

# My Year as a Social Worker: What a Professor Learned by Returning to the Field

Sarah Twill, Wright State University - Main Campus

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00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:07,480  
Sarah Twill is our next speaker. Sarah is Professor and Chair of the Social Work

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00:00:07,480 --> 00:00:14,660  
Department. She received her PhD from the University of Georgia in 2005 and came

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00:00:14,660 --> 00:00:20,910  
to Wright State that same year. She has been active in service-learning, pursued

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00:00:20,910 --> 00:00:26,349  
interdisciplinary work through team teaching and joint publishing, and served

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00:00:26,349 --> 00:00:31,189  
as director for the Center for Teaching and Learning. Her scholarship treats

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00:00:31,189 --> 00:00:37,719  
issues of poverty, human rights, and child care. The title of her talk is My Year as

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00:00:37,719 --> 00:00:46,080  
a Social Worker: What a Professor Learned by Returning to the Field, Sarah.

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00:00:46,080 --> 00:00:50,800  
Alright, so my project, My Year as a Social Worker: What a Professor Learned by

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00:00:50,809 --> 00:00:55,100  
Returning to the Field. I spent a year,

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00:00:55,100 --> 00:00:58,859  
well nine months working at Children's

## Services in Montgomery County and I'm

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00:00:58,859 --> 00:01:04,629

very appreciative to those folks as well for hosting me. So how I came to this idea

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00:01:04,629 --> 00:01:09,990

initially, I became very intrigued by the professor who went back to be a

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00:01:09,990 --> 00:01:15,680

student and it began to make me ask lots of questions about myself and my

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00:01:15,680 --> 00:01:23,380

own practice is both a teacher and as a social worker and it began to make me

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00:01:23,380 --> 00:01:27,979

re-frame question that students were asking me in the classroom. I had noticed

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00:01:27,979 --> 00:01:33,640

a big over emphasis on wanting to know the right answer and students would be

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00:01:33,640 --> 00:01:36,150

like "but what's the exact thing that you're supposed to do?" and it's this

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00:01:36,150 --> 00:01:41,070

completely gray ethical decision with a hundred and fifty nine factors and they

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00:01:41,070 --> 00:01:44,060

would say "but you have to tell me what to do" and I would be like "there is no

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00:01:44,060 --> 00:01:50,490

answer, there's like 400 variables that you're going to consider" and I guess I

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00:01:50,490 --> 00:01:55,299

got very intrigued with why did they want that answer? They also became very

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00:01:55,299 --> 00:02:01,610

fixated on my own practice stories. So a lot of my teaching was driven and I would

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00:02:01,610 --> 00:02:06,040

give an example from my own practice and they would say "but how did you learn how

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00:02:06,040 --> 00:02:06,900

to do that?"

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00:02:06,900 --> 00:02:11,550

and I would be like "how did I learn how to do that?" and I would be have told a story

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00:02:11,550 --> 00:02:18,000

about a case in my practice experience where a chicken had come up through the

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00:02:18,000 --> 00:02:22,790

floor of a trailer and I would describe how you really just have to punt in those

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00:02:22,790 --> 00:02:25,910

circumstances. You have no idea no one trade you for that and they're like "your

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00:02:25,910 --> 00:02:29,900

professor didn't tell you what to do if a chicken came through the floor?" and I'm

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00:02:29,900 --> 00:02:33,790

like "no, no I could never have imagined that myself, my professors could have never

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00:02:33,790 --> 00:02:39,220

imagined it, it happened one time and it never happened again." And so it was very

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00:02:39,220 --> 00:02:42,600

intriguing to me that they thought there

was an answer to what to do that

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00:02:42,600 --> 00:02:47,350

question, that somehow I had some social work Bible that had every possible human

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00:02:47,350 --> 00:02:53,630

behavior scenario in it that I could answer that kind of question for them. Kind of in this

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00:02:53,630 --> 00:02:59,160

book it inspired me to ask what have I forgotten? What did I not know anymore

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00:02:59,160 --> 00:03:03,980

with my higher ed training? So what had a PhD program and then being a professor,

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00:03:03,980 --> 00:03:09,959

beat out of me in terms of social work practice. Did I view things differently?

