Applied Assignment

SEL Challenges and Diverse Learning Needs in Inner-City Elementary Education

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EDUC 610- Qualitative Analysis in Education

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Educational professionals have traditionally faced a myriad of classroom challenges from a wide variety of internal and external stressors. While many stakeholders, including those in school communities, typically focused on predominantly academic instruction which was implemented by teachers, it is now only one facet on their daily classroom experience.

In the wake of Covid-19, teachers and education professionals are now facing substantially increasing demands in the areas of Social Emotional Learning, while in many cases simultaneously attempting to assist students coming from significant trauma backgrounds. As such, my research and the attached interview, focused on these oft-intertwined social structures, and led to a line of a questioning starting with:

'What significant Social-Emotional challenges do inner-city educators face on a daily basis?'

Having worked in an inner-city elementary school myself for nearly ten years, I thought it prudent to interview a colleague who had shared a number of similar experiences, while simultaneously recognizing the individual accounts that the participating teacher would have lived through in their own professional practice. To investigate this, I met with the research participant at our shared work location during a district-led professional development day. Before conducting the interview, the participant and I spoke briefly several times regarding the content of the interview and how the information would be distributed. Upon these discussions, the participant consented to the interview and participated enthusiastically.

<u>The Interview</u>

While conducting the interview, the researcher utilized an Apple Memos voice recording, and then transcribed utilizing Microsoft Word transcription software. To ensure the accuracy of the transcription, the researcher manually edited any discrepancies to ensure accurate responses. Coding was initially conducted on paper utilizing paper and highlighter. As this was the first attempt at coding an interview for myself, numerous revisions of the terminology utilized in the codes was conducted. The process arrived at the creation of five major themes, and within them, coding specifics related to these themes were identified and used. Codes utilized are shown in the right-hand margin of the attached transcript. The five aforementioned themes include:

Social-Emotional Learning

Diverse Learning Needs

Instability

Community Involvement

Realism

Transcript

<u>Transcription Key</u>

Speaker 1   Interviewer

Speaker 2   Participant

{sarcasm}

. . .   significant pause

Speaker 1

Alright hi. I am sitting here with a colleague of mine, Lauren, and we are conducting a qualitative interview for Education 610 at UNBC with Professor Gretchen Vogelsang. We'll go right into the questions here and the conversation will kind of casually come forward from that. Could you please introduce yourself for me and share a little bit about your teaching experience?

Speaker 2

Yeah, my name is Lauren Diaz. I am 35 years old. I've been teaching in the Abbotsford School District since the end of 2012. I got into teaching right after graduating from PDP. I TOC'd for about four years and then have been in a classroom since 2016.

> **Commented [BT1]:** Professional Context

Speaker 1

OK. Thank you. So, Lauren, you and I, we've worked together for quite a few years now and have worked, in what's dubbed a "difficult inner city elementary school" in the city of Abbotsford, that kind of presents a number of unique challenges in terms of different kind of things we encounter on a daily basis. So that being said, working in a diverse socio-economic environment definitely presents a number of unique challenges for us and a unique number of scenarios. Now, could you kind of elaborate on what I just said and discuss the context of the school or schools you currently work at?

Speaker 2

Yeah, so our school community, we live in an area where families experience a lot of financial instability, food instability and housing instability. A lot of our students move frequently and change schools frequently. We have a lot of students where school is the only place where they maybe get rest or food or feel safe. And we have students who

> **Commented [BT2]:** Instability

come from families who didn't have good school experiences too, so that attitude can come in with them as well, a little bit. Trying to think if I'm missing anything. So you have a lot of unregulated students who need extra support in areas that I think a lot of other people take for granted.

Speaker 1

So I'd imagine probably within that, one component would be Social-Emotional Learning for sure. So, in an environment where we work in the particular kind of elementary school that we do, do you face unique challenges with the significant SEL things that other schools may not encounter and like experience them as a result of socioeconomic ineqaulities?

