

Michalak Interview

Gabriel Michalak: [00:00:01] All right. Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me today. I am Gabriel Michalak. It is 11:02 on March 6, 2020. I'm doing a phone interview with Stacey Boomershine located in Kentucky and Dallas. I want to clarify that. I'm going to record this interview and it will be uploaded to the University of Dallas oral history repository.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:00:24] Is that all right?

Stacey Boomershine [00:00:26] Of course.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:00:27] Awesome. All right. Well, I should get a lot out of this. Um. Let's begin. What was your educational experience like as a student in school?

Stacey Boomershine [00:00:38] You know, I attended a large public school, um, in an urban area that was a very diverse experience. Um, It, I think, overall prepared me well for college. But, you know, I'm sure there were some areas where I could have felt a little bit unprepared when I went to college and then um I came to college in Indiana, Ball State. And again, after a Masters in Miami, Ohio and, um principal certification at Indiana University. So, its a long career as a student.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:01:19] Gotcha! Um, at the public school what were some of your I guess the highlights and maybe some negative experiences specifically?

Stacey Boomershine [00:01:32] Um, I love school. I was always one of those kids. Um, I love to learn. And I had some wonderful teachers and so I loved, you know, being in class um and I loved participating in sports, you know as a student and clubs, activities, yearbook, those kinds of things. Um, I think my negative experiences, um, were typically, um, you know it was a very diverse school that I went to so vividly remember as a freshman two pregnant girls um, I knew on the floor. So, you know, those were the kinds of experiences that I still remember to this day. So those were definitely negative. The physicality of some of the things that I saw, um, were challenging.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:02:21] Right. But overall, you would say it gave you a good access to clubs and to other organizations that you possibly wouldn't have gotten at other places, though?

Stacey Boomershine [00:02:31] Most definitely. Most definitely. And it gave me a window into other people's lives. You know, I think it taught me compassion and empathy to realize that, you know, not everyone was going home to the kind of home you had, a two-parent household, a safe, happy home, you know there were people elbow to elbow with you every day that were not, you know, having that experience.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:02:54] Right right right. Absolutely! Um, how would you say at the, uh, at the school that you attended for elementary and high school? How did the teachers differ from those that you see in classrooms today?

Stacey Boomershine [00:03:13] You know, I think that the teachers when I was young, you know, I think the the respect for teachers in the teaching profession, I think, um, has changed just a bit over the years. And, you know, when I was young, I'm 51 right now. So, when I was young, you know what the teacher said went, you know, no one typically questioned it. And now, you know, um, parents are much less afraid to question the teacher's judgment, to question the school's judgment. Those kinds of things that are sort of a shift, a paradigm shift there somewhere. But I do think teachers, you know, typically are

called into what they do. Right. And I had two wonderful teachers that really had a heart for education and for students. And that I think is where I see continuity in you know, same types of teachers coming out of college are for sure just the same.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:04:15] For sure, for sure. Did you have a particular favorite one growing up?

Stacey Boomershine [00:04:19] You know, I did, I had several. My fifth-grade teacher was very much, um, one of my favorites. And she actually was a neighbor of ours growing up. But she was a very, very good teacher. And I think teachers now have to deal with a lot more, you know, a lot more on their plate now than there ever has been before. And it makes for a, you know, stress and anxiety, I think, among some teachers sometimes, because there is just a lot of responsibility to the classroom.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:04:50] Absolutely. OK. And then moving on. What first inspired you to enter the field of education? Did you kind of know going into college that that was what you wanted to do as a career or was there a kind of a moment later on where you realized it?

Stacey Boomershine [00:05:10] It's funny you should say that. You know, my mother...I kind of sort of come from a family of educators. My mother is retired from higher ed., um, and I think there was some encouragement by no fault of hers to just sort of maybe find a different path and I was very interested in science; I was actually a biology major and planning on going to medical school. And I just all along had that urge, like, you know, I think I really want to teach, you know, I would work during the summer as a camp counselor. And, you know, I had this urge but I would just sort of like say I'm not doing this, I'm not doing it. And so then finally, I was like, you know, I really felt like God was calling me to education. And I thought, well, I'll do it. I'll do it for a couple of years. If don't like it, I'll be young enough that, you know, I can still go to medical school or do what I need to do. And, um, so that's what I did. And then I got in and I just loved it. And it fit better. You know, it fit well. You know, at that time, I had just met my husband and we married and we wanted to have a family and it just sort of fit with our life plan, um, you know that schedule, fit a little bit better than being a physician.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:06:27] Gotcha. And I do feel like it is one of those things where you kind of always have it in the back of your mind. And if you have a particular skill set you kind of know that you would do well at it, it's kind of different from other careers in that way.

Stacey Boomershine [00:06:42] Yeah. And I've talked to a lot of teachers, you know, and they will say the same thing. It's like sort of this gnawing, like, feeling like you try not to do it and sometimes you just think, ugh, I'm not doing this, but it still keeps coming up or I talk to people, who are not teachers, and they will say, you know, I always felt like I should be doing that. My own husband actually says that he feels that perhaps that was what he was called to do. But he just didn't, you know, follow that. So, yeah. So, I think for most teachers, I do think it's a calling.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:07:15] All right. You mentioned that your mother kind of gently pushed you away from pursuing an educational career. Why was that?