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00:03:09,959 --> 00:03:17,459

Did I do look at situations from a more theoretical context than my 21 year old

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00:03:17,459 --> 00:03:21,070

students were in practice? And I wanted to know if that was the case. So I had some

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00:03:21,070 --> 00:03:29,060

hypotheses about that. I also from a personal level, I was very bored with

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00:03:29,060 --> 00:03:35,130

telling my own practice stories and I wanted some new ones and I also began to

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00:03:35,130 --> 00:03:42,280

doubt my ability as a practitioner. Did I lose the skills that I once had and then

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00:03:42,280 --> 00:03:48,090

was I doing a disservice to my students  
by not keeping up in practice? So those

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00:03:48,090 --> 00:03:53,430

were all the things that went into how  
do I design a sabbatical where I could

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00:03:53,430 --> 00:04:03,269

both practice and do some research on  
that practice? So what I did is I worked

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00:04:03,269 --> 00:04:09,709

in Montgomery County Children Services  
and when I had originally set out with

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00:04:09,709 --> 00:04:13,250

my sabbatical proposal, I wanted to be  
placed in

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00:04:13,250 --> 00:04:18,250

an ongoing unit. It's important to know  
that I picked Montgomery County Children's

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00:04:18,250 --> 00:04:23,550

Services and Child Welfare as a number  
of social work students end up in public

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00:04:23,550 --> 00:04:29,640

child welfare. It's where a lot of our  
jobs are. It's that and aging and I was

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00:04:29,640 --> 00:04:33,840

not quite ready to go the aging route. All  
of my practice experience has been with

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00:04:33,840 --> 00:04:37,990

children and families, so I played it a little  
safer and we'll look at that next time.

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00:04:37,990 --> 00:04:45,800

But I did wanna be in a unit that had  
ongoing work. I had not worked at

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00:04:45,800 --> 00:04:51,630

Children's Services before in my career,  
although I had had a lot of experience

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00:04:51,630 --> 00:04:58,280

overlapping. I managed, five of my years was in school-based mental health work and

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00:04:58,280 --> 00:05:03,910

probably anywhere between 25 and 40  
percent of my case it was always involved

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00:05:03,910 --> 00:05:07,570

with children's services. So I was not  
unfamiliar with the work of the agency.

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00:05:07,570 --> 00:05:12,850

I had never practiced in Dayton. I came  
from other regions so that was another

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00:05:12,850 --> 00:05:18,710

thing I was interested in practicing in  
Dayton. What actually happened is my

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00:05:18,710 --> 00:05:22,950

sabbatical got deferred and then it got  
very quickly activated because of some other things

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00:05:22,950 --> 00:05:27,490

going on in my life and the life of the  
department and so I ended up in an

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00:05:27,490 --> 00:05:32,270

education unit, which was a brand-new  
formed -- I actually met with the unit

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00:05:32,270 --> 00:05:35,880

the first day that they were -- I started  
my practicum on the first day that they

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00:05:35,880 --> 00:05:40,270

were meeting. It was a little closer to my  
practice experience than I wanted to be

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00:05:40,270 --> 00:05:45,919

I wanted to be, I wanted to be farther away from that, because I did do five years in a

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00:05:45,919 --> 00:05:55,740

school. I did a lot of work with  
troubleshooting cases. So this was kids

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00:05:55,740 --> 00:06:00,190

who the primary caseworkers thought that they needed IEPs: educational plans

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00:06:00,190 --> 00:06:07,970

for special education. I did some policy  
writing for the unit, some procedures and

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00:06:07,970 --> 00:06:12,970

I carried to caseload of 13 3rd graders  
who were in foster care, so they had been

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00:06:12,970 --> 00:06:16,860

removed from their home and the 3rd  
graders were selected as one of the

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00:06:16,860 --> 00:06:21,650

targeted areas by Montgomery County, because of the 3rd grade reading guarantee

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00:06:21,650 --> 00:06:27,240

and there is tremendous pressure to  
get students to pass the third grade

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00:06:27,240 --> 00:06:31,490

reading tests. So that was a little bit  
out of my wheelhouse age wise. I like

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00:06:31,490 --> 00:06:36,229

middle schoolers not  
elementary schoolers, so here I was thrust in

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00:06:36,229 --> 00:06:43,070

3rd grade life again. Behind the  
Education Unit there was a lot of

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00:06:43,070 --> 00:06:47,789

reasons why child welfare agencies are

on the hook to begin to provide these

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00:06:47,789 --> 00:06:53,320

services for youth. There are two federal mandates that child welfare agencies have

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00:06:53,320 --> 00:06:59,039

largely ignored about making sure the educational needs of students and care

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00:06:59,039 --> 00:07:05,240

are not neglected. We knew that about 65% of kids in care switch schools

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00:07:05,240 --> 00:07:10,130

seven times during their care and with each switch of schools, they

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00:07:10,130 --> 00:07:13,979

lose approximately a half year of education.

