceptions, kinesthetic intelligence

Introduction

Their eyes lit up when they walked into the room for the first time and looked upon the new seating in the classroom. Mrs. Byrd (all names are pseudonyms) had told the students of the new types of seating that was purchased for our classroom, but it seemed that nothing could have prepared them for what they saw walking into the classroom that morning. Their smiles and enthusiasm told it all, but what were they really thinking? They had only been given a small taste of flexible seating since the beginning of the year. Would they like the new types of seating? What would be their favorite? Would the limited numbers of each type of seating cause bitterness and arguments between the students? These questions circled through my mind the first day of the new flexible seating in our classroom.

What do teachers think of flexible seating? What about parents and students? These are important questions to ask before purchasing types of flexible seating for a classroom. Knowing what other teachers, parents, and students think about flexible seating can help teachers best provide for their classroom community to create a positive learning environment.

Purpose. The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents towards flexible seating. Flexible seating is the supplement of “traditional desks and chairs with seating that accommodates greater flexibility and comfort” (Kennedy, 2016, p. 21). In this study, I sought to understand the lessons learned through the implementation of flexible seating. My purpose was to understand how perceptions changed from the initial implementation of flexible seating to having used flexible seating for almost a full school year.

I conducted the research in the classroom in which I was completing a yearlong clinical teaching experience as a requirement for my M.Ed. in Teaching and Learning. Because of this, the participants knew who I was and were comfortable sharing their thoughts on flexible seating. My research focused on three initial questions that drove this study. What are teachers’, students’, and parents’ perceptions of flexible seating in a second-grade classroom? What are the lessons learned from using and implementing flexible seating in a classroom? How did perceptions change from the beginning of implementation to the end of the school year?

Literature Review

In recent years, an increasing number of teachers have chosen to implement flexible seating into their classrooms. Types of flexible seating include stools, therapy balls, small portable lawn chairs, cushions, boxes, seats with wheels, beanbags, and lofts (Kennedy, 2016). Kennedy (2015) says that, “Classroom spaces need to be flexible and adaptable enough to accommodate these quick changes in tactics and tempo” (p. 26). As classroom practices start to evolve in the use of stations, centers, and small groups, which requires students to use many different parts of the room per day, flexible seating gives students multiple options to sit in different types of seating all over the classroom. With this movement towards flexible seating in the classroom, there have been multiple studies conducted to understand more about flexible seating.

Using flexible seating gives students the chance to move around more in their seats, whether that involves swiveling on a wobble stool or lightly bouncing and rolling on a therapy ball. Gardner (2011) believed that there are nine different intelligences that people best relate to and learn from, which is called the Theory of Multiple Intelligences. We are all born with a mix of the intelligences, possibly including bodily-kinesthetic (Gardner, 2011). It is known that “students with high kinesthetic intelligence process information through their bodies-through muscle, sensation, and movement” (Tamilselvi & Geetha, 2015, p. 4). This means that they can best learn and focus while moving. Their movements can be getting up and walking around a classroom or small movements like swiveling on a wobble stool. Gardner’s (2011) work suggests that perhaps the movement flexible seating allows may benefit students who learn through kinesthetic movements a chance to move without interrupting a classroom.

While theory states that movement, like the movement from flexible seating, could help students who are inclined towards bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (Gardner, 2011), there are

many studies that focus on the benefit flexible seating gives to special needs students. Particularly, researchers have examined the benefit that flexible seating gives to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, students who had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and gifted students. Benefits include an increase in learning, behavior, and health.

Two studies focused on students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Schilling & Schwartz, 2004; Umeda & Deitz, 2011). In Umeda and Deitz's (2011) study, they found that therapy cushions do not produce any benefit for behavioral changes because of the lack of adequate amounts of sensory input given from the cushions. Umeda and Deitz (2011) did not see a change of behavior because of the flexible seating, but for Schilling and Schwartz (2004), results showed behavior improvement with flexible seating. The study showed "substantial improvements in in-seat behavior and engagement across all four participants when seated on therapy balls" because of the active engagement the seating brings to the classroom (Schilling & Schwartz, 2004, p. 430). Although these studies are insightful and show the different effects of two types of flexible seating for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, they provide no data on the perceptions the students had towards flexible seating.