Speaker 2

Yeah, I think when you have kids that come from highly stressful backgrounds, with maybe the adults in their lives don't know how to model emotional regulation and what can you do…, like what to do when you're feeling upset, what to do when you're feeling scared, what to do when you're feeling angry. So I think every child yells. But kids who don't know what their body is doing when they are mad and that results in destroyed classrooms, hitting other people, swearing at the adults, these behaviors that on the outside look very scary and are not acceptable in an education setting. These kids are coming in without having those skills, so a lot of the time it needs to be modeled and taught, and one of the other challenges of that too is we only get them during the hours of the school day. So we are trying to teach and reinforce these things when maybe these things aren't being reinforced or are being done at home too. So you have

Commented [BT3]: Home/Family Instability

Commented [BT4]: SEL/Trauma Behaviors

families that throw things when they get mad, or shut down, or run away, or hit walls

> Commented [BT5]: Learned aggressive behaviors

when they're angry and upset, so that's definitely a big challenge there too.

Speaker 1

Now do you find in your experience, are there any particular ways you've found

successful that deal with some of these SEL challenges, or kind of more generally, what

would you do sometimes when some of these challenges are presented to you as a

classroom teacher?

Speaker 2

Modelling is a big one. I talk through my feelings a lot in my classroom, so like when I

> Commented [BT6]: Modeling behaviors for SEL

feel myself getting frustrated, I often tell my students I'm not a robot, so I'll be like, I'm

feeling really angry right now or I'm feeling very upset and frustrated. So I'm going to

take my 3 deep breaths. I'm going to walk from here to there and then I'm going to take

a drink of water and then after that, I feel like I will be ready again. Because I don't want,

I feel angry, but I don't want to… I want to show them that being angry is a normal part

of the human experience, but there are other ways and healthier ways to manage it.

Speaker 1

And even if sometimes, if we're the only people that are modeling that for them, right, I

think sometimes we take for granted how much the kids want to emulate adult behavior,

and if they're not receiving that modeling in the first place, they don't know how to act,

you know, quote, unquote, "appropriately."

Speaker 2

Yeah, and I do, I do see the positive results of that too, even in small ways. Always like, I talk with my hands a lot.

Speaker 1

Me and you are both hand talkers for sure.

Speaker 2

I pull the like, I don't know how to describe this motion, but when I take a deep breath, I kind of like motion drawing the air out of my nose and I will notice students doing that too when they're getting frustrated and they go, okay, and then release the frustrated part.

Commented [BT7]: Modeling behaviors

Speaker 1

Now a lot of the time and I know in a number of conversations you and I have had over the years, that we see how these SEL behaviors and challenges, they are often a symptom, or are just completely intertwined with histories of trauma, whether that is verbal abuse, physical abuse, bearing witness, how do you in your practice, try to support students who have experienced, like the huge variety of trauma?

Speaker 2

I think for that the priority is like looking back at Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs.' So if you have a kid coming from a background like that, my priority isn't necessarily like you're going to do your writing today. We're not going to make sure you learn how to regroup today. It's have you eaten? Are you rested? Do you feel safe? And I do have a couple of students where that's all we're focusing on right now. And have been since September.

Commented [BT8]: Uncomfortable home life

Commented [BT9]: Meeting basic needs of home

Speaker 1

Yeah. And those I know, the ones exactly that you're talking about.

Speaker 2

I'm hoping we'll be able to get to the academic part by mid to end of term 3, but again like priorities you can't have kids coming in, who aren't rested, who don't feel safe and haven't eaten, and then expect them to take a PM Benchmark test.

> **Commented [BT10]:** Basic needs

Speaker 1

Yeah. What's the true priority at that point? Is it can they read at grade level or is it are they operating safely? Are they feeling valued? Do they just feel like they could even function in any way shape or form here?

