

*Desks? Carpet? Free Choice? Oh
my!: How does student placement in
the classroom impact learning?*

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Description of Teaching Context:

My fourth grade classroom at Easterly Parkway Elementary is composed of 23 unique students. There are 13 boys and 10 girls. Each student possesses a variety of different strengths and weaknesses. There are also a few students who benefit from certain learning accommodations. There is a paraprofessional in the classroom that specifically assists three of the students. Out of the 23 students, there is one boy with Autism, two students with ADD/ADHD, and one boy with ODD. While many of the students in the class are quite independent, there are three students who need strong emotional support. A good number of students are pulled out of the general classroom at certain times for extra support based on their needs. Four of the students in my class receive ESL services. One of these four moved here recently and speaks very limited English. There are two students who receive learning support for reading, writing, and mathematics. Also, two different students receive Title I services for either reading or mathematics. The students in my class are quite diverse in their learning needs.

There are a great variety of different personalities and learning styles present in my classroom. Four students are what I would call natural born leaders. While the achievement level of these students ranges from average to quite high, they each possess strong leadership skills and serve as behavioral role models for other students in the class. Six students in the class are followers. These students are highly influenced by the actions of their peers. There are also grouping concerns that must be considered. Three boys in my classroom cannot be seated together in class/lunch or even use the restroom at the same time. One of these boys is highly active and

intelligent. He generally performs well when he is on his own. The second boy is very intelligent, but often has behavior issues. The third boy has special learning needs and is easily influenced and distracted by others. The students in my class are very diverse in learning needs, preferences, performance, and behavior.

Wonderings and Questions:

Main Wondering

How does student placement in the classroom impact learning?

My classroom contains a variety of different learning spaces for the students to utilize. There is a whole-group seating area on the carpet, individual desks placed in groups of six, and various other individual and group work spaces. Typically, my mentor and I ask the students to sit on the carpet during whole group instruction and at their desks when they work independently. Recently, I noticed that some of the students would remain at their desks when we asked everyone to come to the rug. Often, students might ask if they can sit at their desks while the rest of the class is sitting on the carpet. This made me wonder what makes students want to sit at their desks while the rest of the class is on the rug. Further, I began wondering what the benefits are of having students sit on the carpet rather than at their desks, or vice versa.

Sub-Questions:

- Where do my students prefer to sit?
- Where do teachers prefer their students sit during whole group instruction?
- Do students prefer to have a choice of where they sit?

- Will students make a responsible choice for their seating when given the choice?
- What impact does student placement in the classroom have on talking?

Data Collection and Analysis:

Formal Research

Data Collection

To help me plan and execute my inquiry, I researched a variety of sources. The literature I looked at gave me a solid foundation on my area of study. The literature I looked at came from credible web sources and educational journals. The articles discussed many different aspects of workspaces in the elementary school classroom. Details about the resources I examined can be found in my annotated bibliography (Appendix B). The research I did helped me develop my sub-questions and plan my methods of data collection.

Analysis

After reviewing a variety of sources on classroom seating arrangements, I began considering how the information could help guide my inquiry. Two of the sources I reviewed were inquiries that other teachers had investigated on classroom seating arrangements. While these papers did not investigate the same wondering, they provided me with ideas of different ways I might like to collect data. Other sources provided me with a wealth of information on how seating arrangements an impact student learning, classroom community, and overall student behavior. These sources helped me consider different factors that may be affected by altering students' physical

placement in the classroom. This was particularly helpful when it was time to begin analyzing my own data in hopes of discovering overall trends.

Systematic Observations

Data Collection

When considering what type of data I wanted to collect to investigate my inquiry question, I mainly wanted to focus on measuring student engagement levels. To do this, I took systematic observations to track student engagement levels in a variety of different settings. To determine where the students work best during whole-group instruction, I took systematic observations of the students sitting on the rug and sitting at their desks. To determine where the students work best while working independently, I took systematic observations of the students sitting at their desks and sitting in the spot of their choice.

When taking systematic observations to track student engagement levels, I recorded students' off-task behaviors over periods of ten minutes. When recording off-task behaviors, I split them into four categories; talking, getting out of seat, daydreaming, and other off-task behaviors. This allowed me a more in depth analysis of specific behaviors students exhibit in a variety of different settings.

Analysis

The systematic observations I took provide me with a wealth of information. To determine if there was an overall trend in student engagement levels based on their location during a particular type of instruction, I calculated the percent of students that were on-task during each ten-minute segment. I did this by dividing the number of

students who showed no off-task behaviors by the total number of students were in the classroom at the time. After getting a percentage for each period of data collection, I found the mean of the percentage of students that were on-task in the four different settings. This allowed me to easily compare where the most students are engaged during both independent work and whole-group instruction.

After determining the overall level of student engagement in each of the four settings, I began to look at the data from my systematic observations in more depth. I calculated percentages to represent how often each of the individual off-task behaviors occurred. This allowed me to examine if individual behaviors such as talking or getting out of seat occur more in a certain setting. This step of data analysis provided me with a plethora of information. I was surprised to find that while overall the engagement level of the class was higher in a particular setting, specific behaviors followed their own trends.

Student Survey

Data Collection

In addition to taking systematic observations to track student engagement levels, I collected other forms of data to research my wonderings. One alternative form of data was a student survey (Appendix C). I designed this survey to help me gain insight into the students' perspective on seating in the classroom. This survey asked questions that encouraged the students to reflect on where they prefer to sit during different types of activities. Also, the survey asked the students to be honest and consider if where they prefer to sit is necessarily where they do their best work. The survey helped me

determine where my students like to sit and where they feel they are the most productive.

Analysis

To evaluate the data from the student survey, I broke it down into individual questions. For each question, I recorded the number of students who responded not true, a little true, sometimes true, and very true. I used this information to make a bar graph for each of the questions. This made it very easy to see how my students felt at a glance. Some of the questions had great consistency in the student answers while others varied greatly. I was able to take the information from the student survey and compare it to the results of my systematic observations and the teacher interviews. It was interesting to examine if where the majority of students prefer to sit is where the data shows that they are the most engaged.