While these two studies attempted to determine whether flexible seating benefited students with autism, two more studies researched the impact on students with ADHD (Schilling, Washington, Billingsley, & Deitz, 2003; Pfeiffer et al., 2008). The purpose of the study conducted by Schilling et al. (2003) was to investigate the effects of therapy balls on student behavior and productivity for students with ADHD. They concluded that therapy balls helped students with ADHD demonstrate better behavior and productivity (Schilling et al., 2003). Interestingly not only do students with Autism Spectrum Disorder benefit from flexible seating, specifically therapy balls, but students with ADHD also benefit from flexible seating. While one study found the benefit of therapy balls for students with ADHD, another study focused on students using cushions (Pfeiffer et al., 2008). Both studies showed the improvement of students' behavior through of the use of flexible seating because of how flexible seating allows the students to move and not stay still in a desk and chair. Although this strengthened the argument for implementing flexible seating, there was no mention of perceptions towards the therapy balls used as seating in the classrooms.

Another benefit of flexible seating present in the research is the health benefits. Wendel, Benden, Zhao, & Jeffery's (2016) research included 380 students in three elementary schools where they studied the students' BMI for two years. The group who used standing desks for the two years decreased their BMI while the group who used standard desks increased their BMI (Wendel et al., 2016). Not only does flexible seating benefit the mental health of special education students, it can also benefit the physical health of all students. Although the Wendel et al. (2016) study showed the positive outcome of using flexible seating in the classroom, it too failed to examine the perceptions of the flexible seating used in the study.

Within studies that focused more on types of students and how they can best learn or how to increase positive behavior, two studies reported on their special populations participants' perceptions about flexible seating. In a study, Rayneri, Gerber, and Wiley (2006) focused on how gifted students learn and how they like to learn. They found that gifted students prefer

classrooms with flexible seating (Rayneri et al., 2006). Rayneri et al. (2006) mentioned their participants' perceptions, but provided little supporting data to verify the statement. Schilling et al. (2003) in their study found some data-supported findings about the perceptions of flexible seating. Schilling et al. (2003) mentioned that of their participants, twenty students preferred therapy balls to regular desks. The students mentioned liking the therapy balls because of increased back comfort, increase of appropriate movement when sitting, helping them have better handwriting, and how the therapy balls helped increase their attention span (Schilling et al., 2003).

These studies produced research describing how flexible seating is helping and benefitting students, but only one study has provided perceptions of flexible seating. Even with a study providing perceptions of flexible seating, there is still no research that addresses students', teachers', and parents' perceptions. Because the studies found were focused on the benefit of flexible seating, whether behavior or health, my study brings new information to the teachers and parents who want to learn more about flexible seating. By only focusing on what parents, teachers, and students think about flexible seating in the classroom, my study helps them understand multiple perceptions of flexible seating. By understanding perceptions of flexible seating, teachers will have the opportunity to modify their classrooms to make their flexible seating more enjoyable for their students, and parents will understand why flexible seating is used in their child's classroom.

Methodology

This action research study included qualitative data collected from teachers, parents, and students. I interviewed, observed, handed out questionnaires, and took pictures of my classroom. Through the year, I built relationships with the other second grade teachers and the parents of our students. Because of this, many participants volunteered to be in the study. After collecting data, I analyzed my data using the constant comparative method where I compared my new findings to previous findings.