Speaker 2

I can't… I can't really put myself in their shoes. I've been fortunate enough to have not grown up in an environment like that, but sometimes all it takes is, like how do I behave when I am hungry? And why would I expect a nine-year-old to behave better than an adult in that same situation when they are probably far hungrier? So yeah, that I think that would be my number one response is… are the basic needs being met when you have children who come from those like very, very traumatized backgrounds who are still maybe experiencing a level of that when they go home on the weekend or go home after school?

> **Commented [BT11]:** Unstable home life/basic needs

Speaker 1

Yeah. And I think that blends really well to my next question here. Which is just organizing just an environment of trust, not only with students, but with kind of families in the neighborhood as a whole, many of which who have really experienced difficult, potentially adverse living conditions, whether that is financially, whether that is food

insecurity, whether that is physical safety coming from a wide variety of potentially war-torn backgrounds. We have a pretty significant immigrant population at our school. All those things being said, and you're trying to build trust with families who may not be trusting of systemic education, what are your first steps of just trying to put out that olive branch?

Speaker 2

I tried to project being very approachable. I try not to use a lot of like pedagogical language with families, because I feel like even that is a barrier, especially if you like have families who the parents maybe didn't graduate from high school. And I know that there's… not a power imbalance, but I could see how a person from a family or with that kind of background could view me as being very intimidating. I don't want to make anybody feel like they are dumb or lesser than, so in my interactions with parents, I do try to communicate like… it is us versus the problem. It's not your child is the problem, it's…

> **Commented [BT12]:** Community Involvement/Relating to Families

> **Commented [BT13]:** Relating to Families-Approachability

Speaker 1

Not a me versus you, it's us versus what's going on?.

Speaker 2

Yeah. So we are working as a team together to support your child, build together…and sometimes even where you are having the conversation is important. I know I have some parents who are not comfortable in the school building, so I will happily talk to them outside, or through e-mail or over the phone. That's kind of the tough one for a lot of them, but a lot of them don't feel comfortable with that either… like there's a lot of avoidance behavior too. So trying to remain open that way and the other thing too, if they have a contact at the school that they're comfortable with, like my teaching partner,

> **Commented [BT14]:** Community Involvement

who used to be the LSS teacher here, a lot of the families have been interacting with her for years, so sometimes she's the gateway person or our school counselor if they've had dealings with her in the past. Just trying to make them feel comfortable and supported, and also being honest with them too, I think that goes a long way as well.

Speaker 1

Yeah, kind of just slightly switching gears, thinking about not *just* SEL hurdles that we may potentially face, we also work in some unique, diverse classroom environments where there may not be necessarily enough adult educator support. How do you try to differentiate instructions for students with just this wide variety of learning needs?

Speaker 2

I try to get a blend of things from a lot of areas. I look into UDL, Universal Design for Learning. Math, in particular, is kind of an area where I've been focusing on that this year, where I was reading… I wish I remember the name of the study, but I was reading that it's usually Grade 4 or Grade 5 where we see a drop off of girls, especially not feeling like they can succeed in math and not being a "math person," which blows me away because we never tell a child that, "oh, you're just not a reading person." That's fine, but. We tell like, oh, no, I'm not a math person. You're not a math person, it's ok.

Commented [BT15]: Differentiation- Adaptation for Learning Needs

Speaker 1

Oh, we say it as adults in our vernacular. "I just was never a math guy."

Speaker 2

So that's been a pet peeve of mine that I've been trying to change in my classroom for diverse learning needs in Grade 4 math specifically. They say, I let the kids know, like we're learning, regrouping or borrowing with subtraction, whether that is up to the tens

