

## Transcript of Interview with Anonymous by Art Reyes

**Interviewee:** Anonymous

**Interviewer:** Art Reyes

**Date:** 11/15/2020

**Location (Interviewee):**

**Location (Interviewer):**

**Abstract:** This is an interview with a recent college graduate that started her career at the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic. She describes pre-covid conditions to COVID-19 rules in the kindergarten classroom.

**Art Reyes 0:02**

All right, so we're here today. We're gonna ask questions about any impact that COVID-19 has had on your work environment, so as a substitute teacher, what has been any changes or any differences in your work environment between last school year, the beginning of 2020, and the beginning of this new school year in August of 2020?

**Anonymous 0:34**

So the beginning of last semester- well, the semester started- second semester started in January. And everything was normal up until March when we released for spring break, and we just never went back to school. So as a substitute teacher, my job obviously wasn't guaranteed anymore because there was no need for a substitute teacher because teachers weren't- started teaching from home. So, I did not have a job. The district that I worked for, Southwest ISD, they continued to pay their subs throughout that time, but only if they had worked 30 consecutive days in a row, and I had only worked 25, so I wasn't going to continue to get paid. So, I didn't have a job until the next school year started when they called me back, and the district that I work for, Southwest ISD, was hiring permanent subs for the semester to just be on standby at the school if- if they were needed. So since the beginning of August, or the beginning of the school year, which was mid August, I've been on campus at the junior high that I sub at in case I'm needed on a daily basis for a teacher that calls in a teacher that's already out office work clerical work. So, yeah, it's been pretty different. Of course we have to wear our masks, all day, every day. We have shields around the kids' desks, that they're not allowed to move. We have to sanitize at the end of every class period. We have hand sanitizer stations posted at- in every classroom and in every- in every other hallway. So everything has been taken to the extreme, of course, to be able to keep the students safe. And, um, yeah, we're only allowed to be- right now we are only allowed to be at 50% capacity, so we still have a lot of students who are at home who choose to be at home. And also, once we reach- we're not at 50% yet, so it's still a choice

whether or not they can- they want to come back with- their parents want them to come back. At the beginning of the school year we were only at 25% capacity, so it's actually been a big difference between the first three months and this month which is when we moved over to 50%. So we're still allowing kids in because we haven't reached 50% yet, but we've also seen a couple of cases, since we've started adding more students in. They don't have to report their cases, obviously, because their children, they're minors. So... but we have- we have steadily gotten more students back in the classrooms, which has both been great because it's easier to teach them when they're in person because they don't always, you know, log in when they're supposed to. But, um, yeah it's still a really big change and something that everybody's still getting used to.

**Art Reyes 4:01**

So, what platform are they using to log in? I mean people like, the kids from school. I mean, the kids are at home. How are they logging in to turn homework? Is it video?

**Anonymous 4:16**

So most of the teachers are still using live Zooms. So the student- that's one of the way to mark their presence for attendance purposes. They have to log in to the Zoom link for each teacher for each period to prove that they were present for that day. And so that- that kind of helps them to be interactive with the teacher and other students because they can chat in a chat box and answer the questions that the teacher is asking, and so she's- the teachers are basically teaching their in class students and their at home students at the same time, or at least they're trying to, if they're logged in and participating online because you can't neglect kids at home because they got to make sure- you got to make sure that they're learning the same lesson that your kids in class are learning.

**Art Reyes 5:04**

So for the kids at home, are they logged in for the whole day, every hour of the day?

**Anonymous 5:08**

So each hour- each class period has its own- they have their own Google Classroom page. So for- if my first period is English, I have to go to my first period Google Classroom page, and it comes up with their personal Zoom link for that class only and their assignments for that class and that's where they submit their assignments on to Google Classroom. And so the Zoom link for each teacher is different. So you have to be in that teacher's Google Classroom to access their Zoom link.

**Art Reyes 5:42**

Got you. So you said that you weren't working after the spring semester, I take it in the summer of 2020, was there anything else that you were doing?

