

Nicole: You know I mean, I'm Nicole Racca and so my partner is William Aaron.

Michael: Hi, Aaron.

Will: I, um, Will here I'll actually- yeah, wait it uses my last name on the email so it messes up. Wait, hold on. There we go um, there we go.

Michael: Hi Will

Will: No worries next to each other

Michael: You're lucky you have two first names so yeah.

Will: The middle names Andrew so that's three first names all together.

Michael: There you go. You're triple

Will: by the time. Yeah.

Nicole: So um, obviously we're both to WPI students. And we are currently working with a corporation down in Panama City, Panama called Fundesteam. And they're interested in bringing more STEAM based learning to children in Panama because, their education system is pretty much the same as it has been for 30 years with little to no reform. Um, so what we've been is we've been reaching out to teachers inside Panama, and in like the US and other countries to see what their current perspectives and like, techniques have been, like there's been the switch to virtual learning. Um, so just a few housekeeping questions on Do you mind if we have your permission to record this interview? So we can capture responses?

Michael: Absolutely fine.

Nicole: And so any information that you share with us can be confidential and anonymous. We can not use your name if you would, like on Are we allowed to like quote you in our report and maybe use your name?

Michael: That's absolutely fine. I really don't think is anything controversial in the questions.

Nicole: As long as you're not spilling any tea.

Michael: Nicole, if I want to spill tea, it's gonna be a private session. You and I it's not gonna be-

Nicole: I'll drive down.

Michael: -Not gonna be in a public forum.

Nicole: Um, So, um, the other thing is we've been asking those that were interviewing if, in the end of all this if they would like to see our like, have us send over our a paper and webpage

Michael: Oh, yeah, I would love that.

Nicole: Absolutely. And also, we'll be transcribing this interview afterwards. Would you also like to see the transcript?

Michael: Sure.

Nicole: All right. Will, do you want to start us off?

Will: Yeah, sure. Uh, let's see. Hold on. I just lost my place. That's inconvenient timing. Okay, there we go. Okay. All right. So I guess First things first of what is sort of your level of experience with education in general, like how long you've been teaching?

Michael: I am just starting my 34th year teaching. So I'm back in the old days, I would have probably been already retired. But they changed the pension system in Rhode Island. So that's not happening anytime soon. And I am ready to begin the new school year.

Nicole: That starts the 14th. Right? Ah, so, since the whole shutdown and everything I'm assuming with Warwick Public schools, you have been running online courses like within the past six months, and there's a current plan in place to continue that?

Michael: Yeah. Warwick voted, um, a few weeks ago to continue distance learning because of the physical plant of the schools, lack of adequate ventilation and lack of staffing in terms of cleaning. So, we are starting remotely but there isn't a time frame as to when that will end but we are, we are going to start remotely.

Nicole: um we've recently heard that Gina Raimondo had kind of put a place in, like put a plan in place that as of October she wants everyone to be back in schools. Do you believe that the public school system will stick with that?

Michael: I don't think that it's physically possible for we in Warwick to safely bring everyone back, and I can't see ventilation issues being fixed, you know, in a, you know, short period of time. So, Nicole could tell you my room I have I have one window that opens in the back. I mean, there's no, there's no air on a good day, um, and to which it's just not, it's just not safe. So the the governor has kind of chastise Warwick a number of times she has publicly sort of shamed Warwick when other districts have also voted to begin remotely and she doesn't say anything about those districts, but that's okay. I'm not really worried.

Nicole: The current enrollment at pilgrim Is it still sort of towards Is it like wasn't it like 1200 kids or something in Warwick?

Michael: More than that, It's like 1400.

Nicole: Okay. Yeah. And so the high school just for background information, William, it's all one floor. On. Yeah, there's like, everything's like in squares, little wings.

Michael: Yeah, they're like, they're like, they're like, it's like cubes. There's um. You know, courtyards that the school is built around. And there's one section and Nicole can tell you, it's where like English history like the humanities, English history, foreign language. So if you're switching from that to the math and science area, there's always a bottleneck. I can Can't imagine, you know, trying to get you know, any and and she talked about staggering the passing times and everything but everybody's classes are on a different you have classes with every with everybody else. And you're not going to the next class together. So I just don't see how it how it can work but

Nicole: also like any kind of windows in any of the classrooms, they're always up high. And most of windows in any classroom kind of faces that courtyard, it's very much very much not good ventilation for any means, Not at all,

Michael: at all. Not at all. So I can't really see out this is like a bank of, of one section. And there is a window there but you're not allowed to open it for ventilation purposes.

