Using a value-creation framework to evaluate an inclusive education program: A case study in a US middle school

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Inclusion has become the focus of a significant body of research, advocacy, and committed action in communities, businesses, and schools across the United States and beyond. Professional development focused on inclusion is part of a program called *Joyful Inclusion*. Evaluating the impact a professional development program has on stakeholders is often a neglected piece of the puzzle and there is little agreement about the best way to assess the quality of professional development. In this study, we used a value-creation framework to evaluate the Joyful Inclusion program and whether participation in it made a difference. Results from the study suggest that Joyful Inclusion participants improved and increased their communication with parents of students and family engagement, increased student engagement, empowered their students to take ownership over their learning including giving students choice within their instruction, and used co-teaching strategies to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

Introduction

> If you expect to be making a difference, it is important to assess whether it is happening
> (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020)

Inclusion has become the focus of a significant body of research, advocacy, and committed action in communities, businesses, and schools across the United States and beyond. *Webster Online* provides two relevant definitions of inclusion, "the act or practice of including students with disabilities with the general student population", and "the act or practice of including and accommodating people who have historically been excluded (such as because of their race, gender, sexuality, or ability)." Both definitions are needed to understand the full possibility of inclusive practice.

The inclusion movement began with the rallying cry "separate is not equal," as a school-based legal mandate to include racial minorities in neighborhood schools following the landmark *Brown v Board of Education* U.S. Supreme Court decision. It was continued with the passage of the first special education law, *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (PL 94-142), targeting students with disabilities. Over the decades, the inclusion movement has broadened into a social justice mission to ensure equity for individuals representing diverse characteristics across multiple environments.

In this article, we will focus on inclusion as it relates to the provision of special education in public schools. Under the current requirements of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act* of 2004 (IDEA, 2004) local education agencies (LEAs) identify

eligible students and provide free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

When determining the LRE, current IDEA regulations require LEAs to ensure that:

> To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplemental aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (IDEA, 20 U.S.C. § 1412).

After identifying a student's individual strengths and needs, and their essential supports and services, individualised educational program (IEP) teams determine the appropriate placement for eligible students. The team decision is based on consideration of two components to the LRE requirement: First, the right of all students to be educated with their same-aged peers. Second, the conditions under which a student may be removed from the general education setting. Recent case law has clarified that this decision must be based on the student's unique needs rather than upon their disability label or the services that are currently available (Rodriguez & Murawski, 2022).

LRE is a determination of physical placement – where each student will receive their education; inclusion refers to how the student is educated. Inclusive practice is a complex tapestry of methodology, adaptation, intention, problem solving, and mindset. It has inspired multiple frameworks, publications, conference presentations, graduate research, and college courses. But what is inclusion exactly?

The term "inclusion" is not defined in IDEA. The federally funded IRIS Center at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee offers this definition within their professional development module: What is inclusion and why is it important?

> Inclusion [distinct from mainstreaming and integration] … involves supporting students with disabilities through individual learning goals, accommodations, and modifications so that they are able to access the general education curriculum (in the general education classroom) and be held to the same high expectations as their peers. [https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/inc/cresource/q1/p01/]

This definition is framed through a third person lens – what an objective observer will see when inclusion is happening. This definition is useful for school leaders and practitioners who implement evidence-based practices to create inclusive education. School improvement efforts use this definition to guide professional development and accountability, but we believe that it omits an important ingredient. We have worked in schools where all components of the IRIS definition are in place without the student experiencing inclusion. Furthermore, we have worked in schools with those components in place without faculty and staff experiencing inclusion.

We propose to add to the IRIS definition these sentences, adapted from Cobb and Krownapple (2019):

> Inclusion is engagement within a community where the equal worth and inherent dignity of each person is honored. An inclusive community promotes and sustains a sense of belonging; it affirms the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and identities of its members.

Like *Webster Online*, we offer this two-part definition as the foundation for our school reform initiative which we call *Joyful Inclusion* (Pleet-Odle, 2024). Dr Amy Pleet-Odle started her educational consulting company in 2011, based on four decades of experience as an English teacher, special educator, transition coordinator, state department specialist, college associate professor/ graduate director, state inclusion specialist, and parent. She was frustrated that traditional methods for improving inclusive instruction were having limited and temporary impact and was determined to find a more effective approach (Pleet-Odle, 2022).

