

Nicole: All right, um, so just to introduces ourselves. Um, I'm Nicole Racca. That's my partner William Aaron. We both go to Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Um, for the first seven weeks of this semester, we were supposed to be in Panama, completing our interdisciplinary Junior capstone project. But instead now we're working with the same Panamanian Corporation virtually and their goal is to bring more STEAM education to students down in Panama because they do have like a lesser education system, it really hasn't been reformed in the past 30 years. Um, so we are working to create a virtual resource for teachers whether peddle like in Panama or outside Panama to learn how to create virtual learning content. Um, so we wanted to interview you about your experience with online learning, especially after hearing that you went to like a professional development webinar this summer. But just for some housekeeping questions, if you don't mind, do we have your permission to record this interview?

Jennifer: Yes

Nicole: Um, and any information you share with us can be completely confidential and anonymous. Um, do you consent to be quoting quoted in our report and like can we use your name if we quote you?

Jennifer: Yep

Nicole: All right. Um, and Everyone that we've been interviewing, we've been asking, if you'd like to see a report and, like mock up of our website in the end along with the transcript after we interview you?

Jennifer: Whatever works for you. So you're, you're in America right now. Yes. I didn't quite get that piece.

Nicole: We're both in Worcester working

Jennifer: I'm glad you're here

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

Will: Yeah, sure. Of course. Um, so one thing, thank you, especially for like coming to, you know, talk with us. We like really appreciate it. Um, I for one, I'm actually like, really interested in learning about like, sort of this like seminar and your experience with education. Um, so actually, really to start us off what is sort of as like an educator, what's your experience with education in general like how long have you been teaching and like, what kind of like certifications Have you like or degree in teaching or anything sort of, of that nature?

Jennifer: I was in the corporate world for about 10 years. I stayed home with my children for about 10. And then I got my master's degree in education at Roger Williams University. And I've been in education for about 10, well, it's been 12 years actually. So I didn't have any undergrad degrees in education. I got my Masters of Arts in Teaching for Elementary Ed. So I'm certified K through six regular ed. And I taught for two years in a public school in East Greenwich. And then the last 10 years. I've been at Our Lady of Mercy which is a private Catholic school. Ironically, it's literally across the street from where I taught. And Our Lady of Mercy is in East Greenwich, Rhode Island.

Nicole: So our next question is, are you on like currently preparing to run more online courses? Or have you run online classes in the past six months?

Jennifer: So I have never run a class? I am. I wouldn't say that, you know, if I were to describe myself in terms of my abilities in technology, I would say I'm average, maybe above average. I'm certainly I'm not a novice, but I am far from an expert. So yes, I have already incorporated in the four days that we've been back at school. A couple of the platforms that I'm going to want our children to use because I'm anticipating that we will be full distance learning. I'm trying not to be pessimistic, but realistic. So, and certainly the pandemic and us leaving school in March just threw us into deep waters. So it was kind of crazy trying to pull all that together.

Will: Just to like clarify, would you say that? So, like, pre pandemic, did you ever use online sort of education before? Or is it sort of with the rise of pandemic is that what really is sort of pushed?

Jennifer: You know, I mean, it kind of I guess it depends on how you define online education. So were there programs that we used? Yes. Certain we were up on Google Classroom, so at least my children were very familiar with that. In I teach fifth grade. So with that, they they type and they look at their doc. But I usually print it and give it back to them. Because I find that they have difficulty reading my edits that I put on the side and then going back and editing it on the computer. So they use it, you know, a simple doc to type something, but then I kind of print it out. And within Google Classroom, I actually, in addition to Google Classroom, I have my own website, which I love. I love my website. And I've had a website since I began teaching so it's kind of evolved over 12 years. And on that website, there are various topics and research and links for the children to use and we do use that in class as well. So I don't know if you want me to go into detail with with that or to?

Will: Yeah by all means. I mean hosting an actual website, directly like that that's something we are looking for.

