

Interviewee: Amanda Gingue  
Interviewer: Michelle Baldenegro  
Date: 11/27/2020  
Location: Interviewee-Virginia  
Interviewer-Arizona  
Transcriber: Otter

### Abstract

In 2020, the United States was faced with its first pandemic since the Spanish Influenza of the early twentieth century. The whole nation along with the world was turned upside down in pandemic known as COVID-19. Every aspect of life was transformed, none more than that of the educational world. In this interview, Amanda Gingue, a teacher in Fairfax County VA, the tenth largest school district in the nation shares her experience with trying to education the young minds during COVID-19. Amanda discusses the struggles that she has faced with trying to teacher in a low social-econ environment and transition her students to virtual learning. Faced with the trials of the unknown, Amanda, a twelve-year veteran teacher has learned how to reformat her science lessons to adapted to the new learning environment while still supporting her students who have struggled emotionally. She talks about how her colleagues have put the needs of the students first even during these uncertain times.

### Transcription of Interview with Amanda Gingue

Michelle Baldenegro 0:02  
I think it's recording now.

Amanda Gingue 0:04  
It is I can see it in the corner.

Michelle Baldenegro 0:06  
Perfect. All right, so we are talking about covid 19 pandemic that has affected everyone across the world, specifically how it is affected the educational world, teachers and students. So let's start with your full name and your profession.

Amanda Gingue 0:26  
Sure, Amanda Gingue. And I am a teacher, seventh and eighth grade science.

Michelle Baldenegro 0:33  
Where do you teach at?

Amanda Gingue 0:35

I'm in Fairfax County, Virginia. I ended the last year. So the beginning of the pandemic, at one school and now I'm at a different school, but in the same County.

Michelle Baldenegro 0:46

Gotcha. And how long have you been teaching?

Amanda Gingue 0:50

This is my twelfth year

Michelle Baldenegro 0:54

And how long have you been teaching in Virginia?

Amanda Gingue 1:00

Um, four years is my fourth year.

Michelle Baldenegro 1:03

Wow. What was your initial interest in going into teaching?

Amanda Gingue 1:09

Um, I initially actually was going to go into pre med. And that's how I started out going. And then realized that I didn't want to be in a lab and had always really liked working with kids. I had worked as a camp counselor. And so I just sort of shifted and went, well, maybe instead, I will teach and maybe science as part of that. Um, and so I shifted over and just fell in love with it when I started my program. And I started out actually in fifth grade, and then my principal was the one that was like, you have a really strong love for science. How about you move up to science? And that was three years into teaching. And I've just been there ever since it's my kind of niche.

Michelle Baldenegro 1:53

Yeah, for sure. Okay, so let's jump right into the global pandemic that hit the United States, in probably I would say about March. I mean, I feel like most of us kind of knew it was out there. But we were blindly to that it was across the world, and they would never reach us or whatever, you know, thoughts we had at the time and yet, March came around, and we were all hit with pandemic.

Amanda Gingue 2:23

Yep.

Michelle Baldenegro 2:25

When the pandemic first hits. Were you guys in school or spring break? Because that's, is that roughly around your spring break? I know it is here in Arizona? I'm not sure about Virginia.

Amanda Gingue 2:34

Yeah, we were like a week or two from spring break. And so they just were like, well, we'll just take an extended spring break. And we'll be off for three weeks. And then they were like, just

kidding, we're not ready to go back yet. We haven't figured this out. So that three weeks turned into five weeks. And then we went back to our virtual schooling such as it was,

Michelle Baldenegro 3:00

Okay. How did you do when it when everything first happened, as you just said, they didn't really have anything figured out? So how did your district handle educating students?