Will: So, since like it's essentially like it's

Michael: it's a rescue window. Yeah, jump out into the courtyard in case there's an intruder. I don't know really. But

Nicole: so um, obviously, through the shutdown you were using, like completely virtual learning, but how long have you possibly been using like kind of online education platforms, whether it be like Google Classroom or anything

Michael: I was fortunate that I was already comfortable using Google classroom and and the meats and everything. So it wasn't, you know, a huge stretch. I myself think that it was a pretty positive experience for myself, you know, on my end and for the, you know, the students and the students that I felt, um, gave up. Were the seniors in my elective class that probably didn't need the credit anyway. Those were the ones that I kept saying, you know, like you haven't done anything since we left in, in the middle of March. Are you going to do anything and so, and they were I had two class, they were probably 10 in total, you know, and they just, you know, they just didn't need the credit and they, you know, the rest of the of my classes, you know, they were on top of things they, you know, they handed things in, they follow deadlines, they did everything, you know, everything that they were supposed to do.

Nicole: So for like purposes of content distribution, did you kind of just like upload on like lecture videos for them to learn?

Michael: Well, you know, the, it was interesting in the AP class in my AP class, College Board, because there was like that a couple of weeks where they weren't sure what they were going to do then they had canceled the SATs and the PSATs but they they made that decision to to continue with the AP testing, but the format was going to be different and you know, because they were doing it at home How is that going to work and college board itself, um, put out a review videos by units and I watched a couple of those were really good. Um, so I would post that Nicole knows my process. Um, they still have the study packets, they still have the essays they still had, basically all of that I would sometimes tape not an entire lecture, but five to 10 minutes sort of a highlight thing this is like really what's important that you need to know you know, if we're doing like causes of world war one right here the four main causes, you can get the details here's the reading. I'll post the you know, the reading. I have found up a PDF of the textbook that was able to because again, when we left that Friday, no one kind of knew what, you know what I mean, like what was happening. And, you know, no one was allowed back in the building, the kids didn't have their textbooks for the most part. So you kind of had to do things on the fly. But, um, you know, I think they were pretty successful at a lot of fours this year. So, um, I was quite happy with the results.

Will: What are some? Well, I'm curious to know that then in that case, because you only mentioned like some of the College Board videos in terms of like, the content itself that you then like taught, what are some other examples of content that you then like, used or like created in order to then like continued on with the class was it like just the college board videos are like,

Michael: Oh, I myself, um, especially in my I don't use them that much in my AP class, but for like the regular West Civ class, and some of my electives, I have PowerPoints. So I would post I

would post the, I would post the PowerPoint. And we'd spend part of like the, you know, like the Google meet portion of it, going over the PowerPoint, you know, but they would have that in classroom already. And, you know, again, they can do a kind of one or two ways you can look at the PowerPoint first and then listen to me or you can listen to me and then go back to the PowerPoint. So I usually let kids decide. And most of them probably do neither. But I usually let them kind of like you. You have to find your own methodology of what's, you know, successful for you and what's not So, and I'm not wanting to get obviously I'm not one to like overload kids like an AP class, you have notes, but I'm not wanting a regular class that there's, you know, all this extraneous stuff that you don't need. It's it's pretty much the nuts and bolts of a particular unit or section is what's expected of them.

Nicole: So when creating this content, do you use any kind of like online amenities or interactive applications to create any fun engaging content for your students?

Michael: We did like, we did some online Kahoot stuff. Like we did that, um, you know, the problem I ran into and I have a feeling it's going to be the same is the, a lot of the upperclassmen. They were working as many hours as they could, and they were working during the school day. So last year, you know, it was You know, whenever you get this done and as the time went on, I kind of lengthened the expectation of the due date. And I would make it like Sunday night at 11:59. You know, and give out the work like at the beginning of the week, and it was due at the end of the week because I had so many kids say to me, you know, my, my parents or my mom or my dad or whoever they're laid off, I have to work in order to bring some money in. There were there were more of those than you would expect in a suburb like, you know, Warwick, Rhode Island. And I just didn't think that it was fair to like, you know, you have to be at my Google meet when there's bigger issues going on in their family in the world, you know. Now this year, we have been instructed that they have to attend if they are not at your They are marked absent, and there's some kind of a consequence. So I don't I don't know how that's going to work because I, you know, can foresee the same situation happening with kids have obligations and you know, if you have to choose between, you know, a class and feeding your family you know, I don't know what what's going to happen.

Nicole: I've been in touch with [REDACTED], and like she was that same boat is like she was working and she plans to continue

Micheal: She works at McDonald's. She works a lot of hours.

Nicole: Yeah, she was there the other day. She I think she had like a 10 hour shift. She was telling me She's like, I gotta go, I'm done with my break. I've been here for like, eight hours got two more. That's wild and like the same with [REDACTED]. I think you had her as well. But I didn't personally expect that but I also had You know, we had this project, we were supposed to go abroad. And then we weren't. And as much as it's a full time job, we didn't really have as many requirements. And my current plan was to I was supposed to work at my internship and continue there and I haven't yet but I'm back at my research lab and I'm still doing research.