Stacey Boomershine [00:07:24] She did. Well, my mother, God love her, is very practical, and I think she realized, um, you know the financial limitations that come with being a teacher. Um, and like most parents, they, they think that their child is the best thing ever. And I think she felt like I, um, might be better suited for something else, something that maybe made more money, had more prestige, those kinds of things. And I don't think she thinks that now. But I just think at the time she's just a very practical mother, very practically minded and not that she thinks that teaching is not very important, but that was sort of her view.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:08:08] Right. All right. Moving into your years as a teacher, how would you describe your very first, your very first years in the classroom? Was it a difficult transition or did you kinda naturally just get it?

Stacey Boomershine [00:08:31] You know, there are some parts of it that I didn't actually just get. Um, I knew intrinsically that, and I don't think anybody ever told me this, but I knew that I was responsible for educating the whole child.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:08:46] Right.

Stacey Boomershine [00:08:47] You know, despite being a biology teacher, a chemistry teacher or whatever I was teaching, that, you know, my job really was to teach them the whole, you know, the whole shebang. You know, that it wasn't just so much about science. No one ever told me that. I just took that responsibility on. So, when you come at it, from that point of view, um, you naturally start building those relationships with students. And it makes your classroom management much more, um, just easier. Especially in a rough school, which were my first you know, my first year especially, I was hired in inner city Cincinnati and at a very disadvantaged school. And the kids, you know, I taught ninth and tenth grade and they were, you know, it was challenging, as I had as many as 42 in a class.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:09:54] Wow.

Stacey Boomershine [00:09:55] Yeah. And so, you know, they wouldn't be at school or be arrested or, you know put in foster homes and it was very eye opening. But I still felt like it was wonderful cause I really did feel like I was making a huge difference in some of their lives.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:10:11] Yeah. No. Absolutely!

Stacey Boomershine [00:10:12] It was tough because you're young. You look young. You are young. You know, when you first get out. Um, so that part was very challenging. But I learned a tremendous amount.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:10:27] Right. And oftentimes, at least I've noticed that those, uh, economically disadvantaged schools, they need the best teachers almost to help form them but they kind of always get, well there's a bad tendency, to get less qualified teachers.

Stacey Boomershine [00:10:45] There is. You're right. You're right. And they do. They need the best, they do. They really do. They need good teachers that are going to be invested in every part of the child. And that continuity. You know, knowing that the teacher is not going to just be there for a year and then be gone.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:11:02] Right.

Stacey Boomershine [00:11:03] You know, they know me. They know my family. You know, we're gonna, I am gonna see you next year. I do think that sometimes they feel like people quit on them. So. Yeah. And then the following year, for the next seven years, I moved to a school that was also very diverse, not quite as economically challenged, um, but still very diverse. And it was closer to my house.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:11:30] Gotcha.

Stacey Boomershine [00:11:31] And so I moved there for the next seven years and had a wonderful career there. Loved it. It was very well run, the school district. You have lots of support. Yeah. And the

families, you know, for the most part were engaged. You know, despite maybe not having positive, um, school experiences themselves, you know, I still would have parents that would come. They would show up for conferences and those kinds of things. Surprisingly.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:12:03] Gotcha. Um, what would you say was your biggest struggle through those first few years? Was it classroom management, lesson planning, um, something that I haven't mentioned?

Stacey Boomershine [00:12:19] Um, you know, I think in those kinds of situations, you know, peop-, children that have had a lot of, you know, serious adverse childhood experiences, trying to reach them and teach them about your subject. You've got to do the work of getting them past anything that might have happened at home, on the way to school, last night. They may be hungry. I think that was the biggest hurdle, was realizing, you know, in school, I thought, well, we are going to come in and I'm going to teach these great biology lessons and they are gonna love it. But then you come in and they may have slept for two hours because their parents were in a fight or, you know, just being willing to be flexible.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:13:04] Gotcha.

Stacey Boomershine [00:13:04] And realizing that that is such an important part of the job, that flexibility. Um, I think that was hard for me because I tend to like to just plan things out and have everybody engaged and you know I think that was challenging.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:13:17] Gotcha. Um, I know that you are a science teacher. Did you have something within science that was just like your absolute favorite to teach?

Stacey Boomershine [00:13:30] Um, you mean the subject in science or a teacher that I had?

Gabriel Michalak: [00:13:33] Um, no. Like what, what was your favorite, I guess, lesson plan? But kind of broader than that.