Amanda Gingue 3:11

Um, so for those five weeks that we were off, they had nothing, we were not allowed to post any assignments, kids were not allowed to work on any assignments. It basically was like, here's an early summer break, which did not go over well, with our community. They were not pleased the kids were happy for about two weeks. And then they were like, I'm bored. Can't you give us something? And we were like, sorry, read. Um, and then after that, it was they gave us like two online trainings, that basically said, like, we're not going to require kids to go to class. This will not count for them or against them. So just sort of come up with what you think will work, what might engage them. And you will only see them for 40 minutes, once a week.

Michelle Baldenegro 4:03

Once a week, meaning like, you would only teach once a week or just in general 40 minutes a day?

Amanda Gingue 4:15

40 minutes, we would see each class for 40 minutes.

Michelle Baldenegro 4:19

Gotcha.

Amanda Gingue 4:19

Once a week.

Michelle Baldenegro 4:21

And how normal on a normal rotation. How long is your, your class periods?

Amanda Gingue 4:25

We had 90 minute classes. We were on a you know, block schedule a day b day so we'd see him two or three times a week.

Michelle Baldenegro 4:34

Right. So you basically cut out a little bit more than half of that time with the kids.

Amanda Gingue 4:38

Yeah.

Michelle Baldenegro 4:39

And you met you said something about your community. So what are you primarily a Title One was that primarily a title one school or?

Amanda Gingue 4:49

Yeah, so the school that I was at, it was very interesting because we had like a, we call it AAP center. So like an advanced academic program, kind of like the gifted and talented kids. Um, so they test in into that. And we had those kids bused in. That's that grouping of kids, but the actual base of our school, were Title One students. So we had this dichotomy, and I happen to teach AP science and team top sped science.

Michelle Baldenegro 5:22

Oh, wow. So yeah, pretty different spectrums.

Amanda Gingue 5:26

Right. And it was, it was interesting, though, because like, the anxiety level with both groups, is very similar on a normal basis. And so then, given the pandemic, academics were sort of I mean, completely backburner, but the anxiety level that we had to deal with was very much in the forefront.

Michelle Baldenegro 5:47

Right. So I mean, the pandemic hit, and the educational field is really looked at as you know, leader in these types of situations, especially with our kids, you know, they look to us to figure out, but when we don't know what we're doing it gives them a little bit more anxiety. Do you feel that your district gave teachers enough time to transition to your online formatting?

Amanda Gingue 6:15

I think they gave us enough time, but they didn't give us the resources. So like I said, we had five weeks, and they, at first they said, We think we're going back to the building, we're just taking this break, we're going to clean the buildings. Well, I'll be back. It's fine. That's why we're giving this extended time. And then about three weeks in, they were like, yeah, we're not going back to the buildings. And then like I said, I think there were two online like one hour trainings. And it was like, here's what you could do. And they gave us about 40 different options of what you could do. So in an hour long training, I was like, two minutes an option. And it covered the gamut of Esau to aap, and all content levels, and all grade levels, k 12. For our county, so it was not tailored for any specific group. Um, so I think they gave us enough time. They just didn't give us any like direction or resources of this is kind of what we would like it to look like. So even within like my science department, because I was a lead at the science department. It was not consistent. So I tried to get my group on the same sort of page. But the first couple weeks, we weren't even consistent with how is Maureen rolling this out? versus me versus Sarah? We were completely different.

Michelle Baldenegro 7:41

So your formatting was switched to completely online? Was there any hybrid? Or was everything just digital?

Amanda Gingue 7:47

Everything was digital.

Michelle Baldenegro 7:48

Okay.

Amanda Gingue 7:50

Seeing our kids didn't all have technology.

Michelle Baldenegro 7:53

So that was my that was kind of leading into my next question like, how did your district prepare the students for that transition? Because as you mentioned, you are a title one school or that was a title one school? And not always, but predominantly they are hey don't always have the means for like home laptops, or home computer or even home internet, which is a huge part that we here in Arizona, we found that many students just didn't have internet in your district, you know, you're basically taking kids in five weeks, a traditional setting brick and mortar and throwing them digitally. How did your district prepare the students for that?

