

Interviewee: Betsy Stangel

Interviewer: Cullen Stangel

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Abstract:

Betsy Stangel continuously faces difficult challenges in her everyday job as a math teacher at Wausau East Highschool. But since the COVID-19 pandemic Betsy, in her later years of teaching, has had to adapt and mold not only her styles of teaching but many of her teaching standards to reach many of her students and their struggles with the virus. Betsy constantly must find new methods of interacting and engaging her class along with dealing with pressure from other school district staff. In addition, the new lazy “COVID lifestyle” that fellow teachers have been encompassing within students and their assignments could be in correlation to parents, guardians, and a vast majority of the American population’s tone towards returning back to work. This could explain why education has been such a rough adjustment back to the original five-day-a-week class schedule.

Cullen Stangel 0:00

First off, it is November 26 2021 and just a quick reminder, everything we discuss here will be recorded and documented within our COVID archive. Is that okay with you?

Betsy Stangel 0:10

Yes.

CS 0:11

Okay, so my name is Cullen Stangel. Do you mind telling me your name and any other demographic information you're willing to share for this study?

BS 0:20

Sure. I am Betsy Stangel. I am age of 52, and a high school math teacher.

CS 0:30

Okay, so from what I understand is you've been a current Wisconsin resident all your life, do you mind sharing a brief history as to the cities you've lived in within Wisconsin?

BS 0:42

Sure, I grew up I was born and grew up in Altoona, Wisconsin. And then around age five, I moved to Whitewater, Wisconsin. I continued there through my high school and college years. And then I got my first and only teaching job up in Wausau, Wisconsin around age 23-22. And I've been there ever since.

CS 1:07

So from what you just said, You've been an educator for so long, what grade levels do you teach? And are there any other clubs or sports you do within your school?

BS 1:23

So I teach high school mathematics, it's grades nine through 12. And I've been through my 30 years of teaching, I'd been a key club advisor, I have been a seventh grade volleyball coach, I've taught summer school classes, which is kind of extra duty as well. I help out quite a bit with extracurriculars, where I like take tickets and or supervised, so I can see the kids outside the classroom as well.

CS 1:58

So you can definitely see that you've built up a good credibility within your field of education, especially within math. Is that, would you say that's accurate?

BS 2:11

Yes. In my 30 years of teaching, I feel that I've become very known around the community. I guess I should also say that I have been teaching aerobic classes at the YMCA before school for all about 20 years to so community member doing that, and then also activate St. Andrew's church, volunteer at the warming shelter, so yes, I feel like I have some strong roots in our Wausau community,

CS 2:41

Since COVID, come out, the current status of Covid cases within America with updated within the last 30 days have been about 48 million cases. And a current total of deaths. also updated within the last 30 days is 773,779 total deceased. How would you say you first learned about COVID-19, and what were your first thoughts of it? Did you think it was going to be as impactful as it was?

BS 3:24

So I think that was right before my spring break of the year 2009 teen that I was told, we may have to teach at home for one to two weeks or maybe you know a little bit longer, not sure. Just take your computer home and get ready to try to figure out how to be a virtual teacher, I had learned a little bit about blended classrooms and flip lessons. But as an older teacher, I really kind of ignored that. But that's when I first was impacted. And then I realized, you know, through our spring break, and then coming back in, and then just with the numbers in the older there were the numbers then but the scare of the numbers. We went virtual for the rest of that year. So that was my first encounter of it. I think that's answering your complete question.

CS 4:19

Just remember, you feel free to discuss as much as you want. Um, so have your thoughts changed since you're first learning of COVID-19?

BS 4:32

Yes, because we've all gone through it. And hindsight, you always can reflect and learn things. You know, should we have closed down that spring? Probably would have mattered, I'm not sure. Then the next year our school district, Wausau, went virtual to begin with them blended where you had an option for the rest of that year of 2020 - 2021. So, you know, what I think I got the most out of all this is that uncertainties occur, and no one can predict the future and know exactly what's right. And I really found, I just looked at people's perspective and reasoning on their stance or their view, especially if it was a really strong opinion or view about what we should do a COVID. And I kind of just kind of step back and just listen more on what they were thinking, again, knowing that wouldn't it be nice if we had all the right answers before it happened, and no one did.