Michael: I will give you an example. I'm not going to use the name but I had a girl who was in my regular West Civ class. She probably belonged to my AP class, but she's she's just not a Hitch and just like history. So she had like a 99 average the entire year without without like breaking a sweat in our in a regular class. And we were told not to give like traditional final exams in June, like you, you do some kind of a capstone project, sort of a thing and it was supposed to take like, you know, two to three weeks to do so. And they were like, you know, due dates and everything. And she said, No, she said to me Look, she said, I, you know, I'm working two jobs. You know, is there any way that we could, you know, could I just turned the thing in without, you know, all these, you know, I knew she would do it. She literally was on top of everything. And I just said to her, I said, You know what, don't even worry about it. Because if she was a senior, she would have been exempt anyway, because of her of her average. Why should she be penalized because she's a junior, on top of everything, like what's the whole purpose of of this? You know, I do think you have to be flexible and and I know that there are quite a few teachers that are inflexible, you know, but you're in the middle of a pandemic and he has a girl working multiple jobs, who doesn't really need to do that. Whether if she did the project or average wasn't going to move a decimal point like she was going to get an A plus on the project she had an A plus her average isn't going to change. So you're going to penalize someone for that.

Will: Yeah, so sorry, just filling out this here. Okay. So what is what would you consider? So I, let's roll back at least a bit to like the the the PowerPoints that you mentioned beforehand. What was your process you also mentioned that like you don't want to inundate them with like material that's like unnecessary or anything. What is your process then for like creating the PowerPoints? Because it seems to me like

Michael: I make them up myself. I mean, I think it's, it's easier when you have many years of experience. To know, when you have a particular content, what's the important stuff? And what's the stuff that can go? Because we found, and it's going to be a problem this year as well, curriculum wise, something's going to have to get cut. Because you can't, you can't in, you know, in a history class, you're not going to get to where you need to be. Unless you cut out the stuff that is relatively unimportant, and you can, you can make a claim that everything is important, but that's just not being realistic. So you have, you're going to have to chop somewhere. You know, so I think, you know, when, when I was a brand new teacher, I was so afraid that I wasn't going to cover every single bullet point in the book or every single, you have to mention every little single detail. And when you look at the big picture and that comes with experience, you want the kids to have the big picture. I don't necessarily need all those, find minute bullet points. Because you know what you can, you can find that you can find that here in literally five seconds.

Will: In such a case, just for like further clarification, then as you're trimming down and focusing on what's really important, how long would you say that takes you nowadays, considering your like, extended experience

Michael: I can, I can, I can look at a slide and say, You know what, this isn't really that important. We're just gonna go on to the next one. And don't worry about it if it's all good. You know, but conversely, you have to understand too, that if they've been exposed to that information, you can't assess them on that either. You know, you have to, there are some people that use the same tests from 20 years ago. But if you're not, you know, covering the same material, then that's not a valid assessment where, you know, you have to expect them to perform when they haven't been exposed to the content.

Will: Does this apply to both sort of the both the PowerPoints that you created and also like the little short, like videos that you've made as well, this apply for both?

Michael: Or just in a discussion

Will: Okay, so it applies for all over

Michael: what I choose, you know, like what I would choose to do, you know, like, we're not doing that we're gonna we're gonna move it on, you know, we're gonna, this is this is it? So, um, last year in AP, they stopped the content at 1900. So they made the decision, College Board did that there would be nothing on the exam. That was before World War One, let's say. So the entire 20th century wasn't going to be assessed. So it made it easy in that class because Basically, it's like, we don't have to worry about the 20th century, unfortunately, you know, um, but the last thing that we did was was right when you remember 1917 that movie? The 1917 Yeah. Was it was like, though, the last weekend before Corona. Um, I went to the movies with my AP kids to see 1917 and we were the only ones in the movie theater. So I don't know if that was because of Corona. Or, you know, at this point in time, nobody wanted to see 1917 but it was nice because I could just sit there and we were the only ones. And I could I could sort of like lecture while the movie was going on and give them you know, some, you know, details about you know, the trenches or whatever. See how they're in the German trench now and how deep and they made a concrete and when the You know, when the movie started, they were in the British trenches, and they were kind of temporary. And so, you know, stuff that you know, you would you could do, but if I was, if I was in in class and I was running out of time, then my whole trench discussion, I would have ditched it because you just, you just don't have the time to do that. But again, that's, that's all experience. That's something that you just, you just know, there isn't any way to, you know, to read about that in a in a book, you just know what has to go. And you just, you know what I mean? Like you just do it. It's a must be like for a medical professional, how they do triage. don't mean like, you can't read about how, you know, if you see someone that that person gets immediate attention, you just look at them assess on the spot, and you decide like who's going to be treated, where they're going to be treated, how they're going to be treated? Right then in there. That's Kind of the same you know, with a teacher is when you think about it when you're a teacher, you you are making thousands of decisions in any given day. How you know, like you don't read a script you're not you're not you are you are on when you are actively instructing. And every minute you're deciding what you're going to do and I'm gonna do this with you, but you don't think about it, you just do it. It's just automatic.