Amanda Gingue 8:34

So they did it was weird, because they were trying to do it all at once, as far as technology rollout. And, by the way, Come get your stuff out of the building. Because we left on that Friday, and they were like, We figure we will close down on Wednesday of next week. And that will give you one last day with each group of your kids. Make sure that you have assignments for them to take home. Like if you have packets, whatever, have them take their instruments. And that came out like Friday afternoon. And then we got an email Sunday night saying you're not going back. So they weren't just rolling out technology. instruments were left at school lockers were still full notebooks were at school, like kids just turned in their notebooks because we had done a lab and I was doing a notebook check to see where they were at. So they didn't have the notebooks. We didn't have anything. So they did like a material pickup in that fifth week that we were home. Um, but that required families to go to the school the pickup the stuff and some of our families don't have the means to get there. So like we had kids that were showing up on their own, taking the bus like the county and then they were like, well, we can't give it to you because your parents not here to sign the waiver. Plus, we're not going to let you get back on a public bus to go home. Because that's a safety concern, So it was just kind of a messed up. And we didn't have enough laptops. So they were taking our sort of antiquated cards because our high school was already one to one. So high school was set, they already gave out like my fi devices. High School was good to go, right? middle school, elementary school, and were the 10th largest county in the nation.

Michelle Baldenegro 10:25

Oh, wow. So that's a lot.

Amanda Gingue 10:27

Yeah, we were not ready to go. So they were taking our laptop carts and trying to dismantle them and figure out which ones had updated internet and updated software so that the kids can actually use it at home, right, would just not know phone or wouldn't function at all. Um, and the county realized that, oh, we have enough Wi Fi devices to give to all these kids. And it wasn't all spring long, they didn't decide like, we were rolling meals out to kids as well. They're putting the meals on buses, driving the buses to our lowest income areas, and then dispersing

food from there. And it wasn't until like the last two weeks, that they decided, oh, you know, we could put a WiFi device on the bus and leave the bus in these high need, like neighborhoods. And then we could actually get the kids on. But in the meantime, we'd been like, seven or nine weeks without kids with, like Internet.

Michelle Baldenegro 11:32  
Right. Yeah.

Amanda Gingue 11:33  
So it didn't really roll out very well. Um, my school, for instance, only had 200 laptops to give out. And we had 1500 students. So the teachers asked to, to figure out which kids would need devices. So thankfully, my team, my myself, my civics and my English teacher had done a survey saying, What do you have at home? Do you have a device your own? are you sharing? Do you have internet? Like we had already done that? Because we kind of saw, like, the signs writing on the wall? Yeah, sure. And so we did that. And so we knew well, here's the 25 kids that are going to need devices. These kids will, it would be good if they had them, because they're sharing them with two other siblings. But these have nothing at their house. So it was kind of up to the team to figure out which kids needed devices. Because like I said, we only had 200.

Michelle Baldenegro 12:31  
So what would you estimate the total loss of instruction time from when the pandemic hit to when kids actually got devices and were able to at least log on?

Amanda Gingue 12:43  
for a good chunk of our kids, because not just due to technology, but because our county also made a public statement saying students are not required to come to school, there will be no grades. All of that. We lost a huge, probably 50 to 60% of our students. Higher fourth quarter. Yeah.

Michelle Baldenegro 13:05  
Um, so you mentioned that you teach eighth grade, what were the eighth graders reaction, especially like, I know, you said you had kind of like that gifted and talented group. You know, they were transitioning to high school, and I know, middle school well enough that that last quarter is really in preparation for high school. So what was that, like for the eighth grade?