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00:07:13,979 --> 00:07:19,510

This results in increased absenteeism, it results in increased special education

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00:07:19,510 --> 00:07:23,830

placement, foster kids are four times more likely to be placed in a special

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00:07:23,830 --> 00:07:29,330

education setting than the traditional population, and they're two to four times

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00:07:29,330 --> 00:07:31,580

more likely to be disciplined

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00:07:31,580 --> 00:07:39,370

more harshly than their non foster foster-care students. So the system has

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00:07:39,370 --> 00:07:44,479

really failed the educational aspects of children. We yank them out of their

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00:07:44,479 --> 00:07:48,370

homes, we put them in foster care, and then we really mess with their school

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00:07:48,370 --> 00:07:49,690

lives as well.

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00:07:49,690 --> 00:07:55,419

changes and other factors. So it was important work to do and I was excited

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00:07:55,419 --> 00:08:01,539

about getting to be a part of it for that particular reason. So that's kind of

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00:08:01,539 --> 00:08:06,440

the purview of what I did, what became the research questions. So I was very

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00:08:06,440 --> 00:08:10,130

excited about practicing. I knew the University however, wanted me to do some

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00:08:10,130 --> 00:08:17,190

research on this. So that's what it brings us to, my research questions for the project and

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00:08:17,190 --> 00:08:21,590

there were three. To understand this it's important to know that social work

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00:08:21,590 --> 00:08:22,910

is an accredited

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00:08:22,910 --> 00:08:27,830

discipline and our Council on Social Work Education specifies what we teach,

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00:08:27,830 --> 00:08:32,530

how we teach it, and what order we teach it and with that they have 10

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00:08:32,530 --> 00:08:38,030  
competencies and 42 corresponding  
practice behaviors. And so I wanted to

100  
00:08:38,030 --> 00:08:43,800  
see which practice behaviors do  
students most use in their first year of practice?

101  
00:08:43,800 --> 00:08:48,140  
So we spend two years in the major  
preparing them, are we preparing them for

102  
00:08:48,140 --> 00:08:53,230  
what they would actually do when they  
hit the first day of their job? I had a

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00:08:53,230 --> 00:08:58,470  
hypothesis that we were over and under  
teaching certain practice behaviors.

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00:08:58,470 --> 00:09:05,840  
Students typically complained about this  
in their senior practicum. "Well we have to

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00:09:05,840 --> 00:09:11,050  
take policy and I never have to do it" and so  
I wanted to see is that really accurate

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00:09:11,050 --> 00:09:16,480  
or are students not being able to identify  
and measure it, which is part of the

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00:09:16,480 --> 00:09:23,280  
issue. And then third, I wanted to know how, as both an educator and researcher, the

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00:09:23,280 --> 00:09:29,470  
practice experience changed me. This was my more qualitative questioned and my personal reflection part

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00:09:29,470 --> 00:09:36,240  
of the project. So over the course of my  
9 month I collected data in multiple

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00:09:36,240 --> 00:09:43,700

ways. Every day that I was at Children's Services I tracked on the half hour what

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00:09:43,700 --> 00:09:48,490

I was doing and I linked that back to a competency in practice behavior. So you

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00:09:48,490 --> 00:09:53,250

can see my coding sheet up there. It's not real clear, but if I was visiting a

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00:09:53,250 --> 00:09:57,540

family or I was meeting with school, I would write down what I was doing and

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00:09:57,540 --> 00:10:03,460

I would code that back to the corresponding competency in practice behavior.

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00:10:03,460 --> 00:10:08,660

I took daily notes alongside so I just didn't say home visits, I put a couple of little

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00:10:08,660 --> 00:10:14,380

notes next to that. I kept a copy of all the case notes that I entered into the

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00:10:14,380 --> 00:10:18,160

official record for Children's Services and that was part of my research

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00:10:18,160 --> 00:10:19,510

validation when I

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00:10:19,510 --> 00:10:23,300

back and matched up my time logs to with what I was doing. I wanted to know that I

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00:10:23,300 --> 00:10:31,060

had coded correctly and I use that as verification. I also made iPhone videos

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00:10:31,060 --> 00:10:36,760

of myself commenting at the end of every

day or at least a couple times a week. On

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00:10:36,760 --> 00:10:42,910

a particular case or issue, I knew I was not... if I tried to sit down and write, I

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00:10:42,910 --> 00:10:46,040

would get too caught up in trying to write, so I was just kind of get in the

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00:10:46,040 --> 00:10:50,290

car, turn my iPhone on and talk to it for a minute or two and I'm going back and

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00:10:50,290 --> 00:10:54,770

looking at those qualitative comments. I also any time I talked about it, I was

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00:10:54,770 --> 00:10:59,520

invited to talk to a couple classes about my project, I video taped myself so I

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00:10:59,520 --> 00:11:03,410

had that qualitative data to see what I was saying about the experience in the

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00:11:03,410 --> 00:11:09,920

middle of it. I wrote the logs that our students are required to write as part of

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00:11:09,920 --> 00:11:15,280

their senior practicum. So I spent some time writing a couple of those that really

