

**Chapel Hill Public Archive  
Pandemic Stories Project  
recording with Gabby La Mantia**

*Narrator: Gabby La Mantia*

*Date: July 17, 2022*

*Location: Chapel Hill Public Library*

*Interviewer: Luis Melodelgado*

*Additional Attendees: Mandella Younge*

**Luis Melodelgado 00:00** It was funny. I was thinking I would ask us to close our eyes and to put our feet on the ground and to think that we are traveling through time and that we are going through space. And--close your eyes.

**Gabby La Mantia 00:15** Okay.

**Luis 00:16** All right?

**Gabby 00:17** Um-hm.

**Luis 00:17** And so we are traveling through time. We are bound to Earth. And there is a speck. You see it from up above, and there's a speck, and it's getting bigger and bigger as you approach. And it so happens that you feel that you are going to enter into that space. And then just as you are entering that space, you recognize that that space is you. You are that speck out there. And then you open your eyes. You're here. Hey! [Laughter]. So anyway, is there anything that you want to initiate with on your recollection of the pandemic?

**Gabby 01:12** I think, you know, such a big part of it, being a teacher, was that realm of how I had to explain things to the kids, of what was happening at the same time as trying myself to understand what was happening.

**Luis 01:32** Before you go there, let me tell you that my name is Luis Melodelgado. That I work with the Chapel Hill Public Library, and that we are in the history lab.

**Gabby 01:43** Yes.

**Luis 01:43** And we are recording for the Pandemic, the Chapel Hill Pandemic Story. We are with Mandella Younge, which is my coworker. And can you remind us who you are and et cetera?

**Gabby 01:56** Sure. So, my name is Gabby La Mantia, and I work here in the summers at the Chapel Hill Public Library in the Youth and Family Services department. During the school year

I'm a teacher at McDougle Elementary School and I teach second grade.

**Mandella Younge 02:14** And, what, it's like 1:05 PM on July, what 13th? Fourteenth--?

**Gabby 02:23** --Fourteenth?

**Mandella 02:24** Ooh. Yikes. Okay--

**Luis 02:26** Fourteen.

**Mandella 02:26** --July 14, 2022. Okay.

**Luis 02:30** Good. So you were saying about your relationship with the pandemic and your work.

**Gabby 02:38** Yes. So a primary part of the pandemic for me was teaching through it. And again, trying to understand it myself and what was going on, especially at the very earliest stages, and convey it to my students in a way that they understood. And then all of the transitions that we went through with how we were learning. Virtual learning, coming back, in person, but only a little bit in person and all that. So it was quite, quite an experience. It has been trying to navigate that as well as possible with seven year olds.

**Luis 03:25** Do you think that the biggest part of your identity is what do you do for a living?

**Gabby 03:32** I feel like it is. I feel like it is just, I think because--I am far from perfect and I'm learning all of the time--but so much of what I think about and so much of what I want to learn and do has to do with teaching, has to do with my kids. And trying to always think of new ideas and activities and what worked well and what didn't. And so I think that is a big part of, like you said, kind of my identity. I hadn't really thought about it like that, but I like how you put that, and I feel like that's true.

**Luis 04:09** So how was the beginning of the pandemic for you? What--

**Gabby 04:14** Yeah, so, when I first--so I was teaching again, second grade, and interestingly enough, it was the same group of kids I had had the year before. So I kept them. I had them for first grade. And then my principal had asked me if I could keep the same group of kids for second grade. And I did. Then, lo and behold, March 2020 comes. So we had been together for a very long time, which was beneficial because we knew each other so well, me and the kids. And I remember hearing the kids--so the kids started asking me questions. And they said, "There's something--my mom or dad said something. Like, people are getting sick, but it's far away." And they were just frightened. They didn't know what was going on. And we were getting some emails from our principal and administration saying, have the kids wash their hands more frequently and don't cause big alarm. Right? But have them wash their hands. And that was kind of it. And then, a few days after that, we got called into a meeting. And it was about how we *may*

close school temporarily. And I remember sitting in the room and kind of looking at each other and thinking, wait a minute, what's going on? I thought this was a couple of people got sick in Europe somewhere. You know, we were so--we had no idea what the reality of everything was at that time. And so they said that that's what may happen. They said we may close for about two weeks. We're still waiting on the district to say. In that event, you guys will have to put together a work packet for the kids to work on at home and then we'll be back. And that's that. And that is not at all what happened. [Laughs] And so then--again, I remember sitting with my friend and we were kind of laughing. We're like, they're not going to let us out for two weeks. There's no way [laughs]. This is, you know--we're going to be back tomorrow. No big deal.