CS 5:46

Isn't that the great question to life. So you mentioned that you went online, the spring semester of 2019. And then you ended up going into blended classes the next fall? Do you mind explaining a little bit what blended classes were to somebody who might not know?

BS 6:07

So we were a virtual, all virtual, and then we decided to open up we, our school district West, the school district send out survey after survey, saying, would you be interested in coming back and this and that now remember, I'm a high school teacher, I think I feel for the middle or the elementary schools and teachers and elementary parents. But the high school you have a little bit more flexibility where the kids can get themselves there and not have to ride the bus, you know, the daycare stuff. So, we opened it up knowing that about 50%, I think it was 60/40 or close to 50/50 would be coming back. Now what's interesting, the 50 that stayed home, and the reasoning for saving, staying home safety and such. Now hindsight this year, when we're back full in person, and we have them for the whole year. I often wonder if it was that less demands on learning the mathematics when your full time virtual maybe occurred, because this year has been quite a challenge, trying to get the students back into full gear of doing homework and thinking

deeply and processing. And, and quite a bit of it, I feel is from, from what a lot of students that are struggling were full virtuals last year. So that's something I've kind of noticed.

CS 7:38

So going off of that, a lot of the returning students deal with current issues such as like whether or not to get vaccinated. I'm just wondering, with a state rate of 59.3% vaccinated Are you vaccinated in do you support others being vaccinated and even the vaccine mandate?

BS 8:04

I did get vaccinated. And I to be honest, my one of my main reasons for getting vaccinated was because of my, my mother, my elderly mother and seeing her and then also that we did decide to go on a spring break trip that spring of 2020 with our high school son, and it was out of the country so I wanted to be fully vaccinated before flying for the all the mandates of the COVID test to come back and all and all of that. And then I get my booster as well. I did not have a reaction with any of the shots whatsoever. So I felt okay, even like with the booster, I didn't hesitate. But again, I see people with concerns on why they want to get vaccinated a young teacher who was soon to be wanting to get pregnant all the way, you know, to the people that were concerned with people not being vaccinated, because they were immune compromised and didn't want to be around people and were around lots of people, high school students and such. So I really have found I just am more of an observer of what people are going through, and listening to their reasoning why they made the choices they did.

CS 9:37

So looking at past COVID records specifically within Wausau which is where you've been living for the past few years and teaching, COVID has actually been a huge hotbed spreading around Wausau and even the newer mutations such as delta and the current muu strain have now been infecting more and more, even those who have been vaccinated? What kind of steps do you take to protect yourself in your household, your community, any of the above?

BS 10:14

Well, being vaccinated and getting the booster along with, I always get the flu shot, then I also, you know, taking precautions you know, with our church and social distancing occurs there. But to be honest, I'm probably one of them that is not taking, being overly cautious. I'm more feeling that I'm very healthy. And, feel if I, if I did get it, especially with the vaccine, vaccines me that I would, it would be, you know, not as traumatic as someone else. And I kinda am on probably leaning towards the, I'm gonna live my life and not hesitate to do the things that I didn't get to do for the last year or so. Because of COVID in the scare, so I'm probably more where I'm just saying, You know what, let's go for it. And we'll see what happens while taking, you know, the precautions that people recommend.

CS 11:24

Okay, going off with this, the whole mental idea of living your life a little bit more to the fullest. Do you think that is more of a recent shift in thinking or do was that your total mindset going all the way from the start of COVID to now?

