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Marlene Chetek's Educational Comparison: Then and Now

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Lisa Saman: where I wanna go, what I wanna do yet, haha

Marlene Chetek: Well, now, you're still very very young, so take your time.

LS: That's what mom says too, haha.

MC: Yeah, good.

LS: Oh, she sends her best regards to both you and Mr. Chetek.

MC: Oh, you do the same too. I'll have to Facebook her one of these days.

LS: She was really excited that you would—were willing to help me out.

MC: Well, like I don't know if I'm answering anything the way you want it answered, but—oh well.

LS: It's so open. That's what I really like about this project. It's just a really open—question, answer, and then I'm going to have to write a paper about it comparing it to like the American history and how that changed over time and how you saw changes over time. So, it'll be interesting.

MC: Wow. Probably very similar, but uh— sounds like a big project.

LS: It is, it's worth 30% of our grade! Haha

MC: WOW. So are you interviewing others or just me?

LS: It's just you.

MC: Oh my gosh! Pressure!

LS: No, it's fine. She [Dr. Newstreeet] said that whatever you get out of it, you get out of it. So, it's not—there's no right or wrong.

MC: Right.

LS: So, whatever you say will be beneficial to me.

MC: Well that's all good—good. So how do we do this? (1:18)

LS: Well I need to ask you for your oral permission for me to conduct this interview and then transcribe it and then potentially it'll be put in our University of Dallas Oral History Repository. So it will be kept forever and ever.

MC: Oh my gosh.

LS: So, I need to get your oral permission to have that on there.

MC: Definitely. (1:39)

LS: Awesome. And then, yeah, we can get started. And just, you know, thinking back to how you experienced your education yourself, do you think that there were certain things that were more or negative—like more positive or negative recollections that you have of those experiences?

MC: Uhu-- well, I got some notes here so I'm looking down often, if you don't mind. Okay haha. So, just want you to keep in mind that I was educated many years ago and graduated from high school in 1967. So my experiences are ancient haha. Um, all my experiences that I recall were very very positive. I attended a small
school in rural Alberta, which is the Prairies, and uh- I loved school. I always remember having my homework done, planning what I’d wear the next day, I really wanted to do well and I was quite shy, I was always wanting to uh—to please. So, um- every day I rode a school bus for about an hour to school and on the bus I would remember doing a lot of reading, socializing with friends on the bus, um—I was so keen on school I would always bug my older brother to hurry up so we wouldn’t miss the bus every morning. Um- we had close neighbors, we lived on a farm so friends at school were very very important. Uh- I can recall something about each grade, each teacher, uh- all in a very positive way. So, just little snippets. So, living in that small farming community, uh- we, as families, knew all the teachers in the community, we knew their families, uh- we socialized—I socialized with uh— my friends often had their parents for teachers, so everyone knew everything about everybody…

LS: Uhu…

MC: …it seemed. Uh- being positive about school meant that I was always really proud to tell my parents how well I was achieving. This is when I was quite young and it- uh was really important to have a good report card, very high priority. I remember—don’t remember getting any special bought rewards, but it was verbal approval and just making my parents feel proud. So I guess these were memorable because they were happy and exciting times while I was growing up and developing so, I guess that’s why I’m remembering them. Um, getting back to ways of teaching, uh- I remember the teachers were very organized, um- they seemed strict in those days, but they were very caring. Um- they taught lecture style, I guess, mostly. I copied a lot of notes from the chalkboard uh- especially in late elementary and junior high. Uh- elementary school was structured with readers, fill in the blank, work books, uh- high priority on neatness and uh- really not remembering too much in uh- you know, planning individual— or doing individual kind of learning assignment. It was all very structured I would say.

LS: Teaching the class as a whole.

MC: What’s that?

LS: Teaching the class as a whole compared to differentiating. (5:25)

MC: Exactly. So, um- because it was a small school, I was in a split grade for grades 3/4 and then 5/6 so, I had the same teachers for those years. So, I guess they got to know the students really well, we got to know the teacher very well, it all worked out really well in that way too. Uh- so it was not any hands-on that I can remember until probably going into junior high and high school as science classes were more hands-on then.

LS: Right.

MC: So, that’s basically that first question!

LS: Do you remember how the like desks were structured when you were in elementary school? Because I know now-a-days they really emphasize on grouping, so was that any different back then? (6:11)

MC: Oh, yes. It was—what I remember is rows, rows of desks. Um- yeah. Don’t remember being switched around, can’t remember that at all. But it was all in rows and yeah—nothing as far as you working with partners, it was, what I remember is individual— doing your own work, and finishing it on time, completing homework if there was any. Getting a little star on my printing page was very special, haha.

LS: The stickers never go away, haha.

MC: Exactly, yeah, yeah. Still very rewarding.

