



2 Counselors and a Mic

A PODCAST COMPANION GUIDE THAT EXPLORES HOW LEARNING IS EXPANDING



About the Podcast

2 Counselors and a Mic is a podcast dedicated to exploring the ever-changing topics related to education. By listening to and learning from each other's diverse experiences, we can harness the power of our collective stories to make change in the world. Through these stories, we can expand our understanding of who we are and how we learn.

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2 Counselors and a Mic: Meet the Hosts

LISA JOHNSON DAVIS is an applied researcher in educational complexity currently embedded at the San Diego County Office of Education studying expanded learning programs. She is coordinator of the new LEXL lab, a unique community engagement initiative. Lisa's work integrates anthropology, living systems and complexity/chaos theory to deconstruct hegemonic frameworks that have previously defined human learning. As a liminal scientist, Lisa studies complex adaptive human systems by looking specifically at how adolescents navigate unknown learning spaces and isolating the building blocks that may lead to growth and emergence. Lisa holds a PhD in education from Claremont Graduate University.



GABRIELA BAEZA DELGADO has worked in education for more than 20 years. She has developed and delivered professional learning on a variety of topics, including trauma-informed approaches, support-group facilitation, restorative practices and student engagement. She is an experienced grant writer and has implemented a multitude of programs that focus on underserved populations. Gaby has also served as an adjunct instructor for Azusa Pacific University's Department of School Counseling and Psychology. She holds an MA in education/counseling and guidance with a Pupil Personnel Services Credential from Point Loma Nazarene University and a master's degree in public administration from San Diego State University.



HOW TO USE THE COMPANION GUIDE

This podcast companion guide provides a pathway to dive deeper into the individual stories that bind us together. The podcast provides a jumping-off point for understanding the lived experiences of others. The companion guide anchors your thoughts as you explore the various themes and topics that emerge for you during the podcast. The guide is meant to push your thinking on how your experiences and understandings of the world interconnect with those of others.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

At the end of each podcast, use these overarching questions to guide your reflection:

- What did I learn that I didn't know before?
- How can I dive deeper into the individual stories that bind us together?
- What is one of your wonderings?

We hope that in listening to the podcast, you step away with a deeper understanding of the individual path of educational access. Additional questions to guide your thinking around these topics include:

- How can storytelling help us explore our lives and our journeys to reveal treasures for all of us to learn from?
- How is the concept of education expanding?
- How can we reimagine learning?

EPISODE 1

The Power of Transformation: Michael Paredes

*The principal of a school for children experiencing homelessness recounts his own journey of transformation and reflects on what it means to be a transformative influence on his staff and students. **Listen to Episode 1***

OPENING SEGMENT

Lisa and Gaby consider a quote from Jillian Michaels: "Transformation isn't a future event; it's a present-day activity." Gaby recalls a student whose physical transformation mirrored her interior growth. Lisa talks about the "privileged ability" of counselors to observe students' incremental transformations.

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- What resonates with you about the idea of transformation as a present-day activity?
- How do you encourage the ongoing transformations of your students?

INTERVIEW SEGMENT

San Diego's Monarch School, where Michael Paredes serves as principal, is the largest K-12 school for children experiencing homelessness in the US. In the podcast, Michael tells the story of his evolution from a so-so student to a committed teacher and then to a principal guiding the education of some of the community's most vulnerable children. He also explains how, in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, he initiated a "raw conversation" about racial inequity with Monarch's staff.

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- Michael describes his gradual transformation to educational leader. What is one example of an ongoing transformation in your own journey as an educator?
- Monarch strives to create a safe space for its students. How does your school/program protect its most vulnerable students? What else can you do to support the learning and engagement of these students?
- Michael, Lisa and Gaby emphasize the importance of having uncomfortable conversations about race. What steps have you taken to bring racial concerns into the open at your school or program? How can you help staff and students overcome their discomfort about conversations on race?
- Michael's vision for the school of the future includes a willingness to listen to the voices of students. How are students' voices being heard at your school? What is the role of a _____ (fill in) in encouraging open communication?