Jennifer: Yeah, but and you can you can access it because it's, it's on the web. So all you've got to do is go to, olmschool.org and that will bring up bring you to Our Lady of mercy website. And then if you click down on the left hand side about us, you'll go down to faculty, you'll find my lovely picture and my my link to my website so that'll give you a bit more insight as to what I've actually got on it. But of course, very general overview of it would be just some simple resources for the children in the event they forget something at school so you know the the reading log or whatnot. But there are links to specific periodicals or magazines. That I have them use for a current events assignment that we do. They do 15 over the course of the year. So they're able to click on the link and get to what I feel are appropriate assignments for them. I've also got links to in fifth grade, we we read a specific set of 20 books in Rhode Island that have been voted on by their librarians, and that changes every year. So that link brings them to that their trailers on it, it's a really good way for for them to gather interest on the books that I would encourage them to read that I know are different genres and very good literature because the librarians from Rhode Island voted on it. There are also because we're a Catholic school. We have something called

virtues of practice, and it is a virtue of the month and so the online program is right there for them so the parents can access it as well. And then just some links that go along with our curriculum. We have Greek and Latin roots. So they can they can access the online website for that, or the vocabulary and grammar, the online, they have quizzes, they have games that they can play with the words, just a different way of reinforcing the skills. So I will give that to them at times. What else do I have on that? Oh, then I have all content. So like for social studies, we read a few novels, number of the stars is one of them. And we do web quests. So on. on that piece number, the stars. The link is there and they have different assignments on the webquest. So that brings them to it. There's also a background. It's age appropriate for Hitler and not the you know, the Nazi invasion and whatnot. So we can go over that or they can go back John Smith, we study the colonies and the settlements of the colonies. So blood on the river is a fantastic historical fiction book that goes along with our curriculum. And it has I have on there different websites that some of them are fun, you know, cartoonish where John Smith is coming over to Jamestown. Some of them are a bit more academic in nature because they need to do an online report. That's, it's not a PowerPoint, but it's it's similar to that and they need to conduct research on that. So I give them specific links to that of for math, we use a program that's pretty popular IXL. And that reinforces a specific math skill. I mean, I think they have in fifth grade, something like 450 specific math skills. So I can differentiate that way too, which I can talk about later, but Class I do that. So I might assign an IXL for them. So they can hit it, or Quizlet is another program that I use that's on my website that its vocabulary. They make their own Quizlet sets. And I, because of my teacher account can see them and they have different things that they need to do with that. So they're probably about my website. But that's pretty much what I can remember at this moment.

Nicole: So how long have you been like implementing this online platform like the website, design?

Jennifer: The website I've had since I started teaching, so I create, it was not a requirement where I was. So I had my own website for about seven years, I'd say, and I had to use different platforms. And then once at some point at OLM, they required it And I had to use Google for that, which I wasn't thrilled about, because then I had to take all my content from my old one, and put it on my new one. So if you scroll down, you will see when you go to oLM, all the teachers websites and they vary, you know, some put pictures up. If it's primary, then they've maybe got a newsletter on there. So if you're looking for some examples of different websites from teachers and various grades, because we're pre K to eight, that might be a good resource for you.

Nicole: Thank you, yeah. So obviously, you're using this website to distribute your content to the students. But do you also use anything like Google classroom as well in addition to it, or is it just solely through this one?

Jennifer: No, we we use Google classroom and so now Google Classroom kind of trumping my website at this moment, which I'm not overly thrilled about, I gotta be honest. So I'm making

sure that my kids have already bookmarked my website, we've already gone. It's only been four days of school, but they bought on the rooster game, the rooster books, because I want them to act, they're going to have to access my own website for things that we do in class or things that I expect them to do at home. Google Classroom is in addition to my website, but at this point in time, it's become critical because of distance learning and where we are in the world with the pandemic. So there are I actually had them go on Google Classroom this summer. I put all of my summer work on google classroom, so they at the end of the year, your mom actually Mrs. Racca made OLM student accounts for them and they were able to I was able to communicate with them. So they had the Google Classroom code. And I also used Google Forms for seven different math assignments. And they were grouped by the strand of math. And what's great about Google Forms, is that a correct fit for you. So I was able, I don't have to correct all that they had to write down, I needed to see their work. So when they came in, I needed to actually see that they had worked these out. But it gave me a really good snapshot of where they are. And it was easy for me because I didn't have to correct it. And I have it online, so I'm never going to use it. So they actually got on my Google Classroom in June. I also put up my summer reading assignment there which was all online, so it had different options. There were 13 different options in related to the book that we read over the summer, which was Wonder, and they could pick six. But again, that was online. So they're submitting it to me through Google Classroom. So when they came into me, they already had, you know, some pretty good exposure to my, or I should say, our Google Classroom.

