RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH FAITH D'ALESSANDRO

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY
MARCH 30, 2022

TRANSCRIPT BY

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Paul Clemens: Okay, now, I think I've activated the live transcript. Can you see that across the bottom of your screen?

Faith D'Alessandro: I see it at the top of it.

PC: OK, fine, but it's there?

FD: Yes.

PC: Well, this is different than what we've done in the past, because Zoom now has a transcription program. Well, actually, I think they did in the second interview we did because I don't think I have that as a text file. This is our third interview. The consent process is the same for all the interviews. You're consenting for the use of this by Johanna Schoen and myself. We're collaborating on a project about the pandemic. It means that we could use any part of what we're recording. It means your name would be attached to that, unless there was some very important reason it shouldn't be. It means that we probably wouldn't use, if you happen inadvertently to name somebody else while we were talking that didn't seem appropriate, we would not use their name. The process can be bailed out on at any time at all. We certainly hope you don't do that. If I ask you a question you don't want to answer, just say, "I don't want to answer it." If for some reason you want to go off the record, then I will turn things off, and you can explain whatever it is and that that happens occasionally. The consent process was approved by IRB [Institutional Review Board] in what they call exempt status, which means we don't have to go through the formal IRB process.

I will add one wrinkle to it that has occurred since we last spoke. IRB has apparently agreed orally but not yet confirmed it, that historians are what they've been claiming to be for the last decade and acting as if they were in most cases not simply exempt from the normal process but completely outside of it, which is to say we don't have to go through the process in any way that people in the social sciences that are collecting data do. We're not collecting data; we're collecting personal interviews. That means that the strictures we put on ourselves to speed the process up--it took us three months to get approval; it could have taken us a year. By that time, the pandemic could have been over. Unfortunately, it wasn't. That no longer applies and I am going to go back to some of the people, you included, with whom I've talked and see if they're interested in donating their interviews, which now becomes possible, not to us, we have a right to them, but to the Rutgers Oral History Archives. If you're interested in it, then I'll put you in touch with them or they'll get in touch with you, and then you can see what their process is and whether you're willing to be a part of it. They are collecting material on the pandemic. They're mostly concerned with military veterans from Rutgers, that's where they were set up for, World War II and Korea and now Afghanistan and Iraq, and Vietnam. But they also have a large collection, which I helped start, of Rutgers-related stuff, and they are collecting stuff on the pandemic, as the library is as well, but they're not doing a very good job because they're so badly understaffed. They're horribly understaffed at the moment, and there's no prospect of hiring new people for a while, so it's a sort of sad thing. With all that background, to just start off with, do you consent to go forward with this?

FD: Yes.

PC: Good, thank you. First, if there is anything that has happened personally that is relevant to our discussion of you as a practicing teacher during the pandemic, could you fill me in on that? If there isn't, that's fine, but there could be things that have come up personally that contextualize what's going on.

FD: Yes, of course. Personally, my experience with COVID is I don't have a very good track record of it. I had it three times. My student-teaching experience was a little more stressful because I clearly seem to be susceptible to it. So, I was constantly worried about getting sick on the job or being sick and going to the job, which was something that was very overwhelming, because you feel as an educator, it's your responsibility to protect your students. If you could potentially be the cause of someone getting sick is very anxiety-inducing. Thankfully, I didn't get it at all during my student-teaching experience. I wound up getting it after the fact over winter break for the third time. But, at one point, I did have strep throat in the beginning year. I took the proper amount of days off from work, but the whole process is being like, "Oh, no! What if it was COVID and I was in the building last week?" Thankfully, it wasn't, and that didn't become an issue. But just having to worry about the wellbeing of not only myself [but also] the people around me and my students was something that was really stressful as a student-teacher.

PC: When you say you got it three times, what do you mean by that? You had three positive tests, or three completely different times when you got COVID?

FD: Three completely different times. I had it in October of the beginning of my senior year [2020]. I had it in February of my senior year [2021], and then I just had it in January of my fifth year [2022].