Joyful Inclusion

Collaborating initially with a small number of visionary school leaders, Dr Pleet-Odle experimented with materials and methods grounded in evidence-based practice to build the capacity of teachers to implement both parts of the definition of inclusion. She was committed to integrating the separate silos of collaboration, co-teaching, research-based instructional strategies, differentiation, transition planning, learner engagement and agency, and family engagement into one inclusive initiative. She wove together those often-separate fields into one sequential learning journey, organised into a three-year sequence of online course modules (see Table 1). Each module included a variety of opportunity options so that teachers could select applications to fit their students and subject matter.

In 2022, Dr Pleet-Odle recruited a team of experienced, like-minded professionals to serve as inclusion coaches. Throughout the 2022-2023 school year, the team co-created a tailored school improvement process with school leaders, facilitated professional development through online learning modules, gathered evaluation data, and provided effective inclusion coaching for teaching staff. During the 2023-2024 school year, the Joyful Inclusion initiative grew to encompass 22 schools across four states. That year, Dr. Pleet-Odle added a companion inclusion coaching series of courses to build the coaching capacity of the Joyful Inclusion team as well as school and district-based coaches identified by local school leaders.

The Joyful Inclusion intention is best summarised by the following:

- Our bold promise: Every Joyful Inclusion School will set and meet ambitious inclusive practice goals.
- Our vision: To co-create inclusive school communities where every student belongs and has personalised support to achieve rigorous expectations and every teacher loves teaching.

- Our mission: We spark the joy of learning for each student and staff member and equip every teacher to teach ALL learners.

Table 1: Three-year sequence of Joyful Inclusion online course modules

Description of focus for professional development year	Key competencies
Year 1: Collaborative teaching for student-centred learning Enhance cross-faculty collaboration and empower special educators as co-designers in the classroom.	• Collaborative parity • 7 Co-teaching structures • Disability awareness • Scaffolding strategies • Student engagement strategies • Data-based flexible grouping • Stakeholder roles in inclusion
Year 2: Specially designed instruction Design individualised evidence-based practices for "riddle students"* and empower youth self-efficacy. * A "riddle student" is a student who has special learning needs (usually qualifying for special education services) who has the desire to succeed, but who is struggling in their class for some reason that is a riddle to their teacher at present.	• Students' driving need • High leverage practices • Lesson struggle points • Individualised interventions • Youth self-efficacy and monitoring • Student led IEPs • Family engagement
Year 3: Inclusive school communities Expand sustainable inclusive practice into equity and belonging for ALL students with inquiry-based action research.	• Learner self-efficacy • Professional collective efficacy • Universal design for learning • Implementation science • Equity and inclusion • Family partnerships • Expert learners

Program evaluation

Evaluating the impact a professional development program has on stakeholders is often a neglected piece of the puzzle (Earley & Bubb, 2004), and there is little agreement about the best way to assess the quality of professional development (Borko et al., 2008). King (2014) conducted a review of professional development program evaluation literature and identified several commonly used evaluation frameworks. Specific to education, Stake (1967) examined three constructs to evaluate the impact of professional development programs including antecedents, transactions, and outcomes. An identified challenge of this framework is the difficulty in knowing whether it was the professional development program that caused the outcomes or some other influencing variable. Guskey (2002) adapted an evaluation framework designed to assess business training programs and developed five levels of professional development program evaluation that could be used in an education context including: (1) participants' reactions: (2) participants' learning: (3)

organisation support and change; (4) participants' use of new knowledge and skills: and (5) students' learning outcomes.

Critiques of this framework include the idea that the levels are hierarchical and offer "over-simplified sequentialism" (King, 2014, p. 6). One key component missing from both the aforementioned frameworks is the collaboration that occurs between teachers leading to the development of a shared vision (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Smith, 2007). Building on Guskey's work, Bubb and Early (2010) developed a 12-level framework that facilitates professional development program planning, which has been shown to improve outcomes for both teachers and students. The issue with this framework is still the hierarchy that is noted in Guskey's framework.

Desimone's (2009) framework, commonly used in special education professional development program evaluation (e.g. Cavazos et al., 2018; Griffin et al., 2018; Lembke et al., 2018), focuses on a core conceptual framework. This framework includes core features of professional development programs such as content focus, duration, and collective participation, change in teacher knowledge/skills as well as attitudes and beliefs, change in instruction, and change in student learning. The framework also takes into consideration other contexts like teacher and student characteristics, curriculum, leadership, and policy development. All of these things, Desimone argues, are critical to gain a complete understanding of the impact of professional development programs. She goes on to say that in adopting a core conceptual framework that includes the core features mentioned previously, researchers should use the framework but allow for individual adaptations.