or up to the thousands. This is a skill we are all capable of the skill, but also letting them know that it's challenging. You're going to make mistakes and you're going to need help and needing help doesn't mean that you are not being successful or not smart. So one of the things that we do, even sharing out an answer can be a high risk move for a lot of kids, especially in a topic like math. So whenever somebody shares an answer, we have a classroom norm of applause. Whether it's correct or not, and then the answers go up on the board in a range and usually right away you'll start to see like, okay, we've got five or six of the same answer, that's probably the correct answer. But even though we're seeing that, I'm seeing students volunteering other answers because we look for the good math in those. Well, how did you get that? How do we know that it's not correct? Well, let's look. And there's always something of value in those two, so differentiating, making it a safe space for everyone to volunteer and answer some other classroom routine things that we do. I do a lot of student choice… so in our math work there's a level of questions that the kids can pick. I think my average is, we call it a pick four… so they pick four questions from each page and I try to find them like good fit questions. If one's a little too spicy or a little too mild, like training them to find the right fit for them, just the right amount of challenge, and that looks different for a lot of the kids. I'm finding that they're really enjoying the choice of that, and then one of the other things we do is normalizing coming up to the teacher for help. During independent work periods, I don't circulate the room. I'm back at a rainbow table, and kids freely come up, get help, and some kids stay there the whole time, some kids come up for just one question and because it's at the back of the room I can kind of see if someone's off task or really struggling.

> **Commented [BT16]:** Instilling self-confidence- Diverse Learning Needs

> **Commented [BT17]:** Empowering Student Choice- Diverse Learning Needs

Speaker 1

…And it kind of creates that empowerment too, as they don't feel as if they're being managed simultaneously. If I need help it's ok, but I'm in control, if I need Mrs. Diaz.

Speaker 2

And I have kids who are honestly probably doing grade five, grade six level math, but are still coming up for help because the questions that they're working on, it's hard for them. So I told my students if your brain isn't tired by the end of the math lesson, then I'm not doing my job.

Speaker 1

OK, so admittedly we spoke before interview…this is a little bit of a big global question coming up. But within those kind of diverse needs, ASD, autism, kind of presents some unique communications, social and learning challenges. Now, I'm sure there'll be a variety of answers, but what do you believe is the most effective way to support students diagnosed with ASD?

Speaker 2

So I'm in a lucky spot, being an intermediate teacher, and as long as it's not a new diagnosis, the number one thing to do would be to look at their IEP for things that have worked in the past for them. How does the student prefer to communicate? iPads are great for that. If we've got a nonverbal student, it is a tough one because it's such a wide spectrum. I yeah, just trying to organize my thoughts with this one… most effective way to support students diagnosed with autism…

Commented [BT18]: Utilizing IEPs- Addressing Diverse Learning Needs

Speaker 1

If you know, if it's comfortable… if you give me an example of like one student, maybe,

that you had success with. Maybe that's the way to go.

Speaker 2

Am I allowed to use student names? Would it be like redacted later or I can invent a name for them?

Speaker 1

Just let's just keep it anonymous if we can.

Speaker 2

We can. OK. Yeah. So I had one student a few years ago. Mostly nonverbal autism, but

the way that we kind of got through to her is she loved like just being in proximity, the

side-by-side play… she loved music, so kind of using that to buy in students reading

beside her, and then she would follow along in a book, whether she was reading or not.

A lot of her IEP goals were more social based, but then the other side to that too, she

was very skilled at coin identification… and she blew the students out of the water

Commented [BT19]: Utilizing IEP Goals

where she was like, that's a nickel, that's a dime. That's a five-dollar bill. When they

were still learning it, too. And so that's kind what's the word?... Not symbiotic. But like,

back and forth, she's learning, and then students are also getting a new appreciation for.

Speaker 1

Kind of a mutualistic kind of relationship.

Speaker 2

Yeah. Yeah. And honestly, getting to know your students. Who has diagnoses, and

Commented [BT20]: Recognizing Student Strengths/Challenges

figuring out kind of what makes them tick? What are they like? How do you get them to

buy in? And then also, how do you like push them a little bit, right. We want you to learn, we want you to be successful figuring out what success looks like first though.

