

Vicki Shafer Interview

Interview Orientation

Date: March 9, 2016

Time: 9-10 am

Location: The Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration

14115 Hillcrest Road, Dallas, Texas 75254-8622

Interviewer: Erin Silkey

Interviewee: Vicki Shafer

Interview Transcript

ES: So, I guess the first question was where did you grow up. So did you grow up in Texas, or ?

VS: I grew up in Wichita Falls.

ES: Ok, and, where is that exactly?

VS: That's, it's in north, very north-central Texas off toward the west, it's about 14 miles from the Oklahoma border.

ES: Ok, so that's why I've seen it, because when I drive up to Oklahoma to see my dad. Yeah.

VS: Ok, yeah you probably go through it. Where does he live?

ES: He lives in Norman, so we take 35.

VS: Oh, ok, well you actually-you cut over, yeah. You have to cut over to the west then. Ok.

ES: So we see the signs for it. Yeah. Ok.

VS: So, yeah, I grew up there—I was born there, and I grew up there.

ES: Alright.

VS: Went to high school. There was only one high school. —

ES: Oh! Ok.

VS: —Wichita Falls High School.

ES: [laugh] Right/ok, that makes it easy, it's a small school—I mean small town, small school.

VS: Well, it's a huge--small town with a huge school, because when I was there it was the only high school, so they had to split up their football team. It's medium small, it's about 100,000 (people).

ES: Ok. So then where did you go to college?

VS: UT Austin.

ES: Oh, Ok. And how did you find the difference between the small town to Austin, then?

VS: Well, at first it was difficult. (The thing that made it) —and I was homesick for about 6 months. Then when I came back the second semester of my freshman year I realized that Austin was a lot more fun place to live than Wichita Falls.

ES: [laughs] That's what I've heard! Austin's cool. [laugh]

VS: —And then I loved it, I loved it after that. I really did love Austin.

ES: Yeah.

VS: And uh, so I got my bachelors there, —

ES: Ok.

VS: — and my teaching certificate, and I did all my education courses there. Uh —

ES: And did you do them, so you like have a 4 year bachelors and then you did your education certification at the same time?

VS: Yeah, my degree was not in education. My degree was in Liberal Arts.

ES: Oh, ok,

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47 VS: I had, actually, I had a double major in English and Latin —
48 ES: Oh, ok.
49 VS: —and a minor in Greek, which I've forgotten all of.
50 ES: [laughs] Yeah, me, too, and it's only been 15 years...uh 10 years.
51 VS: And then I came to Dallas.
52 ES: Ok.
53 VS: When I came to Dallas—I married—and I came to Dallas, and there was no... Well, UD was
54 really new at the time, so I didn't really even think about UD, which was the only place,
55 probably the only college, that had a Masters in Latin. So I, but I had a full ride to SMU,
56 so I just got my Masters in English.
57 ES: Oh, ok. How come you decided to do English, then?
58 VS: Well, that was, that was my other field, you know.
59 ES: Oh, ok.
60 VS: That was my other field of teaching. And, uh, well, I really had not intended to be a teacher,
61 I intended to be a house wife.
62 ES: Oh, I see! [laughs]
63 VS: But my mother made me get that teaching certificate and I was really glad I had it when I
64 got divorced.
65 ES: Oh, yeah.
66 VS: You know that was—well I had actually intended to major in Comparative Literature, and
67 bring in both my undergraduate majors, but they were phasing out that, so
68 I only had a couple of classes in Comparative Literature. They were phasing out that major
69 at the time.
70 ES: Ok.
71 VS: So, I just got the degree in straight English.
72 ES: SMU's—that's in Dallas? Yeah that's in Dallas.
73 VS: Yeah. It's in Hyde Park.
74 ES: I know they have a big Archaeology program, because that's where one of my Archaeology
75 professors at UTA went and got her PhD there. It's most—a lot of it is South
76 American, Mesoamerican Archaeology, but I don't know about their Classics Program.
77 VS: It's simply nonexistent, I think.
78 ES: [laughs] Ok.
79 VS: At some point—they occasionally have 2 years of Latin so that people can get their language
80 off. Last I heard one of the teachers who had retired from the Richardson school district
81 was teaching there, but I think it was only a couple of years, it was only part time and it
82 was adjunct.
83 ES: So, how come you chose to do Latin, then, in your BA?
84 VS: You know, when I was in the 9th, no in the 8th grade in middle school we had a program called
85 Exploratory and we had 6 weeks of 6 different things, we had Latin, Spanish—
86 ES: Oh, ok, yeah I think we had something similar.
87 VS: —and, you know, I just fell in love with it. I tell people I fell in love with the Accusative case
88 ... [laughs] ... because it's just so ...
89 ES: [laughs] Yeah, I know what you mean.
90 VS: It's just so wonderful that you can move things around, and most kids hate that, but I just
91 thought it was great.
92 ES: Yeah.

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93 VS: You know it just resonated with me, in that 6 weeks. I just loved it, and I liked the teacher
94 a lot. So, I decided to go ahead and do it. I don't know it just really, it came very logically
95 for me, it was not ever a struggle.

96 ES: Right, yeah.

97 VS: And I loved my teachers, I truly loved my Latin teachers.

98 ES: Yeah.

99 VS: So, that's probably a big part of it, too.

100 ES: Well, yeah. So that was in junior high, then?

101 VS: Well, that was in 8th grade, and then in the 9th grade I went on and I had a wonderful
102 teacher there, and then I had one not so wonderful teacher, [laughs]

103 ES: [laughs]

104 VS: and then I had another wonderful teacher for two years. So, I mean Latin was really big
105 in that school. I mean there were 3 Latin teachers at my high school.

106 ES: Really? Ok.

107 VS: It was huge. No more.

108 ES: Considering you were in Wichita Falls!

109 VS: Yeah, no kidding. It was huge.

110 ES: Yeah.

111 VS: It doesn't happen anymore.

112 ES: No.

113 VS: Although, I don't know if they still have it or not. They had it for a while. There are 3 high
114 schools there now.

115 ES: Ok.

116 VS: And the reason I then chose ... your second question—Well, actually let me just go ahead
117 to finish the education thing.

118 ES: Sure.

119 VS: I did have, I started the doctoral program at the University, UT Dallas, and I got a little bit of
120 a pay raise. I did not finish it, because I got divorced at the time and had small children
121 so I never did finish that. I have 30 hours, 24 hours or something like that for the
122 doctorate, and I just let it lapse.