**06:37** And then I think it was actually the very next day. We started hearing all of this, "So school is closing and we're not coming back." And we were all so confused and what's going on? And a big part of working with kids is remaining- keeping a calm energy. Because they can read and they can feel if you are frightened and stressed and then it's not good. So I remember explaining to them what a virus is, to the best of my ability. And trying to put it in just scientific terms. So the- and I remember telling them, at least for me, if you understand something, it's not as frightening. If you don't understand it, that's when it becomes very scary. And so I tried to explain what a virus is and how they spread and things like that, and we're going to be at home learning for a while just to be safe. But none of us knew what that looked like at the time. At all. And then we ended up just all going home. And thinking, we have no idea what's going to happen (laughs). The kids didn't have computers with them. We had nothing. And so some friends and I went--they needed to get lunches for the kids. Because a fair amount of kids rely on school to have their meals. And so we certainly didn't want them to be without, you know, breakfast and lunch, with school being closed. So we went into the cafeteria and we bagged lunches. And we would do hundreds of lunches and go and deliver them. And this was all in the two, three week time period of we have no idea what else to do. We couldn't make lesson plans because we didn't know what we were planning for. We had absolutely no idea what was going to happen. And then they ended up saying, "Okay, here's the plan. You guys are teaching remotely." And we had to figure out what that meant. And get kids laptops and hotspots for internet, because a lot of them didn't have internet access. And call and come to pick up laptops at school. And we finished out the year as best we could, not knowing what it would look like in the fall.

**09:12** And then come fall, we stayed fully remote. And I taught that way until almost exactly a year to the day. It was very interesting, because it was March 2021, it would have been, that--watching a lot of school board meetings and things and they were trying to figure out what to do and when to do it. And then some of the kids came back. And I had ten in my class, and the other six stayed home. And so--yeah sorry.

**Mandella 09:45** Can I interject--

**Gabby 09:46** Of course, yeah.

**Mandella 09:47** --real quick.

**Gabby 09:48** I'm sorry if I'm saying too much. (Laughs) Okay.

**Mandella 09:49** No, no. I just want to go back to the moment where they said, "We're going to be doing remote learning."

**Gabby 09:57** Yes.

**Mandella 09:57** And thinking about that exact time. What was your reaction to that? Like, emotionally--

**Gabby 10:03** That's a great question.

**Mandella 10:05** --and also what you were thinking?

**Gabby 10:06** Yeah, so I remember thinking, gosh, I've taught a while, but I've certainly never taught like this. And so I was nervous, I really was. And I was trying to prepare for what to bring home in order to make their learning accessible. So I went into my classroom and did a quick mental inventory of what do I need to bring home? So I had big poster paper, math manipulatives, books, just anything that we would use day to day. I remember feeling very unsure about the whole thing. But also I knew I had to do the best I could for the kids. And calling them was really interesting because it was maybe two, three weeks into everything, you know, them being at home, and just hearing their little voices on the phone, because they, they had no idea what was going on. They just knew we weren't in school. And so trying to explain to them, "So you know that computer? You're going to go on the computer, and I'm going to be there. And you're going to get to see our other friends, and they're going to be on the computer. We can't be in our class." And it was a lot of like, "Why can't we just be in school? Why can't we be there? I want to see everybody." And it was trying to explain that we weren't allowed and why. But also not trying to cause panic. So that was tough.

**Luis 11:45** That's Gabby the teacher, right?

**Gabby 11:48** Say again? I'm sorry.

**Luis 11:50** That--what you're describing is Gabby the teacher, right?

**Gabby 11:53** Yeah.

**Luis 11:53** How are you in your personal life? How was your--you know you discovered all of a sudden, all of this is thrown into you.

**Gabby 12:01** Yeah

**Luis 12:03** So what, your personal life? How was it affected?

**Gabby 12:08** So, it was tricky to try and just figure out how to best do everything. One way that my per- so my personal life was definitely affected in the sense that my dad--who I hadn't talked to for years, we didn't have a very good relationship unfortunately--but he ended up passing. He got COVID. And he had other health complications and things too, but that was a big factor, of course, for him going to the hospital and eventually passing away. So that was probably the biggest part.