Speaker 1

Yeah, without even saying who the student was, I know exactly who you're talking about. She was a little beacon of light in the class… so that being said, and you've got these individual kind of programs in place or meeting needs of individual students… How do you kind of try to balance that individual attention with these particular students, while acknowledging the fact that we have classes of 24, 26, 28, 30 students at a time?

Speaker 2

Yeah, this time of the school year, things have kind of leveled out. I find it more of a challenge at the beginning of the school year. But that's where I think the adage needed for some but good for all really comes in so. That is a big part of September here. All of the tools that we have to help us be successful and they're accessible to everybody. But then you find that the kids that don't really need it kind of stop using them because the novelty wears off. But then the kids that do need it, it's built-in and it's normalized. And that also includes, I think getting more help from the classroom teacher or having more of those little one on ones… like I am available to all of my students. But some of them definitely rely on that resource a little bit more. Some of them need the talks out in the hallway, or you can grab a clipboard and work underneath my desk, because I can see that you're really uncomfortable and you just need to not be looked at right now, like it's definitely available to all of the students in the class. But it's consistently used by the ones that really, really are needing it. But sometimes it is hard, right? Like sometimes it feels like everybody needs you and so… do I get to give an honest answer?...

Commented [BT21]: Universal Design

Commented [BT22]: Recognition of Individual Student Needs

Sometimes there isn't a balance either. There are some days where two or three kids get all of my attention, and the other kids thankfully work independently. But then when I look at the work at the end of the day, it's like, oh, you needed me here and I wasn't available.

Speaker 1

And I had to be... Yeah, I was elsewhere.

Speaker 2

Yeah, I gotta try to catch you up tomorrow.

Speaker 1

I understand that. I know that feeling very, very well. That being said, when you're working with students who have sometimes more significant needs, whether that is physical, social, emotional, developmental… do you get opportunities to collaborate with specialists and speech language pathologists, OT's, occupational therapists to help with these students as much as you want?

Speaker 2

My experience with, like, the itinerant specialists has been very mixed. I think if they're open to collaborating they let you know that, and it's always very welcome. I have had some reach out be like, hey, I want to tie in what we're working on here… with what you're doing in the classroom. Can you let me know or even just debriefing after an IEP meeting, or they come and introduce themselves at the start of the school year and then other times it's been very much "I have my own program."

Speaker 1

And never the two shall meet?

Commented [BT23]: Itinerant Specialists- Community Involvement

Speaker 2

Yeah, and sometimes I almost feel like a bit of an obstacle to them. Like ohh, you didn't tell me you were coming today and it's actually not a good time, and we're trying to do this one thing in class. But also, I'm not going to not let that child go to their individual intervention.

Speaker 1

Not going to deny the child who needs that support, even if it is not, maybe the most appropriate or feasible time to be getting that one-on-one.

Speaker 2

Yeah. Yeah, so my experience has been very mixed. And then the other part too is that I am not an expert in speech or vision… but one of the best things, when I have had an opportunity to collaborate with one of the hearing teachers I taught grade one… once in 2015/2016 and two of my students were deaf and used sign language, so I had two EA's who were essentially just there to translate, but then one of the hearing teachers would come and support and come and check in once a week. And the frequency that she came in and like, hey, so this is what we're doing here. What are your suggestions? How can I incorporate more sign? Visuals were the other challenge, too, is that these students were deaf, but they were also ELL, so there were multiple levels there. And so, she was completely invaluable and that's probably been the best example of support that I've received.

> **Commented [BT24]:** Utilizing Support-Community Involvement

Speaker 1

There's multiple levels to that support.

Speaker 2

And it totally changed how I did lesson planning. And again, like the students loved it too. You can incorporate everybody into it. Like I still know the sign for Ninja Turtles because that was an area of interest of theirs and we were learning about turtles.

Speaker 1

Yeah, cowabunga. Yep. That's actually a nice little segue to thinking about the challenges and the stressors of the classroom. And you know, the different hats you must wear and the 1000 balls up in the air at the same time. How do you just take a second to celebrate the positives? The small victories that kind of happen daily?

