



Morning Meetings and Perceived Behavioral Impact for Students With Special Needs: Teachers' Perspectives in the United States

Vira Lex P. Rom II 

International Journal of Interdisciplinary Viewpoints (2)8, 60-66, 2026

Correspondence: speducatorvira09@gmail.com
University of Perpetual Help System DALTA, Philippines
Chicago Public Schools, Chicago, Illinois, United States

Abstract

This study examined teachers' experiences of implementing Morning Meetings to support students with special needs and disabilities in inclusive classrooms in the United States. A qualitative phenomenological design was employed with 10 educators, comprising five general education teachers and five special education teachers working in elementary and junior high school settings. Data were collected through 45–60-minute semi-structured interviews and analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. Four interconnected themes emerged: Behavioral Stabilization Through Emotional Regulation, Social Integration and the Domino Effect of Peer Synergy, Enhanced Task Initiation and Cognitive Capacitation, and Holistic Wellness Check and Trauma-Informed Awareness. Teachers described Morning Meetings as a predictable beginning to the school day that provided opportunities for emotional preparation, peer interaction, communication, expectation setting, and preparation for classroom activities. Participants also reported adapting the routine through visual schedules, timers, communication supports, sensory tools, and individualized accommodations to address differences in students' needs. The findings indicate that teachers perceived Morning Meetings as a structured and relational classroom practice that supported emotional readiness, social participation, transition management, and task initiation. However, the findings represent teachers' perceptions and do not establish causal effects on student behavior or academic outcomes. Schools should support flexible implementation through professional development, collaborative planning, and mentoring, particularly for educators working in unfamiliar educational contexts.

Keywords

Morning Meetings, inclusive education, special needs, emotional regulation, social participation

How to Cite

Rom, V. L. (2026). Morning Meetings and Perceived Behavioral Impact for Students With Special Needs: Teachers' Perspectives in the United States. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Viewpoints*, 2(8), 60–66. <https://doi.org/10.64612/ijiv.v2i8.137>

Received: 29 June 2026

Accepted: 28 July 2026

Published: 30 August 2026

Copyright and License

© 2026 The Author. Published by Edukar Publishing. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Peer Review Statement

This article underwent a double-anonymous peer review process in accordance with the editorial policies of the *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Viewpoints*. Both author and reviewers remained anonymous throughout the review process.

Open Access Statement

The *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Viewpoints* is a fully open-access, peer-reviewed journal. All articles are freely available online immediately upon publication without subscription or access fees.

Funding Statement

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Author Contributions

The author contributed to conceptualization, methodology, investigation, writing—original draft preparation, writing—review and editing, and supervision. The author approved the final manuscript.

Ethics Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has increasingly focused on more than placing students with special needs and disabilities in general education classrooms. Meaningful inclusion also involves giving students opportunities to communicate, interact with peers, participate in classroom activities, and receive support that responds to their individual needs. Students with complex support needs may encounter barriers to participation that are influenced not only by their individual characteristics but also by the classroom environment and the supports available to them (Kurth et al., 2025). Similarly, teachers' perceptions of social inclusion have been linked to how students with emotional and behavioral needs are supported in general education settings (McGuire & Meadan, 2022). In this context, predictable classroom routines may help students understand expectations, interact with classmates, and become ready to participate in learning. Morning Meetings have provided one such routine by bringing together greeting, sharing, group activities, and communication about the school day within a common classroom structure.

The beginning of the school day can be particularly important for students who experience difficulty with transitions, communication, social interaction, or behavioral regulation. Research on the transition to kindergarten has shown that the experiences and expectations of teachers and families can influence how children with disabilities adjust to new educational settings (Sands & Meadan, 2024). Earlier research also examined classroom meetings in relation to students' self-concept and behavior, while later work considered Morning Meetings in relation to student behavior, academic achievement, and trauma-informed teaching (Sorsdahl & Sanche, 1985; Westbrook, 2023; Battle, 2021). Research on social-emotional learning has likewise highlighted the importance of supporting students' emotional and social development within educational settings (Bergin et al., 2024; Henriksen & Gruber, 2024). Together, these studies provided a basis for viewing structured classroom meetings as opportunities for students to connect with others, understand expectations, and prepare for the activities that followed.