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00:11:15,280 --> 00:11:19,080

illustrated to me how confused we made it for students, because I didn't understand

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00:11:19,080 --> 00:11:24,460

what we were asking sometimes or how to do it. So it's going to lead to some redoing

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00:11:24,460 --> 00:11:30,040

that. I took notes from conversations with university colleagues when I would talk

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00:11:30,040 --> 00:11:35,540

about my sabbatical, as well as notes from CPS workers, clients, or school

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00:11:35,540 --> 00:11:39,740

personnel. If they said something that I thought was particularly interesting, I

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00:11:39,740 --> 00:11:47,510

wrote that down. It was two cases that I carried, provided some interesting insight for me

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00:11:47,510 --> 00:11:52,440

in terms of my practice. I carried a foster mom and her child and she was a

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00:11:52,440 --> 00:11:59,140

faculty member and so she often wanted to talk about this is my sabbatical not

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00:11:59,140 --> 00:12:03,570

just as the work is her student and I also carried a foster mom who is a Children's

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00:12:03,570 --> 00:12:07,490

Protective Services worker in a different county. So I had these two kind

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00:12:07,490 --> 00:12:13,050

of computing roles in these two families where my identity was not as clear and

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00:12:13,050 --> 00:12:14,760

then what they reflected on to me

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00:12:14,760 --> 00:12:19,300

helped clarify. So I took some notes when those foster mom's talking to me as well

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00:12:19,300 --> 00:12:23,010

as part of my data collection.

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00:12:23,010 --> 00:12:30,110

I'm going to share one month of quantitative findings, because it was

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00:12:30,110 --> 00:12:34,590

basically representative of my entire time. So we're going to look at the

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00:12:34,590 --> 00:12:35,980

second month I was on the job:

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00:12:35,980 --> 00:12:41,650

October. I worked a 103 hours over fourteen days at Children's

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00:12:41,650 --> 00:12:50,030

Services and in looking at that we have 10 competencies in the profession, where I was

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00:12:50,030 --> 00:12:54,660

tracking what we were doing and where was I not. So interestingly and not

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00:12:54,660 --> 00:13:00,840

surprising to me, I spent 31% of my time or the most percentage of my time

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00:13:00,850 --> 00:13:05,240

engage with practice with individuals, families, groups, and communities. And

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00:13:05,240 --> 00:13:09,280

interestingly, we have three practice courses only in the curriculum. So that's

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00:13:09,280 --> 00:13:14,730

certainly an under taught area if I'm spending that much time there. I spent

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00:13:14,730 --> 00:13:18,590

the next most common time in communication and critical thinking. This

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00:13:18,590 --> 00:13:22,080  
was not surprising at all. This was  
writing on the case notes and reports

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00:13:22,080 --> 00:13:26,730  
that are required of social work. So we do  
a lot of documentation. Students think

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00:13:26,730 --> 00:13:31,440  
writing is stupid and academic and not  
at all related to what they're going to

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00:13:31,440 --> 00:13:35,310  
do in the field and they're very stunned  
and I talked about this very publicly

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00:13:35,310 --> 00:13:40,190  
now, that about 24% of my social work  
practice was involved in case notes and

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00:13:40,190 --> 00:13:43,860  
report writing and calling people. And so I'm not kidding that they need to write

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00:13:43,860 --> 00:13:51,150  
correctly when they do that my classes  
as well. We have a competency number one,

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00:13:51,150 --> 00:13:54,980  
which has to do with acting as a  
professional at skills such as

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00:13:54,980 --> 00:14:01,090  
supervision, lifelong, learning, and  
advocating on behalf of clients. This was,

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00:14:01,090 --> 00:14:07,160  
I spent time primarily in meetings where  
I was arguing for my students to have

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00:14:07,160 --> 00:14:12,850  
access to services and so that was the  
majority of that time coded out.

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00:14:12,850 --> 00:14:16,790

Interestingly, I had 25% of time that I can not... is not

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00:14:16,790 --> 00:14:21,920

accounted for by the CSWE guidelines.

About 20% of that was driving to and

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00:14:21,920 --> 00:14:28,160

from schools, home visit, activities that the

youth were involved in the community.