Nicole: So when creating like your virtual content, did you find any specific aspects or things that worked well, to engage your students and make sure that like they were on top of like, topics that are being learned?

Michael: Again, it's it's hard because, you know, the, the Google meet, I found, could be awkward because, I remember one incident there was a girl lying on her bed. And she was in pajamas. You know, and it's like you don't want to address it's like, it's like dress code violations like I you know, you address it and then it's like, Why? Why are you looking at me wearing you know, so it's like, Okay, so then I look and the door is open and it looks right into her bathroom. And her dad is walking by. And he's like shaving I'm like, okay, like, this is you know, weird, like it's, you know, I mean.

Nicole: I attended classes from a recliner. And we had four of us doing school and like work from home and just like anyone would walk by me sometimes I'm like, you know, if I was actually on zoom, it would be weird.

Michael: Again, we are we are expected to hold two meets per week. So that is that is the expectation to formal meets per week. If you want to do more, you have to get permission because the schedule is is set in stone. And it's not rotating. That's going to be something else this year. That's going to be interesting, because period one is always at 7:24. So it doesn't rotate. So I have I'm a senior elective. I have my American legal class period one, mostly seniors, I have a feeling that seniors are not going to be getting up at 7:24 to be in my Google meet. No, I mean, I know that so. You know, but what can you do? The other thing, Nicole, I don't know if I told you this or not, but I Went back to college. Yeah, I'm getting my degree in business. So, yeah, I needed something in Corona times for myself, you know. And so I took a class over the summer and I'm taking a class now, it's made me a little more reflective of my own practices. You know, and one of the things I liked was, you know, if you have a reading, and you have to post your interpretation of that, you then have to comment on two other people's interpretations. You know, when, for the most part 99% of the time that positive comments a couple of times, they're, you know, a little a little negative, but I kind of liked that I'm going to somehow incorporate that this year. You know, have some kind of a primary source document have their analysis and I think I'm going to do you know, they only have to post one but you have to, you know, like you have to comment on, like peer editing sort of, yep, you have to comment on someone else's analysis and, you know, kindly not you don't want criticism of them.

Nicole: Even like before Corona, we have had like a lot of professors here, they'll start discussion boards for that, like sole reason where like, they'll send out an article or paper or something like that. People throw up their, like analysis of it or their ideas, opinions and like, you have to comment and I think it's, I haven't personally do it. I would love to do like, I love talking about things like that.

Michael: No, but and I think it's good because we all know that there are some people that are very comfortable talking in class. And then there are some people that is the worst experience of their life is if they get called on. So this way, in the written form, you can actually hear their

voice because if if you were doing it You know in a in a live setting like this they would never volunteer to be to be heard. And and again I hate calling on someone that is so painfully shy that it literally ruins their day. So this way in writing if they respond you know you still can can you know assess whether or not that they you know understand what's going on, but it also gives them an opportunity to contribute.

Nicole: So I know we were discussing earlier that you'll make some like quick 10 minute videos to post to do like a quick overview on what like physical types of equipment Have you been using, we've just been using a webcam or-

Michael: I would use my phone and then post it to classroom.

Nicole: Okay, cool.

Michael: Like and just like myself like nothing formal just, you know, just a quickie little all right here. Here's what you need to know. Because people aren't interested. I mean, I think the attention span that most people have is probably 10 minutes or less. So the minute you start, I had a PD this morning, where the woman droned on for 48 minutes. And literally like halfway through I just, it was like background noise. You know, like-

Nicole: if you were to like continue creating this content, let's say like later years, would you ever want to kind of like, learn or understand how to do like a more formal setup, or do you think yeah

Michael: I think the thing that hurts me is my age because I'm, I'm resistant to the ever increasing change in technology. You know, where younger people, you know, they're like, Oh, you know, I got just got a new upgrade or I got a new phone and I'm like, Oh my God, please keep my phone so I don't have to learn the new, you know, a new system or whatever. I think that's the difference between, you know, generations whereas younger people in Braille like oh, like I this is so cool like, look what I can do now on my phone and older people and more like, Oh my god, I have to learn how to do that. I don't wait. I don't want to learn how to do.

Nicole: So you'll never be like one of those history teachers posting tik toks or anything about that about their content.

Michael: Oh Honey, not on my content. But did you see my Tik Tok from last year?

Nicole: What no?!