**Mandella 12:52** And when did that happen?

**Gabby 12:53** It happened August of 2021. Yes. On a much, much, much, obviously smaller scale, just, I think what everybody else probably went through. Of you can't go to a restaurant. You can't--if you're going to go--trying to figure out what was open. Who you should see. And I remember like, one or two friends and I, once we tried to figure out like, is this okay for us to like get takeout food? We would go to one of our friend's house and it was just me and like, two other girls who weren't leaving their house ever either. And we would just hang out and talk and try and maintain some semblance of normalcy.

**Luis 13:54** I'm going to go back to your father. Right. Was it in North Carolina? And you said you weren't in touch. Did it change your relationship with him because of COVID?

**Gabby 14:10** So he was in Pennsylvania. That's where I'm from originally. I'm from Pittsburgh and he was still there. It--so that all happened very, very quickly, actually. He was admitted into the hospital and my younger brother who still lives in Pittsburgh--who didn't have a good relationship with him either. It's a very, very long story. We'd need all 7 hours left of the library to--(laughs). But I'm not gonna do that. But he, he called me and said what was going on. And he went to go and visit with him and it was maybe a day or two later he passed. It was very, very quick. And I was thinking back on the last phone conversation that he and I had had, my dad and I had had. And there had been many, many, many that had not been good. But that last one happened to be a good one. And so I had some sense of closure, I guess that it did happen to be in a good spot for both of us. But yeah. That was definitely a big factor.

**Luis 15:36** Do you think that changed something in your life?

**Gabby 15:41** (Sighs) I would say for sure, thinking more mindfully and intentionally about when you, when you leave someone, whether it's on the phone or whatever, to try and make it a good and positive thing, you know? Because I think we all know of course, on some level, that it could be the last time you ever talked to somebody or it could be the last time you ever see them. But it really solidified that, I think for me. Of gosh, I'm so glad that it was okay. I think that was probably my, one of my biggest takeaways from it. Yeah.

**Luis 16:31** I'm thinking about the role of a teacher as a parent, right? Maybe that's what I was thinking. Do you think you- the pandemic changed you a little bit? Or not? Or can you give us examples?

**Gabby 16:54** Oh gosh, yeah, I think so. I think so as a teacher, but also just as a person, being okay with the unknown (laughs) is a big thing that I think I had to adapt more to. I'm a planner. I like to know what's coming next, and then after that, and then after that. Right? I like to plan things out and have a clear picture. And with this, there was no clear picture. We were all, I think, in a way of just we don't know what's going to happen next. And trying to shift mentally to being okay with unknowns and being flexible with change, because that was a big part, too, of just everything can change very quickly. You don't know how or when, but it's probably going to change (laughs). And so I think that, primarily. Yeah.

**Luis 17:57** Did you leave any hobbies behind? Did you pick up any new ones?

**Gabby 18:06** So I didn't really leave any behind, but I pick- I did pick up a few new. So I liked to paint before the pandemic, but I didn't do it as often, and I painted quite a bit more during the pandemic. I also did only one--this hobby didn't stick--but like embroidery. It was okay. (Laughter) I tried. It was okay (laughs). And--so, years ago--I like to play musical instruments. I played in high school, middle school and elementary school, actually. And so I decided I miss playing an instrument. And so I'm currently teaching myself ukulele, which is not going great, but I'm trying, and it's fun. So I started that during the pandemic, and I'm still keeping up with it pretty well.

**Luis 19:00** I see those activities as moments in which you are a creator right now. What I mean is you are on your own and you are responsible for your time--

**Gabby 19:14** Yes.

**Luis 19:14** --and for the things you do, right? And you said kept- you are still keeping that. So part of that lifestyle that came out during the pandemic you think is still with you?

**Gabby 19:32** I think so, yeah. That's definitely another--I've always loved to have some form of creative outlet. But I think you're right. Like, having more time, especially just time at home, of, you know, how can I channel--I want to do something creative. How can I channel that? Or like, it kind of freed up my mind, maybe, from scheduling things of, I don't have a schedule right now, (laughs) so how can I use my time in a productive way and something that I enjoy?

**Luis 20:14** Do you think the people you frequent, do you see that reflected on them? Do you think your children, for instance? Did they learn a little bit of that? Do they have any of those consequences? Good consequences?

**Gabby 20:30** Yeah. No, that's a good way to--it's a good question, too. Yes and no. So part of, thinking on the remote learning aspect of it, of how it affected some kids and how it affected others, and that was one part of it. So, for example, one little boy, he and his dad--and this was the first spring we were remote--he and his dad did basically a science show for us almost every day. And they would put up these little video clips of them in their kitchen doing science

experiments. And he carried that through with him for quite a while, and he loved doing that. And he really thrived in that learning environment.