LS: And that was the same for high school as well, the rows? Those never changed?
MC: Right, right.

LS: And thinking back about high school and the classes you took, do you think the curriculum was any different for boys and girls? Did you go to an all girls school or a mixed school? (7:14)

MC: So, that’s a good question. The high school, because we were in a small town, so the high school was the same building as what I went to elementary and junior high school. And in high school there were two streams, I don’t know if that’s common—the way they separate them now. There’s the matriculation program and the general program, does that sound familiar at all? Matriculation?

LS: No, that does not, but I’m thinking it’s like a higher—like an IB kind of, AP program.

MC: Well it was—it was, you took matriculation if you were planning to go to university.

LS: Okay.

MC: So, you had to take specified classes which were: English, French, math, social studies, and then two sciences. So the school that I went to there were only about thirty students in my grade- 10/11/12. So, we graduated with a very small class, and—so we were very close-knit. It was boys and girls, so maybe there were about twenty in the matriculation program and the other program was called the general program, so those students would be taking the business courses more so, the -you know, accounting, and so on—filing. So I was in the matriculation program. Um- the entrance to go to universities in those days was you had to have a minimum mark of sixty-five percent overall. So, it’s more strict now, of course.

LS: Oh, yeah.

MC: Also, when I went to high school, being a small school, there weren’t many options to fill in the timetable so I do remember there was home economics for the girls, industrial ed for the boys. Most boys in the mat— matriculation program took the, I guess they were smarter than us girls, the math 31, the physics, which I didn’t take. Otherwise the course were mixed, there weren’t many options at all.

LS: Right, and was there any sort of track—so there was the matriculation and then the general. Was there any track that was more focused on the vocational route? (9:33)

MC: Um- I guess it would have been the general program. Um- do you mean... what do you mean by the vocational?

LS: Vocation as in people that were—they knew they were going to be set out to do a certain job like being a mechanic or being a hairdresser or an archer—you know like a shoe smith— a very specific kind of job.

MC: Not in high school. They would probably take the general program but then after high school, they would, you know, the post-secondary would be where they would focus on—if it was a trade, they would go to the technical college, if it was hairdressing, it was a hairdressing school, and so on. So they would probably be taking the general program more so than the matriculation.
Alright, perfect, awesome. I know there are a lot of people that—even you, that I look up to thinking back that influenced me to be a teacher now. So, is there anyone in particular that you remember really influencing you, you said you really enjoyed elementary school so I can imagine there are some of them that stick out that influenced you to be a teacher. (10:48)

MC: Well, you know, to be honest, after high school I wasn’t really sure what I wanted to do.

LS: Really?

MC: At first, I thought I would like to go into dental hygiene. But, yeah- I don’t know why, haha. But my marks weren’t high enough for that faculty so um- during those years most of the girls, if they were going to university, they would either go into education or nursing.

LS: Uhu…

MC: Not like today where you have all this—these variant job opportunities. Uh- my older brother was already in university, he was in engineering and so I thought ‘Well, you know, this is a good start for a family’. So, not knowing what I wanted to do, I went into the Arts—the Bachelor Of Arts Degree program first. So I did that for three years and during university days, quite a few of my school friends from high school were in education and new friends I met at university were in education, Mr. Chetek was in education a year ahead of me and I met him, haha. So I think that— at that time as a young adult was when I really thought ‘Well, this is uh—where I—what career or what faculty I’d like to go into’. So, I applied for the education faculty and because I already had a Bachelor Of Arts Degree, I only needed to go into education for one year.

LS: That’s nice, haha.

MC: Yes, it was nice. So the majority or many months during that year was in student teaching was where, to me, that’s where I learned how to be a teacher. So, I guess, yeah, because I was in the outer degree program and into education then, the biggest influence I would say would have been my friends and the contacts. So, it was— a lot of it by- by chance but possibly because I did experience great school years when I was younger- that was subconsciously something that I thought would be good.

LS: Would you mind stating what year you went to university? (13:08)


LS: So you did the three years bachelors and then the one year um- additional for education?

MC: After three program—yeah, I did stay out a year after grade 12.

LS: Okay.

MC: And was deciding what to do and just worked at odd jobs.

LS: Right.

MC: And so, yeah, I took my time, I guess.
LS: Awesome. You said you wanted to go into dental school, was that seen as like “a man’s job” back then because you said that nursing and education were the “usual” places—like the usual courses that girls took. So was that seen as like a—a negative thing for you to go into dental school? (13:55)

MC: Uh- it really was—it was dental hygiene which was females that would be doing more of the teeth cleaning and uh- so, I don’t know, I guess because I had a friend who was a dental assistant, I thought maybe university with dental hygiene would be interesting and I don’t know why! But, yeah, it was—it was females who were dental hygienists.

