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Ethnographic Narrative Project- My Journey to Teaching

Linda Melendez

Claremont Graduate University

Teacher Education Program

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Abstract

When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower.

Alexander Den Heijer

This is one of my favorite quotes because the message it portrays is very powerful. This is the motto that I have abided by in the past and will continue to abide by in the future as an educator. Like the quote states, I feel that educators, are the environment and it is up to us to build an environment where students are given diverse opportunities to feel empowered and acquire the tools to succeed. Being a first year teacher comes with many excitements and emotions. Parents put all their hope and trust in educators with the goal of having their child, accomplish the same or close to the same successes as those students without disabilities. In my perspective, being a special education teacher with students who have different needs and disabilities is even more of a challenge. My goal is to provide a classroom ecology where my student's feel their unique needs are met and where my students and parents can collaborate with me to reinforce and ensure that they emerge with a strong sense of self-worth, self-confidence, and the fortitude to build resilience. In the classroom and outside of the classroom teachers and students can apply the knowledge that they learned. Knowing how to apply the strategies can make a difference on how obstacles are dealt with by both students and teachers. A positive teacher presence is vital to the classroom environment and it is composed of relationships with students, staff and parents who work together to build the child's educational ecology. In a reading Hattie & Zierer write that " Successful learning requires targeted perspectives, and it is the responsibility of all around the learner (teachers, parents, peers) to build up, support, and develop positive perspectives in all involved."(Hattie & Zierer, 2018, p. 40

Part A: Journey to Teaching

My Positionality

Both of my parents were born in Mexico. Like so many others, they immigrated to the United States to seek the American dream. None of my parents finished high school. My parents met in California and started a family. I am the second oldest of seven siblings. Growing up, my father took on various jobs and eventually he owned his own business as an auto body technician. My mother was a homemaker for the greater part of my life. As a child, we moved around a lot. In 1996, we eventually settled in Mira Loma when my parents were able to purchase our first home. Although my parents were homeowners, our socio economic status was on the high lower income bracket.

My youngest sister and I are 11 years apart. I always say I practically raised her and helped raise my younger siblings as well. As a child, I enjoyed role-playing. My most memorable role-playing was when I would pretend to be a teacher and I would have my younger siblings be the students. This is something that I truly loved doing. The role-play later played a real role when I would help them with their homework and when I would explain an assignment that they did not understand. I believe that being a caregiver for my siblings is what initiated my aspiration to nurture, be a mentor, and teach. Linguistically, I was raised in a home where Spanish was my first language. Later on, I would have to learn how to code switch in order to interpret for parent teacher conferences, for appointments and for any other occasions that my parents needed.

My father's parenting style growing up was authoritarian. Growing up my father went to great lengths to teach us to be independent and to value education. On top of school, we would

have chores and were expected to help with dinner. Some might think that his way of teaching us lessons was way out of the ordinary but I think it was the most relevant to him based on his upbringing. Being the second oldest, meant that I was expected to be a caregiver for my siblings. My father always tried to instill the motto that in order to get what you want you have to work hard and be persistent. One of his lessons that I recall the most happened one summer when I was thirteen years old. He took me, my older sister who was 14, and my brother who was 12 to Arkansas to work in the cotton fields. We would get up at 4:30, helped my mom prep lunch and arrived at the field by 5:00. We would go around weeding the cotton because back then every process was done by hand. Our day ended at 3:00. At that age, I did not see it as a lesson but I was up to the challenge. Now I look back and although it might be perceived as extreme, I feel that it made me the strong independent woman I am today. If I set myself a goal, I will accomplish it. It also taught me responsibility. In my perspective, this experience will help me connect with other students because it helps me understand them and helps me be more culturally aware.

Even though he taught us life lessons, he did not know how to support us in school. There was not only the language barrier but the lack of education from his part as well. To my advantage, school was always easy for me, I loved going to school. I was a straight- A- student throughout Elementary, Middle school, and most of high school. In high school I was in the MEChA club (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán or Chicano Student Movement of Aztlan), the teacher that lead the club, Mrs. Preciado, became an important mentor during the last two years of high school. Now that I think back, I think it was because she was culturally aware and had experienced many of the difficulties that I faced. I was never in AP or honors

classes because I did not know much about the criteria and never had anyone to guide me. Mrs. Preciado got me into Avid where I became aware of the process of applying to a University.

I applied and was accepted to several Universities. At the end I chose Cal Poly Pomona because my goal was to major in Computer Engineering. However, that same year I started a new job as a Para educator and fell in love with it. I changed my major and before pursuing teaching decided to take a break. That break turned into years. In between, I had two children and took one class at a time to finish my general education requirements. I got my associates from Riverside Community College and then my Bachelor's in Business Management at the University of Redlands.

Throughout those years, I continued to work as a Para educator. I was fortunate to work with educators who shared my values and with some that I did not. Being exposed to both has greatly shaped what I value as an educator and has given me the opportunity to experience situations that go against my values. Having experienced that has opened my eyes to see that in education there are going to be challenges that will make you question our role as educators.

“Positionality is the concept that our perspectives are based on our place in society” (Sensory & DiAngelo, 2017). I strongly agree that my positionality in regards to my culture and economic position helps me better understand the obstacles and difficulties that arise from it. For example, having Spanish speaking parents lets me see situations from a different lens. It has also given me the opportunity to know that parents and children go through situations that interfere with what they want to achieve in the school system.

My Decision to be a Teacher

My initial major was computer engineering, during the first year as an undergraduate at Cal Poly Pomona; I decided to get a part time job. I began working as a Para educator in the Riverside

Unified School District. The flexibility and the hours were a perfect balance to work and go to school. As the months went by, my passion for my job as a para-educator grew and seeing the improvements in students was extremely rewarding. I worked with students in small groups. It was easy for me to connect with these students and during that first year, I realized that some of the difficulties they presented were similar to the difficulties my brother had when he was going to school. Being more aware of the aspects of special education, brought me back to those times that I would help my brother with his homework. He needed a lot of time to process the information and needed a lot of repetition. After over a decade working with students with special needs, I can see that he would have most likely qualified for Special Education services if he had identified.

What and Who do I Want to Teach?

When I began my job as a Para educator, I knew that my passion was within special education. I have been very fortunate to work with a resource specialist that has been open about teaching me and sharing different aspects of special education. She has been someone who exemplifies and fulfills her role as an educator. I look up to her because we share the same values. I have had the opportunity to see every aspect of being a special education educator. Having exposed to special education in such a way has given me the affirmation that my passion lies in special education. These are the reasons I chose to be an Education Specialist. I would teach any grade level, however I would prefer elementary because I feel that identifying and providing services for these students at an early age is crucial. There are times that students have gaps that can be closed using intervention. In my perspective when students are, having academic deficits intervention can be a great way to determine the specific needs of students. It facilitates and helps them expand their potential to the fullest. Doing so increases the chances of

these students exiting special education. I would like to be that educator who is involved in the whole process and source as a resource for other teachers who may need assistance with the process. I feel that with my years of experience, having the credentials to continue to share my knowledge and support to students, parents, and teachers is what I need.