Teacher Interviews

Data Collection

After creating the survey to gain insight into the students' perspective, I wanted to create a way to determine the teachers' point of view. My goal of the interviews was to discover where teachers prefer for their students to sit during a variety of different types of instruction. In choosing what teachers I was going to interview, I tried to include teachers from a variety of different grade levels. This helped me determine if there is consistency in where teachers like their students to sit during whole-group instruction and independent work. I also asked the teachers to elaborate on why they prefer to have their students sit in a given spot. My final interview questions asked teachers to

share their experiences with giving students a choice about where they sit. I hoped to discover how often teachers give their students the opportunity to choose their seat and what the result was. The interviews I conducted helped me learn more about classroom seating from the teacher's perspective.

Analysis

The way I analyzed the data from the teacher interviews was less formal than the way I analyzed my other data. During each of the interviews, I recorded what each teacher responded to each question. When it was time to analyze the data, I started by reading over each teacher's response. Then, I tried to examine if the teacher's perspective aligned with the students' answers or a trend I noticed in the systematic observations. Ultimately, it was very helpful to have both the teacher and student perspective to support the data I collected on student engagement levels.

Explanation of Findings

Claim # 1: Students are more engaged during whole-group instruction when seated on the rug rather than at their desks.

Evidence A:

The systematic observations I collected to determine student engagement levels showed the percent of students that were engaged each time I took observations. When examining these percentages, it was easy to see that a higher percentage of students were engaged during whole-group instruction while seated on the carpet than at their desks. The mean percentage for the number of students on-task while seated on the carpet during whole-group instruction was 63.56%. This is clearly higher than the mean for the percentage of students on-task while seated at their desks, which was only 39.51%. A graph representing student engagement levels during whole group instruction can be seen in Appendix D.

Evidence B:

The responses students gave to certain questions on the survey corresponded with the results of the systematic observations. When asked to respond to the prompt “I am a better listener when sitting on the carpet”, the majority of the students responded by saying often true or very true. A full graph representing the students’ responses to this question can be seen in Appendix E.

Evidence C:

I interviewed a variety of teachers to determine their preferences in terms of where students sit in the classroom. One of the questions I asked was where the teachers prefer for their students to sit during whole-group instruction. Three out of the four teachers I interviewed responded that they prefer for their students to sit on the carpet area during whole-group lessons when they are teaching. When asked to reflect on where her students sit during lessons she teaches, fourth grade teacher Jaime Komlenic said she prefers to have her students on the carpet. She stated, "I feel that the students are more with me and not fidgeting with materials in their desks while I'm teaching."

Claim # 2: Students are more engaged during independent work when they are allowed to choose their own spot to work.

Evidence A:

This claim is directly supported by the systematic observations I took to track student engagement levels. I used my observations to calculate percentages to represent the amount of students on task while working independently both at their desks or when allowed to choose their own space. This data clearly showed that students are more engaged when they are allowed to choose their own spot to work in the classroom while working independently. The mean percentage representing the number of students engaged during independent work when students are allowed to

choose their seat was 65.18%. The mean percentage of students engaged while sitting at their desks during independent work was 40.92%. About 24% more students were engaged during independent work when they had the opportunity to choose where they wanted to work in the classroom (Appendix F).

Evidence B:

Many of the responses that students gave on the student survey also supported this claim. The data I collected from the student survey indicated that the students like having a choice of where they work in the classroom. When asked to respond to the prompt “I like choosing where I sit in the classroom”, 18 out of 23 students responded that this is very true. Four responded that this is mostly true (Appendix G). I believe that if students like where they are working in the classroom, they will be more likely to remain on-task. Another prompt I asked the students to respond to asked them to reflect on how well they work when they are allowed to choose their own workspace. When asked to respond to the prompt “I work well when I am allowed to choose to work anywhere in the classroom”, the majority of the students responded that this is mostly true or very true. A graph depicting the students’ responses to this prompt can be seen in Appendix H.

Claim # 3: Students talk more when they are instructed to sit at their desks.

Systematic Observations:

When I recorded observations to track students’ engagement level, I broke the behaviors I observed down into four categories. This allowed me to make a more in

depth analysis of what was occurring during various types of instruction. One of the individual behaviors I looked at was talking. Out of the four settings I examined, talking occurred at the highest rates when students were seated at their desks during both independent work and whole-group instruction. This is likely because the students are grouped closely to one another and not always in close proximity to their teacher. A graph depicting the level of talking in each of the four different settings can be found in Appendix I.

The responses the students gave on the survey also supported this claim. One of the questions on the survey asked the students to reflect on when they talk the most. When asked to respond to the prompt, “I talk more when I am sitting at my desk”, the majority of the students in the class responded that this was either mostly true or very true. I was impressed to see that my fourth grade students were able to reflect openly and honestly on their own behavior while sitting in different settings. The responses to the survey show that most of the students feel they talk more when sitting at their desks. This aligns with the data I collected in the form of systematic observations. To see a graph representing the students responses to this survey questions, see appendix

Reflections and Implications for Future Practice

After reflecting on my first inquiry as an educator, I realized that this process has been incredibly valuable. Through my inquiry investigation, I have gained a great deal of insight concerning educational practices and my own classroom. What I have learned so far will allow me to plan and implement better instruction in my classroom for the remainder of the school year. Now that I know where my students work the best in

the classroom during different types of activities, I can target where students should sit during specific portions of each lesson. For example, if I am leading a whole-group lesson, I will likely have my students sit on the carpet. This is where my data has shown that they are the most engaged during this type of instruction. Also, I have started giving my students the chance to choose where they would like to work during independent work. As fourth graders, many of my students have demonstrated the ability to choose a good place for them to work in the classroom. The survey also showed that the students like having the opportunity to choose where they will work in the classroom. I am a firm believer in allowing students the freedom to make their own choices whenever possible. I now have data that supports this practice.

My inquiry investigation has also left me with further wonderings surrounding classroom seating. In my inquiry, I examined students sitting on the carpet versus at their desks. In the future, I would be interested in learning more about different arrangements of desks and how this may or may not impact student learning. Also, I would like to look at if having students sit on the carpet during whole-group instruction has any effect on classroom community. Finally, I would like to examine how engaged students are if they are allowed to choose their spot in the classroom during whole-group instruction. Over the course of my inquiry investigation, I found that students work well when given the opportunity to choose their spot in the classroom during independent work. I would like to investigate if this is true during whole-group instruction as well.

While my inquiry investigation has definitely influenced my ability to determine where my students should work in the classroom, this process as a whole has had a

much larger impact on me. Ever since I began researching my wondering, I have become much more familiar with how data can be used as an instructional tool. Also, the inquiry process has led me to look at myself as a teacher in a different light. I now see classroom occurrences as an opportunity to collect data and make improvements. I have noticed myself forming wonderings about my students and myself as an educator. In the future, I intend to continue taking an inquiry stance in my own classroom.