LS: Okay. So did it...

MC: Um—of course, I didn’t have—my grades weren’t high enough, they had higher uh- grade—or higher um— course—um- grades that you needed to—to apply and get accepted.

LS: Right, so that still hasn’t changed because medical school seems so hard to get into. Your grades have to be extremely high to get into those medical programs.

MC: Absolutely. Uhu—uhu.

LS: I’m beginning to see these correlations between how it’s basically not changed over the years.

MC: Oh, very much so. In many ways. Absolutely, yeah.

LS: Alright. Well, the requirements now-a-days to become a teacher seem very extreme, all the testings we have to go through, the certifications, the additional certifications for ESL and gifted and talented and just the control that we are under and we have to prove all our diplomas. Was that the same back then, how you had to prove that you were a teacher with some kind of certification? (15:22)

MC: Uh- no. I—I think it was—it was a lot easier. Um- the requirements now are definitely more strict. Um- now one needs uh- four years of uh-to get a bachelor of education, four years in university, I believe that’s—that’s still the case.

LS: Uhu.

MC: Or with an existing degree, it’s two more years in—in the faculty of education. So that’s changed. Um- teachers here can get a permanent teaching certificate when they’re in their second year of teaching. Um- there’s permanent continuous school contracts aren’t so easy to attain. Um- new teachers now have a probationary contract for several years, uh- it’s not very secure. There’s—I think there’s a lot of competition. A new hire, for instance, maybe that is replacing someone on a leave, maternity leave or some sort of leave, could be in that position for way over a year, but then uh- they, you know, aren’t promised a continuous job after that returning teacher returns.

LS: Right.

MC: So it think it’s quite stressful as far as security. When I started teaching, uh- we had to take certain jobs in certain communities. But, it seemed like after your, for sure, second year, you were guaranteed of a permanent contract. Which—which was—and then you were really secure in your job and if you wanted to change like, for instance, your saying to go into maybe uh- special ed.
MC: or enrichment, quite often we were mentored in the school or it—you—it would just be by chance that you would be able to do some sort of specialized teaching. Um- so I think...

LS: So it wasn’t that...

MC: Hmm...

LS: additional schooling that you had to follow to then specify in those subjects? (17:32)

MC: Yeah, now it’s—you know, people are—are, I feel, more trained directly in—the – in what they want to do. In those days too, that was true, because if you were uh if you specialized in music or whatever, you would definitely be hired because you—they would hire the music teacher or there were special ed. uh degrees I guess at that time, but you could also fall into it with your experience in the school as a regular generalist so, yes.

LS: Hmm. It was more flexible, it seems.

MC: Yeah, exactly. I know teachers are, as probably now-a-days, teachers are observed by the administration regularly. Um- when I taught, I taught in a Catholic school and in those days, you didn’t have to be Catholic to be hired in a Catholic school, I was, but there were many teachers who because of their, you know, teaching qualifications, they were hired. Now-a-days, you have to be Catholic, is my understanding.

LS: Right.

MC: The salaries and contract terms, here, are negotiated by uh teacher negotiating committees for each school for each school division that one works for, so uh it’s not province wide where you would have it state wide and the states where all the teachers are paid the side—the same. Here, you’re paid according to what school division has negotiated with their teachers so it’s different for different areas in the same province. Um- what else can I say? Teachers receive, this is the same as years ago, teachers now receive an experience salary increment for every year they teach until they teach ten years and then it’s kind of at their maximum.

LS: Uhu.

MC: Know if that—how that compares. Uh- also here we have the public and the catholic schools that are funded equally by the—by the province.

LS: Oh, interesting.

MC: So people have their choice without paying any extra fess of which schools they want to go to.

LS: That’s nice, they give them that choice of actually—where to send their kids to without spending millions of dollars in just the elementary school level. (20:00)

MC: Yeah, uh, one thing I may add here now, which is—uh- before, when I was teaching, uh- you would have to kind of go to your community school, you’d be bused if you were in the city or, you know, within
walking distance. But now there are so many parents driving their children to school because they can
do school shopping.

LS: Right.

MC: So they’re choosing more that—that fit their- what they think would be best for their child. We
have uh- schools who—that are, you know, the morning may be all academics and the afternoon, in
elementary school, would be a sports program. Another school in the same city might be fine arts where
they would have the, you know, drama, music, and so on- specializing in that. So, parents have a lot of
options. Some schools are very noted for their special ed. programs, early intervention programs. So, so
there’s a lot of choices for parents.

