

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Embracing Neurodiversity: Exploring Inclusive Education
Practices in Neurodiverse-Focused Schools

By

Shayda Shevidi

June 2024

A paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts degree in the
Master of Arts Program in Social Sciences

Faculty Adviser: Lisa Rosen
Preceptor: Marshall Kramer

Abstract

This study explores the potential of schools to serve as spaces for inclusion and empowerment for neurodiverse individuals. Focusing on City Elementary, a Chicago independent school that works with neurodiverse children, this case study examines the school's approach to education and the perspectives of educators, parents, and students within the school. This research underscores the significance of explicit pedagogical strategies, personalized education approaches, and the integration of social-emotional awareness in shaping a transformative educational experience for neurodiverse learners. It also critically examines and challenges the conventional deficit-focused perspective on disabilities. City Elementary offers an alternative model for neurodiverse education. This research underlines the necessity of re-evaluating existing educational policies and practices to create a more inclusive and empowering learning environment that caters to neurodiversity.

Introduction

Schools exist as spaces of learning to cultivate well-rounded citizens and facilitate the growth of all individuals. However, ongoing discourse regarding inclusion remains prevalent in educational circles and broader society. This is especially evident considering that not all students come into the classroom with the same abilities, a fact particularly true for neurodiverse students.

The landscape of education is not homogeneous, particularly when considering the diverse spectrum of student abilities present in any given classroom. The conversation around inclusion is particularly urgent when examining the experiences of

neurodiverse students who learn differently from their neurotypical peers. Existing studies suggest that disabilities are commonly perceived through a deficit lens in societal attitudes and educational frameworks, underscoring the need to investigate strategies for fostering inclusive learning environments.

This study aims to explore the effectiveness of alternative educational strategies within a neurodiversity-focused school setting. The investigation is centered on the experiences and viewpoints of three key stakeholders: educators, parents, and students. Through their perspectives, the research will aim to illuminate the impact of these alternative educational approaches on both academic performance and personal development.

This thesis is a case study about City Elementary, a Chicago independent school that specifically works with neurodiverse children between kindergarten and eighth grade. The breakdown of students' neurodiversity at City is as follows: 50% with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), 30% with attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and 20% with learning disabilities, sensory processing disorders, and specific language impairments. It is important to highlight that attention and learning disabilities are regarded as interrelated. Children with ASD are also at higher risk for comorbidity, or overlapping diagnoses, with other conditions (Rusell and Pavelka, 2013). In particular, 50 to 70% of individuals with autism also present with comorbid ADHD diagnosis (Hours et al., 2022). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that students at City may have other diagnoses in addition to their primary diagnoses.

This paper is organized to provide a comprehensive understanding of the context and significance of City Elementary's neurodiverse-centered approach. I begin by

tracing the history of special education in the United States, followed by an examination of the frameworks of disability and neurodiversity that shape my inquiry. Next, I turn to the perspectives of students, parents, and teachers at City Elementary, which provide a nuanced understanding of the model's benefits and unique features. I situate these perspectives from participants in the best practices in special education, as revealed in the literature. I conclude by addressing the limitations of City Elementary. This structure informs readers of the historical and conceptual context of special education, while also gaining insights into how City Elementary's approach can inform and improve educational experiences for all learners.

History of Special Education in the United States

In 1975, Congress enacted the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), originally named the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, due to several factors. Concerns regarding states' inability to provide adequate public education for these children became widespread. Simultaneously, states sought financial assistance from the federal government to fund public education services specifically for children with disabilities. IDEA aimed to address these issues by establishing requirements for educating students with disabilities and providing federal funding to assist states in meeting those obligations (Martin et al., 1996).

The passage of IDEA in 1975 was a defining moment in special education legislation, setting a precedent for modern special education practices. In addition, the enactment of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was a civil rights law that aimed to eliminate any discrimination based on disability in any program receiving

federal assistance (Madaus and Shaw, 2006). These two laws have shaped how special education is implemented in schools. Later advocacy efforts aimed at greater inclusivity in education for students with disabilities (SWDs) directly challenged the practice of removing them from general education classes. Federal laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 mandate inclusion for SWDs, with exceptions made only when necessary to address individual learning needs. Other legislative measures like the Every Student Succeeds Act and the No Child Left Behind Act further encourage full inclusion by holding schools accountable for SWDs' performance based on grade-level standards.

Over the span of forty years, education has evolved from separate placement of those with disabilities to inclusion in mainstream classrooms. Inclusive education was initially geared towards providing students with disabilities focused equity efforts, but has since branched off into a broader definition to provide for all historically marginalized students (Forlin, 2010).

One method of providing inclusive education in the classroom is through Individualized Education Programs (IEP). School psychologists and teachers are expected to collaborate with parents to create IEPs. IEP meetings are held with teachers and parents, as well as an outside facilitator. The outside facilitator maintains order in the meeting, and parents and teachers can collaborate to create an educational roadmap for students with disabilities, at no cost to the parent. Student progress is monitored and updated to reflect their current needs (Mueller, 2009).

Additionally, individuals with disabilities may require testing accommodations or modifications to ensure equitable access. Some modifications could be extra testing

time, small group instruction, assistive communication devices, and adaptive writing tools (Fuchs et al., 2005). As mandated by Section 504, these accommodations change the testing format without changing what is being tested, leading to comparable scores (Hanson et al., 2023). Even with current policies and laws geared toward inclusion and accessibility, major obstacles persist. Opportunities for inclusion are not equally accessible to all SWDs based on factors including race, gender, and disability. Despite efforts for inclusion, students with disabilities (SWDs) frequently lack the necessary interventions and support to access mainstream curriculum. Systemic challenges such as inadequate teacher training and resources, further exacerbate this problem. The persistent achievement gap between SWDs and their peers indicates that, despite being placed in general education settings, many SWDs still struggle to access the curriculum. (Stelitano, 2020).

City Elementary

City Elementary is an outlier to mainstream schools' approach to working with neurodiverse students. City is premised on the idea that children inhabit a wide spectrum of neurodevelopmental profiles. They prioritize teaching social and emotional skill-building alongside academic subjects like math, reading, and science. Small class sizes allow for a better student-to-teacher ratio, with one teacher for every four students. This system enables teachers to focus on individual students and create an environment that fosters attention, self-regulation, and social interaction.