Despite this body of research, a contextual and empirical gap remained in understanding how teachers experienced and adapted Morning Meetings specifically for students with special needs and disabilities in inclusive U.S. classrooms. Previous studies had addressed classroom meetings, social inclusion, transitions, trauma-informed practices, teacher preparation, and inclusive education, but they had not fully explained how teachers used a recurring Morning Meeting routine with students who had different communication, sensory, behavioral, and learning needs. Teacher knowledge has been identified as an important factor in translating inclusive principles into classroom practice, while professional preparation and experience have also been associated with the practices of special education teachers (Woodcock & Anderson, 2025; Plotner et al., 2023). Collaboration among educational professionals has likewise been recognized as important in responding to students' educational needs (Hallaråker et al., 2025). The present study therefore addressed this gap by examining how teachers experienced Morning Meetings, how they perceived their influence on students' behavioral and classroom participation, and how they adapted the routine to meet individual needs.

This study examined teachers' lived experiences of implementing Morning Meetings for students with special needs and disabilities in inclusive classrooms in the United States. Ten educators participated, consisting of five general education teachers and five special education teachers working in elementary and junior high school settings. A phenomenological design and reflexive thematic analysis were used to explore teachers' experiences, perceptions, adaptations, and professional support needs. The study contributed qualitative evidence about how educators understood and used Morning Meetings as part of everyday inclusive classroom practice. It did not seek to establish causal effects or statistically generalize the findings, but rather to provide a detailed account of teachers' experiences within their particular classroom contexts. The findings were intended to provide practical insight for classroom teachers, school leaders, and professional development programs seeking to support predictable, responsive, and adaptable classroom routines for students with diverse learning and support needs.

METHODOLOGY

Design

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological design to examine teachers' lived experiences of implementing Morning Meetings for students with special needs and disabilities in inclusive classrooms in the United States. A phenomenological approach was appropriate because the study focused on how teachers experienced, interpreted, and made sense of a shared classroom practice. Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, which provided a systematic approach for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning across participants' accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Byrne, 2022). The analysis was inductive and reflexive, allowing themes to develop from participants' accounts while recognizing the researcher's role in interpreting the data. The design prioritized depth and contextual understanding rather than statistical generalizability.

Sampling

Purposive criterion sampling was used to recruit educators who had direct experience implementing Morning Meetings in inclusive classrooms. Ten educators participated, comprising five general education teachers and five special education teachers. Participants had at least five years of teaching experience, including at least two years of classroom teaching experience in the United States. They were actively implementing Morning Meetings in inclusive elementary or junior high school classrooms serving students with special needs and disabilities. The participants represented urban, suburban, and rural public-school settings and different staffing arrangements, including co-teaching, push-in support, and resource-service models. The sample was selected for its information value and direct experience with the phenomenon rather than for statistical representativeness.

Collection

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 45–60 minutes. The interview protocol focused on four areas: implementation and routine, behavioral observations, obstacles and adjustments, and professional recommendations. The interview questions underwent expert review before data collection to assess their clarity and relevance to the research objectives. Interviews were conducted in English, either face-to-face or through remote video conferencing. With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants were assigned pseudonyms from P1 to P10, and identifying information relating to participants and schools was removed from the transcripts and manuscript. Electronic records were stored in password-protected and encrypted files, while hard-copy materials were securely maintained.