Participant Selection. Within this study, there were three types of participants: students, teachers, and parents. Students were selected from one second-grade classroom. Participation was solicited from every student. The students were informed of the study and received an informational letter and consent form for their parents to read and sign. Every student who received consent and assented to the study participated in the observation. I interviewed four students from my classroom, two girls and two boys. I used my data from observations to select which students I interviewed. I sought three second grade teachers' permissions and interviewed those who gave me permission. I interviewed three teachers who were selected based on their use of flexible seating in their classroom. This meant that I chose the teacher I am co-teaching with, one teacher who successfully implemented flexible seating, and one teacher who temporarily stopped using flexible seating after the first six weeks but later brought it back into her classroom. For parents, I sent out letters explaining what I would be doing in their child's class and an attached permission form for if they wanted to participate in the study. All who turned in the permission form participated in the study by filling out a questionnaire.

Data Collection. Data for this study was collected through interviews, questionnaires, observations, and pictures. The interviews included three teachers using semi-structured questions. These interviews lasted around 20-30 minutes. The four students I chose, using purposive sampling (Patton, 1990), were individually interviewed once. Their interviews only lasted 10-15 minutes. The interviews were semi-structured (Hendricks, 2012), which meant that open-ended questions lead to further discussion with the interviewee. Questionnaires with open response questions were sent home to all the parents along with a letter that gained consent of their participation in the study. I observed the class twice a week for three weeks. On these days, I observed and took notes about the students' attitudes towards flexible seating and how they used flexible seating during the day. I also used photographs of my classroom. This was the classroom the students and parents were familiar with when they described flexible seating. I took the pictures before or after school when there were no students in the classroom.

Data Analysis. Qualitative data was analyzed using the constant comparative method with initial coding followed by identifying major categories with supporting codes (Hubbard & Power, 2003). Through the coding, major themes appeared. The first twenty percent of my data was coded, which created 15-20 level I codes (Tracy, 2013), as seen in Appendix A. These themes helped relate the data from the field notes, interviews, and questionnaires to the original research questions. To refine the 15-20 level I codes, I coded the remaining eighty percent of my data and narrowed down to 3-5 level II codes. These codes were chosen to "explain, theorize, and synthesize" the existing level I codes (Tracy, 2013, p. 194). The codes helped me organize my data to write up my findings.

Results

Through my data collection, I encountered many different and similar perceptions from my participants, as seen in Table 1. After coding my data, I narrowed my findings down into several major themes. These included choice, positive outcomes, social impacts, implementation, and classroom management. I will discuss these themes as I address each major research question.

Initial Perceptions. This section focuses on the findings that answer my question about what are parents', students' and teachers' perceptions towards flexible seating. The perceptions I encountered were given after the participants had experienced flexible seating for about a full school year. Since I did not collect data immediately after their first experience with flexible seating, the perceptions I found are considered the initial perceptions because they were the first perceptions I gathered from my participants. The next three sections explain the initial perceptions of the parents, students, and teachers who participated in the study. Their perceptions are based on flexible seating like the types of seating pictured in Figure 1.

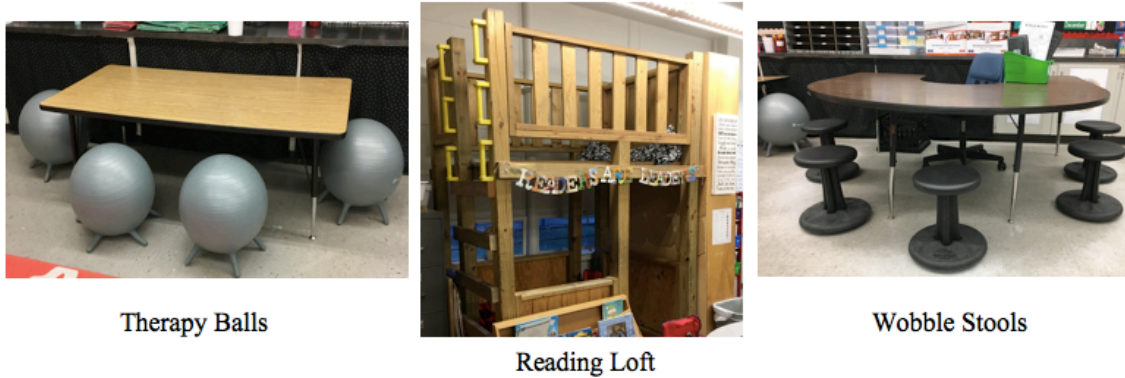


Figure 1. Pictures of types of flexible seating.