Amanda Gingue 13:31  
um, it was kind of split. So we had some kids that were like, Oh, we really need to get this. Like, we need to make sure that we're prepared because I said to them flat out, we don't know what's going to happen, you may be starting your fiscal career this way. So I know there's not grades. But wouldn't it be good to have those skills? And they were like, Wait, what? We may be this way for a while. And I'm like, yeah, we don't know what's gonna happen with this. So some of them were like, Okay, well, then we're really going to get on this. And they did a really good job of like, logging on communicating with me, because we did some asynchronous work with them. So they were emailing me and really working on their advocacy skills of how would I ask a teacher this in high school? Like, I know you, but if I don't know, you know, this teacher

for high school, how do I ask them questions like this without looking stupid? So some of them did a really good job with that. And that was more what we focused on was that transition. Um, but then some of them were like, well, if there's no grades, yeah. Bye

Michelle Baldenegro 14:36  
Checked out?

Amanda Gingue 14:37  
yeah. And we would reach out to the parents and they're like, well, that's just not a battle we want to have right now. So we told him as long as he reads for 30 minutes a day, then we'll call it good.

Michelle Baldenegro 14:50  
Yeah. Did you guys have I know here in Arizona, there was a big push for virtual ceremonies and drive up ceremonies. Did you guys have to do anything In Virginia no?

Amanda Gingue 15:01  
um, high schools did our eighth grade does not do any kind of ceremony.

Michelle Baldenegro 15:06  
So you don't promote like that at all?

Amanda Gingue 15:08  
No

Michelle Baldenegro 15:09  
There's just so you know, there's a push here in Arizona for any type of virtual because promotion is a big thing here in Arizona. And we had a lot of parents, definitely wanting that experience with their kids. And I didn't know that you guys didn't do that. I've heard other states, it's not as big of a deal as it is here in Arizona. But for AZ it seems to be a thing.

Amanda Gingue 15:34  
Well, we also like to do a ceremony in sixth grade, because they're in their elementary school for kindra through six,

Michelle Baldenegro 15:40  
Gotcha.

Amanda Gingue 15:41  
And then we just have them for those two years. And we don't have sports. We don't have like, it's a very weird. And we've actually talked to the, the superintendent about this for middle school is very much like a void. Hmm, great community in elementary school, you have great communities in high school, but the middle school two years are just like, you don't have sports, you don't really have any kind of like, well, a pep rally, like, what are we?

Michelle Baldenegro 16:12

Right, great.

Amanda Gingue 16:13

Um, so like, we'll bring the high school kids down, and we'll do pep rallies for the high school that we've been to, right. But it's just kind of a weird thing. So don't do like a promotion ceremony, they have an eighth grade dance. But that's it. Um, and the kids were kind of like, we don't need a dance, it's fine.

Michelle Baldenegro 16:33

Right. So really, your fourth quarters, really, I think, probably more so than in other places really spent getting them prepared for that high school transition.

Amanda Gingue 16:44

And our kids split to five different high schools. So the majority of them go to Fairfax High School. But some go to like Madison or oak did or Marshall. And

Unknown Speaker 16:58

so there's kind of a fracture. So we do work on sort of community things as far as like, making sure that the kids have that time to connect with each other. They have those that basis, because when they go to high school, they may never see each other again, r I'm just because some of our high schools, even though we're not a huge, they're not like really far apart. They really are far apart when you then the circles that they go into. Um, so yeah, it's more like that kind of transitional piece. Um, and then, like I said, the anxiety piece of our kids going, Well, I'm never going to see these kids again. And my entire group of friends are going to martial and I'm going to this other school,

Michelle Baldenegro 17:42

right. So on top of that, now you have a pandemic, know, where your kids don't get to spend the last nine weeks with their friends. They're kind of just thrown into this virtual chaos.

Amanda Gingue 17:55

Right. Right.

Michelle Baldenegro 17:57

I'm moving into the start of this year. So So then I think, you know, we kind of we've we started in March, and then we kind of, I think, at least out here out west, we kind of felt that, okay, but by August or September, which I know you guys start in September, we I think this is probably early on, we were kind of like, Oh, well, you know, we'll be back in in fall. And I know that the district I work for we started to kind of see this, like trickle of like, while the pandemic not going away, and they're still raising. And we're trying to mitigate that. But we're concerned about fall. So now we moved into fall? Have you guys even gone back in person?