Analysis

The interview transcripts were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. The analytical process involved repeated familiarization with the transcripts, generation of initial codes, development of candidate themes, review of themes against

the dataset, definition and naming of themes, and preparation of the final thematic account. Reflexive memos were maintained throughout the process, while codes were organized through code-to-data matrices and thematic maps to document the development of themes from individual participant accounts. The analytical approach followed the principles of reflexive thematic analysis, which emphasizes the active and interpretive role of the researcher in developing patterns of meaning rather than treating coding as a purely mechanical process (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Byrne, 2022). The analysis examined both the explicit content of participants' statements and the underlying meanings associated with their experiences. The resulting themes were interpreted in relation to the study's focus on behavioral stabilization, emotional regulation, social participation, task initiation, classroom readiness, and adaptation for students with special needs and disabilities. Intercoder reliability statistics were not used because the study adopted a reflexive thematic approach in which interpretive engagement and coherence of theme development were prioritized (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Byrne, 2022).

Reflexivity

The researcher was an active J-1 Learning Behavior Specialist in an American public-school district and had direct professional experience with special education, inclusive classroom practices, and Morning Meetings. This position provided contextual understanding of the phenomenon but also presented a potential source of interpretive influence. Reflexive memos were therefore maintained throughout data collection and analysis to examine assumptions arising from the researcher's professional experience. Interview questions and follow-up prompts were kept neutral and non-suggestive, and interpretations were anchored in participants' accounts. Analytical decisions were documented throughout the process to strengthen transparency and coherence.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before the interviews were conducted. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw without penalty. Pseudonyms were used to protect participant identities, and identifying information was removed from transcripts and reporting. Electronic data were stored in password-protected and encrypted files, while signed consent forms and other hard-copy materials were securely maintained. The study specified a five-year retention period, after which electronic records would be deleted and hard-copy records destroyed.

Limitations and Rigor

Several methodological limitations were considered. The study involved 10 purposively selected educators; therefore, the findings were not statistically generalizable to all teachers or inclusive classrooms. The reliance on teachers' self-reported experiences also meant that participants' accounts could have been influenced by individual interpretation, recall, or social desirability. In addition, the study did not include direct classroom observations or independent measures of student behavior, academic achievement, or task initiation. Consequently, the findings addressed perceived behavioral and classroom impacts rather than objectively measured intervention effects. Rigor was supported through expert review of the interview protocol, verbatim transcription, reflexive memoing, an audit trail, code-to-data matrices, thematic mapping, and detailed descriptions of participants and instructional contexts. The use of reflexive thematic analysis further supported systematic engagement with the dataset while recognizing the interpretive role of the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Byrne, 2022). These procedures provided a transparent basis for developing and interpreting the themes while maintaining alignment between the research design, data collection, and analytical approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The reflexive thematic analysis generated four interconnected themes: Behavioral Stabilization Through Emotional Regulation, Social Integration and the Domino Effect of Peer Synergy, Enhanced Task Initiation and Cognitive Capacitation, and Holistic Wellness Check and Trauma-Informed Awareness. Across these themes, teachers described Morning Meetings as a predictable beginning to the school day that provided opportunities for communication, peer interaction, emotional preparation, expectation setting, and transition into academic activities. These perceptions are consistent with earlier research examining classroom meetings and student behavior, as well as studies concerning Morning Meetings, social inclusion, student transitions, and inclusive classroom practice (Sorsdahl & Sanche, 1985; Battle, 2021; McGuire & Meadan, 2022; Sands & Meadan, 2024; Kurth et al., 2025). Because the present study relied on teachers' accounts, the findings describe perceived effects rather than objectively established intervention outcomes.