PC: In some ways, it affected the observation semester you had in the spring of your senior year.

FD: Yes. Thankfully, I had the opportunity to be virtual at that point, so I took that for my whole quarantine period, and whenever it was safe to come back, I logged in on that. I was still able to go and see it, but I wasn't in proximity to the students.

PC: Okay. I know that in talking to some students in a different GSE [Graduate School of Education] program, that they occasionally during their eighth semester, last semester as an undergraduate, were allowed to go in for a couple days, but that was it, during the pandemic, in fact. Everything was virtual, at least for them, except for a couple days they went in. That's not something you did? Do you know if that was anything that other people in your cohort did? Did they sometimes go into the schools during their observational period?

FD: I actually did get to go in, because what I think a lot of people were experiencing was [in] March of that year, schools decided they will give the students the option to go in or not. It was a hybrid format for my senior year. The first year, I was doing the observational portion, where two days a week I could go in person, or I could just log in through a Google Classroom, because there were students who were not comfortable yet going into the building, so they

joined online. I was given a lot of freedom in that aspect, where once I was COVID clear, I did wind up going into the classroom those two days a week towards the end of my experience. I know some students had similar experiences where it was hybrid and they had the option, and I know that the majority of them, when given the opportunity, did go into the classroom.

PC: I presume, you can skip this question if it's too medically personal, but you didn't have an exemption from Rutgers' mandatory vaccination policy. You were vaccinated and got COVID anyway.

FD: Yes, I was fully [vaccinated]. I had two Moderna shots and a Moderna booster and still got it.

PC: But probably like most people and very, very mild cases.

FD: Yes, I was fine. I actually was very energetic and just bored in my room, "I want to be done with this."

PC: You found out about this through the Rutgers spit test that they give? Is that what you were tested with that alerted you to it?

FD: When I was on campus my senior year, it was through the Rutgers spit test when I found out of those two cases, and then when I got sick this year in January, it was through my doctor at home that I got a nasal swab.

PC: Again, without being too specific, when you have COVID, you're living somewhere. Are you living with people who are at risk at that point? I guess they are. That means you have to take precautions within your room, or your home, or wherever you were living at that point as well?

FD: Oh, yes. I didn't leave my room. When I was at school, I was like a little prisoner in my bedroom. My friends would drop me off food outside my door. I'd be able to sneak it in quickly. Same thing at home and especially at home; my sister has a heart condition.

PC: You mentioned that, actually.

FD: Yes, so, I had to be super-duper careful. Same thing, I could not leave my bedroom. They did not use the upstairs bathroom at all because that's the one I was using. Even if I did go straight from my bedroom to the bathroom, I had Lysol wipes going over everything while I did it.

PC: Since the third one was done by your doctor, what was the doctor's advice about how long he or she thought you were going to actually be contagious?

FD: I'm going to try and remember the exact dates. I want to say it was around twelve days, twelve to fourteen.

PC: Full?

FD: Yes, full quarantine--or maybe it was ten. I remember, I was done January 13th, and I think I was exposed--actually, it was ten days, because I tested positive January 3rd and had to quarantine until the 13th.

PC: Okay, I'm just curious, because that number came down from the CDC [Centers for Disease Control] over time, as more and more people were anxious to get back to doing whatever they were doing, and they became more and more specific about it being a smaller and smaller number, until I think it got down to close to five or something, which isn't necessarily correct. There is a big argument about that and it's obvious it's still an issue, because there's still COVID going around. So, you're going to teach [in the fall of 2021] in the first semester of what is your fifth year and your first full semester as a full-time graduate student. Can you tell me where you went, what school?

FD: Sure, I was at Colonia Middle School in Woodbridge, and I student-taught a sixth grade U.S. history class.

PC: Okay. Remind me, you're in the K-through-twelve program or elementary ed program?

FD: I'm in the K-through-twelve social studies program.