**Luis 21:18** The father or the children? The child.

**Gabby 21:20** The child primarily (laughter). But I will say the dad, he was very excited to be, I think, actively included. Because he had a job that wouldn't really allow him to come into the classroom. But then when he was working from home he could. He could be included in the learning. But at the- on the other end there were kids who did not thrive in the digital environment at all. Even when--you know we would make sure they had access to internet and as much as we could take obstacles away. But at the same time there were some we couldn't. They might not have family members at home with them to help with assignments and they desperately missed peer interaction. And so you could see them really have a hard time and really, really struggle. So I think yes and no to your question. Some for sure. I saw a lot of musical instruments come on the screen. Art projects they had done at home, building things with Legos and- because they were able to do that at home when other kids, no. You know. So it just depended, yeah.

**Luis 22:47** Part of the pandemic experience, as I heard it related to me and maybe as I saw it--this is a morbid question. It had to do with death. Even if you didn't see in front of you, there was that cloud, that threat, right.

**Gabby 23:08** For sure. Yeah.

**Luis 23:09** Do you think, your peers, were they affected? Do you think your relationship with them somehow reflect that?

**Gabby 23:20** So I think it probably--well, yes. So I think times that we were together, the bit that we could be, we would try and just really enjoy each other's company, and maybe not go down that path. But all that to say, sometimes things would come up in conversation of family members were sick or they're really worried. I have a good friend whose mom had- she was going through cancer treatment and she was very concerned about her being affected. And I would listen to *Democracy Now!*, the- you know. And they would talk about the death toll and it's, yeah, a lot to process. And like you said, even if it doesn't affect you directly.

**Luis 24:21** So you grew up in--

**Gabby 24:24** Pittsburgh.

**Luis 24:25** --Pittsburgh, right? Which is really pretty, right? I love the mountains. (Laughter) It's fantastic. Now you live in Chapel Hill. How do you describe Chapel Hill?

**Gabby 24:38** I very much enjoy Chapel Hill. I think it is geographically very pretty. The people are diverse--the people I've encountered, at least from different places and have different

perspective on things, which is really, really nice. A welcoming community overall in my experience. I really do enjoy it, I do.

**Luis 25:05** Do you think it was a good thing to be in Chapel Hill during the pandemic?

**Gabby 25:13** Yes.

**Luis 25:14** And how would you say was good?

**Gabby 25:18** I think some of the--so having talked with my younger brother that I had mentioned before, he being in Pennsylvania, mask mandates were different. Less restrictive, and that to me made me give pause. I was very worried about him too, because he is a counselor in a prison. And so he was around a lot- he had to be in close proximity with a lot of people. And a lot of people did end up getting COVID and he would just update me a little bit about that, but that was very hard for him, too. And I think being in a school system too, that prioritized safety for the kids and for the staff was really important. And I think Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools did their best job of what they could with that.

**Luis 26:21** Do you- did you make any--how did you strengthen your relationships with your current networks? Did you make any- did you expand it or it shrank to a level that you feel comfortable?

**Gabby 26:40** So relationships--which--?

**Luis 26:44** Friends.

**Mandella 26:45** Like interpersonal. How were those impacted--

**Luis 26:48** --your peers.

**Gabby 26:49** Yeah.

**Mandella 26:49** --or not. By the pandemic.

**Gabby 26:51** A lot of my friends stayed my friends through the whole thing. We were there from the very beginning, but I think that helped to strengthen it, too, because we got to see how, how we were each affected, and had the sense of camaraderie, I guess. It also helped us understand our students' families more, because we would do the home visits. And that was very eye opening as well. Very, very eye opening. To see them in their home.

**Mandella 27:31** Sorry, real quick, can you describe what the home visits were like?

**Gabby 27:36** Yes, so we--

**Mandella 27:37** or like, what that means, I guess.

**Gabby 27:38** Yeah. No, no no. So it was mostly when we were delivering lunches. And so it was my friends and I who were doing it. And so it helped us in the sense of having that--we were together and we had a common goal and we were happy to help. And so that helped kind of lift our spirits a bit. But then, sometimes we would go and deliver a lunch, and you could see some of the living conditions that didn't seem to be very good for the kids. In regards to overall cleanliness, and some of them, you don't want to be invasive, of course, but you can kind of see it's dark, they're in there by themselves, maybe watching other siblings, so happy to see anyone. And it was hard, it was really hard to see. And then at the same time, when I was teaching remote and you could see the background of some other kids' houses--so I didn't go to them--but you could see the difference of the affluent families versus kids who, they may not eat if we don't bring them lunch. So that was, you know, it was eye opening. It was. It was.