While the professional development program evaluation frameworks described have their strengths, the limitations and gaps lay in three key areas. First, collaborative practices seem to be missing from some of the frameworks. We know that collaboration is essential for teacher learning, student outcomes, and sustainability of practices (Bates et al., 2019). Second, some of the frameworks are missing a focus on teacher agency, which also contributes to a change in practice (Li & Ruppar, 2021). Finally, some of the frameworks lack a strong focus on teacher beliefs which are critical to the change process, particularly when it comes to instructional practices and interactions with students (Boyle et al., 2020). Moreover, to Desimone's point, any framework needs to have the flexibility to allow for individualisation based on need.

Evaluation of Joyful Inclusion

At Joyful Inclusion we are confident that our professional development program itself is grounded in research. What we do not know is whether Joyful Inclusion is effective. Said another way, does participation in Joyful Inclusion *make a difference*? What does it mean to make a difference? According to Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2020), "Learning to make a difference means getting at assessing what creates value, what makes a difference, and what does not" (p. 64). While there are traditional ways to evaluate whether a difference is being made, typically quantitative in nature like pre and post surveys, for example, we wanted to leverage the *Value-Creation Framework* as a comprehensive tool to evaluate if Joyful Inclusion was making a difference.

The value-creation framework (Figure 1; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) builds on Wenger's (1998) communities of practice research. Communities of practice helps close the gap mentioned previously related to collaboration. The value-creation framework contains eight value-creation cycles that work together to help evaluate whether value was created by participating in a social learning space (collaboration). A social learning space is described as "what participants create among themselves."

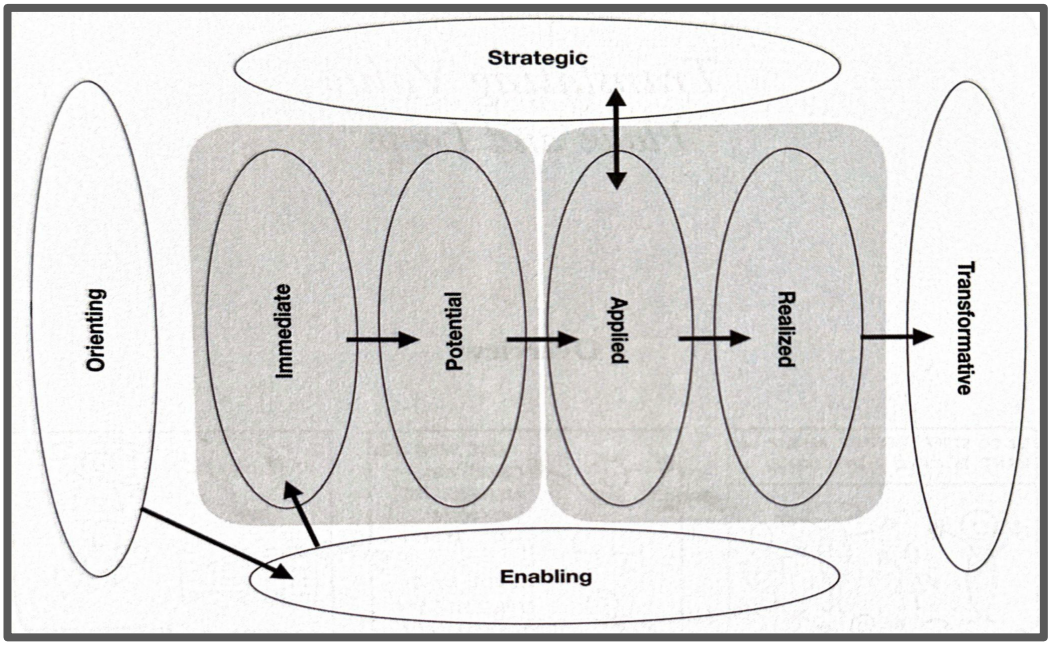

Figure 1: Value-creation framework (after Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020)