The school works closely with parents to develop educational plans that align with students' learning styles and goals. This collaborative approach aims to bridge the

gap between home and school, ensuring a consistent learning experience. City Elementary recognizes that students have unique needs and abilities, and its approach is designed to support their diverse learning styles and social-emotional development.

The curriculum at City Elementary integrates explicit instruction in social and self-regulation skills with the teaching of core academic subjects. Small class sizes create an environment where educators provide personalized attention, scaffolding, and support in areas such as attention, emotional control, and interpersonal communication.

Methods and Limitations

I used a qualitative case study to examine City Elementary's approach with neurodiverse students. With the help of the Head of the School, I gathered the perspectives of teachers, students, and parents. I asked 12 participants – one Head of the School, two Head Teachers, two Co-Teachers, three parents, and four students – a series of questions through informal interviews that highlighted their experiences at City Elementary. These questions allowed me to gather insights from educators, parents, and students at City Elementary, exploring their experiences and perspectives on the school's approach to supporting neurodiverse students. The interview questions covered topics such as the school's educational philosophy and framework, teaching strategies, self-advocacy, and inclusivity, as well as the participants' personal experiences and perceptions of the school environment. Lastly, I was also able to sit in classrooms to observe how students interact with each other.

Additionally, I have been volunteer-teaching a Social Music class at City Elementary for two quarters. Through teaching social music, I have become well

acquainted with the learning styles of students and witnessed them interact with one another, while building significant rapport with several of my informants. This benefitted my study because students felt comfortable talking to me about their past and present experiences in school since I was a familiar face.

There are some limitations to my methods for this study. One potential limitation of this study is the use of the Head of School as the primary point of contact for data collection. As the leader of the school, the Head of School may have had an insider bias that influenced the information provided to me. For example, it is possible that the Head of School may have wanted to present the school in the best possible light, leading them to overemphasize the school's strengths and downplay its weaknesses.

Additionally, City Elementary is a private school with an annual tuition of approximately \$30,000. This high tuition cost poses a significant financial barrier, potentially limiting access for students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and reducing the socioeconomic diversity of the student population. In turn, the perspectives I gained from the parents of students could reflect financial privilege and may not be representative of the experiences and viewpoints of families from lower-income backgrounds. Therefore, the study's findings may be limited in their ability to generalize to a broader population of students and families, particularly those from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. However, all parents vehemently expressed that they want City to be accessible to far more neurodiverse students, and that its approach should be replicated by many other schools.

The final limitation to my study could be the age of the students interviewed, as they were all below 13 years. Their responses to the questions posed were often

unclear or lacking in conciseness. A significant proportion of them were unwilling to discuss negative experiences from previous schools, and their explanations regarding their preference for City Elementary were typically ambiguous. However, their parents discussed this at length.

Theoretical Frameworks for the Study

Models of Disability

Before discussing how neurodiversity is addressed in classrooms, it is necessary to review the various models of disability understood within the disability studies movement. There are two widely accepted and influential models: the medical model of disability and the social model of disability.

The medical model of disability frames disabled bodies and minds as “deviant, pathological, and defective” and pushes for them to be addressed in strictly medical terms (Kafer, 2013). This model holds that the most appropriate approach to disability is to view the condition as an illness and impairment with a clear goal of “treating” that condition, and views disability within a strictly deficit mindset. Kafer highlights that the medicalization of this framework reaches past the involvement of doctors and other medical providers because it positions disability as an entirely objective medical issue (Kafer, 5). This has important implications, as it manages to isolate the social realities of disability and treats disability as an individual condition that must be managed. The individual is responsible for treatment and handling of their diagnosis, which centralizes their disability as a problem.

Researchers formed the British social model of disability as a response to this, which shifts attention from the impaired body to the surrounding environment (Williamson, 2015). The origins of the social model can be traced back to the efforts of disabled activists and scholars in the UK, particularly within the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS). UPIAS challenged the medical model and advocated for a more holistic understanding of disability that acknowledges the role of social structures and attitudes (Shakespeare, 2010). This model asserts that society is responsible for the impairment of people because social structures impede people's participation rather than cause deficits, which underscores their oppressed identity. This model has been criticized for its view of illness and impairment as being mutually exclusive and for neglecting the social-relational nature of impairment and illness (Owens, 2015).

Critiques of the previous frameworks of disability led to the creation of the political relational model of disability, which I use as the basis for my research. This model views the problem of disability as “no longer [residing] in the minds or bodies of individuals but in built environments and social patterns that exclude or stigmatize particular kinds of bodies, minds, and ways of being” (Kafer, 6). The model emphasizes the worthiness of people with disabilities for discussion and debate, and it encourages activism and collective action to challenge ableism and create a more inclusive society. City Elementary’s students frequently come from schools that stigmatized their neurodiversity and experienced exclusionary measures. By predicating its philosophy of inclusion on recognizing the strength of students and their neurodiversity, City seeks to create a safe and supportive learning environment that values and celebrates the

diversity of its students, rather than perpetuating ableist attitudes and structures that have historically marginalized and excluded them.

Disability scholars and advocates for the rights of people with disabilities have argued for abandoning the language of disability in favor of the language of difference. Alison Kafer, the creator of the political-relational model, supports politics that go beyond individual accommodations to address larger systemic issues and promote social justice for people with disabilities. Rather than perceiving conditions like autism as defects, neurodiversity involves recognizing such conditions as a natural variation, comparable to other markers of human diversity such as race, gender, or sexuality.

In the political-relational model, “cripping” refers to the deliberate reclaiming of disability identity as a form of empowerment. Crip theory is more contestable and willing to explore potential risks (Kafer, 8). By reconceptualizing the classroom through a “cripping lens”, it cultivates political awareness of disability as a socially constructed concept. This approach directs attention towards issues of accessibility as necessary to be reflected upon in interpersonal and social dynamics. Crippling in the classroom urges students to contemplate their actions as well as the establishment of practices aimed at challenging disabling societal conditions. This representation of disability creates new standards of interaction and ways of engaging with the world (McKinney, 2016).