PC: That's what I thought. In other words, you got sort of the very first time that you might be used as a teacher, which is sixth grade, as opposed to doing eighth grade or eleventh grade or whatever, which other people have gotten.

FD: Yes, I got the youngest.

PC: Did you like that?

FD: There were certain aspects of it that I adored. I loved that they were younger, but after they were virtual for almost two years and then getting them their first year back, it was definitely a lot more to handle than when I've previously had experiences in middle school.

PC: To start off with, you were completely in the school for this? You go to, actually, the Colonia School. How big is the school overall? Are you in the last year of an elementary school, or is this a middle school?

FD: This is strictly a middle school, so sixth to eighth grade.

PC: Okay. How many kids in the school approximately? Are we're talking about school with a hundred people or four hundred people?

FD: I would say closer to four hundred.

PC: A big middle school.

FD: It was bigger. I would say maybe anywhere from 250 to 350.

PC: Okay.

FD: That's my range. I was only teaching the sixth grade.

PC: What was the class size you were teaching?

FD: I had three blocks. My first block was very small, only had about thirteen kids, compared to my fourth block that had twenty-eight, and the third block was right in the middle with twenty.

PC: Fill me in for a second, because I don't remember this. Where did they start having blocks as opposed to being first or second grade, where almost everything is in one classroom and one teacher is responsible for their entire education? Is that something that happens in fourth grade, fifth grade, sixth grade? When do they start moving around the school, as opposed to staying with one teacher or at least one classroom most of the day?

FD: For my experience, it was always sixth grade was the first year that they had to do that. I think that schools are trying to integrate elements of that into fifth grade, so that they have at least some exposure before middle school. But middle school is the first time it's full time like that, where they have different teachers all throughout the day.

FD: Okay. You've got kids who are different in two ways, in that they're out of the mask and out of the quarantine and online and all this stuff, we'll get back to that, and they're also for the first time experiencing your classroom as a standalone classroom and then going to other teachers during the day. Okay, so, everything's changing for them very, very quickly, in other words, in terms of education. Are they masked?

FD: Yes.

PC: Are they vaccinated?

FD: Well, the hard part about that was during my experience was when the CDC was making it that you could be twelve years old, and then by the end of my experience, then it could be as young as five, where a lot of them were still only eleven.

PC: I was going to say, they have to be eleven or twelve to be in your class.

FD: Yes, they were eleven. Then, some of them were excited when it was their twelfth birthday. "I'm getting vaccinated," they would tell me about it. But a good chunk of my kids, if it was still the beginning of the school year, were still only eleven.

PC: There is a better than average chance that during a school year, kids who are not vaccinated are going to bring into the school from their parents, who they've gotten it from, COVID, and

then it's going to spread, so there's always that worry. What sort of precautions do you take in the classroom under that situation?

FD: Of course, everybody was masked. Teachers had to wear masks. Students had to wear masks. The school had a scheduled process for when the bell would ring, just to limit exposure in hallways. They had certain staircases only certain grades could use, and they would have teachers out in the hall trying to facilitate where you could stand to try and keep it six feet apart. Before and after every single block, teachers were required to wipe everything down with sanitizing wipes. We had hand sanitizer at the front of the room, so students used that and grabbed a wipe to wipe down their desk and their computer before class started. When, unfortunately, students did get COVID, we had a system where we had Google Classroom, like the Google Meets up, where they could still join that way, just so that they weren't totally behind during their quarantine, that they could actually still keep up. That worked out pretty well because they still were learning, even though they couldn't be in the classroom. But it was a little challenging, because we were not allowed to really give them direct instruction. We were more supposed to keep it teaching the class, and then they could just listen in on it, which for some of my students with learning disabilities and stuff, that was really hard for them.

PC: In other words, your classroom had in it people who were designated as having learning disabilities.