Amanda Gingue 18:54

So no. In July, yeah. early July, our superintendent sent out a survey to all families and all staff asking, would you if it's a possibility, would you send your kid back to school? Or would you want them to stay online? with staff? Do you have an ADA cert like certificate that says you



can't go back? Would you be willing to go back would you prefer not to like that kind of thing. And then they basically built our entire schedules for each teacher around those surveys. So I'm supposed to be online all year, because we had so many students that chose to be online all year. So all the kids on my roster, initially chose online. And the goal was that in September, yes, we would have the kids who wanted to go back, go back. That did not happen. So then, October came around beginning of October, and they were like Oh, our numbers are going down. We're gonna start to transition people back,

Michelle Baldenegro 20:02  
like hybrid

Amanda Gingue 20:05  
No.

Michelle Baldenegro 20:05  
Okay

Amanda Gingue 20:06  
So they decided to take like our highest need groups are like self contained autistic, non dual cat-b groups, and they went back and they went back full time. And those teachers were given like, full ppe, like, masks shield, I mean, outfits, like full on. Um, and then that seemed to go, okay. Everyone else is still online. So then they decided, Okay, we're going to start transitioning back a few more kids. And they came up with like an eight step plan for transitioning us back. phase two, I think was some of our classes that can't happen online, like auto mechanic, we have an EMT course, like that. And then they started transitioning back a few like pilot classes to see how that would go for hybrid learning. So AP calculus, you have this group that wants to be in the building this group that wants to stay online, we'll try a hybrid model with them.

Michelle Baldenegro 21:10  
Current teaching for those kids, like what was it a concurrent situation for the teacher?

Amanda Gingue 21:17  
Oh, current teacher? Yep.

Michelle Baldenegro 21:18  
So they were both teaching in front and on camera?

Amanda Gingue 21:22  
Correct.

Michelle Baldenegro 21:22  
At the same time, got it.

Amanda Gingue 21:23  
Correct. So that's the phase we're in right now, which is phase four, we were supposed to then go to phase five before Thanksgiving break, bringing back another set of students. But our

numbers have spiked. So that's been paused. And now they're not. We can't even send them back after Thanksgiving, because we're still at like, 8.2%. So we are all still online, except for those few pilot groups. And if our numbers continue, where they are, those pilot groups will be sent back home. Their goal is for us to all transition back January 26, which means about 59,000 students, and all staff. Because instead of going hybrid, our superintendent decided to resurvey the families. And now he's like, I think we're all going to go concurrent. Based on those numbers, even though we planned our entire schedule around this first survey that we gave, and we said can't change once you make this decision. This isn't right. Um, he backed off of that and said, Just kidding, or reserve a you now we're all going to try this concurrent model, which we have had no training in. And that's supposed to happen January 26.

Michelle Baldenegro 22:41

So, um, what was the method that they wanted? They just wanted you to be strictly virtual? Because in, right, so we have the spring, where they're kind of throwing you into online, but now, you know, the summer and she said, What do you guys go back after Labor Day?

Amanda Gingue 23:00

Usually we go before, but this year, they backed off the start of school two weeks.

Michelle Baldenegro 23:05

So after Labor Day, they had all of this time to prepare? Did you get additional training? Or were you guys instructed? Especially you being a lead and probably working with district and things like that? Did you guys get a training as to how they wanted things done? Or was it all that kind of up in the air? When I figure it out kind of thing? I guess a better way of saying that was do you feel like the district had more together for the fall than they did during the spring?

Amanda Gingue 23:35

No. That's simply enough. Um, they. So all of our teacher training, beginning of school was virtual, obviously, Um, normally we have like, it's called our PD playlist playlist. And there's like 12 things, you know, anaphylaxis, and mandatory reporting, that kind of stuff. Um, instead of 12, this year, we had 36. And they were things like, five minutes training on a video of how do you build community virtually? Um, and it really, none of it was very useful, because again, it's not tailored for any specific grade content. Anything it was here's a training for the entire county, So it really, and again, they had made this decision in July, we started training in August, or weeks, they sort of slapped together these trainings, and we're like, hey, go. And if they really weren't that effective. So again, the teachers were really like, Okay, how do we do this? And teams came together, teams figured out how we were going to roll things out and how to make things more consistent. That didn't come from the school or from the county.