LS: They can pick and choose. Talking about mobility, do you think that the whole, contracts not being
extended to a permanent contract could also be due to our mobility now-a-days to move around and
that people don’t necessarily want to stay in the same place? (21:22)

MC: Oh, that’s a good point, that could be— definitely one factor. Uh- on the other hand, if there’s, you
know, a young teacher what—really wants to start out a career. I know, for example, one young gal
who—who is teaching in one town, but she moved away and then she did get a replacement job in
another city and uh- she wanted to stay and get a full time contract. But, because there wasn’t enough
positions available, she kept getting a different grade, a different position- so she had varied—you
know, she was an elementary teacher. It was a smaller town. She ended up teaching high school and so
every year was like being a first year teacher again, you know. So, now, I’ve just been talking to her, she
has applied of overseas teaching and she’s going to Columbia, but she’s had like ten years of no
permanent contract. So it’s stressful!

LS: Yeah, I can see how that’s very stressful.

MC: Yeah, for sure!

LS: When you got your permanent contract, was it also like a specific grade or just the school that was
permanent? (22:42)

MC: It was the school—the school division like I could have been transferred to another school or asked
to go to another school, but it was—it was for the school division.

LS: Okay, so it was in the same area.

MC: So that was—that was— gave us a lot of security.

LS: That alone, yeah, you have different schools within that area, so even if one school were to have to
get rid of a teacher, you would have other options to go to.

MC: Exactly. And most of us, well we all had student loans to pay off so we really wanted a job.

LS: Yup, I feel you.

MC: Oh, boy, I know! Haha
LS: So going all the way back um— through your career, thinking about your first job that you had going into that permanent contract, could you just walk me through all the way from there to your retirement and what you’re doing now.

MC: I sure can! Okay, so—so, in 1972 was when I graduated with a teaching uh—degree I guess. That was the year I married Mr. Chetek and he had graduated a year ahead of me, so he did get a job a year before I graduated in a small community which was an air force town in Alberta, where we’re living now. So, uh—because he was already there, I think the principle was happy to keep Mr. Chetek, so they offered me a job. So I taught elementary school there after we got married. It was about a four hour drive from the main city, Edmonton, where a lot of our family lived. So after the first year, we decided—we thought rather than driving every weekend to go see our family, relatives, and friends, we would apply for jobs that would be closer. And in those days, I guess, it was kind of booming with, you know, new schools and so on—we applied to several places—several schools near the city. And we were both very lucky to get positions in a small city, which is a suburb just out of the capital city, it’s uh-called Saint Albert. So, Mr. Chetek was teaching junior high school, he later got—was in two high school and then I was teaching elementary in that school. So from, I guess, 1973 to 2001, I was teaching in that Catholic elementary school, mostly teaching grade two and uh—then when we had our children. I went on maternity leave and when they went—were, I guess they were quite young, and I returned to teach, but I asked for half time teaching.

LS: Uhu.

MC: And fortunately, I had a half time teaching position until our children went to school. Along with that time I was able to keep my permanent full time contract, so it was my choice whether I wanted to come back full time.

LS: Wow, that’s nice.

MC: It was in contract that I was—would still have that. So, I don’t think they do that anymore is—, you know, half time, full time, full time, half time. So, it was perfect. So, when I did work part time, I wasn’t in a regular classroom because I was half days, so I taught some remedial reading—resource room we called it.

LS: Uhu.

MC: So, little bit of special ed. Um—so I did that until 1998 to 2001, I went back to full time teaching and during that—those years, the school I was at, they—uh—tried a new approach to teaching called combined classrooms.

LS: Okay. (26:48)

MC: Uh—where you would have—I had a combined grade 1/2 classroom, so I had followed the grade ones, kept them till—when they went into grade 2, so I had that grade for two years.

LS: Okay.

MC: And so I did that for—till 2001.

LS: Hmm.
MC: It was really interesting. It was very difficult. Because you, I had—I remember having a class of twenty-eight. I had fourteen grade ones and fourteen grade twos and it was just very very busy. You know, teaching the two grades at one time. But—survived.

LS: Would they be lower level—or higher level first graders and lower level second graders so they kind of match up? Or completely...

MC: You know, because the entire school went on that type of uh- approach, every teacher had a combined classroom. So, it was all heterogeneous. There were—at the time there were, two grade 1/2 classrooms, or maybe there was three. So it was all heterogeneous and so, we, as teachers, we really worked together to do planning and sharing of our materials and so on. So, no, you just had a mixture of who you got. I’m sure they probably did plan, you know, to separate kids with behaviors, but as far as abilities- it was a mix, ha.

LS: Wow, that sounds very hard.

MC: So that was interesting. So then in 2001, we um- we learned about overseas and international teaching. So we went to a presentation at the university and uh- thought ‘Well, this would be something we’d like to try to do’, so we got all our resumes and materials ready and went to a job fair in Ontario and I had several different opportunities to go to several countries. Um- we chose Abu Dhabi, as you know.