Each of the eight value-creation cycles within the value-creation framework will be described in turn. *Immediate value* describes what the experience in the social learning space was like for the participants. The value in this cycle focuses on being and engaging in the social learning space, whether it leads to something else or not. *Potential value* is what comes out of being a part of a social learning space including both tangibles and intangibles that are a result of the social learning space. *Applied value* is defined as what is being learned through participation in the social learning space. Said another way, when participants apply their potential value, that is applied value. *Realised value* includes recognising what difference was made because of the applied value. Realised value can be described through the outcomes achieved (or not) by participation in the social learning space. *Strategic value* looks at the quality of engagement with stakeholders and how the engagements and conversations with these stakeholders recognise the usefulness of a social learning space. *Enabling value* describes looking at what made learning possible. These could be both internal and external factors. *Orienting value* includes looking into how the work that happened in the social learning space fits into a broader historical, cultural, and/or political landscape. Finally, *transformative value* is evaluating whether the difference made had broader effects. This includes both internal and external transformations

meaning internal changes experienced by participants or external transformations occurring more broadly outside the social learning space. Learning needs to flow across the value-creation cycles of the framework to make a difference.

We believe using this framework to evaluate Joyful Inclusion decreased or eliminated the challenges noted with other commonly used professional development program evaluation systems. The focus on the social learning space and what value was collectively created supports the notion that collaborative practices are an important element of effective professional development programs. When educators are creating value from their experience a sense of agency occurs. Finally, the focus on developing and refining instructional practices and interactions derives from a change in belief about inclusion and students with disabilities, thus putting a strong focus on shifting beliefs through professional development programs.

Joyful Inclusion value evaluation system (JIVES)

We named our evaluation system, which leverages the value-creation framework, the *Joyful Inclusion Value Evaluation System* (JIVES). JIVES is a comprehensive evaluation system that collects and analyses both quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate whether Joyful Inclusion is making a difference and further probe about specifically what that difference includes. JIVES takes place throughout all three years of Joyful Inclusion with a final, comprehensive summative evaluation at the conclusion of Year 3.

Data collection in JIVES

Data collection in JIVES is comprehensive and includes both quantitative and qualitative data. The collection of both types of data allows us to see if something of value was created by participating in Joyful Inclusion and what can be attributed to the value that was created. The two types of data are *effect data* and *contribution data*.

Effect data
This is largely quantitative data (some can be qualitative) and helps establish whether something of value was created. Effect data can be collected from each value-creation cycle. If we simply looked at effect data, we would have evidence that something of value was created, however, we would not know whether that could be attributed to participation in Joyful Inclusion. Additionally, we would not know what value was created by participating in Joyful Inclusion. For this reason, we also collect and analyse contribution data.

Contribution data
This is qualitative data and establishes what role Joyful Inclusion had in achieving the given effects. Contribution data is collected by conducting experience conversations. Value-creation stories are developed to make plausible claims that Joyful Inclusion *contributed* to the achieved effects. Contribution data is collected via experience conversations that are conducted with different participants.

By using both the effect and contribution data, we are able to develop value-creation stories. These stories paint a robust picture of the value of Joyful Inclusion. *Effect data* corroborate statements in stories and amplify a story's importance by connecting it to the bigger picture. *Contribution data* give meaning to quantitative numbers and provide plausible claims of contribution effects of Joyful Inclusion. The goal is to collect effect data (quantitative and qualitative) for as many value-creation cycles as possible and collect value-creation stories (qualitative) that reference as many effect data as possible. The effect data uses the contribution data stories to explain how the effects came about, while the contribution data stories point to effects that may still need to be monitored.

Methods

Our study used a case study design (Yin, 2017) and sought to describe and interpret how one public middle school on the East Coast who provides a comprehensive education for students in grades 6-8 made a difference with inclusion from participation in a professional development program called Joyful Inclusion. We used a descriptive single case study method (Yin, 2017) as our goal was an in-depth analysis to explore *how* participation in Joyful Inclusion contributed to making a difference for students with disabilities through implementing inclusive practices. In our analysis, we used various data collected from each of the years of Joyful Inclusion (1-3) and continued to probe interesting data with further collection of qualitative data. We did this by using strategic probes in semi-structured interviews, which we call experience conversations, to help our participants tell their stories and pinpoint what specifically from Joyful Inclusion may have led to a particular effect or outcome. The case study method provides space for an in-depth study and "detailed probing" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 358) to gather sufficient information to understand the participants, the context, and the impact in which the case takes place to acquire an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Yin, 2017).

The effect data collected as part of the evaluation is specific to the professional learning that occurs in each year of Joyful Inclusion (see Table 2). In addition to each type of data collected within each year, we also collected longitudinal data throughout years 1-3 which includes student achievement data and specific IDEA indicators. These data are mostly quantitative in nature and were collected as part of the process and procedures Joyful Inclusion coaches go through in their ongoing work with schools.