123 ES: Yeah. Yeah, I think a lot of people do that. Not uncommon. And what was that in?

124 VS: It was in Comparative Literature.

125 ES: Oh, ok. That was the one.

126 VS: They did have a program in Comparative Literature.

127 Uh, Let's see. So, what was my next question? So you decided to, so how come you
128 decided to teach Latin instead of English, then? Like one of my teachers ... ?

129 VS: Well, because I just love Latin more. As a matter of fact, when I got my first job I did teach
130 English. I taught English for 25 years, or actually 22 years.

131 ES: Ok.

132 VS: I worked for 22 years. Actually, I worked for a semester at South Oak Cliff, but that didn't
133 work out. My baby was little. I would have probably... I didn't even finish a year, because
134 my little girl was—I wanted to be with her.

135 ES: Right.

136 VS: And then when I got divorced, I went back and I worked 22 years in Garland.

137 ES: Ok.

138 VS: Teaching both English and Latin.

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139 ES: And are you still teaching there?
140 VS: No, I'm teaching at Bishop Lynch. Remember you visited me?
141 ES: Oh, that's right. I always think that's in Garland.
142 VS: Well, it's on the way. It's on the way, but it's not in Garland. The Garland job was at a
143 public school, that's GISD.
144 ES: Oh! I see, alright.
145 VS: And that job just kinda fell in my lap.
146 ES: And so you've been at Bishop Lynch for—?
147 VS: 12 years.
148 ES: 12 years. Ok. And the English that was for 22 years, that was before the Garland?
149 VS: No, that was in Garland.
150 ES: The same time, ok, alright.
151 VS: I taught English and Latin in Garland for 22 years.
152 ES: Um, and that was at a pr—in a public school?
153 VS: And actually then I went back. After that, I went back to Garland—after I retired, I went
154 back part time and taught only Latin. But it was just half time.
155 ES: Oh.
156 VS: Yeah, they hired a teacher and he didn't work out. So they called me after 5 weeks into
157 semester—
158 ES: [laughs] Oh, no!
159 VS: I don't know what was the matter with him, but he didn't come to class, and so they fired
160 him 5 weeks into the year and asked me to come back part time, so I did for 3 years. So,
161 I worked in Garland 25 years, but the last 3 were only part-time.
162 ES: Right. Um, yeah, that happens. {laughs}
163 VS: I taught all levels of English. I started teaching what they would call basic English, which
164 was remedial, and gradually worked up to Honors, which was more rewarding. Well, I
165 don't know, it was a lot more pleasant most of the time.
166 ES: [laughs] How did--? Because, I know that I'm taking reading in secondary school and I know
167 that literacy is an issue. Totally off the topic of Latin, but ... [laughs] So, would you
168 necessarily in the remedial classes, be teaching how to read as opposed to Shakespeare?
169 VS: Oh, yeah, when we did Shakespeare it was like, well, I don't like the word "dumbed-down,"
170 but basically simplified Shakespeare.
171 ES: Right.
172 VS: We basically did a lot of reading—in the remedial classes—a lot reading of simplified
173 things, a lot of short writing.
174 ES: Right.
175 VS: You, know a lot of writing. One of the things, that was big then, and I think actually worked
176 for kids, was giving them a pattern, a pattern for writing, but in the remedial classes we
177 never really got over a paragraph.
178 ES: Really? Ok.
179 VS: Yeah. Actually, they probably do now, because they have to write a longer essay for the,
180 whatever they call the state test now. It was TASK when I was doing it, or STARR. You
181 know, I don't know. They change the name of it every year.
182 ES: [laughs] That was 2006 or 2007? I don't know when they changed it. I was working at the
183 library when they changed it. And then, so for Latin, you taught from Elementary all the
184 way through AP?

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185 VS: I didn't teach Elementary.
186 ES: Oh, you didn't? Ok.
187 VS: No, just high school. Oh! Are you talking about Elementary Latin, yeah Latin I.
188 ES: Yeah.
189 VS: Right, not, elementary school. Yes, beginning to AP.
190 ES: Ok, uh, let's see. I don't know if they need to be necessarily in order.... [laughs]
191 VS: It doesn't matter, it's up to you.
192 ES: [laughs] I was curious about the difference between the public school versus the private
193 school, because people keep telling me that maybe in the Catholic schools that kids would
194 be more motivated, more interested in doing Latin than in high school.
195 VS: You know what I find, where I am it's not the first choice for many of them. It's not the elite
196 Catholic school. The elite Catholic schools are Ursuline and Jesuit.
197 ES: Yeah, Ron was just talking about that last night. Ok.
198 VS: A lot of our kids are pretty much average, and it came from, really, our former principal's
199 belief that anybody should be able to get a Catholic education, you know. And a lot of
200 what they do at that school is theology, and service oriented. Actually, I think only about
201 70% of the student body is Catholic, –
202 ES: Oh, really?
203 VS: –and a lot of them are not very practicing Catholics, are lapsed or just lazy Catholics. But so
204 many of them are. And what I find is more homogeneity in those kids. I don't have—with
205 rare exceptions—I don't have as really good of students as the few students that I had in
206 public school. But I also don't have the ones that are just very difficult to teach.
207 ES: Right.
208 VS: And while I don't think a lot of my kids are really into what they—into the subject—they do
209 care about their grades.
210 ES: Oh.
211 VS: And the parents—
212 ES: Right, ok. Yeah.
213 VS: –that's the difference—the parents are much more involved.
214 ES: That's what I was wondering, if at a—parents have put their kids in a private school, Catholic
215 school, well they want them to do well, so they're gonna be a bit more involved.
216 VS: Yeah, well, and they're paying money.
217 ES: Yeah, exactly. [laughs]
218 VS: So, that's the difference that I see. With rare exceptions, I have not had..., because in public
219 school you just get everybody, and some of the best students I ever had were just kids that
220 —One of the best students I ever had was a little kid that was just dirt poor, but he was just
221 sweet, wonderful and smart, very smart, and the first kid that I ever had that took AP. I
222 taught him – they wouldn't put him in a separate class, and so I —
223 ES: [laughs] Because it was just him!
224 VS: It was just him and I taught him at lunch—
225 ES: Oh, ok!
226 VS: —after only — he only had 2 years of Latin.
227 ES: Really?
228 VS: Usually they have 3, but he was highly motivated, very smart, had an excellent memory.
229 Which is one thing I've noticed is missing in many kids. It's pathetic. Well, they have
230 the attention span of a gnat. [laughs]