LS: Yes. (28:57)

MC: And that was a wonderful experience- just wonderful. So, I did teach grade three for two years and then I was in the ESL program, I don’t know if you remember that, but um- there was an opening for English as a Second Language and there again, I just fell into that. I didn’t have any of the TESOL courses or anything like that, but with working with, you know, good teacher mentors, it all worked out really well. So we did that until 2006 and decided to come back home. And came back to our city where we raised out kids and taught school. And still wanting to stay in the education field, I put my name into substitute teaching- supply teaching

LS: Hmm...

MC: and did a bit of that and through the school division that I had been working for previously for all those years, I was offered a part-time job teaching some reading and math improvement to grades three and four. So I did that for hmm I guess till 2009, so three years. That’s really good opportunity. So I was, at that point, receiving my teacher’s pension plus receiving a little bit of extra teacher’s pay. Then in 2009, uh- Mr. Chetek and I decided—so that part-time contract ended—we decided to start a little company called Educational Success Strategies.

LS: Hmm

MC: And that gave us an opportunity to um- have a job at the technical college in Edmonton. So we had a contract there from 2009 to 2013. And what we did- we were academic strategist, is what our position was called. So we worked with struggling, they were already struggling adult students, who were in the college. Most of them had—were apprentices in the trades and so they were coming to college for their six weeks every year of- I guess, not the hands on that they would be doing as apprentices, but the schooling. And so, many of them were apprentices because they were so successful with uh- you know,
becoming a mechanic or a plumber or so on. But, they were not prepared for the college aspect of exams and going to classes.

LS: Right. (31:42)

MC: So, what we did is— they were booked for one hour scheduling to see one of us. And we would work with them, talking about just time management, exam taking strategies, study skill strategies, organizational skills, anxiety issues, and so on. So, that in itself was really rewarding because as adults, they had their careers planned and if they weren’t in an apprentice, many of them were upgrading their high school and they could do it at the college. So, they wanted to be able to enter that college program.

LS: Wow.

MC: This was government funded that they were able to get these services through the student services at the college, so. We did that and 2010, we um- decided to move out to our lake walk, out of the city. And the contract ended with—at—in 2013 with the college. So we decided now to uh- substitute teach here in the nearby schools in our area. We also invigilate exams for the apprenticeship board, which is again for apprentices that are going to school. Or we will read to an apprentices who has difficulty reading their exam, so that’s really a neat thing to do. So that’s one-on-one, so that’s what we’re doing now.

LS: I love that! That sounds so interesting to do. (33:26)

MC: It is! It really is interesting to see adults in their learning. You know, and they are having difficulties so it—it is gratifying to see that they really want to improve themselves and have a career, so...

LS: Right and I think maybe that’s a big difference between teaching elementary and then teaching the adolescence or adults. Is that the motivation is kind of different—adults are more motivated because they need it while students—elementary students might not realize that it’s going to be useful for them. (34:04).

MC: Yes. Yeah, they are not at the—at least the ones I’m seeing now in the elementary schools when I’m teaching they’re—yeah, but again, there are those that are focused and are able to maybe see how, you know, working hard and so on is gratifying to them. But, it has changed- which I’ll probably talk about in another question haha.

LS: Right.

MC: There- I think that’s our next one!

MC: Yeah, so yup- thinking about performance and behavior of students, do you think that that’s changed over time? I know parents seem to be a lot less involved now maybe or just not as strict as they used to be, at least stereotypically. The whole— parent—getting good grades and, you know, proving to your parents and making them proud doesn’t necessarily be—doesn’t necessarily seem a common concept anymore. So how do you think that’s changed over time? (35:05)

MC: It’s really hard to—well, we can compare. What I would say is- the good, studious kids from before, we still see so many of them now—you know, like yourself.

LS: *Chuckles*
MC: You have ambitions and we do see a lot of that. But, right now, I think the performance or the academic performance has changed or the curriculum has changed because over the years, the topics have filtered downwards. So what maybe I was taught, for instance, in biology in high school is now taught in grade seven. Math concepts, a lot—everything is expected at a younger grade and younger age. So, I don’t think all students are ready. Many of them are not ready for those concepts taught at these earlier grades, so we still have the same developmental issues, cognitive differences as before, um—students now are included in regular classrooms—there’s the inclusion

LS: Uhu.

MC: Which we didn’t have in our day. So, it’s— it’s very time consuming for teachers, you’re doing a lot of individual planning and so on. Um— so, I think for a teacher there is a lot more expected and um— what should I say? Anyway, I lost my train of thought.