The Role of Critical Social Justice

“Understanding social justice means that we must be able to recognize that relations of unequal social power are constantly being negotiated at both the micro (individual) and macro (structural) levels” (Sensory & DiAngelo, 2017). In my view, educators need to be aware of who their students are and where they come from. It is well known that fair dispersion of resources and equitable treatment does not happen in schools. For example, affluent schools often have the most current academic material, the best visual arts programs, and plenty of support staff like counselors, nurses, and librarians. On top of the social injustices in schools, there is also the injustices that educator who are minority’s face, which attributes to the social injustices that are seen in the education system. An article written by Brenda Alvarez, talks about some of these injustices. She interview Audrey Murphy-Brown, a social worker and a member of SEA who says “ The storm swirled with nepotism, favoritism, and institutional biases that prevented highly qualified educators of color from becoming lead teachers or being offered lateral promotion” (neat.org). In my perspective, breaking that stigma and allowing highly qualified educators from all backgrounds will bring more critical social justice into the classrooms.

Assets and Needs

I will bring my assets into the classroom to set the environment and promote a fair education for all students. Some of my assets that I will bring in my first year of teaching include socio-

cultural, socio-emotional, communication, and critical thinking. These assets will serve as a means to create a class that is diverse and culturally sensitive.

Socio-cultural/socio-emotional

My cultural background will enable me to mitigate my assumptions when it comes to parent involvement. Instead of assuming that parents do not care about the education of their child, I will get to know those parents and keep in mind that many of them may work two jobs, and may have a job that does not give those days off with ease. I will see each student as a unique individual and will service each student according to his or her specific needs. I will make sure to take the time to connect with my students and give them the opportunity to connect with each other. I would do this in the beginning of the year during circle time. During our first Teaching and Learning class our professors introduced us to the value of circle time. I felt that it gave my classmates, my professors, and I the opportunity to know something personal about each one of us. Lastly, I will take the time to listen to my students and give them many opportunities to learn the material by differentiating and accommodating them as often as needed.

Communication

In my perspective, communication is one, if not the most, crucial part of teaching. Throughout my years of experience, I have been able to communicate effectively with parents. Being fluent in Spanish has given me the advantage of getting to know the parents without having a middle person involved. Establishing communication gives me the opportunity to address the issues first hand. I would not only establish communication but I will also make myself readily available to answer any concerns or questions they may have. Since I will be working with students with special needs, I will also make sure I have evidence to show them how their child is progressing

towards their goals. This is important because it is proof that I am looking out for their child's best interest. Communication with teachers and administration is also vital. Overall, being in education is like being in public relations. You want to have an open communication and a positive attitude with your parents, teachers, and administrators. I plan to communicate with teachers consistently and frequently. In the beginning of the year I will make sure that, each teacher receives information about the student and the student's needs. I will also make sure to include a manila folder that contains the student's goals, a description of their disability, and strategies that they can use to help students be successful in their classroom. The main goal is the success of the student. Being open, accessible, and positive will help you advocate for your students and get what they need.

Goals

“It is vital for teachers to get to know their students beyond their academic profile” (Smith, Fisher, and Frey, 2015). I agree that in order to create social justice within the classroom you have to get to know your students interests and likes outside the classroom. My goal as a first year teacher in Special Education is, to give my students with special needs accommodative instruction to meet their needs. This means that I will get to know their specific deficits in order to implement the proper goals that will meet their needs. My goal is also to have consistent communication with parents, teachers, students, and administration. I firmly believe that having consistent communication is beneficial to everyone who is involved, especially the student. My goal is that parents will have more knowledge on their student's disability and ways that they can help. I want to be able to help parents understand what special education entails and how to help their child be successful in school and in their future adult life. Learning about the specific needs of their child gives them a sense of security and satisfaction. I want to be an advocate for

students so they understand how and when they can request their accommodations as special needs students. I want my students to feel empowered and able to learn and apply different strategies in and out of school. I am also aware that many teachers do not have a full scope of understanding the needs of children with special needs.

Part B: My Students

Introduction

As an educator, there will always be different challenges that will arise. One of the major challenges will be the lack of quality programs. Throughout my years as a para-educator, I was able to see this first hand. Oftentimes, there were students who needed services; however, the process to get them was long and overwhelming. To make this less unbearable I plan to have constant communication with my team so that I can be up to date with any changes and procedures. I will also make sure to have current data on my students so that parents know their child's strengths and weaknesses. Being able to support students with multiple disabilities and knowing how to prioritize these disabilities will be an area that I will continue to focus on.

Case Study 1: Jo

Demographic Information

My first focus student is an English Learner. His name is Jo. He is an 8-year-old Hispanic male. His current setting is a Special Day Class. Jo was not making progress and had challenging behaviors when he started preschool. He was referred for special education assessments because he showed delays in pre-academics, language, fine motor development, and social/adaptive behavior. He is an EL (English Learner) student and his primary language is Spanish. I chose this student because I wanted to build a better connection with him so that I could provide him

strategies that he could use to de-escalate his aggressive behavior in the classroom. I would like to reduce the behaviors in the classroom and encourage him to explore his academic strengths. Although Jo has some challenging behaviors throughout the day, he also has some good attributes. Some of Jo's strengths in the classroom are assisting the teacher, helping other students, and creating work that is legible and neat. Jo is always eager to help students log into their chromebook or helping them find the assigned academic website. He has younger siblings who he helps take care of at home. I believe that is the reason why he is so good at helping my kindergarten student with various tasks. Some of these tasks are opening breakfast items, hanging his backpack, and helping him log into the chromebook. He enjoys helping me pass out the necessary materials like paper, pencils, and crayons. However, he wants it to be his job all the time and does not like it when other students want to participate. I have to remind him that it is important have other students be involved in the classroom jobs.

Assets and Needs: Academic Standing

Academically, Jo struggles with standardized assessments and non-standardized assessments. For example, the math benchmark that contains multiple-choice questions is difficult for him. I administered this assessment and it was a struggle just to get him started. He said it was too hard but he had not looked at it yet. He was not patient, rushed through it, and guessed every answer. Another standardized test, the SRI (Student Reading Inventory), is an assessment designed to gauge students reading abilities. After rushing through it, his result was beginning reader. As of August, he knows 26 out of 26 uppercase letters and 23 out of the 26 lower case letters. He currently knows 17 out of 23 consonant sounds; he knows four out of the five short vowels and does not know any of the long vowels. He is not able to read any consonant-vowel-consonant words like cat, met, sit, and pat. Although he may know the sound of most of the letters, he has

difficulty when it comes to blending the sounds together. For example, when he tried to read the word let, he was able to sound out each letter but when he blended the sounds together he omitted the beginning sound. His academic deficits cause frustration and defiance in the classroom during lessons. For example, if he is doing ST Math, which is an academic math application, he will get upset and whine if he does not get the answer correct. Instead of trying, he constantly asks me, or my instructional assistant for the answer. I have had to make some changes to accommodate him and other students in the classroom who were struggling. During rotations, I used to have ST Math as an independent rotation. Jo would constantly interrupt my small group to ask for help. Due to this, I decided to change ST Math to a rotation where both my instructional assistant and I would be available to help the class. Jo also struggles with all the academic standards. Especially with the ELA content and Math content. In math, he struggles adding numbers within 20. He is not able to remember the strategies previously taught and he cannot correctly count when using manipulatives. In Language arts, he struggles with high frequency words and remembering the short and long vowel sounds. During my interview, Jo said, "I don't like to read because reading is really hard" (Jo, Personal Communication, and October 2019). This information was insightful and I knew that I needed to expose Jo to reading in a different way, like having him listen to a book instead of having him try reading. To help Jo in these areas, I had to scaffold the instruction. I created sight word flashcards and we read them every day in small group. During small group, we have been practicing identifying the initial sounds in consonant-vowel-consonant words. I will say the word and have them share the initial sound they hear with their partner. For math during whole group, I had one of my higher students, who is great at math; give us a lesson on how to use number bonds when adding two numbers. I felt

that having another student teach what he or she knows would be a great way to recruit students' interest and keep students engaged.