The role of education in creating supportive social structures that encourage individuals to reach their potential is important. Advocates of crip theory underscore the presence of disabling elements in classrooms and culture, drawing attention to the widespread ableist notions that permeate daily life and educational settings. To counteract these disabling aspects and ensure educational accessibility for all students,

particularly those with disabilities, it is essential to integrate disability perspectives into teaching methodologies (McKinney, 115, 126). Furthermore, scholars of disability studies propose an overall transformation in pedagogy, emphasizing the creation of inclusive learning environments that accommodate the diverse requirements of all learners, including neurodiverse individuals (Dawson, 2022).

Neurodiversity

This thesis regards neurodiversity as an essential aspect of human diversity that must be accommodated and embraced in educational settings. Neurodiversity is defined as the principle of the brain having many natural variations. This results in people interacting with the world in different ways. It emphasizes that differences should not be viewed as deficits; rather, they exist as simple differences that deviate from the norm (Baumer and Fruer, 2021). Neurodiversity exists on a spectrum but primarily includes those with neurodevelopmental conditions, such as autism, ADHD, and other learning disabilities. The neurodiversity movement seeks to create a culture where neurodiverse individuals can feel pride within their minority group identity and support each other in self-advocacy (Kapp et al., 2012). This project regards neurodiversity as a critical aspect of human diversity that must be accommodated and embraced in educational settings.

With words like disability and neurodivergent, they imply that there is an inherent deficit or weakness caused by a difference in the brain. This is harmful to individuals, as it fosters a perception among individuals that there is a deficiency within themselves, whereas in reality, their brains are wired differently. In response to this, the concept of neurodiversity directly challenges deficit perspectives on disability in educational

settings by shifting the focus from perceiving neurodivergent individuals as inherently deficient or abnormal to appreciating and respecting the variety of neurological differences (Bailey, 2023). It campaigns for the recognition of the strengths of neurodiverse individuals and uses these strengths to increase benefit to society as a whole. Advocates of neurodiversity oppose pathologizing attitudes that categorize neurodivergent individuals as needing to be fixed or conform to fit a neurotypical standard.

All students in the classroom shape and modify their identities as they continue in their educational journey. However, not all students learn in the same ways, which is seen in the case of neurodiverse students. Supporters of neurodiversity expand conversations past the disability rights movement to include cognitive, emotional, and perceptual variations of people (McGee, 2012). As a result of the disability rights movement, there is a growing recognition of neurodiversity, arguing that neurological differences, such as ADHD, dyslexia, and autism, are natural variations of the brain throughout human evolution. Proponents of the concept of neurodiversity firmly believe that neurological variation is natural and essential to the viability and longevity of the human species (McGee, 12-13).

This shift in perspective can contribute to a more inclusive educational environment that values diversity and accommodates a range of learning styles. By acknowledging neurodiversity, educators and administrators can move away from traditional deficit-based approaches, which often pathologize differences, and towards a more inclusive framework that recognizes the unique strengths of neurodivergent individuals. This approach is supported by research in disability studies, which

highlights the importance of challenging norms and promoting diversity as a key aspect of inclusivity.

Mainstream Schools' Approach to Neurodiversity

Integrating students with various abilities, including those with learning disabilities, into mainstream schools does not guarantee a high standard of education. Schools often resort to excuses to justify excluding certain students, attributing their exclusionary practices to factors like limited resources or inadequate training among teaching staff to support students effectively (Sharma, 2018). One study has shown that teacher education programs inadequately equip teachers to effectively teach students with diverse abilities, including those with disabilities. Over a third of participants noted that their teacher education programs did not cover information about inclusive education. Additional feedback from the same participants highlighted that the lack of experience among educators hindered their ability to translate theoretical knowledge into real practices for future teachers (Nicholls and Pinnock, 2012). This lack of teacher preparation for inclusive classrooms suggests that many current teachers within the same educational system may encounter challenges in effectively accommodating all students in normative classrooms.

It is easily recognizable to find that neurodivergent students have differing and adverse experiences in educational environments in comparison to their neurotypical peers. A student's school environment plays a crucial role in shaping their identities, but the impact on neurodivergent individuals is not fully understood and requires more attention. For those with neurodivergence, they are often treated as problem students in

the classroom, mainly as a result of the ways that their neurodiversity presents (i.e. fidgeting, vocal interruptions during class), and this can greatly impact their experiences in the classroom and impact their learner identities. Learner identities refer to the perceptions students have of themselves as learners, which are influenced by their relations with their pupils (Reay, 2010). For example, students with ADHD often experience negative feelings about how they are different from their peers, as well as more scrutiny and lower expectations from teachers. Labeling and stigma can produce negative self-esteem, which can in turn impact the identity of the neurodiverse individual (Owens, 2020).

Although neurodiverse students are frequently placed in mainstream classrooms, these students are often subject to exclusion by their peers. They struggle with acceptance from their peers and have fewer strong friendships (Chen and Pattern, 2021). They are often subject to bullying from their classmates, which leads to them developing feelings of not belonging (Rose et al., 2015). Existing research on social participation among neurodivergent students has been heavily shaped by the medical model, which attributes their challenges in participation to their deficits, such as a perceived lack of "acceptable" social skills (Chen and Patten, 2-3). This reductive perspective fails to account for the large role that external environmental factors play in shaping the social experiences of neurodivergent learners.

In this thesis, I utilize the political relational model to guide my inquiry on how City Elementary differs from mainstream schools. By using language that views disability as a difference rather than a deficit, City reframes its educational philosophy to view its students as nuanced individuals, rather than forcing them to conform to

mainstream ideas and practices of education. Because mainstream schools force students into molds of what is believed to be a good student (i.e. maintaining attention, staying silent during class, being seated for the duration of the class), City differs in that it believes “children inhabit a wide spectrum”. Through its recognition of the value of neurodiversity and promotion of self-advocacy, as well as its efforts in challenging societal barriers to inclusion, City Elementary exemplifies a progressive and inclusive educational approach.

Perspectives on City from Parents

My conversations with parents revealed their relief in finding a school for their children that, for the first time, worked for them. Many of them talked about how their children were frequently disciplined for their forms of self-regulation in mainstream schools.

Studies have found that interventions aimed at addressing social participation challenges for neurodivergent students have predominantly focused on the modification of behaviors within the individual and less attention on the social environments around them (Leigers et al., 2016). In overlooking key factors such as peer attitudes, institutional policies, and other systemic barriers, their absence in being addressed can profoundly impact the ability of neurodivergent individuals to meaningfully engage within their classroom environments.