MICHAEL PAREDES has been an educator for more than 21 years. Before becoming principal at San Diego's Monarch School in 2018, he worked as a special education teacher, history teacher, coach, ASB advisor, dean of students and vice principal. He holds a BA in history from Sonoma State, a master's degree in education from Ashford University and an administrative credential from Point Loma Nazarene University.

“That's why we all got into teaching ... because we want to make a difference, and it's not just for that little window when we have our kids. We hope that when they leave us, they leave us changed.”

EPISODE 2

Tapping Student Potential: Shameka Thompson

*Our potential often goes untapped until something or someone comes along to awaken it. The coordinator of a high school expanded learning program talks about her passion for making a connection with students to help them find meaning and realize their potential. **Listen to Episode 2***



SHAMEKA THOMPSON is the coordinator of the CRASH expanded learning program at High Tech High School in Chula Vista, California. She has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from San Bernardino State University.

OPENING SEGMENT

Lisa and Gaby reflect on how we look for meaning in the projects we take on, yet sometimes we grasp the real purpose only after we have shed blood, sweat and tears. Gaby describes overseeing a service-learning project that frustrated her at the time; now she realizes she would "do it again in a heartbeat" because of its lasting impact.

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- What's an example of a project you worked on where it took you time to realize the true meaning of what you were doing?
- How can educators provide opportunities for students to have experiences that will be meaningful to them in the long run?

INTERVIEW SEGMENT

Shameka Thompson's road to becoming coordinator of an expanded learning program has been convoluted and sometimes difficult. In the podcast, she talks about how her own high school experience failed to awaken her potential. She navigated college as a single mother and endured professional setbacks before finding her passion as an educator. Now Shameka takes an intentional approach to her interactions with students, helping them find meaning and purpose in their school experiences.

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- Shameka works to engage students in a way that contrasts with her own uninspiring high school years. How have shortcomings of your educational experience motivated you as an educator?
- Shameka talks about the obstacles that prevent educators and community members from interacting meaningfully with students. How can these obstacles be overcome?
- Shameka argues that expanded learning programs have an important role in making education more equitable. What are some ways these programs can even the playing field for students?
- Gaby and Lisa stress the importance of bringing a sense of family to school-based experiences. How does your school/program promote an atmosphere of love, security and safety?

"I'm very intentional. I don't have a haphazard plan. I always think if I say something (to a student) today, it may not resonate today, but it may resonate when they're 25 and they need that advice."

EPISODE 3

Being a Disruptor: Felicia Singleton

*A versatile administrator and educator talks about making it her mission to act as a disruptor for the benefit of historically underserved students. **Listen to Episode 3***

OPENING SEGMENT

The hosts examine how educators can view the chaos gripping our society as an opportunity to disrupt things in a beneficial way. Lisa notes, "Anytime you see disruption in a complex system, you're looking at the potential for growth." Gaby observes that in school situations, chaos sometimes allows students to learn in different ways. The two talk about the need to re-evaluate inherited educational frameworks that don't promote equity.

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- How can educators take advantage of current disruptions to help students maximize their potential?
- How have you changed your thinking about traditional educational systems in light of the social justice movement?

INTERVIEW SEGMENT

Felicia Singleton had her heart set on becoming an attorney, but a series of serendipitous events led her to find her passion as an educator instead. In the podcast, she describes her journey from teacher to counselor to administrator, noting, "I got to know and love children who had been thrown away. The system had pushed them out." She has made it her life's work to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline: "We need counselors at schools, we need therapists. We don't need law enforcement."

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- Do you agree with the assertion that our school system is founded on racist ideology? Explain.
- Do you see yourself as a disruptor in school settings? Explain why or why not.
- Felicia talks about the need to use restorative dialogue in school discipline. What steps could your school/program take to humanize the disciplinary process?
- Felicia envisions the school of the future as a place of cultivating and nurturing. How do you create a nurturing environment for your students?