Assets and Needs: Socio-Emotional Development and Social Identity

My student's self-concept is not a positive one. He likes school but does not like to do anything that involves reading and writing because he cannot read. When it comes to communication and behavior, Jo struggles. He receives speech services. His areas of weaknesses are morphology, semantics, and syntax both receptively and expressively. Morphology is the study of word forms; syntax is the study of sentence structure; semantics is the understanding and appropriate use of meaning in single words, phrases, sentences and even, longer units (cslstherapy.com). His deficit in his receptive language, cause him to have difficulty with comprehension. This is because he does not understand what he hears. For example, in the classroom when I ask him to tell me what happened in the story he cannot find the correct words to tell what he wants to say. He does not use complete sentences when speaking and often lacks the production of single and multiple speech sounds. He exhibits poor listening skills. He will often omit sounds and does not use the plural and singular word forms correctly. He often misunderstands advanced sentence structure. For example, if I say, "Jo I need you to put your markers in your desk and put your paper in the tray", he will do one and ask me to repeat what else I wanted him to do. He is able to work independently for short periods if it is a fun activity like coloring and painting. Jo sometimes will get upset if the task he I ask him to do is a non-preferred task. Transitions are difficult for Jo, so I have to make sure I give him extra time to transition or give him a five - minute reminder before the timer goes off. He has a difficult time working as a group and often argues or teases any student that he has to work with. He will mimic other students and often

bother and tease them. He also encourages other students to make poor choices when he does not get his way. He will tell them “Don’t listen to her”, or “Hit the table”. In order to help Jo in his struggling and disruptive behaviors I set up a token chart for him. The token chart has helped him acquire better self-control. It motivates him to follow directions and get along with other students. During the home interview, Jo's Mom shared that Jo enjoys playing soccer. He has been playing for the past three years but he gets very upset when he loses a game. She said that sometimes he gets upset and pick fights with the other children. She shared that he is very impulsive and has a short temper. It is hard for her to de-escalate his tantrums because he will not listen to anything that she has to say. She will take away his electronics and will not allow him to go to the park as a way of disciplining him. She said that sometimes she has to tell him that the police is going to come and take him if he does not behave.

Assets and Needs: Funds of Knowledge

In order to build a better relationship with parents and students, it is vital for the teacher to get to know their students at different levels. Families are essential for student success. One effective way of connecting to students is accomplished by conducting home visits. Jo was the first home visit that I conducted. Due to Jo’s challenging behavior, I communicate with the parent every day. I feel that our continuous communication has given me an understanding of whom my student is and how I can better attend his needs. I arrived at the home of my first focus student Jo an evening around 3:30 in the afternoon with some doughnuts. I felt nervous because visiting the home of students is not something that I was comfortable doing. The parent greeted me and right behind her was my student Jo, and his siblings. He came over and asked why I was in his home. I told him that I wanted to stop by to ask his mother some questions so that I could get to know

him better. With five children that range from 11 months to 11 years, and the television on, the home was loud. Jo's brother, Jayden, who is in a moderate to severe class and I see every day, came over to greet me. He does not know my name, he just said "Hola Maestra" (hi teacher) and gave me a high five. We sat at the kitchen table and I shared a few things about my family before starting with the interview. I once again told the parent that everything would be confidential and that I would be taking notes throughout the interview. I asked her if she had any questions or concerns before I started the interview.

During the interview, the children frequently interrupted. John seemed excited to see me and he said that he had never had a teacher visit his home. This reminded me of one of our competencies, maintaining awareness of your socio-emotional development. For the past months, I have been working on building our relationship. I would like to get to know him better so that I could find strategies to de-escalate his behavior in the classroom and teach him ways to self-regulate his emotions. Jo's mother interrupted our interview several times to yell at the children because they were fighting with each other. Her husband was at work, and would not be home until late at night. By that time, the children are usually asleep so they do not see much of him until the weekend. It was evident that she felt overwhelmed. She knows that his behavior is challenging and she has put in a lot of time and effort to get him the interventions that he needs. He currently receives services in and out of school hours. She said she was bothered that the counseling services that he receives through an outside agency have been very inconsistent. She said, "It is difficult for him to improve because they are always changing the therapist and Jo does not like change. He was just bonding with the therapist and now she is no longer going to see him. It has been almost a month since his last session." (Mom, personal communication,

November 2019). The following information provides insight on observations that I made while conducting the interview or information that the parent mentioned during the interview:

Jo's mom shared that she would like him to be an independent and responsible individual when he grows up. She said "I know he is struggling but I hope that he will be better at school", (Mom, Personal communication, November, 2019).

Mother shared that her experience with the school has gotten a lot better. She feels that the inconsistency of having a stable teacher has contributed to his behavior. She is glad that the school has provided different interventions for him and is happy with the counseling and speech services he receives at school.

During the interview, I observed Jo playing with his baby brother Angel. He carried him and was having a conversation with him. When I saw this, it took me back to my classroom and I thought about what a good helper he is and how he takes care of my only kindergarten student. For example, in the morning during breakfast he opens his milk and his yogurt. During recess, he will stand up for him if another student is being mean or playing rough with him.

Assets and Needs: Experiences, Interests and Developmental Considerations

Therefore, I am providing an inclusive environment by providing him with small group instruction and guided reading. This improves his self-concept because he knows that he will get one-on-one help when it comes to the curriculum. I am also creating an inclusive environment by providing him different ways to access the curriculum. For example, EPIC, which is an educational website, gives him the opportunity to listen to books and then take a quiz on the books. After students listen to books, they can take a quiz. Students listen to the questions and the answers choices read aloud to them. In my perspective, this will boost their self-esteem and motivate them because it will provide a sense of accomplishment.

Some of Jo's interests are sports, the chromebook and building Legos. He enjoys playing soccer and basketball during recess and PE. Coloring and building Legos are some of the hobbies that motivate him in class. However, it keeps him motivated for only a few minutes and then the behaviors began to reappear. The behaviors are common when he feels frustrated. He aspires to be a police officer when he grows up.

Jo has had speech impairments since he was three years old and has a younger brother who is in a moderate to severe classroom. His speech is incoherent and does not like to repeat himself when he is having a conversation with others. He is aware that his speech is not clear and tends to be defiant and aggressive if others do not understand him. Over the past three years, he has had different teachers and at one time, he had two teachers in one year. These are some of the events, which have shaped his life and it has taken away his sense of security. Jo expressed that he does not feel he has ever been successful. In the interview he said, "All the school work is hard and I don't like it" (Jo, Personal Communication, and October 2019). This helped because it told me that he feels he is always unsuccessful and not smart.

Jo is one of five siblings and has a younger brother in the moderate to severe classroom. His father is his role model because he works hard and provides food and shelter for his family. Jo comes from a struggling economic household. His dad works long days and hours. Both of his parents are undocumented and do not speak English. This has created a barrier for him because they are not able to help him with his homework. He speaks both languages (Spanish and English) and has often interpreted for his parents in and outside of school. He does not see that being binary requires a certain level of cognitive ability.