Behavioral Stabilization Through Emotional Regulation

Teachers consistently described Morning Meetings as providing a predictable and organized beginning to the school day. Participants explained that students were given time to greet peers, communicate, participate in shared activities, and review expectations before moving into academic instruction. This structure was perceived as helping students transition into the classroom environment with greater emotional and behavioral readiness. Teachers characterized the routine as a regulatory anchor because it established a consistent starting point around which students could organize their expectations for the school day. This finding is consistent with research examining classroom meetings and student behavior. Earlier research identified classroom meetings as a structured context associated with students' self-concept and behavior, while more recent work has specifically examined Morning Meetings in relation to student behavior and academic achievement (Sorsdahl & Sanche, 1985; Westbrook, 2023). Similarly, Morning Meetings have been examined as a trauma-informed classroom strategy, suggesting that structured opportunities for connection and interaction may have relevance for teachers' classroom practices (Battle, 2021). Although the present study did not measure behavioral outcomes independently, the consistency of participants' perceptions with this literature supports further examination of structured classroom meetings as an element of inclusive classroom practice. The perceived regulatory function of Morning Meetings is particularly relevant to students with special needs and disabilities because participation may involve simultaneous communication, social, behavioral, and transition demands. Research involving students with complex support needs emphasizes the importance

of examining educational experiences in relation to the supports and environments available to students (Kurth et al., 2025). Research on educational transitions similarly demonstrates the importance of coordinated expectations and support for children with disabilities as they move between educational contexts (Sands & Meadan, 2024). In the present study, teachers perceived Morning Meetings as providing a gradual and predictable transition into the expectations of the classroom.

The findings therefore suggest that teachers understood Morning Meetings as a preventive classroom-support practice rather than simply a response to behavioral difficulties. Participants described using the routine to establish expectations, observe students' emotional presentation, and develop a common classroom rhythm. This interpretation is important because the study does not demonstrate that Morning Meetings independently reduce behavioral incidents. Rather, the evidence indicates that teachers perceived the routine as contributing to classroom conditions that may support behavioral regulation and participation. The finding also has implications for inclusive education. General educators' perceptions are important to understanding how students with emotional and behavioral needs experience social inclusion in general education settings (McGuire & Meadan, 2022). When teachers incorporate behavioral and emotional support into ordinary classroom routines, students may receive assistance without being separated from the broader classroom experience. This perspective is also consistent with research emphasizing the influence of teacher knowledge on the implementation of inclusive classroom practices (Woodcock & Anderson, 2025).

Social Integration and the Domino Effect of Peer Synergy

The second theme concerns teachers' perceptions of Morning Meetings as a setting for social integration. Participants described repeated opportunities for students to greet one another, listen, take turns, share information, respond to peers, and participate in group activities. These opportunities were perceived as particularly valuable for students who experienced difficulty initiating communication or participating spontaneously in peer interactions. The finding is consistent with literature emphasizing meaningful social participation as an important dimension of inclusion. General educators' perceptions of social inclusion have been shown to be relevant to how students with emotional and behavioral disorders are supported within classroom environments (McGuire & Meadan, 2022). Research concerning students with complex support needs likewise emphasizes the importance of examining students' experiences and opportunities for participation rather than considering placement alone (Kurth et al., 2025). The present findings similarly indicate that teachers viewed inclusion as involving active participation in classroom life. Participants emphasized that the repeated nature of the Morning Meeting helped students become familiar with expectations for social interaction. The predictable sequence appeared to reduce some of the uncertainty associated with greeting, sharing, responding, and listening. Through repeated participation, teachers perceived that students became increasingly familiar with the social expectations embedded in the routine. This finding provides a contextual explanation of how a recurring classroom structure may support opportunities for social participation.