BS 11:47

At the beginning of COVID, I was confused and scared. And I found that, you know, I listened to or saw the news clips and the banners that said, this many cases, this many... if we don't do this it's gonna this. And so I entrusted that. And I still do, but I was a rule follower, I will do what you say, what do I need to do with frustration, knowing that I was completely unprepared to do the best job I could as a virtual teacher for that spring semester. So essentially, we lost a fourth of the year, fourth quarter, again, trying to do the best I can. But you know, so I started out that way and then I think I was along the lines of everybody else that when they said, it's going to come back, it's going to come back worse this year, you know, we're going to need to do this and that, I think I just kind of said, Let's just wait and see, I was less cautious and more like, you know, majority of us made it through. And we now have a vaccine to protect ourselves and make it not as traumatic. So I think I just kind of said, Let's just move forward and try to let me do my job the best I can with the kids in this school.

CS 13:19

When you said this year, did you mean specifically 2021? So a year and about maybe eight months after COVID broke out?

BS 13:29

Yes. I was thinking about that. When I said that last year. I was one of them. When they told us we had to be fully virtual. I thought, okay, they know what we need to do. But when we did decide, I think in November, December to go blended, I was one of them that was like yes. Which did make my job even more difficult because I had to teach with people in person and in Google meet (online meeting website, and it slowed down my technology. my smart board and my graphing calculator, software on the smart board, because it was presenting to Google meet, but I was I at that point, I was definitely ready to have kids back in the classroom, I could see the damage it was doing to those people that were not good with online learning. So it was nice to welcome them back. So yeah, so even that year, and then even now this year, I know we will never go back to blended or well maybe blended but we won't go back to full virtual.

CS 14:31

So virtual was kind of a bust. So when your school district first mentioned that they wanted to go virtual, how did many of your colleagues respond to that? Do they have the same kind of approach you did?

BS 14:46

Would that's where it's very interesting. We had the teachers that said, I am not going to teach unless we are fully virtual, because you are jeopardizing my health or my loved one's health. Then I had other coworkers that were I do not want to teach virtual anymore I did that for a quarter and it was awful, I cannot like a band teacher, how do they teach virtually. So, you know, I just came up with as an example. But um, so anyway, so it was where I was really seeing the all the way to this side, the spectrum all the way to this side all the way to the other side on what we should do. And that's where I kind of was, you know, in the middle, just kind of looking and listening to everybody's view on what we should do and why.

CS 15:46

So kind of going back to like the, or just going off with the fact that a lot of teachers probably a varying views when it came to how the school district responded to COVID-19. Do you think there could have been a better approach handled at the current outbreak in 2019? Or do you think virtual was probably the smartest idea right off the bat?

BS 16:19

I think there were so many questions, and so much worry about the extent of what COVID could do to, you know, human, the human population, that I think we were overly cautious. But what if we went to been? And we would of, hindsight, we would have been “Oh my gosh,” we should have been. So, I think that I'm more of a person that said, Well, this is what happened now we move forward from it. But I'm sure that there are many people that feel we could have done that differently and better, and probably we could have because our numbers weren't that that high. But who's to say they want to really gotten high if we wouldn't have done that. One thing I noticed this year, because last year, when we did go to blended we had masks for the entire year.

CS 17:20

So 2020

BS 17:21

Yeah, 2020, 2021 year, we were masked the whole year. This year, we've entered in full, no blended no masks. And I've never seen so many kids with a common cough or wWauith strep throat. I think all those things that we always fought every year are coming stronger, or maybe they seem stronger, because we are unmasked this year. So that is something I've noticed even this year.

CS 17:52

Oh, I'm so going off of students. How did students and parents and any other influencers kind of react to the initial adapting of schools to fit COVID regulations?

BS 18:10

Well, there were many people that were well, in the spring of 2019. I think everybody, like we said, we're just trying to figure out the impact this was going to have, but then when we came to the fall, which would be you know, five months later, there were many people that were done. They were done with this, or there were many people that were worried they're very worried about what we were going to do. So for Wausau school district, we had an election, I think that fall, and we had three of our school board members be replaced with three people that ran together as like a pack, elect us will help, organize this or we'll figure it out. So again, there were very strong opposing opinions on how to deal with stuff. And I kind of just sat back and wanted to be where I thought they will tell me what I need to do. And then I will figure out what I need to do. So

CS 19:15

well, so for the past two and a half years, your job has shifted from online to hybrid blended to what you just said as students now not having to be mandated to wear debt masks. In what state do you view your job now? Are you still as interested in and inspired to teach youngers or are you still a little cautious when it comes to maintaining a decent distance to students when it comes to mingling in the halls and so on?