The contribution data collected as part of the evaluation (see Table 3) is grounded in a series of probes given during a semi-structured interview. We call these interviews *experience conversations* to limit the formality of a traditional interview with the hopes that it feels more like an informal conversation between Joyful Inclusion staff and Joyful Inclusion participants. Probes are designed within each of the value-creation cycles to prompt Joyful Inclusion participants to talk more about their experience with Joyful Inclusion and what they noticed within their own personal practice, with their colleagues, with their students, and within their school because of their participation in Joyful Inclusion. The probes build on one another starting by eliciting basic information and then asking participants to expand on what was shared. The probes are designed to get

Table 2: JIVES effect data collected

Yearly data		
Year 1 Collaborative teaching for student-centred learning	Year 2 Specially designed instruction	Year 3 Inclusive school communities
Effect data: • Inclusion rounds data • Faculty inclusion survey data • Monthly coaching report • Monthly strategy calls report • Professional learning community minutes/agendas • Course progress reports • Year 1 end of year pre/post survey data • Other	**Effect data:** • Riddle student data from at least four teachers (innovators, early adopters early majority, early adopters, late majority, laggards) • Monthly coaching report • Monthly strategy calls report • Professional learning community minutes/agendas • Course progress reports • Year 2 end of year pre/post survey • Other	**Effect data:** • Universal design for learning rounds rubric data • Action research projects/data • Monthly coaching report • Monthly strategy calls report • Professional learning community minutes/agendas • Course progress reports • Year 3 end of year pre/post survey • Other
Longitudinal data		
Student achievement data: state-level testing, Individual Education Program goal growth, discipline data IDEA Indicators: graduation rate, dropout rate, % of students with disabilities proficient on state testing, Least Restrictive Environment data		

Table 3: JIVES contribution data experience conversations

Experience conversations with:
• Team • School leader (if not part of team) • Successful collaborative teaching pair(s) • Caregivers • Students (students in collaboratively taught classrooms - both general education and special education) • Selection of teachers focus group - Special education, general education, specialist, co-teaching pair • Riddle student • Riddle student caregiver(s) • Caregivers • Students (students in classrooms focused on implementing UDL - both general education and special education) • Other special cases

participants to share their experience and outcomes across each of the value-creation cycles. Examples of probes used include (a) what was your experience of the space?; (b) what did you do with this idea?; and (c) what specifically helped you do things differently?

Participants

The middle school provides a comprehensive public education for students in grades 6-8, drawing from suburban and urban communities in a district of 30 schools (PreK-high school). The 807-student population in the 2022-23 school year was 38.8% Black or African American, 27.6% White or Caucasian, 23.8% Hispanic or Latino, 7.4% Multi-racial, 2.1% Asian American, and 0.3% American Indian or Native Hawaiian. Of that population, 1.5% were homeless, 12.0% were English learners, 33.6% qualified as low income, and 22.9% were eligible for special education. During the 2022-23 school year, there was a total staff of 135 with a teaching staff of 70. In all, 86 were enrolled in Joyful Inclusion courses, including administrators and support staff.

Data analysis

Once all contribution data was collected, we used a 6-step thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyse the qualitative data and identify themes which illustrate the value that was created by participating in Joyful Inclusion. All audio from the experience conversations was recorded and transcribed. In step one, a member of the Joyful Inclusion team read the transcripts to familiarise with the data. In step two, *a priori* codes were assigned to segments of the data. The *a priori* codes used were the eight value-creation cycles of the value-creation framework. Definitions for these codes were developed by the program evaluator and discussed with the Joyful Inclusion team member coding the data until there was agreement on the meaning of the definitions. Twenty percent of the data was double coded by both the Joyful Inclusion team member and evaluator, who, after coding, came together to discuss any discrepancies and refine the code definitions. The refined definitions were applied to the remaining data. Once codes were assigned to relevant segments of data, the segments were checked to ensure they still fitted under the originally assigned codes. For step three, themes were identified within the coded segments. For step four, themes were checked, and some were combined. During this step the Joyful Inclusion team member and evaluator discussed themes until they were in agreement. For step five, themes were defined and named. Finally, for step six, exemplars were located by highlighting golden quotes that exemplified each of the identified themes.

Results

Six themes were identified through engaging in the 6-step thematic analysis. Each theme will be discussed next.