Appendix

Appendix A: Inquiry Brief

Context

My fourth grade classroom at Easterly Parkway Elementary is composed of 23 unique students. There are 13 boys and 10 girls. Each student possesses a variety of different strengths and weaknesses. There are also a few students who benefit from certain learning accommodations. There is a paraprofessional in the classroom that specifically assists three of the students. Out of the 24 students, there is one boy with Autism, two students with ADD/ADHD, and one boy with ODD. While many of the students in the class are quite independent, there are three students who need strong emotional support. A good number of students are pulled out of the general classroom at certain times for extra support based on their needs. Four of the students in my class receive ESL services. One of these four moved here recently and speaks very limited English. There are two students who receive learning support for reading, writing, and mathematics. Also, two different students receive Title I services for either reading or mathematics. The students in my class are quite diverse in their learning needs.

There are a great variety of different personalities and learning styles present in my classroom. Four students are what I would call natural born leaders. While the achievement level of these students ranges from average to quite high, they each possess strong leadership skills and serve as behavioral role models for other students in the class. Six students in the class are followers. These students are highly

influenced by the actions of their peers. There are also grouping concerns that must be considered. Three boys in my classroom cannot be seated together in class/lunch or even use the restroom at the same time. One of these boys is highly active and intelligent. He generally performs well when he is on his own. The second boy is very intelligent, but often has behavior issues. The third boy has special learning needs and is easily influenced and distracted by others. The students in my class are very diverse in learning needs, preferences, performance, and behavior.

Rationale

The students in my classroom have assigned spaces on the carpet as well as assigned desks. Generally, the students sit on the rug for whole-group instruction and work at their desks for independent activities. Recently, my mentor and I have noticed that many of the students will sit at their desks when we ask everyone to join us on the carpet. Often, we have to give individual reminders for students to come to the rug. This made me wonder what makes students want to sit at their desks while the rest of the class is on the rug. Further, I began wondering what the benefits are of having students sit on the carpet rather than at their desks, or vice versa.

I had an interesting conversation with another intern that made my curiosity surrounding this topic grow even more. A first grade intern shared a difficulty that she has been having in her classroom. She said that the students generally work fairly well while at their desks, but do not remain focused when she tries to engage them in a lesson on the carpet. This is the opposite of the trend I have noticed in my own classroom. Generally, I feel that the students are engaged when we are all on the rug,

but when they are off at their desks I lose their attention. I am interested to collect data that will help me determine where my students are the most productive.

The information I learn throughout the course of this inquiry has the potential to help me improve my instruction. By collecting data, I may be able to determine where my students are the most productive and where they prefer sitting. This information will help me to plan and implement the most effective lessons possible. Research has supported the importance of building a strong classroom community where everyone feels comfortable. I am also curious about if/how seating on the carpet vs. at individual desks impacts the sense of community in the classroom. I believe that giving students a choice can empower them and put them in control of their own learning. This led me to wonder what the benefits are of allowing students to choose where they would like to sit. When given the choice, will fourth grade students choose the spot where they learn best?

Main wondering

How does students' placement in the classroom impact learning?

Sub-questions

-Where do individual students prefer to sit? -Will students make a responsible seating choice if given the opportunity?

-Does seating on the carpet or seating at desks impact time on task?

-Where do teachers prefer for students to sit during whole group instruction?

-Are students more attentive during whole group instruction while sitting at desks or on the carpet?

- How does sitting on the carpet as opposed to desks impact the classroom community?
- Do students work better individually at their desks or when given the choice to work anywhere in the classroom?
- Does students' placement affect the level of talking?

Timeline

Week of 1/30

- *Develop wonderings*
- *Continue to review literature*
- *Finalize topic*

Week of 2/6

- *Design data collection methods*
 - *Set up good times with mentor at the beginning of the week*
- *Begin taking observations*
 - *Engagement (4 different settings)*
 - *Whole-group/individual reminders given*
- *Begin conducting teacher interviews*
- *Review literature and add to annotated bibliography*
 - *@ least 5 sources*

• *Week of 2/13*

- *Design student survey*
- *Give student survey to whole class*
- *Take observations (systematic and anecdotal records)*
 - *Engagement (4 different settings)*
 - *Whole-group/individual reminders given*
- *Conduct teacher interviews*
- *Review literature and add to annotated bibliography*

• *Week of 2/20*

- *Design student interview questions*
- *Conduct 2-3 student interviews*
- *Take observations*
 - *Engagement (4 different settings)*
 - *Whole group/individual reminders given*

- *Review literature and add to annotated bibliography*
- *Week of 2/27*
 - *Take observations*
 - *Engagement (4 different settings)*
 - *Whole group/individual reminders given*
 - *Video recording of students during whole group instruction (2 different settings)*
 - *Review literature and add to annotated bibliography*
 - *@ least 10 sources*
- *Week of 3/5 (Spring Break)*
 - *Begin analyzing data from survey and observations*
 - *Code video footage for student behaviors*
- *Week of 3/12*
 - *Conduct follow-up interviews with students*
 - *Take observations*
 - *Engagement (4 different settings)*
 - *Whole group/individual reminders given*
 - *Video recording of students during independent work (at desks and free choice)*
- *Week of 3/19*
 - *Code video footage of independent work*
 - *Take observations*
 - *Engagement (4 different settings)*
 - *Whole group/individual reminders given*
- *Week of 3/26*
 - *Analyze data*
 - *Interviews*
 - *Surveys*
 - *Observations*
 - *Video footage*
 - *Begin paper draft*
- *Week of 4/2*
 - *Finish draft*
- *Week of 4/9*
 - *Edit paper*
 - *Begin designing presentation*
- *Week of 4/16*

- *Edit paper*
- *Finalize presentation*
 - *Add video/photo artifacts*
- *Week of 4/23*
 - *Practice presentation*
 - *Finalize paper*

Data collection ideas

Observations

- Engagement: We will make systematic observations of behaviors that will help us track which students are engaged. These behaviors include talking, getting out of seat, staring off or “zoning out”, playing/fidgeting. We will take these observations in the following settings:
 - Whole-group instruction, students on the rug
 - Whole-group instruction, students at desks
 - Whole-group instruction, students choose their spot
 - Independent work, students at desks
 - Independent work, students choose a spot in the classroom
- We will take anecdotal notes to supplement our systematic observations on student engagement and time spent for transitions.
- We will also record the number of whole-group reminders given during different activities.
- We will record the number of individual reminders (including verbal reminders and warnings) given during different activities.