One parent said of a student with a dual diagnosis of autism and ADHD said:

In most classrooms, paying attention is expected to look like sitting still in your chair and looking straight ahead and making eye contact with the teacher. [My son] is never going to be able to do any of those things, probably not for a sustained amount of time. And if

he was doing those, he wouldn't be learning because he'd be so focused on doing those things. But if he's pacing around and seems to be not paying attention, often he's usually absorbing everything that's going on. We've had scattered teachers who recognize that, you know, at other schools. But it's just so variable, you just pray you end up with a teacher who sees that and it's rare.

She was very aware of the reality of her son's neurodiversity and the way it would continue to present in mainstream schooling. Often, mainstream schools view self-regulating behaviors such as rocking, pacing, humming, and repeating sentences as disruptions. Interventions that aim to stop self-regulating behaviors may risk perpetuating the inequality of neurodivergent learners and overlook opportunities to foster true social inclusion. This one-sided approach inherently places the responsibility on neurodivergent students to "fix" their perceived shortcomings, instead of recognizing the necessity for truly inclusive and accommodating social environments. Regarding these challenges as individual impairments oversimplifies and neglects the complex interaction between student behaviors and environmental barriers. This limited emphasis creates the risk of disregarding crucial environmental factors that impact the social participation of neurodivergent students. Our conception of "normal" and "appropriate" classroom behaviors do not transfer seamlessly to neurodiversity.

When I asked the same parent about her son's experiences at City, she shared only positive feedback.

In the first week at City, we were blown away by how quickly the faculty understood things about what was underlying some of his behavior in ways that no teacher had really gotten to the bottom of. It just felt like they understood him so quickly. And then as a result, we were able to make progress with things and open him up to growth. The openness just hadn't been there. And that literally happened three or four days in. We

got phone calls from [the head of the school during the first two or three days in] saying, "Here's some stuff that happened today, and it's fine. And we're all learning."

We were like, oh, no, it's happening, we're getting the phone call already. And then I think it was the third or fourth day, the phone rang and it was [the head of the school] again. We're like, oh, no. And he called and just said, "I have such great things to report, we had the most amazing breakthrough today". And it was in week one. Because they're not looking at kids as, how is this child deviating from the way a kid should be? And let's hammer out those differences and get them back in, force that squared peg back into that round hole.

I think they're just recognizing that it's a classroom of square pegs and respecting square pegs and trying to figure out how the square pegs meet their needs and goals.

Her account highlights City's impact on her son's educational experience. In stark contrast to the difficulties he faced in mainstream schools, City's faculty demonstrated a rapid and profound understanding of his neurodiverse needs. The school's ability to quickly identify and respond to her son's underlying behaviors, rather than simply disciplining him for being different, enabled progress and growth for him in a way he had not experienced before.

Another interesting takeaway from her feedback is its emphasis on the school's communication style. The regular phone calls from the head of the school, initially anticipated with anxiety because of her past experiences in mainstream schools, instead brought news of her son's breakthroughs and progress. This open and collaborative approach not only reassured her, but also helped to build trust and confidence in the school's ability to support her son's unique needs. Existing literature emphasizes the recurring theme of prioritizing and valuing relationships that emerge between neurodiverse students and their peers and teachers in the classroom. Measures that ensure that neurodiverse students are both seen and heard by teachers

and peers have been shown to significantly enhance educational outcomes (Mirfin-Veitch et al., 2020). Building respectful, warm, and empathetic relationships with neurodiverse students are crucial for teachers (Rentenbach et al., 2017). This open form of communication is one of the ways City stands out from mainstream schools.

Furthermore, her perspectives suggest that City's approach differs from the deficit-based mainstream education model, which often attempts to "hammer out" differences and conform students to normative standards. In contrast, City's faculty embrace a more inclusive and accepting philosophy, recognizing that neurodiverse students like her son are not "broken" or need "fixing." By valuing diversity and accommodating different ways of being, City creates a neurodiversity-affirming environment.

Another parent of a student shared the adverse experiences of her son, Peter, at both public and therapeutic schools, prior to attending City Elementary. Peter's mother reports that he had a challenging school journey, marked by early placement in a therapeutic-based setting in kindergarten, where he experienced significant isolation and physical restraints. Therapeutic schools are educational institutions heavily influenced by principles of therapy and psychology that shape the teaching methods, and curriculum. In a therapeutic school, the focus is not solely on academic instruction but also on addressing students' emotional and psychological needs. Therapeutic schools cater to a diverse range of students, including students with learning disabilities, and prioritize emotional well-being, personal growth, and individualized support (Rice, 2002).

However, in the case of Peter, his mother believes therapeutic schools created detrimental effects on her son. After a period of at-home learning during the pandemic, Peter attended a second therapeutic day school, which worked well initially in a virtual setting. However, once he returned to in-person learning, the consistent use of isolation and restraints resumed. Peter's mother reported that when he is dysregulated, he presents as unsafe, exhibiting aggression and destructive behavior. Emotion dysregulation is an individual's inability to exercise control over their emotional or behavioral responses (Bunford et al., 2015). His dysregulation at his therapeutic school led to his eventual removal at the therapeutic school. Peter's mother mentioned that he has since been diagnosed with school-based PTSD, which she believes is a direct result of his previous experiences.

Peter's parents refused to place him in another therapeutic day school and instead opted for a Montessori school until they found City with the help of a consultant and attorneys. She was not shy to credit City with providing a safe and healing environment for Peter:

Peter wakes up every morning and he's excited to go to school. And we had never had that. Peter feels safe with the adults there. I dropped him off after spring break and he saw his teacher in the parking lot. And the first thing he said to her was "I have so much to tell you today. You can't wait to hear about it."

That stuff's powerful. I was a school principal [in the past], so I know schools. Those kinds of interactions unfortunately aren't given, right? It's just not a given that that's the kind of context that child walks into. He has friends now, and then that's something he didn't before. He was really lonely.

Existing literature emphasizes the recurring theme of prioritizing and valuing relationships that emerge between neurodiverse students and their peers and teachers

in the classroom. Measures that ensure that neurodiverse students are both seen and heard by teachers and peers have been shown to significantly enhance educational outcomes (Mirfin-Veitch et al., 2020). Building respectful, warm, and empathetic relationships with neurodiverse students is crucial for teachers (Rentenbach et al., 2017). For Peter, his ability to form relationships with adults and peers was something he had not experienced before. His mother attributed City's success to its strength-based approach to neurodiversity, which focuses on supporting Peter's needs rather than correcting his behavior.