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00:14:28,160 --> 00:14:33,540

This has changed my teaching practice in that I talk a lot about self-care now with my

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00:14:33,550 --> 00:14:38,279

students and using their drive-time

appropriately to think about who they

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00:14:38,279 --> 00:14:42,720

are, what they're doing to prepare for

their next clients, and to use that

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00:14:42,720 --> 00:14:48,949

us that as some stress management time. I had about 5% of stuff that just couldn't be coded,

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00:14:48,949 --> 00:14:55,730

time that my computer was being fixed

and I had to learn a new login or a lot

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00:14:55,730 --> 00:14:59,730

of this time is former students coming

by to talk to me in the middle of my day,

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00:14:59,730 --> 00:15:04,940

not necessarily about social work, but

about what was I doing there, was I

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00:15:04,940 --> 00:15:11,860

having a good time, was I learning stuff. So a lot of that was was time spent chitchatting with

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00:15:11,860 --> 00:15:19,350

former students. When I comment on this,

there's some interesting things I coded in

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00:15:19,350 --> 00:15:23,399

my primary competency and practice behavior and I coded a secondary

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00:15:23,399 --> 00:15:28,480

competency in practice behavior and that's where I see a lot more of theory and

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00:15:28,480 --> 00:15:32,399

diversity coming into play. Those were things that were often coded

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00:15:32,399 --> 00:15:37,649

secondarily. The Council on Social Work Education has recognized one of these

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00:15:37,649 --> 00:15:41,630

problems. They're moving the theory category, they're essentially eliminating

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00:15:41,630 --> 00:15:47,550

it and rolling it into engaged with practice. I think our students have a

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00:15:47,550 --> 00:15:50,870

really hard time knowing that theory is guiding their practices, that they

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00:15:50,870 --> 00:15:54,250

just think these ideas about child development for instance, got in their

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00:15:54,250 --> 00:15:58,380

head and they know this suddenly and I'm like "no, that's theory. That's why you're

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00:15:58,380 --> 00:16:05,779

making those choices". Carl and I had a lot of talks about like why was it not primarily

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00:16:05,779 --> 00:16:11,380

coded and then how do we help make that clear to students. What was pretty stunning

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00:16:11,380 --> 00:16:16,420

as I did not cold very many ethical issues over the course of my time and

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00:16:16,420 --> 00:16:23,610

that I expected to be much higher. What I was not surprised about was that research and

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00:16:23,610 --> 00:16:24,620

policy we're not

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00:16:24,620 --> 00:16:32,970

used it all. I had very few, I had under three hours across over 600 hours that

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00:16:32,970 --> 00:16:37,550

were used for research or policy time and our students complain about this

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00:16:37,550 --> 00:16:41,970

nationwide. Policy and research are seen as the ridiculous courses, the courses

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00:16:41,970 --> 00:16:47,260

that don't count, the courses that aren't relevant to them and quite honestly it's

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00:16:47,260 --> 00:16:52,220

very hard for me to disagree with that when I look back at my time. Now, I

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00:16:52,220 --> 00:16:57,320

believe that they need to know that for some other reasons, but first-year

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00:16:57,320 --> 00:17:01,270

practice social work. Those are things that our students just do not

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00:17:01,270 --> 00:17:06,030

encounter. It tends to be more supervisory role that would use those an

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00:17:06,030 --> 00:17:10,630

administrative role. And so helping students be transparent about that has

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00:17:10,630 --> 00:17:18,450

been important to me and changed my teaching. So that's quantitative findings.

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00:17:18,450 --> 00:17:23,500

A couple of examples of my qualitative findings from three different sources.

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00:17:23,510 --> 00:17:28,580

For my video journal I would comment on like whatever I wanted to comment. I

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00:17:28,580 --> 00:17:33,570

hadn't really no real intention around that it. It was what was on my mind for the

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00:17:33,570 --> 00:17:41,100

day. This was from one of my very first video journals and it helped

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00:17:41,100 --> 00:17:44,880

me appreciate how nervous are students are when we toss them into practice,

207

00:17:44,880 --> 00:17:48,170

because it was the same sort of nervousness I had. What if I wasn't a

208

00:17:48,170 --> 00:17:51,930

good enough social worker? What if I didn't know what to do in a particular

209

00:17:51,930 --> 00:17:57,560

situation? What would I do for lunch, like who would I eat with? So there were these competing concerns

210

00:17:57,560 --> 00:18:01,510

and I knew lots of people at the agency, but that was something that I was really

211

00:18:01,510 --> 00:18:06,650  
nervous about the first week and so  
talking about not just kind of the hard

212  
00:18:06,650 --> 00:18:09,990  
skills of social work, but some of the  
softer skills of students entering new

213  
00:18:09,990 --> 00:18:15,120  
agencies and new situations. When I looked back at this I was as nervous as they

214  
00:18:15,120 --> 00:18:18,950  
are and I have a lot more experience and  
competence in my skill and helping be

215  
00:18:18,950 --> 00:18:24,910  
transparent about that with them. I was  
stunned how many times my university

216  
00:18:24,910 --> 00:18:28,730  
colleagues told me this was a ridiculous  
way to spend my sabbatical, that it was

217  
00:18:28,730 --> 00:18:32,050  
too much work and I was probably told  
this