Parents' perceptions. Through the parent questionnaires, I learned that most parents perceived flexible seating as a benefit to their child's education; however, some parents believed that flexible seating had a negative effect on the learning of their child. Sergio's mother believed that there "is no structure when seven-year olds can play, learn, or whatever throughout a classroom." This mother also asked for her son to not participate in flexible seating. His assigned desk and chair are attached to the teacher's desk, and he is not even able to sit on the carpet during whole carpet time. The parents' believed that their child's behavior was poor because of the lack of structure that flexible seating creates in the classroom.

Table 1: Overall Perceptions from all Participants

Overall Perceptions from all Participants	
<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit to education • Great for active children • Gives students a choice • Sit near friends • Each subject needs a different type of seating • "It's great!" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of structure • Distracting Atmosphere

Another parent believed that along with the lack of structure, it created an atmosphere that was distracting for children. One mother substituted in a classroom where flexible seating had been implemented, and she found the room noisy because of the seats and that the

children were never focused. It seemed that parents worry about classroom management once flexible seating had been implemented.

While a few parents voiced their opinion about the negative aspects of flexible seating, the other parents seemed enthusiastic about their child's seating experience. These parents mainly focused on the positive outcomes and student choice in their questionnaires. One mother believed flexible seating to be "fantastic, especially for active children". Other parents agreed that the movement the seats allowed created a positive learning environment for their children because their bodies are engaging their limbic system, and it allows them to "get their wiggles out" which allows them to pay better attention to the lesson being taught.

Along with students becoming more engaged with their learning, parents perceived flexible seating as a great way for students to make decisions for themselves. As Zoe's mother put it, "it lets the kids feel in charge as they get to make a choice on where to sit." As you will learn, teachers do not believe the students are "in charge", but if the students are enjoying the seating and learning, that is what matters the most. Heather's dad thinks that flexible seating makes his daughter feel valued because of the decisions she gets to make on where to sit that best fits her needs. As I mentioned before, some students need that kinesthetic movement to best help them learn, but there are those children who need to be still to focus. The different choices of seating help students pick the seat where they will best learn, and this makes the parents feel good about the new experience with flexible seating.

Students' perceptions. Students seemed to agree with the positive perceptions their parents had about flexible seating. In my observations and interviews with students, I did not encounter negative perceptions towards flexible seating. Some comments made it clear that some students would learn better with standard seating. One of the most common perceptions that students had was that they get to sit by their friends because of the choice flexible seating gives. Three of the four student interview participants mentioned this with a smile on their faces because they enjoy getting to sit by their friends. But as Mark mentioned, if he had an assigned seat, he would not sit by people he would talk to, making it easier for him to learn. Even though he admits that learning would be better with standard seating, Mark, like his peers, agreed that he would rather have flexible seating in his third-grade classroom.

In my observations, I saw the importance of sitting near friends. Students saved seats for friends, moved to a different seat to be near a friend, or waited for their friend to get to school in the morning to choose their seats together. On multiple occasions, I had two girls wait for each other to get to school before choosing their seat. In my interviews, the theme of friends seemed to emerge frequently when talking about the choice flexible seating gave them.

Along with the students getting to sit with their friends because of the choice aspect of flexible seating, they also could choose their favorite type of seat. Overwhelmingly, the favorite seats were the therapy balls and the wobble stools (pictured below). While observing, I noticed that the first seats to be chosen each morning were the therapy balls, and the stools were usually chosen second. The students described these seats as comfortable and fun. Heather liked the wobble stools because “you don’t have to sit still and be stiff all day.” John explained that his back becomes cramped after sitting still for an extended period, and that with the therapy balls and stools, he gets the flexibility that he needs to make his back feel better. Zoe said that she likes all chairs that move, which would be the therapy balls and wobble stools. It seems that maybe all students need or prefer that slight kinesthetic movement in the classroom that the therapy balls and stools offer.