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- 231 ES: Yeah, we've talked about that both in my education classes and I've talked about it
232 with Ron. You know, just these days... [laughs]
- 233 VS: Yeah, that's a disagreement that I have with a lot of educators. You know, the owner of our
234 school was telling us we should change activities every 15 or 20 minutes, because you can't
235 keep them engaged. And I really think what we ought to be doing is trying to extend
236 their attention spans.
- 237 ES: [at the same time] Longevity! Yeah. [laughs]
- 238 VS: So, you know, I haven't had that—I do have that disagreement with the powers that be, but
239 they don't give me too much trouble, so... And I do try to do, I roll up, because we have
240 hour and a half classes. I think that's too long with high schoolers, you know. I don't like
241 that, that they're on the block schedule.
- 242 ES: [at the same time] On the block schedule, yeah...
- 243 VS: That's too long, especially for a math and foreign language there's so much more, if you
244 have them every day. But you know what happened was that the state mandated so many
245 things, that they had to provide 8 periods, instead of 6. So, anyway...
- 246 ES: Mmmm...yeah, we had 8, but we weren't on the block system. We had the same classes.
- 247 VS: You had 8 every day?
- 248 ES: Yeah, but we were one, um, it was called ...
- 249 VS: Was it that rotating system? My step-daughter I think was...
- 250 ES: They were modules, so a mod was 15 minutes, so you either had a 45 minute class or a 60
251 minute class, and um, the 60 minute classes would be the science and math. I think the
252 languages were actually only 45, but you'd have the same class every day.
- 253 VS: Well, that's probably enough. You know that's, you could get a lot more done.
- 254 ES: Yeah.
- 255 VS: With two 45 minute classes than an hour and a half class. Primarily because you give
256 homework in between, to, you know, reinforce it. Reinforce a smaller amount.
- 257 ES: Yeah, so we had homework every night for the next day, 5 days a week.
- 258 VS: I think an hour and a half is not only too long for them to sit, but it's –
- 259 ES: And is that twice a week or three days a week?
- 260 VS: It depends. It depends, because, you know, because it alternates. Like if it's Monday,
261 Wednesday, Friday in one week, then the next week it would be Tuesday, Thursday.
- 262 ES: That would be so confusing! [laughs]
- 263 VS: It's not.
- 264 ES: Oh, I guess you get used to it.
- 265 VS: Anyway. Yeah, you get used to it.
- 266 ES: Let's see, umm. There was something I was going to ask, but now I don't remember. Oh.
267 How—so, I guess we did touch on how students, you know, they have less attention
268 span. The students' performance, has it changed over the years? You know, when you
269 first started kids were, I don't know, I get the impression that they might have been more
270 studious than they are now. Even from when I was in the '90s, in school, and now—
- 271 VS: Some are.
- 272 ES: [laughs]
- 273 VS: I started in '79 and we were then competing with television, and now we are competing with,
274 you know, with phones and video games. So, I know. It's so...
- 275 ES: Yeah. [laughs] So, in some ways technology has helped, in some ways it hasn't. and I know
276 having a phone in the room is like, for me, I'd be like here's a basket, put your phone in

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277 it, put your iPad in it. [laughs]
278 VS: I've never told them to put it in the ..., but I have taken some up, and some teachers do:
279 "There's a box, put it in there when you come in the room."
280 ES: Oh, yeah, I guess, and similar is the view of Latin over the years in terms of how,
281 you've said that it's—you really only have part time teachers, maybe only one teacher in
282 a school right now, as opposed to it being more popular back 50 years ago, I don't know.
283 But now I've heard that it's becoming more popular again, but in the '90s, early 2000s, it
284 was really not, not as popular, and when I got my bachelors in 2001, there were more
285 people with degrees than could actually teach ... [laughs] ... because there just weren't
286 the positions. People weren't—it just wasn't as popular. Is that what you found?
287 VS: Well, I don't know, because I had a job, so, you know, I wasn't looking.
288 ES: [laughs] Right, that's true.
289 VS: I was just lucky, very lucky. Well, that one took me a very long time to find it. And they
290 weren't hiring, they weren't hiring. I was just lucky that, that uh, somebody resigned at
291 the last minute to go to law school, --
292 ES: Yeah.
293 VS: So, I fell into that job, which fed my kids for 22 years. What else can I say?
294 ES: [laughs] Right.
295 VS: What was I gonna say. I worry now that they have just changed the SAT.
296 ES: Have they? Again?
297 VS: This is the first year.
298 ES: Ok.
299 VS: This is the first year that they've done it, which is not emphasizing vocabulary so much.
300 ES: Really?
301 VS: Yeah, and it's uh, you know, that's a concern to me. Although I don't think Latin's going
302 away any time soon,
303 ES: No. Right.
304 VS: But, you know, it just comes in cycles, and I got job when it was down, so... It just, you
305 have to – There, there is an organization, the American Classical League—or
306 American Classical League, yeah...
307 ES: Yeah.
308 VS: And the Texas Classical Association —
309 ES: [laughs] Yeah, I always get them confused!
310 VS: — that posts jobs. They have a website that posts jobs.
311 ES: Yeah, I have them both saved, but I always get them confused in my head—and I'm sure
312 they're very different, but ... [laughs]
313 VS: Yeah, well there just, one's state level. I think it's the American Classical League that has
314 the website.
315 ES: Yeah. Right. Texas, uh...
316 VS: Classical Association. It's TCA.
317 ES: Yeah, it's TCA and ACL, right. [laughs] I have them bookmarked on my computer, and I
318 have stuff printed from them, too, in files.
319 VS: Yeah, and if you join they'll, you know, send you periodically – they don't have all of them,
320 but, you know, they'll send you when there's an opening.
321 ES: I think I, you know, when I first got here, or over the years, I've had membership off and
322 on. It's just trying to keep track, and like when I went to England I canceled all my

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323 memberships for over the year, but, [laugh] I just wasn't paying attention, so
324 wasn't paying for that year. It just depends. Let's see ... So did you, do you, I know there
325 seems to be a correlation between parental involvement these days (to me, anyway) and
326 the kids being less interested in their ... you know, having smaller attention spans. Are
327 you having to give less homework and stuff?

