

Ecological Context of Friendship Development
in an Inclusive Classroom

by

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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this study was to create a detailed description of the ecological context of friendship development in an inclusive classroom. Of specific interest, was the friendship development of a target child with a diagnosed special need. This topic was investigated from multiple perspectives: the researcher/observer, the target student and her peers, the teacher, and the principal. The goal of the investigation was to identify the perceptions of these individuals in relation to the following issues: supports and resources, the ecological context of the classroom, and activities which support the development of peer friendships. Information from this study can be used by teachers as they prepare to meet the social needs of students in inclusive classrooms. Today's teachers are not dealing solely with academic challenges. Rather, they are expected to provide children with social and emotional support in addition to cognitive stimulation and assessment. The results of this study provide insights that stimulate practitioners to reflect upon their roles in providing support for social development of children in an inclusive primary grade classroom.

Keywords: Friendship, Inclusion, Elementary Education

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