Speaker 2

Like on my own or with the class? Even the fact that kids share answers and the round of applause that they can receive. They love it. It's nice to be able…

> **Commented [BT25]:** Classroom Relationships-Diverse Learning Needs

Speaker 1

Come up, take a bow.

Speaker 2

Yeah, And like at the beginning, it's like a half-hearted support part way through the year. I teach them the like snapping as applause. Even that momentarily, just like lifts the room, being able to be like, you know… I'm having a hard time today… I would like to give out five compliments, because that makes me feel better and then just looking around the room and then that's something new that I've been kind of doing, like I'm going to hand out some compliments because it makes me feel good to lift you guys up and I notice the students being more forthcoming with the compliments too. That's

> **Commented [BT26]:** Classroom Relationships-Diverse Learning Needs

another way and then just sharing with colleagues. So and so came into the classroom

for an hour. He didn't do anything. But he was in the classroom.

Speaker 1

Hey, we were here. We were safe. You know, that's a win.

Speaker 2

Yeah. So and so didn't tell me to F off today, which was nice. Yeah. He glared at me, but

he didn't swear at me. Yeah. {sarcasm}

> **Commented [BT27]:** Unwanted, Aggressive Behaviors-SEL

Speaker 1

That glare is sometimes better than a swear.

Speaker 2

Yeah, the inside thoughts were kept inside. {sarcasm}

Speaker 1

I kind of know who that probably is too. So yeah, we can laugh about this, and you know

anyone who's worked in the classroom extensively, in the I would say, the last five to ten

years, sees the increase of challenges, sees the changing dynamic of the classroom,

the increased SEL requirements that are put on teachers on a daily basis. What if you

could advocate for one thing that you'd like "we need to do this regarding the way we

approach SEL in the classroom," does something come to mind? Maybe that we could

shout from the rooftops or…

Speaker 2

Just one???

Speaker 1

OK, give me… give me your short list. Give me three.

Speaker 2

I am not a therapist. Okay, that's kind of the big one. I can do, and I am happy to do the breathing techniques, finding out how to get you in that space where you are focused, successful, those kinds of things. But I feel like… where to even start… more access to school counselors for these kids? It's not just I had a bad morning, and I need help regulating, it's my baseline… I'm on the verge of losing my **** every single day. Like, that's that child's baseline, or these kids who come from, like, just heartbreaking backgrounds. And we do have a school counselor, but you know, access is 15 minutes a week.

> **Commented [BT28]:** Realistic Expectations- Obtaining Services

> **Commented [BT29]:** Unstable Backgrounds

Speaker 1

When your caseload is in the hundreds, if not close to thousands of children that you could potentially be responsible for…

Speaker 2

Yeah, and then there's really, really simple things like… I am an intermediate teacher in a primary sized classroom, and sometimes I just don't have a space for these kids to go. To where you see a kid like "everyone is looking at me." I don't have an EA in my room. I can't give them space outside of the class, so it's literally… "you can sit underneath my desk. My shoes are there. I'm very sorry, but like, that's your spot."

> **Commented [BT30]:** Realistic Expectations-Classroom Restraints

Speaker 1

Yeah, here's your hiding hole. But that's the best I can do.

Speaker 2

Yeah. And it's such a Band-Aid. Yeah, funding access to professionals who are trained in this. And then I didn't mention this at the very beginning... I am actually teaching at two different schools this year. And I can't think of another two schools who are on more

opposite ends of the spectrum. I'm at a uniformed, traditional school in one of the wealthiest parts of town one day a week, and then the three other days I am here at the inner-city school.

Commented [BT31]: Social/Financial Upbringing

Speaker 1

Often kind of dubbed, well, usually dubbed, the most affluent and difficult elementary schools in the same school district.

Speaker 2

Yeah, like whenever I tell my other coworkers I work here, the air gets sucked out of the room and they're like, "are you OK???"