328 VS: I don't. Sometimes I tell a student—well the kids are way overburdened—I mean, you
329 know, they've got so many activities. That's part of the problem, that you're competing
330 with the activities, the sports, which always take precedence.

331 ES: [laughs] Yeah.

332 VS: Which consume a lot of their time. And I've had kids ... We have a musical, and the kids
333 that are in the musical are up there until 11 o'clock every night.

334 ES: Yeah

335 VS: Rehearsing or doing the play. And I notice their working, and the good students' work slacks
336 off those times.

337 ES: Yeah, we had activities in my high school. I was in plays and stuff. I wasn't in sports or the
338 band, but I have heard that that is becoming more and more of a problem, and it's starting
339 earlier, too. In elementary school, there's all these afterschool activities and the kids can't
340 get their homework done until 8 o'clock at night, and then they've got 3 hours of
341 homework. For me I had like 5 hours of homework when I get home. It's just ... so,
342 people are starting to give less homework, but then....

343 VS: Well, what they've asked us to do is give less homework, but more relevant homework, and
344 I think that for things like math and especially foreign language that repetition is so
345 important—

346 ES: It is!

347 VS: —and I'm not really sure that you can give ... less. What I've noticed: a lot of cheating, a
348 lot of cheating.

349 ES: Really?

350 VS: Mmhmm..

351 ES: I hadn't heard about that!

352 VS: They've taken down—Well, the textbook that I'm teaching out of, they've posted all the
353 translations. I've quit having them do the translations of the stories, because the translations
354 were all posted online.

355 ES: What book are you using?

356 VS: I'm using the *Ecce Romani*,

357 ES: Oh, ok

358 VS: --but I think that's probably true for any of them.

359 ES: Yeah.

360 VS: And so we just do those in class and I give other assignments. Either I'll make my own
361 sentences or, when they do translation.

362 ES: It would be, in that case you'd have to spend the time in the classroom to do the translations
363 so that you know that they're not looking it up. [laughs]

364 VS: Exactly, exactly. You do. The homework that I give is mostly grammar.

365 ES: Yeah. Memorization.

366 VS: Or translation of my own sentences that I do.

367 ES: Yeah. So you've said that the you don't use too much technology, but have you found that (I

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368 know I wouldn't either), but in terms of access, doing research papers and stuff like that,
369 it's a lot easier to get information about, you know, Roman culture and stuff online.
370 VS: They do, and I don't do a whole lot of that. They will do that in the history classes. Yes,
371 they do. I do require a paper and a project in Latin I on mythology, but they have to use
372 one book. [laughs] They have to use one books that's not online.—
373 ES: Ah, yes! [laughs]
374 VS: They have to do that. And then, I don't do that – I need to do something in Latin II, but I
375 haven't recently done a project or paper in the last quarter. Latin IIIs do an emperor report.
376 They choose an emperor and do a report project.
377 ES: Oh, ok.
378 VS: Of course Latin IV we just—that's just crazy translation. We just have to cram that in. We
379 have to be sure everything's covered. So.
380 ES: Oh, right.
381 VS: So, I don't, they don't do a whole lot of research. There are some sites—there's one site,
382 and you might want to mark it, it's T A B N E Y.com and they have little exercises. That's
383 one of the best... T A B N E Y...
384 ES: N E Y? Tabney?
385 VS: Uh-huh. Well, his name is something Abney, Tom or Tim or something.
386 ES: [laughs] Ok. [laughs]
387 VS: And he has for a lot of books little matching exercises for vocabulary, things like that.
388 Little games. That I don't have time for. I think that he has way too much time on his
389 hands. [laughs] Or insomnia, or something.
390 ES: [laughs]
391 VS: He has way more time than I have to do that. I do make a few PowerPoints, but not many.
392 When I get inspired.
393 ES: Yeah, well...
394 VS: You know, I have one on the Imperfect Tense, but just a few.
395 ES: You can reuse them! [laughs]
396 VS: Oh, yeah! And I guess you are familiar with Blackboard, that program? For the students?
397 ES: Oh. Yeah. I've used it in various iterations over the past 10 or 15 years. Different schools
398 have had it.
399 VS: Yeah, we're required to use it to post assignments, and you can put your PPTs on that, and
400 you can put your, you know, if they're absent you can post your worksheets and handouts
401 on it.
402 ES: Yeah.
403 VS: Some teachers, I'm not that technological, but, you know, they'll record themselves doing a
404 lecture and put it on there. I'm thinking there ain't no way...
405 ES: [laughs] For one thing, I don't like to hear myself speak, which can be a problem as a
406 teacher, but nonetheless ... it is helpful.
407 VS: I mean it's just so incredibly time consuming, so. I mean, it'd be wonderful ... Or, you
408 know, if you did a lecture. Some teachers, especially history teachers, do a PowerPoint,
409 because they're talking about facts, you know.
410 ES: Yeah.
411 VS: And they do a PowerPoint. As a matter of fact, one history teacher I know said that he started
412 going to PowerPoint for his lectures because, he taught, you know, several sections of the
413 same class and he wasn't sure he always gave the same information.