Perspectives on City from Teachers and Administrators

Teachers and administrators play a large role in City Elementary's philosophy. When asked about the school's education philosophy, John, the Head of the School said:

I think City's philosophy is a philosophy of inclusion, of understanding that there's many different ways that brains work and function and our work is to both understand and embrace and celebrate the way that different brains work.

Having said that, the real work is figuring out how those brains work, how those brains work differently and then supporting the growth of those students in a way that helps them meet their own goals and also belong to a community. And so there's friction there, right? Because sometimes those individuals in the way that they think or their perspectives or their ideals may not mesh with the communities that we're trying to build. So a lot of what City does is all about balance. It's trying to both understand student goals, understand student perspectives, and then how those fit into a broader community of learning. How do we help those students meet their social, emotional, and academic goals that help them have the brightest futures possible? And that's really what we're after at City. That's the heart of what we're trying to do.

John encapsulates several key themes observed in City's educational approach, particularly the emphasis on inclusion, understanding diverse learning styles, and fostering a sense of belonging within the community. This aligns with the observed balance between flexibility and structure, the focus on identity-affirming practices, and the integration of socioemotional learning.

City's commitment to neurodiversity is exemplified by their recognition that brains function in a variety of ways. This understanding forms the foundation of their approach, where the focus is on embracing and celebrating these differences rather than trying to force students to fit normative frameworks.

Their philosophy centers on helping students meet their socioemotional and academic goals by embracing neurodiversity. Its ability to foster a sense of belonging and provide a flexible yet supportive learning environment, City empowers students to become well-rounded individuals with a strong sense of self and a passion for lifelong learning.

However, John touches on a very important problem that City faces: friction. Inclusion can encounter friction due to conflicting access needs. Some students may require background noise to pay attention to the lesson, while some students may find the stimulation from the sound distracting. Although City tries to create an inclusive environment for its students, the likelihood is that there will be tension in providing accessible education practices for all. The idea of access friction highlights the importance of flexibility and collaboration in identifying solutions that cater to the needs of all individuals involved. Some City students struggle to pay attention to their classroom instruction at times because it can conflict with their needs at that moment.

This friction is present in mainstream and neurodiverse-focused schools, and is something to further explore.

As the Head of the School, John mentioned that many of the students tend to be risk-averse and only want to do the things they are good at.

We tend to avoid things in our lives that are hard and challenging, and we go for the things that are comfortable which is fine to a certain extent, except there's things in life that we have to do that might seem scary in order to grow as humans, and that's how we all learn and grow is by taking risks.

And so, the thing that I think we've really identified and that our staff are masterful at is figuring out what are small risks that our students can take that still feel safe to them to, again, build that muscle of risk-taking, that it's okay to take a chance, and it's okay to take a chance and fail, right, or to take a chance and make a mistake, and that's all part of the learning process.

I think our educators really understand that process and understand what those next steps are. A lot of our work is kind of undoing some of that educational trauma that happens at other schools, and then our next set of work is how do we rebuild that sense of risk taking where kids can feel safe, but still do things that are a little bit out of their comfort zone in order to learn and grow.

City strives to create a safe environment where neurodiverse students can take calculated risks, which is made possible by the staff at the school. Students are not punished for making mistakes at City, which creates an environment for students to try things they normally would not do. This prepares them to tackle challenges head-on and view failure as a learning opportunity rather than a setback. City's philosophy understands that learning is also about nurturing students to step outside their comfort zones. A growth mindset can be an effective instrument that has the potential to assist City's students during their educational journey and in their future endeavors.

When I spoke with the teachers, I noticed several themes regarding City's approach to schooling continuously mentioned: flexibility versus structure, trauma-informed, implicit versus explicit expectations, identity-affirming, socioemotional awareness, and self-advocacy.

Samantha, a Co-Teacher at City Elementary, discussed her experiences in making sure her students are meeting standards while also having fulfilling educational experiences:

"I feel like you can go deeper because of the pacing [of classes] and the individualized aspect to it. When I'm teaching social studies with these kids, we can get really deep into things because, in a way, there's less pressure to meet these standards and benchmarks. When you're pressured to meet all these benchmarks and standardized tests, you can't feel out where the kids are interested. Or where more learning needs to happen, or what you think is important to teach them. You kind of just have to breeze through all the curriculum and get through it."

Samantha points out City's emphasis on balancing impactful learning experiences with meeting academic expectations. This approach aims to develop well-rounded individuals with essential skills and a passion for learning. Classes are somewhat individualized as students can choose their enrichment classes, which allows them to go deeper into whatever they are interested in. Samantha's education philosophy reaffirms student identity and flexibility in the classroom, so that she can provide a holistic experience for her students' education.

For many mainstream schools, this flexibility in class subject and structure is absent, as students are expected to meet benchmarks. If students do not meet standards, they are held back and fall behind from their classmates. Generally, private schools are more lax and not subject to the same state-mandated benchmarks and

assessments as public schools. Regardless, many private schools in Illinois voluntarily choose to align their curriculum and assessments with state standards to provide their students with a consistent educational experience and prepare them for college and career opportunities. However, my interviews did not reflect exactly how City measures student progress and if they are adhering to state benchmarks. Some teachers did mention that some students are behind a few grade levels in reading and math, but this was the extent of what I gathered through interviews.

Samantha reflected on the way her students learn in the classroom:

I don't think I particularly approach working with neurodiverse students very differently than I would approach other students. Sometimes things need to be repeated more often. There's moments where you can feel that they're processing something in a different way, or I think that with our students who are on the spectrum, there are some things that are not understood in the same way that would be by a neurotypical person. Sometimes we have to teach our kids pretty explicitly in terms of socioemotional learning, but I think that's something that would benefit all kids.

Something I teach my kids a lot is having them think about group dynamics, like when you're in a classroom, when you're with your family, when you're with a friend group or a community group. Just reminding them that they are one individual in a whole group, and that their needs matter and that they can advocate for themselves. But also, they have to remember that the things they do and say impact how other people feel.