BS 19:49

Well, and that was one thing too when we came back to blended in the in the year 2019 - 2020 year, I have a hard time seeing, I'm getting old. I didn't want to enter into a student's area. But we still did a lot of online assignments because I had half at home and half in class. And so I would cautiously ask, may I get into your personal space to see your Chromebook (standard computer) because I can't see what problem you're on. You know, even though we both had masks on, and I felt like I had constantly asked that. We had hand sanitizer, of course in our classroom, and we would wipe down all the desks in between every class, but I mean, in order to do my job, I needed to get close to those kids. Now, this year, it's very interesting it that we're kind of back to the norm of before COVID, where I don't ask that I still have the hand sanitizer, some people use it, I would say about 1/6 of my students wear a mask, especially when they're feeling under the weather. And I don't know if that'll ever go away, I actually think that there will always be one or

two, that if they're have a cold or something their parents might say, now put your masks on so you don't make other people sick. But anyways, I think that has gone back to how it was before COVID, the classroom setting and the procedures, I feel the teaching hasn't gone back, that the students are like, Oh my gosh, this is a lot to do. I remember when I barely had to go to school, and we didn't go to school on Fridays at all last year because it was we had synchronous, and learning and then nonsynchronous learning. So Friday was a day where they were kind of doing their own stuff getting caught up on their assignment, which was really in the students eyes a day off. So just the fact that we're back in school regular hours, five days a week, they look exhausted, and they really aren't up to the same motivation level, they were, you know, prior to COVID.

CS 22:13

So, from what it sounded like, a lot of the settings are kind of going back to normal, but education itself is still taking a toll from COVID.

BS 22:23

Yes, we I think is going to take at least another year or so before we get back into the groove of; Hey, we have a math assignment every day, five days a week, or stuff to do every single day, five days a week.

CS 22:39

So you would say a lot of the students who you have currently in comparison to the pre COVID students have a little, maybe less focus, and it's harder to kind of get them up to speed with the content you have to teach being in a newer upper level class. Is that right?

BS 22:58

Um, I don't know, if it's really focus motivation, they don't really, they're not really excited about working. Its kinda is funny, because if you look at just, you know, how many jobs are available, and how many people are now not jumping in getting the job, I feel like that's kind of the whole society is like, wow, we really have to work again. So I think the kids are kind of just going hand

in hand with that. So we just we need to, we need a little bit more adjustment period to get back to normal.

CS 23:33

Do you think that might be a result of students having to stay home during that year of fully online, and then the half blended, and not only having to do with schoolwork online, but then kind of seeing their parents who might have had to take a break from their jobs, and seeing how their life is compared to the students?

BS 23:56

Absolutely, I think our whole country got a little bit COVID lazy, and we're still recovering from that. But I absolutely think that that staying home and especially not having that learning, that structured learning on Fridays, but having the non-structured learning on Fridays last year definitely did not help us with trying to get back into the parameters of a structured five days a week, you know, 7:45 to three o'clock school day.

CS 24:36

You mentioned earlier that stuff might be normal or the results of COVID within education might begin to normalize around next year. I've heard a lot of other educators respond with that they are thinking about early retirement due to COVID and how things will never return to the same. Are you positive with your comment about everything going back to normal in a few years? Or do you think there still might be some underlying issues?