FD: Yes. I did have students with IEPs and 504 plans. It wasn't a special ed [special education] classroom. It was a gen ed [general education] classroom, but there were students with ADHD [attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder], lower reading level skills, things like that, where I was aware of that and how to make accommodations for that. [Editor's Note: An IEP is an Individualized Education Plan, which is developed to ensure that a child with an identified disability who is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives specialized instruction and related services. 504 refers to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which guarantees certain rights to people with disabilities.]

PC: If this were a non-COVID time, would those students have somebody in your classroom who would be assisting them, in addition to you? In other words, are they people who have to get, in some formula, some designated assistance while you're teaching?

FD: There was not anyone else in my classroom. I know that a different class, the other history class, did have a specific block that had an inclusion teacher there that was meant to help those students, because he had a lot more of them. Instead, in my class, me and my cooperating teacher just needed to be aware of those accommodations and make sure that we were meeting them for those students.

PC: If one of those students is virtual, as a teacher, what do you do to solve that problem, or can it be solved?

FD: Essentially, we didn't really have a rundown on how to handle that. What I would do was, instead of doing like we were supposed to do, where we were supposed to totally ignore them, leave them there, let them listen, I would always come in and give them periodic reminders, do

kind of like a comprehension check-in, ask them if they had questions about what we were doing, making sure that they were on task with what we were supposed to be doing. This one student, I am picturing his head right now, he was so sweet, he had a lot of difficulties with reading comprehension. Writing levels, he was very below average compared to his classmates, and he was out quite often because of exposure situations, where the students had to quarantine. Even if they didn't have COVID, if they were just exposed to it, they still needed to stay home. For him, he was struggling a lot that year because he does need a lot of hands-on help. What I would do was I would always just make sure, check in on him, and almost trying to monitor what he was doing through Google Classroom. If I assign something, I would check and go on his document that I provided him and make sure that he was staying on track and doing what I asked him to do.

PC: I haven't used Google Meetings. When we teach at Rutgers, we usually use Zoom, or one of the Kaltura things that they've got, which doesn't work very well. Can you see this student?

FD: Yes. It's kind of the same thing as Zoom. Google Classroom's kind of like a simplified version of Canvas, where they have a meeting option that'll just let them zoom into the class as well, where it's all in one place.

PC: You can see them, and they can see you?

FD: [Yes].

PC: Okay. Can they black themselves out like you can on Zoom?

FD: Yes, they can shut their screens off. For the majority, we like them to keep them on, but we didn't really have much control over that because we were supposed to be just sticking to our regular class. They were supposed to be listening in, so they could keep their cameras shut off. But when we were hybrid last year, they had to keep their cameras on.

PC: Okay. Your teaching, this is just an overview of American history or something like that?

FD: They learned from colonial America, so they learned about the Spanish colonies, the English colonies, French colonies, all that, to the Civil War. That's the chunk of the period they had.

PC: Then, they would follow that up the next semester or next term with, right now, I guess, it would be from the Civil War to the present?

FD: How Colonia is, they do half of the time with history and then half of the time with science. Once they're done with history, they go into science. Then, I know seventh grade, they have civics class, and then eighth grade, they have ancient world history. I don't think they're going to have any U.S. follow up or specific U.S. history compared to civics until high school.

PC: It's interesting because some of the people who teach in high school tell me that at the very most, they get up to World War II in the high school classes, which is to say they don't get

anything from World War II to the present, which is probably why the students I teach are so dismally ignorant of that period, their own lives, so to speak, not completely their own lives.

FD: I would not have known anything from World War II to present if I didn't take AP U.S. History in high school.

PC: That's the only exception to that. You were in one of our partnership schools with the Graduate School of Education, so there were other Rutgers teachers who were in the school at the same time you were?

FD: There was two other students that were also in Woodbridge district, but they weren't in the same school as me. Melaina was in Fords, but she wasn't in Colonia with me. There was another student, Mark, I'm not sure which school; I think he was in Colonia High School. We all were at different schools but in the Woodbridge District.

PC: Did you all three have the same supervisor, or was there a supervisor assigned just to your school of some sort?