Will: So what are some I know, we talked at least a little bit about, like, the content itself that is already sort of on your site. But we, I'm curious to know sort of about, what are some examples of like, well, how should I phrase this question like? What are sort of certain like new practices that you've more recently discovered in light of, you know, this pandemic that you want to use in relation to the content that you make, like the educational content?

Jennifer: so that's where the professional development that I took was awesome. And in the event, You want to attend that seminar. She's having them again in October. It's through the bureau of edge, bureau of education and research, I think what is what it is I can send you the link, but it is the best PD in my 12 years of teaching than I've ever been to. So it's a webinar and it lasted from 830 to 330. But when I tell you it was packed with information, and I believe Mrs. Rocca sent you the handbook in the PowerPoint. If she didn't, I will send it to you. But that's where I got exposed. I was probably exposed to 12 different flat platforms, and I only maybe knew one of them. So because of that PD, I now have so I actually already have an assignment online, but we're going to do it in class flipgrid, which I don't know if you're familiar with that at all. But flipgrid is great, because they actually videotape themselves, and I get to see it before, you know was published to the class. But you can do an awful lot with that, like in terms of summarizing a book you can differentiate. So the kids when you put it together, if it especially if it's distance learning, they can they can understand different points of view or different, you know, inferences that students might make about a book. The first, the first lesson that we will do

together is an all about me project. So I was able to upload some graphic organizers to flipgrid and I have a model as well. And I have a video of myself, which is lovely. So they know exactly what to do organizers pretty straightforward, and it has text boxes in it. So they bullet the first organizer, you know, tell me about you how old you What are your interests? Do you have any siblings? There's some specific questions there that they need to answer. And then they take that. And they put they write a script from it. And again, I've modeled that for them. And that script is going to be what they read when they videotape themselves. The video tape I did, it's a little bit long, but I thought for the first one, I'd rather err on the side of caution. So they have five minutes, they can take two, but I just didn't want it to cut them off. So they'll complete that I get to see it before I post it to the class. And then that will be one of our assignments where each night or during class will view like three or four of them together. So it's a great way at the beginning of the year for students to get to know each other, especially if you're just learning right off the bat. And it's exposing them to the Flipgrid platform. And because we're In school, we can learn it together because I do plan on using it. When, if and when we're distance learning and even not I'll use it in class. So flipgrid is definitely one. What I had used, I was familiar with this one is explain everything. And that flipgrid is free. Explain Everything I think is like \$5 a month. But what I liked about it, especially with math, I got it. I have an iPad, I actually bought it specifically for distance learning. And I also have a stylus pen and what I can do for math lessons, I appreciate that they hear my voice, they see exactly what we're doing. So it's, you know, I'll do the screen, different colors, explain it, then I can do another screen. I keep it short. I keep it like four minutes. It just kind of gives them a preview as to what we're going to talk about that day. So it's not it's really just like an exposure to what we're going to be doing for the day. I do give them a couple questions at the end to try to have them answer and then I and then I provide the answers. So explain everything I really like and I, I exclusively used it for math. I was also exposed to something called Canva, during the professional development that was brand new to me, that you can make like posters. And I liked it because it's collaborative. So you could make your own poster or you could have a partner and the two of you are collaborating and making the poster together. And the first one that they're going to do is about Coronavirus. So, there's a model and for that one, I probably will just have them find like maybe a picture and superimpose it to the picture. That's awesome. They're so they're probably going to follow the outline that's there for the poster first, and something that you know, some content that's certainly very relevant to their lives and what's going on today. And then as we proceed, that's something that that I think is fun. I think it's creative. And it's just a different way of showing your knowledge. So Canva is free, you could pay for it and get some bells and whistles, but as a teacher really wants to do that. Not me. Anyway. Um, another program that I was exposed to is called screencastify. That I knew about but I'd never used so that's basically recording yourself. It would be you know, during a live lesson and you can have the screen up and you can be in the corner. So they see your face. They see you Talking and you're able to basically share your screen. And I liked that because again, I'm on there, they can pop up, I can see their face, they