BS 25:08

I believe that and this might be a good thing that came from COVID, I believe that the opportunity to look at different ways of learning has really occurred. And online learning is not definitely for some people, but for others, they were efficient and did well, and actually learned, you know, not just kind of got around the system of that. So I do believe that people that say teaching will never be back to the same. I think that's true in the sense that there will be and should always be some other options available now. I was thinking more of the line of the work ethic and the knowledge that my students they'll come in with, because my Algebra one

freshmen aren't coming in with the knowledge to learn Algebra one like they did two years ago. But that's because they've had the at home learning from COVID. You know, so I could see how some teachers would be close to retirement would be saying, this is enough, I'm exhausted. I cannot lie this year has been one of my most challenging years, to try to motivate kids into deeper learning deeper thinking and investing that time to get caught up or to understand, because they haven't done it for a while, like I said. They're not trained to focus on schoolwork and thinking like that. Funny story, when I first heard that I had to teach virtually for a couple weeks back in that spring of 2019, I said, I will never be able to do this. And I told one of my accelerated Algebra two IB classes, I told them that I would never going to make it. And the last Google meet of that class, at the end of the year, I had two girls stay on later when the meet was done. They told me how proud they were of me for achieving, and excelling in teaching them virtually, and figuring it all out. With good lessons and good online homework and it made me feel very good that I was able to adapt and figure things out. So I feel that even though I'm close to retirement, I can take what they give me. Whatever happens, I can monitor and adjust. But you know, I can see it is a tremendous amount of change that we have gone through in the last three years as educators. I could see how some people would throw in the towel and say I'm exhausted and I'm done.

CS 28:01

So you mentioned the two girls staying after class, to tell you how great of a job you did. There's a lot of new studies for teachers saying that one of the first steps to being able to teach someone to be willing to learn is to not only understand kind of who they are and build a relationship with them to be able to kind of have that mutual respect and give and take when it comes to learning. Do you think through online, blended, and now, post COVID but still dealing with COVID issues, do you think those relationships are harder to build?

BS 28:43

I think online was extremely hard to build relationships, especially when students would turn their video off or not chime in, you know...

CS 28:54

The black screen (when an attending student refrains from showing their video their screen is just black)

BS 28:55

Yeah, with the mic. But it's so interesting, because now with everybody back in school, when I'm in the Math Resource Center, and a student comes to get a pre calc test. When I look at the name, I realized they were my student last year and it's so I kind of look at them and they look at me, but I had not, interacted with the visual-ness of them in person, but I knew them well for online interactions. So, I think online learning or virtual learning was very hard to get to know the students, especially the quieter students. You can't, come over to their desk scooch down, get in their area and say, do you want to say after do you want some help? Because you don't see them? You don't hear them? So that is that was difficult. I think what we're seeing, unfortunately with the people coming back is the anxiety now of the Students coming back that, hate to say it, didn't learn us Photomath (online math answering AI) or cheated. That got through somehow now the consequences are coming back into play this year, and they're struggling and the grades are struggling and all that, that pressure that was pre COVID, about GPAs, ACT's and grades. The kids again, are struggling and aren't able to cope with this. There is that depression and anxiety. I think I'm seeing that that more this year than I have, for a long time and I relate that to COVID as well.

CS 30:45

Knowing this, and kind of assuming that students will use resources if given the opportunity, and or, during test and stuff. Has your school district set anything up to kind of help accelerate students who might need it in order to understand stuff going into Algebra two if they, I don't want to say half-assed (completing a task with no effort), but half assed algebra one?

BS 31:19

Yes, we have. We schedule people into the Resource Center on their off mods or their off periods, to help them get caught up. And this year, we took two of the days and the five days of the week and we made it like odd or even classes with a half an hour intervention prevention

time at the end of the day, where the student can come or you can assign the student to come and help them. So yes, we tried to change your schedule a little this year, and schedule more people into the Resource Center to get help. I do believe any of the teachers, quality teachers, are aware and are trying to reach out and meet with the students. We don't want to be anxious; we don't want anybody depressed or any of that. So we're trying to do that, which again, makes the job quite a bit harder, because you're assuming they know stuff. They don't know it and not only do they not know it they're anxious about not knowing it and being back in the school setting.