He has an outside social worker and an outside therapist due to his behaviors at home and at school. This school year, due to his behavior, an outside psychiatrist would be providing him with extra services. This group of individuals has become his support network. I know he has expressed that he is a bad kid and recognizes his academic deficits. He says he is not smart and that he does not want to go to high school.

Action Plan

According to his Psycho-Educational report, Jo is atypical because as soon as an 8 year-old, he is currently performing like a 5-6 year old child. Although he is a lower achieving student academically, his conversations with others and his social awareness is typical of a student his age. I am hoping that with the support of his vast network of people, he will be able to find his small successes rewarding and of value. In my perspective, I can provide opportunities for my students and Jo to learn by providing him with many positive reinforcements throughout the day and by providing equity in the classroom. When I asked him what he enjoys doing in his spare time he said, "I like coloring and playing with Legos" (Jo, Personal Communication, October 2019). This was helpful when creating his token chart. On the token chart, one of the activities that he could work for was building Legos. Providing differentiation and small group instruction would give him the support and build his confidence. Practicing sight words on a daily basis provides exposure to the most common words in texts. Reading aloud and discussing the book builds his comprehension.

Case Study 2: Liz

Demographic Information

My second focus student is one with an IEP. Liz is a 9-year-old Hispanic female. Liz was retained in first grade. She is an EL, whose primary language is Spanish, and entered Special Education as a first grader. The Student Study Team referred Liz for testing. Liz qualified for Services in special education and speech. Her primary disability is Learning Disability and her secondary eligibility is speech impairment. Her receptive and expressive language skills are very low. After one year of showing regression in the academic areas, a change of placement to a more restrictive environment was approved. I chose this student because although she is low, she has the ability and the determination to succeed. I would like to get to know her better so that I can provide her with the necessary tools in class. My goal is to fill in the gaps and provide her strategies that she will be able to use now and in the future.

Assets and Needs: Academic Standing

The data I used to determine the specific areas that Liz needed help with was, the Houghton Mifflin Phonics Inventory, System 44, which is an online evaluation. For math, I used an assessment that was provided by a first grade teacher. The student does not need any assistive technology. She does however use her chromebook as part of the curriculum that is at her level.

Assets and Needs: Socio-Emotional Development and Social Identity

Some of her strengths are, good behavior, eager to learn, determined to succeed. Out of the classroom, Liz enjoys books that are read to her and likes playing with friends. She loves to color and role-play with her neighbor. At home, Liz enjoys playing with her dog and coloring. “She cleans her room and needs several reminders if I ask her to do more than two things at once” (mom, personal communication, November 2019). After hearing the input from her mother, I was able to provide some strategies that she can do at home to help her with multiple step instructions. For example, I told her that it would be helpful if she asked her to do one thing

at a time. . Liz also knows that she needs to speak up for herself when other students are bothering her or when she needs something. I feel that I am creating an inclusive environment because I am having the student practice talking in front of her peers. Liz enjoys coloring, playtime with peers and dancing. She is not sure what she want to be when she grows up. One of her dreams is that her father would be home more. I notice that as Liz gets more comfortable with her environment, the more comfortable she feels speaking in front of an audience. The parent shared that at home, when Liz played with the neighbor she would go home crying because Liz never got choose a game to play. At school, I noticed that if another student were invading her space, Liz would just step away. I have taken a few minutes out of class each day to talk about ways that she can communicate with other students without being confrontational. During class, I will have her and other students' practice using different voice levels and listening to what they sound like. I will also role play along with them so that they can recognize the appropriate voice level to use.

Assets and Needs: Funds of Knowledge

My third parent interview was with Liz's mother. I have spoken with her throughout the year and met once for parent teacher conferences. Her work schedule changes from one week to another so it was difficult to set a time and date for the interview. For my third parent analysis, I met the parent at the Starbucks. I had spoken to the parent and it she had agreed that I would be visiting her home. However, a day before meeting, the parent contacted me and said that they had family over for the holidays and that she preferred if we met afterschool in my classroom. I reiterated that the purpose of visiting their home was to provide me with some insight on ways that I could

better help their child so that a more trusting relationship. She insisted that it was more convenient for her if we met afterschool so I suggested Starbucks. I felt that meeting at a place outside of school would provide a less formal environment. As I entered Starbucks, she was waiting on a table by herself. I greeted her as I sat down and I thanked her for taking the time to meet me. I told her that I would be taking notes and that everything that we talked about would be confidential. I asked her if she had any questions before the interview. She had no questions at the time. The following are things that I observed or that the parent said that I could use to inform my pedagogy with the student and the class.

- The parent shared that Liz has struggled in all the academic areas since she began school and that being shy has caused her teachers target her as a struggling student. I responded by telling her that she is very shy in class but that Liz is working on speaking up, and asking question when needed.
- She shared that she would like her to get out from special education in the future and be more open about what she wants to be when she grows up.
- Her understanding of special education is minimal. She came to the United States 18 years ago but Liz if her only child that is in special education. She does not understand a lot of terminology and does not really understand the difference between SDC and regular education. At times, she wonders if she made the right decision. In the beginning, she was hesitant to move her because she was not sure about what types of students would be in the class.
- She was not happy with the previous school that Liz attended. She was bullied and she felt that the school was not doing their part to resolve the issue. One of her fears was that Liz was also, going to be bullied at this school as well. It makes her feel a lot better to

hear Liz say that she really likes her new school. I told Liz's mom that in class I notice that she is beginning to speak for herself and that her determination has helped her make progress.

“Teacher home visits are exceptionally significant in working with diverse student populations. They provide an essential link to students’ families, granting insight into learners’ lives, language, culture, and needs.” (El Yaafouri-Kreuzer, 2017, p. 22). After conducting my own home visits, I agree that I learned more about my students. I am able to help them in the classroom. I am also able to provide parents with feedback and strategies that they can use at home and we can continue to collaborate with the best interest for the student in mind.

Assets and Needs: Experiences, Interests and Developmental Considerations

Liz is aware that she cannot read, she is able to sound out the sounds of CVC consonant-vowel-consonant words, but has difficulty blending the sounds together. One of the major events that have shaped Liz has been the change of placement. SDC has given her the opportunity to be in a smaller classroom and get more one-on-one intervention in the areas that she is having difficulties in. Liz shared that her mom is the most influential figure because she works hard and takes care of her. Her outside support network consists of her parents and her brother. Her brother goes to college and will pick her up after school most of the time. Liz's development is typical because she is able to carry a conversation with adults and her peers.