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- 414 ES: Yeah. Yeah.
- 415 VS: All the information. So he started doing that so they would have that. And those would be,
416 if you wanted to take the time to make them, those would be great to post, but I have not
417 ever done that.
- 418 ES: I know, I know me...
- 419 VS: But ours is not lecture, ours is like give and take. You know it's like translating in class and
420 what not.
- 421 ES: Yeah. For me, I know, lectures would be, I would never give the same lecture twice. You
422 know, even if I have the exact some information.
- 423 VS: Well, you know, Math and Foreign Language don't, and English really, don't give
424 themselves, they don't really do well with lecture, I don't think, because you just want give
425 and take with the students.
- 426 ES: Yeah. Running through with the Accusative case, giving examples and having them work on
427 them, yeah. The only thing I was, would be thinking, if I was doing a lecture, in terms of,
428 for me, because I want to incorporate Archaeology, and Architecture and stuff, that, you
429 know, I need to have slides for that.
- 430 VS: Uh-huh, yeah, you would need to do that.
- 431 ES: But otherwise, yeah...
- 432 VS: I do a lot of Mythology with the freshman, and we have a story every day. It's 5 minutes at
433 the beginning of class.
- 434 ES: In English? Do you have them, like read it in translation, like Edith Hamilton or something,
435 or...?
- 436 VS: I did when I was teaching English.
- 437 ES: Ok.
- 438 VS: But, no, they don't read it. I just read it, just read them a story.
- 439 ES: Oh, I see
- 440 VS: A lot of them by this time have had, a lot of the schools now have had a myth unit, a
441 mythology unit in Middle School, so a lot of them—and plus with the Percy Jackson—
- 442 ES: [laughs] oh! Yeah
- 443 VS: They're familiar with Greek and Roman mythology, much more than when I started.
- 444 ES: Really?
- 445 VS: Uh-huh, oh, yeah. Because when I was teaching sophomore English we did a whole unit
446 on Mythology and it was new, it was very new to a lot of them, and now...
- 447 ES: That has never even occurred to me that it would be more, but yeah, you're right, there are a
448 lot more books and movies and whatnot.
- 449 VS: Yeah, it's much more familiar to them.
- 450 ES: Hmm...How do you find the difference, you know, in terms of Elementary students versus
451 AP students—Elementary Level—does it vary, there's always going to be that one person
452 who's really good at it, versus the person that's just doing it because...
- 453 VS: Exactly.
- 454 ES: because they want to do well to get into college? [laughs]
- 455 VS: Some of them because their mom's made them take it or because they have to have a
456 language.
- 457 ES: [laughs] Yes, exactly.
- 458 VS: Yes. [laughs] Yeah, you have very few that, I do, that like it well enough. They all say
459 when they start out that they're going to do four years, but then by the time they get to

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460 Latin III and the real translations, they're dropping out like flies. So, I only have one
461 student in AP this year, and she's excellent. She'll do fine. She wants to come back and
462 take my job, so I'll see if I can hang in there long enough for her to get a degree. [laughs]
463 ES: Yeah. [laughs]
464 VS: Another next year wants to do it that's really good, and another one that wants to do it next
465 year that's not very good and we'll see how she does. I've had several that once they see
466 what AP requires, you know, they'll drop out after two weeks. I've had that.
467 ES: [laughs] Yeah, it's, it's...for me I've found the actual textual reading more challenging, but...I
468 relish the challenge—
469 VS: Well, that's good.
470 ES: So I would spend all afternoon doing it, but I knew many kids who wouldn't do that.
471 VS: No, many won't. They have to love it. They have to love it. They have to not only be
472 really good, but they have to love it.
473 ES: Yeah.
474 VS: This year. What did, what...they changed it last year, or two years ago...The AP class
475 now...There used to be four tracks of AP and you could choose.
476 ES: Oh, ok.
477 VS: Then they narrowed it down just to the *Aeneid*. The last 3 years, the new AP test (this is the
478 first year I've taught it) is half Caesar and half Virgil. Virgil's cut down. And I hate
479 Caesar, I just hate it.
480 ES: Oh. [laughs]
481 VS: But some power that be wanted to do prose, so.
482 ES: Yeah, makes sense.
483 VS: Caesar, I just found the substance—obviously he writes very good Latin prose—
484 ES: Right! [laughs]
485 VS: But I just found the subject matter boring.
486 ES: I read the Gallic Wars, or part of them, in some of my classes. Well, I found the
487 Anthropological aspect interesting, his comments about it, but, yeah, after a while, how
488 many battles...? [laughs]
489 VS: Battles. Geography. So, anyway, but I'm doing it. But I do Caesar first to get it out of the
490 way. So we're working on the *Aeneid* now, and interestingly enough she finds Caesar much
491 easier.
492 ES: Huh.
493 VS: I don't, and I think it's because I'm just so familiar with the *Aeneid*, because I've done it so
494 many times.
495 ES: Oh, yeah.
496 VS: But it is poetry. Poetry's harder.
497 ES: It is!
498 VS: And this child doesn't. She loves Latin, but she has the soul of an engineer. [laughs] She
499 doesn't love poetry like she should. —
500 ES: I have—
501 VS: She loves the grammar. So we'll see. She'll do well on the AP, she'll do fine.
502 ES: I found, you know, I like reading poetry, but I have always had a really hard time with meter
503 and stuff, for the life of me. I've been in choir, I've done dance classes, I've played an
504 instrument, but I can't...
505 VS: That's interesting, because if you know music, because I think it's the same as reading music,

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506 you know. Long and short.
507 ES: Yeah.
508 VS: That's interesting. I never had any trouble with that. She does, she does, it doesn't sing to
509 her.
510 ES: Right, yeah.
511 VS: For me it just kinda rolls for me, especially that dactylic hexameter it just rolls off, but she
512 struggles with that.
513 ES: Well, once I get into it I think, sometimes, yeah, but then like when we were reading Catullus
514 and different poems would be—it wouldn't be obvious to me that the meter was changing,
515 and it's just, I don't know. Something about my brain. [laughs] So... So, you're
516 only teaching Latin right now?
517 VS: Yes, and I've told them that I will not teach English.
518 ES: Why not?
519 VS: I'm done with it, because it's just too much work.
520 ES: Oh. Ok.
521 VS: It's too much. It's just grading. I hardly ever bring anything home anymore.
522 ES: Oh, yeah.
523 VS: And of course this job has only been, well it's part-time, I started part-time, I went full-
524 time, taught full-time for two years, then back to part-time. It just depends on how many
525 students sign up for it. And then I had, for 10 years I had to travel, I had to float, I didn't
526 have a room. I finally got a room last year, it was wonderful. I hope I can keep it.
527 ES: That that would be nice. Yeah, I guess I remember. Yeah, you went from one end of the
528 building to the other...
529 VS: Yeah, if you'll remember that, because you were there when I was doing that, so...
530 ES: That is ... that would be so frustrating!
531 VS: What year was that, that you came? Was that, 4 years ago ...?
532 ES: What was it, like 2 years ago? More than that. I can't remember.
533 VS: Maybe more... Anyway, any other questions?
534 ES: Well, we got through all those, but I think, maybe you didn't ...
535 VS: One thing that's really important, you won't have a choice if you teach in a public school,
536 but you will in a private school, is to choose a textbook.
537 ES: Oh! Okay yeah, that is actually ...
538 VS: They were using Jenney when I started. Some students, some teachers swear by
539 *Wheelock*. That's probably what you used.
540 ES: [I have used it...]
541 VS: I have never taught out of *Wheelock*, but I have tutored out of it. The book I chose, and it
542 was a parent that was a Latin teacher at one of the middle schools suggested it. I liked it
543 partly because of the the access to helpful things on the internet. You know the little
544 games that I told you about before. I taught out of *Cambridge* for a long time. I did not
545 like *Cambridge*. There's supposed to be a new one out called *Latin for the New Millennium*
546 and that,
547 ES: Huh, not heard of that....
548 VS: Well I heard people complaining about *Cambridge*, because they say if you're trying to, you
549 know, if the goal is to get these kids to AP, that Cambridge does not do a very good job of
550 giving them the vocabulary that they're gonna need for Virgil and Caesar.
551 ES: Oh. Ok