Speaker 1

Yes, I am. I'm great, why wouldn't I be????{sarcasm}

Speaker 2

Yeah, I'm fine. But I think it also goes back to that idea of "needed for some, but good for all."

Commented [BT32]: Diverse Learning Needs

Speaker 1

OK, thanks for checking on me. Appreciate it. {sarcasm}

Speaker 2

The difference in training between the staff at both schools, and like, they have training there that I think we could benefit from here, but just managing kids who need that little bit of help, that little, little bit more SEL learning in a way that's not superficial, I think. And I don't know, like where would you start that? How do you change that school culture where you do have kids from well-adjusted backgrounds, but everybody needs help with this stuff?

Commented [BT33]: Explicit SEL Instruction

Speaker 1

And I don't know if it would be a matter of… You don't want to mandate professional practice by any means, because then it starts to infringe on teacher autonomy, but recognizing that maybe there needs to be a baseline of some sort of SEL, trauma-informed background training for all school district employees, while not just throwing out the same professional development repetitively. No, I'm going to go take the math one again and I'm going to go teach math, you know, math groups again. {sarcasm}

Speaker 2

Yeah. And I feel like the SEL stuff like leads into the behavior management of the classroom, because if you don't have kids who are regulated, you're going to see that in behavior.

Speaker 1

100%.

Speaker 2

It's simple. An example at that other school, is a student there… I've not seen such a classic case of undiagnosed ADHD in a very, very long time. He vibrates and there's no alternative seating for him. They don't have wiggle stools; they don't have raised desks. There are no other like arrangements… he just needs to stay here and not move, and he's so not set up for success.

> **Commented [BT34]:** Acknowledging Student Needs as a Learning Community

Speaker 1

Give him a floor mat, a soft mat that he could tap dance on while he's standing there or something else.

Speaker 2

Yeah. Like, hey, are you allowed to walk to the office, touch the door and come back? Things like that could be done. It's just the expectation that "no, you sit still for six hours." Like I can't do that at all, myself.

> **Commented [BT35]:** Learning Community

Speaker 1

I can't do that either, so I totally get it.

Speaker 2

So just that I wish the expectations were somewhat equivalent across the board, because it's beneficial for all of them that you do know these basic strategies and you understand their importance.

Speaker 1

No, that's fine. So, as we're starting to come to the end of our chat here, anything finally you want to close with? Any kind of final piece of advice that you might want to… any nugget there, that like hey, this is what I've done and was successful or just anything that for other teachers, other educators, working schools that are seeing this stuff on a daily basis, and are kind of working their way through it?

Speaker 2

Yeah, I think finding a support system at work. Also, knowing that like these things don't change in a day or a year… they're skills that slowly build up. I think one of the bigger things too is just acknowledging that it's hard… that I think sometimes because we work with kids. I hate, I hate to use this phrase as it's overused so much… but like the toxic positivity, you're a superhero stuff. You can do this. It's like, "no, it's hard." Having somebody acknowledge that it's hard is so helpful.

> **Commented [BT36]:** Realistic Expectations

> **Commented [BT37]:** Professional Realism Acknowledging the Job is Difficult

Speaker 1

And just listening to you, when you tell them it's hard and they do not offer advice immediately and try to "fix it."

Speaker 2

Yeah. And recognizing there's a realistic ceiling on what we can do with the resources that we have access to. This is going to sound pessimistic… I genuinely don't feel like I'm being pessimistic about it, but I think having a realistic understanding of what can be accomplished with the tools that you have, and celebrating that and not getting hung up on the things that you can't do, yeah. Yeah, that and find people who will listen to you at the end of the day and…

Commented [BT38]: Realistic Expectations: Limited Resources

Commented [BT39]: "What You Can and Can't Do."

Speaker 1

Get to vent to. That is important, yes. Both of us knowing each other very well, that is an important outlet.

