



EDITION 4: PODCAST WITH A MENTOR

WHAT DOES LEARNING LOOK LIKE, SOUND LIKE & FEEL LIKE?

Transcript

Ben Pisani & Laura Rawlins

Ben:	00:12	Hi, welcome to the graduate teacher learning series podcast channel. I'm Ben and I will be hosting this session. In this podcast series we will be talking to graduate teachers, mentors and experts about a variety of different topics that relate to each editions framing question. We will also get the graduates and mentors to share some reflections on their practices that may assist you in yours. In each podcast, the graduates and mentors will be asked the same question so you can hear the different perspectives on each topic. Okay, so sit back and relax and let's get into this edition of the graduate teacher learning series podcast, talking to a mentor.
Ben:	01:00	Hi, thanks for being part of this podcast. Can you please introduce yourself and tell us a little about where you are working in some of your experiences?
Laura:	01:08	My name is Laura Rawlins and I work at Dorset Primary School. I'm a grade five six teacher who works four days a week and I also coordinate the level
Ben:	01:24	In this first section of the podcast our discussion will focus on the framing questions for this edition.
Ben:	01:30	What does learning look like in your classroom?
Laura:	01:33	In my classroom learning looks like organized chaos. I have students working independently at their desks. I have students in groups on the floor. I have students working one on one with me. I have my anchor charts up. I've got writing on, on the

whiteboards to support their steps. I have staff in my room. I have three different lovely ladies who come into my room through different periods of the week. They support one of my visually impaired students. They also support, some other of my students that need just need a bit of direction and guidance as well so there's never ever just one adult in the room. And because I share a classroom with currently our AP, he also likes to come in and touch base at random points. I will say team teach with, my graduate next door, so the doors are open. So sometimes there's two classes in there at the same time with ES staff, with maybe up to three teachers. So, it's never really, it's never really boring in our classroom. We use our laptops as much as we can. We have an electronic whiteboard where I will put, our instruction in our lesson up on the white board to support those students who need something visual as well as audio.

Ben:

[03:06](#)

What does learning sound like in your classroom?

Laura:

[03:06](#)

It never sounds the same on any day. There are moments where my students are working independently and therefore, they're working quietly or they're supportive whispers to the person next to, next to them. There are other times when it is loud and I have to remind them to be quiet, but the learning's happening and there are questions being shot across the room and then there are answers being shot across the room. I love it when a student questions my knowledge, asks me if I'm sure something's right cause it means that we have a deeper discussion about something. I love when they connect with what they're learning and they start throwing out random things and from someone looking in, they might think, how's this got to do anything with the lesson? But to them it does. So exploring that.

Sometimes we have music in the background. I do like to try and educate their musical choices. The Beatles didn't go down well Yeah, so we have some music in the background and that's more of a chill out time. So, it's if it's been a busy day or a hot day or a busy week kind of play it in the background while they're working. There's always reading happening. Sometimes it might be independent, sometimes it might be out loud. We're reading class novels, so throughout our class novels, questions are being, I'm constantly being interrupted with questions or connections or definitions. So yeah, it's never the same when

I'm writing on the board because of my visually impaired student. I am also reading out loud what I'm writing, so it's almost like a think aloud, but with the text being written on the whiteboard as we go. So, I read it aloud for the visually impaired student and I write it for everybody else.

Ben: [05:00](#) What does living feel like in your classroom?

Laura: [05:04](#) Well, the students have to feel in the classroom. They have to feel secure; they have to feel safe, they have to feel respected. And, I think once there, those things are implemented into your classroom, then all the other things can kind of, all the other magic can happen. So, I think because my students feel respected that they feel comfortable to learn, they feel comfortable to challenge themselves. And because of that, that relationship that we have there's a bit of banter in our classroom. We like to make fun of each other, and you know, they always like to hear stories about myself and then poke fun about the stories and vice versa. You know, we ask them how they're going in footy and things like that. So, there's a bit of banter and we talk about, in our classroom we kind of have, we talk about house rules. So, we talk about how when you go to a friends, every friend has different rules with their parents. Like, you know, one friend might be allowed to put their feet on the couch and other friend might not be allowed at their house. And we try, I try and remind the students that that's what it's like when you go from classroom to classroom, that you have to respect their house rules so to speak. So, if there's no banter in another classroom, it doesn't mean that there isn't a relationship there between teacher and students it just means that that's the house rules. Or if there's no music in one room in one classroom, it doesn't mean that there's no respect. It just means that's their house rules. So, we establish our house rules, our grade rules early on and that makes for a coherent classroom.

You could say that we were connected, we feel connected with each other and that comes from these house rules and the respect that we have for each other. And sometimes, cause I'm only in there four times a day and the, the four times a week, sorry. And then the extra time, the other teacher comes in, they realize the students have to adapt because they realize that the house rules again then change. It's like when you know, mum's home and dad's home, the house rules change. It's the same

when if I'm in compared to the other person I job share with the house rules change and they have to adapt to that. And I think, that helps them in life as well because no one's the same. And when they go to a specialist class, their house rules are different again. So, you know, the house rules for P.E. are different for the house rules for science so it teaches them to adapt and I think that's important.

Ben: [07:21](#) What did your team do to set up classroom structures and procedures?