The term Domino Effect of Peer Synergy reflects participants' perception that successful interactions during the Morning Meeting could influence students' willingness to participate in later classroom activities. Teachers described early peer interactions as potentially creating momentum for subsequent participation. This interpretation should be treated as a participant-derived perception rather than a demonstrated causal relationship because the study did not independently measure changes in peer interaction following Morning Meetings. The finding also relates to research on social-emotional learning. Research has examined social-emotional learning programs involving both teachers and students, demonstrating the relevance of social-emotional processes within educational environments (Bergin et al., 2024). Similarly, research on school-wide mindfulness has considered relationships among structured educational practices, social-emotional learning, and student well-being (Henriksen & Gruber, 2024). Although these studies do not directly evaluate the same Morning Meeting routine examined in the present study, they provide relevant context for understanding classroom practices that intentionally create opportunities for social-emotional engagement. The results therefore suggest that Morning Meetings may provide a recurring context in which students with special needs and disabilities can practice social participation within a familiar classroom structure. Such a practice is consistent with the broader principle that inclusive education should facilitate students' participation in shared classroom experiences (McGuire & Meadan, 2022; Kurth et al., 2025).

Enhanced Task Initiation and Cognitive Capacitation

Teachers also perceived Morning Meetings as helping students prepare for the academic and organizational demands of the school day. Participants identified the Morning Message, visual schedules, timers, and discussion of upcoming activities as useful supports for communicating the sequence of events and clarifying expectations. Students who experienced difficulty transitioning between activities were perceived as benefiting from advance information about what would happen next. This finding extends the perceived function of Morning Meetings beyond social and emotional preparation. Teachers described the routine as providing an instructional preparation function because information concerning upcoming activities was introduced before students were expected to begin academic tasks. Participants perceived that students were better prepared to initiate subsequent activities when classroom expectations and transitions were made predictable. The finding is consistent with research emphasizing the role of teacher knowledge in translating inclusive education principles into classroom practice. Teacher knowledge has been identified as an important influence on how inclusive concepts are implemented in classrooms (Woodcock & Anderson, 2025). Similarly, professional preparation and experience have been examined in relation to the practices and dispositions of special education teachers (Plotner et al., 2023). In the present study, teachers' use of visual schedules, timers, communication supports, and individualized accommodations demonstrates how professional knowledge may be translated into specific classroom adaptations. The finding also corresponds with research concerning educational support for students with severe developmental and behavioral needs. Tomaino et al. (2022) examined the feasibility and effectiveness of distance learning for students with severe developmental disabilities and high behavioral needs, highlighting the importance of considering instructional arrangements and support structures when working with students with substantial educational needs. Although the context and design differ from the present

study, the research provides relevant support for considering environmental and instructional arrangements when interpreting students' educational participation.

The role of predictability is also relevant to research on educational transitions. Parents and kindergarten teachers have described transition experiences as an important aspect of supporting children with disabilities as they enter new educational contexts (Sands & Meadan, 2024). Although the present study concerns daily classroom transitions rather than the transition to kindergarten, participants similarly emphasized the perceived value of advance information and predictable expectations. The term cognitive capacitation is used in this study to describe teachers' perceptions that environmental supports made classroom expectations easier to anticipate and act upon. It should not be interpreted as a formally measured cognitive construct. The evidence supports the narrower conclusion that teachers perceived external organizational supports as facilitating students' readiness to begin classroom activities. The study does not establish that Morning Meetings increase cognitive ability or academic achievement.

Holistic Wellness Check and Trauma-Informed Awareness

The fourth theme concerns teachers' use of Morning Meetings to observe students' emotional and behavioral presentation at the beginning of the school day. Participants described attending to students' mood, communication, participation, and general presentation during the routine. Emotional check-ins were perceived as providing teachers with opportunities to notice changes before concerns became more evident during academic instruction. This finding has a direct relationship with research examining Morning Meetings as a trauma-informed strategy. Battle (2021) investigated Morning Meetings in relation to teacher self-efficacy within a trauma-informed context, providing relevant support for understanding the routine as a potential space for relationship building and awareness of students' emotional experiences. The present participants similarly emphasized the value of observing students' emotional presentation before academic demands intensified.