can ask a question. And they hear my voice. So it's just, it's kind of like zooming I guess when you share a screen, except they can see your face. I liked that. Um, the was it screencastify? Or was it there was another one and I don't think it's called screencastify where you can take your document camera, and you know, just turn it. I guess it would be screencastify. If you've got a webcam, turn it and then all of a sudden it is an overhead projector that you can now Yeah, right on. So you're going to write a summary. Here's the main idea and they actually see you doing that. So that's something so simple, but I would have never thought of that. Another thing I was exposed to that is a fun thing. I not necessarily using it right now, but this I probably would only do with distance learning. I think it's a little primary for fifth grade, but it's a bitmoji classroom. So I already I've created it. And my bitmoji is so cute, she looks just like me. But it's got hyperlinks there. So in the morning, you know, you could put on the board, I my classroom happens to have a little board, you know, you could put what's going on for the day. Um, I had a plant, let's say you're doing plant cells or something you can hyperlink to a to the plant cells and it brings it to them. It's just, it's fun. It's different. So they would totally be into that. The other thing again, really simple as emoji keyboard so I now when I'm typing or doing Anything I can use the fun emojis or my bitmoji. And it just makes it that, you know, they identify with that because of all the texting and you know, it's going to keep their attention. What other things have I done? So I learned what the screencastify. Oh, one other thing I learned in that and I think that might this might be a question like later on, but, um, differentiating is really hard when you distance learn. It's really, really hard to do. And I am not an expert on google classroom or Google Forms, I'm getting better. But this was just like mind blowing to me when you make a form and if you're going to make it like a quiz, it's really just hitting a different button. And it's similar to like a star assessment in the sense that if you have two plus two, and Susie gets four, she moves on to a harder problem like that the next step in that maybe like 10 plus four, two digit plus one digit now with Johnny doesn't get two plus two is four, you can put a whole other strand on that. Where it now gives him an easy question, again, an easy question again. And now you go to the harder questions. So it differentiates by making two different quizzes for the learners who have either you know, they're mastering the skill, they're getting close to mastering the skill or those learners that are still struggling with it. So I learned that as well in the professional development, and then there are a few things that like, I just know, I wouldn't use the ones that I just told you. Now I could wrap my head around and I could see How I would use it and I had some time in the summer to actually, you know, I've prepped lessons for it. So I already have a flipgrid a Canva. Lesson going, I've got my bitmoji classroom. So I felt pretty accomplished with that, again, the PD was just amazing. She was amazing. But there were 100 educators. She did it four times during that week. And there were 100 educators on the zoom, and from all over the country, I mean, and then she she had little breakout rooms in zoom, which you know, you can do, and so my breakout room had other fifth grade teachers. We had one from Monterey, California, somebody from Pennsylvania, somebody from Kansas. So it was really interesting just to talk to them to see what their methods were but specifically for for this time in our

country, what their state's plans were or their towns plans were on distance learning and what was like in September. All right, I'm gonna take a break and get some coffee, that was a long answer sorry.

Will: No worried, this is great! This is content we are looking for, thank you so much!

Nicole: We're just curious, um, when kind of the pandemic struck and everything what was like OLM, like plan in place, like, how did you guys do distance learning? Did you have synchronous lessons, asynchronous lessons? Like, how did you go about that?