LS: You’re fine. (36:46)

MC: Right now, so for behaviors, I think there are more students that we are noticing that are more aggressive, more distracted, attention seeking, maybe more issues coming from family dynamics that aren’t the same as when I taught years ago. Um—there—I think there’s a more sense of entitlement, less self-control, like you say, some of the poor work ethics are noticed more. But, then again, the good, hardworking, polite students are the same.

LS: Uhu.

MC: But difficult cases seem to stand out to a greater degree. More students are identified now with conditions that we’ve never heard of before. A lot of children are um—, you know, they might be premature and in my day they might not—their life expectancy was short, they never made it to schools. There were special schools for those who had severe problems. Now, there’s—their’s a lot of inclusions and it’s very demanding.

LS: Right.

MC: Counseling services, to me, aren’t the same as when I first taught. We used to have a full time counselor in the school and in elementary school. Now, one counselor shared maybe among the division.

LS: Wow. (38:15)

MC: So, it’s uh— you know, with cut backs and funding.

LS: Right.

MC: You know, there’s not as many supports.

LS: Yeah. Do you think it’s because there are so many different programs that they focus on now-a-days like special ed. and inclusion and all these different kind of programs that they had to cut on the counseling?

MC: Exactly. And they’re hiring so many more educational assistants.

LS: Uhu.
MC: That maybe we would have two in an entire school and now there’s one or two for every classroom, haha.

LS: Yeah, which you think would make a teacher’s job a bit easier, but haha

MC: Not always, right?

LS: Not always haha. Perfect. And what about the parental involvement- do you think that’s changed at all throughout the years?

MC: Uh- you know what, I was always so really fortunate to have parent volunteers in my classroom. Uh-really lucky to have supportive parents and developed good reports with them. So- always had an open door policy. Um- now many parents, I think, continue to really be involved with volunteering and supporting their children with their academics. I see a lot of that in the schools, elementary schools, now when I’m substitute teaching. So I think that parents are still generally, if they’re going to be supportive, they make themselves available.

LS: Okay.

MC: Currently, something we didn’t have is parents have access to the classroom teacher’s website, they receive all the notices, the current topics taught, homework assignments, just general news. So the communication is open through emailing, I know in the high school they report attendance, they report assignments completed or not completed through, you know, their website. So there’s a lot that parents know now that uh- it’s easily accessed as to—as far as how their child is doing

LS: Right.

MC: and so yeah, many parents are very willing to volunteer. On the other hand, I’ve seen some cases of—I don’t know if you’ve heard of the term helicopter moms?

LS: No! (40:43)

MC: They’re hanging around the child’s classroom door to kind of check what their child is doing in the classroom and compare and so on, haha

LS: Hahaha. Oh, that is silly.

MC: They’re not working moms, but they’re almost overly involved.

LS: Right.

MC: So that can be a negative, can be a positive, I don’t know, haha.

LS: Do you think also the parental involvement has changed because just now both pa—it’s a common thing that both parents are working. Compared to probably back when you were in elementary, your mom was at home—it was common for the mom to stay at home mom, but now it’s kind of—both parents are out and working. Do you think that’s changed the parental involvement towards the kids?

(41:27)

MC: Uh- as far as their performance?

LS: Uhu- yeah, because like the motivation that they receive from having their parents involved.
MC: Right, uh- that’s a tough one. I think, you know, working parents definitely - there are those who will be on top of what—how their children are doing even if they themselves go in to volunteer in the classroom, but they are checking their kid’s backpack and so on. I still think you still have the ones who are very on top of it and then those who..., as in our day, the backpack wouldn’t be emptied in weeks or checked and so on.

LS: Yeah.

MC: So for me it’s really hard to compare. I do think though now-a-days, it’s such a throwaway society as far as parents sending lunches in a different way compared to when, you know, I taught school that um-so much is consumed, thrown away, or wasted and parents are working maybe they can afford all those, you know, extras. Children now-a-days have a lot of extras.

LS: Yeah, it’s seen that third graders now have phones and that’s... even for me, that’s a crazy concept! I had my first phone when I was in seventh grade and they have smart phones now-a-days in like first and second. (43:02)

MC: And they feel entitled. For example, in one of the schools I was at substitute teaching, I guess a teacher on supervision was telling a student outside at recess ‘You—You can’t have your phone out here’ and the child just blatantly said ‘It’s private property, you can’t take it away. You’re stealing’.

Just—yeah—so it’s... there are some

LS: Oh my goodness.

MC: you know, ideas that—that children have that they’re—it’s entitlement. It’s their right.

LS: Yeah. And then you wonder where they’ve heard that before, how they know these things.

MC: That’s right, exactly. Yeah.

