



# Social Inclusion + Intentional Play

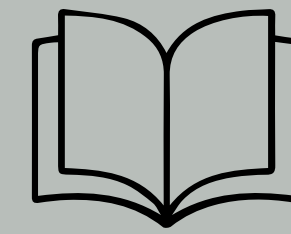
Impacts of the interior environment on children's learning and behaviors.

## ABSTRACT



The purpose of this study is to determine which elements within the built environment best support children's educational, physical, and emotional needs. The benefits of child-centered play therapy (CCPT) and social inclusion in educational settings have been found to enhance child development, social interactions and learning. Data for this survey was collected through an online survey with questions that revealed insight on effective learning considerations. Survey results supported the most beneficial design features and desirable play elements within classrooms.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE



### CHILD-CENTERED PLAY THERAPY (CCPT)

- "Child-Centered Play Therapy is a developmentally appropriate intervention utilizing play, the natural language of children, to offer a therapeutic relationship evident through responding with empathy, setting limits, returning responsibility to the child, and facilitating emotional expression" (Axline, 1969; Landreth, 2012; Ray, 2011) (Ritzi et al., 2017, p. 34).

### SOCIAL INCLUSION

- Wenger et al. (2020) recognizes that encouraging socially inclusive environments can potentially break social barriers and help children with disabilities feel accepted.
- Inclusive practices in learning can also increase academic achievements, social behavior, and educational well-being (Schwab et al., 2018).

## METHODOLOGY



### METHOD

An online survey was open for 32 days and asked participants a sequence of questions using a Likert rating system, multiple choice options, and additional written responses when desired. The questions focused on elements of the built environment to best support children's educational, physical, and emotional needs.

### PROCEDURE

Childcare workers and practitioners in the Midwest region provided an insight on how to foster intentional play and social inclusion within the interior environment

### SUBJECTS

- Early Education Teachers (13)
- Child Therapists (6)
- Childcare Directors (4)
- Childcare Coordinators (3)
- Childcare Site Supervisor (1)
- Health & Safety Specialist (1)
- Childhood Consultant (1)

## RESULTS



- 100% of participants reported frequently incorporating **play** when working with children.
- Access to **outdoor spaces** (76.67%), **natural lighting** (43.33%), and **flexible/mobile furniture** (43.33%) are extremely important design considerations [FIG 1].
- Children most often play with **building blocks** (40%), **play sets** (30%), and **art projects** (6.67%) [FIG 2].
- A majority of respondents strongly agreed that the display of **children's artwork** (80%) and the **layout of the space** (76.67%) are the most influential elements within children's educational environments.

FIG 1. ELEMENTS THAT ENHANCE A CHILDREN'S LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