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552 VS: And there's one called *Latin for the New Millennium*, I think, that does a better job of that.
553 One thing you might want, to get on somebody's mailing list. There is a publishing house
554 that specializes in the classics called Bolchazy-Carducci. Do you know them?
555 ES: Yeah.
556 VS: Do you get their catalogue?
557 ES: Yeah, I'm not on their list, but I was familiar with them when I got my bachelors, but yeah...
558 VS: Okay. You probably ought to just get on their list. They'll mail you catalogues for free.
559 You know, they'll be thrilled to, or you can access them online, too.
560 ES: Oh, right, yeah.
561 VS: I just, you know, they come out with new stuff all the time.
562 ES: I can never remember how to spell ...
563 VS: B O L C H A Z Y C A R D U C C I
564 ES: I know it's, you know, Italian. So I think I used oxford. *The Oxford Latin*, when I was in
565 college.
566 VS: I have, yeah, I have never been familiar with that.
567 ES: What I have also just found, it's not that new, it's the the *Lingua Latina*, I always... *Latina*
568 *Lingua*? ... but it, it's just a different approach to it.
569 VS: Yeah I'm not familiar with that one either. One thing that's kinda trendy is that spoken, which
570 I don't, I can't and don't do is this conversational Latin. That's tough for me. Have you
571 heard of that...?
572 ES: Conversational? Yeah, I know it's become more of a... more popular, I know when I've
573 done research on it. I am not sure I could do it. I love the idea in terms of teaching, but
574 I'm not sure I could teach it, because I don't know Latin, you know, I'm not used to ...
575 VS: Yeah, if you didn't learn it that way. And one of the things, frankly one of the advantages of
576 the old-fashioned just translation is to teach them how to take a problem and break it
577 down.
578 ES: Yeah.
579 VS: You know. To look at a look at a sentence and and analyze it. They are not doing that,
580 but—and a real disadvantage is that middle schools are not very good anymore at
581 teaching English grammar.
582 ES: Yeah.
583 VS: They don't know the terminology, they don't understand and they don't like it. They don't
584 like analyzing grammar.
585 ES: In my reading in secondary school class we read several articles that it's become more
586 prevalent that we need to get back into teaching English and, both at the elementary level
587 and at the you know high school level, junior high and high school level, because students
588 are not getting there the content area terminology. They just, you know, the teachers
589 assume they already know how to read, but they don't necessarily teach them how to read.
590 I had not really thought about that, but it's true. You sort of assume that kids know what
591 the terminology is or, you know. It makes sense, but because I know we didn't really focus
592 on it too much after elementary school, but it – one of the arguments for doing Latin or
593 Greek is that it helps you—I know it helped me—helps in literacy, because you're actually
594 learning to figure out the, you know, grammar and for me, yeah, I took it in junior high,
595 elementary school and junior high, but it didn't really stick until I took Latin—and maybe
596 because, you know, of the Accusative case. You know, like, right. For me it was like, hey,
597 look! A Nominative case, Accusative case. For me it visually made more sense and I know

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598 that in England there's a whole association that's starting to have literacy using Latin as
599 the base for teaching kids how to read and understand and as you said, breaking the
600 sentence down and analyze it. They're just not doing that.

601 VS: Yeah, I'm not familiar with that, but it seems like it would be a good idea.

602 ES: Yeah, it does. That is interesting that you say that. So it's been more and more that kids
603 have been not able, like when they're coming into the high school level, you're finding
604 they're just don't know ... ?

605 VS: Yeah, they don't know English grammar, and they haven't learned to to read phonetically,
606 you know, so ... and that's a problem, because they don't like to look at the end of a
607 word and that's where everything is, you know. So..

608 ES: [laughs] I hadn't thought about that! That is... Yeah, how do you...?

609 VS: You know it's like you look at this word and sort of a general impression. [laughs]

610 ES: It seems like, how do you read without reading the whole thing?

611 VS: So, and like I say, some are just wonderful and they pick it up right away, and some, you
612 Know, some a lot of it depends on their work ethic, frankly.

613 ES: Oh, that's true.

614 VS: I mean, I would think that that is the most important determiner of how, you know,
615 anybody's gonna succeed.

616 ES: Yeah.

617 VS: You know. Will you sit down and stick to it, will you work at it until you understand it, do
618 you care enough to understand it. And some of them don't, and some of them do.

619 ES: Right. Yeah, and yeah, We'd like to get them interested, but yeah that's what all teachers
620 struggle with. Either they do or they don't and there's not much, maybe you might
621 inspire someone, but still... and if you're taking a Latin class—for, for your students, is
622 is Latin required, because it's ... ? Okay. I know some...

623 VS: No and most of us, I don't think any do anymore, and as a matter of fact, I think at Ursuline
624 they discontinued it in favor of Arabic, which is ridiculous, but

625 ES: Wow!

626 VS: but, no, most of our students take Spanish, and French is probably a little bit ahead of Latin
627 and then German. We have those four languages. German just never does pick up much.
628 We have a really great German teacher. Well I don't know how good she is, but she does
629 a lot of stuff. She's really good with technology.

630 ES: Oh, ok.

631 VS: She does a lot of games and stuff, but I'm not really sure how much they really learn, frankly.

632 ES: I know ...

633 VS: She does a lot of culture.

634 ES: Oh, well, yeah. I know that part of the TEKS, you have, even in the foreign language
635 classes, you have to do culture, as well as ...