CS 32:28

How do parents approach issues like this knowing that their student might be a little behind, or not even knowing at all, and when it comes to communicating with parents with kids who might be failing or having more difficulties within classes?

BS 32:49

So I've had a lot of parent emails or parent interaction, that was one thing I learned how to do with our internet campuses are grading system, and you can send out just a general email to all the parents, because all their emails are in there and that that's nice just to say this is coming due or this is here, this is what's going on or retakes available. Not that I do that I really haven't tried to but like, this is what I saw on the tests. This is what the kids can do about it or how we're going to relearn the material. It's not really retake but relearn. But anyways, so um, a lot more parent communication. I have found also, because of our virtual year in a blended year, a lot especially that the fully virtual all year long students would email and so there's still that emailing, which I like that they feel comfortable emailing. But now that you're teaching in person the whole time, plus doing a lot more other stuff that we didn't do so much of when we were blended or fully virtual, the emails just got overwhelming at the beginning of the year. And that's where I started to use that group email just sending out a general email to all the parents. But yes, parents are definitely active. It helps us to know what's going on how the students are dealing with COVID Or what's happening. Of course, we have quarantine or students that are being quarantined. And when they have COVID they let us know all our materials out on our software where they can see the daily lesson plan we use, It's learning (the Wausau School Districts main website for students). So keeping that up to date as well. But yes, parents have

been very active in figuring out both my parent conference nights in the fall are completely full with parents. I didn't have one break available, which has not occurred. I can't remember the last time they didn't have at least one or two slots open.

CS 35:10

Very interesting. So you would probably say that students are actually being less accountable and need more reminders and or people kind of motivating them to do stuff that three years ago, pre COVID students would have done by themselves without having so many, like textual reminders.

BS 35:37

Um, yes. I think they need more incentive motivation. I don't know if it's a reminder, they know it's coming due, they don't want to deal with it. So they're kind of in denial, like, oh, I don't really want to go to school this Friday, I wish it was last year when we didn't have school. And then they're there. And then they're like weekend, and then on Monday, they didn't achieve what they needed to on the weekend. So it's kind of more, that they're intentionally not doing something and they need incentive, or motivate to do it.

CS 36:21

And I'm going way back, I know you mentioned that you had a high school son who you took with you on one of your spring breaks. Did you see a lot of these trends, not only as a teacher, but as a mother?

BS 36:34

Of people taking kids on breaks?

CS 36:37

More the fact that your high school kid did he kind of have some of these same issues when it came to dealing with high school and COVID.

BS 36:48

I think as a teacher, Mom, I could use what my son was struggling with at home to help justify or make my students feel better. Also, when they would say that they were very stressed, I could relate to their stress, because I could see my own son going through that same stress. I think that that helps a lot with perspective as seeing on both sides of it. But yes, of course, my son did some procrastinating. Some I'm not really motivated, definitely on Friday was kind of like a "it wasn't really a school day" to him. But again, being a teacher, I tried to motivate him or just talk him through the need to stay on top of stuff, because I knew it would come back when he transitioned to college, because that was his senior year last year(2020), how he would need to be prepared. So yes, I did see it I tried to use it to help guide both my son and my students.

CS 38:00

So not only being a mother and an educator, seeing both sides did that force you to have to be a little bit more flexible when it came to holding due dates, and making compromises with students to make sure that they were able to pass.

BS 38:19

The word compromise, I think it's more, I'm not a fan of that word. I think it's makes you more flexible, and what you're doing so when I tell my students this year like we had a big test right before Thanksgiving break. And, I heard some moaning and I was like, "So what's going on?" Oh, these are my accelerated students and they're an accelerated IB chem, IB all these high end classes and they were like, "well, we have this doing that doing ..." So, I can do a little wiggle room, or justification or instead of having an assignment, do on Friday, I still use some online assignments, and they're due on Friday at midnight, they're always default to midnight, I would be like, "do you want me to make that Sunday at midnight?" And they're like, "yes." You know, and then the review would be do at this time because it was an online assignment. I would adjust that and they were very gracious or happy about that. And I think that's, that working together and relating. The flexibility and the hearing your students you want the most out of your students is not it's not it needs to be in a respectful way that they know that there are hard deadlines, and then there's some adjustment that can be done. And anytime you do that, give them rationale on why you're doing it. The test can't be moved to the Monday after Thanksgiving. That's five days

you wouldn't be studying. But anyways yes, but I think I did that before COVID too. Is to listen to my students and try to help them manage their workload the best they can.