LS: Uh- was there any- because you taught both in Canada and the United Arab Emirates- was there a difference in parental involvement there? Because I know the culture in the United Arab Emirates is more ‘Let the nannies take care of the kids’. So, did you see any parental involvement- like a difference there? (44:02)

MC: Uh- there—there was a difference. You know, all the parents were very supportive in coming to parent-teacher interviews and discussing their child’s report cards. But, I’m thinking because it was so international and most of the students’ parents were, you know, from the Emirates, that the parents didn’t feel, possibly, like they didn’t have to come in and maybe assist or volunteer in the classroom, their nannies could. Or because English wasn’t their first language. We really didn’t expect it from the parents. So...

LS: Right.

MC: Maybe that’s changed now, with—over the years. But, we didn’t expect it. We know that many of the students would go home and they’d be tutored for two or three hours by a tutor to help them, so. It would just be that we would be teaching, we’d have our assistants, if they were in the classroom, and it all worked out really well. We had a lot of preparation time as teachers.

LS: Yeah, haha. I’m sure.
MC: Yeah.

LS: And so, you mentioned that you taught adult learners just recently. Do you think that there’s a big difference, just other than the age gap, but is there a really big difference between teaching kids and adults? (45:30)

MC: Well our example with—with the adults was because they were at the college and they were, you know, this was—many of them were quite a bit older, they had a greater vested interest in what they were trying to achieve in their careers. So, they were highly motivated, so they would seek this assistance if they could get it.

LS: Right.

MC: So, whether they— they would have similar learning difficulties because they may have missed some of their prerequisites for their foundation skills like they had reading difficulties, weak comprehension quite often, maybe their math skills were lower. The um- possibly a lot of them were very anxious, stressed, had attention issues. So, they were adults and many students have the issues as younger children, but you could see that they were—these adults that we worked with, and it was one-on-one again, so that’s kind of a different situation

LS: Right.

MC: They were very willing to do their best. However on the other hand, if some—they would come to a session with us and, you know, if they were very uh—they had attention deficit issues, organizational skills, uh- they would agree- yes I need to do this, I need to do that, but they just couldn’t follow through.

LS: Wow.

MC: We did see students who would finally be on medication because they had gone through testing and would see a specialist and they would try a medication for attention deficit. For many it— they found the right one, it made big world of difference. It really did.

LS: That’s interesting to know.

MC: Hmm.

LS: Do you think it’s easier being a teacher, even though it was one-on-one,- do you think it was easier to work with adult learners just because you don’t have to deal with, you know, parents being over protective of their children or wanting to know exactly how their child is doing, like the helicopter moms you were saying...

MC: Exactly, haha.

LS: Do you think it’s easier to work with adult learners? (47:54)

MC: It was in our case. Uh- again, they have to achieve to go further in their career, so they did have these obstacles, like I said of exam writing or whatever, but they had the government’s support as far as funding that—them for that extra help. So, there wasn’t any parent involvement.

LS: Yeah.
because they were adults already themselves. Many of them had families that they—you know, they had a lot of stress because they were married with families and had these issues that made it difficult for them. But we did see a lot of success stories too.

That’s awesome. So I guess, yeah, that could be another issue that can then pop up, they have their own families to think about rather than having someone watch them, they are the ones that are watching.

That’s right and they come in adults with—they could have relationship issues, financial issues,

That’s awesome. So I guess, yeah, that could be another issue that can then pop up, they have their own families to think about rather than having someone watch them, they are the ones that are watching.

That’s right and they come in adults with—they could have relationship issues, financial issues,

So a lot of them had many obstacles. But, at least they were trying to move forward. A lot of them were not successful, they had to repeat that year, whatever, but if we did find out that someone did really well, it was really gratifying.

Yeah, I can only imagine. I mean, even teaching elementary, and just seeing the progress that students make is very gratifying.

Oh, isn’t it? Have you done your student teaching?

I have, yes, I did last semester! And it was just amazing to see just—I could—the twelve weeks of student teaching, so just over that course of twelve weeks to see the immense progress that kids make, it’s incredible. (49:37)

Yeah, it is. You’ve chosen a good career.

Hmm, I hope so, I know so. Alright and then, how have educational issues or concerns evolved throughout the years. So, there was, earlier in the days, a very big focus on the different tracking methods and having kids either, like you said there was the general and... it slips my mind... m--

Matriculation, those two routes. Do you think there are still, you know, those kind of issues and concerns of maybe tracking and pushing them into one kind of educational track. Do you think those are still prominent today? (50:22)

What I would say is, now, I think, we’re seeing students progress through the system despite not having achieved the skills that they need for the next level. So, I think the issues are compounded. You know, do we see if—in our day it was, you either got this mark and you moved on to the next level or you didn’t. Well, now it’s, you know, it’s you give them these supports and you still move them on and try to work them at their individual level. But, I don’t know, as—when they’re coming out of high school as young adults if they’re achieving at a grade seven level or lower, that’s a big concern too.