The finding is also consistent with broader research on social-emotional learning and student well-being. Research has examined school-wide mindfulness in relation to social-emotional learning and well-being, while other work has investigated social-emotional learning programs involving both teachers and students (Henriksen & Gruber, 2024; Bergin et al., 2024). These studies provide broader evidence for considering students' emotional and social experiences as part of educational practice rather than treating academic instruction as separate from student well-being. The present study refers to this practice as the Holistic Wellness Check because teachers emphasized understanding students within the broader context of their emotional and behavioral presentation. This perspective moves beyond interpreting behavior solely as compliance or noncompliance and instead emphasizes teacher responsiveness to students' circumstances. Such an orientation is compatible with research emphasizing positive mental health and well-being within educational environments (Frazier & Doyle Fosco, 2024). Nevertheless, the Morning Meeting should not be considered a diagnostic or clinical assessment based on the present findings. Participants described classroom-level observations rather than standardized psychological assessment. The study therefore supports the interpretation that Morning Meetings may provide teachers with opportunities for early awareness and responsive classroom support, but it does not provide evidence for diagnostic or clinical effectiveness.

Adaptation for Students With Special Needs and Disabilities

Adaptation was evident across all four themes. Participants emphasized that Morning Meetings could not be implemented effectively through one identical procedure for all students. Teachers described adapting the routine through visual schedules, timers, communication supports, sensory tools, and individualized accommodations while retaining the overall structure of the meeting. This finding reinforces the importance of distinguishing consistency from uniformity. Participants valued consistency because students benefited from knowing that the Morning Meeting followed a recognizable sequence. At the same time, teachers recognized that students required different forms of access and participation. Thus, maintaining a common routine did not require every student to respond, communicate, or participate in exactly the same manner. This interpretation is consistent with research involving students with complex support needs, which emphasizes the importance of examining educational access and experiences in relation to individual support requirements (Kurth et al., 2025). It also corresponds with research concerning social inclusion, where meaningful participation requires attention to the classroom conditions that enable students with emotional and behavioral needs to engage with peers and instruction (McGuire & Meadan, 2022).

Teacher knowledge is particularly relevant to this process. Research has demonstrated the relationship between teacher knowledge and inclusive classroom practice, while professional experiences have also been examined in relation to special education teachers' practices and dispositions (Woodcock & Anderson, 2025; Plotner et al., 2023). The present findings similarly suggest that implementing Morning Meetings requires teachers to exercise professional judgment concerning the type and extent of adaptation needed by individual students. Environmental supports may also be relevant to students' behavioral and participation needs. Research involving autistic children has examined how aspects of the built environment, including light and color, may relate to behavior (Nair et al., 2022). Although the present study did not experimentally investigate environmental design, participants' descriptions of sensory tools and environmental supports similarly indicate that classroom conditions may need to be considered when developing inclusive routines. The findings consequently suggest that Morning Meetings are better understood as a structured but adaptable classroom practice rather than as a standardized intervention. The predictable structure provides continuity, while individualized adaptations provide access. This distinction is important for inclusive implementation because students can participate in a shared classroom experience without requiring identical forms of participation.

Professional Support and Collaboration

Participants' experiences also highlighted the importance of professional support for sustaining inclusive classroom practices. Teachers, particularly those working within unfamiliar educational systems, described the value of orientation,

mentoring, collaboration, and familiarity with local educational expectations. This finding is consistent with research emphasizing teacher knowledge and professional preparation as components of inclusive practice (Woodcock & Anderson, 2025; Plotner et al., 2023). It also corresponds with research on collaboration between educational psychological services and schools, which highlights the importance of professional relationships and coordinated educational support (Hallaråker et al., 2025). The findings suggest that educators entering a new educational system may require explicit orientation concerning local procedures, terminology, classroom expectations, behavioral support practices, and approaches to social-emotional learning. The issue should therefore be understood as an organizational and contextual consideration rather than as an indication of reduced professional capability among international teachers.