Action Plan

In class, some of the opportunities that I can provide is more group collaboration. We also role-play different situations so that she know what to say when someone is bothering her or when she needs help. During lessons, I make sure I call on her and remind her to use an audience voice when speaking. I also give her class roles in class to build her confidence and her social-emotional development. Liz knows some of her sight words so I sent home a ring with the first grade sight words for her to practice with her brother. I also run the sight words with the class as part of our morning routine so that students are more familiar and can develop automaticity. Giving Liz academic material for her to practice at home also ties in with the third point. Liz's brother knows English, so he will be able to help Liz with homework. I have also added him to my communication app so that he is up to date with things happening at school. For the fourth point, I know that Liz is good at helping other students. Her peers like her so I grouped her with my challenging student because they have built a good report with each other. Lastly, parent shared that her understanding of special education is minimal. She came to the United States 18 years ago but Liz is her only child in special education. She does not understand a lot of terminology and does not really understand the difference between SDC and regular education. At times, she wonders if she made the right decision. At Liz's annual, her mother was hesitant to move her because she was not sure about the types of students that would be in the class. At home, Liz enjoys playing with her dog and coloring. "She cleans her room and needs several reminders if I ask her to do more than two things at once" (mom, personal communication, November 2019). After hearing the input from the parent, I told her that this was a perfect example of Liz's disability and that it would be difficult for her remember a list of things so providing a written list would make it a lot more easier for her. I explained the process in detail using terminology that would be easier for her to comprehend. I also printed out some articles in

her native language that talk about Liz's disability. I repeated that if at any point she had any questions or concerns to contact me

Case Study 3: Scarly

Demographic Information

My third focus student is one with a significance life experience. My student Scarly is an 8-year-old Hispanic female. Her language classification is EO (English Only). This means that the primary home language is English. Her parents are divorced and there is a very specific and detailed court order in place. She is an only child on the maternal side and has a two-year-old half-sister from her father's new marriage. Scarly's triennial was in May. When students have an IEP, a process take place. First, there is an initial IEP meeting. In the initial meeting, the results of all the comprehensive evaluations that were done by the team, are reviewed and explained. If the student has a disability or disabilities that adversely affect the educational performance and the needs cannot be addressed through education in the general education classes alone, then the student qualifies for services through special education. If a child becomes eligible for special education and/or speech services, there is an annual meeting every year to review the goals that were set. Lastly, every three years, the student is re-evaluated to determine if they are still eligible for special education services. I chose this student as my second focus student because on her triennial, her primary disability changed from Other Health impaired to Intellectual Disability. Her second disability is SLI (Speech and language Impairment). However, I am having a difficult time understanding the change in disability because she is more able and has the ability and determination to learn. I want to make sure that her new determination is correct and if it is not, I want to have the data to support a change in disability. I would like to know more about her so that I can find ways to challenge her to reach her potential. Her strength is

math and because she is able to retain the information, I would like to have her mainstream into regular education for Math for at least 30 minutes three times a week. I feel that mainstreaming her will provide her the opportunity to gain more confidence and determination.

Assets and Needs: Academic Standing

In August, I administered the Houghton Mifflin Phonics Inventory to my class. This assessment swiftly ascertains if a student is in need of intensive foundational skills. After administering this assessment, it showed that Scarly knows 26/26 lower and upper case letters, 5/5 short vowels, 5/5 long vowels, 21/21 consonant sounds and some CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words.

In writing, Scarly can complete sentences with the use of sentence starters. Writing and sight words is the area that Scarly needs to grow so that she is able to move on to solving word problems and independently write simple sentences. She is a great helper and enjoys playing with her peers. Outside of school, Scarly enjoys coloring, dancing, homework, and spending time at her father's house.

She struggles and has difficulty with formative, summative, and standardized tests. The major reason for this is her inability to read. However, if everything is read aloud, she can improve her score in a summative test. Scarly is able to work independently during math if she is adding numbers within 20. She is able to work independently when using her chromebook and can easily navigate from one academic site to another. Scarly sometimes struggles when working in a group because her nose picking or tendency to talk when they are talking bothers some of the classmates. For the independent rotation, Scarly uses System 44. It is an online program where students get to practice words, sounds, and fluency. I assess her creativity and critical thinking skills during small group and whole group instruction. In small group, I have her use complete sentences when answering and during whole group, I have her show what she knows on the

viewsonic. Scarly struggles with all the academic standards. Her speech does impede with her learning because she is not able to use complete sentences to express what she wants to say.

Assets and Needs: Socio-Emotional Development and Social Identity

Inside the classroom, Scarly has many strengths. She is a good listener and always participates. Although she is below grade level in math, she is able to retain the information from previous lessons. Scarly needs improvements on some areas in and outside of school. In her psychoeducational report, it mentioned that her teacher, parent, and speech therapist shared that she has a hard time with spatial awareness in and out of school. She always wants to be touching, hugging and when she is talking to someone, she does not give him or her his or her space. This is evident in the classroom as well. She needs several reminders throughout the school day to give others their bubble space. Giving others their bubble space means that she needs to be able to have an arm's length between her and the other person. I have seen Scarly be impulsive and hug others without permission. She also tends to get too close, like 6 inches from the other persons face when speaking to others. In the beginning of the school year, she needed constant reminders about giving others an arm's length space. Mrs. Cardenas shared that she enjoys coloring and dancing. She previously had her in dancing lessons and she feels that it allowed her to mature and act appropriately towards other children. "Scarlett contributes to the family by cleaning up her room and helping me set the table for dinner. She is also a great helper with her cousins. She likes to makeup stories using picture books, and helps her kindergarten cousin with her homework" (mother, personal communication, November 2019). I now knew why she was a great helper in class and would always feel the need to help her kindergarten classmate.

Assets and Needs: Funds of Knowledge

After my first home visit, I felt a lot more comfortable conducting my second home visit. For my second focus student Scarly, I arrived at the home around 3:00 p.m. with pastries. Scarly's mother is divorced and lives with her sister and her sister's three children. Scarly's cousins were at the home when I got there. Scarly is a sweet girl and even though she was a little shy, she was very excited to see me. She came over and gave me a big hug just like every morning when she sees me. Scarly, like my other student asked me why I came to her house. I told Scarly that I was here to ask her mother some questions so that I could help her better at school and so I can get to know more about her home environment. Scarly's mother does not work. She is a part-time student and hopes to become a registered nurse in the future. Mrs. Cardenas takes care of her niece and nephews in the morning and goes to school in the evenings. I had met Mrs. Cardenas twice before. The first time was an amendment IEP meeting to do a health update, and the second time was during parent teacher conferences. We both share the same ethnic background, which made the interview a lot easier for me to conduct. As we sat at the table, Scarly grabbed a coloring book and sat with us. I thanked Mrs. Cardenas for the opportunity to get to see Scarly in a different environment and I once again reiterated that the interview would be confidential. I also told her that I was looking forward to using the information she would provide to help Scarly in the classroom. I was excited to know that this would help me build a better relationship with both the parent and Scarly.

The following are things that I observed or that the parent said that I could use to inform my pedagogy with the student and the class:

As we sat Scarly's mother shared that Scarly's father and her had separated three years ago. "The divorce was very hard for me because it happened when Scarly was being evaluated and the psychologist told me that her disability was going to change to intellectual disability", (mother,

personal communication, November 2019). They ended up with a very specific court order for visitation. For the most part, she is satisfied with the school. At one point, she asked for more speech time but the speech therapist said that because she had made progress, more speech time would not be recommended. Her expectations were similar to the expectations that I have for Scarly. She is always focused and eager to learn. The parent shared that she would like Scarly to be challenged at school and would like her to have the opportunity to reach her potential.

Assets and Needs: Experiences, Interests and Developmental Considerations

During the interview, Scarly was comfortable. She loves the one-on-one attention and she willingly answered all of my questions. When she grows up, she wants to be a teacher so that she can help students be smart. . She enjoys playing dolls with her cousins and loves to dance. She also enjoys her speech therapy sessions with her private provider. She likes to color and sing the ABC's song with her mother. Scarly enjoys school because she learns math and listens to me read books aloud. Painting is one of her favorite activities to do in class because she gets to choose the color of her paint and paint about a book that I read. At school she enjoys math and playing with her friends at recess. Reading and writing are difficult for her but she is motivated to learn. Her sister is her motivation to learn how to read because she would like to read her books. Scarly's development is atypical because she is currently performing at a late kindergarten level. She was the most unsuccessful when she was in kindergarten because she was academically and socially behind. She currently does not need any assistive technologies. After my interview with Scarly, I felt that I could offer her more opportunities for her to learn. I was also able to learn more about her strengths and weaknesses and use them to accommodate her and motivate her to excel.