When asked, the students who participated in the interview all mentioned that they wished that along with choosing where to sit and who to sit by, they could pick their seat for each subject. They enjoyed the fresh and new experiences the choice of seating brought them each day; however, they believed that they would learn best if they were able to change seats for each subject. One student, Zoe, wanted to just have her own space, or in her perfect classroom, a personal loft (see Figure 1). The other three students believed that the different subjects call for different types of seating. John needed stability from the camp chairs or boxes while learning about science or when writing; however, he liked the movement the other seating gives him during math and reading. Other students had their own preferences about which seating is best for which subject, but the way the seating was implemented did not allow the students to change seats throughout the day; the teacher made this decision based on her own findings.

Teachers’ perceptions. As I mentioned, teachers made changes in how the students used flexible seating each day after implementing the seating for two months. Two of the three teachers who were interviewed changed their classroom plan by allowing students to choose one seat for the entire day. They originally thought that having the students choose a different seat for each subject or activity would be best. As Mrs. Byrd said, “I think that I liked the idea that the kids had a choice in the classroom,” while Mrs. Red wanted freedom for her students. The teachers originally implemented flexible seating to give their students choice, but they quickly learned that having them choose a seat per activity was too much choice and freedom for one day.

Not only did the teachers implement flexible seating because they thought it would give their students more choice, but they also believed that flexible seating would help students who need the kinesthetic movement. Mrs. Red mentioned in her interview that she wanted to do something about her fidgety kids. After reading research, the teachers were interested in seeing if giving students therapy balls and stools would help the students who needed movement. Along with believing that the moveable seats would help their active students, Mrs. Byrd just wanted to take away the chairs because “some kids just do not know how to sit in a chair. Period. So, it is kind of good to take away that stress, instead of me fighting about if they sit correctly.” The perception of flexible seating was that it would

help the active students, and there would be fewer problems of students sitting correctly. However, they quickly learned that the therapy balls created new problems with students bouncing on them or popping them.

While thinking that flexible seating would help the active students and give all students choice in the classroom, the main perception the teachers had about the new seating was that “it was great!” The teachers could view a first-grade teacher’s room the previous year that inspired them to implement it in their own classrooms. Once they researched flexible seating and became excited about the new types of seating, as Mrs. Red said, they “just did it.” They jumped into the new school year with seating that would hopefully help their students learn and make them feel included in the workings of the classroom by giving them choice.

Perceptions After One Year. As previously stated, I was not collecting data when the students, parents, and teachers experienced flexible seating for the first time. Because of this, I am limited in the extent to which I can fully answer my research question about if perceptions changed throughout the first year the participants experienced flexible seating. Teachers and students did not mention much about their changed perceptions. Teachers still had positive feeling towards the seating, and the students said that they had always liked it and that they still do like the seating in the classroom.

One parent was the only participants who mentioned a change in their perceptions. On the parent questionnaires, I had one parent mention that their perception had changed because when she was first introduced to the idea she never thought it would work because the “children would play around and not take their work seriously,” but after seeing it implemented in her daughter’s classroom for a year, she saw “it is a setup that actually works for children.”

Other parents mentioned that they have always wanted flexible seating, and that now that they have experienced it, they want flexible seating for their child every year. Carrie’s mother’s perception was always positive because she thought it was a great idea at the beginning and still believes so. Comments like this were consistent with most of the answers to questions about how participants’ perceptions changed after having flexible seating for a year. No participant who had a positive perception about flexible seating had their perception turn negative throughout the year.