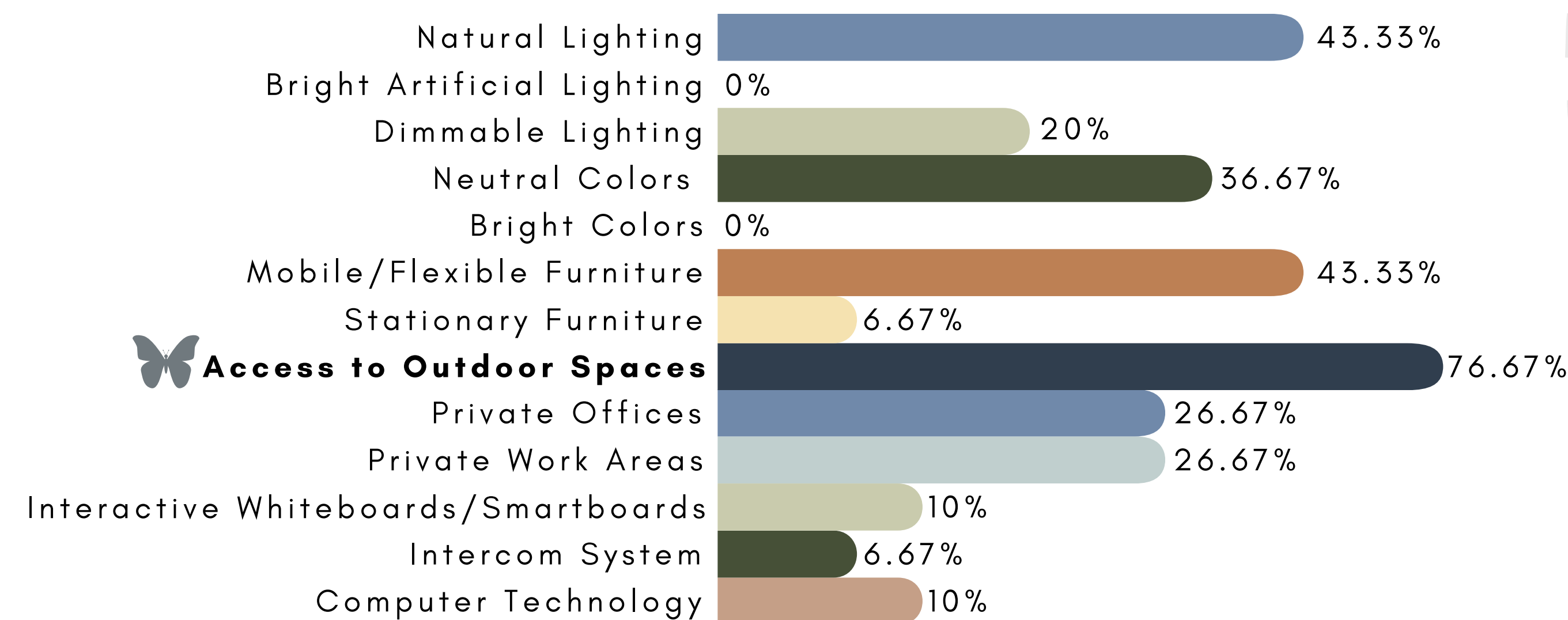
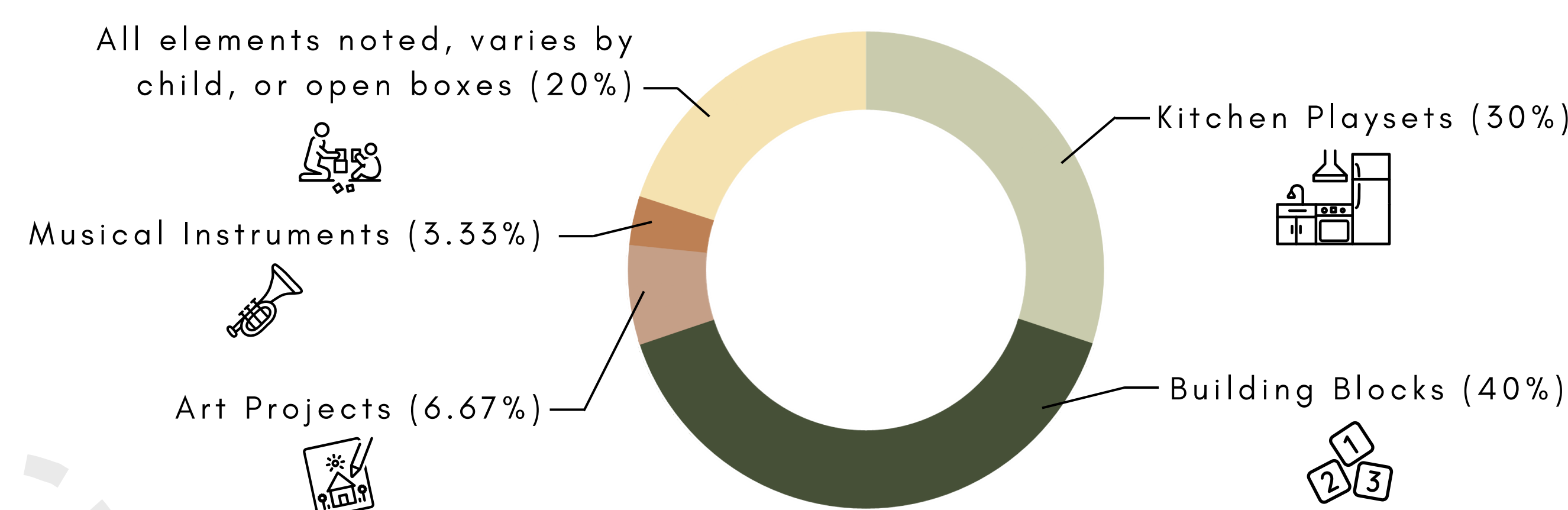
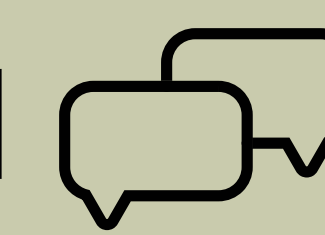


FIG 2. PHYSICAL ELEMENTS/TOYS CHILDREN MOST OFTEN PLAY WITH



## DISCUSSION



When working with children, play was considered an important aspect of children's development. Play should be more heavily incorporated within learning environments and children should have a variety of activities to choose from to best support their learning and individual interests. This evidence suggests that natural lighting, flexible/mobile furniture, and neutral colors are extremely important. This evidence also coincides with previous research that access to nature, spatial arrangements, and furniture flexibility have a significant effects of productivity and overall satisfaction.

## FUTURE IDEAS



- Investigate additional considerations such as modified learning programs and well-being initiatives that are beneficial to children's learning environments.
- Determine the impact of a more dynamic sample group population in regard to race, culture, geographical location, and occupation.

## References:

- Ritzi, R. M., Ray, D. C., & Schumann, B. R. (2017). Intensive short-term child-centered play therapy and externalizing behaviors in children. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 26(1), 33-46. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pla0000035>
- Schwab, S., Sharma, U., & Loreman, T. (2018). Are we included? Secondary students' perception of inclusion climate in their schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 75, 31-39.
- Wenger, I., Schulze, C., Lundström, U., & Prellwitz, M. (2020). Children's perceptions of playing on inclusive playgrounds: A qualitative study. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 28(2), 136-146. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11038128.2020.1810768>