636 VS: Yeah, you're gonna have to do that, you know, if you teach. I don't have to mess with that
637 too much,

638 ES: Yeah.

639 VS: and I don't, and I wouldn't, I'd retire before I did that, but anyway.

640 ES: [laughs] Yeah.

641 VS: But if you teach in a public school, but that's not that, you know, you can you can lie or just
642 stick it in, you know. See what you have to stick in, and just, you know, when I was
643 in public school you did have to document that on your lesson plans.

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644 ES: Really?

645 VS: Yeah, but it's not that hard. I mean, you know, just put numbers on there—I don't think
646 anybody reads it closely, I don't think. Nobody questions it...

647 ES: Well that's interesting, I have wondered.

648 VS: As long as you have some numbers up there.

649 ES: I know when you submit your lesson plans the afternoon have all the parts, and I'm like I'm
650 not very good at getting all the details. That's really ... but you know obviously for me,
651 because I'm interested—I love Latin, obviously—but I'm also interested in the Roman
652 culture and the whole aspect of why I went into archaeology is, you know, the
653 architecture and the art and stuff. I'm going to be teaching that anyway, so that's
654 cultural and the mythology ...

655 VS: It helps. Then you'd be doing much better than I am in that. I'm weak in that, I think. I'm
656 weak in the history. I'm trying to do better, but ...

657 ES: So, for ... yeah, I don't remember... For the private schools do ... in order for the AP you
658 are still doing, you still have to get the regular, you know, language, culture, history,
659 mythology stuff for the AP, but you don't have the same requirements to do TEKS, right?

660 VS: Right.

661 ES: Ok.

662 VS: and frankly what you need to do when you teach AP, is is to look at the test, see
663 what's the test, which is mostly translation. Although they do have to write an essay.

664 ES: Interesting.

665 VS: Analytical essay, and so yeah you need to look into that.

666 ES: And in and in

667 VS: And there's a lot of well ...

668 ES: Do they have to do composition, or just...?

669 VS: It's not in Latin, no. The essay's analyzing passages from English, usually just compare and
670 Contrast. They'll give two passages from what you've read. Then you have to write an
671 essay. And you can just look at that, and you will before you teach. You know, you have
672 to set up your, you have to get your AP class, what do they call it? Documented. You have
673 to do that and it's a hassle, and what I would suggest, you know, once you get ready to
674 teach is to take a class. They offer them, it's a week long course in just the Latin AP.

675 ES: I think the University of Dallas has it when I've ...

676 VS: They they do sometimes. I've taken it out there.

677 ES: ... in the summer ...

678 VS: Yes, it is in the summer. They're always, well, they have to be for teachers.

679 ES: [laughs] Well, good point. Yeah, that's true.

680 VS: Then I took one a couple years ago at TCU, and I'm thinking about doing it again this
681 summer if the school will pay for it.

682 ES: Is it just to update you on the changes to the AP system?

683 VS: Well, yeah, and just to give you strategies you know, and I've found it very useful, you
684 know, and to show you how AP's graded. It's a money making thing for the college
685 board.

686 ES: Oh. Yeah.

687 VS: They can get they can get college credit, if that's what they're after.

688 ES: I guess I did not know that. I mean, we had AP at my high school, but I didn't ever do it.

689 VS: It was... we didn't have it at my school. So what I took, what I did when I went to

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690 undergraduate was take the CLEP, you know, the test that they give for placement. I
691 didn't get any hours for it, but I got put in a junior class, because I did four years, you
692 know.

693 ES: Right. Yeah, yeah.

694 VS: So...

695 ES: Did they have ... I don't even know when the AP started...

696 VS: I don't know. To be very honest, I don't either, because I was out of schools for so long.

697 ES: Right.

698 VS: but that's ... , you know, there's just a lot of stuff you learn as you go.

699 ES: That's what I have heard! [laughs]

700 VS: Setting up your AP class, getting it whatever they call it nowadays. It's not validated, it's
701 like audited, I think. You have to do what they call an audit and you have to submit it.
702 Actually now you can just kinda look and pick one. They have several sample ones online,
703 and you can just pick one. It's not that much trouble, but what you need to do is go to one
704 of those classes. If you ever are going to have to teach an AP class, you need to do one of
705 those in the summer.

706 ES: Yeah, that's what, I guess, been one of my biggest concerns. I'm okay with Elementary and I
707 wouldn't mind doing AP later, but, you know, once I...

708 VS: Yeah, I didn't start with it, either.

709 ES: [laughs]

710 VS: So, I just started with Latin I and Latin II, but I was having to teach English, too. And that
711 might be if you can find the job in a middle school, or start a program in a middle school.

712 ES: Yeah.

713 VS: ... and then you don't have the pressure of getting them ready for the AP.

714 ES: Yeah.

715 VS: Because I didn't do it for a long time, but I was just lucky that first kid that I taught AP to at
716 lunch. He got a four out of five on the AP, you know.

717 ES: Wow, yeah.

718 VS: but he was just really ... he had the iron butt, to stick to it. He went, he ended up going to
719 Annapolis. He was really good for public school. Great kid.

720 ES: Yeah, that's pretty ... you said, so he only had two years and then he did one year of AP.

721 VS: and he did it at lunch [laughs]

722 ES: [laughs]

723 VS: but it was everyday.

724 ES: Ok.

725 VS: We covered what we had to cover in the *Aeneid*, and that's the thing, he remembered it.

726 ES: Yeah.

727 VS: You know, that's thing, that's the big problem is that you go over all the stuff, you complete
728 the curriculum, but can they remember what they translated. You do need to, just, you
729 need to take that course, or at least get a