218  
00:18:32,050 --> 00:18:37,790  
twenty times by people in all different  
disciplines including my own and I

219  
00:18:37,790 --> 00:18:43,820  
thought that was really fascinating that  
returning to do the work that you train

220  
00:18:43,820 --> 00:18:48,220  
students to do with somehow seen as too  
much work. And so I'm not really sure even what to

221  
00:18:48,220 --> 00:18:52,900  
do with that yet. Other than I thought it  
was the greatest way to spend my

222

00:18:52,900 --> 00:18:57,370  
sabbatical, so I would encourage anybody  
to do this. I got the most support from

223  
00:18:57,370 --> 00:18:59,090  
colleagues in education

224  
00:18:59,090 --> 00:19:03,640  
who were like "absolutely you go back to work, because we don't remember what it was like" and

225  
00:19:03,640 --> 00:19:10,350  
so my education colleagues were the ones  
who are most positive about this experience

226  
00:19:10,350 --> 00:19:16,880  
or re-experiencing of practice. Then I  
look lots of notes about what

227  
00:19:16,880 --> 00:19:22,880  
colleagues that I was working with or what foster parents were saying about the work in

228  
00:19:22,880 --> 00:19:26,590  
the unit. I was intrigued because this  
was a new unit. How did the

229  
00:19:26,590 --> 00:19:32,510  
school's perceive child welfare being  
involved kind of in their domain and it

230  
00:19:32,510 --> 00:19:39,740  
was actually quite positive. I was  
delighted to find that the rhetoric

231  
00:19:39,740 --> 00:19:45,200  
about teachers or the rhetoric in the  
research that holds the teachers aren't for

232  
00:19:45,200 --> 00:19:49,810  
children in foster care. I can honestly  
say that I worked over nine school

233  
00:19:49,810 --> 00:19:54,270  
districts in the area and each one of

the teachers that I worked with was

234

00:19:54,270 --> 00:20:01,140

absolutely a rock star and centered on the work of my kids. So I was really

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00:20:01,140 --> 00:20:09,050

pleased to be able to offer that counter to what the research holds. Implications,

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00:20:09,050 --> 00:20:14,010

I've talked wee bit about those, but I think that as a profession we're going to have to really

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00:20:14,010 --> 00:20:19,630

get honest at the BSW level about what skills do students use. They mostly

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00:20:19,630 --> 00:20:26,790

use the practice competencies and you know we offer a stats course, a research

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00:20:26,790 --> 00:20:31,590

course, and a policy course and then a lower-division policy course and things that

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00:20:31,590 --> 00:20:37,050

are not being taught. Are we neglecting, in my opinion, mental health? That is not taught

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00:20:37,050 --> 00:20:43,360

at the BSW level. So I'm in the process of looking at that.

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00:20:43,360 --> 00:20:44,060

I'm trying to be more explicit

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00:20:44,060 --> 00:20:49,520

in my teaching about why we cover what we cover. Even if you are not doing

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00:20:49,520 --> 00:20:54,370

it in direct practice when it will come up. So that's kind of the implications

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00:20:54,370 --> 00:20:59,660

for social work education. I'm working on that data now. My advice to people do not

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00:20:59,660 --> 00:21:03,620

become a chair the year after you finish your sabbatical, because you will not get

247

00:21:03,620 --> 00:21:10,220

through data collection. You will have all that data and no time to get it done. In terms of social work

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00:21:10,220 --> 00:21:14,920

practice, I got better at my skills in a couple of different ways,

249

00:21:14,920 --> 00:21:19,140

was able to recognize changes in the field. It had been ten years since I had

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00:21:19,140 --> 00:21:25,140

practiced at all and thirteen years since I had practiced full time. I was leaving

251

00:21:25,140 --> 00:21:29,640

practice just with the advent of electronic records and so I used to fill

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00:21:29,640 --> 00:21:35,610

out tickets that our people laugh at now. So I as able to talk about the simplicity

253

00:21:35,610 --> 00:21:39,410

and challenges of using electronic records now with my students and I feel

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00:21:39,410 --> 00:21:45,570

much more confident in talking about that. There was no GPS when I was

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00:21:45,570 --> 00:21:51,830

practicing and I would drive around with maps and so that was a big change in

256  
00:21:51,830 --> 00:21:59,590  
talking again about the the driving with  
social workers. Child welfare agencies do

257  
00:21:59,590 --> 00:22:02,990  
not require that students have a  
bachelor's degree in order to work there

258  
00:22:02,990 --> 00:22:07,040  
and so what I realized is our students  
were far more prepared than the other

259  
00:22:07,040 --> 00:22:13,350  
majors to do that work across the board.  
I would have interactions with previous

260  
00:22:13,350 --> 00:22:18,390  
students and with students who we had not taught and their casework was better, their