FELICIA SINGLETON is director of the System of Supports Department in the Student Services and Programs Division of the San Diego County Office of Education. She has served as teacher, counselor, and site and district administrator spanning K-12 levels, including in alternative education. She is working to earn her doctorate in educational leadership at UC San Diego with a focus on social justice and equity.

“My ‘why’ is to be able to help families and help students to know that someone is here to disrupt that inequitable narrative for you.”

Unintentional Mentoring: Bob Daily

*Educators often serve as mentors, but mentoring does not need to happen through formal relationships to have a significant impact. Join us as a recently retired principal reflects on his impact on students. **Listen to Episode 4***



ROBERT (BOB) DAILY recently retired after a 36-year career as a teacher and administrator. He spent the last 10 years as principal of Howard Pence Elementary School in the South Bay Union School District, which serves a diverse community in southwestern San Diego County. At Pence Elementary, he oversaw a “No Excuses” approach that aimed to give every student the skills and confidence they would need to attend the college of their choice.

“The biggest joy is just watching the accomplishments of kids. There are numerous stories of students who came back, and there are kids that went into education because they valued what they did (in elementary school).”

OPENING SEGMENT

The podcast guest, Bob Daily, was Gaby's fifth- and sixth-grade teacher. She recalls how she looked up to him as a mentor even though he wasn't in an official mentorship role. Lisa and Gaby talk about how educators can take an intentional approach to serving as mentors for students in need.

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- What is an example of a time when you have served as an unintentional mentor?
- Lisa observes that schools don't effectively support the transition of children into adolescence. What are some ways schools could support this transition?

INTERVIEW SEGMENT

Growing up in a small town in Iowa with 10 siblings, Bob Daily realized early on that he enjoyed working with children. In the podcast, he notes that becoming an educator was a natural step, but moving to a school district near the Mexican border created a culture shock. As a teacher and principal, he maintained high expectations and treated students firmly but fairly. He describes hearing from past students that he was an important mentor to them even though he didn't realize it at the time.

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- Bob talks about the need to hold students accountable for their actions. How does your school or program create a sense of accountability?
- Bob imagines an education system that supports children at home from an early age. How can educators help students cope with problems they are having at home?
- Lisa notes that there are no “purposeful mentoring” courses for teachers. How can we better prepare educators to support and mentor students?
- Gaby emphasizes that teachers can be mentors even over Zoom. What are some ways to nurture a connection with students during distance learning?

EPISODE 5

Teaching During a Pandemic: Esperanza Villanueva

We hear from a second-grade teacher who is juggling family, work and other stressors as she strives to make a difference for her students in the midst of the pandemic. **Listen to Episode 5**

OPENING SEGMENT

Lisa poses a question: Do people continue to learn throughout their lives? Gaby responds that as an educator, she is grateful to have chances to learn every day. Lisa notes that people often view learning as a linear process that happens in school, but that research shows learning happens everywhere, starting in the family. The hosts discuss how the challenges of the pandemic have given us unprecedented opportunities to learn.

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- What are some ways you continue to learn in your day-to-day life?
- How have you learned and grown as an educator in response to the pandemic?

INTERVIEW SEGMENT

Esperanza Villanueva's parents had only a primary education, but from her earliest years, they impressed on her the importance of education. In the podcast, she talks about the obstacles she overcame as the first in her family to graduate from college. She also reflects on how the pandemic has distanced her from her students at Sherman Elementary School near downtown San Diego but has also allowed her to forge new bonds with them as they navigate the crisis together. "It has also taught me to be a little more patient with myself and my daughter and son," she says. "I know they are struggling, too."