Surveys

- Students will complete a survey asking them a variety of questions about seating in the classroom. The survey will include questions on a ranking scale about where students prefer to sit during different types of activities and where they feel they are the most productive. There will be open-ended questions asking students why they prefer a certain seat.

Interviews

- As a supplement to the whole-group surveys, I will complete interviews with a smaller group of students. I will interview 1-2 students before creating the survey for the whole class. This may help me focus my questions and add other prompts. After giving all the students the survey, I may choose to interview certain ones based on their responses.
- I will interview a variety of teachers to see where they prefer to have their students sit during whole-group instruction and independent work and why.

Technology

- I would like to use video and photography to help document and record data. After recording a video clip of a particular lesson, I can code the video for different students behaviors. Photos will be a simple way to keep track of where the students sit when given a choice.

Appendix B: Annotated Bibliography

Source One:

Wannarka, R., & Ruhl, K. (2008, November 2). Seating arrangements that promote positive academic and behavioural outcomes: A review of empirical research. *Support for Learning, 23*(2), 89-93.

This article reviews empirical research concerning where students work most productively in the classroom. The article evaluated data on students sitting in three different arrangements; rows, groups, and semicircles. While these are not the same exact arrangements I am investigating, much of the information in the article was helpful. One important claim the article makes is highly relevant to my research. The article states, “The physical arrangement of the classroom has the potential to encourage desirable behaviour or contribute to students’ misbehaviour.” The belief that seating arrangements can impact students’ behaviors is a key reason that I am interested in this inquiry. This article also stresses that the research did not indicate one seating arrangement as being the best. The optimum arrangement seems to depend on the nature of the activity. This information helped me develop my methods for data collection. I will be collecting data on where students work best independently and where they work best during whole-group instruction.

Source Two:

Gordon, D. (2010, October). Multipurpose spaces. *National Clearinghouse for Educational*

Facilities, 1-4.

This source discusses how a variety of different factors can impact a learning environment. Some of the factors discussed include lighting, acoustics, and storage spaces. While this article focuses specifically on large, multipurpose spaces, much of the same information can be applied to smaller general classroom spaces. The section of the article on seating arrangements was particularly interesting. It briefly discussed how different arrangements of moveable workspaces could create flexibility for accommodating a variety of needs. This article also suggests the value of using different arrangements for different purposes. Having both carpet seating and desks or tables gives a classroom many versatile workspaces. In my inquiry, I am hoping to determine if certain students work best in certain seats. Also, I can examine if sitting in a certain place in the classroom is best for a particular type of activity.

Source Three:

Berrill, D. P., & Gall, M. (1999, August). On the carpet: Emergent writer/readers' letter sharing in a penpal program. *Language Arts, 76*(6), 470-478. Retrieved from ProQuest Education Journals (196871236).

This article discusses the value of whole-group carpet seating. It uses first and second grade classes to exemplify the benefits of whole-class carpet time. This article stresses the development of a cooperative learning environment through time spent on the carpet. The data collected by the authors suggested that spending time as a class on the carpet gives students the opportunity to share and learn together in a safe environment. This article opened my mind to new potential sub-questions for my own inquiry investigation. I am curious to examine how seating on the carpet vs. at individual desks will impact the community in our classroom.

Source Four:

Schmitt, L. (2010). *What's so smart about smart seats?: How student seating impacts on-task*

behavior. April

I found this teacher inquiry that was completed by a PDS intern two years ago. While it did not investigate the same exact question as me, much of the material is similar. Reading this person's inquiry helped me think about some of the smaller details as I continue to develop my own investigation. This teacher made three claims on different seating arrangements based on the data she gathered. I am interested to examine if the results from my data will match with what was found during this inquiry investigation. I also enjoyed looking at how this person chose to collect data. I will be using some similar methods and some different.

Source Five:

Eash, M. E. (2005). *Do classroom spaces really work?* May

This was another inquiry investigation that was completed by a PDS intern in 2005. This inquiry investigation examined the effectiveness of different arrangements of desks in the classroom. This was one of my initial wonderings that I considered investigating. While some of the information from this investigation does not apply, much of it was very helpful. I enjoyed reading about how the author developed her wonderings into an actual investigation. I will be collecting data in many of the ways that this teacher chose to. I was interested to see that this inquiry paper was written in a very different manner than the other one I read. The tone of this one was much more conversational. Another benefit of looking at this inquiry investigation is that many of the sources that were relevant for that investigation also apply to mine.

Source Six:

Guardino, C. A., & Fullerton, E. (2010, July). Changing behaviors by changing the classroom environment. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 42(6), 8-13.

This article primarily examined the impact that the classroom-learning environment can have on disruptive behavior. While the article discussed a variety of different aspects of

learning environments, seating arrangements were definitely discussed. The article also discussed the process that teachers can use to change their classroom to make the learning environment more effective. The first step in this process is to make observations about different behaviors the students exhibit and how the spaces in the classroom are used. Next, they suggest making modifications based on the observations that were made. After making changes, it is important to follow-up and observe what, if any, effect they've had. This process is similar to some of the steps of the inquiry process. Both involve making observations about what is going on in the classroom and using these observations to make changes. I enjoyed reading the portion of this article that discussed a case study of a fourth-grade classroom. It walked the reader through the entire process of making classroom adjustments from making observations and collecting baseline data to experimenting with changes and tracking progress. It was interesting to read about another teacher's experience of altering seating arrangements.

Source Seven:

Zaghlawan, H. Y., & Ostrosky, M. M. (2010, November 17). Circle time: An exploratory study of activities and challenging behavior in Head Start classrooms. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 38, 439-448.

This article discusses the role that circle time plays in the classroom. Circle time is a whole group activity similar to a morning meeting. This activity takes place in a meeting place such as a carpet. In my inquiry, I will be investigating the effects of having students sit on the carpet. I am interested to see if what I find will align with the information presented in this article. One point discussed in this article is that seating in a circle as a whole group can have a positive impact on the sense of community in a classroom. One of my sub-questions concerns the impact seating on the carpet rather than desks impacts the sense of community in the classroom. The article also points out the difference between circle time, a teacher-led, whole-group activity, and independent or free time. The article also discussed common challenges that arise during whole-group activities on the carpet. I will compare these to the

challenges/behaviors I see in my own classroom while students are sitting on the carpet.