Stacey Boomershine [00:13:42] Oh! To teach in science! Got it. Got it. Well, you know, I loved dissections. I loved dissection because I think, you know, I think that during my time in college and getting my masters, you know, like my faith grew. I could see the intricacies of God's creation. And, you know, even when I was in public school I could share that with the kids, my faith. I could show them those intricacies. And there's nothing like doing a dissection. Everybody remembers when they do it for the first time or every time they've done it. And you really are, I mean it's hard not to be in awe at all the intricacies of the frog or whatever it is you're dissecting. So, I always enjoyed that.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:14:31] Yeah. No, that hands-on approach I found was really effective for me, too, because I'm not a big science guy myself. But whenever you're able to do those hands-on activities, that was assisted learning.

Stacey Boomershine [00:14:44] Yeah. And it appealed to those kids that may not be good at reading or writing or, you know, you can really capture them on a lot of different levels. Maybe that's why I like science. And you can get up and get all your senses involved.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:14:58] Yeah, absolutely. Um, I know you mentioned, you mentioned teaching the whole child. You've mentioned how your faith has influenced your teaching. What would you consider your philosophy on teaching and how has it developed over the years?

Stacey Boomershine [00:15:14] You know that is a tough one.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:15:15] Yeah, that's a big question.

Stacey Boomershine [00:15:19] I think my philosophy would be, and this has definitely changed like I talked about earlier a little bit. You know, I came in and I'm thinking it's all about me, you know, and I'm going to be an actor on the stage, I'm going to present lessons and they're all going to be engaged. I think my philosophy has shifted in that, instead of being a teacher, which you are, I see the best learning going on when a teacher is really acting as facilitator. So, they have planned the lesson. They've engaged the students. If there's something direct that needs to be taught they work with them and then they plan these stations or an activity where the students are actually doing the work. So, I really work towards um, you know, coaching teacher, pre-service or in-service teacher. And just say, you know, try to make sure that they are working harder than you are.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:16:16] Right. Right.

Stacey Boomershine [00:16:17] During that class time. Um, so I think that's how my philosophy sort of changed over the years, because kids, you know, when you are driving a ship all the time and there's not a lot of room for experimentation, error, um mistakes, and I think that kids, you know, when they can be in the driver's seat, you know, with some limitations and some guidance and those kinds of things, they get used to making mistakes, they get used to having to try and refigure and go back and work together, which I think is a very important life skill.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:16:56] Right. Cooperative learning.

Stacey Boomershine [00:17:00] Yeah, I think that over the years, that's how it's shifted. Um, and it allows the teachers then to sit back and collect data and observe. You can't say, you can't have a conversation with one child and say, what about this? Or, you know, ask this deeper question, have you thought about this? How do you come to that answer? You know, those kinds of things. So.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:17:30] Right, right, right. Not sitting back so much where it's kind of all on the students, because I've seen that, uh, in my observations where the teacher is kind of stuck behind the desk, you know, and like the students are doing something on their iPads and, you know they are all actually playing online. But instead a kind of a more effective version of that where you've got productive circulation going on within a cooperative learning environment.

Stacey Boomershine [00:17:56] Yeah. Exactly. Like yesterday I was in a first-grade classroom and it was just fabulous. And she's a very young teacher. But she had a reading, it was reading, and she had four stations and she was sitting at one station which was facing out to the classroom. And she was going over vowel patterns with the kids, but she had small groups. And so, they were they were grouped by where, you know, where they fell on . . . on the scale. They were sort of grouped, you know, by their progress. And then she was doing it. When they came to her, she could tackle problems, like each group had a different book, depending on where they were at that point. And she could keep, you know, cursory data about each kid. She went to each kid and asked them, "Which is this sound? What does he say?" And then, you know, one group, the assistant was working on adjectives and nouns with the kids, making sure they knew what they were. And then two groups were actually working on their own. And it was a thing of beauty. Yeah, it was just fabulous. But you're right, a teacher, and we're lucky enough at my school for the intergrades to have an assistant and getting them involved. The real work for a teacher comes before the class. Basically, you get it all ready to go. Making sure you have all the supplies and that you know it's going to run smoothly. But yeah, she was definitely collecting some really good data while she was at it. But you're right, the teachers still gotta be in it.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:19:29] Do you find that young teachers are more in love with that, more cooperative learning rather than like didactic instruction or lecturing?

Stacey Boomershine [00:19:40] You know, I do. But I do see a lot of lecturing still with my young teachers. I think it just depends on the person. You know, and maybe what they've been encouraged in their, you know, in their programs in college. How much have they been coached on the cooperative? It could be their interest, maybe. The level of comfort with that loss of control.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:20:03] Right, right right. Yeah. And everyone, I mean, both of those teaching strategies are effective. It is like you said where it kinda just depends on the person's attributes.

Stacey Boomershine [00:20:15] Yeah. Short of what they're, and maybe the subject because I know math sometimes is lecture. But we have a sixth-grade teacher that has great math groups. But, you know, I know math teachers kind of like to adopt a more direct instruction. But I've even seen those groups are very effective in that grade. And the kids, I think I read somewhere that the human brain can only focus for about fifteen minutes and so, you know, you got about ten or fifteen minutes here before you're going to lose them. So as much as you can get them up and involved, you know, bring them to the board if it is a dry construction time so that they can maybe do a problem or something. I think that could help, especially with younger kids.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:21:00] Gotcha. I see. Um, what would you... describe your most difficult challenge that you encountered as a teacher. I know you mentioned that the relationship between a student's home life and their academic performance might have been an issue. Did you have anything else that you would describe as very difficult?