Discussion

Although the teachers’ perceptions stayed positive throughout their implementation and first year of flexible seating, it was not always perfect in the classroom. The three participating teachers answered my question about what they learned throughout their first year of using flexible seating.

Make clear expectations. “Go slow.” This was the most important piece of advice the teachers had for peers when explaining how to implement flexible seating in a classroom. The three teachers all mentioned that they were so excited that they jumped right into the school year with the new seating. They recommended teachers try it, but they learned that there must be clear expectations, and that you should introduce the seating options little by little. One teacher recommended that you “go through every single scenario in your classroom that you can possibly think of and come up with a procedure for it before you implement it.” This will help the classroom run more smoothly, especially with a substitute in the room.

One teacher learned that without explicit directions and expectations, a substitute might not know the regular routines of the classroom. After a bad note from a substitute, Mrs. Asher took away flexible seating for a couple of weeks. She made her students earn back the privilege of the seating. That is where she came up with the idea of introducing the seating little-by-little until they prove they are ready for a new type of seating.

Along with the clear expectations and introducing the seats one at a time, Mrs. Byrd recommended that teachers spend time explaining the rules, procedures, and expectations for each seat to the students. This is where they all agreed that teachers need to “go slow”. Next year, when Mrs. Byrd introduces flexible seating to her new class, she plans on explaining every detail about each seat instead of jumping right into using the flexible seating.

You will learn as you go. Before implementing flexible seating in their classrooms, the teachers read research online and asked a first-grade teacher, who used it the previous year, about her opinions. She mentioned that students enjoyed sitting on the floor, therapy balls, and stools. Because of this, the participating teachers included floor seating as a flexible seating option. They bought small rug circles and cushions for the students to use, but to their surprise, the students did not like sitting on the floor. This is when they realized that every year is going to be different. When using flexible seating, the teacher must be flexible as well. They must learn as they go to make sure that the students are enjoying the seating options. Another teacher learned about the type of table she and her students enjoyed. Mrs. Red learned she did not like the big round tables because the students’ workboxes would sit on top of the table, blocking their view of the board. When using flexible seating, teachers will have to learn what is best practice for their students and classroom.

It costs money. A major theme that emerged in the interviews with the teachers was that the seating costs money. Two of the three teachers were fortunate to receive a grant to help pay for their seating; the third teacher had to pay out of her own pocket. Mrs. Asher gave herself a budget that she did not want to exceed. She knew the previous year that she wanted to implement flexible seating the following year, so that summer, she constantly looked for sales and deals. Even with the sales she found on different types of flexible seating, Mrs. Asher also prioritized her list of seats. She knew she wanted stools and

therapy balls, so they were first on her list to buy. Knowing her budget and what she wanted in her classroom, Mrs. Asher furnished her classroom without straining her wallet.

Mrs. Red had not received her grant yet, but she knew she wanted to implement flexible seating, so she looked at garage sales and on Facebook for seats that would be enjoyable for her students. One day, her friend posted a Facebook post about two therapy balls that she wanted out of her house. When Mrs. Red saw that post, she went straight to her friend's house and received two free therapy balls for her classroom. As she said, "you have to be thrifty" when buying all the seats for your classroom because it can get expensive.

Another idea that emerged in my interviews was that teachers can slowly add throughout the year so the teacher does not have to purchase it all at once. Not only would this help with spreading out the expense, but it would also help the teacher make clear expectations about each type of seating he or she brought into the classroom, and it would give the teacher more time to learn what types of seating her students like before wasting money on seats they do not enjoy.

It helps you get to know students. One of Mrs. Byrd's favorite parts of flexible seating was that she could get to know her students better. She better understood the students' personalities, and it gave her more "of an idea of who [were] friends and who [were] not friends" in her classroom. She believed that she learned information about her students that in previous years she had not.

All three teachers mentioned that there were groups of students who sat by each other each day. Mrs. Red had students take their friend's "choice folder" out of their locker and put it by the desk where they were sitting to make sure that they would get to sit by their friend that day. Mrs. Red saw this as an opportunity to make her students feel good because it showed the students that they were wanted and cared for by their peers. Without flexible seating, the teachers would have a more difficult time learning which students were friends with whom.