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- Esperanza talks about how Gaby, her college roommate, served as an anchor in helping her through college. Who has acted as an anchor for you in your educational or professional journey?
- Esperanza has overcome technical challenges in teaching remotely. What are some technical obstacles you have faced in online learning and how did you handle them?
- What's an example of how pandemic distancing has led you to form a closer bond with someone?
- Esperanza imagines schools of the future with equity for all students. How does your school or program promote equity for its underserved students?



ESPERANZA VILLANUEVA is an elementary teacher with 20 years of experience in the San Diego Unified School District. She has worked as an English Language Arts and math teacher in Sherman Elementary's dual immersion Spanish program for the last 12 years. She is proud to work in a diverse community and strives to be a change agent for her students. Through ongoing fundraising, she provides much-needed technology and materials for her students. She has a bachelor's degree in liberal studies and a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from San Diego State University.

“Sometimes it takes something like a pandemic to push you out of your comfort zone and try new things.”

EPISODE 6

Grace in the Time of Coronavirus: Marissa Allan

An elementary principal talks about exerting leadership in the face of pandemic disruptions, in part by using her own vulnerability as a tool to support and inspire teachers. **Listen to Episode 6**



MARISSA ALLAN is principal at Vista Square Elementary School in Chula Vista, California. With more than 16 years as a classroom teacher in English and Spanish dual immersion programs, she has a strong administrative mindset with a deep understanding of the needs of teachers in the classroom. She is an expert educational coach, highly skilled in curriculum development and instruction, community engagement and budget management.

Some of the biggest lessons have been from the most challenging students. These are the kids that really change you.

OPENING SEGMENT

The hosts discuss the idea that growth can come from uncomfortable experiences. Gaby mentions that she felt like the “new kid on the block” when she was suddenly assigned to a different team at work. “That feeling of being uncomfortable pushed me to grow,” she says. Lisa agrees that we should view disruption as a “precursor” to growth. “We live in a system that we really can’t control – we can never predict what human beings are going to do,” she notes.

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- What is one example of a time when an uncomfortable experience led you to grow as an educator?
- What systems exist at your school or program to ensure staff members are supported in transitions to new assignments?

INTERVIEW SEGMENT

At a young age, Marissa Allan learned from her parents’ example about the importance of giving back to her community. In the podcast, she describes her journey from strong-minded teen to corporate trainer and then to inspiring classroom teacher. Today, as a principal, Marissa helps teachers adjust to distance learning in part by being open about her own challenges with the current disruptions. “I’ve been vulnerable with my staff,” she says. “Seeing that from their leader is huge.” By showing grace to teachers at a difficult time, she hopes to inspire them to extend the same grace to students and parents.

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- Marissa talks about how much she has learned from her most challenging students. What have you learned from interacting with challenging students?
- Marissa says that distance learning has opened the door to creativity. What are some creative responses you have seen from educators and students to pandemic challenges?
- Lisa and Gaby see Marissa as an example of a creative risk-taker. How do you incorporate creative risk-taking into your educational practice?
- Gaby and Lisa predict that the coronavirus pandemic will cause lasting changes in education. What permanent changes do you expect to see in your role as an educator?

EPISODE 7

Being The Change: Gabe Ogilvie

A former director of after-school programs reflects on his determination to provide the kind of mentorship for students that he wished for when he was growing up. **Listen to Episode 7**

OPENING SEGMENT

The hosts talk about how certain people or experiences plant seeds that stick with us and grow throughout our lives. Gaby notes that when she first worked in expanded learning programs, she had no formal training, but she tapped into skills that mentors had modeled through the years. Lisa suggests that, in the face of the pandemic, educators can call on the ideas and passions that originally motivated them to reinvent themselves as multidimensional thinkers.

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- What is an example of an idea or skill modeled by a mentor that you have relied on in your work as an educator?
- Has the pandemic led you to approach learning in a less linear, more creative way? Explain.

