

1 Emma Moore: Okay, so thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me today. I am Emma
2 Moore and it is four o'clock on October 13 2020. I am with Tracy Detchemendy and over Zoom.
3 And I want to clarify that I'm going to record this interview and it will be uploaded to the UD
4 oral history repository. Is that okay?

5 Tracy Detchemendy: Yes.

6 EM: Okay, awesome, then we're going to start with sort of your education experience. So first
7 question, uh how would you describe your education experience growing up?

8 TD: Growing up? Growing up, I loved school, and I actually went to the school that I teach in
9 now, and now that was coming home that um I loved going to school, I loved just everything
10 about it. So, I would say it was great. Um you know, involved, loved all the way through high
11 school. I felt like school was a safe and um fun place to be. Yeah.

12 EM: Yeah. And um so to clarify, you went to a public school?

13 TD: Yes.

14 EM: Okay.

15 TD: Well, I'll- I'll- I'll go back on that. And I went to a private first grade, for first grade for
16 kinder and first grade, because I wasn't old enough. Um my birthday fell in November. So they
17 started me- my parents didn't want to wait. And they wanted to go ahead and start. So I went to a
18 private school through first grade. And then I was old enough, and they would let me back in so
19 then I started public school in second grade.

20 EM: Okay. So most of what you remember is from public school (laughs)

21 TD: Yeah, yes, definitely.

22 EM: Um, so would you say that your own education has impacted your view on education as a
23 whole?

24 TD: Um, yes. I mean, education has changed a lot. So it's, um, but I do think that, you know, my
25 education, I felt like, opportunities were there, was made possible and, you know, you could do
26 what you wanted to with your education. It was you- had the choice to, to further it. So yes, I do
27 think so.

28 EM: Okay. Yeah. And are there any people or experiences that really influenced your uh desire
29 to want to be a teacher?

30 TD: I gave this a lot of thought. Um (laughs) Um, well, when I went to college, I did not go to
31 college to become a teacher. I didn't- I was pursuing a different, completely different goal. And
32 then about towards the end, I really realized that it wasn't for me. And then I thought back and
33 through my whole life, I think I've been teaching something. And I think it started in third grade.
34 (laughs) I had a teacher give me a out of adoption teacher, um a TE, a teacher's edition math
35 book. And I remember as a little girl teaching, you know, my dolls and my stuffed animals and
36 any friends I had, we would play school. So I think from about third grade on I've been playing
37 school teaching something. And then I taught swim lessons when I was very young, to the
38 younger kids. And then even when I was in college pursuing a different career, I was teaching at
39 the Boys and Girls Club of America, teaching art and some activities there while I was- and then
40 I thought, I'm-I'm teaching. I'm a teacher. (laughs)

41 EM: Yeah (laughs)

42 TD: So yeah, yeah. So I think it all started in third grade was that teachers' edition.

43 EM: Yeah, that's awesome.

44 TD: The power. (laughs) Of having all the answers. (laughs)

45 EM: Yeah. (laughs) Oh, my gosh. Um, so you already touched on this a little bit. But what was
46 your teacher education program? Like, what was your experience becoming a teacher?

47 TD: In college, I think really different than now. When I was in school, you had to uh in
48 Elementary, at least where I was pursuing Elementary, you had to pick a subject content area that
49 you wanted to specialize in. And at the time I picked reading because I loved reading so much.
50 And uh we did not do a whole year of student teaching. We did ha- one semester of student
51 teaching, and one semester of uh- you learned how to test and analyze and formulate
52 individualized plans for for struggling readers. And did, you know, one on one testing. Of course
53 all of those tests are very outdated now. (laughs) It's all changed, but you did learn how to like
54 analyze that data and figure out a plan. And then you worked with I think I had three students
55 that I worked with them individually on individual reading to um help them further that. So it
56 was I don't think they do stuff like that anymore. It's a, it's a little bit more all whole class, but it
57 was a little bit different.

58 EM: Yeah. So to clarify, you had one semester where you did student teaching with the whole
59 class, and then another semester where you did sort of like, individual intervention?