FD: We all did have the same supervisor from Rutgers, where we would have our meeting check-ins, but school wise, our main supervisor was the cooperating teacher in the classroom.

PC: The cooperating teacher. Did the principal actually drop in to see you teach at any time?

FD: I had a lot of exposure with the principal because of certain things with students' behavioral challenges coming back to school, I had a lot of one-on-one time with her. Then, the school actually offered me a position to teach, to get hired there, because someone had an early retirement. Unfortunately, I wasn't certified yet because I had to do the edTPA [Teacher Performance Assessment-Education] and then Rutgers couldn't present me as a certified educator until I finish these twelve credits in the spring, so they had to hire someone else. When they were considering me, I had a lot of time to talk with the principal, so we became close that way.

PC: That's too bad. I know with the nursing school, another professional school, that they got their temporary certification, so they could put the nurses out there on the frontlines working before they graduated, and that worked. Then, they got their hours while they were doing that, and those hours allowed them to eventually get certified as beginning nurses. But I guess they don't do things like that in education. The nursing crisis is really something. A lot of people were not undertrained but had not been fully trained to do what they were going to be asked to do and certainly weren't prepared for the sort of trauma that was involved with nursing problems. That first group of nurses who went out while not everybody was vaccinated, including in some cases even them, that was really something. A little more taxing I think than this sort of teaching. I hope you get a job out of this; that would be nice if you did. Did you get to meet, in this context, a lot of the other teachers who were there, or were you more or less isolated as a member of the teaching faculty?

FD: I actually did get a lot of exposure to the other sixth grade teachers just because my cooperating teacher and I would have lunch in the faculty lounge. So, I became very close with

the other history teacher and the language arts teacher and the science teachers, where we would all just have that half hour to have lunch and talk about our experiences. They were super helpful with me too, providing me with any advice or answering any questions I might have about their experiences as well, which was really great.

PC: Did your cooperating teacher give you any sense of whether or not the student performance had gone down during the pandemic, in other words, whether you could expect, to put it bluntly, sort of less out of these students than you might otherwise have been able to expect?

FD: My cooperating teacher and I kind of came to that conclusion together because we started the year together, where we didn't anticipate any--well, for me personally--I didn't expect any real challenges because we had kids during the pandemic last year that were performing quite well and they were really able to do what we asked of them. We both were kind of finding out at the same times, where we're like, "Oh, no, these students that we're getting this year are just a lot lower than the ones that we had last year performance wise," where we were figuring it out on the fly together, things that they can do, can't do, and they need more time on. It was very interesting for me to see these students in a virtual platform performing better than the students I had this year in person.

PC: I'm not totally surprised by that because it's a cumulative effect of this, I think, on students. In some ways, we see at Rutgers the students who come into Rutgers who have had two years in the high schools of less than perfect education, and it's worn them down. They feel they're not as good at answering questions, as many of them learned to duck out of Zoom meetings and their equivalence in the high school system, so they're not as ready for colleges, some, not universally, but there are more problems of that sort that we've seen. I'm not too surprised by that. What was the biggest challenge for you in teaching in this situation?

FD: I think my biggest issue was student expectations of what they could and could not do. It was overwhelming being a student-teacher, trying to manage a classroom of students who hadn't been in person in two years, so already in the process of what generally student-teachers have to [do]: try and earn their respect, learn classroom management skills that work for them, things like that. For me, it just felt amplified, where students were doing things and saying things that I would never have expected in the classroom. I think that those social skills that they should have learned in those two years of being in the classroom, they just didn't get. It was trying to teach sixth grade content to fourth graders who were behaving like second graders, which was very overwhelming and I know a universal experience, it seemed like, between talking to other people in my cohort and the other sixth grade teachers, where everyone was just having that experience, where students were being extremely disrespectful, did not understand how classrooms work, how they run, things like that. It seemed like we were delegating more time to getting them to behave properly than actually spending time with the content like we wanted to.