Source Eight:

Kuuskorpi, M., & Gonzalez, N. C. (2011). The future of the physical learning environment: School facilities that support the user. *OECD: CELE Exchange*, 1-7.

This is a very recent publication that discusses the current role of teachers and what they need from a learning environment. After examining schools in multiple countries, the authors of this article worked to consolidate the information they collected concerning the optimum physical learning environments. They used this information to identify factors that are key to a good physical environment. One of the factors that was discussed was the importance of flexibility within the classroom. Teachers showed a need for multiple different types of learning spaces within one room. Two different examples of these settings include carpet seating areas as well as desks or worktables. In my own research, I will be collecting data on how well students work in a variety of different settings. The article also discussed the different accommodations necessary for independent and group work. The article suggests that individual or paired clusters of desks work the best for independent work while carpet seating or more interactive spaces are better for whole-group activities. I am interested to find if the systematic observations I take in my own classroom will support these trends.

Source Nine:

Shaw, M. (2011, October 21). Moving tables and shifting attitudes. *The Times Educational Supplement*.

This is a brief article that talks about a variety of different seating arrangements. One point made by the author is that there is not one correct seating arrangement for students. This is primarily because every group of students is different. What works for one group may be disastrous for another. Also, the author discusses that the best type of seating depends on the type of activity students will be completing. This is a common trend that has appeared in many

of the articles I have read. I believe this to be true. In my inquiry investigation, I am not looking to identify carpet seating, desks, or free choice seating as superior. For this reason, I will be collecting data in each of these settings during different types of instruction. For example, by collecting data while the students sit at their desks during both whole-group instruction and independent work, I will be able to evaluate if seating at desks is more effective during a particular type of activity.

Source Ten:

Patton, J. E., Snell, J., Knight, W. J., & Gerken, K. (2001, April). A survey of elementary classroom seating designs. , 1-8.

This source was quite different from any of the others that I explored. This article discusses a study that was done investigating the preferences elementary teachers have regarding the seating arrangements in their classrooms. I was particularly interested in this article because I will be interviewing teachers on the same topic as part of my inquiry investigation. The teachers in the survey were asked to identify the arrangements they liked the most and provide a rationalization for their choices. I was interested to find that 56% of the teachers surveyed for this study typically only used one type of seating arrangement throughout the entire course of the year. I originally did not think to ask how many different arrangements teachers use during my interviews. The majority of the teachers who were surveyed responded that they felt seating in clusters was the best way to enhance student learning. A correlation between learning and engagement levels has been shown repeatedly. I am curious to see if I find that the students are the most engaged while sitting in desk clusters rather than on the carpet or in a seat of their choice. Another interesting aspect of this study was that the authors provided a chart showcasing the number of teachers who responded to a variety of prompts identifying positive and negative attributes of different seating arrangements.

Source Eleven:

Gest, S. D., & Rodkin, P. C. (2011, July 18). Teaching practices and elementary classroom peer ecologies. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 32, 288-295.

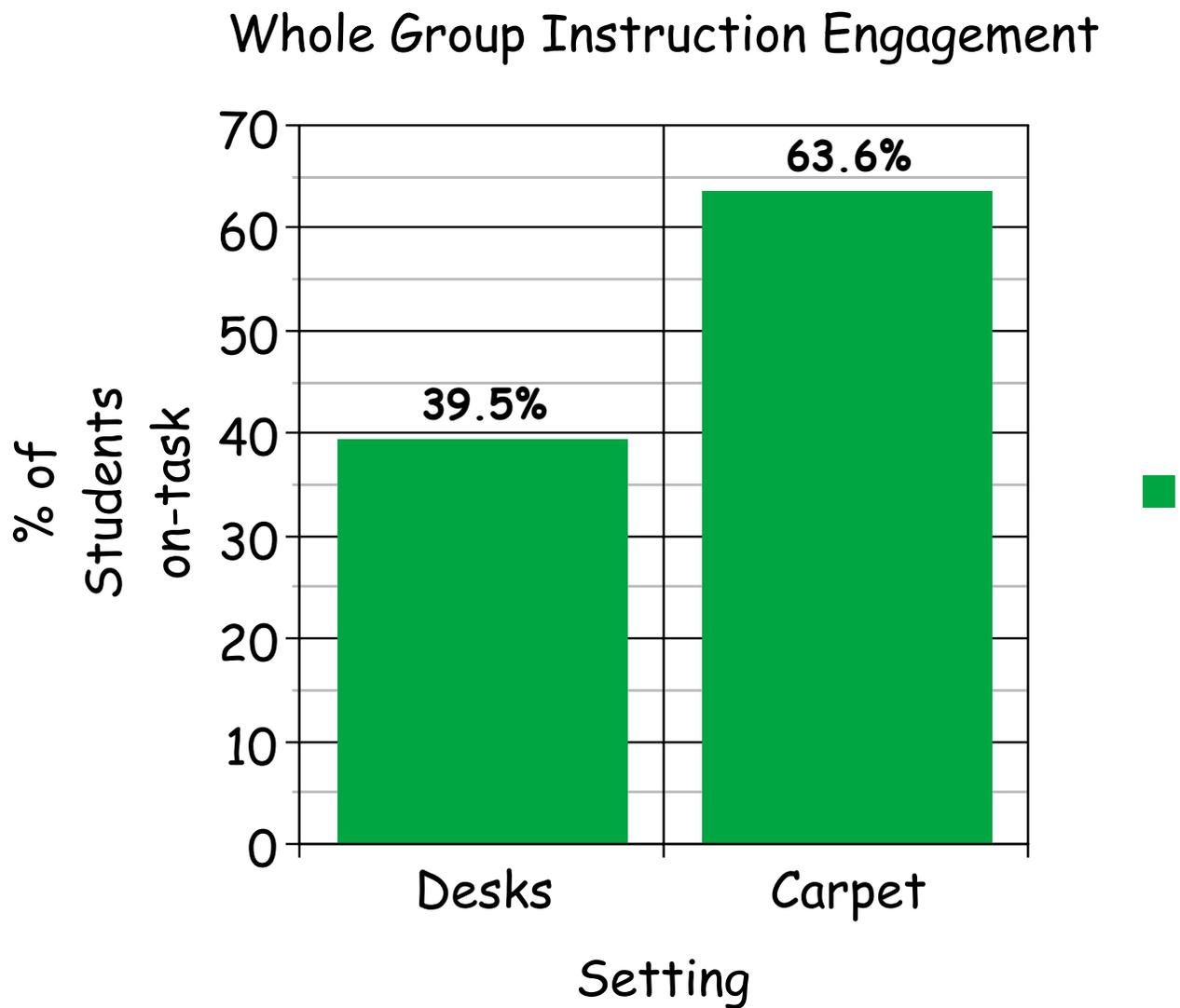
This article mainly discussed the role that teachers play in students' social interactions. The authors stated that one way teachers can influence the relationships between students is through seating choices in the classroom. The article considered teachers' self-reported considerations in making a seating chart. Teachers were asked to report how important various factors were in determining a seating arrangement on a scale of one to three. The authors compared these responses with the levels of liking and disliking between the students in each classroom. They were able to identify overall trends between what factors teachers considered the most in creating arrangements and the balance between liking and disliking in the classroom. It was interesting to see how different aspects of classroom seating impact the relationships between the students. A large portion of a positive classroom community is the relationships between the students. As part of my inquiry, I would like to investigate if seating on the carpet or at desks clusters will better promote positive relationships between students. After reading this article, I went back and added a couple of questions to the student survey I designed. I am now also including questions that concern where the students feel they best get to know their peers and enjoy their company. This is a topic that I would also like to discuss in the individual student interviews I conduct.