Michelle Baldenegro 25:02

So it was basically teachers saying this pandemic isn't going away, and we need to do what's best for kids.

Amanda Gingue 25:08

Correct.

Michelle Baldenegro 25:09

That seems to be the theme of most teachers.

Amanda Gingue 25:14

And we need to make it consistent so that, you know, the whole point of doing the survey was consistency. If you're online you're online, so that we're not bouncing kids back and forth. You know, it took us 10 weeks for them to figure out how to use Google Classroom full time and how to log into our video classrooms and how to turn in assignments and like all of that stuff. So then if you're at 10 weeks, and well, now we're going to go into the building. Now we're going to be hybrid. Now we're going to be concurrent. We know middle school kids, high school kids can't figure that out, especially if they have any kind of like, executive functioning issues. It's a nightmare. So the plan was for that to be more consistent. . Um, and like I say, teams have been very consistent with like, here's what our weekly plan looks like, right? It gets turned in on this one platform. Everything's done here. But now, if we go concurrent, it's going to be kind of a mess

Michelle Baldenegro 26:15

All over the place. Yeah. Um, so there have been many reports of mental health issues with students working remotely. Do you? Have you seen any of these issues?

Amanda Gingue 26:26

Yeah.

Michelle Baldenegro 26:27

So so we're talking now we're talking about eight months that kids have been virtual, in some aspect or home or away from friends? So what have the types of issues what are the types of issues that you've seen?

Amanda Gingue 26:43

Um, we've seen a lot of depression. Um, a lot of like, the kids just can't, they haven't been able to transition to knowing like, this is school time, this is play time. This are the balancing and then the stress of I don't know how to balance these things. I don't know how to organize my life. Right now. And now parents are on me, because grades are coming out. And I'm not doing well. . Um, so then there's the anger that comes out of like, why didn't choose this? So that happens with, you know, the anger, the depression, the anxiety, I mean, the number of emails,

Michelle Baldenegro 27:25

that anxiety, yeah,

Amanda Gingue 27:26

number of emails I get about an assignment where everything is written, and given to them, as well as explained and like the directions and post the video as well. And then I'll still get the same questions over and over, like, but when is this do? Literally in four inch read writing on the screen when you open the document? So like, anxious, they literally can't function to even read down through the document.

Michelle Baldenegro 27:56

What is your school doing anything for that? I know, like, here we have. It's called social emotional learning. So the first 15 minutes, 15-30 minutes of the day, is spent in a social emotional type of lesson. It's not really a lesson. It's more like a conversation that they're having with some of these strategies to help work through that. Are you guys doing anything like that?

Amanda Gingue 28:20

Yeah, so we started an advisory this year. That purpose. So every Monday, Wednesday, Friday, we meet with those kids for 40 minutes. Um, and they may or may not be students that you actually teach, Um, but it's just like mine to group of 16 kids. There are optional lessons, some are mandatory lessons. And it's just a time to like, get to know the kids, give them work time. walk them through how to use, like Google Classroom, as are just those kinds of things. And a lot of times my kids want to play games like, Can we do a Kahoot? Can we do I'll pop up with a whiteboard option, and I'll have them do Pictionary. , to like relax, cannot to interact and the kids, Um, and doing Pictionary has been like the best thing ever, because they get absolutely hysterical and the comments in the chat and they'll turn on their microphones. And so that's been really fun, like, just to get with the kids and, you know, they're like, what is what did you do? What the heck? And it's like, it's, it's very much like sitting in a classroom with them. Whereas a lot of times when it's academic, it's not.