Action Plan

In the class, I provide several opportunities for Scarly to improve her strengths and weaknesses. During small group, I provide sentence starters when we are writing. When I provide the sentence starters, they can fill in the blank from a list of simple consonant-vowel-consonant words. I then challenge the group to come up with their own sentence and we sound out the word together. Scarly is grouped with other students that are at her level and because they know some sight words, I have them pair up for fluency. For fluency, students are given a passage for the whole week. On Monday, we go over the boxed sight words and then we read the passage together as a group. From Tuesday to Friday, students are able to track how many words they can read in one minute. I always make sure I tell them that it is not a race and that we are reading for fluency and not for speed. I have also provided her with flashcards that she can take home and practice so that she increases her sight word knowledge. I nourish a growth mindset by motivating her when she feels she is failing and tell her that she is learning. I view her challenges as opportunities for her to learn.

Concluding Thoughts on Case Studies

The experiences throughout have given me the opportunity to explore different venues when it comes to building relationships with parents and students. Conducting home visits was a way to get to know the student outside of school and see them interact in the environment where they feel the most comfortable. In essence, the core of the teacher and the pedagogical space encompasses each other and creates a genuineness that students sense, and feel drawn to. These interviews have informed my pedagogy and have facilitated my desired classroom ecology. The student and parent interviews gave me the opportunity to form a relationship with my students and their parents while taking into account their struggles, their obstacles, their assets, and their weaknesses. Learning about my students and their culture has opened my eyes to look into their

learning with a different lens. It has helped me recognize their unique needs and has made me wiser when it comes to building a relationship and guiding parents. In the future, it will allow me to teach them strategies that they can use in and out of school with the hope of making them productive and independent individuals.

Part C: The Community

Section 1-Community Context

Demographics

The research conducted was for a district within the Los Angeles County. Currently, I work for the Pxxx Unified School District. The city of Pxxx was initially part of Mexico in the 1830's and became part of California in 1848. It was incorporated in 1888. The city was named after a Roman goddess after a horticulturist won a contest. Pxxx has grown rapidly and by the 1920's was "The Queen of the Citrus Belt and had one of the highest levels of income in the country" (www.worldpopulationreview.com). The top four most common industries are accommodation and food services, health care, educational services, and construction. According to city.com, Pxxx is a diverse city in ethnicity. The population in 2017 was 152,939 and 100% is urban. The gender demographic is made of 50.1% male and 49.9 female. The median resident age is 33.9 years old, compared to the California median of 36.5 years old. The demographics state that the city is made up of 71.1% Hispanic, 10% White, 12.3% Asian, 5.4% Black, and 0.9% are other races. In the city of Pxxx, the median household income in 2017 was \$58,837, compared to \$71,805 in California. In March 2019, the cost of living index was 135.8 compared to the United States average of 100. In addition, the poverty rate in 2017 was 20.2%. The languages that are most spoken are Spanish, Pilipino, and Chinese.

According to demographic information of the city's Population website, the language has not really shifted within the last years and has remained the same. (Pxxx Ca Population. (2020-02-17). Retrieved 2020-04-19, from <http://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/pomona-ca/>).

Housing and Resources

In the city of Pomona, the percentage of homeowners is 52.6%. Most of my students live in apartments that are near the school. The housing proximity is so close that there is no bus transportation needed for students whose homeschool is Lxxx. Lxx is a school that offers special education programs, for both mild to moderate and moderate to severe students. Students that are placed at Lxxx for a special education program, have bus transportation available to and from school. 52.3% in Pxxx are homeowners and 47.7% are renters.

Problematize the Issue

Pxxx Unified School District has faced many challenges over time. One challenge has been an increase in homelessness and a city deficit. According to an article written by the Daily Bulletin, Pxxx is facing a 10 million operating deficit and has considered an increase in taxes. Over time, an increase in living expenses for residents has contributed to the increase of homelessness in the community. According to datausa.io, the poverty level is 20.7%, which is higher than the national average of 13.1%. The largest race living in poverty are Hispanics. In addition, their language barrier accounts for the challenges they face in the community when it comes to attaining resources. Lxxx

Elementary is a Title one school. Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESEA) provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards

(<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html>). The Student Accountability Report Card reported that in the 2018-2019 school year, 10.6% of the students enrolled were homeless. A staggering 94.6% are socioeconomically disadvantaged which supports why it is considered a Title 1 school.

Section 2: Community Events and Community Members

Events

The city offers several community events. Some of these events occur every year. They provide different resources that are essential to the community and students. Lxxx Elementary also provides school events for students throughout the year to raise funds to use in organizations like, Associated Student Body (ASB), Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and fieldtrips. It does this by making school events around different holidays and celebrations. Some of the events that the school hosts to raise funds are a Halloween Haunted House Party, Glow Dance, and Father and Daughter Dance. Other events that the city provides for the community is Toys for Tots, Food Drives for needy families, and counseling referrals.

As part of my ethnography, I researched two events, one is a community event and the other is a school event. The first event I researched was the School Site Council. I chose the School Site Council because I am part of this committee and thus have a better

understanding of it. According to the CDE, “The school site council develops the School Plan for Student Achievement for programs funded through the consolidated application.” This categorical program has to be composed of a minimum of 10 individuals for an Elementary School. The individuals that make up the School Site Council at Lxxx Elementary is the Principal, three teachers, our data coach, and four parents. The parents are also active participants of the School Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and active volunteers. We review expenditures and discuss the allocation of funds towards programs that benefit students the most (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/co/ssc.asp>).

I spoke to two community members that are part of the School Site Council. One of the members is a parent and the other is colleague. One of the parents, Mrs. H, has several children who are current and past students of Lxxx Elementary. She has served different school titles throughout the years. She is an active participant in many school activities as well and has become an advocate for students. Mrs. H stated that she likes to be active as much as possible because she wants her children and other students to have the opportunity to receive a fair education and as much support as possible in areas that they are struggling in. She has built relationships and good communication with parents and staff. She takes the time to socialize and get to know many parents by being part of the PTA and attending coffee with the principal. Mrs. H brings forth their concerns and ideas to the school site meetings. She said many parents have told her that they trust her to speak up and advocate for the students at Lxxx. Since her children have been attending Lxxx Elementary for many years, I asked her to give me an insight on how she sees the community and how it has changed. She said, “I think that more parents need to be

involved with their children's education. I usually see the same parents participating in school activities and helping. They are the same ones that volunteer when their child has a field trip or when their child's class has activities and need chaperons or an extra pair of hands in a class activity" (Mrs. H, personal communication, January 2020)

The second individual that I spoke to is a Special Education Teacher. He teaches a moderate to severe kinder to third grade class. He is charismatic and goes beyond for his students by creating lessons that keep his students engaged in their learning. He has been part of the school site council for the past four years. He said, "The school site council is not very popular, no one is fighting to be part of it because it feels like you are taking an accounting class. Most of the comments I have heard between staff are that they don't like the responsibility of determining where certain funds need to be allocated." (Mr. R, personal communication, March 2020). He mentioned that he has always been a numbers person and feels he has been at the site enough years to get to know the community and the staff. Overall, he has great communication with other teachers. He collaborates with them to find out what their concerns are and what educational resources they would like for their students. School clubs, grade levels, and PTA, are some of the events that Mr. R helps with. This has allowed him to know many parents that have children in different grade levels.