Communication

We defined the theme of communication as: Creating or strengthening communication between stakeholders (students, families, staff) through discussions, messaging (text, email), phone calls, etc. This could be a weekly email home about what the class covered this week, assignments due, and what they will be learning next, along with any struggle points that need to be addressed.

Participants reported becoming more consistent and persistent in their methods of communication - especially with their students and students' families. They noted that they were more mindful of the content of their communication, both in their wording and in ensuring there was positive communication as well as constructive communication about issues a student experienced. Participants noted that communicating with their students and families helped students know what the expectations were and built trust and respect in their classrooms. The theme of communication tied in often with the themes of student engagement and family engagement, with one participant stating that the communication home helps students because,

> … they know what we expect… but then knowing that we're contacting home and the families know what is expected of them. It sort of helps build that bridge of student success… We include that in some of the emails, too… questions to ask at home: 'What did you learn today?'… 'Here's some vocabulary words'.

One participant, who reported texting or emailing their students' families constantly regarding issues in class, progress monitoring, and what was being worked on in class, said,

> I feel like they [students] have more trust and I feel like the kids are definitely more respectful and responsible when they're with me. Because they know there's always that line of communication and they know. Ask, initiate, initiate - it can be positive, it could be negative.

We found that communication fell across many values of the value-creation framework, primarily in potential value, applied value, and strategic value.

Student engagement

We defined the theme of student engagement as: Getting students more involved and engaged in their learning. This included offering choices in the students' learning environment, restructuring questions to encourage students to think instead of just giving a solution or answer, and finding ways to get students to actively participate in their learning.

Student engagement built on the theme of communication, with participants noting that they communicated with their students more about their students' goals, data collection, and life outside of the classroom. The themes of empowered students and student choice tied in with student engagement as well. One participant engaged students by rethinking how they asked questions in class,

> ... I'm always looking for ways to kind of do the higher-level thinking in my classroom. So just kind of getting the kids to do the heavy lifting, getting them to do the questioning. So, I'm not the one asking all the questions, having them come up with questions.

The participant noted that this was one strategy they felt they had gained while learning about high leverage practices during Joyful Inclusion professional development. Several

participants noted that their students' engagement had gone up due to persistence in trying to connect with and engage students:

> In the beginning of the year they [the students] were very shy, very reserved - they still are - but like today… they all participated.;

> I feel… that class… they're way more inclined to share now and just in any activity, participate.

One of the participants described their students being more engaged as an effect of using co-teaching methods, stating,

> … in the beginning of the year, I don't think [students participating] would have occurred… I do think it's always with us being kind of in there together [co-teaching] supporting them.

We found that student engagement fell across many values of the value-creation framework, primarily in applied value, realised value, and strategic value.

Empowered students

We defined the theme of empowered students as: Allowing students to take ownership of their learning through various methods. This could be by offering choices, involving students in their own data collection or progress monitoring, and tools to advocate for their needs.

Participants saw a growth in empowered students that mirrored the growth of student engagement. One participant empowered students by involving them in progress monitoring and data collection. The participant and their collaborative partner would show the students their data collection form, what data was collected, and eventually have their students track their own data.

> … we would show them…, 'this is how many times that you were calling out without using your hand,' … then little by little you know. 'Do you think that you could keep track of those things?' … with some time they were actually able to keep track of how many times they were doing those behaviours.

Another participant, who offered their students many choices, noted,

> … I have a student that I'm thinking of he will call me over and say, 'I appreciate all the choices but I - my brain can't handle it. I need you to narrow it down to two for me. I know, I know that you'd like to give us choices and I appreciate it, but I can't take it so I need you to just narrow it down to two and then I'll just pick.'

We found that empowered students fell across many values of the value-creation framework, primarily in realised value and strategic value.

Student choice

We defined the theme of student choice as: Giving students choices in their learning environment, which leads to/strengthens student engagement and empowered students. This allowed for students to have more choice in their learning by offering a "menu of options", working with students to create their own checklists, allowing students to voice their needs, etc.

Student choice is built on the theme of student engagement and often created empowered students. One participant would give their students ten vocabulary words and ask the students to "pick words that pop, pick words that stand out, ... or ones that you want to learn more about," and would base their vocabulary list on the students' input. This participant also focused "on UDL thinking" from the Joyful Inclusion professional development course,

> … especially with vocabulary… And actually, their vocab test scores kind of went up from that, which I've seen an improvement because it's what they're choosing to do versus 'okay, you have to do this'.