So, they’re often not ready to handle that level so, everything is magnified. I would say the frustrations are magnified, their feeling of confidence, um- there’s so much pressure to achieve. So, I don’t know if that can ever be rectified.

Right.
MC: Sometimes they don’t accept the fact that they don’t have those skills and so they blame—it’s someone else’s fault but their own— that they’re encountering difficulties.

LS: Haha.

MC: Now, that might have been the same years ago, but in my day, when I was young, then I think if there were difficulties, quite often those—those students knew that their career path would take them more—like there was, you know, they would stay on the farm or they would go into, you know, some other sort of job where they successful. Now, I don’t know, are we pushing out so many people and they have this “high school diploma”, but they really haven’t finished high school.

LS: Don’t have the knowledge of—yes, exactly.

MC: So, hahaha.

LS: That’s definitely something that I’ve noticed as well, that students are just passed on to the next grade even though they don’t necessarily know all the material that they were said to have known. And they just keep pushing them through instead of keeping them or making them repeat the year. (52:42)

MC: Right, exactly. And we’ve always—we now are so worried about self-esteem and confidence that, again, a lot of it causes this entitlement—feeling of entitlement.

LS: Yeah.

MC: It’s their right… And, so...

LS: Yeah.

MC: No answers to how to fix that.

LS: Yeah those are—yeah, some very mind blowing concerns.

MC: Uhu.

LS: And it’s probably not going to get any better over the years coming.

MC: Yeah, it’s hard to say. You’re going to have to let me know how things are going, haha.

LS: Haha, I will. Alright, and what are your predictions for the future of education and how technology is going to impact education and how that’s going to change it all. (53:28)

MC: Hmm, well, I know technology definitely has many advantages and we’re all benefitting.

LS: Haha, as we see right now!

MC: We all know the different areas—like right now! Right?

LS: Exactly.

MC: But, on the other hand, has it made a decrease in original thinking for people? You can find anything on the internet or online.

LS: Right.
MC: Um- there’s a lot of spare time that students are using for video games, etcetera. So, are we addicted to technology?

LS: Yes.

MC: In some ways, yes. So, is this causing problem solving to decrease? Socializing to decrease? I don’t know, so, there’s so many positive things about technology I don’t know how that will change- for it to be more beneficial or, you know— I don’t know.

LS: Yeah. It can come crashing down. Yeah, that’s interesting to think about just because back then, I believe, like when you first started teaching, lesson plans were made by the teachers, all ideas were just put together, you came up with the most original things to teach and now, if you don’t know what to teach, you just put it in Google, and there you have it- your lesson plan.

MC: And there’s lots— that’s an advantage in many many ways, you know. So, as long as it’s not um- I don’t know, if there a balance, if we can have just our students, you know- people we socialize with- have the balance, I guess then that would be the best that we could hope for.

LS: The best that technology can offer us. (55:22)

MC: Exactly.

LS: Alright. And is there anything other you would want to add to this interview?

MC: No, I can’t think of anything. I’m just so pleased that you contacted me, I feel very very blessed to be in contact with you again, Lisa. It’s just...

LS: Thank you.

MC: It’s just a pleasure.

LS: Thank you for agreeing to help me out because this is just so- so much information that is just great to have this different perspective on. Great.

MC: Is there anything else that you’re feeling that maybe I didn’t answer? That you’re thinking

LS: No.

MC: That would— you can always get back to me.

LS: Okay, will do. But this is definitely what I’m looking for and I definitely will be able to use every part of what you told me.

MC: Aww that’s really sweet.

LS: I want to thank you so much for helping me out.

MC: You’re very welcome and do keep in touch.

LS: Yes, of course. I’ll actually- I’ll send you the essay and I’ll have to transcribe this. So, I’ll send you a copy of the transcription just so you can approve it- that’s part of the process next, so.
MC: Oh wow, well good luck, it sounds like a major major project. That's another difference, Lisa, when I went to university, I don’t think I even learned how to write a term paper.

LS: Wow.

MC: So—there’s—good luck to you.

LS: Thank you.

MC: You’re doing an amazing job.

LS: Perfect. Another quick question- can I use your full name or would you like me to use a pseudoname?

MC: No, no, you can use my name.

LS: Alright, perfect. Well thank you so much and...

MC: You’re welcome. And take a break and enjoy the rest of your day.

LS: I will, I’m going to eat my donut now, haha.

MC: Good for you, haha. You’re still as tiny as ever.

LS: Yeah, I got my mom’s genes, haha.

MC: Lucky you, okay, well we’ll be in touch, for sure.

LS: Definitely, thanks again so much, Mrs. Chetek.


LS: Bye, thank you.

MC: Bye-bye

LS: Bye-bye.