This interpretation is important because effective implementation of inclusive classroom practices may depend on the interaction between teacher knowledge and the professional environment. Teachers may possess relevant pedagogical experience while simultaneously needing contextual knowledge concerning local policies, procedures, terminology, and collaborative structures. Structured induction and mentoring may therefore assist educators in transferring existing professional knowledge into a new educational context (Hallaråker et al., 2025; Plotner et al., 2023).

Integrated Interpretation of the Findings

Taken together, the four themes indicate that teachers perceive Morning Meetings as a structured relational practice that connects emotional preparation, peer interaction, communication, transition support, task initiation, and teacher responsiveness. The findings are broadly consistent with research on classroom meetings, Morning Meetings, trauma-informed practice, social inclusion, transitions, social-emotional learning, and inclusive teacher practice (Sorsdahl & Sanche, 1985; Battle, 2021; McGuire & Meadan, 2022; Sands & Meadan, 2024; Bergin et al., 2024; Kurth et al., 2025; Woodcock & Anderson, 2025). The findings further indicate that the perceived value of Morning Meetings depends substantially on adaptation. Participants did not describe effective inclusion as requiring all students to participate identically. Instead, teachers emphasized maintaining a predictable structure while modifying communication, sensory, behavioral, and instructional supports according to individual needs. This finding is consistent with research emphasizing access and participation for students with complex support needs (Kurth et al., 2025) and with research identifying teacher knowledge as an important factor in inclusive classroom implementation (Woodcock & Anderson, 2025).

The evidence should nevertheless be interpreted within the methodological boundaries of the study. The findings are based on teachers' self-reported experiences and do not establish causal relationships between Morning Meetings and student outcomes. The study also did not include direct classroom observations, student reports, parent perspectives, or independent measures of behavior, task initiation, or academic engagement. Consequently, the results provide qualitative evidence concerning teachers' interpretations and experiences rather than evidence of intervention efficacy. The overall pattern suggests that Morning Meetings may function as a predictable classroom structure through which teachers establish expectations, facilitate peer interaction, observe students' emotional presentation, and prepare students for subsequent learning activities. Their perceived contribution appears to arise from the interaction between routine consistency, teacher responsiveness, individualized adaptation, and professional support. Future research should therefore examine these processes through multiple sources of evidence and across longer periods of implementation to determine whether the perceptions identified in the present study correspond with measurable changes in student participation, behavioral functioning, and academic engagement.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined teachers' experiences of implementing Morning Meetings for students with special needs and disabilities in inclusive U.S. classrooms. The findings identified four interconnected themes: Behavioral Stabilization Through Emotional Regulation, Social Integration and the Domino Effect of Peer Synergy, Enhanced Task Initiation and Cognitive Capacitation, and Holistic Wellness Check and Trauma-Informed Awareness. Overall, teachers perceived Morning Meetings as a predictable and relational classroom routine that helped students prepare for the school day, interact with peers, understand expectations, and transition toward academic activities. The findings further showed that effective implementation depended on maintaining a consistent routine while adapting participation through visual schedules, timers, communication supports, sensory tools, and individualized accommodations. These findings contribute contextual evidence on how teachers used a structured classroom routine to support participation among students with diverse needs. However, because the study was based on teachers' self-reported experiences and did not include independent measures of student outcomes, the findings should be understood as perceived benefits rather than evidence of causal effectiveness.

Based on the findings, teachers should maintain the predictable structure of Morning Meetings while adapting activities and communication methods to individual students' behavioral, sensory, communication, and learning needs. Schools should provide sufficient planning time, collaborative opportunities, and professional development addressing inclusive education, social-emotional learning, behavioral support, and classroom adaptation. Structured induction and mentoring should also be provided for international and early-career teachers to strengthen their familiarity with local educational practices and support systems. Future research should include direct classroom observations, student and parent perspectives, and objective indicators of behavior, task initiation, social participation, and academic engagement to complement teacher reports. Longitudinal studies may further examine how sustained participation in Morning Meetings relates to changes in classroom functioning over time. The proposed Inclusive Morning Circle Guidebook may serve as a practice-oriented resource, but its implementation and effectiveness should be evaluated through separate empirical research before conclusions about its efficacy are made.