Jennifer: Alright, so we obviously had no plan in place. So it was every teacher for themselves. It was crazy. And I mean, I seriously got no sleep. And I don't think any of my colleagues did either. It was it was really, really difficult. Synchronous learning, like all day long, I just, you know, there's no way that I could do asynchronous learning. At that point I think I could do it now, but I definitely couldn't do it that. So it was really, really difficult. Even just the most difficult thing about that, to be honest, was getting them the content. You know, I I would have I didn't have many, like Google slide assignments. I had things that I'd find online that I really liked the reading and I liked the questions, but then I had to take a, you know, take a picture of it, upload it, because it's PDF, then I had to put textboxes in so they could actually type the answers. I mean, it was it was bananas. So no, we had no place no plan. Google Classroom thank God, my children new Google Classroom. I had to That's when I learned how to organize it per topic. So that if they had assignment of science assignment, they would go to the science topic. I love my kids like so much. And I really miss them. And the most important thing to me during that time was for me to comfort them and for them not to be anxious. So what I would do, and again, this was challenging, is I would make a video of myself, I ended up with a YouTube channel. I mean, my boys were hilarious. They're like, Mom, I can't even believe I'm like, I know what is happening to me. And thank God I have older children. So they really helped me with a lot of this technology. So I feel for my colleagues who either had no older children at home or had babies because without my boys, I would have been up a creek but I would take a lesson I would tape just like a morning message. And I usually made it pretty funny. And I didn't care because in class like I'm very nurturing. I think I'm funny, but I don't know, you'd have to interview them. But I'm strict. Like, I definitely have expectations. When we're working. We're working, we are all business. And they I think they know when they respect that. So in the mornings, I would just give them a five minute, you know, hello, be funny, and then kind of prep them for the day like what we're doing today. So that when I met with them on zoom, they had an idea. And I already had on zoom, I'm sorry, I already had on google classroom, the whole outline for the day. And that was when you open Google Classroom. That's the stream. That's the first thing you come to. So I'm really varying from your question. I think But I am kind of explaining things. Is that okay?

Will: Yeah, of course.

Jennifer: Okay. So when when they opened google classroom, and you go to the stream, I would have the outline for the day I would have my video. And then I had, at the end of check, a

daily checklist that they had that I would make every day in forms that they went through, and they had to check and say they did it. Or if they had questions, that's where they write their question. And many assignments I gave on Monday, they were due on Friday, so they give me Yeah, I'm working on it or no, I'm going to do it on Wednesday. So that was a good way for them to make sure that they were doing all the work that they had to do and it was great way for me to answer questions for them if they didn't understand something. But at that point in time, if I had a science assignment you would have have to go in to another screen called classwork. And then you would have to go into another folder called science. And they had a hard time sometimes finding that. So when I did this professional development day, somebody, I don't know who it was made their folders just for the day. So, you know, Friday, September 11, and any assignment they had, that's where they go. And again, I just that organization to me is brilliant, but I hadn't thought of that. So I've already set that up with my kiddos so that they they know how it's organized. So if they're out, because we have some remote learners, we have distance learners or if there are any assignments that I'm having them do online that they need to do at night. That's where it is. It's in that folder. I don't even know how to go on that. But does that make any sense to you?

Will: Yeah of course

Nicole: So, um, I know you discuss that you're basically online synchronous learning. All day long during the pandemic, um, can you just give us like a rough estimate of like, maybe how many hours like what timeframe we kind of just on a zoom with your students?

Jennifer: Yes. So we, as a school, we had different hours per grade, because people have different students, different ages. So fifth grade, we were at nine o'clock. And the requirement was a half hour, 45 minutes. You can already tell I like to talk. So I would, and I taught science. So I ended up driving like All these microscopes dropping them off. And we actually did science with microscopes, because it was a microworlds unit distance learning. So those science lessons when I did them for really long, but they liked it because it was interactive. That was kind of hilarious, but they loved it. And they had to like slice an onion and put an onion under there. And we were looking at the plant cell and you know, all that kind of stuff. So my zooms and my math lesson, we did math every day. So math might go a little bit and then I did la every day. So I'm getting like, I didn't do science every day. I did science. Maybe twice a week. So my zooms were long. They're about an hour and a half. In one shot, nine to 1030. We had like a little break in there, but it wasn't a very long break. So, but the good thing was it was at nine o'clock. So they if they had questions or they're like Mrs. Nygren, and I just looked and you didn't put that on, I'm like, Oh my gosh, I didn't thank you for telling me I will put it on. They got all their questions answered. So I liked being on at nine o'clock, some, some people weren't on till like 11 or 1130. And I personally wouldn't like to that, but you get what you get.