CS 40:17

Okay, so going off of this question when it came to listening to your students kind of like building up a sense of responsibility, but also flexibility when it comes to hard deadlines and stuff like that. Do you think students have actually been doing better knowing that if they're overwhelmed, and they come to you for assistance, and you're able to kind of just move back a deadline? Are they doing better?

BS 40:49

I think what they're doing is they're being better advocates for themselves and communicating. And I'm very worried about that with this generation, because their noses and heads seem to be in their phones all the time. And that's how they communicate not verbally. So I think them saying, "Oh, would you consider moving that homework deadline, a day later?" And then me asking why, and then them giving their rationale and me saying, absolutely, that's fine. As long as you know, then this is still this. This is when we're taking your test. So I feel like they're getting better at that. And I expected that before COVID, and I like that they're doing that more this year. That has come a long way, since we've been back in person, where they do that in a positive approach way of being an advocate for themselves, and just saying, This is what I need to do. And being able to do that is going to release anxiety and stress, which is huge right now. So yes, I think that they're getting better at that.

CS 42:10

As a current student who's not only in the ES program, but also in my own capstone class this semester, I've read different reports about how, when it comes to just focusing on one task. It will relieve anxiety, which will ultimately allow kids to work faster, or work more efficiently on whatever they focused on at that very moment. So your response there, kind of fit that article I read, which is very interesting. But kind of towards the end of this now, do you think there are any positives that COVID has taught teachers, students, and parents that we haven't discussed on yet?

BS 42:57

Well, that's the thing, I try to look for some positives that have come out of COVID. And realizing that we have always taught public education the same way for like 90% of the students. Does it always have to be 7:30 to 3 o'clock every day? Eight classes are could there be some classes that could be blended, and some that could be in person. I believe math needs to be a class that you're in person for majority, so that you can ask questions, you can hear other people's questions, but I don't know if all classes need to be. So, that's a lot of scheduling and figuring that out. But I do believe COVID has opened the doors to we don't have to stay with the same class schedule that we've had for 30 years for public school. Possibly look at different ways of changing that. I believe also that COVID has made people realize the need for students to be together to look at each other and communicate person to person not technology. I mean, how many people I remember saying I have a headache, my screen, I can't sit in front of that screen anymore. My eyes are hurting How about the glasses you have to buy so that it's easier to look at a screen for eight hours. So I feel like that COVID made us aware of that human contact is needed. Feel that also the value of a good teacher that can do their job well in a classroom and the magic that can come out of well-structured high energy learning atmosphere has been noticed, and praised now. So, I feel that there's a couple good things that have come out of COVID along with a lot of the bad.

CS 45:19

So just as much as teachers were very happy to be going back to teaching in person, it's kind of the same sense for students with their social connections, and not only that, but then being able to read body language when it comes to teachers, and kind of understanding the the full scheme of things. So, with that in mind, do you think COVID benefited teachers? Or do you think it's going to put a dent on how teachers educate for the, maybe, for the next 100 years or so?