Michelle Baldenegro 29:42

Do you feel like they've been more adaptable to students or is it is it kind of like student by student bases?

Amanda Gingue 29:51

I think the majority of kids been very adaptable. We still have, you know, obviously some kids that aren't and it's not really a consistent group either. Like we have some kids that are have IEP or five oh, fours that have adapted for well, . Some of them are like, actually, it's better because I have ADHD and there's less distractions. But then a lot of my kids with executive processing issues are having issues with organizing and knowing things, right? Um, so it kind of depends. Same thing, like some of our advanced kids are doing really, really well. And some of them are like, well, it's not real school. Um, so it kind of is very much. It's not a consistent group. But for the most part, they've been pretty adaptable.

Michelle Baldenegro 30:47

So you mentioned that in spring, your district notified that none of that stuff kind of counting for grading, are you now back to grading?

Amanda Gingue 30:57

We are now back to grading.

Michelle Baldenegro 30:58

Okay, so that's another transition piece for kids. Right?

Amanda Gingue 31:02

That has been huge. And did first quarter. And it took us probably six weeks of the nine weeks. for the kids to understand that. Oh, no, these grades actually count, Um, you really actually need to do the work. Like, we will be adaptable. And you know, I'm going to give you longer to redo things. And I'm allowing resubmissions of assignments, which I haven't, I don't usually do on the majority of assignments. There's specific ones like labs, you can come in after school and redo it. Absolutely. But we're allowing a lot more redo and resubmission work. But it definitely took like the last three weeks of the quarter was absolute mayhem, because they were like, wait, we're actually getting more cards. Yes. So those 14 days? You know, I've had 14 assignments and you have 14 missing?

Michelle Baldenegro 32:00

Oh, my gosh. Right.

Amanda Gingue 32:04

Um, so that's definitely been a huge transition.

Michelle Baldenegro 32:07

Yeah, this pandemic has definitely, I think affected different areas that, you know, the higher ups didn't really think about until we were, you know, well into dealing with the the outcome of what started to happen. But what about you? How are you doing as a teacher?

Amanda Gingue 32:29

It's mayhem. It's, I mean, thankfully, my mom only lives two hours away, and she works at home as well. So we're kind of like each other's pod. Allow me to get out of my apartment because I live just outside of DC. And my is under 700 square feet. So the walls close in and like, my desk is it literally folds out of the wall. Because I live in a small apartment. So it's like part of my kitchen. And so that's been a big transition, like how do I not feel like I'm living in my classroom, but have a space that's constantly set up so that I can work? Um, so that's definitely been a transition. And, and like I say, sometimes it's like, I just have to go down to my mom's house. Get out of my four walls. Um,

Michelle Baldenegro 33:28

and, and I feel like, and I would imagine, as a teacher, you know, at the end of the day, just like most of us, we can clock out and go have our like, our own life. And now with with you having to teach virtually from your home. You never I've heard this from a couple of different teachers, like you never escaped teaching, because now everything's home. And so if you know, a student, and a lot of our teachers have set up Google phone numbers, so if there's an assignment that they need help on, you know, they're texting them at six o'clock at night, trying to get answers. So I know that it I've heard many teachers feel like they just can't escape work. So it's double the work.

Amanda Gingue 34:09

Yeah, I mean, I've set limits for myself after the first like five weeks of school that I will log out, I will actually close my computer like I double screens, but I'll log off my computer, close it down by six o'clock every night. And I won't look at my email, nothing. Because otherwise it is 24 seven and like if you if I don't do that, then I do I find myself like even it's on my phone

and I only check my email. No, it is like what am I doing? I'm sitting here having dinner, and I'm checking my school email and then oh, I really should deal with that this kid emailed me or this parent or so it's been more like we really have to set boundaries for ourselves because those boundaries are completely gone. There's not a building that you can be like, Well, when I walk out of my laptop I can do. No.