Will: So if, if the process, at least when you're actually like, in time synchronizing with students is like, sort of on this timescale where it's like an hour and a half, sorry, not rF? Half an hour, excuse me, got the words mixed up there at the start of the day, um, what about when you For

example, with like, flipgrid, right, a specific example, when you had to like create videos or create, like textboxes or something that the student would have to look into asynchronously or how To do sort of, in their own time, Mm hmm. How long did that type of content take to create?

Jennifer: Hours. I mean, hours, I didn't know what I was doing. So I'm teaching myself my boys are teaching me they were supposed to have and it was like, one of my favorite favorite assignments, or they choose somebody in history. And they it's called Who am I? And they read the biography. And then in first person, they tell who they are, but they never say their name. And they dress up like that person. And parents, grandparents, you name it, they come in, so the kid will come to me they like knock it out of the park. They love these costumes. I tell them don't buy them. Some do but the ones that are homemade are the best. Like Neil Armstrong, the kids literally had white trash bags. It was great. So they had already like that was in the works. We were supposed to have that a week after we went out. We went out on March 13. So I'm scrambling. And in talking to a friends, son, they told me about Dropbox. I didn't know what Dropbox was, I ended up getting a free trial. And then I had to add to it for like \$200 but I got it back. So the kids videotaped themselves. Then they sent it to me. Then I had to download it to Dropbox. So everybody had to look at it through dropbox. I then sent the file to the parents so the parents could see it. But it was such a process. Now if I had flipgrid, it would have taken Like, I don't know, the 20th of the time, but I didn't know about flipgrid. So, if we were to do that, again, I know exactly what I'm doing. You know, creating text boxes, I am not doing that unless it is totally necessary because it's not hard to do. It's just like they're four steps in it's it just takes a long time. So I did get kind of smart Teachers Pay teacher's saved me. I spent about \$250 on different distance learning assignments. But I do it all over again. A lot of them were Google Slides. And it had content along with it. And then they'd have to create the Google slide but everything was done for me the textboxes were there I liked the content. If I didn't, I could edit it. They were all editable, then it was sent to me really easy. So I did get quite a few Google Slides and I might assign it on a Monday and it was due on a Friday and we discussed it as they went along. That I would do and I and I saved quite a bit of that. Um, other than any and teachers take pay teachers, as I said, did have some great stuff. Some of it I had to convert, which took a long time. So if it were to happen again, I think I'm in a much better places. Don't get me wrong, it's going to take me longer than it necessary than it would but it's not going to be near the amount of time i don't i don't think.

Nicole: so, um, if you have any resources or even like, if you can think of any resources on whether it be like they would like to learn whether it be online Like physical, like, equipment on that would help maybe alleviate some of the challenges of creating your content. Is there any that like, you can think of maybe if you wanted to learn?

Jennifer: Yeah. So I do use Kahoot in class, and they really, really love that. Like, that's a great I use that for review. So I do have, I have a lot of blood on the river that that novel, and many of them are already created. So I just search for other teachers who have created it, and then I can

modify it the way I want to modify it. So yeah, I kind of forgot to tell you about that. Yes, I do use Kahoot. I don't. Right now. Um, I got exposed to so many different platforms in that PD. That my mind is spinning a little bit. And I feel like she exposed me to really a variety of like the latest greatest. So in time, maybe I'll go back and look at some of those others. But I've got about five that I'm working on right now. And that's more than enough for me.

Will: So, let's talk. Um, let's narrow in and be a bit specific about so when you're trying to communicate with students, right? Either like it's done like Google through words through Google Classroom or emails or forums or like anything of that nature, you know, trying to like still keep in touch with them. Even the video that you created a first because you delve into a little bit about what are sort of the challenge Does that come with trying to communicate with students like in this way.