Speaker 2

Yeah. And acknowledging like honestly…I love my job. If someone was on the fence, I would never to try to encourage them into this… again having a dose of realism, right. Like if this is not for you, like try these strategies. I am here to help. I think that's the other part of it too, where like we're trying to force people to stay when it's not for you, you have to want to be here, because *it is* hard.

Commented [BT40]: Realistic Expectations

Speaker 1

OK. So as we wrap up, I just want to acknowledge on the recording, that today's date is Friday, February 16th and we're finishing at 1:43 PM. I told Lauren that just beforehand

we started recording that I would ask her this at the end… Lauren, you've answered all

of these of your own free will. I'm not pointing anything at you.

Speaker 2

To the best of my ability. {sarcasm}

Speaker 1

To the best of your ability and I am not financially compensating you in any way shape

or form other than maybe a cup of coffee.

Speaker 2

This was a huge burden on my day, I'm not…{sarcasm}

Speaker 1

Being compensated. OK, so with that I am going to conclude this interview. Thank you.

Table 1

Social emotional challenges faced in the inner-city elementary classroom.

Themes	Codes

Social-Emotional Learning

SEL

Trauma

Learned Aggressive Behavior

Modeling

Diverse Learning Needs

Differentiation

Adaptation

Self-Confidence

Student Choice

Instability

Home life

Financial Hardship

Discomfort

Basic Needs

Community Involvement

Itinerant

Support

Acknowledgement

Learning Community

Realism

Services

Classroom Restraints

Expectations

Resources

Summary

        When posed with the idea of conducting a qualitative interview, I had to face

several realizations: a) I had never conducted a formal interview, and b) I had no idea

where to direct the focus of my interview. As I have previously made mention of in prior

submissions in multiple education classes, my major focus in my graduate studies, as

well as my professional practice, has been focused on social-emotional learning and the

relationships formed between educators and students in depressed socio-economic

environments.

        While the specificity of my intended future research regarding the absence of

male teachers in SEL training, and the relationships formed between male teachers and

their students, would not necessarily fit the scope of this assignment, participating in this

interview work has highlighted several ideas for me to focus on.

        First and foremost, I quickly realized how quickly an interview can become

cumbersome to manage and transcribe. While being aware that the interview needed to

take less than thirty minutes, it was surprisingly difficult to adhere to this time limit, while

simultaneously feeling that the interview provided real valuable information that could be

utilized. This experience with a long-term colleague that I have a very positive

relationship with highlighted how difficult it could be to discern useful, insightful

dialogue. This would be particularly true in a situation where I do not have a pre-existing

relationship with the research participant. Whereas I was immediately able to delve into

content questions in this exercise, I feel it would be a much slower, more sensitive

process where there would be a perceived power imbalance between the research

participant and myself.

Second, I had to recognize that focusing on minutiae would be very difficult within an interview process. I believe that narrowing the scope of this assignment too much would not allow for a valuable dissemination of information and would extend the time and work required beyond what would be considered feasible. While I have previously read and come to achieve a basic understanding of the restraints surrounding qualitative interviews, this experience provided me with a more well-rounded picture of how significant an undertaking that conducting multiple in-depth, focused interviews would be.

Finally, I had to approach the idea of how to begin coding. This was an entirely new concept to me, as I had never been required to participate in this process at any point in my undergraduate degrees. The most difficult part of this was to not transfer my own pre-existing biases in the conversation and allow for my research participant's thoughts to form the basis for the themes and codes. While, admittedly, this was a first attempt at coding for me, and I'm sure that the development of my coding process could be further refined, I believe that this has been a valuable exercise and process that has highlighted to me how to quantify and evaluate the information presented in an in-depth interview.

Ultimately, I felt that this activity was extremely valuable, as it provided a very clear example of how to conduct future interviews with a wide variety of research participants. Moving forward it is my belief that I will be able to further develop and greater construct my ability to recognize thematic codes within qualitative interviews and conversations.