**Anonymous 5:57**

Um, yes, so I had just graduated in December right before all of this happened. And I was- I graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology, and it's been a really hard to find a job right now because of the pandemic. But I was- I did have a great opportunity to work with the children's shelter in the summer. While I wasn't- I was no longer being paid with the district. As a m- I was going to work for the children's shelter as a mental health facilitator. And they- I went in for a couple of shifts, I worked there, the children were great. However, they weren't following any of the health guidelines. It was- it's really hard with kids in a children's shelter to follow guidelines because you can't- they're not your kids, you have to... you can't like go put a mask on their face and say, "You have to wear it." You can't touch these kids because they're minors, first of all, and they're not your kids. So it was really hard to get them to follow those guidelines and they're not gonna follow them when the other employees aren't following the guidelines. So because I wasn't very- I didn't feel very safe. It was- I was very vulnerable because no one was following any guidelines, and they didn't really have any guidelines established yet. I did end up leaving that job, and about a month later, they did end up having an outbreak within their shelter. Yeah, they ended up having an outbreak right after I had left. Just for simply not following guidelines. And what I thought was kind of, what's the word... They just didn't follow the rules and they should have because it's an emergency shelter. These kids are coming- you don't know where these kids are coming from, you don't know where they've been. And there's a pandemic going on, so you want to make sure you have guidelines set in place, even if it's just the bare minimum, and they didn't have that. And so, I wasn't very safe, I didn't feel very safe there, so-

**Art Reyes 8:16**

They probably weren't prepared.

**Anonymous 8:18**

They were not prepared in any way. And this was in July. So, the- the pandemic had started in March when everything shut down right after spring break. And so, I'm not saying like every business is the same and should always have, you know, some kind of plan, but in July, they still didn't have any kind of guidelines or plans or rules that they were following. So it was kind of ignorant of them to not have anything set in place yet. So...

**Art Reyes 8:53**

Sure. Um, so you mentioned that you graduated with a degree in psychology.

**Anonymous** 9:00

Yes.

**Art Reyes** 9:01

Had you wanted to pursue a master's degree this- this year during the COVID pandemic?

**Anonymous** 9:08

I had told myself after I had gotten my degree that I would take a year off because working towards that degree it took a lot out of me. But I was very excited to start a master's degree, to start a graduate degree, um, this next fall. And of course the process of applying to graduate school includes taking the GRE exam, which has been a really big struggle for me. Not only am I- do I have test anxiety. But I'm paying \$200 to take this exam, which they moved to 100% online, only to find out that the website in which they are proctoring the exam was not compatible with my laptop. And the only solution that tech support could give me was to just try another laptop. Because I have several laptops at my disposal. That was the only solution that they could give me so after rescheduling the exam, four or five times. I finally was able to find somebody with a laptop that it was compatible with that I could take it. So it was really hard. It was- not only was I stressed out because, you know, I couldn't even take it on my own personal laptop. I'm stressed out because it's an exam, of course. I- test anxiety, I don't do well on exams. Um, you know certain schools require you to have a certain score and so if I didn't score where I needed to, then that's a problem, because then I just spent \$200 to take an exam. And I didn't get what I wanted on it, and I have to take it again

**Art Reyes** 11:06

Which you passed.

**Anonymous** 11:06

I did pass. I did do- I did do well. Crazy story, I found out, you know, a month after I took it that one of the programs that I'm applying to no longer requires it. So it was a very stressful time for me. It was- it was a lot harder than it needed to be. The site that they use to Proctor, it wasn't- it was not user friendly. So, yeah, it's pretty stressful, just because it had to be online because nobody was offering it in person.

**Art Reyes** 11:39

Well at least your options for taking the- the exam have grown, instead of just waiting for one class to open for this test

**Anonymous** 11:48

Yeah.

**Art Reyes** 11:49

Multiple options now.

**Anonymous** 11:50

Yeah.

**Art Reyes** 11:51

Well, thank you for your interview. It was great.

**Anonymous** 11:54

Thank you.

**Art Reyes** 11:55

Congratulations on passing your GRP.

**Anonymous** 11:56

Thank you very much.

**Art Reyes** 11:57

It's pretty sweet.

**Anonymous** 11:58

Yes.