Appendix C: Student Survey

Name: _____

Please check the box that fits best	1 (not true)	2 (a little true)	3 (mostly true)	4 (very true)
I would rather sit on the rug than at my desk while the teacher is teaching.				
I like choosing where I sit in the classroom.				
I get distracted when sitting at my desk.				
I work well when I am allowed to choose to work anywhere in the classroom.				
When given the choice of where to work, I pick a good spot for myself.				
I talk more when I am sitting at my desk.				
I like sitting at my desk when working independently.				
I am a better listener when sitting on the carpet.				

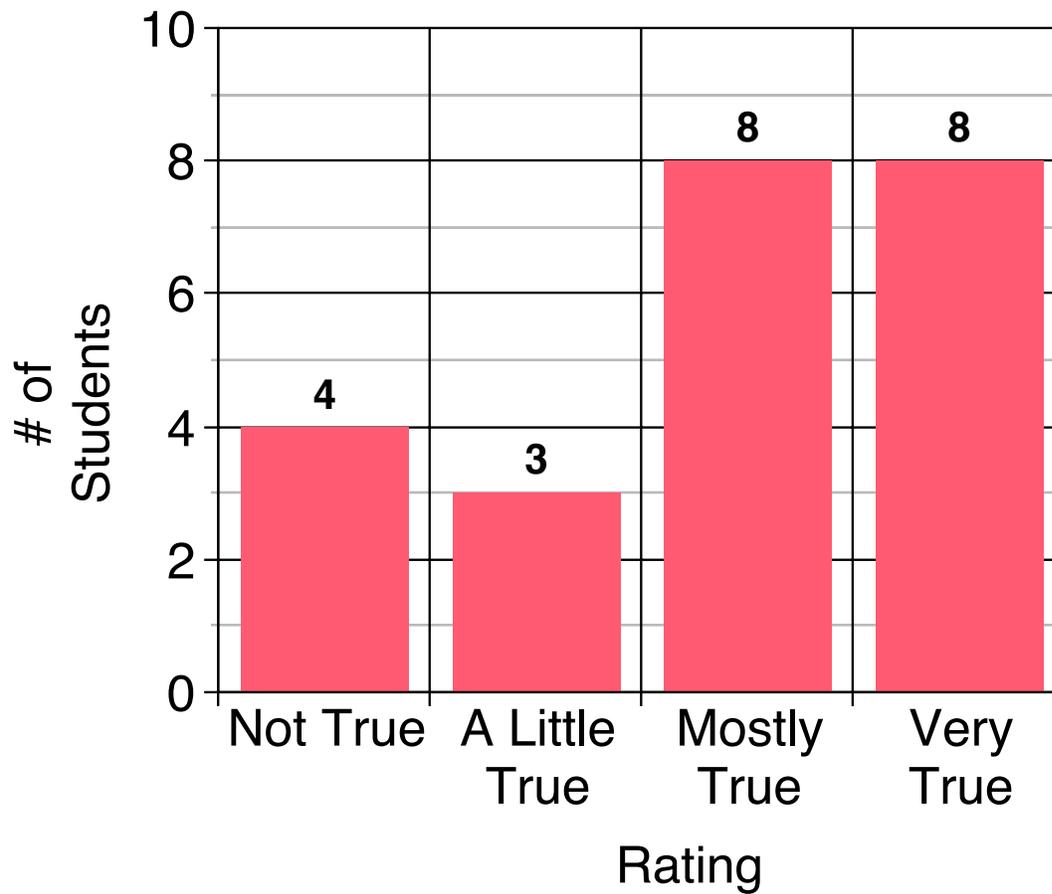
Appendix D: Whole Group Instruction Engagement Graph