The second event that I researched, The Pxxx Community Summit on Early Childhood Well Being, is a community event that supports the community. The Community Summit for Childhood Well Being provides resources for parents regarding health care, mental health, advocacy for park and support for parents and their families. Last year was their first year for this summit. The outcome was so beneficial that they

decided to provide it again. I found out about this Community Summit from a parent. She has five children, four attend Lxxx school; two of those children receive special education services. She is a stay at home mom and her husband works long hours. She stated that being a stay at home parent has been stressful and chaotic, she tried to get mental health for herself through medical but the process was tedious and required too much time, because the doctor has to make a referral and then it needs to be approved. There is a language barrier because her native language is Spanish. She is not always aware of all available resources, especially if the information for the events is sent out as an electronic flyer or is posted on the website. She attended the summit last year and this year as well because she received the information from another parent. She was able to acquire mental health and community resources for herself and one of her children at the summit; she was referred to an outside clinic where she would receive therapy for herself and her child. The following is the e-flyer that was sent out. It provides the information in both English and Spanish and briefly describes all the resources that will be available at the summit.



Services

The Pxxx Unified School District has partnerships with several businesses. One of these is United Way. United Way is a non-profit foundation that offers community social service programs. Pxxx Unified School District offers tutoring services, mental health services, after school programs and special education resources. The district also has a tutoring program with Gxxx High School. It is a walking distance, so it is easy for students to come and tutor students that are in Middle School. Middle School students have expressed their gratitude and have said that the high school students have provided the necessary support for those that are struggling. In my perspective, the Pxxx School District is missing a social skills program for students in special education. This program would benefit students because they would be able to learn strategies that they could use in their future school years and after they are out of school. Providing social skills program would allow students to interact with each other and receive strategies for them to know what to do in different scenarios out of school.

Problematize the Issue

Like many other schools, Lxxx Elementary has had its issues and parent complaints. One community event and resource that is not in place is adequate funding for foster youth. Foster youth, is one of the areas where the districts lacks proper accountability. It is also lacking programs that include parent involvement and parent engagement. Parents have complained that they feel that their voice has not been heard. Parents would like their children to have more support in academics and tutoring. Many of the parents live below the poverty rate and students do not have proper housing. Students live in hotels, in garages or with other family members.

Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

The COVID-19 Pandemic have taken a toll in the education system. It is still surreal when I think about it. Thinking back on how the District responded, I feel that we were fortunate to have great communication between district and staff. The day is clear in my mind. It was Friday March 13, 2020. My class was wrapping up for the weekend and we were in between our end of the day activities. Friday has consisted of raffles, Go Noodle, and coloring to end the week. A few days before, LA Unified had already made the decision to implement school closures. We knew that it was a matter of time before we followed as well. With 30 minutes left, we received an email and a flyer for students to take home. The flyer stated that Pomona Unified School District would close and would resume after Spring Break.

There was an on call for a mandatory staff meeting after school. We were notified that for the moment. No work was to be assigned. There was a lot of communication, information, and directives from the District the next week that followed. The Special Education Department said that we would not begin distance learning until further notice. I initiated contact with my parents and provided some resources that they could use at home. I made sure to explicitly, tell parents that students should take breaks in between and should not be on any learning resource for a longer period than 20 minutes.

Throughout the weeks, I began searching other online resources and signed for resources that had high ratings. I made sure to call parents to offer support and answer any questions that they had. As the weeks progressed, we found out that schools would close for the remainder of the year and that teachers would have to switch to virtual learning. The community leaders provided resources such as technology, internet service,

and food for families. The online community came together and made many of the learning resources free for students. The school is also providing resources for struggling families. Many of the families struggle so it was vital for the district to provide them with resources that would alleviate their struggles and make success a little more attainable. They ended up offering school lunches even during our spring break. The District provided hot spots for students and devices for virtual learning. They also provided mental health for students and their families.

The pandemic crisis has taken a toll on family and myself. To begin with, virtual learning is a new challenge that comes with many obstacles, especially being a special education teacher. I was worried for my students, especially for those whose school was their safe haven. As a first time teacher, I was navigating the classroom and that was a challenge in itself. It had taken me a few months to set my classroom ecology. It was very rewarding to see that students were finally improving their academics and enjoying our daily routine. Now, teachers were required to teach students from their home. I attended many professional development trainings and at times became more overwhelming than settling. I have had to play with and test out those resources to find the most beneficial for my students. Navigating this has been extremely challenging and I have had to change my schedule many times to go around other service providers' schedules and my own children's schedules. This was due to my internet not being able to handle multiple devices at the same.

Section 3: School Site Research

The School Site

My school site is Lxxx Elementary. It is a Kindergarten to Eight grade Elementary School Located near downtown Pxxx. The school structure is old and according to an MOU in 2018, certain parts needed to be updated. Some of the areas are painting the fence and updating the air conditioners on some classrooms. All of the classrooms are attached, like duplexes. There are also portables towards the back of the school where all middle school is housed. Lxxx was named a California Honor Roll School for 2017-2018 by the Campaign for Business and Education Excellence (CBEE). It is partner with the Cotsen Foundation for the Art of Teaching and has Cotsen Alumni who during professional Learning, collaborate with colleagues.

Personnel

In order to research my school site, I interviewed three individuals. I spoke with a colleague, my administrator, and the head secretary. The first person that I spoke to was a colleague. Mrs. T. She has been at Lexington for the past 6 years. She is a moderate/severe teacher and is passionate about teaching. She spoke well of the staff and said that they are friendly and always willing to help. I agreed because when I began teaching there they were all very welcoming. She said, "In past years, there have been staff that treated students unfairly by yelling at them and calling them out. However, these educators have been removed from the school because parents have come together and will speak out." She also mentioned that a few years back she thought about moving districts to acquire better pay, but after thinking about it chose to stay because she likes the staff and parents. Her para-educator is amazing and they work really well together. They both hold the same values and passion for teaching.

My second interview was with my administrator, she has been the Principal for the past three years. She is understanding and does not helicopter over teachers. She is fast to respond when an issue arises and trusts teacher to run their classrooms. I asked her how she would describe the dynamics of staff, she said, "We are like a family and our students are making progress because they all work really hard to make it happen. I really like that the majority of them get along and collaborate well with each other." She also expressed that not having a permanent vice principal has put more strain on her. Especially because Lexington is, home to students in the Resource Specialist Program, Special Day Class, and moderate to severe.

My last interview was with Mrs. Maria, the Principal's secretary. She is bilingual and has been working at the school for the last 10 years. She began as the attendance clerk and this past year became the head secretary. My first question was "How do you feel about working here? She answered "Lately very overwhelming! I have been trying to manage as best as I can but it is difficult when there is not another stable and permanent secretary to help. I have had temporary office clerks but it feels like at the end, it is more work for me. Once they are proficient, they leave, a new one comes, and that means more of my time taken away. The librarian and another para-educator help when the sub office clerk is vacant. I appreciate it but would like someone to be hired already!" This conversation made me think back to the school culture. One of the complaints was that there was not enough staff for the size of the school. I have walked into the office and have seen up to five parents there waiting to speak to Maria because she is the only one there. As a parent, this would be frustrating and Maria has had her share of rude parents. There is only one of her and she is doing what she can as best as she can. This issue was

brought up many times to the district and all they said is that they were in the process of hiring someone to fill the spot. This information gave an insight on the lack of resources for personnel funding from the district.