60 TD: Yes.

61 EM: Okay. Can you talk a little bit more about the individual intervention?

62 TD: Yeah, we, um, because I was, I chose reading as my content area to specialize in. And we
63 learned uh, you know, like, what tests to do to find out their learning disabilities or learning
64 deficiencies, and then developed a program or, you know, a series of lessons to help them
65 overcome those. So it might be... and I worked, I did work with an elementary student. And then
66 I also worked with a high school student. So you worked with them. And just like the
67 elementary, it was, like, you know, back to the basic phonics and sounding out words, that
68 element that with higher kids, it was more... it was some language and stuff like that, but you

69 just worked with them one on one individually, at their reading level and helped, you know,
70 guide them up that one on one time.

71 EM: Yeah, yeah. That's awesome. Um, so can you describe your whole education career as a
72 teacher, I guess?

73 TD: (laughs) Sure! (laughs) When I graduated, I moved out of state, which, at that time, and it's
74 probably still somewhere similar today. A lot of states don't accept to teaching credentials from
75 other states, they don't reciprocate. So I moved to California, which did not take Texas
76 credentials. I needed almost by their standards, a whole other year of school.

77 EM: Oh wow.

78 TD: And as a new wife with twins on the way that didn't happen, but I was certified. So they
79 would let me long term uh sub. So I started out doing that. And then when we moved back to
80 Texas, I started teaching, I taught first grade for 11 or 12 years. Then I moved. I said, I need out
81 of first grade! (laughs) I moved to fourth grade, I was there for a couple years. Then second, and
82 I've kind of ping-ponged around between second and third ever since. Um so this is my 22nd
83 year. (laughs)

84 EM: Oh wow.

85 TD: Twenty-second year, so um so I can't even tell you right now, how many years in each grade
86 there. But I've gone back and forth between second and third. So...

87 EM: Yeah. So how many years have you spent in third grade since you began in third grade?

88 TD: Um this is... Okay. Last year, this year, last year? Not the year before, but the year before
89 that? So I guess this is probably my third or fourth year in third grade total? Yeah, I kind of went
90 second, third, second, third.

91 EM: Yeah. (laughs) Go where they need you. I guess.

92 TD: Uh... Yeah, I kind of went back and forth. And then I looped up with my second grade class
93 one year. And I really liked doing that.

94 EM: Oh yeah. Can you talk a little bit about your experience with that?

95 TD: Yeah, it was, it was really, because I kept I had the gifted and talented class in second grade.
96 And so I stayed with them all the way came up to third with them. And that was really good.
97 Because I mean, we just jumped in, I already knew where they were in reading, I didn't have to
98 figure it out. I knew exactly what they can do. You know, I kept pretty much the same routines in
99 my classroom. And so they knew what to expect. And so, you know, the first week of school, we
100 were already off and going as opposed to you know, having to learn routines, and you know,
101 kind of me getting a better feel for what they knew and didn't know. So I did like it. So that was
102 you know, was really neat.

103 EM: Yeah. Would you say that that's something you want to do again in the future maybe?

104 TD: If I didn't have to pack and move my classroom? Yes. (laughs)

105 EM: (laughs)

106 TD: They actually asked me if I wanted to do that again this year, and I said I would if I didn't
107 have to move everything. Yeah, that's a chore.

108 EM: For sure. Yeah, but that sounds like an awesome experience for sure.

109 TD: It really was. Yeah, yeah.

110 EM: Okay, so now we're gonna move on to talking more about the pandemic. (laughs) Um, so
111 how would you say the COVID-19 pandemic has affected your teaching style? Have you had to
112 adapt?

113 TD: Everything has changed. And I, you know, we do, so in the classroom, we do so much
114 hands-on stuff that math manipulatives, science, I love science, I love the experiments. I like the

115 kids really experimenting to find the answers. And even even in the language and the reading
116 and language arts, you know, letters and words and, you know, just we do so much hands on
117 manipulative um... stuff like that, then it's been very difficult to not do that. It's been sad to, you
118 know, show the kids a science experiment. And, uh and not have them get to actually do it
119 themselves. And some of them, I guess, are doing a little bit at home on their own, but a lot of
120 them just don't have the resources to do it. So that's been really hard.

121 EM: Yeah. So you haven't been able to do any sort of maybe science experiments at their desk or
122 anything, there's just not enough resources.

123 TD: Yeah. And, and the not, the sharing of materials and all of that they're not allowed to share
124 materials in the classroom. So we, and they have to stay at their desk area, there's no moving
125 around in the room, which is really different. Because typically, we have stations throughout the
126 room, and they're up and they're moving in there. They're going from one thing to another, and
127 now they're just having to sit in one spot.