References

Battle, C. R. (2021). *Examining the Effect of Implementing Morning Meetings as a Trauma-Informed Strategy on Teacher Self-Efficacy in a Low-Performing School*. East Carolina University.

- Bergin, C., Tsai, C. L., Prewett, S., Jones, E., Bergin, D. A., & Murphy, B. (2024). Effectiveness of a social-emotional learning program for both teachers and students. *Aera Open*, 10, 23328584241281284. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584241281284>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). Conceptual and design thinking for thematic analysis. *Qualitative Psychology*, 9(1), 3–26. <https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000196>
- Byrne, D. (2022). A worked example of Braun and Clarke's approach to reflexive thematic analysis. *Quality & Quantity*, 56, 1391–1412. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-021-01182-v>
- Frazier, T., & Doyle Fosco, S. L. (2024). Nurturing positive mental health and wellbeing in educational settings—the PRICES model. *Frontiers in public health*, 11, 1287532. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1287532>
- Hallaråker, H., Hesjedal, E., & Brandmo, C. (2025). Characteristics of interprofessional collaboration between educational psychological services and schools: A scoping review. *Educational Research Review*, 48, 100707.
- Henriksen, D., & Gruber, N. (2024, March). System-wide school mindfulness: addressing elementary students' social-emotional learning and wellbeing. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 9, p. 1272545). Frontiers Media SA. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1272545>
- Kaimara, P. (2026). Digital transformation stands alongside inclusive education: Lessons learned from a project called "Waking Up in the Morning". *Technology, Knowledge and Learning*, 31(1), 51-77. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-023-09667-5>
- Kurth, J. A., Lockman Turner, E., Zagana, A. L., Kim, G., & Loyless, R. (2025). Experiences of elementary students with complex support needs in segregated special education classrooms: A mixed methods study. *Research and practice for persons with severe disabilities*, 50(1), 66-83. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15407969241267283>
- McGuire, S. N., & Meadan, H. (2022). General educators' perceptions of social inclusion of elementary students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders*, 48(1), 16-28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01987429221079047>
- Nair, A. S., Priya, R. S., Rajagopal, P., Pradeepa, C., Senthil, R., Dhanalakshmi, S., ... & Zuo, X. (2022). A case study on the effect of light and colors in the built environment on autistic children's behavior. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 13, 1042641. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsvt.2022.1042641>
- Plotner, A. J., Marshall, K. J., & Smith-Hill, R. B. (2023). Special education teachers' preservice experience with inclusive postsecondary education programs: Impact on professional practices and dispositions for secondary transition professionals. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 46(2), 89-107. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08884064221091580>
- Sands, M. M., & Meadan, H. (2024). Transition to kindergarten for children with disabilities: Parent and kindergarten teacher perceptions and experiences. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 43(4), 265-277. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02711214221146748>
- Sorsdahl, S. N., & Sanche, R. P. (1985). The effects of classroom meetings on self-concept and behavior. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling*, 20(1), 49-56.
- Tomaino, M. A. E., Greenberg, A. L., Kagawa-Purohit, S. A., Doering, S. A., & Miguel, E. S. (2022). An assessment of the feasibility and effectiveness of distance learning for students with severe developmental disabilities and high behavioral needs. *Behavior analysis in practice*, 15(1), 243-259. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40617-020-00549-1>
- Westbrook, D. (2023). *Morning Meeting: An Examination of Its Effect on Student Behavior and Academic Achievement* (Doctoral dissertation, Trevecca Nazarene University).
- Woodcock, S., & Anderson, J. (2025). Conceptions to classrooms: The influence of teacher knowledge on inclusive classroom practice. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, 8, 100412. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2024.100412>