Stacey Boomershine [00:21:21] You know, I think any time you have to call Child Protective Services it's very difficult. Because, you know, and you have to call. One time, I can vividly remember this, I would probably have been teaching about five years and I called home on a child and then quickly realized that when you call home, he was beaten. And it just, I just still remember to this day how horrible I felt about that. I was calling because he had misbehaved and you find out, but then you call Child Protective Services and well, then you're thinking, OK, you know, are they gonna go? Is he going to get hurt again? Yeah. And you just pray that they will do their job and report it. But I've seen, unfortunately, a lot of times when that's not the case, that they don't investigate or could not handle the influx of calls, you know? Kentucky, in particular, has a very high child abuse rate. I think we are first in the country and we may be ahead, I think we may be so far ahead that we're almost double the next state, if I remember correctly. Yeah, we have a terrible child abuse problem in Kentucky. So, I don't know why that is. I don't know if we have more reports or if, you know, it really is, in fact, you know, clearly is a problem. But, so I think those are the times, you know, that are probably the most challenging. When it's not even about teaching or, you know, it's just about their home life.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:23:08] Right. And that's when, when Child Protective Services isn't doing their job that would be when you adjust your strategy; like you wouldn't call home. You know what I mean? Like, you have to adjust your strategy.

Stacey Boomershine [00:23:21] I just never called home on that child ever again.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:23:24] Gotcha. Gotcha.

Stacey Boomershine [00:23:26] Yeah. And I think now, you know, that's been a long time ago. You know, I think now, you know, I'm in a private school. But, I know a lot of friends that are in public school every year, they communicate that pretty quickly to the teachers. You know, this child is in a situation we

are dealing with or, you know, he may have been removed from his home much quicker now than he was then.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:23:49] Right, right, right. And that kind of leads into my next question, which is, throughout your teaching career, you've worked in public schools and private schools. What were the major differences or similarities?

Stacey Boomershine [00:24:05] Yeah, well, I really enjoy public school and I went to public school. I like public schools. I like the diversity that comes with the public school and the challenges and those kids that are really challenged. And then, you know, as far as K through 12 type schools, I like the private school because, you know, as an administrator when I'm disciplining a child, you know, we can use our faith as a tool, and the learning of how to behave better next time or to make better choices. And, you know, these kids have been in this school, most of ours, for years, since preschool. They have a foundation of faith that you can draw upon and that you're forming children that will go out and make a difference, I think, in God's kingdom, not that public school children won't, but just from a Catholic point of view, or a Christian point of view. So that is a very powerful thing that I very much enjoy and I know that I would miss if I were in public school. But I love public schools because I do think they have the potential, as they did in my own life, to make a huge difference because my parents probably didn't have the means to send me to a private school, and many parents don't. So, someone, you know, I still was met with . . . with a huge amount of kindness and love, you know, even in a public school, but I think they have their benefits. Both places have their benefits and their drawbacks. I think in the private school, we do not have the resources, um, that a public school has. You know, we still are seeing a lot of society's problems. We have a lot of kids that have anxiety, depression, social, and emotional issues. But we don't have a social worker. You know, we don't have, um, an interventionist if they're having identity struggles. We have two learning coordinators for 700 kids. So, yeah, and we have cosigners if you diagnose. So that is often, you're trying to make the best with a small amount of resources and people end up working, well, sometimes just work themselves to exhaustion.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:26:27] Gotcha.

Stacey Boomershine [00:26:29] You're trying to meet their needs because, you know, teachers, they're going to work, right? All the time. And so, I think that is a problem at the private school, because we're still seeing all the issues or, you know, maybe not to the largest extent, or at as large an extent, as the public schools do, but we still have to deal with them. But we just don't have all those resources. So, I think that's a hardship sometimes.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:26:56] Right. Absolutely. So administratively, though, you would say that you prefer, like, the private school.

Stacey Boomershine [00:27:07] Um. I don't know. That's a tough one. That really is a tough one, because I just enjoyed both experiences. Yeah, just for different things, and for different reasons. Yeah, but I think I just, sort of, know I'm going to go wherever God calls me to go. But I do think there's benefits to being in both?

Gabriel Michalak: [00:27:29] Right. Right. So, throughout your career, you worked as a teacher and currently as an administrator. Which do you prefer?

Stacey Boomershine [00:27:41] Oh, that's a tough one. You know, I really enjoyed my time in higher ed because I did it at a private, higher ed institution. I was there for about seven years and I was at a public institution for about seven years. And during that time, I could sort of be an administrator by day and then an instructor by night. And I'd like that. Because I love to teach. I just love it. You know, is it extremely

exhausting? Yes. You know, but I do love it. And occasionally here like I'll run a math group or something and I just really enjoy it. So, I guess by not answering your question I like them both, but I loved teaching and I still do. And that's how I feel, I always tell my teachers that I work with. But I never felt like I had it mastered. You know, in 30 years or whatever. I just never felt like I was an expert. I felt at times that I was good enough, you know, that I would make a difference. I was pretty good. There was just always a new kid with a new issue or something that they just couldn't grasp. And I think that's why I like it.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:28:54] Right.