128 EM: Yeah.

129 TD: It's awful.

130 EM: I know. Um, so how would you say that a typical lesson goes with the kids online?

131 TD: Um, it's, it's so much harder, it's harder to have discussion, um especially a lot of the kids
132 don't have good reception from the internet. So when they try to talk, sometimes it's very
133 garbled, or, like, we just can't understand what they're saying. And your heart breaks, because
134 you... they're wanting to participate. And you're just like, I'm sorry, you know, we can't
135 understand you today. And some days, their's works better than others. But... Plus, there's
136 always that kind of like, pause time between them and you. And so um that's makes it really,
137 really hard. And you can tell a lot of the kids are distracted. There's younger siblings, there's

138 parents walking through, there's other noises, some of them, they turn on their mic, and I'm like,
139 holy cow, what's going on at your house? You know, there's like, just noise everywhere. And
140 you're like, how can you even be paying attention to what we're talking about?

141 EM: Mhm.

142 TD: So it makes class discussion very, very challenging. It's challenging to keep them engaged.
143 And I think part of it is because they're just sitting so long, they're not getting to get up and be
144 physically engaged in what they're learning. I think physical engagement in learning is huge.
145 They need to you know, be able to move but um yeah. Yeah, it does. You know, it's just a
146 challenge challenge to keep them keep them involved.

147 EM: For sure. Have you seen a little bit more engagement since some of the students have come
148 back? Or is it still hard?

149 TD: Some of the ones, I've had a couple who I was really struggling with them at home to do any
150 work. And now that they're in the classroom, they're doing everything, and it's not even hard to
151 get them to do everything. And I think, again, it's the distractions at home, were too much. And
152 they're just now they do all their work. They're doing it right, you know, they can it's a little
153 easier to ask questions in the classroom, than, than the online format, it's a little harder. And I
154 think, you know, some of the kids are hesitant to ask questions, even though you try to pull them
155 into a breakout room or something they they don't want to ask, always in front of the whole
156 entire class. You know, some of them are kind of shy. So it's um well, yeah, the ones that are in
157 the classroom, I think are probably doing a little bit better.

158 EM: Mhm. Yeah. So like that one on one time is beneficial?

159 TD: Yeah.

160 EM: Okay.

161 TD: Yeah. And the structure.

162 EM: Yeah. The structure. Yeah. So what would you say is the most difficult part of remote
163 teaching? I know, you said student engagement. But can you talk a little bit more about that?

164 TD: Well, that and I'm getting them to pay attention and, but also getting them to finish their
165 work to do all the assignments. Um, and I know, it's, it's, I think some of them, they get kind of
166 lost, you know, just in the format of where the assignments are, and what I'm supposed to do so
167 They did they miss and you know, you're constantly tell them, okay, you didn't do this, she didn't
168 do that you need to go back and do this assignment of that assignment, also getting them just to
169 log in on time, and not miss the actual instruction part of the assignment. And you know, a lot of
170 them will, will log in 15/20 minutes late and you're like, Okay, well, you know, you missed the
171 lesson that tells you how to do the assignments that we're doing. That um... So, you know, that's
172 kind of a struggle, and, you know, some of them, I, they don't always have parents, they're telling
173 them, you know, it's time to log in, or whatever, they're kind of, they're kind of on their own. I
174 think some of them are there with the babysitter who, who doesn't know or grandparents and,
175 you know, it's- it's a wide range of people watching them. So, and of course, you know, that
176 that's, there's nothing you can do about that. And the families can't help that either. But, you
177 know, a lot of times they miss a lot of lessons. So that's challenging.

178 EM: Yeah, yeah, for sure. It sounds like it, and are the assignments all in one place, or... you
179 were saying that it was hard to find where they were? (laughs)

180 TD: Well, we use, we use a program—Canvas—I don't know. And it has all of the assignments
181 are listed in there. But like the assignment for that subject, it might send them to another place to
182 actually do the work and might send them to... uh we use seesaw. We use, you know, maybe it's
183 a Nearpod assignment. It might be an assignment in their reading book, it might be an

184 assignment in their social studies book, it might be you know, so we use Stem Scopes for
185 science. So it might be to go watch a BrainPop video and take the quiz. So the assignment itself,
186 the the work product is not always in Canvas, sometimes it's there. But sometimes the work
187 product is someplace else. And, you know, there's always the instructions that tell them where to
188 go, but they have to, (laughs) they have to read those.