Implications

The lessons above are the lessons that the teachers learned through their experience this past year. However, they are not the only participants who learned through this research. When interviewing my students, they seemed to have come to realize that because they chose to sit by their friends, they did not learn as much as they could. Three of the students mentioned that because of the choice and movement that flexible seating allows, they could learn better, but once they started talking about the social aspect of flexible seating, their minds somewhat changed. They said that of course they talk more sitting next to friends, and if they chose their seat based on the type of seat instead of which friend to sit by, they would learn more each day. Although they realized their mistake of sitting next to friends, their choices each day did not change. They might have learned about their poor decision-making, but that did not change whom they sat by after the interviews and realizations.

I learned that overall, perceptions of flexible seating were positive. Parents wanted their children to learn, which was the same goal as the teachers. If teachers had good classroom management and procedures with the flexible seating, seventy-five percent of students seemed to believe that flexible seating helped them learn. Because of this, I learned that flexible seating is beneficial for student learning. The students enjoyed the choice they were given each day, and they enjoyed moving in their seat without getting in trouble. The only hindrance for student learning seemed to be the social aspect of flexible seating. One procedure that teachers need to address is what to do when students make a bad decision and sit by a friend whom they talk to when working at their seat. Once that is fixed, flexible seating seems to be beneficial for the classroom.

Conclusion

For future studies, I would want to know if flexible seating really does help student learning. My study found out that parents, teachers, and students perceive that the new seating helps the students learn, but does it really? People can perceive that flexible seating is beneficial for students learning, but without research to support it, teachers will not know if it helps learning or not. As one mother said, she cannot “get on board with it until she sees more research”. I know that kinesthetic movement is good for students, especially if they are kinesthetic learners (Gardner, 2011), but there has not been an implementation study to track student growth. To best help students learn, I believe that answering the question of does flexible seating truly help with student learning is extremely important. As teachers, we need to know the best practices for our students. For now, I can say that parents’, teachers’, and students’ perceptions are positive, and that they enjoy flexible seating. So as Mrs. Red said, “Just try it!”

About the Author

Mary Ellen Sorrell is a third-grade teacher in Frisco, Texas. At Abilene Christian University, she majored in Elementary Education in 2016, as well as receiving her Masters of Education in Teaching and Learning in 2017. Email: mep11b@acu.edu

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Appendix A: Codebook

<i>Code Name</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Example</i>
Choice	I	Students can choose where they sit each day and on whatever type of seat they want to sit on.	"I also like kids having some freedom to make choices" (Red Interview, p. 1).
Focus	I	Any perceptions that believe that flexible seating either helps or hinders focus.	"If it is proven that it helps students focus and stay on task, then I think it's a good idea" (Natalie's Mom Questionnaire, line 11-12).
Implementation	I	Any descriptions of the ways the teachers implemented flexible seating in the classroom.	"Take your time with your procedures and take your time introducing different seats" (Byrd Interview, p. 3).
Get to know students	I	Any descriptions of how teachers can get to know their students' personalities and social circles through observing their use of flexible seating.	"Now that they are used to the seats a little more, they choose who they want to sit by. It gives me more of an idea of who is friends and who is not friends" (Byrd Interview, p. 3).
Traditional	I	Any descriptions of traditional seating (desks and non-moving chairs) and how students and teachers feel about them.	"I think that when I substituted in a class and they were in traditional seating, there were definitely some things that make that a little bit easier. Having kids in a row and at a desk where you know exactly where you sit. That makes management simpler." (Byrd Interview, p. 2).
Movement	I	Any descriptions of the movement the students can do, including moving seats, bouncing, spinning, wobbling, and fidgeting.	"Children learn more when they can move" (Heather's Dad Questionnaire, line 12).