Stacey Boomershine [00:28:55] Like, it was always a challenge to me. Um, but, you know, after a while I kind of got to the point where I was like, you know, I'd like to have a different challenge. And so that's why I chose to try to move into administration. And it has been very challenging. And I learn a lot every day. So. And that's good. It's good. It's been very good because, I just, I learn something new every day and I felt like I did that with teaching as well.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:29:22] And teaching does have that kind of unique quality where you get to kind of start over with new techniques every, every year because you get a new batch of kids, you know what I mean?

Stacey Boomershine [00:29:32] Yeah. Which is a great thing. But it's also very scary. Like, you know, you wouldn't think that after all this time, the night before school or the week before school I still get those butterflies. I still get anxious. And I still think, OK, can I do it again? Can I pull it off, you know? And so, I think it's that unknown, you never know what's going to come down. And my day today, you know, every day, I just am like what's going to happen today? They surprise you!

Gabriel Michalak: [00:30:03] Gotcha. But would you say administration is more kind of continuous? I guess, you know, like you're not constantly refreshing or would you say it's similar?

Stacey Boomershine [00:30:16] You know, you don't, like when you're a teacher, you kind of know within a certain level what your day is going to look like, you know, we're going to have this class to teach this. And as an administrator, you know, when you have meetings, you may have four meetings scheduled, but then an emergency happens or there's a fight or something breaks out. And then those four meetings or whatever you had on your agenda. You'll have to reschedule.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:30:45] Right. Right.

Stacey Boomershine [00:30:47] And so that's kind of the nature of the job. You sort of move from fire to fire.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:30:54] Gotcha. So, it's almost more unpredictable than being a teacher, somehow?

Stacey Boomershine [00:30:59] It is, I think in some ways. You just never know where you're going to be called and for what? Like last year we had a water main break. And I just remember vividly thinking, I was in maybe water to my knees trying to get this knob to shut off and I just remember thinking "This is not on my calendar for today!". I didn't think that I was gonna have to cancel school and the principal wasn't in the building. And I'm thinking, do I need to cancel this? You know, making phone calls and that kind of stuff. But yeah, but that's also the challenging part of it and enjoyable part, because it is unpredictable.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:31:47] Gotcha. And the administration is kind of relying on cooperation, too, between its members.

Stacey Boomershine [00:31:51] That's for sure.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:31:54] In a similar way to . . . to teacher cooperation with your, with your lesson planning and everything.

Stacey Boomershine [00:32:02] It really takes a team to do all of this. Me in my office calling the shots is not gonna make it happen. That really those people on the front lines, the teachers, are the ones and our learning and teaching assistants that have that one on one contact with the kids every day and are just ensuring that they have what they need, that they're properly trained, properly supported. And that can be challenging to different personalities and life happens to people. And ensuring that that's good every day is certainly a challenge.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:32:49] Gotcha. So, my next one is a big one as well. As an administrator responsible for discipline, how do you think parental involvement and support or lack thereof impact student's behavior in school? Because I know you've spoken to me about it in the past. I was wondering if you could, if you could, talk about that for a while?

Stacey Boomershine [00:33:10] (laughter) Yeah! You know, it's very interesting because we have a lot, you know I'm blessed to be in a school where we could have a lot of parental support, and parents love their children dearly. And, and, I'm a parent. So, I understand that when children misbehave, it's easy to blame the messenger.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:33:31] Right.

Stacey Boomershine [00:33:31] And I have kind of learned over time that the story typically, that the truth usually lies in the middle. And what the kids tell their parents is not always the way it went down. And so oftentimes when you're talking to the parents, they have an idea of what the story is. And then you share with them the reality.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:33:57] Right.

Stacey Boomershine [00:33:57] And often that is good and they tend to back up a little bit, but not all the time. Like today I've been sending out, I sent out letters last week about kids who had missed 10 or more days. Kentucky state law says that you can only miss three days unexcused and then you're considered truant. And so, we sent the letter. And, you know, even though I put that law in there and our . . . our policy is in the archdiocese, that I have to report this to the state, the parents get so upset. And they say, well, they were sick, they were sick. And I was like, I know, I know, I know. I said, but you know, we still have to follow state law. Sometimes it's just explaining to the parent, and often I am a big fan of just a phone call, I like email because you have written documentation that you actually made contact. But I keep a phone log, and I encourage our teachers to do that as well. So that every time I make a phone call home, I have it documented, and so sometimes there's just something about hearing someone's voice, the intonation, the care, the time that you cared enough to pick up the phone and call them, and take the time usually disarms the parents of some. And sometimes we're gonna disagree. And that's okay. But I think as long as they know that we really, truly are not out to get the children and that we have their best interest at heart always, and that we really, any time the best kids that I see, the most well-behaved, the most well-adjusted, happiest kids are the ones with the parents and the teachers have partnered with the kid in the church, have partnered with the family through the years. When the kids sometimes are disrespectful, you will call home and you will sense that disrespect from the parents. They say, what's it say, the sins of the