Michael: I was Tik Tok famous. It was trending. We did it, it was the week, it was spirit week. And I well I dressed up as Chad, I was a Chad. So I had my red solo cup in my lacrosse stick and my Vineyard Vines outfit and I was in a tik tok I'll have I'll send it to you if I can. But yeah, I was tik tok. I'm sure you can find it. It was I even started at tollgate. So it was. it was all over the city.

Nicole: Over quarantine I did a project where my partners and I analyzed our social media usage during quarantine. And it was scary. So social media is kind of removed from my life for now and it's the best thing.

Michael: So I'm not, you know what I mean? Like I'm not, I'm, you know, I don't feel like I'm obsessed or anything like that. I know it's a tool. I just, it takes so much time just to go through,

you know, and I'm not even, you know, basically Facebook is about is about it, I have an Instagram and I have a Twitter and I have all that I just don't use it. So I don't snap anybody so
Will: What would you consider are probably some of the challenges that you face with like creating and like dealing with online learning content instead of bringing it out?

Michael: You know how you how you engage the students in a classroom, I can do it through humor. I can there are a lot of ways that you can you can do that. Online is totally different. You know and I and, again because it was an emergency last spring You know, I thought all summer about how how to do it more, you know, because you're only going to have them twice a week on this, you know, kind of a setting like this. And I'm not exactly sure, you know, because if it's just straight history, they're going to get lost in the first five minutes. You know, I find that I can, I can get people interested when I make them understand that history is relevant today, even if it's something that we're studying 400 years ago because you can bring that right to today and understand that cause and effect relationship. You know, I always tell them like history is like the GPS, you can't know where you're going until you know where you've been. Everybody has a starting point, your GPS has a starting point or you didn't get there. Accidentally you There was a reason why you started where you is the reason why my car is in my driveway right now. You know, I mean, like I did errands and I came home to be home for this, like there's a reason for that. You know, so that's, that's history. It's going to be more difficult in this kind of a setting than when I'm, you know, in my in my classroom, but as I as I've thought about it all summer, all you can do is try do you know what I mean? Like I'm not willing to give up or anything, but I'm gonna do the best that I can. Because it's no one's fault that we're in a situation like this.

Nicole: Along with that last year, did you see any on like challenges with either students falling asleep during any Google meets or just like more excuses than you normally would find.

Michael: Again, the Google meets, the ones that I'm the ones that attended. were, you know, they attended, I did have quite a few who I'm either said they had to go because we weren't really good at, um, sort of, like, you know, like in a period block you had and Nicole would know is there's quite a few teachers who think they are like the bomb and so their subject matter or their presentation is worthy of the three hours that is eating into my time and they would not they would not relinquish their time even though it wasn't their time. You know, so you had a lot of students having to pick and choose you know, like, Am I going to go to English with You know, the guy thinks he's, you know, Shakespearean actor. And so he's got three hours to talk about Beowulf or, you know, am I gonna go to a history lesson where the guy really doesn't care if I'm there or not, which, you know, like, I'm not gonna penalize somebody who's not going to be there. What are you doing? You say, like, Oh, [REDACTED] is doing a three hour Google meet, so I can't go to yours. Am I going to say, okay, you know, it makes more sense. If you know who the players are. Nicole knows if, I gave Nicole list of names, you don't understand exactly who I'm referencing, but there are people who think that they are very important. And so therefore they need three hours to do their lesson and other people aren't that important. So you don't need

the time. So they did fix that this year where there is a set schedule and you have to follow that, that schedule. So I'm hoping that that's a little bit, you know, better for everyone.

Nicole: If you had any access to any, I don't know, resources to, like, alleviate some of the challenges or make content more engaging or if you even had on like, the explanation to use any like resources. Can you like think of any that you'd like to learn?

Michael: Yeah, I do better one on one. So I do better when I physically can experience it myself. watching something from a video isn't the best way for me to learn. So way back in the day when we started doing online grading, we didn't have any professional development. We were told To watch a YouTube video that the city of Cranston produced as to how to use Aspen. So I, I basically taught myself how to use Aspen. So if in the best possible world, if I could have like a, like a techie or an IT person or just somebody who is really savvy when it comes to that, sit down with me, which again is challenging in Corona, but sit down with me and show me a few things that would help. Like this morning, I went into the building. And the the tech person, Mrs. Randall showed me a couple of little tricks. Um, you know, because they have the Google meets embedded into the Google Classroom format. So all that basically all I have to do like last year, we had to schedule it through the calendar, and it was kind of a The but this year it's embedded into the Google Classroom. I just have to go on to my Google Classroom kit like Google meet and I've already opened up the window the kids already have the code so it's like you know they know what the schedule is you know so it's like it should be it should be perfect.

Nicole: So for you personally believe like one on one one on one help would be better than like even if you had like kind of a manual like read this.