INTERVIEW SEGMENT

When Gabe Ogilvie left his job overseeing after-school programs to start a video company, the school he was leaving surprised him by unveiling a mural in his honor. In the podcast, Gabe reflects on how he made such a profound impression on the school's students. Growing up, he always wished for a special mentor but never found one. He even dropped out of film school because of lack of support from his professors. When he became a director of after-school programs, Gabe devoted himself to encouraging students in whatever realms captured their imagination. Now, as a videographer, he continues to work on education-related projects.

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- How does your own experience as a student influence your approach as an educator?
- Gabe believes in actively reaching out to students rather than just having an "open door." What steps do you take to initiate interaction with students?
- Gabe talks about learning from watching "genius" teachers and administrators. What are some lessons you have learned by observing skilled colleagues?
- Lisa describes High Tech High, where she and Gabe worked, as an incubator of continuous learning and growth. How would you describe the educational culture at your school or program, and how would you like to see it change?



GABE OGILVIE started his expanded learning career at South Bay Family YMCA Teen Center in San Diego overseeing after-school activities. He spent 11 years at High Tech High, a public charter school, directing before- and after-school programs for elementary and middle school. He then moved to Orange County and started a video production company (www.madeitmedia.com). Gabe has reconnected with his love for expanded learning by creating video content for the San Diego County Office of Education and the Los Angeles Unified School District.

“I thought, moving forward I will not let kids down because that’s a bummer. Once you’ve lost that deposit, that’s a withdrawal that you can’t fill.”

Crucial Connections: Claudia Hernandez

An assistant principal at a continuation high school talks about the importance of maintaining strong relationships with students and staff, especially during the pandemic. **Listen to Episode 8**



CLAUDIA HERNANDEZ, an immigrant from Bolivia, spent 13 years as a teacher before becoming assistant principal at Twin Oaks High School in San Marcos, California. She grew up in San Marcos and raised her two children there. She believes that with a supportive, engaging, collaborative and caring environment, we can provide a valuable, challenging, relevant and equitable educational experience for all students. She earned her bachelor's degree in history and master's degree in education from Cal State San Marcos.

I tell my students on a daily basis, 'I hope you learned something from me, but I learned so much from you.'

OPENING SEGMENT

The hosts share responses from high school students surveyed about their experiences with remote learning. The students describe their fears and frustrations but also talk about the insights they have gained. Lisa and Gaby note that the students' observations show how the pandemic has put the spotlight on relationships and made mental health and well-being more of a priority.

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- Which of the students' comments resonates most with you? Why?
- One student talks about recognizing that we are living through historic times. How can considering the historical context help us to cope with the current situation?

INTERVIEW SEGMENT

Claudia Hernandez grew up in an immigrant family from Bolivia that believed strongly in education and in contributing to the community. She has deep ties to San Marcos, the city in northern San Diego County where she grew up and attended college, and where she serves as assistant principal in a continuation high school. In the podcast, Claudia talks about how she has devoted herself to forming genuine relationships with her students and to providing them with the support they need to succeed. During the pandemic, she strives to maintain a sense of connectedness among isolated students and staff.

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- Claudia emphasizes how much she has learned from her relationships with students. What is the most important lesson you have learned from your students?
- Claudia says the pandemic has brought existing inequalities to the forefront. What are some examples of how the current situation has made inequalities among students more stark?
- The hosts note that the well-being of school staff is sometimes an afterthought. What does your school or program do to help teachers and other staff members cope during the pandemic crisis?
- Gaby talks about how the pandemic has caused people to pay more attention to self-care. What steps have you taken to promote your own wellness?

EPISODE 9

Mentoring from the Heart: Linda and Robert Guerrero

Husband-and-wife educators talk about serving as effective mentors to their students and responding to an expanded need for mentoring during the pandemic crisis. [Listen to Episode 9](#)

OPENING SEGMENT

The hosts begin by reflecting on a quote from Robert Frost: "I am not a teacher, but an awakener." They discuss the idea that professional educators tend to focus on credentials and titles like teacher, counselor or principal. Yet, they note, all educators are awakeners, striving to help students realize their potential.