father are visited on the children? And so those kinds of situations maybe even require more care with the kid or with the parents. Although I don't have any counseling training, I do feel like that's a lot of what I do. And I think our teachers would say the same thing. Yeah. One came in the other day, she said, I feel like I'm a cross between Oprah and, what did she say, a policeman or something? I don't know. The way she said it was really funny. And that's kind of the truth sometimes. You have to love the kids enough to hold them accountable.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:36:51] Right. Yeah, absolutely. Even if the parents don't.

Stacey Boomershine [00:36:55] Yeah, exactly. Yeah. And a lot of times parents will say, what do you think I should do with them? You know, like at home, what should the punishment be? And you know, I really can't answer that for them. But you know I think they're at their wits end and they really don't know what to do either.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:37:13] Right. Right.

Stacey Boomershine [00:37:14] But, so, and I do think that consistency with children is a very, very important. Just that if you say it, mean it and follow through.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:37:27] Right. Right.

Stacey Boomershine [00:37:29] I think the biggest problems I see with kids are that they don't know where the line is. They don't know where the line is as far as like speaking to a teacher. How far can they go or, you know, and I think maybe it's sometimes hard to find it enforced at home. You know, I just you know, every child is different.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:37:46] Right.

Stacey Boomershine [00:37:47] But I think that has a lot to do with it. It's just that consistency in teaching them. This is how far we can go here.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:37:55] Gotcha.

Stacey Boomershine [00:37:57] Most kids will rise to the occasion.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:38:00] Right. Yeah.

Stacey Boomershine [00:38:01] They really will.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:38:01] Well, if they are held accountable.

Stacey Boomershine [00:38:01] Exactly.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:38:06] What's your, I mean, tried and true method for dealing with like a severe problem? Would that be a parent student administrator conference or something of that nature?

[00:38:20] Usually like, you know, our kids, we have a kind of a detention program in school. Like a after school detention. So, they'll get that. They get a couple of those, unless it's very severe. And then, you know, every couple of weeks, we will have someone suspended either out of school or in school. If it's in school, they typically spend a day with me in my office and we'll work on things or talk. Give me a time to build that relationship with them. Because I don't always get a chance to do that with the kids. If a kid

is continuing, like, you know, like right now, we have a kindergartner that keeps hitting her classmate, hitting, kicking and shaming, that kind of thing. And she will not stop. It's been going on since the new year and it's very unprovoked. Like, you just never know when she's going to do it. So, we've built in all these, you know, positive reinforcements for her. Her teachers put her on like a positive behavior plan and some other like a little notebook that she takes to classes and things. But, you know, eventually she will hit and kick so many times that I'll have to call her parents. And sometimes it's severe enough we will just call home and the parents will have to come and get them. And with her, it's happened two or three times. And so now she's on a behavior plan. And so basically it's like, you know, we need to see this de-escalate.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:39:52] Right.

Stacey Boomershine [00:39:53] De-escalate for the remainder of the year or we can't meet her needs. And as a prior school, we can do that. As a public school, we don't, they don't, have that much recourse. They can certainly advise that she should be evaluated or things like that, which we can do, but they also have specialists built in that can kind of deal with those kinds of issues. You know, experts, which we don't have. I wish we did, especially with this one, because she kind of is stumping us. That's kind of the protocol for how we handle issues like this. If we try to handle it, the teacher first tries to handle it, if not it comes to me if it is severe. Straight to me. And then, you know, we'll, you know, anytime I have a student in my office, I contact the parents because if I don't, most of the time they will contact me, which is good.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:40:49] Yeah. Yeah.

Stacey Boomershine [00:40:52] I try to avoid out-of-school suspensions because it does pull them away from your academics.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:40:58] Right.

Stacey Boomershine [00:40:59] You know, occasionally its severe enough, you know we had a racial issue last year. Um, we've had an issue of kids drinking during school day, they had alcohol at school. Those kinds of things always warrant a suspension.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:41:13] Gotcha.

Stacey Boomershine [00:41:18] And the age. Like threatening language, like we had a kid that said, "I'm going to bring my gun from home, my grandfather's gun, and shoot you." If you kind of look, how old is this child? How credible is this threat right now? If they're older and we think that threats credible we will ask for them to be evaluated.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:41:41] Gotcha. All right. Well, kind of changing the subject up, I wanted to talk a little bit about your experiences in the collegiate sphere, because I know you did that for a time. So, what . . . what do you think inspired you to transition from secondary education to collegiate educational duties? (Jumbled static) You're kind of jumbled. Hello? You're really, really jumbled.

Stacey Boomershine [00:44:17] I'm so sorry. My phone does that periodically lately.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:44:26] Oh, gotcha. You're totally fine. Don't worry about it. Um, so we're talking about the inspiration for your transition from secondary education to kind of collegiate level.