Michael: I mean I manual is better than nothing but yeah. For me I need multiple opportunities to perfect the even today when she was showing me you know, she showed me a one class added whatever I needed to do I need to do for all five and she showed me the first time that when she was going to leave I'm like, don't leave until I'm don't leave until I do all five like in case I in case I mess up. Um, because it was a way you had to manage manually, anyway. But I personally would do better if there was a person who could, like show me versus just the manual. She sent me the directions. I'm in an E and an email. And I was like, I'm in school on Wednesday, by chance we'll even be there and could you like stop by my room, I promise to wear my mask and, you know, show me you know, kind of what it is that we need to do. The where we have the opportunity to if we want to go in to the building and do our Google meets. And that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to go into the building, because there's four people in my household all trying to use the Wi Fi at the same time all on a different schedule with different different things and No trying to get it all set, it'll be a challenge.

Nicole: My mother is also in that same boat where [REDACTED] is asking them to come in and teach virtually from their classrooms at least, especially to kids who are probably across the hall in their own actual classroom.

Michael: And again, it's totally my choice. It's an option. You know what I mean? So, um, I just think like today I got, I was there. I got a lot of work done there was I shut the door, you know,

there was nobody around, I can take my mask off, do what I needed to do. And then I just been I just left so it was actually perfect.

Nicole: Do you think um having like the resources available like, you know, like a chalkboard or-? Do you have like a document cam? Do you think that's going to help?

Michael: Document camera that I've used. I have my Promethean board. I think it'll be it'll be easier. I have my old fashioned maps, Nicole knows I always would reference the my big, my big wall map. I mean, I've got my stuff. I'm in my room, I would just make it, it would definitely make it easier if I was there.

Nicole: Is there any additional like maybe virtual resources other than Google classrooms or Google meets at Warwick Public Schools has, like given you guys licenses to?

Michael: They asked over the summer if we had any, you know, any requests. And I just said if we could get just an online version of the textbook, that alone would solve you know, much of my problem. They couldn't get that done. I found which is probably illegal, but I found a couple of um, [REDACTED] I found a couple of PDFs of the books I use. So I found Spiel Vogel which was my main because again, my main, my main concern, but my first concern is always my AP class. And I found a PDF of Spiel Vogel so I'm like, okay, that's one. You know, one thing off my plate. I found a PDF of the street law book. I found a PDF, the regular West Civ Kids. The book I use is from 1994. It's not even it's not even not only not available, it's not even publishing. It's not even a newer edition of it. It's it's out of print. So I found one that was pretty close that I used and then the specifics, I found up a PDF up to chapter four. So once I get past chapter four, I don't know what I'm going to do, but You know, I also can't worry about a month from now, I have to concentrate on Monday. That's my, you know, not look so far ahead. Let's just get all my ducks in a row for Monday. And, you know, go from there. But that would be my number one if I could get like if there was like a school purchased, you know, online version of the textbook, that alone would solve many of my problems.

Nicole: So what is your kind of like first day, especially like Monday, what does it look like

Michael: On Monday, it's like, it's like a regular day. And then all the classes are meeting on Monday. And we've been told that you have to go over policies. So policies and expectations, especially with the Google meets, so I don't want to like a similar The teachers are talking about, like a dress code. Like, I don't want to, you know, like, you know, no pajamas. I don't even want to address that. You know what I mean? myself like, I don't know, I don't want to go there. Um I'm gonna ask that they turn their, their camera on. You know, um, I know a lot of times the cameras off I, you know, again, the problem is, is that you set the rule but there's no what what what's the punishment supposed to be if they don't? So if I say my expectation is that you leave your camera on, and then somebody refuses to put the camera on? What am I going to do go to their house and give them detention? Like what? You know what I mean? Like what's the what's the consequence if they don't do What what you want so because no matter what I'm going to end up losing that, that battle so do I even want to get in that fight so I'm going to say like, I really want you to put the camera on. But that's not the hill that I'm gonna die on. Like I'm not

that's not happening because you're gonna you're gonna end up losing that and Nicole knows I get along with most people like I'm not I'm not the type so you know like the teachers that like they throw a kid out of the room because they don't have a pencil like you've you've wasted time you've wasted the lesson. Like he has a pencil like let's move on like move you know, moving on, but like, I'm not gonna fight over stuff like that. So it's mostly policies and procedures on Monday.

Nicole: On Have you run into any issues where maybe like a kid is like Like, oh, I don't have a camera or anything like that, because I know they give the Chromebooks that have the camera?

Michael: No, but you know what issue I did run into in the spring was I started using Google Forms for my assessments, because there's a lockout feature where they can't, they can't like look at something else. And then the kids figure that out. And then suddenly, everybody's Chromebook was broken. And they had to use a laptop or some other some other device where that same feature doesn't, doesn't work. Or I'd have to like upload a different version of the quiz. So I'm like, whoa, I'm making myself you know, I'm making way too much work for myself. So I'm part of Monday's routine is like you need to use your Chromebook. The Chromebook is broken. You should have had it Fixed over the summer. You know, I'm not providing an alternative assessment, as I'm going to lock out, you know, to be able to access other things and you won't be able to take a quiz.