PC: Okay. What went particularly well for you? Did you find anything that you looked forward to being able to do this sort of thing with the students? What went well?

FD: A lot of things did go well, despite that. Despite all of the stress with having to try and help them get acclimated back to being in person, they were also extremely excited about being back.

There was so much engagement from the students. We would do these silly little on-this-day things every day, where we presented them with a fact of history that happened on that day and asked them five related questions to that. Without fail, every hand in the classroom would be up, and they'd be so excited to answer. Same thing with any activities I made; I'd always try to give it as hands-on as possible. These poor kids were not in a classroom for two years, where I was like, "Let's make it as fun as possible, as well as educational," and they ate it up. They loved every minute of it.

One class, we did a case study, where I made them almost act as lawyers, where they were presented [with] we called it the "Case of Andrew Oliver." He was the tax collector that was pinned out by the Sons of Liberty, and we used that primary source that they put on the Liberty Tree and had them determine, one class stuck up for the Sons of Liberty, saying that they were justified in calling out Andrew Oliver and asking for his resignation, where the other half had to defend Andrew Oliver. They came up, they did a whole case presentation and used their facts that they knew about the situation, as well as the primary source's evidence. Then, at the end, we were like, "Okay, no more roles, we're not on either side. Just act as a jury and vote. Should he have resigned, should he not?" Then, at the end of the class, they found out that in history, he really did resign. Some of them were bummed out about that, but it was really cute to see them all excited about it, frantically going around the classroom, "We should say this, we should do that." It was very refreshing to see, after having to teach them virtually last year. [Editor's Note: Andrew Oliver was a public official in colonial Massachusetts who was responsible for enforcing the Stamp Act of 1765. Oliver became the target of protests against the tax, and he was hanged in effigy on the Liberty Tree, a site near Boston Common. The Sons of Liberty forced Oliver to take an oath under the Liberty Tree that he would not enforce the Stamp Act.]

PC: Did the grades that you gave them reflect the fact that their work hadn't been quite as good as you hoped? Is one of the disadvantages of this for them is that they had probably a slightly lower grade on the average than they might otherwise have gotten?

FD: When it came to making my rubrics, I did have to alter them quite often to reflect the effort that they put in there. There were certain elements that I was initially trying to monitor that just seemed like it wasn't going to happen, so I had to alter it to still let students be successful in my classroom. But there were certain cases where I would simplify the rubric as much as possible and there were still students failing out of my class, which was really unfortunate.

PC: Most professors at Rutgers would tell you, not all, but most would tell you that they probably in some ways modified their grading standards in order to accommodate the reality of what this has done to students, so I'm not surprised. The question then is when you lower your expectations for something that's really central to their education, and the sad thing is sometimes you have to do exactly that. Why would you want to go back to this particular school and teach there if you had the opportunity, other the fact that it's a job and any job is a good job?

FD: I would have loved to go back and teach in Colonia. I thought they have a wonderful community. The students, despite having all of these classroom management struggles, they were still super involved in the school. They were excited for certain events that the school would host. All of the faculty and staff were super kind and welcoming to me. They're very

helpful for any questions I had. I'm someone who always asks questions. I rely on my resources a lot, and they were super eager to help me and to provide me with any guidance. I really appreciated that from the school, and I felt that it was a very positive work environment that I would be happy to join again.

PC: Did you make friends? You mentioned you had a group of faculty members you knew pretty well. Did they talk to you about the similar sorts of problems they were having in the classroom?

FD: Yes.

PC: Okay. If I understand what goes on now, well, it has for a couple of years, during the time you're doing this teaching, you're also attending, every week or every other week or something, a night class at Rutgers with other people in your cohort who are discussing what's going on in the classroom, what can we do about it? Are other teachers at other schools telling you roughly the same sort of things?

FD: Yes. When we had those weekly classes, we spent probably the first hour of the three-hour course just sharing our experiences and X, Y and Z happened. What do I do with someone else going through that? Without fail, at least two or three other people were having similar experiences.