Stacey Boomershine [00:44:37] You know, to be honest with you, it was purely by accident. Maybe not by accident, but I had three children under three and I wanted to be, um, I wanted to work part time.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:44:53] Gotcha.

Stacey Boomershine [00:44:54] And those positions are very few and far between in public school. And so, I was able to transition to higher ed. I was teaching classes. I was actually teaching microbiology at the community college for a while, maybe a year. And I could do that in the evenings when my husband was home.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:45:15] Right.

Stacey Boomershine [00:45:16] And then I transitioned to a private school, liberal arts institution, and I coordinated their secondary ed science program.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:45:25] Gotcha.

Stacey Boomershine [00:45:25] So I taught their methods, supervisor, student, teachers. Those kinds of things. Um, and that could be done in a very short window each week. Maybe ten or twelve hours, and some of it at home. And then eventually I continue to do that. And I flipped into that education for disability services once my youngest was in school. So, yeah, it was purely a family decision. That's why I kind of went to higher ed.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:46:03] Gotcha. And this was at the University of Louisville?

Stacey Boomershine [00:46:08] That actually was at Wheaton College. And it's listed as a private Christian Liberal Arts Institution. Then our family relocated to Louisville, we originally lived right outside Chicago, and then our family relocated to Louisville. And that's when I went to work for the University of Louisville doing a disability services position but for the athletic department at University of Louisville because it had a huge athletic department. So, yeah. So, I sort of worked with kids that had brain challenges or were in the process of needing evaluation. Very interesting. And I enjoyed it very much.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:46:52] So how would you describe your experience? Like what were the major differences that you saw in these kids compared to kids that you worked with in the past, or were they more similar than different?

Stacey Boomershine [00:47:04] Well, it was very interesting because when I was at Wheaton, it has a you know, has a very academic reputation. You know, those kids are very, you know, "Type A", very polite, you know, over achievers kind of. It's a Christian school. So, they're coming there because they want to be in that environment. And they're very perfectionistic so oftentimes, kids are very bright and they may be dealing with a learning challenge that's gone undiagnosed. They will come to college and believe it or not I had several kids that would just get diagnosed when they came to school because their coping strategies they were using broke down when they got there because of rigor. And so they would get evaluated or diagnosed with a learning challenge and would work to get them some accommodations to follow ADA and get them some classroom accommodations and level the playing field academically for them. Louisville, that's a public school, a huge public school. And a lot of the student athletes, not all, are coming in underprepared by no means not all. And then the NCAA grants exemptions to universities. So not all kids coming in are meeting the admittance standards for the university.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:48:33] Right.

Stacey Boomershine [00:48:34] So you're coming in with some kids that have maybe some very low test scores, very, very unprepared, have not had a typical positive school experience. And so, you're trying to get them to do college work when perhaps, you know, in reality, perhaps they're just not made for college. But because of the NFL and the NBA restrictions on kids attending college prior to and during those you know, that's really the only training ground they have. So that's a different interesting environment.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:49:14] Gotcha. So wildly, wildly different from what you had experience prior to?

Stacey Boomershine [00:49:21] Oh, my goodness, like night and day, night and day. Yeah, but you did feel like you are making a difference. You were taught or you were teaching a kid how to draft an e-mail or, you know, when they're learning about things and really enjoying the process because they were just standing there. They were coming from deprived educational environments. It was an adventure. Their focus is not on education, like most college students want to be in college. You know, some of the student-athletes really didn't want to be in the college. But if they wanted to continue playing football or basketball, they had to be there. They still had to make choices. So that was often a challenge.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:50:11] I see. Okay. So, throughout your career, you worked in the classroom as a teacher, you worked as an administrator. You know, you talked about collaborative learning is kind of making a comeback almost. What would be the other major differences you've seen come up in the education system throughout your career?

Stacey Boomershine [00:50:37] Let's think about teaching. I remember when some people were kids. You know what you see today, if you look a few years down they'll just come out in different ways, and be canned differently. Like the same things kind of resurface. I think the push towards collecting data on kids and that standards, looking at standards and change, is this kid mastering the standard? I just think that's so wonderful. And that is not something that was done when I was young, when I was a young teacher. I think it's so wonderful because we've got, we can actually collect data on a kid and say, yeah, this kid is not mastering, you know, he doesn't know his math facts or, you know, he can really drill down and see where a kid is and what we can do to help them.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:51:27] Right.

Stacey Boomershine [00:51:27] And that's such a neat gift as a teacher and an educator to do that. That data collection is not something that we ever did. When I was I was taught about it.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:51:38] And that really helps in all aspects, too. With English language learners and kids with learning disabilities, all that data collection is key for them as well.

Stacey Boomershine [00:51:50] And I just I just love that we know so much. There's ways now we can find out so much about kids, you know, about where they are academically. And it's such a gift as an educator. I think you're not just shooting in the dark. Which I often felt like when I was teaching. Right now we don't have to do anymore. I think it's a wonderful thing.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:52:12] Right. Have you seen anything kind of developing that you perceive as a negative development? I know that the increased use of technology is kind of a polemical issue. Do you see anything that you don't approve of that's becoming more of a trend?