Another participant noted that while some of their students enjoyed the "menu of options" they provided, some students needed fewer choices, and they would adjust based on that.

> I'll even say sometimes, 'I was thinking about giving three options or five. I don't want to overwhelm you.' And... they're very vocal... They'll just tell you [if they're overwhelmed, amount of options they prefer].

We found that student choice fell across many values of the value-creation framework, primarily in applied value, realised value, and strategic value.

Family engagement

We defined the theme of family engagement as: Engaging families in their student's learning and growth. This can also include a lack of family engagement. Family engagement could be a teacher sending a weekly email home about what the class covered this week, phone calls to discuss students' driving needs or supplemental activities, or a school creating more opportunities for community engagement.

One participant noted frustration in having strategies for family engagement,

> The parents ignore the email, the kid comes in with no work done… I appreciate the strategies for trying to engage, but at the same time, like it has to be two parties engaging. And so I did find that frustrating this year to have the strategies to do it [engage families], but not be able to get the reciprocation that you need from that to be a successful partnership.

This participant noted family engagement as one thing they felt they wanted to pinpoint as learning during the Joyful Inclusion professional development.

Other participants, while noticing a similar lack of engagement, did find that utilising more communication (such as emails, texts, or phone calls home) had parents become "way more responsive," even noticing that families became more aware of their students' skills: "they're [families] like, 'Oh my god I didn't know my child could write so well.' They can, they've been working on things." Participants also saw their school doing "way more than years past, with family community engagement". Family engagement, student engagement, and communication were themes that tied together often, with one participant noting,

> I text my families constantly… I just keep that line of communication open. But specifically, like, recording, progress monitoring, and things like that, instead of just filling out the IEP and sending it home.

Some families were looking for extra work or support for their student(s), and one participant would send homework with notes so that the families could assist the student in doing the work.

We found that family engagement fell across many values of the value-creation framework, primarily in strategic value, with some instances in applied value, realised value, and orienting value.

Collaborative teaching

We defined the theme of collaborative teaching as: Utilising collaborative teaching structures with or without a co-teacher. These structures could include stations teaching, flexible grouping, parallel and alternative teaching, one teach/one support, etc., with or without a collaborative teaching partner.

Some participants had a new co-teaching partner, some had a continuing co-teaching partner, and some had no co-teacher in their classroom, but did utilise co-planning with another professional or utilised collaborative teaching structures without a partner. One participant noted that, while their co-teaching pair wasn't able to use as many collaborative teaching structures during the school year as they would have liked, they

> … have that [collaborative teaching structures/strategies] in our pocket for next year… we know how to use it… We can focus more on the co-teaching strategies that we want to try and include in the classroom.

One participant even utilised students as collaborative partners. They used flexible grouping and ensured

> [they had] at least one expert [student] in place per group [to assist other students in place of a teacher]. And if I don't, I'll try to work with one group.

The themes of student engagement and communication tied into collaborative teaching, as participants often used flexible grouping and one teach/one support to focus on students' driving needs. One co-teaching pair became

> more mindful of the groups… and just more mindful of what - not only just questioning, but how we're speaking to the students… of what is being said and how it's being said to the students.

With one student who was using self-evaluation tools to refocus in class and complete work, a participant said that

> [having a co-teacher using] one teach/one observe, or one teach/one assist kind of thing… made it a little easier for me to focus on him," and was able to see "him grow into self-evaluation… and making progress and making these better choices.

We found that collaborative teaching fell across many values of the value-creation framework, primarily in potential value, applied value, and enabling value.

Discussion

The purpose of this case study was twofold. First, we wanted to explore using the value-creation framework as an evaluative measure of the value of participation in Joyful Inclusion. Second, we wanted to report findings from the case study to answer the research question, "what value is created by participation in Joyful Inclusion?" We believe our study produced interesting findings for both points.

Most education evaluation systems rely heavily on quantitative data and therefore miss out on the stories that participants have to tell that help further explain the quantitative data. The typical observations, surveys, and interviews are conducted leading to reportable outcomes but leaving researchers wondering if it was the professional development program that could be attributed to such outcomes (Stake, 1967). The use of a comprehensive system in JIVES allowed us to pinpoint exactly which element of Joyful Inclusion could be attributed to the outcome our participants discussed. Participants specifically mentioned modules or resources that led to changes in their practice and outcomes for their students and families. Further, frequently used evaluation systems are one-directional and hierarchical (Bubb & Early, 2010; Guskey, 2002). Because JIVES leverages the value-creation framework, the evaluation system removes that hierarchical barrier. The framework itself is bi-directional and Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2020) stressed that for learning to be meaningful it must flow across the framework. While JIVES does include the core components described by Desimone (2009), the use of the Value-Creation Framework allows for the individual adaptations she suggests be present when using her framework. So, JIVES uses critical components of previous models of professional development program evaluation but extends this work by addressing the concerns with these models.