PC: Were most of you teaching in person, or was everybody teaching in person?

FD: I want to say everybody was in person.

PC: That's good. I know the experience more generally in New Jersey schools has been very locale specific, but I did think that most people last fall were in person, so that's good.

FD: My computer is on, what is it, ten percent. I'm going to just quickly run and grab my charger. I'll be right back, if that's okay with you.

PC: Fine.

FD: My roommate, the other house mom, is off from work today, so she's still sleeping.

PC: You're not living at home right now.

FD: No, I am at Rutgers for right now. I'm working as my sorority or what used to be my sorority's house mom. I essentially just live here and make sure that everything is running smoothly and that everyone's safe.

PC: Oh, yes, you're no longer in a sorority, because you're a fifth-year graduate student?

FD: Yes.

PC: That always struck me as strange that you couldn't stay in a fifth year, but you're not the only one who has told me that over the years. Actually, we're pretty close to done, as far as I'm concerned. Anything else you want to add about the experience of teaching during that period of time?

FD: I would say that, similar to every other student, me being a student, I also struggled with those two years not being in person. I feel like there were certain valuable pieces of information or experiences that I missed out on, and as a new teacher, I have insecurities about my abilities, just because we didn't get as extensive of a level of education in these times as students in the past did through the GSE. I would say certain things like the edTPA, I was doing that on the fly, finding out from classmates who already passed it in years past. I was getting more information from them than I retained from my classes, which was a little unfortunate. But, besides that, I feel that I'm just excited for the next chapter, and I'm growing in confidence in my abilities with being back in person this year.

PC: That's really, really great. This spring semester has gone okay for you?

FD: Yes, definitely. It's interesting going from full-time student-teaching to then being the student again, where certain things like sitting in a three-hour course, I feel like I should be getting up and doing a lot more, where I'm just sitting there and I'm like, "I don't think I have the attention span for this anymore, after going through a whole semester of me constantly doing and going." Getting back into the groove of that has been a little more challenging, but besides that, it's been going great.

PC: I think that's probably all we need to talk about. You're going to try to send me your video of your teaching, and then I'm going to work on a letter. I could send it to you personally, but I think the better way to do is, I'll send it as an attachment. I'll sign it and then PDF it, and you can put it together with your credentials. It will be available to me as a [Microsoft] Word file, and if for some reason, the school wants it sent, then obviously I could just do that. It will be a non-confidential letter; it wouldn't have a word different in it if it were confidential, but it will be a non-confidential letter that you can use at any time at all.

FD: Yes, and I think that most schools, at least the ones I'm applying to, use AppliTrack. They have me upload the material, so as long as you send it to me, I think it should be fine, where I could just directly upload it, that you don't have to worry about sending it to a school or anything.

PC: The software that they use, does it prefer PDFs or a Word document? Do you know? Most things take both, and if there is a preference, it's usually for a PDF.

FD: I want to say it takes both. It definitely takes a PDF, because the other letter I had is in a PDF. My cover letter's in a doc, and it took that, too. I think either one is fine.

PC: Okay. Thank you very much. I hope to see you in person at some point in the future. Are you going to a graduation ceremony for fifth-year M.Ed. students now? Is that going to happen?

FD: Yes. I think I'm going to go to the one on May 18th in the Livi [Livingston] stadium, I don't know, they changed the name already. I think they call it like Jersey Mike's Stadium or something like that, but I'm going to go to that one. I'm not going to do the general graduation because I did that in the fall. I think it was the fall of this year that they made up for the year before, where I was like, "I already did that, so I'm not going to do that one again." I'm definitely going to do the GSE graduation. [Editor's Note: Jersey Mike's Arena, commonly known as the RAC, is located on Rutgers' Livingston Campus.]

PC: Good. Good luck, and we'll stay in touch.

FD: Thank you again for agreeing to do that letter for me. I'm going to send it over to you right now.

PC: Okay, bye-bye.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Transcript by Zoom
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