730 ES: Yeah.

731 VS: get a, before you do that, but start, if you can, start start with four levels if you can possibly
732 help it.

733 ES: Right. Well, I would guess I probably will be part-time. I might just do two, I have no
734 idea at this point.

735 VS: Yeah, you know, you just have to see what's available when you're ready. How long do

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736 you think it's going to take you more at school? When are you going to get out of school?
737 ES: It's a two-year program. So this is my first year, and then next year I'll be doing the
738 ... I think I have one or two more classes, but then I have the student teaching and they
739 have what's called a practicum, which is actually a term of sitting in, and then there's
740 another class where you sit in like three days a week and then once a week you go in and
741 talk—there's a class on the UD campus and I guess you're sort of analyzing things. I'm
742 not entirely sure, I've just talked to students who are taking it. So, I know those are two
743 of our requirements. In which case, I will have to be balancing when I will be in the
744 classroom and when I'll be in my own classes. And that'll be next year and I'm hoping to
745 finish, you know, it should be two years. I'm looking forward to it. It's just been a long
746 process, because it had been so long since I did Latin. I think I probably told you. So, I
747 had three years of Latin and then general education requirements, because I didn't do my
748 bachelors in Texas.
749 VS: Oh, ok.
750 ES: So, I didn't have ... American History wasn't required, I had European History and I then did
751 have to take a politics class. I am thankful, unlike the undergrads, that I didn't have to
752 take a Texas History.
753 VS: That's actually interesting
754 ES: [laughs] For the graduate program I still had to take you know some of the gen eds, that I'd
755 not ever taken: a math class I took this summer... Took three years to get into a two-year
756 program, but oh, well. You know it's good, because I wouldn't have wanted to teach, you
757 know. I knew I didn't know Latin well enough and I needed to get re-familiar with it and,
758 you know. So it just wasn't as much of an issue.
759 VS: Yeah.
760 ES: Yeah. I'm hoping in the next, you know, I guess I will probably start looking next year more
761 in depth what schools have Latin where, but everybody I've talked to says it's, you know—
762 well, ok, I'm in the classics where I know people who teach Latin, so ...
763 VS: There's usually job openings. Are you, are you willing to go other places besides the Dallas
764 area.
765 ES: Yeah, that's the thing.
766 VS: Because are openings all over the country and all over Texas.
767 ES: Right.
768 VS: And they start coming in about probably about April.
769 ES: Oh, that's good to know. Ok. April. I guess I should start looking here.
770 VS: Some of them, though, sometimes they'll advertise for like a long-term sub, someone's having
771 a baby or a surgery or something.
772 ES: Right. Yeah. I did talk about doing subbing for a while, like that's what Ron did for years,
773 but I can't. I don't do well with disorganization and like out of the blue stuff, just would
774 drive me crazy. So if I could do like a long-term you, know, three months
775 VS: Yeah.
776 ES: At one school and I could get to to know the kids and I'd know what my schedule is,
777 it would be much easier for me than doing, you know, history one week or one day,
778 then art the next day.
779 VS: Most of those are just you know baby-sitting, because the teachers [are supposed to leave
780 stuff, but they don't] ...
781 ES: Yeah, it's true.

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782 VS: ... sometimes there's discipline problems.
783 ES: Yeah. Alright. Well I, this has been great.
784 VS: I hope you got all the information you needed.
785 ES: Yeah, well we didn't really have... these were just the questions that I came up with, but I
786 really, uh...—she wants us to just get an idea of the teaching, you know, maybe things
787 have changed a bit. Like one of the, we could choose to talk to either a teacher or just
788 somebody who has had a pretty, you know, wasn't a teacher, but just about their education
789 experience just to compare with our own. So, it should...
790 VS: That's pretty broad!
791 ES: [laughs] Yeah! This has been...
792 VS: Well, let me know, you know, if you have any other questions you can e-mail me, or if you
793 think of anything that I need to elaborate on, send me an e-mail.
794 ES: Right, yeah. After I get and look.
795 VS: I hope I gave you enough to write your paper.
796 ES: It's been pretty helpful. Yeah, I didn't write a whole lot, but I figure I'm going to be going
797 back and listening. So... I'm not very good—I'm usually very good at writing things, um
798 but I'm always afraid I'm going to miss something. One of the reasons why I'm
799 having it recorded.
800 VS: One thing I didn't tell you, when you interview, the first thing you need to tell them is that
801 you love kids. They are way more interested in that most of the time.
802 ES: Really?
803 VS: Oh, yes, and that's important!
804 ES: Yeah.
805 VS: So if you don't love kids you're going to learn to really fast. [laughs] A lot of people don't like
806 teenagers and a lot of people don't like middle school kids. Yeah, I don't like middle
807 school kids, I don't think I could teach in the middle school.
808 ES: Yeah, I'm not sure I could.
809 VS: But high schoolers, high schoolers are different. You know it'll depend on and frankly you
810 get better support discipline-wise from some schools than others from the administration,
811 that's important. To get discipline support from the administration.
812 ES: Do they ... I know there's been a new—and the support reminds me—here has been a
813 trend and I haven't even heard about it in any of my classes, but what do they call it? Yeah,
814 team teaching? I don't know if that's really possible for a Latin teacher.
815 VS: Uh, you know, you could. I don't know, the things that I've heard it in, that they actually at
816 my school way back in the 60s started.
817 ES: Really?
818 VS: Yes. It was a two period class taught by two teachers. American Lit and American History.
819 ES: Well that makes sense.
820 VS: My daughter went to Greenhill and they had something like that in European History, where
821 they would do the – or maybe in Ancient History. It was in Ancient History, where they
822 would do the history, the architecture, and art, the literature and, you know, so that's the
823 kind of thing that I've heard of with team teaching. Latin might work with Ancient History,
824 ES: Yeah,
825 VS: but I don't know. Most of the time when you do — what was I gonna say? – it's broader than
826 that.
827 ES: Yeah.

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828 VS: So, I don't know what would work. Maybe in art

829 ES: [Yeah, that's a good point.]

830 VS: if you can get the school to do it; and it it takes more effort than you would imagine to get a
831 new class into the curriculum.

832 ES: [laughs] Yeah.

833 VS: It's ... you have to propose it and write – Oh, this one teacher is trying to get a PE class
834 called Circus Acrobats or something, I don't know. It sounds like a dream, but I think ...
835 it'd be fun, you know, unicycling and juggling, you know, which would be. She said, well
836 it could be crossover. It could be Fine Arts or PE and theoretically it could be, but it's ...
837 I'm thinking she's gonna have a hard time getting it through the curriculum council or
838 whatever they have and it may be even harder in public schools to get a new class.

839 ES: Yeah, I'm not sure.

840 VS: I don't know who you have to go through in public schools, if it's the school board or
841 individual. Individual schools can do it. I know we one time, we had a class of the
842 bible as literature which I thought would be great, but as an elective. It didn't last very
843 long, so but you really understood it. Well, anyway, well, if you have any other questions
844 just email me and I'll try to email you back the answers.

845 ES: Yeah, I sure will. I do try to email frequently, but not always.