Michelle Baldenegro 35:09

Yeah, it's constant, constant. So this is kind of a de, I don't know, maybe a little bit more personal. Do you feel that you are as effective as a teacher remotely? As you would be in person?

Amanda Gingue 35:22

No, no Absolutely not. Um, especially if you doing science, like, all of my labs are virtual, Oh, it's just not the same. When you do science. The whole point is, it's hands on. Exploring, and here's I'm posing a question to you go do this, and then I'll attach the vocabulary to it afterwards. And then we'll go back and evaluate what you've done. Now, it's, you can't really do that. Because it's like, here's the link. Go on and do this. The vocabs at the top of the sheet that they fill out. There's no exploring and developing and learning. It's just there.

Michelle Baldenegro 36:03

Wow. So you've kind of you've kind of removed that hands on experience that is associated so much with science.

Amanda Gingue 36:10

Yep. I like the most, the most effective thing so far, because I've been teaching physics, specifically with my eighth grade is they build Rube Goldberg machines? It could decide whatever their outcome was, they didn't build it, and then use flipgrid to video it and explain the physics that was involved. So I'm, like that was really effective versus the an online lab. It's just trying to find the time and then the structures to put it in for them. Like, here's what you should include. It takes a lot of time.

Michelle Baldenegro 36:44

Wow. And and that's, and that's something because, as you stated, at the start of this video, you've been teaching for 12 years. So it's not like you're a new teacher off the street who's never had to teach a physics lesson, you've literally been doing this probably seven years, at least physics. And that is incredibly telling of what this pandemic has done for our educational system. If teachers, such as yourself that have been teaching for so long are struggling, I can't even imagine what new teachers will or are going to feel like during this whole thing.

Amanda Gingue 37:19

Yeah, I mean, you can't really use pretty much anything that we've used before. Mm hmm. You're recreating your lessons. Because you, you can't just be like, well, I'll just adapt this video, this lesson here, I'll video the lab for you. That's just not effective. So you are literally recreating the wheel. And sometimes it doesn't work. Sometimes it blows up in your face. And you know, I'm in the class and the kids are doing their thing. And suddenly, it's like, total mayhem. I have 42 chats. And they're like, how do I something happened? Was she it's not and

I'm like, Oh my gosh, okay. Cancel breakout rooms. Let's do this together. Because, yeah, that did not work the way I thought it was going to. And now we're 30 minutes into our class, and

Michelle Baldenegro 38:06

we gotta go, we gotta we gotta do something else.

Amanda Gingue 38:09

It's in class, you can catch those things like, Oh, you know, Johnny's confused over there, I'll go check in with him. You can't see their faces, because a lot of them don't turn their cameras on. So if they don't actually tell you in chat, then you're totally lost. You have no idea what kids are getting at what they're not until they turn in the assignment. So you can't catch you know, that whole catch and release thing. You can't do that with the kids.

Michelle Baldenegro 38:36

Well, I have one more question for you. And that is when you do return in person, how comfortable will you be being back?

Amanda Gingue 38:47

I'm currently not very,

Michelle Baldenegro 38:50

are the numbers high in Virginia?

Amanda Gingue 38:52

Yeah, and they're climbing. Um, so I know, there's like metrics that allow us to go back and make us stay home and that kind of thing. Um, but I just, I don't know how it's gonna work in a closed area. My team in particular is in the middle of the building. So there's no windows, Um, like, You're not supposed to be within six feet of the kids, they can't share equipment. I just I don't know how it's going to work. They're gonna have to have lunch in our rooms. It's just it doesn't make me feel very comfortable. Like I've got asthma so I feel like I'm more susceptible to picking this up. And you know, some of the teachers were kind of kind of joking kind of not like when I get home I'm just going to strip in my garage and I'm like, if I do that, I'm getting in the elevator of my shared like building and going up six floors naked so that can't how do I not take it home with me had like, so I don't really feel that comfortable with where we're at right now. I just think we're forcing it and we shouldn't be. Yeah.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>