When classroom expectations are consistently communicated, students are less prone to deviation. Repetition plays a crucial role in shaping behavior. Classroom management is a skill that educators can readily practice and refine; hence, it should not be overlooked but rather prioritized in its implementation. Creating inclusive environments is vital for neurodiverse students to feel accepted and valued. A structured and predictable environment, coupled with adaptations to reduce sensory overstimulation, contributes to their success in school (Korinek and deFur, 2016).

In the quote, Samantha draws attention to City's emphasis on explicit instruction. Studies have repeatedly emphasized that neurodiverse learners require expectations to be clearly stated and repeated for them to understand tasks (Daley and Birchwood, 2012). Mainstream schools generally do not practice this level of explicit instruction; rather, they often rely on implicit cues and unstated expectations that neurotypical students may pick up on more readily. Instructions and behavioral norms are frequently conveyed through subtle hints, implied meanings, and the ability to "read between the lines." This implicit approach can leave neurodiverse students feeling lost, confused, and unable to meet unclear expectations. Subtle social cues like tone of voice, body language, and unspoken assumptions about how to behave are also commonly used practices that some neurodiverse students struggle to interpret. Without direct and repeated explanations, the unspoken rules, implied tasks, and social norms of a mainstream classroom setting can be difficult to decipher for those who process information and social cues differently.

Additionally, Samantha highlights another important aspect of City: the interrelatedness of students. City emphasizes the interrelatedness of the students, and how they fit into the broader community. Similarly to the need for explicit instructions, it is also necessary to emphasize the role that people play in each others' lives, whether or not they are aware of their impact.

In another interview with one of the Head teachers at City, Chelsea, she revealed her thoughts on how City stood out as an outlier to traditional schooling. She believes the school was founded as a safe haven for students with disabilities and learning differences. As a former CPS teacher, she is familiar with the challenges of navigating

the special education system. She thinks that the school's initial focus on individualization and differentiation may not have considered the manner by which to prepare students for the transition back into traditional special education models in high school. This raises some questions regarding what the future of students at City Elementary could end up being once they leave the school. Some students remain at City through their eighth grade graduation, later exploring various high school opportunities. Teachers reported that some students are able to transition back into mainstream schooling, and other students go on to vocational schools to gain technical skills for jobs. Assistance is provided to students and families in identifying the optimal educational pathway that suits their unique needs.

However, she expressed that the school is shifting its focus towards providing students with opportunities to gain experience, make mistakes, and take risks in a safe environment, mirroring the experiences of their neurotypical peers. This approach emphasizes exposure and access, rather than solely focusing on meeting individual needs. It has been observed that as students develop their social, emotional, and executive function skills, they exhibit an increased capacity for self-regulation and self-advocacy. This growth facilitates the consolidation of their achievements and enhances their adaptability to diverse learning environments. She expressed that she also focuses on teaching students functional skills, such as self-advocacy, recognizing "triggers" (stimuli that elicit reactions), and managing "meltdowns" (sudden emotional responses) in order to equip them for success in inclusive environments.

She envisions a future where students can exist comfortably in spaces with neurotypical and neurodiverse peers, feeling included and empowered to self-advocate

for their needs. This evolution marks a shift towards integration, where students receive proper support and accommodations that enable them to thrive in diverse settings.

Another head teacher, Maria, told me about how she emphasizes the importance of social relationships in her kindergarten class.

My classroom was called The Kittens. And so in the mornings on Mondays and Fridays, they have an extra half hour in the morning called Kit Kat Chat. And it's just time for them to spend time with their friends.

And it could be seen as less academic or not worth your time. But the fact that these six kids have formed a community and have real friendships and are getting adept at making those complicated, nuanced social decisions is really powerful stuff. And that's been a lot of the work that we've done this year.

In a traditional school setting, you don't have the time to explicitly say, this is social learning. Or this is, we're going to talk about being friends, or we're going to talk about X. And I think that that's something that makes the school really special. And when we say that, when we tell somebody that we do that, a lot of people think it's like, oh, we're going to sit on the rug, and we're going to read a book and talk about our feelings. And sometimes it is. But more than that, especially for my kids at that age, it's helping them navigate, number one, what it's like to have a friend. A lot of them have never had a friend or have never had a regular school year.

Maria highlights the power of social interactions and how they help students form real friendships and practice their social skills. In a traditional school setting, there may not be enough time to explicitly focus on social learning or discuss topics like friendship. This is what makes City Elementary stand out from mainstream schools, according to Maria. This aligns with the school's philosophy of providing clear, direct instruction to neurodiverse learners.

As a teacher, Maria acknowledges the diverse needs of her students, some of whom may have never had a friend or a regular school year. This reflects City

Elementary's explicit commitment to understanding and catering to each student's unique experiences and needs. By dedicating time to social learning and friendship, City Elementary exemplifies its focus on providing a well-rounded education that caters to academic and socioemotional development.

In summary, the teachers at City highlight the importance of the role of social relationships, explicit instruction, individualized approach, and holistic education in City Elementary's philosophy. These aspects create a supportive and inclusive learning environment for neurodiverse students. However, there are some potential drawbacks to City, with potential access friction and difficulty transitioning back into mainstream schooling environments.

Perspectives for City from Students

In my interactions with students, the responses were varied. Most students were not eager to discuss their experiences at City or their previous schools, but a few students were more open to sharing. One student was Jackson, a third-grader, who attended a mainstream school for two years. He shared that his former school failed to accommodate his needs as a neurodivergent individual. He mentioned that he needed frequent breaks to self-regulate (being able to regulate reactions based on negative emotions) at his previous school, as math assignments would often make him feel irritable. He did not like that he had to do math assignments for as long as the school required. He experienced significant frustration and annoyance during his time there. When I asked Jackson about how City differs from his previous school, he spoke of boundary implementation:

There's a lot of boundaries. Like when somebody says don't do that, I have a hard time listening to them. So that's why I take breaks. [I can feel] overwhelmed at times. Sometimes I have to take breaks as well, [even if] I don't want to get out of the classroom that much.