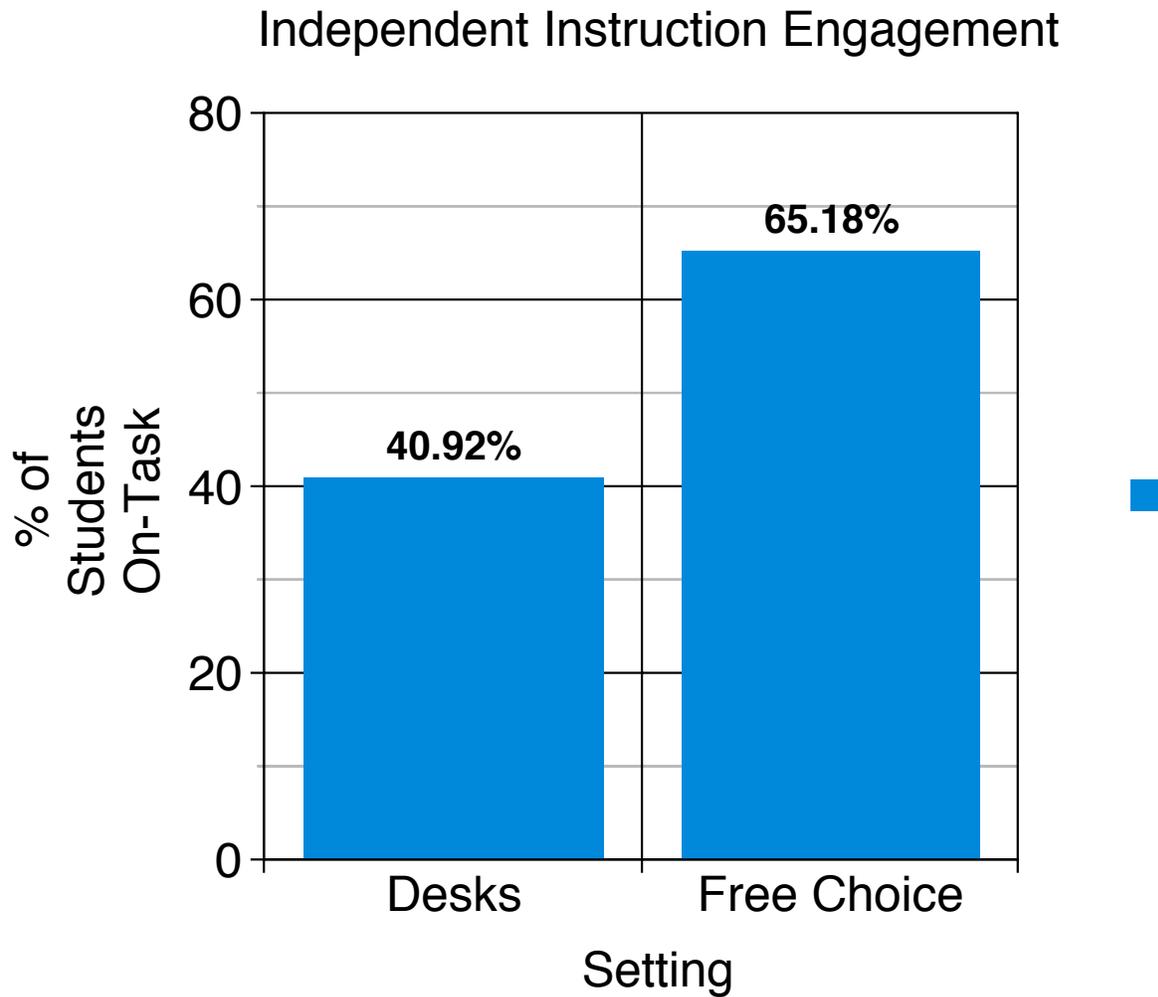
*This graph represents the average percent of students who showed no off-task behaviors during whole group instruction in two different settings.

Appendix E: Student Survey Graph 1

"I am a better listener when sitting on the carpet?"



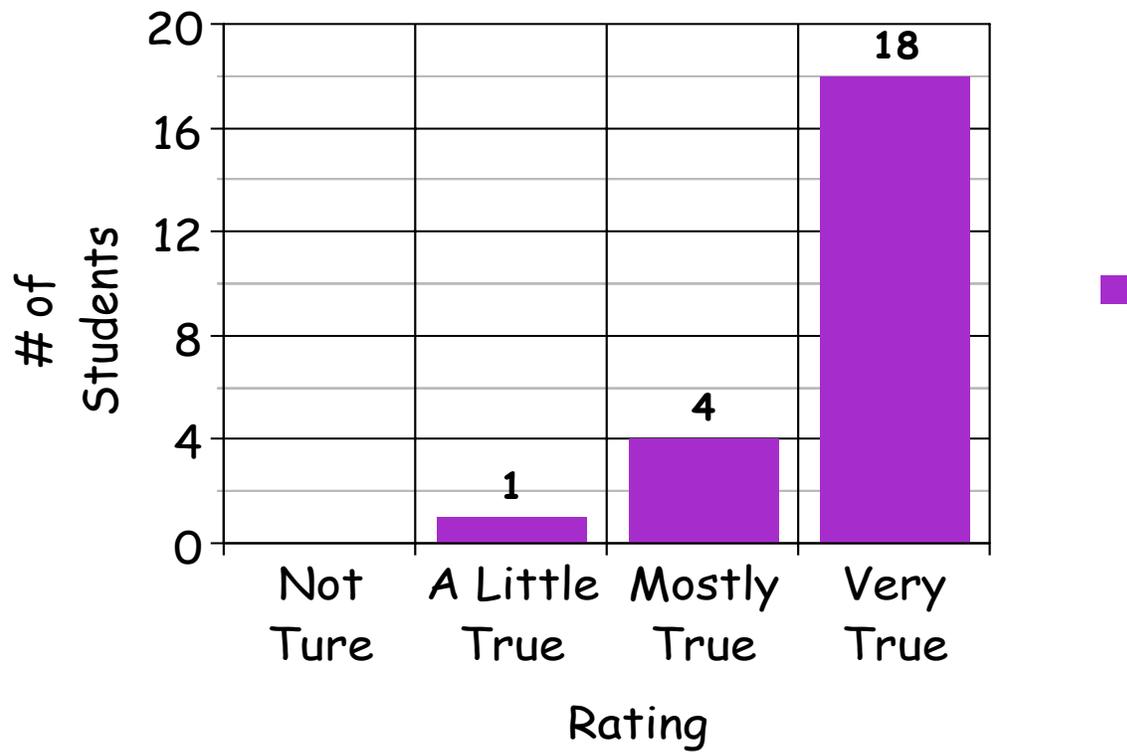
Appendix F: Independent Instruction Engagement Graph



*This graph represents the average percent of students that showed no off-task behaviors during independent instruction.