261  
00:22:18,390 --> 00:22:22,560  
notes were better, their comprehensive  
care of children and families was

262  
00:22:22,560 --> 00:22:27,200  
significantly different than PE majors  
for instance. And so I think that that's

263  
00:22:27,200 --> 00:22:32,520  
a critical piece for us to look at in  
society

264  
00:22:32,520 --> 00:22:40,180  
I mean I had caseworkers who didn't understand IQ implications with some of my kids and just had flat

265  
00:22:40,180 --> 00:22:45,940  
out wrong ideas about what would happen  
with the child's IQ even if the child

266  
00:22:45,940 --> 00:22:49,779  
was stable in a foster home and that's  
something that would just not

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00:22:49,779 --> 00:22:55,969

happen in social work and so the care that kids get by non social workers is

268

00:22:55,969 --> 00:23:00,599

concerning to me. The other thing that was striking to me was the inappropriate dress.

269

00:23:00,599 --> 00:23:07,419

Quite honestly employees and I'm talking very specifically and changed

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00:23:07,419 --> 00:23:13,469

expectations for how students show up at practicum, that I would often not be able

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00:23:13,469 --> 00:23:18,259

to tell the difference between clients and workers and I often was very

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00:23:18,259 --> 00:23:22,499

concerned safety wise with some of the dress. Specifically for women in high

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00:23:22,499 --> 00:23:27,529

heels, they could not be safe in dangerous situations that may arise

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00:23:27,529 --> 00:23:33,769

in-home visits. So I'm talking much more about that kind of professional

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00:23:33,769 --> 00:23:41,019

development very early in my classes, because of my experience. Finally, what

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00:23:41,019 --> 00:23:45,159

did this mean to me personally and professionally for my identity? I was

277

00:23:45,159 --> 00:23:48,330

thrilled to get to work with community partners that we work as a

278

00:23:48,330 --> 00:23:53,690  
Department. Montgomery County Children  
Services again is a great hire-er of our

279  
00:23:53,690 --> 00:23:58,509  
students and a great supporter of our  
department and it was nice to get in and

280  
00:23:58,509 --> 00:24:04,789  
do the work with them. I am thrilled to  
have new practice stories so that I don't

281  
00:24:04,789 --> 00:24:10,800  
bore myself when I'm talking about what  
to do. A piece that I'm very interest in

282  
00:24:10,809 --> 00:24:18,460  
writing is that I was much kinder in  
my view of Children and Families now

283  
00:24:18,460 --> 00:24:23,649  
than I was as a young practitioner and  
as a practitioner who was

284  
00:24:23,649 --> 00:24:31,609  
overwhelmed by the system and much  
more able to look at societal impacts on

285  
00:24:31,609 --> 00:24:36,839  
why children and families are the way  
that they are and to really be explicit in

286  
00:24:36,839 --> 00:24:43,479  
talking with my students about that and  
the use of self-care and burnout, very

287  
00:24:43,479 --> 00:24:50,300  
interesting and changed kind of my work in the  
classroom based on this.

288  
00:24:50,300 --> 00:24:55,640  
I did just want to say, sabbatical is a great  
time if you're doing primary data

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00:24:55,640 --> 00:25:00,020

collection, to get lots of other things  
off your plate and so I was successful in

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00:25:00,020 --> 00:25:06,170

finishing a number of other projects and  
since the sabbatical I've gotten out one

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00:25:06,170 --> 00:25:10,940

book chapter on the educational needs of  
children in foster care and I'm sending

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00:25:10,940 --> 00:25:13,020

out another one this week

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00:25:13,020 --> 00:25:20,450

related to exploitation of children and  
how schools can respond more appropriately to

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00:25:20,450 --> 00:25:30,990

children at risk. So in an attempt to get us back on track  
quickly, any questions? Kristen.

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00:25:30,990 --> 00:25:41,310

I have a question that's relevant to your analysis of possible changes made in the curriculum given the [inaudible] extent  
that it was the practices of being a social worker,

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00:25:41,310 --> 00:25:43,740

but again you are an accredited program.

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00:25:43,750 --> 00:25:44,410

Yeah.

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00:25:44,410 --> 00:25:48,300

Where have those changes going to have to take place and how would you go about them?