Jackson's narrative displays friction. He struggles with the explicit boundaries and instructions and would rather base his actions on his emotions, but is redirected to breaks as a form of self-regulation. Jackson's desires often clash with classroom expectations, but City's emphasis on self-regulation suggests that teachers are aware of how to accommodate neurodiverse students. It is important to assist students in understanding and regulating their behavior, particularly since neurodiverse students may exhibit behaviors that differ from conventional expectations. Strategies that focus on reinforcing appropriate behavior, helping students establish behavioral goals, and promoting self-management align with the broader concept of autonomy (Korinek and deFur, 235).

Jackson was eager to discuss the support he receives from the teachers at City Elementary. He expressed that he feels at ease asking for help and taking breaks when needed, as the teachers consistently exhibit patience and kindness towards him. According to Jackson, the teachers at City go above and beyond to support him and cater to his individual needs. He was excited to discuss his interests that he developed at City, like his passion for art.

Daniel, a fifth grader at City, talked extensively about his experiences at mainstream Chicago Public Schools.

"[It was the] worst school ever. It was for mostly bad kids who got kicked out of their schools for doing bad things because they're mean and they actually hurt other students. I didn't

do that, but they locked me in a room. It was fight-or-flight and I couldn't flight, so I had to fight. I tried to get out of the room they locked me in, and the thing is, it started when I was just a little upset. And then all I wanted to do was go back to the classroom, but they just kept putting me [in there], they just kept pushing me away from it, making me more angry. This is the problem with most schools, they say, "Well we won't let you go do this until you've calmed down". But the only thing that will make me calm down is being able to [leave the room]. That's the problem with most schools; they use something that just doesn't work. They try to use an incentive but it doesn't work."

Daniel's testimony highlights feelings of isolation, negative reinforcement, a lack of effective support, and the desire to be included. He expresses feeling isolated and segregated from the rest of the student body by being labeled as a "bad kid" at his mainstream school, creating a negative environment for him. Daniel describes being locked in a room as a form of punishment that triggered his fight-or-flight response. His distress and discomfort in the environment manifested as escalated behavior; in this case, an attempt to escape the room. He openly criticized the school's approach to managing his behavior, highlighting the inefficiency of the strategies used. For Daniel, he felt that being isolated in a room only exacerbated his feelings of anger and frustration, rather than calming him down. He argues that the school's attempts to use incentives or restrictions as behavioral management tools are ineffective and counterproductive. He expresses a desire to return to the classroom and participate in learning activities. His frustration stems from the perceived lack of understanding and support from the school staff, who resort to punitive measures rather than addressing the underlying issues causing the student's distress. Overall, the quote underscores the limitations of correctional tools for behavior management.

Daniel continued discussing his experiences at City:

"I have more friends now. [I found it hard to make friends at my old school] because most of the classmates were just bullies. The thing is that the only way to not be bullied was to dominate, to be mean. The only way to survive was to dominate. That was the only way. I bullied the bullies. But I don't feel bullied here."

Daniel's experiences reflect that he felt unsafe at his previous school and that he had to "dominate" to navigate the hostile environment at his old school. A student's educational environment plays a crucial role in shaping their identities, and in this case, Daniel needed to act as a bully to "survive". In his past school, the environment had normalized aggression as means of getting by. Identities are constructed in relation to others as well as within the scope of what is considered to be "other" (Reay, 3). The relational dimension of identities is particularly important in educational settings such as the classroom, where students' identities are not only shaped by a sense of "what we are not" but also by perceptions of how others view us, contributing to our understanding of who "we" are (Reay, 1). Identity is both fluid and dynamic in nature, particularly within the context of social identities. This highlights how identities are negotiated and constrained within different social and institutional contexts. Identity formation is complex and operates between factors such as individual agency, social structures, and institutional practices, all of which impact how identity is formed (Reay, 1-2).

Daniel's quote provides insight into the social dynamics at his old school, which was characterized by bullying, aggression, and power dynamics. Daniel's experience at City suggests that inclusive and accepting environments can make a significant difference in students' lives. Overall, Daniel's quote provides a closer look at the complexities of social relationships in schools, highlighting the need for alternative

approaches to addressing these issues and the powerful influence of environmental factors on how students interact and behave in schools.

Conclusion

In this case study, I examined how City approaches working with its students through two important frameworks: neurodiversity and the political relational model. I found that trauma-informed approaches, implicit versus explicit expectations, flexible structure, identity-affirming practices, strong interpersonal relationships, and socioemotional awareness were key factors to its approach in working with neurodiverse students.

Through the perspectives of parents, educators, and students, I was able to get a better understanding of how City serves its students in a neurodiversity-affirming environment. Parents shared their relief in their children attending City, highlighting their beneficial experiences. Teachers discussed their methods with students in the classroom, emphasizing the importance of strong relationships with students as well as using neurodiversity-informed practices of classroom management. Students reported feelings of happiness and understanding at school for the first time.

Nevertheless, three significant limitations exist within the City's educational approach. Initially, educators noted potential conflicts between students' desires and the essential requirements to maintaining effective classroom operations. These conflicts arise due to varying access needs, particularly when addressing the diverse needs of a heterogeneous student body. By recognizing this challenge, the school tried to mitigate such friction by evaluating individual needs and integrating them into the broader

learning community. While not flawless, this method represents a considerable effort to manage access-related conflicts in an optimal manner.

The second limit pertains to City's capacity to facilitate students' reintegration into mainstream educational settings and their everyday environments. Concerns have been raised by both educators and parents regarding students' ability to transition back to mainstream schools following their time at City, a school that is affirming of neurodiversity. To address this issue, it may be advantageous for City to extend its support beyond urging students to take small risks. This could involve developing comprehensive reintegration programs that include collaboration with mainstream schools and preparatory workshops for students and parents.

The third and final limitation lies in the cost of attending City. It costs \$30000 to attend, which is unattainable for the vast majority of people. However, neurodiversity remains prevalent in society, which creates an accessibility issue for institutions similar to City. This financial obstacle implies that only families with substantial economic resources can afford to provide their children with the specialized education that City offers. Consequently, this creates a disparity in educational opportunities, where neurodiverse students from lower-income backgrounds may not receive the same level of support and understanding as their more affluent peers.

In understanding these limitations, it becomes clear that while City's model is highly effective in its specialized environment, scalability and integration with broader structures remain areas for further development. It is imperative for City and similar institutions to not only refine their practices, but also advocate for systemic changes that accommodate and celebrate neurodiversity in all educational settings. In doing so, it can

ensure that the inclusivity and support experienced by students at City become a norm rather than an exception, paving the way for a more understanding and accommodating educational landscape nationwide.

