

# Interview with Kristina Erickson

Sun, 4/11 11:36PM • 9:51

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

students, synchronous, school, teachers, reopen, feel, community, mitigation measures, kristina, spring break, honestly, instruction, returned, thought, massive amount, district, counties, adults, question, exception

## SPEAKERS

Kristina Erickson, Daniel Lopez

**Daniel Lopez** 00:17

Okay,

**Kristina Erickson** 00:19

yes, I am ready.

**Daniel Lopez** 00:25

Today is Sunday, April 11. Time is 1648 and I'm speaking with

**Kristina Erickson** 00:31

Kristina Erickson.

**Daniel Lopez** 00:34

Okay, Kristina, question one, what is your profession? And how long have you been in your career?

**Kristina Erickson** 00:41

I'm a teacher, a high school English teacher. And this is my seventh year. And then I also waitress nights and weekends at a restaurant.

**Daniel Lopez** 00:52

At the outset of the covid 19 pandemic, how did you initially believe school would operate?

**Kristina Erickson** 00:58

Initially, I honestly didn't even think that COVID would affect teaching whatsoever. My co teacher and I, he, he's older, and he's in his 60s. We honestly told the kids that Coronavirus was probably much like H1N1 or the bird flu or any number of the different virus strains that seemed to pop up every year anyways. And that, of course, was not what happened. And we left for spring break, telling the kids not

to worry that Coronavirus seems to mostly affect elderly people so that they didn't have a lot to be concerned about. And then we went to spring break, and I didn't see my students again.

**Daniel Lopez** 01:45

So when you returned you were online. What was a typical day? What did that look like for you?

**Kristina Erickson** 01:53

Well, initially in the spring semester, my school announced that grades had been frozen. My district announced that because we have lots of issues with equity of access, and some students were unable to get computers and even access our asynchronous instruction. Now, at the time, of course, none of us had the understanding that this would end up the way that it was. So we were not prepared to do synchronous instruction. And as a result, I often just ended up recording audio for my students, I had tried to record video, but unfortunately, due to my computer's upload, screens, and all kinds of different things, but honestly, I couldn't tell you very much about it wasn't working. Um, It was taking me several hours to upload a few minutes worth of video. So instead, I just recorded audio. When we returned in the fall, we actually had the ability to do synchronous instruction. And at that point, we were doing regular classes synchronous with our children from 7:25 until two o'clock. After students started expressing the massive amount of fatigue that they were experiencing from such extended periods of time being in front of the computer; we switched the schedule to 35 minute classes. So we get out at 11:20. Now, with learning support time in the afternoon, or at least that's what we were doing prior to the new schedule teams that we made after spring break.

**Daniel Lopez** 03:26

Okay, thank you. And this next question, kind of a two parter. What is your opinion on governance, Doug Ducey's March 15th Executive Order mandating a return to in person instruction. And then for the exception of four high transmission counties, what are your thoughts on that?

**Kristina Erickson** 03:47

Um...I understand the need to provide a space for children to learn. But I think that reopening schools when there were no other mitigation measures being taken, and in this case, we have now eradicated all other communities spread mitigation measures. Like masks and social distancing requirements within establishment, that the CDC says that that will not work, but we cannot safely reopen schools, if we as a community are not also taking charge of this global health crisis. So I thought that it was foolish to put it as kindly as possible. Now as for the areas of high transmission rates? What I.....I think that it's wonderful that counties are allowed to, to have an exception. The trouble is, is that Maricopa County is so wide and so vast, that you're really looking at it in a much bigger picture than we ought to. We needed to look at it based on the individual neighborhoods. For each school. You can't even look at it on a district level, district level. My district is orange right now, according to the metric. But at the community level for the area code where my school actually exists, we have minimal people vaccinated and is in the red. Which then should dictate whether or not my school reopened. But that's not how it worked.

**Daniel Lopez** 05:16

And just how have you been feeling about everything? I mean, it's it's very much, very much a loaded question. But I just, I'm wondering how you're feeling.

**Kristina Erickson 05:28**

Um, to be particularly honest, I have never been so astronomically disappointed in our leadership, at all levels,. Leadership on a national level, on a state level. And then, of course, at my district level as well, I think that it's become very clear to me that the people who are tasked with keeping our children safe, are not thinking ahead. And I understand Of course, we are all going through a collective trauma. But I certainly would have expected our reopening procedures to have been better thought out and more intricately planned. Given the fact that we've known that we would need to reopen at some point for the last year. So that's incredibly frustrating. I feel like teachers are consistently being asked to bear the burden of filling in the gaps when health protocols are not put in place or haven't even been imagined yet. And that also is frustrating because I feel a massive amount of moral responsibility for the community. And to my students, I know that if I don't clean the dust properly, in between classes, my next students might get ill, and then might carry at home to their families, and their families might die. And so it's really, it's a very serious time. And very tenuous, and one that I feel like has not been taken as seriously as I wish it would have. I wish I would have seen more forethought on all levels. And I feel really awful for our students, because they're the ones who have to suffer when adults do not do their jobs. And they're watching. They they know very clearly, when.....when things are not going according to any sense of reason, or science, they understand that. And we're disappoint them.

**Daniel Lopez 07:29**

Any words of encouragement?

**Kristina Erickson 07:31**

[Ha!] Um, I mean, honestly, at the end of the day, it always goes back to my students and my kids are every bit of light and life in this world. I have faith in them because of their ability to look at what is happening and see exactly how wrong it is, and to feel slighted by the adults in their lives. And I just continually remind them that then when they get older, they get to do better than we did. And that I wish that we of course had set a different example. But that they get to make the world into the image that they want it to be in spite of everything that they've been through, as opposed to letting it break them down. And I I have seen an incredible amount of resilience in our students. And it's always inspiring. I just wish that we as adults had done our part to make the resilience that they come out of this with...as as necessary as possible, right, that we didn't give them more reasons to be resilient, other than a global traumatic event.

**Daniel Lopez 08:49**

have that? Love that. Is there anything you'd like to add that we haven't discussed?

**Kristina Erickson 09:00**

Not necessarily anything that comes to my top of my head, except that I really hope people are investigating and asking what's actually going on within their communities. Because politics within schools is very real. And a lot of teachers aren't talking about what's going on. And the real truth of what's happening behind the scenes is very rarely discussed in the community, I think, because

teachers are often afraid of losing their jobs. And it is all of our responsibility to understand what institutions like schools, such pivotal places for our future. We need to ensure that they are doing right by our students and by our community.