299

00:25:48,300 --> 00:25:52,420

Yeah that's a great question. It was how,  
given we're accredited, how do I make

300

00:25:52,430 --> 00:25:56,980

these changes in our classroom. I think

the first thing is I think a lot of

301

00:25:56,980 --> 00:26:01,550

people want to talk about this issue in the BSW program. These were new

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00:26:01,550 --> 00:26:05,490

competencies in practice behaviors about three years before I did my sabbatical,

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00:26:05,490 --> 00:26:10,240

so as a profession was still struggling with what to do with them and again the

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00:26:10,240 --> 00:26:13,830

change in human behavior coming back under policy. So I think the first thing

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00:26:13,830 --> 00:26:18,770

is to begin talk about them and then what I can do at the local level

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00:26:18,770 --> 00:26:23,710

right now is to talk with students about some transparency about why we do what

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00:26:23,710 --> 00:26:30,810

we do and how they may not see the direct impact of research, but there were

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00:26:30,810 --> 00:26:37,340

occasions where research could have been used to inform practice and that

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00:26:37,340 --> 00:26:41,540

practitioners don't have access to the data bases to see what's emerging

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00:26:41,540 --> 00:26:45,400

practice or what evidence based practice and how students have an obligation to

311

00:26:45,400 --> 00:26:50,200

link that, feed that information to practitioners.

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00:26:50,200 --> 00:26:55,740

So there's kind of two things happening. One, that bigger level where accreditation is

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00:26:55,740 --> 00:27:00,480

going to have to look at some of these things. I also think there are ways that

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00:27:00,480 --> 00:27:05,700

we can spin things differently in our courses. So to make our policy classes

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00:27:05,700 --> 00:27:10,630

more applicable and our research courses where applicable. Again, my background in

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00:27:10,630 --> 00:27:14,180

service-learning leads me to do that and is one of the ways that you began to get

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00:27:14,180 --> 00:27:23,520

students engaged in what they see as less relevant material or curriculum. Carl.

318

00:27:23,520 --> 00:27:27,880

What is the advise about how we instruct them to write laws?

319

00:27:27,880 --> 00:27:35,700

Yeah that's changing. Hopefully this summer we're going to do a redo of some of our logs,

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00:27:35,700 --> 00:27:39,809

because I tried to answer the logs and I was like "I can't do this

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00:27:39,809 --> 00:27:44,779

these are dis is not clear to me" and it should be clear to me both as a member

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00:27:44,779 --> 00:27:48,640

of the faculty and as somebody whose practiced a along time and we were asking

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00:27:48,640 --> 00:27:55,270

students very backwards kinds of questions. So in my observation of course,

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00:27:55,270 --> 00:28:01,000

I redid all of the questions so that based on practice experiences that

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00:28:01,000 --> 00:28:05,250

students are having, I believe they can address them easier. I think we really

326

00:28:05,250 --> 00:28:11,100

complicated for them and teaching them to think critically that's the one thing.

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00:28:11,100 --> 00:28:15,110

They just think "I'm out there practicing" and they don't really think why they're

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00:28:15,110 --> 00:28:21,550

doing what they're doing and there is some training and skill to that as well. Tracy.

329

00:28:21,550 --> 00:28:27,980

My question actually is somewhat related to Kristen's and that is, is [inaudible] competency really [inaudible]

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00:28:27,990 --> 00:28:28,650

[Computer Alert Sound Effect]

331

00:28:28,650 --> 00:28:40,020

I'm wonder how within the program, not just how you enter it into the program, but are there gaps that policies don't cover and

332

00:28:40,030 --> 00:28:47,070

is there room to enter that into your curriculum? [inaudible]

333

00:28:47,070 --> 00:28:47,810

Yeah.

334

00:28:47,810 --> 00:28:49,380

[inaudible]

335

00:28:49,380 --> 00:28:54,660

That's a great question, it was how do we get.. are there gaps in the curriculum

336

00:28:54,669 --> 00:29:00,169

and how do we fill those in in waves? I think that there.. we can sneak things in.

337

00:29:00,169 --> 00:29:04,240

I certainly take every opportunity to talk about mental health in my undergraduate

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00:29:04,240 --> 00:29:10,309

curriculum that I can. I think we can even shift some of the research and

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00:29:10,309 --> 00:29:14,530

policy questions to address mental health issues so that we're getting in

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00:29:14,530 --> 00:29:20,570

the content by way of another subject area within, but if they're researching

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00:29:20,570 --> 00:29:24,760

best practices on mental health or they're trying to look at mental health

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00:29:24,760 --> 00:29:29,090

parity policy, they're talking about something that I can't expose them to

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00:29:29,090 --> 00:29:34,450

traditionally, maybe in the curriculum, but I can kind of sneak it in like

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00:29:34,450 --> 00:29:39,780

broccoli mixed up with something else and the curriculum allows for that certainly

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00:29:39,780 --> 00:29:46,030

and so making some curricular decisions

at the local level could be done, should

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00:29:46,030 --> 00:29:48,430

be done, will be done.

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00:29:48,430 --> 00:29:49,810

Thank you Sarah.

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00:29:49,810 --> 00:29:51,670

Thank you. [Applause]