References

- Bailey, Chris. “‘Neurodivergent Literacies’: Exploring Autistic Adults’ ‘Ruling Passions’ and Embracing Neurodiversity through Classroom Literacies.” *Literacy* 57, no. 2 (2023): 120–31. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12320>.
- Baumer, Nicole, and Julia Frueh. “What Is Neurodiversity?” Harvard Health, November 23, 2021. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/what-is-neurodiversity-202111232645>.
- Bunford, Nora, Steven W. Evans, and Frances Wymbs. “ADHD and Emotion Dysregulation Among Children and Adolescents.” *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review* 18, no. 3 (September 1, 2015): 185–217. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-015-0187-5>.
- Chen, Yu-Lun, and Kristie Patten. “Shifting Focus From Impairment to Inclusion: Expanding Occupational Therapy for Neurodivergent Students to Address School Environments.” *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy* 75, no. 3 (May 1, 2021): 7503347010. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2020.040618>.
- Daley, D., and J. Birchwood. “ADHD and Academic Performance: Why Does ADHD Impact on Academic Performance and What Can Be Done to Support ADHD Children in the Classroom?” *Child: Care, Health and Development* 36, no. 4 (2010): 455–64. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2214.2009.01046.x>.
- Fuchs, L. S., Fuchs, D., & Capizzi, A. M. (2017). Identifying Appropriate Test Accommodations for Students With Learning Disabilities. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 37(6). <https://doi.org/10.17161/foec.v37i6.6812>
- Forlin, C. (2010). *Teacher education for inclusion: Changing paradigms and innovative approaches*. Routledge.

- Hanson, Stephanie L., Susanne Bruyere, Anjali Forber-Pratt, Jennifer Reesman, and Connie Sung. “Guidelines for Assessment and Intervention with Persons with Disabilities: An Executive Summary: American Psychologist.” *American Psychologist* 78, no. 8 (November 2023): 995–1009. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0001150>.
- Hart, Katie C., Greta M. Massetti, Gregory A. Fabiano, Meaghan E. Pariseau, and William E. Pelham. “Impact of Group Size on Classroom On-Task Behavior and Work Productivity in Children With ADHD.” *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* 19, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 55–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063426609353762>.
- Hours, Camille, Christophe Recasens, and Jean-Marc Baleyte. “ASD and ADHD Comorbidity: What Are We Talking About?” *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 13 (February 28, 2022): 837424. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2022.837424>.
- Kafer, Alison. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Indiana University Press, 2013. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16gz79x>.
- Kapp, Steven K., Kristen Gillespie-Lynch, Lauren E. Sherman, and Ted Hutman. “Deficit, Difference, or Both? Autism and Neurodiversity.” *Developmental Psychology* 49, no. 1 (January 2013): 59–71. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0028353>.
- Korinek, Lori, and Sharon H. deFur. “Supporting Student Self-Regulation to Access the General Education Curriculum.” *TEACHING Exceptional Children* 48, no. 5 (May 1, 2016): 232–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059915626134>.
- Leigers, Kelly, Christine Myers, and Colleen Schneck. “Social Participation in Schools: A Survey of Occupational Therapy Practitioners.” *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy* 70, no. 5 (July 27, 2016): 7005280010p1–9. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2016.020768>.

- Martin, Edwin W., Reed Martin, and Donna L. Terman. "The Legislative and Litigation History of Special Education." *The Future of Children* 6, no. 1 (1996): 25. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1602492>.
- Mcgee, Micki. "Neurodiversity." *Contexts* 11, no. 3 (August 1, 2012): 12–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504212456175>.
- McKinney, Claire. "Crippling the Classroom: Disability as a Teaching Method in the Humanities." *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy* 25, no. 2 (2014): 114–27.
- Owens, Janine. "Exploring the Critiques of the Social Model of Disability: The Transformative Possibility of Arendt's Notion of Power." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 37, no. 3 (2015): 385–403. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12199>.
- Owens, Julie Sarno, Steven W. Evans, Erika K. Coles, Alex S. Holdaway, Lina K. Himawan, Clifton S. Mixon, and Theresa E. Egan. "Consultation for Classroom Management and Targeted Interventions: Examining Benchmarks for Teacher Practices That Produce Desired Change in Student Behavior." *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* 28, no. 1 (March 1, 2020): 52–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063426618795440>.
- Pinnock, H.; Nicholls, H. 2012. Global Teacher Training and Inclusion Survey. UNICEF Rights, Education and Protection Project. https://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/UNICEF_global_inclusive_teaching_survey.pdf.
- Reay, Diane. "Identity making in schools and classrooms." *The Sage handbook of identities* (2010): 277-294.
- Rentenbach, Barb, Lois Prislovsky, and Rachael Gabriel. "Valuing Differences: Neurodiversity in the Classroom." *Kappanonline.Org* (blog), May 1, 2017.

<https://kappanonline.org/rentenbach-prislovsky-gabriel-valuing-differences-neurodiversity-classroom/>.

Rose, Chad A., Cynthia G. Simpson, and Stephanie K. Ellis. “The Relationship between School Belonging, Sibling Aggression and Bullying Involvement: Implications for Students with and without Disabilities.” *Educational Psychology* 36, no. 8 (September 13, 2016): 1462–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01443410.2015.1066757>.

Russell, Ginny, Zsuzsa Pavelka, Ginny Russell, and Zsuzsa Pavelka. “Co-Occurrence of Developmental Disorders: Children Who Share Symptoms of Autism, Dyslexia and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.” In *Recent Advances in Autism Spectrum Disorders - Volume I*. IntechOpen, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.5772/54159>.

Shakespeare, Tom (2006). The social model of disability. In Lennard J. Davis (ed.), *The Disability Studies Reader*. Psychology Press. pp. 2--197.

Sharma, Umesh. “Preparing to Teach in Inclusive Classrooms.” In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.113>.

Stelitano, Laura, Rachel Perera, and William Johnston. *Supporting Students with High-Incidence Disabilities in U.S. Schools: National Findings from the American Educator Panels*. RAND Corporation, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.7249/RR2992>.

Williamson, Bess. “3. Access.” In *3. Access*, 14–17. New York University Press, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479812141.003.0006>.