Problematize the Issue

At Lxxx, one of the top school wide norms is Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS). Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (**PBIS**) is a proactive approach to establishing the behavioral supports and social culture and needed for all students in a school to achieve social, emotional and academic success (www.rimsd.k12.ca.us). We are currently in phase two. We have blue tickets that the whole school uses for positive reinforcement. The blue tickets are given when students are following the expectations in the classroom, during school activities, lunch, and recess. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) has set up a student store so that students are able to trade them for prizes. They can also use them in a raffle for ice cream, lego time, and art time. Students love it and it serves as a great motivational tool.

Some informal school policies are in regards to technology. Our school has technology coaches that help teachers create different ways to engage students with technology. In my perspective, the point of access to educational equity is evident at Lxx Elementary. Every student at Lxxx has his or her own chromebook. This has allowed them the necessary exposure and experience with online programs such as google classroom, Peardeck, flipgrid, and the academic curriculum online. The school makes sure that they address the needs of EL students by offering teachers continues professional development. They provide support within the school and at the district

level. Students with special needs have a site specialist from the district assigned. She provides support for all teachers. Unfortunately, gifted students have been known to lack support. According to a 2018 MOU, parents of gifted students complained that the school was not providing gate students adequate programs to continue and advance their learning. Currently, there has been no improvements in programs for gifted and advanced students. A school counselor is at Lxxx and offers counseling to all students. Lxxx also refers students who have had major significant life experiences to outside agencies.

Section 4-School Mission/Vision & Demographics

Demographics

Lxxx Elementary is a diverse school. According to the SARC, student enrollment is made up Black or African American, Asian, Hispanic or Latino, white, and the rest are made up of two or more races. There was 613 students in the 2018-2019 school year. English Learners make up 26.3% of the student enrollment. The language that is most spoken is Spanish. This is evident because Hispanics make up 93.1% of the total enrollment. I was surprised to find that 94.6% of enrolled students are socioeconomically disadvantaged and that 10.6% are homeless.

Faculty at Lxxx Elementary is made up of three teachers without full credentials is 2019-2020 and in the District, there are 29 teachers without a full credential. The demographics of the teaching staff do not match the demographics of the students.

Mission/Vision

According to the School Accountability Report Card (SARC) from the 2018-2019 school year, the vision statement is the following “Lxx Elementary is a community of highly motivated and enthusiastic students, teachers, and families who take personal

responsibility for academic excellence and social justice.” (2018-2019) Their vision statement is followed by their Mission Statement which states “Lxx Elementary School community will ensure that ALL students will become proficient and be college and career ready by providing a rigorous instructional program,” (2018-2019). This data was published during the 2019-20 school year and conforms to the state law requirement for public schools. It provide information of the condition and performance of every public school in California. The mission and vision foster a positive, collaborative relationship with community members by preparing students for college through the AVID program. It also provides instructional programs that include Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. The vision is part of my classroom culture because I share the same belief. Social justice and equity is something that I strive for within my classroom. I prepare my students by providing engaging lessons in the different academic areas.

Problematize the Issue

According to the SARC, 41.5% of the students enrolled met or exceeded the CAASPP in English Language Arts. From this percentage, 32.76 were male and 49.73 were females. In the math CAASPP 47.22% of students enrolled met or exceeded the test. Students with disabilities accounted for 16.67% of the total students that tested. The results showed that students with disabilities performed better in Math

(<https://proudtobe.pusd.org/apps/pages/SARC>). On the 2018-2019 School

Accountability Report Card, it states that parents have the opportunity to be involved in their child’s learning by being part of the School Site Council, ELAC, School Advisory Committee, and the District Level Committees. However, according to the school PTA, most of the parents are not volunteering. PTA feels that part of the reason for the lack of

parent involvement is the lack of verbal information to parents. Most of the information about these committees is posted on the website and many parents do not know how to access it. The school has provided technology classes for parents to be able to navigate the internet but not many parents show up.

Section 5- Classroom Reflection

Ecology

In my vision of classroom ecology, I believe that students should come into the classroom with the confidence of knowing that our class is a space where they can ask questions. It is a space where the interactions they have with others, are nurtured and developed. My vision also lies with the belief that students in my classroom will never feel their disability is insurmountable, on the contrary, it will serve as a guide that will enable the student, the teachers, parents, and other individuals effectively address their needs. I will have the awareness that every student is unique and can create his or her own learning style in the classroom. As a resource specialist, I will be highly intuitive because I know that I will have students who endure intellectual disabilities and emotional disturbances. I aspire to be an educator that can adapt according to the diverse needs of students by learning about my students before implementing services. For example, I will make sure I know my student goals, their interests, their strengths, and their weaknesses. I will differentiate when appropriate and offer support and challenges when necessary. I will also aspire to be a teacher who will value my para-educator and treat her/him with respect. I will do this by asking them what they feel comfortable doing, by providing consistent support, collaboration, and providing orientation when needed. I will have open communication and a positive attitude with parents, teachers, and

administrators while keeping in mind that my main goal is the students' success. Being positive and accessible will help me advocate for students and get what they need.

Demographics

Ten students make up my classroom and they range from kindergarten to third grade. I have one kindergarten, two first graders, two-second graders, and five third graders. There are four girls and six boys. The language composition is English Spanish and Cambodian. All of my students have IEP's. None is identified as GATE nor have 504 plans. My students have different disabilities. Some of these are Autism, Intellectual Disability, and Speech and Language Impairments. I usually do a lesson whole class and follow with a fun activity to close the lesson. The end of my lessons involve drawing using paint, markers or crayons. This is their favorite part of the lesson and I enjoy seeing how motivated they are because they look forward to the fun activity. I make many accommodations during small group for my students. IEP goals and their unique needs, determine the accommodations needed. I group students with similar goals together and work on their goals during small group. My instructional assistant is amazing and leads small group instruction. This has given my students the opportunity to make progress.

Problematize the Issue

As far as resources, I feel very fortunate to have a variety of academic resources for my students. Although it felt overwhelming at first, this allowed me to choose what would be the most successful programs for my class based on their unique needs. Having a wide range of materials allowed for differentiation and engagement. This is the first year my classroom has a viewsonic. This has made such a difference, especially for my students

who are special needs. I have been able to create visual and engaging lessons for them. Providing this technology has allowed them to have equity between them and regular education. All my students have chromebooks. For students in lower grade SDC classes, students are able to take them home based on teacher discretion. There are two students in my classroom, which take them home. Having the chromebooks in my classroom has allowed more time for small group instruction and rotations run more smoothly. I created a google classroom and this has made virtual teaching successful. The struggle for parents and students would have been on high otherwise. Another issue was class supply was difficult to get in the beginning. I was surprised to know that special education teachers do not get a stipend for supplies. My classroom had old materials that were ripped or incomplete. I acquired the essential schools supplies but was not able to get educational materials.

Part D: Audio Recording

Conclusion

Overall, the interviews provided great experiences because being able to do home visits is a rare experience. It created genuine relationships with my students and their parents. I had the opportunity to interact at a different level, and it allowed me to get to know their weaknesses and strengths. Through this experience, I feel that I could become a better educator by providing my students a safe place within my classroom.

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