BS 45:59

Um, I think it was a bubble. COVID was a bubble. If our numbers go down, and if we get past COVID, it will just be something you'll look at and go, Wow, look at this maybe a CT scores, they'll drop or something they'll drop or something, but I mean, they'll be like, Oh, that was a

COVID, or something like that. But I don't think it's going to have that huge of an impact on teachers. But again, it might have where people say, I want to be an online teacher, I want to teach blended, I really like that. Just like students that might be saying that, when they go off to college, if there's a choice of I'll take that online class, I like that. I was good at it or No, I was terrible at it. But I don't think it's going to have that huge of an impact. But right now, it's having an impact coming back now and dealing with this. And I am thankful that Wausau school district has not considered doing any kind of blended or virtual this year, but we're just we're just gonna watch your numbers, and we're just going to plow through, I think it is the best thing for the students. Even if our numbers are going up a little and people are getting sick and such. I mean, look, colds and all the old stuff that we had. I just, I think it's I think it's, it's needed.

CS 47:23

So I'm looking at how schools could adapt from this, there was a school district, the Eau Claire School District, specifically our ES professor in 358, discussed how his school district went from being blended to then having a four day week with Wednesday being an optional day. So Monday to Friday, with Wednesday being a day where students would come in to work on stuff in classes, they may be behind in. And he mentioned multiple times, how not only did that make it easier for students, and then also give students a little break during the middle of the week, due to coming back to a full like five day week is hard going from online to like a full day week. But do you think that there could be modifications to how schools run within a weekly time period that you would have liked to continue exploring through COVID?

BS 48:28

Again, I can see why a school district could do that. And we tried to do that with Friday. But I'm very curious how many of those students if you survey them would say that ones they just like a day off. And you wish that everybody would use that time to max. And I bet their intentions in the beginning is to use that time to get caught up and everything. But it's human nature to kind of get a little Laxy (lazy + luxury) on things, and even our intervention prevention time. There's some students that should be coming in to see me and they don't. I have a hard time scheduling them, demanding them. I want them to do that on their own. But honestly, people can come up with reasons why they don't do something until it's like right in front of them. And then they go,

Oh, I should have done that. So I actually think going back to the five day week, in person and not having that day was the best thing last the school district could do.

CS 49:29

Now we got two final questions. The first one being now that you've kind of understood the whole complexity of teaching, pre pandemic, mid pandemic and now kind of towards the end, fingers crossed (symbolizing luck), is there anything that you would tell future teachers and even yourself within a few years that would help benefit you teaching the next few generations of students? When it comes to how to motivate them, how to keep their interest during a 30 to 40 minute class period and or when it comes to having deadlines. Is there anything that you would want to mention to future teachers?

BS 50:18

I think the main thing is that you, you get ready to be flexible, and monitor and adjust, you don't know what's going to be coming your way. Like you can't prepare for everything, but be flexible. And when you try something, if it doesn't work, this is any good teacher does. That didn't work, you try something else. And then even if something works for a while, but then you notice that, like, the students figured out how to get around this system or, use this, to get away with something where they're not deeply understanding. Then you monitor and you change it to so it's just be on your toes be thinking all the time of what's the best way to reach them to have them deeply learn and understand the material and be ready to make an adjustment, when needed.

CS 51:15

Oh, a quick question I forgot to mention. But did your school district back a lot of the decisions teachers made if they weren't a unified decision, such as the flexibility with deadlines or mask wearing and stuff? Did your school district tend to support the decisions the teacher made?

BS 51:34

I don't know so much, it's the teacher. The teachers don't have that much input on decision making since Act 10 came into place in Wisconsin. But they did listen to the community and the people that would go to the school board meetings, regardless of if it was a teacher, community

member and such. So yes, they really the school district in the school board. I think they tried to do the best they could now did they please everybody? No one can ever please everybody, especially how diverse opinions are. But yes, they tried to listen, they tried to do the best they could nowhere did I feel that they were just not having open ears and hearing people's opinions?

CS 52:19

And then final question. Is there anything else that you'd like to say about COVID through the eyes of a mother, as a community member, as a teacher, anything that you would like to share?

BS 52:34

Um just that we are all trying to figure this out and do the best that we can. And as long as you believe that you are working as hard as you can, to be careful to hear others' opinions to be respectful to learn or do your job then I think that then you're doing what's expected or hoped.

CS 53:05

Well, thank you again for allowing me to interview you. And that is the end.