Jennifer: So one thing that made initially, we, the children in fifth grade did not have access to emailing. And they would use their school account for different things to get into but they couldn't receive emails and they couldn't email. So at the beginning of distance learning, I'm emailing the parent, if there's something I want the child to do, very difficult. So soon thereafter, Mrs. Racca was able to enable fifth graders to email me that was a lifesaver. So now I'm going directly to the student. Now we we did have to revisit email etiquette because some of them were just like I don't get it. I'm like, Okay, can you say Hi, this is Nygren. I don't understand this. But it was a great way for us to communicate to each other. Um, it's, again, it's challenging throwing a nail to number one, assess a student's anxiety level over something that they're not learning or I'm just very confused about through an email. So sometimes the parent would email me I can see that in the classroom, obviously, but distance learning I can't. So the parent might email me. I also gave my phone number my cell phone to all the parents and just said, Call me if you need me. And so some took me up on that some just emailed me some texted me. You know Harry, he's having a really hard time. He's so anxious. He's overwhelmed. So I just call him on the phone. That's that's the way I roll. And and we just we would talk it out and be like Harry, take it down a notch. I'm not worried about this, you shouldn't be worried about this. So I actually resorted to talking to the kids on the phone, the ones that really needed me. And some of them freaked out over that, like, Oh my gosh, she's on the phone. I don't know what to say. So I had to get through that a little bit, but it's a challenge communicating with them. I think just so much gets lost in email anyway. And as I said, it was very challenging to give feedback on like a writing assignment. That's really tough, because I can, you know, if a child's having run on sentences, all right, well, now I'm going to have to Tell them where they need to look. And then they might look and not see it. All right that that's really hard to work with a student on that or a specific math skill you know, they're going to get really frustrated so that sometimes when I zoomed with kids with the class I would I'd actually when I saw their homework and I saw they didn't get it I'd be like Sally just stay on with me for a couple minutes when when we end so I would zoom with those children that I needed to communicate more with privately or in a group or whatever it might be.

Will: off the back of like, especially when like a student is like us struggling like with something what what exactly would be in more detail your methods for ascertaining how much the student has learned. Because you mentioned that, like, if they're struggling, then you'll be able to like call and talk with them on the phone. But how would you know?

Jennifer: Um, through through distance learning not in the classroom? You mean, virtually? How would I know? virtually, I can just see with their what writing assignment, if they're not comprehending it if they're gonna write a summary, or they need to give me the main idea and details and they're not even close, what's pretty apparent to me that they're having a hard time and that is, if they are not comprehending the text. I need to speak with that there is no way I can do that by typing back and forth or emailing. with math, it's a little bit more straightforward because well, I take that I take that back because some parents actually distance learning will just feed the kids the answers and so I will I know that because when we zoomed it, and they had to do the questions themselves, like right in front of me with math, and then show me on their whiteboards, I'm seeing the kids that are not getting it, but oh my gosh, on their homework, they totally got it. So that's another way I could assess in real time, if it was their own work, or their parents work. And I really, I didn't, I didn't assign grades for distance learning, because I number one, I thought it would not be valid. And number two, more importantly, I didn't want the kids really anxious about it, because if they get a 70, they're gonna freak out, especially in my school. There's like a healthy competition, but sometimes the parents are really demanding. And they get an 85 and they're crying, you know, so I didn't want to put that extra stress on them, this time with distance learning. If we're going to go out again, I'm going to have to change that policy, but and I'm not quite sure how I'm going to do that. But it was, it's not that hard. I know it sounds hard for you to see that child's not getting it, but it's really not. And you also know, the learner. You know who where their strengths are, and where, you know, they need support. So I'm going to keep my eye out for these three in comprehension, because I know they're going to have a hard time with it.

Nicole: So going back to this, like professional development on how do you other than just like on adding in these new resources? How do you think this PD is going to just like change your online content? Do you think like the students are Going to like appreciate the new platforms that you're incorporating or excited?

Jennifer: Yet, I haven't even really exposed them to a lot of it yet. So the first few weeks of school are going to look very different than they have in the past because I want to practice with them, how to navigate the different platforms, so that if and when they're doing it independently, they know how to use it. I do think they're going to be excited about it. They can also like do podcasts and there's really something for everybody. And I think they're going to enjoy it. I do because it's, it's different from the norm. And a lot of it is now aligned to I mean, really the way these kids think and interact. I mean, it's just it's more technologically based and and that's the way their brain is wired. So I think educationally, I'm still very much into you know, Books and writing and a lot of the traditional type of teaching and learning but I think there's a lot to be said

for incorporating technology every day into your teaching and into their learning because I think they grasp it better.

Will: Well sort of, it's bit more of like a personal opinion question of you, but like as an educator, do you believe that this sort of like, online education is going to still be like as successful as in person education with your students specifically, or even just like in general?