JIVES helped our team use an evaluative measure to identify themes that told a story about the value created by participation in Joyful Inclusion that may not have been

attributed to Joyful Inclusion without the corroboration of the stories. One of the challenges with Stake's (1967) evaluation model was not knowing whether outcomes could be tied to the professional development program in question, or some other influencing factor. Through collecting contribution data, which we call experience conversations, our participants were able to describe specific elements of our professional development program they felt contributed to outcomes they described. For example, participants referenced the learning that occurred in the co-teaching/ collaborative structures modules contributed to their ability to name a practice they were using in their classroom. This module also pushed them to collaboratively plan how they would use these structures in their co-teaching the following year. Additionally, participants referenced an increase in vocabulary knowledge as an outcome and attributed that to the UDL modules that focused on strategies to clarify vocabulary and symbols, which is one of the UDL guidelines discussed in Joyful Inclusion.

Joyful Inclusion gave participants agency in the difference they make for students with disabilities. Agency is one of the key components missing from other evaluation systems (Li & Ruppar, 2021). Our participants described ways they felt they had agency to make decisions related to collaborative teaching structures. They also described instructional practices they had agency over that had an impact on their students. Change in teaching practice is critical especially when considering the impact on student outcomes (Boyle et al., 2020). Not only did our teachers experience a sense of agency, they described the agency their students and families experienced as well. Their students felt they had more of a choice in their learning and they described a bi-directional communication with their parents they had not experienced before. Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2020) state that "without the capacity to act in order to produce a particular effect, there can be no agency" (p. 61). The learning that flowed across the value-creation framework suggests that our participants worked to implement what was learned in Joyful Inclusion to produce certain outcomes.

Limitations

While there were some interesting findings from the current study, there are also four limitations to note. First, the time required to conduct the comprehensive evaluation that is required in JIVES as compared to simply collecting and analysing quantitative data (student achievement data) is notable. The challenge of time was noted in King's (2014) review of professional development evaluation and continues to be a challenge in JIVES. The collection of multiple sources of data takes time and the integrated analysis of these data takes time. Exploring ways to shorten the time it takes to collect comprehensive data is an inquiry worth pursuing.

Second, conducting the experience conversations required a specific level of knowledge and expertise. The Joyful Inclusion team member conducting these experience conversations, which help participants tell their value-creation story, needed to have a thorough understanding of the effect data from that team. Reviewing the effect data took time and deciding what effect data should be probed further took skill.

Third, our case study was conducted with just one school who implemented Joyful Inclusion. Each school or district that participates in Joyful Inclusion is unique as will be their value-creation stories. To get a more comprehensive picture of the impact Joyful Inclusion has on students, educators, and the communities they serve will involve conducting this evaluation with many participants and looking at the data across multiple schools and districts to identify themes that cut across all participants. More research is needed using JIVES to see how it can support evaluation of Joyful Inclusion implementation across schools in different contexts that serve different demographics.

Finally, it is critical to call out the influence of the positionality of Joyful Inclusion researchers and Joyful Inclusion coaches. We are a group of like-minded individuals with backgrounds connected to and a passion for inclusive education. We have a common vision which is the co-creation of inclusive school communities where every student belongs and has personalised support to achieve rigorous expectations and every teacher loves teaching. Further, we are collaboratively working toward the same mission, sparking the joy of learning for each student and staff member and equipping every teacher to teach ALL learners.

Conclusion

The question we were seeking to answer is "does Joyful Inclusion make a difference"? Our data leads us to believe that, yes, Joyful Inclusion *does* make a difference. Joyful Inclusion participants improved and increased their communication with parents of students and family engagement, increased student engagement, empowered their students to take ownership over their learning including giving students choice within their instruction, and used co-teaching strategies to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. All of these are part of the learning that occurs in Joyful Inclusion and the stories the educators told about their experience show that Joyful Inclusion made a difference in their lives and the lives of their students, families, and communities.

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