189 EM: (laughs) Yeah, no. Uh... So moving back on to something more general, what would you
190 say the hardest part of teaching in general is?

191 TD: Oh, yeah, this one uh I ha-, you know, I struggled with this one, um, couple of things, um, as
192 far as teaching, and the students go, I think one of the hardest things is teaching them... um, it's
193 almost, it's a balance of education, and almost parenting, um because a lot of the kids are not um,
194 they're not independent. They are very much they come sometimes almost helpless. And you're
195 just, you know, they're like... I had a little boy today, in third grade, he asked me to sharpen his
196 pencil, I was like, sure in the sharpeners right there and he got... gets over there. And he, like,
197 kind of halfway puts it in and looks at me, and I'm like, (laughs) just put the pencil in the
198 sharpener, and like, you're in third grade, you should know how to sharpen your pencil by now.
199 You know, and it's, you know, it's things like that tying their shoes, you know, just taking care of
200 their own self and their own needs, a lot of them are very, not independent in that manner. You
201 know, so I think uh they've, a lot of them have never had any responsibility to take care of
202 themselves in any way. And so that's a hard thing to teach them and, um and they need to be able
203 to do that to, to take responsibility for their own learning, which they ultimately have to take
204 responsibility for their learning. You can show them, show them, show them but if they don't do
205 the work, they're not going to learn it. So that's a hard, that's part of it. Um... And the other really
206 hard thing about teaching in general, the job is more a personal thing. And I and I think all new

207 teachers need to know this, you are never done, you are never caught up. Never. Don't try to be
208 because if you do, you will kill yourself. Um and you can stay here 24 hours a day, and still
209 never be caught up. And it all gets done. And the world will not stop revolving if you don't get
210 that other paper graded or um something done. But between planning, it's and that's continuous.
211 You're constantly planning for the next lesson the next week, the next day. And there's always
212 papers and there's always "How can I help this kid more?" "What can I do to reteach this or
213 intervention for this kid?" it never, never ends and a lot of the the not actual teaching part of the
214 job is, I think, astounding for a lot of new teachers. It's overwhelming how much paperwork that
215 you have to do that has absolutely nothing to do with actually teaching the kids. And, (laughs)
216 and it's frustrating sometimes, like, I just want to go work with the kids. Um so that but just you
217 have to learn, just stop, you know, do what you absolutely need to do, you stop, you go home,
218 you can't you can't be here. You can't do it all all the time. And you're never caught up. It's never
219 all done. I know that's kind of not not a happy thing to tell you, you're never gonna be done.

220 EM: (laughs) But it's true.

221 TD: (laughs) You do have to just learn to balance that and just accept that. Okay, it's gonna be
222 there tomorrow. Um, you know, it's not gonna be the end, I will address it. But you do. You do
223 have to learn to balance that it's hard.

224 EM: Yeah, yeah. So for new teachers, would you say that they should have like a time that they
225 set that they just go home? And they're done?

226 TD: Absolutely. Absolutely. And you know, your first year, you're going to stay a little bit later
227 than probably some of the the, you know, more seasoned, teachers, you're going to take a little
228 bit longer to do things, but I always and I still to this day, do this, I make myself a priority
229 checklist. Um, you know, I constantly have a list of things I need or want to get done. And I kind

230 of prioritize, especially things that have deadlines, you know, this has to be done. So this is going
231 to go at the top. Um, you know, you just have to make that checklist and keep adding to it. And
232 then you know, just work kind of through it and just say, you know, you know, at a set time, I'm
233 gonna stop. And that's, you know, as long as you have everything done that has a deadline, or
234 has to be done right away. Yeah, set a deadline for yourself and go home and don't take it all
235 home with you. Because you'll take it home, and then you won't do it.

236 EM: (laughs)

237 TD: (laughs) Leave it at school, because you need a mental break, you need that mental break.

238 EM: And when would you say you do most of your lesson planning?

239 TD: Oh, um, I get it, I like to get I'm like to get here early. That makes me... So I do a lot early
240 in the morning, I get here probably, I don't know, 45 minutes before the kids come. So I do a lot
241 then. And then a little bit after school, so or during planning period times when I can. But I like I
242 do good that first little bit in the morning kind of gets me going before school. So I'd rather come
243 a little bit early and leave earlier.