Optimal Learning	I	Any perceptions of whether flexible seating helps or hinders student learning.	"Some research has shown that it is very good for children in their learning. If they can worry less and being comfortable or uncomfortable they can then focus more on academics" (Asher Interview, p. 1).
Enjoyment	I	Any explanations of why teachers and students enjoy flexible seating.	"I think I can just tell from years past that they are happier" (Asher Interview, p. 2).
Research	I	Any description of the research that was viewed before implementation.	"I had read quite a bit this summer about it, and I became very interested in it" (Red Interview, p. 1).
Normality	I	Any description of how flexible seating is now "normal".	"Well I am kind of used to it" (Heather Interview, p. 1).
Do it!	I	These words were spoken by two of the three teachers when explaining their advice for teachers who want to implement flexible seating.	"I would say, do it!" (Byrd Interview, p. 3)
Classroom Management	I	The descriptions of procedures and rules that were created for classrooms with flexible seating.	"Sometimes the chair is the answer" (Red Interview, p. 4).
Distracting	I	Descriptions of how flexible seating can be distracting to students.	"It seems like it could be a little, or a lot, distracting. I found it somewhat distracting when I substitute taught in a room with flexible seating. The kids on the big therapy balls moved a lot and made quite a bit of noise with their 'seats'" (Natalie's Mom Questionnaire, line 3-6).

Upsetting	I	Descriptions of how conflicts were created because of flexible seating choices each morning.	"Ellen beat Lane, and then Lane was upset that he didn't get the ball, so he started calling her mean names" (Observation #3, line 17-18).
Multiple Options	I	Description of the multiple options of seating that the students can choose from.	"I have exercise balls, wobble stools, ottoman box cubes, camp chairs, and then regular chairs" (Byrd Interview, p. 1).
Balls/Stools	I	Any mention of the ball and stools, whether chosen to sit on or their perceptions of them.	Talking about what is her favorite. "The balls... because you don't have to sit still... you don't have to sit still and be stiff all day" (Heather Interview, p. 2).
Friends	I	Any data on students choosing to sit by friends when choosing their seats each morning.	"If we had desks, we would sit by people we wouldn't talk to" and "I like to sit by my friends" (Mark Interview, p. 4).
Cost Money	I	Descriptions of how flexible seating costs money, some teachers received grants while others paid out of their own pockets.	"I knew I wanted yoga balls, so that was the first thing I got. I made a list of what I wanted, so I spent the whole summer shopping, looking for sales." (Asher Interview, p. 4).
Choice	II	The students have choice and freedom each day by choosing to sit by friends and traditional seating over flexible seating.	"They feel valued to make decisions about how/where to sit to learn that best fits their needs" (Heather's Dad Questionnaire, line 3-4).
Positive Outcomes	II	Flexible seating has created positive outcomes including helping students who need to fidget, the students enjoy the seating and freedom, and it	"Zoe seems to love to do class work since she's able to choose her own seat" (Zoe's Mom Questionnaire, line 6-7).

		can help learning and focus.	
Social Aspects	II	Teachers can understand students and their social circles because of the seats they choose each day, and the students are able to sit next to their friends each day.	"I like to sit by my friends. If I sit by John, you know that I am going to talk. And Lane, and Steve, and Edison. That is why I want actual seating for every year. And ,it will help me learn" (Mark Interview, p. 4).
Implementation	II	The description of how teacher implemented flexible seating in their classroom, including the cost of it.	"I think my first thing was when I first did it, they picked a spot every time for every subject. Three or four times throughout the day, and I quickly learned that that was not going to work. That made too long of transition times. So, I quickly make it where they just picked one spot for the day" (Asher Interview, p. 1).
Classroom Management	II	The description of the procedures and rules that are in place because of flexible seating, and the classroom environment because of the different types of seating.	"They come in the morning and pick their spot. That is the spot they are at for the whole day unless they make bad choices of those spots and then I pick a new spot for them" (Asher Interview, p. 1).