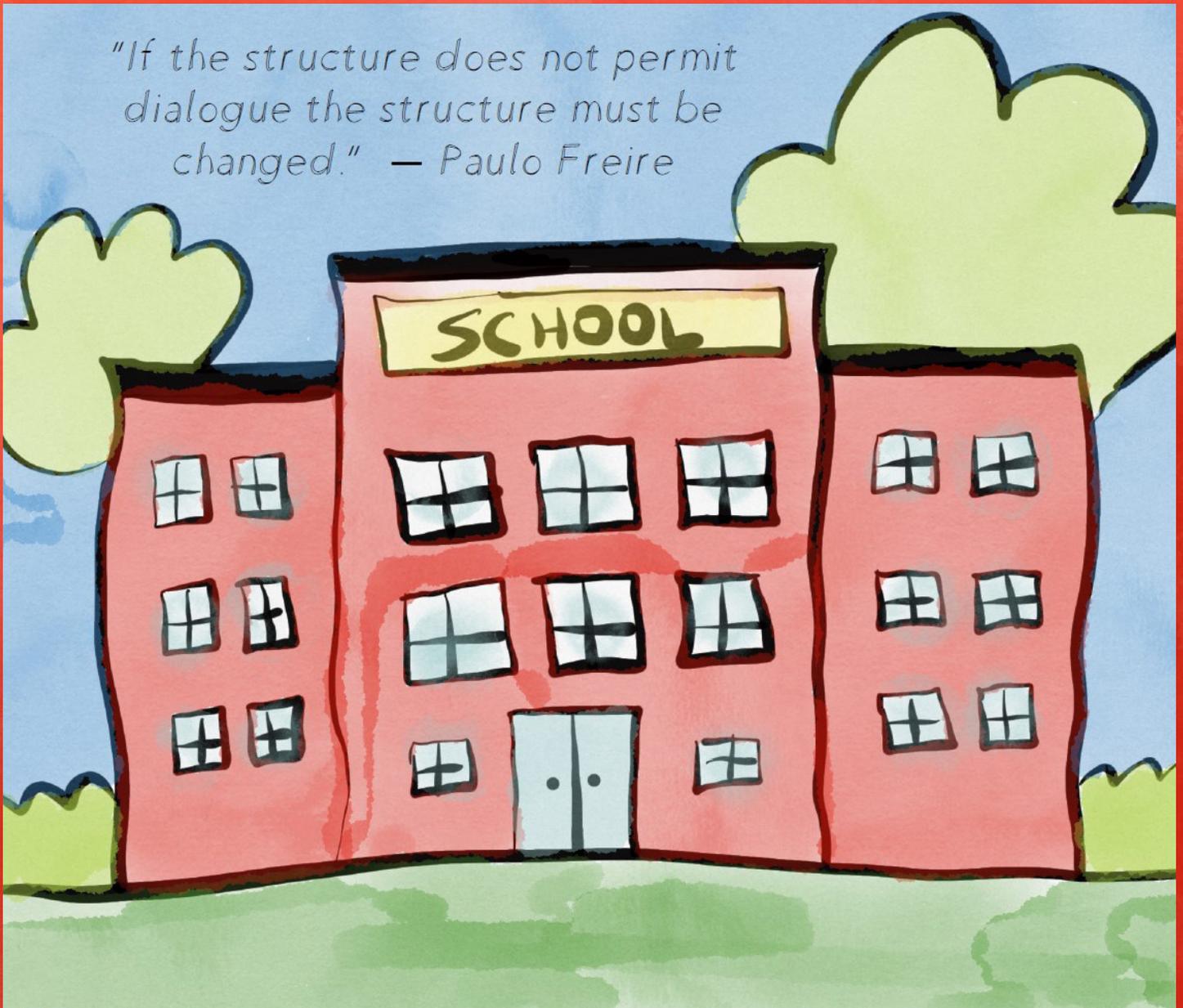


Teacher in a Global Pandemic?

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*"If the structure does not permit
dialogue the structure must be
changed." — Paulo Freire*



Where do I find myself as a teacher in our changed reality?

Let me start with, I was a first-year teacher that started my career online. On top of that, I had moved 33 miles away from my family and friends to a completely new place where I did not know anybody. I was homesick. Plus, navigating my own teaching ideologies with the curriculum given to me and working with a partner teacher (I teach in a 50/50 dual language program), I can say it was a pretty tough year. The pandemic took a lot of my time. Since I lived on my own and my family was not at a close distance, all I did was work to keep me busy. I worked every day all day so I would not feel the emptiness of my family and friends. I would go over our curricula to get familiar with them and, at the same time, to try and find ways to implement my own lessons. It was hard! I would be in a pool of frustration, anger, and hopelessness at times.

How do I change this unit to a social justice unit?

I would find myself literally planning a whole unit and mid-way through, stopping because I would have to create EVERYTHING in Spanish, and finding resources in Spanish is not easy. On top of that, I still had to get my partner teacher on board. FRUSTRATION AT IT'S FINEST, but also sadness. I wanted to provide my students with the best

education possible. I would spend A LOT of my time creating appealing PowerPoint slides for my students. I would find ways to plan fun and meaningful projects where I involved families and culture in order to provide a more humanizing school experience. Their completed projects brought me joy, happiness, worthiness, and justification to the pain that it took to plan. Lastly, let's not forget all the mandatory training teachers need to take, "helpful" training for new teachers, as well as trainings to learn about new websites or applications teachers can use for distance learning. Mind you, these are just some items that took most of my time. Coming back to in-person teaching was a whole different experience. To me, it was my first year all over again because it was my first year in-person. As a new teacher, I feel that we have to constantly be working. We don't have pre-made worksheets from past years of which all we have to do is make copies; we do not have projects already set and ready to be executed; we do not know what works and what doesn't; and, more importantly, we do not have daily lesson plans ready, ESPECIALLY if you want to cause desmadre like Doctor José Medina states. So, it's a battle in your head. You find it worthwhile spending your time creating social justice lessons because of the outcome but then there is no work balance - at least for me there was not. Again, working in a dual language program with a 50/50 model is

HARD and we were still in a pandemic! We had our students' life experiences to navigate through in the classroom.

So, what is it like being a teacher now?

After going through the pandemic and still going through a pandemic but with new norms, I feel that I have a stronger will to deal with hardships. I take what is thrown at me and just do the best I can within my power AND within my contract hours! I do not check my email after contract hours. I do not attend training sessions that are not mandatory; if so, I make sure I complete them during my contract hours. I have boundaries with parents, and most importantly, I ask questions. My time is valuable, so when something is presented to me or I am being asked to do something or to try something, depending on what it is, I ask, "What is the purpose?" "How is this going to benefit me and/or the students?" "Will I get paid?" "Will you provide planning time?" and, "Will there be consistency?" I think asking questions and setting boundaries are part of my healing process. Not to mention, new friendships and after school clubs. I am a Girls on the Run (GOTR) coach and I help with a journalism club. With another teacher, I run a club called CARP (Community Action Research Program) in partnership with California State University, Northridge (CSUN). It was a partnership opportunity that we were offered as a

Community School. I am also a part of our Local School Leadership Council (LSLC). These are the programs that are worth my time: they have a purpose, I feel I am making a positive impact on others, and they bring me joy! It is important that we talk about this topic across educational settings because teaching and being a teacher is more than delivering lesson plans. Teacher experiences should be heard in a way to provide a more humanizing teacher experience and give teachers what they deserve and need to be able to continue doing the work.