Laura: [07:33](#) Obviously we planned a lot together, which is what you do to plan, you're getting to know you or whatever kind of unit you want to call it. We started something last year, decided to keep going where we, we kind of create like a mantra in the classroom. So last year it was 'individually unique together, a master piece' and we created hand prints and we did like in my room there was a Dandy Lion and the hand prints made up the Dandy Lion in another class, the hand prints made up a Peacock and a Tree in another grade. But that mantra kind of stuck. The kids really grew to it, if that makes sense. So this you, we created a mantra with the students of we are, so we just gave them that statement 'we are' and they had to fill in the blanks and we kind of created like a graphic piece with captions and even though, yes, it is a getting to know you activity and it's an art and craft kind of activity, the students really get into it because it becomes their own.

So as a team we kind of discussed kind of the, the captions that our students came up with and we compared, cause it kind of gives you an insight on what that grade, that cohort of kids in that classroom is going to be like. We talked to each other as a team. We're constantly talking about what's happening in the room. You know, any new learnings, sometimes lessons you a lesson and then all of a sudden it goes left of center because someone's spoken up and they've given them a great idea and you've run with it. So, then we share that, that success story or even sometimes we share when the lesson just doesn't go right, it's just gone totally wrong. And we share why and if we could change it and then we, if we've got time, we take that or maybe if someone hasn't taught that lesson yet, somebody will tweak it a little bit with that knowledge of how other people's lessons go. So, communication's really, really important. The same with the students, again, communication is really, really important.

So, we spend that first term, you know, drumming in the, procedures and practices in the classroom, like diaries and, and things like that. We try to be organized together. I know that I always forget things. So, the students are always reminding me. We try and make the timetable really visual. So, we've got a printer timetable out on the window so parents can see as well as children as their packing up their school bags and arriving to school can see what's happening. They have a small printed timetable in their diary just for those students who really need to know what they're doing for each day. So, it kind of gives them a bit of structure.

Ben:	10:15	What could you do to improve the look, sound, and feel of learning in your classroom?
Laura:	10:20	To be honest, I couldn't tell you because every day is a new learning experience and every day I take something away where I think, Gosh, should have done it differently. Or maybe next time I could organize it this way, especially after maybe conversations with my colleagues or even conversations with the children. You know, they say, why aren't, you know, we might do it this way, but how about if we do it that way? So, I don't really know what I could do to improve it, I know that my outcome is for them to be independent and self-directed. So whatever I do in my classroom is to make sure that they're, they're able to do that or able to be that, able to be independent, organize themselves, able to be a self-directed by picking which differentiation level they want to work at, and challenging themselves and also being able to feel comfortable to ask questions. So, I think as long as I'm promoting those aspects in my classroom, I'm always up for a change if it's going to benefit them.
Ben:	11:33	In the second part of this podcast, our guests will share general reflections on their teaching practice to give you some tips that might help you in your first few years of teaching.
Ben:	11:41	What advice do you have for graduate teachers?
Laura:	11:46	I remember being told at Uni not to smile till Easter. That was the phrase, don't smile in your classroom until Easter and I'll admit that being fresh out of Uni I thought yet I can't smile. I've gotta be Stern, but that's not who I am. And I think it's okay to smile because it shows them, shows your class that you're open

and you're happy to be there. So, my advice would be ignore that, ignore that totally. But I think it is important, at the same time, I understand why our Uni lecturer had said that is because they want you to establish those classroom norms and classroom habits, for healthy learning. And I think that's probably the most important thing. I think establishing your classroom routines and norms are probably the most important. So, I don't want to say rules because I don't, I think norms are better, like community norms. We've got one main one in our room, which is treat everyone how you want to be treated and that kind of sums up everything else. So, I think, yeah, my advice would be ignore the smiling thing, smile as much as you want and, work on your classroom routine and habits early.

Ben: [13:06](#) What are your time management tips?

Laura: [13:08](#) I'm not the best with time management to be honest. Been in the teaching game for 11 years and I still haven't quite grasped it. I do have a timetable on the board, like with you know, admin at nine o'clock and recess at 11, lunch and then breaking down the day as much as it is for them, so they know what's coming next. It's also for me. So, when I'm at the back of the room working with someone in my eyes glance forward and I see that, then I'm like, oh yeah, that's what we're moving to next. Yeah, so I think my tip would be just to be aware of the time, even set yourself a timer. I've done that before in the classroom where a bit of Bruno Mars goes off when the time has done and the kids all have a giggle and then they're like, oh, you're, you've run over time again. So, we all have a laugh at that. But just being aware of the time

Ben: [14:06](#) In a new career, it can sometimes be tricky to ask for help. In your opinion, who should graduates turn to?

Laura: [14:12](#) I think importantly is not to be afraid to ask for help. It's okay to ask for help. I think if you start worrying that you're going to be judged because you put your hand up, if you don't know how to do something, you'll miss an opportunity to learn from someone else. So, you can ask anyone for help. You don't have to just ask your mentor. You can ask the person next door to you. You can ask your leader. You can ask the leader from another, like another level because I think every teacher in a school has something to bring and something to teach you. So,

		the more opportunities that arise for you to ask for help and to learn off someone else, the better teacher, I think you'll be.
Ben:	14:59	Give us your words of wisdom.
Laura:	15:01	Give yourself to your class. I thought about this one. And I think children, your students need to know who you are. And if you're not prepared to give yourself, something about yourself, whether it's what you did on the weekend, or if it's the movie that made you cry, the first, like the first movie you watched that made you cry or, or something that goes, something went wrong in your personal life. I think if you don't give yourself to them, your students won't open up to you. I think, being a teacher and a student is a two-way street, so you need to give yourself to them for them to give themselves to you.
Ben:	15:50	And that's it for the graduate teacher learning series podcast. Thank you to our guests for sharing their experiences. And thank you for listening. We'll see you next time. Bye for now.