244 EM: Yeah, that makes sense. Would you say that your work spills over into your weekend
245 sometimes? Or...

246 TD: Sometimes um, not as much now as when I was more a younger teacher. And sometimes,
247 especially report card grades would be due, I would find myself oh, I mean, just finishing
248 grading this whole stack of papers so that I have grades. So I would get behind. I think over time
249 you learn how to kind of balance that better and, and keep up with it. You know, the first couple
250 years, it was a little bit more challenging to keep up. So I would take things home a little bit
251 around report card time or sometimes lesson plans. And even now, sometimes I'll designate like,
252 okay, you know, one, one day I'm going to stay, you know, like an hour later than normal. And

253 just, you know, knock out my lesson plans or knock out grades or get something done. I'll do that
254 maybe once a week, but not hours extra. Just like an hour extra, you know, and just kind of lock
255 yourself in with no distractions and count it out. So...

256 EM: Yeah, seems like the way to do it. (laughs) So what would you say is the biggest lesson
257 you've learned as a teacher?

258 TD: Oh, I think especially teaching where I teach. It's a very eclectic, uh cultural, school cultural.
259 There's many different cultures here. And you just you learn that the kids come from so many
260 different backgrounds and have so many different experiences that growing up, you know, you
261 just think oh, everybody knows this. Well, they don't and uh and you really... I think the biggest
262 example I had was when I taught first grade. I had I had a little boy in my class, he had a twin
263 sister who was in the class next door. And we were reading a little story about making a list to go
264 to the grocery store. And I said, you know, when you go to the grocery store, and he said, I've
265 never gone to the grocery store. And I was just like, What do you mean, you've never gone to a
266 grocery store? I just, that was inconceivable to me that this six year old had never been in a
267 grocery store. And he said, my sister goes with my mom. But that's, that's the girls do that boys
268 don't do that. And I just was so shocked that, you know, here's this kid who's never gone to a
269 grocery store. So he didn't have any background knowledge to base for this story of what it was
270 like to walk through the vegetables and look at them. Like, I just, I had the hardest time
271 wrapping my head around that. And that was such an eye opener that, wow, don't take for
272 granted that kids have what you might consider an everyday normal experience. I mean, that's
273 not really anything big going to the grocery store. And to me, it was just common and, but it
274 wasn't for him. And so it made me very aware and very, um you know, just to really think about
275 it when I presented lessons, to really ask, you know, has anybody, you know, done, this is there,

276 anybody who's not done this, just to make sure you build that background for them. And then,
277 you know, so many kids, especially in our school, don't know about baseball, we read a story
278 about baseball, and they didn't know the basics of a baseball game. But they could tell you all
279 about other sports. But you know, and so you just have to think that you just might take for
280 common knowledge granted, you have to really realize they a lot of its cultural, a lot of its um I
281 mean, they just for various reasons, they don't have things that you might just consider everyday
282 experiences.

283 EM: Yeah, so I guess always make sure they have that same knowledge and bring them up to
284 speed.

285 TD: Right. Always, always check for that background knowledge and that understanding and
286 just, you know, just never just assume they know what you're talking about.

287 EM: (laughs) I can see how that would cause trouble.

288 TD: (laughs) Yeah.

289 EM: Okay, well, that's all the questions I have for you. But is there anything else that you'd like
290 to add? Any thoughts?

291 TD: I can't think of anything. (laughs)

292 EM: Ok.

293 TD: Just but you know, it all comes down to the kids. And, you know, today I had an email from
294 a student from last year and she said, I miss you so much. I wish I could come say hi.

295 EM: Aww!

296 TD: And those are the things that make you you know, the you're like, Okay, I made an impact
297 on somebody. Yeah. And I've gotten emails from kids graduating from high school, which really
298 dates you. (laughs) And had them you know, come, they'll come back and see you sometimes

299 when they're in high school and so you it warms you up and makes you think, okay, it's worth it.

300 EM: Yeah, yeah, for sure. That's such a special experience.

301 TD: It really is. It really is. So anyway, that's it.

302 EM: Thank you so much for that.

303 TD: You're welcome. It was my pleasure.