Stacey Boomershine [00:52:32] You know, it concerns me that schools, public schools, are sort of taking the place of the family, that they're sort of being the be all end all. And in a word, we've got schools that are that have social workers in them. We have schools that have physicians that are coming in. Breakfast,

lunch, dinner. In summer. Not that I don't think all of those things are so wonderful, but we are, you know, the parents are not taking the responsibility that they should. And I think everyone knows that. It's very important that the children get this care. I just feel like asking schools to do this is like one more thing, one more thing. And it's steering us away from what our primary mission should be, which is education. And I think that's a very slippery slope.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:53:32] Absolutely. What are your thoughts? This is a huge issue. On standardized testing, do you see too much like teaching for the test in the classroom?

Stacey Boomershine [00:53:48] You know, I think like anything else, you know, in moderation, right. Like I do. I think that, you know, politicians, the media, people put too much emphasis on one moment in time. On one day. Because a kid could be sick. They might not be a good test taker. So, you know, it's another piece of data that we should have at our disposal in our toolbox in working with the child. But there's so many other things that I think are just as important if not more important than standardized tests. I love like our school is doing the math test, NWEA math testing and I love it because we do it three times a year. You can kind of see the growth or, you know, it's just a blip and kids aren't doing well. Well, you know, you know, a couple of months can be spent catching up. It gives some really good data. So, you know, it's our first year doing it, but so far I've been impressed with that. I don't like teacher pay being linked to test scores. That concerns me.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:55:00] Gotcha.

Stacey Boomershine [00:55:01] I know in some states it is. I think that teaching is an art. And if the teachers aren't effective, then they need to rely on the administrators to make sure that that is fixed. That tying them in to test scores. That really concerns me.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:55:20] Gotcha. All right. This next one kind of ties into that. What would you consider is the most difficult challenge that teachers face in the classrooms today or outside of the classroom?

Stacey Boomershine [00:55:37] I think they are getting kids that are not ready to learn. Because there's so many outside issues. Hunger, parents fighting, you know, lots of access to violent programming. You know, just unlimited access to the Internet. And, you know, all kinds of anxiety, all the societal concern that you see on the news every night. You're getting kids that are really not ready to learn, you know, science or math or whatever it is. That's the least of their worries that day. They're just worried if they're going to have dinner. So, I think that's the biggest problem.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:56:19] Gotcha. And that's kind of a tough one to address because, I mean, there's not really a solution, a be all end all solution.

Stacey Boomershine [00:56:30] Maybe that's why it's so frustrating, because it's out of the teacher's control in a lot of ways.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:56:35] Hmm. All right. And then what would you consider to be the most important piece of advice to give to a young teacher? What do you wish somebody would have said to you when you started your teaching career?

Stacey Boomershine [00:56:52] People did say this to me, and I am so grateful. They would say: can I help you with anything? Do you have any questions or, you know, I think people would say, ask me that. I thank a lot of great mentor teachers that I am still in contact with. And as a young teacher, you know, do not be afraid to ask for help. I think there's that mentality like, well, I've been trained. I should be an

expert now. And, you know, I told you, I've been doing this for 30 years. I don't feel like an expert. So just, you know, being open enough and humble enough to say, you know what, I'm struggling. I don't understand this. How do you do this? Where is it? What can I do? This kid's not getting it or I don't know where this is, or that is or, you know, whatever. Just being able to ask for help is such an important thing for a young teacher.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:57:50] Mm hmm. Mm hmm. That cooperation with the mentor teachers is kind of the beautiful part of education that you don't get in other careers too. You've got the resources.

Stacey Boomershine [00:58:00] Yeah. We'll have an assigned mentor. But then relationships will just naturally form and people will end up with a mentor teacher that's not even assigned, you know?

Gabriel Michalak: [00:58:10] Right. Right. Right. Yeah. Kind of your friend who's experienced.

Stacey Boomershine [00:58:15] Yeah, exactly. So.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:58:20] Gotcha. Well, is there anything else that you would like to add?

Stacey Boomershine [00:58:25] No, I just I'm grateful that you spoke with me today. It was fun to talk about all these things and kind of process them. And I think that you are in the most noble profession. And you have a very powerful opportunity during your career to influence so many young people. And you will think that you're not making a difference. And then a couple years later, you'll get a note or something and you'll be amazed at the difference that you can make. So, I just know that you're doing God's work and an important job. And I admire you.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:59:00] Thank you. Well, I appreciate you taking the time out of your day to do this interview with me. I learned so, so much. And I thought it was really, really, really fascinating to hear your thoughts on my questions.

Stacey Boomershine [00:59:14] Thank you so much. God willing, I will have a few more years in here.

Gabriel Michalak: [00:59:19] All righty, thank you so much.

Stacey Boomershine [00:59:22] Thanks so much. Bye bye.