Will: So in terms of like, I know we mentioned beforehand, the premium for that document can like that's stuff that you currently are working with.

Michael: Yes

Will: What sort of like do you know if you'd like or have looked into any like services or programs or things that you would like to learn or like a way to sort of enhance like, or to better the visual content that you create, or the online content that you create?

Michael: It seems to me a lot of the elementary teachers use a lot more of the available programs. I mean, the secondary teachers tend to, I think, be more traditional, you know, when it comes to their teaching, probably because it's so content driven. You know, that I could, I suppose, but my point is, is like in the last couple of years, years of my career, it's it doesn't. It doesn't make any. I don't know, I don't feel like it's gonna make anything better for me to learn some of these new technologies or new techniques in those last few years of my career, you know, I'm kind of, you know, it's like you're on the highway and you're you just, you're at the top of the hill, like I'm way, way down the hill. So I'm, I'm almost almost ready to, to call it a career, I'm not going to, you know, invest the time and energy and focus on things that you know. And the other thing is, I found like with the younger teachers, they're really good at technology. But they don't know anything about content. Like they, they're there. They're not like they can do all this wizzy stuff, but they're not comfortable in the actual content. With me, I always felt like you had to be comfortable in your content. And then the rest of the stuff would come. You know, like classroom management, like you can't have any, any classroom management if you you're not comfortable in what you're teaching, if you're constantly yourself looking up, okay? Um, you

know, what's the third thing on that I want to get? If you don't know what you're doing, if you don't know history, for example, I can't teach it. So, you know, the flashy kind of stuff, you know, and they have and they have the flash they just have no idea what the flash means. That's kind of what I've found in my know that a newer teacher compared to a veteran teacher, so to speak. So if there is out there, I mean, somebody wants I'm not I'm not going to look for it myself. Personally, you know, I'm quite content with the platforms that we have like the, you know, like the google classroom and you know all that and and Warwick is not going to invest in anything that costs money. And it's funny because they, they, you know, they tell you the lies like everything is Google driven, Google base and you go anyplace else like in the college, I'm taking classes. You don't want anything on Google. They want Microsoft Word. They don't they don't want Google products like they want Microsoft Word. They don't want that we tell our kids Oh, you know, like Microsoft is out you need to know you know, word for it. You know, like Microsoft. Everything is going to be Google based in the future. lies lies my school told me you know, there's number one, everything is Google driven. You know that you want Google because it's free. That's that's that's what it is. And anything that they have to pay to upgrade Warwick does nothing. Turn It In.com. No, we're not going to pay for the upgrade. We're going to do the cheapest, most basic version that there is Aspen cheapest, most basic version that is that ever going to do the gold plan they like on, you know, the bronze plan or whatever.

Will: Do you, or this is sort of a bit more of an opinion question but sort of like as a teacher and with both the difficulties from the end of last semester and then even starting out now. As an educator, do you think that this sort of online education is sort of is it, is it successful so far with like teaching your students specifically?

Michael: Um, I think it went as well as could be expected I have a fear that the powers that be are going to use this to say, we, you know, we can save a heck of a lot of money by doing some, you know, format of online instruction, and then you don't really need a teacher. You know, you could you could have a paraprofessional, sort of like even if you even if you did went back to a traditional school kind of a setting. You could have a paraprofessional July like the classroom management part. You could like everybody's working on the same assignment. Everybody's working on the same presentation, everybody's doing the same thing. You know, you upload your assignment or you upload your assessment. There'll be a you know, like a certified teacher who corrects grades or assesses That and you could fire you know most of your teaching staff really I mean it's, it's like automation in you know manufacturing it's the same it's the same principle. I worry about that sometime or somewhere down the road. But um you know for myself I think it went as well as could be expected last spring you know, and I was I was pleasantly surprised that the kids for the most part did what they were supposed to do.

Nicole: So I know you have both your daughter's, um, and [REDACTED] was a senior this year right?

Michael: [REDACTED] did [REDACTED] did Running Start so she was at CCRI.

Nicole: So good

Michael: Yeah, already. She to me, she graduated, but she already had um a year's worth of college credits, you know, so she chose to stay because which I'm glad she did, because so many colleges are doing virtual learning. A lot of them that being sent I just saw was the University of South someplace like they, the kids were only there like a week or two and they, you know, got sent home, you're spending a lot of money, not knowing sort of like what it's going to be. So she stayed at CCRI and I was thrilled with that because she'll have her associates next year, and she'll still be 18.

Nicole: So as a parent on how did you feel about this, like, I understand it was kind of, there was no opinion like it just kind of had to happen, but like, how did you feel as a parent like this jump to virtual learning Like, how did your daughters adapt?