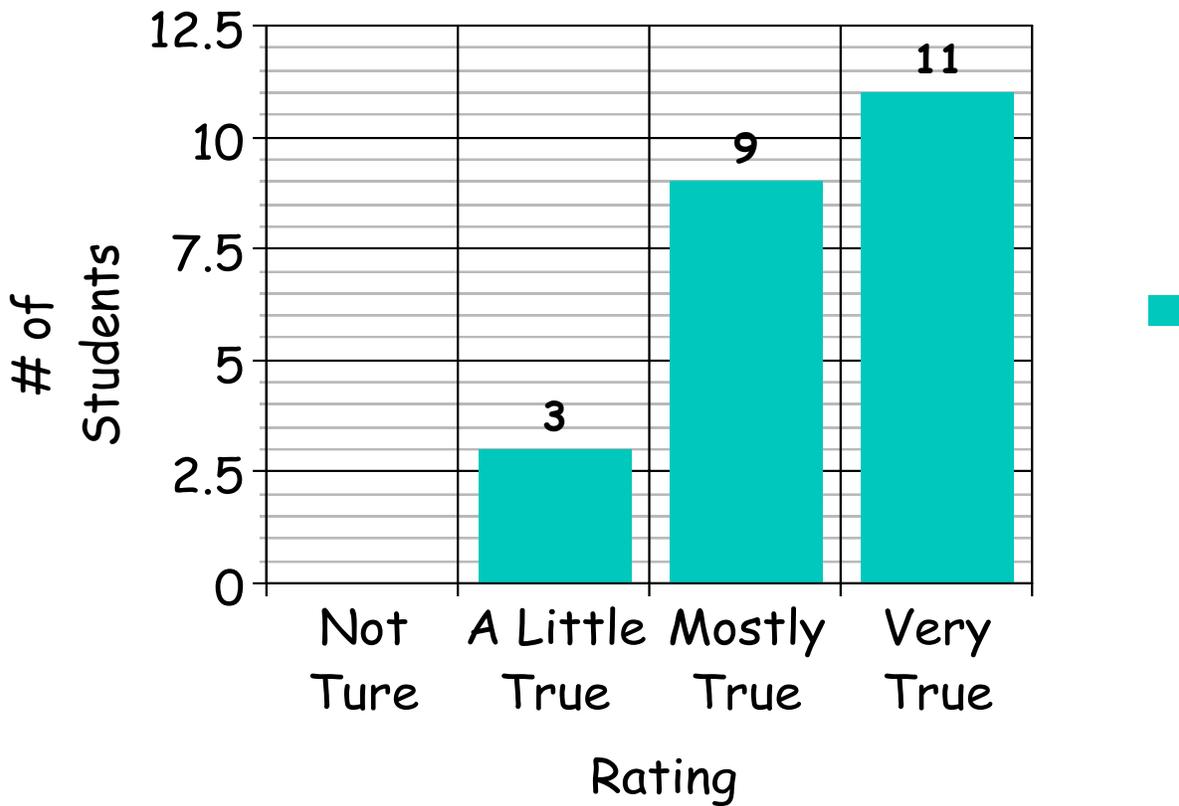
Appendix G: Student Survey Graph 2

"I like choosing where I work in the classroom."

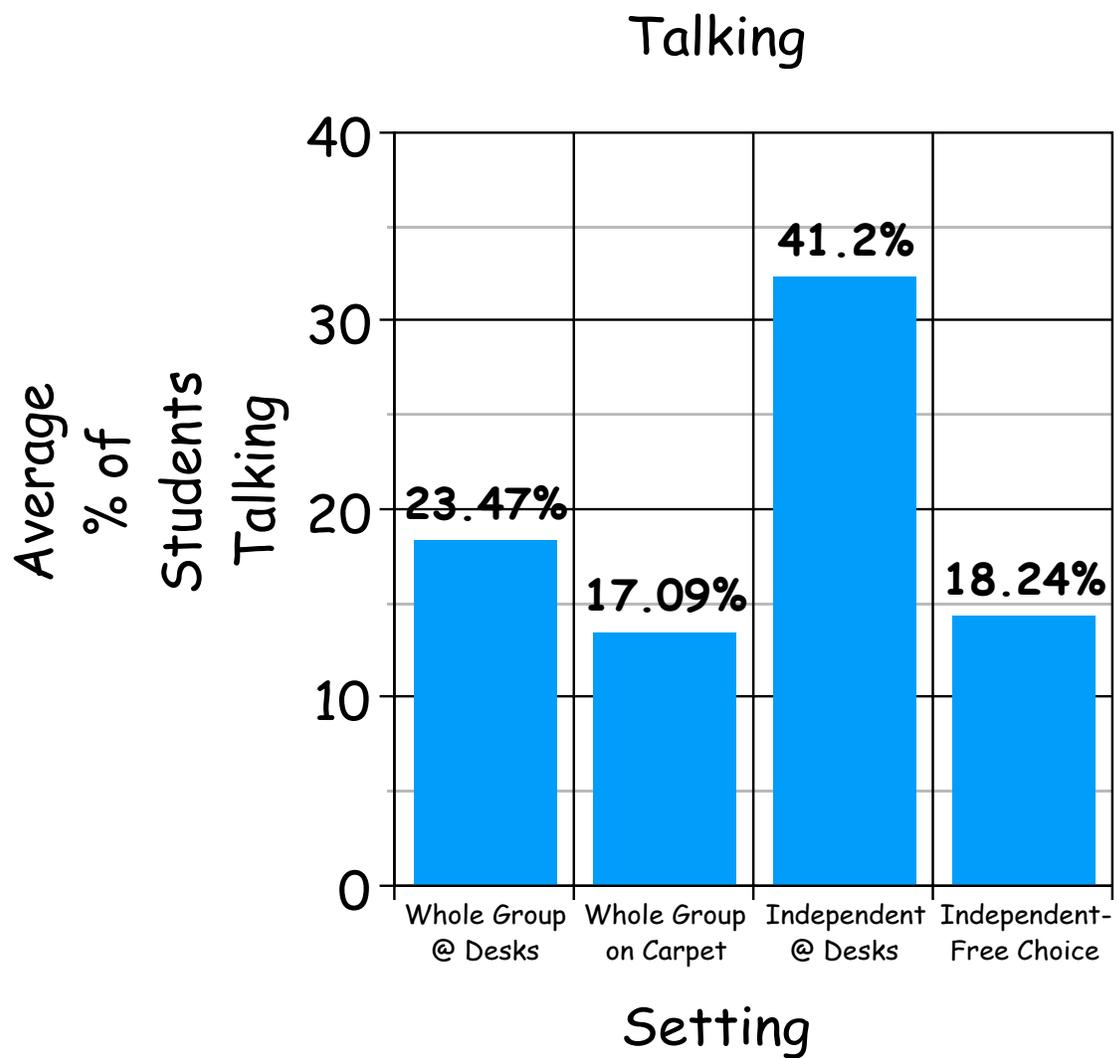


Appendix H: Student Survey Graph 3

"I work well when I am allowed to choose anywhere in the classroom to work. "



Appendix I: Talking Graph



"I talk more when I am sitting at my desk."