Jennifer: Absolutely not. It's not even close. Not even close. So you don't have to didn't contact you don't have that interaction You don't? Absolutely. It I feel really badly for these kids. I feel badly for my kids who are in college. Some kids just think they just don't learn this way. And it stinks, so no.

Nicole: So, um, just to kind of go off that say like seeing that you have two kids in college, like as a parent Do you find that your children are working through like the virtual learning as well like, are they kind of grasping the content as they might have in the classroom? Like what's then your opinion as a parent as well?

Jennifer: Okay, so number one, I lied. I actually my baby just went to college. So I have three in college I forgot that he's a freshman. So um, because they were all home during the pandemic, I saw the distance learning in depending on what school they were at, and Depending on the professor it it really varied. One of my children is very much a hands on learner. And he he was able to learn in time how to advocate for himself and he. He's done great in school. He's now a senior, but he would also even in college kind of seek out tutors to meet one on one and go over concepts. He would meet with his professors. So, the fact that he can't do that is really stressing him out. Because he is not this type of learner. You know, another one of my children. Teachers just fine with it. You know, he didn't like it. But he was able to learn that way. And then one of my children that was in high school. Again, no school knew what they were doing right. And that demographic of high school is not an easy one to control. So that zooming I it was just kind of like, kids were their kids weren't there they were, I don't know muting the teacher like, they were able to figure all these things out. So, I just feel as a parent, and you guys are in college, I mean, my heart breaks for you. It really does, because it's not the way it's supposed to be. So it's not hopefully it'll, it'll change in the spring. I'm trying to be optimistic.

Will: One thing, Nicole and I really want to thank you all like, thank you so much for like talking taking the time to talk to us we like really appreciate it like this especially like, of all the things that you've learned, especially like firsthand through this has been like very, very informative. So we really do appreciate you taking the time to talk with us. Do you have any questions for us about what we're doing or or any sort of extra like comments or anything else about your experience?

Jennifer: Yeah, well, what's your major? And what are the requirements of this class?

Will: Oh, well, so I'm a, I'm a physics and math major. I'm the, I don't know Nicole if you want to say your major or if I should just talk requirements.

Nicole: Okay, so I'm a biomedical engineering major. So I'm in the junior year. You have you like are supposed to go away and do a project to benefit like a different community, normally on

kind of lesser developed communities and countries. So normally we would go abroad and we'd go work down in Panama with this corporation kind of doing the same project on there. Um, and really just the requirement is, we do a ton of research, even some like social science style research, and we gather the data and produce a deliverable. So our deliverable is this like online platform to help teachers learn how to incorporate some more virtual aspects into whether it is their like direct classroom or their virtual classroom. And so that's really what we're working on from here till about the middle of October, we'll be kind of developing those guidelines, recommendations, tutorials, and then kind of making a mock up prototype website. For this corporation down in Panama to then produce.

Jennifer: So would you have done this same topic if you were in Panama?

Will: We actually originally our project back during sort of the end of the previous academic year, the project that they're discussing that they wanted to do is they wanted to create a, a sort of kid's like learning museum for STEM education, where like it would be, sort of a building, they had like a warehouse set up and everything that we'd go and we'd like help design certain exhibits and a activities, like a kid could go in and say like, Oh, I'm going to go to this like exhibit in the museum to learn about the different kinds of clouds and how the weather cycle works. Or I could go to this part and learn about like, cells and things of that nature. So yeah, it's a, it's fairly different from what we're doing now.

Nicole: Yeah, a few weeks after even just starting getting that project back in March, about two weeks later, when we reached out to our sponsor project was completely different. At that point, we were then supposed to be developing, like a common facility for teachers to go where they can go create this virtual content on. And then later on, you know, two more projects down the line here, after actually working for seven weeks ahead of time on a whole different project.

Jennifer: Well, you're gonna be very knowledgeable in different subjects. Look at it like that. Oh, well, I wish you both the best I do.

Nicole: Thank you so much. I really appreciate you talking to us today, and we will be in contact soon with the transcript after it's created. Well, thank you so much. Really appreciate this.

Jennifer: Anything let me let me know bye bye!