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- Do you see yourself as an "awakener" in your role as an educator? Why or why not?
- Do you think we are living in an era of awakening? Explain.

INTERVIEW SEGMENT

Linda Guerrero was a high school assistant principal and Robert Guerrero was a coach when they met at a football game. They soon realized that they shared a passion for mentoring their students. In the podcast, they talk about what it takes to get students to open up and how the two of them support each other in this endeavor. They also describe how they have stepped into a role of mentoring and counseling adult educators as well as students in the face of pandemic challenges.

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- Linda talks about how important it was to her to feel "seen" by some of her teachers when she was growing up. How do you let students know that you truly "see" them?
- Linda and Robert make a point of approaching students from a position of humility and vulnerability. Do you agree that educators should cultivate these qualities? Why or why not?
- The hosts ask how Linda and Robert recharge their batteries so they can keep helping others. What do you do to take care of yourself so you have the energy to help students and colleagues?
- Lisa notes that support from adults is essential for first-generation students to succeed. What does your school or program do to encourage first-generation students?



LINDA GUERRERO has 24 years of experience in K-12 education as a teacher, site administrator and district leader in San Diego's North County region. She has been a strong advocate for the importance of mentorship, working to help students, staff and parents reach their full potential. She holds a doctorate in education from San Diego State University. **ROBERT GUERRERO** has mentored North County youth for 20 years. His involvement with youth and high school sports, community nonprofits and mentoring groups has given him the experience and passion to help people reach their potential. The Guerreros work together through Beautiful Warrior Services, which provides community and school-based mentoring and training.

“Teachers need students and students need teachers. It's a relationship that needs respect, humility and trust.”

Remember Your Epiphany: Morgan Appel

An educational expert and leader at UC San Diego Extension acknowledges the challenges posed by the pandemic but also sees an opportunity to remake education in a more flexible, individualized form. **Listen to Episode 10**



MORGAN APPEL is assistant dean for Education and Community Outreach (ECO) at UC San Diego Extension, overseeing a diverse array of programming for pre-kindergarten to post-retirement. He previously served as director of Education Programs at UC Irvine's Division of Continuing Education. Professional specialties include gifted and talented education; the neuroscience of teaching and learning; arts integration; and organizational behavior in educational institutions.

“My advisement ... to anybody in this profession is to reconnect with your love of teaching. Remember your epiphany. Go back to the time when you said, ‘Yes, this is what I’m doing.’”

OPENING SEGMENT

Gaby and Lisa reflect on what they have learned during the first season of their podcast, which wraps up with this 10th episode. Lisa says producing the podcast is an example of approaching a fork in the road creatively so you can move forward in a different way. The hosts agree that many educators are feeling fear and uncertainty, but that creative leaders are thinking things through and finding ways to move forward.

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- In what way has the pandemic created a fork in the road for educators?
- Gaby says she decided to join the podcast project based on her trust for Lisa. What’s an example of a time you took a chance based on your trust for a colleague?

INTERVIEW SEGMENT

Growing up as the son of two university instructors, Morgan Appel made up his mind to strike out in a different direction by studying business. But then came an epiphany. Seeing the engagement of students in a statistics class he was teaching, he realized he belonged in education. In the podcast, Morgan discusses the importance of addressing the social and emotional needs of educational communities during the pandemic. Yet he also sees a silver lining in the crisis: “Teachers now have the unique opportunity to reconnect with their creative, intuitive pedagogical artistry.”

Questions to inspire dialogue:

- Recent events have “ripped the bandage off” problems that already existed, Morgan says. What’s an example of a long-term challenge in education that has been exacerbated by the pandemic?
- Morgan talks about the importance of “cultural competency.” What steps do you take to understand the educational communities you deal with?
- Are students given “permission to fail” in your school or program? Explain.
- Do you see teachers as artists? Why or why not?



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