Michael: So ■■■ was a sophomore at ■■■. Um, so, you know, I understood the, you know, there was a, there was a range of, um, like, some of the teachers that ■■■ had like, way, way, way, way too much and a lot of it was like busy work. You know, a lot of it was just like, oh my god, like, I think people were afraid that if you gave too little work, you'd be judged that it was too easy. So they, they tended to give too much work. You know, finding that finding that balance virtually, I think is is difficult, but like, I didn't, I didn't have to contact anyone at ■■■ like it was it was. It was fine. She you know, she did well.

Nicole: And ■■■'s just moved all to Virtual Learning?

Michael: Yeah, but he like last year, um, you know, she was at CCRI only. So for senior year, she wasn't at tollgate. She was already at CCRI. And then they transitioned. Same thing. They, you know, they transition to all virtual. So she was used to that, you know, that she was used to that platform there, you know,

Nicole: Do you think it kind of still gave them on like when they move to virtual learning do they seem to retain the content as well as they might like in person setting or?

Michael: I mean, I don't think that any virtual setting can match that dynamic of a classroom. And you know, we've everybody's been in a classroom and maybe it's that particular day, but it's really clicking in that classroom. And there's that back and forth, being the kids and the instructor and it just, it's kind of like magic. It's kind of hard to To experience that virtually, you know what I mean? And I know myself taking these college classes now and it's been a long time since I have been in college. It's, it's everything is, is there's no interaction with the professor. It's like every week, here's the here are the assignments. You know, it's due at the end of the week, you know, you take a quiz or test, boom, the next week stuff gets gets uploaded, you know, at at 12 midnight on Monday morning. So, you know, it's not as but you still learn, you know what I mean? Like I it's not an ideal way of learning I kind of miss sitting in a, in a classroom. You know, speaking as a student there was, it was hard to, you know, be like, Wow, I can't, you know, I can't believe that I'm on the other side of the desk right now, but You know, it's also in one way good that you're, you know, it makes like I said, it makes you more reflective of your own practices when you see somebody else and what their expectations are.

Will: So, I'm curious to know, again, this is a bit of like an opinion question, but, um, you your experience in for teaching is so focused in with like teaching history like as subject Do you think that I guess it might sort of depend on the subject but if like history itself as a subject for like, online learning would work better or worse as compared to other subjects?

Michael: I think it works better. That I think History works better. I think, um, I think someone like a science like the sciences The math. I think it's harder. I just, I just think like, I know myself, like doing a math problem, like on my own versus watching the teacher do the math problem or a lab in a science class. I think you physically have to be there. Not like watching the lab and a YouTube video, or whatever. I do think it lends. I mean, it's still not ideal, but I think it lends itself easier in a history class or an English class. I think that it does, you know, in a math or science.

Will: Would there possibly be like, um, like a subject that would work better than history then in that case, just curious or not, or do you feel like history?

Michael: I just, I feel very, I guess fortunate because I personally didn't kind of like struggle with you know, and even even my daughter, she found the, you know, the history part easy compared to, you know, some of the other classes. And again, a lot of that is is teacher driven, but, you know, just you know, here's, you know, here's either a reading passage or here's, you know, and you know, ■■■'s teacher last year, Nicole knows ■■■ like ■■■'s teacher, ■■■ had ■■■ last year so she, you know, he's, he's a very lively and energetic and he posted videos and he's funny and it's, you know, it's, it's, um, you know, again, a lot of times it's personality driven so it's easier. So.

Nicole: I can definitely see on ■■■ just like bouncing off the walls and doing that making it super fun cuz he even was like that just like as a teacher as a coach and everything.

Michael: Exactly, Exactly

Nicole: Well, um, I think that kind of wraps up at least some of the questions that we have about your experience with teaching overall in virtual learning. Do you have any questions for us and what we're doing?

Michael: No, but if you need, um, follow ups, just let me know, Nicole, I'll be glad to help.

Nicole: Absolutely. Thank you so much. We really appreciate that.

Michael: Welcome. You are welcome and stay in touch.

Nicole: That's really good to hear. Yeah. Um, is there anything else that maybe you've touched upon you want to add anything more to add?

Michael: I just, to sum up, I would say that distance learning is not ideal. But in my experience, it was more positive than negative. Because I really felt like the kids that even gave a minimal amount of effort still learned something. It was, in my experience, I found, you know, so and that's kind of what we're all about. You know, you want to want the kids to have learned something you want to move them from point A to point B by the end of the year.

Nicole: Well, we really, really appreciate you especially on such short notice, like coming on here and chatting with us.

Michael: Anyway, I can help you, you know that!

Nicole: Absolutely. Thank you so much. And it was really great to hear from you. Alright, well, thank you so much.

Michael: Bye Bye guys!

Will: Have a good day!