**Mandella 29:11** How do you think this experience, living through this pandemic, has shaped you as a teacher?

**Gabby 29:21** Definitely having to be flexible in how you deliver lessons. And recognizing, for sure, the social/emotional wellbeing of the kids. And I feel like I've always done a fair job of that. Like, I've always tried to be considerate of that. But even now, more of, academics are going to happen, but you need to be in a good physical and mental space to be able to learn well. And if that's not happening, you're not going to learn. You're not going to learn well. And so when we went back into the classroom, I was thinking a lot about how it was such a change for them and how they've been through a lot and they might need a little bit more downtime or a little bit more of a creative outlet. And so just how I've structured some things has been a little different. Trying to be understanding and patient, and teaching them to be patient with each other is a big thing. And I think there was a shift, at least I seem to notice it, with some of the kids demeanors pre- and post- pandemic. And part of it was, I noticed--and teaching the same age range. It just seemed like the kids who had lived through the pandemic, primarily were a bit more cynical, I guess. And I think it had to do with--and this is just I'm guessing on my part--but I think a lot of them saw their parents struggle a lot and maybe were frustrated with things. And so kids, of course, emulate behavior that's modeled and I think it was just--and I don't blame them--but like having a little bit of a short fuse. And I could see kids say back what they've been told. And I could see that they were not as forgiving maybe with some kids. Sharing was we had to go back and teach a lot of because they had been by themselves for so long, they didn't have to really share (laughs) much of anything. Cooperative learning, I had to go back and teach a lot of. And we got there, we did. But it was a shift. It was. I could see a difference of them kind of automatically thinking someone's out to wrong them. And I think maybe it also had to do with a lot of just imagery they saw in the media and things that they were hearing about all the time. Things are bad, things are scary, you know, and they internalized it. A little bit of like distrust of just a lot of different things. But they've been very, very, very flexible because they've had to be.

**Luis 32:35** Do you think education as an institution--or do you think there was a change, do you feel a change from that? What you're--one thing is the classroom, but the other thing is what

society expects from you, or probably that's too big.

**Gabby 32:56** No, that's- yeah. I had some families who were very receptive and very thankful once they saw teaching actually happening. So I think maybe sometimes people might have one idea of what school is like, oh, you're babysitting (laughs). And then when they saw active teaching all day, and then we would get emails, "Oh my gosh, they learned so much. You really do-" because it would be every single day, they would see. And so there was a lot of good and positive that came from that element of, wow, I didn't know, that's a really cool way to teach that math concept, or oh my gosh, they couldn't read and now they can. This is amazing. But then at the same time, you do have the flip side of when we taught--they called it hybrid. So when some kids came back in person and some kids were learning at home. That was, I think, one of the most difficult elements. Because you were trying to be fully engaged with the kids who were in front of you, but then you have six at home that you also need to be fully engaged with (laughs). And that was really tough. And I think, going through that, some higher-ups, whether it be district or state level, were impressed and happy with how things went. And I think others maybe now come to expect, oh, well, you handled it, so you can handle all of these other crazy things we're going to throw at you (laughs).

**34:51** There was also a little bit of a shift, I noticed, with what we were told as teachers. When everybody first went remote, there was a big, big message to us of, just do what you can. Focus on social/emotional wellbeing. Do what you can. Give yourself grace. That was big. And then a couple of months later, well, no no no. You need to get these kids at proficiency. And no no no. Why are these test scores not looking good? And so it was, wait a second, (laughs) nothing changed. Only a little bit of time has passed, but our expectations were definitely- there were some things that were shifted and that's been a hard thing to figure out how to do well too. Because the curriculum did not change, but the kids have very much changed. And so trying to bring those together has been hard. It really has.

**Luis 35:53** Gabby, are you a sports person? Did you pick up any of that? Maybe your health? What was your experience of the physical being in the, amidst the pandemic?

**Gabby 36:11** So I have a good friend--I've always been pretty physically active and playing sports and things. I have one friend who taught an online class that is--it's called High Fitness. And it's like a cross between aerobics and Zumba kind of thing. But she would do Zoom classes. And it was a way for us to see each other on the screen. It was a lot of fellow teachers, but some of their friends too. And help her financially because we would pay her for her classes. And that was a hobby she had picked up during the pandemic, was learning the--because there's like choreographed--it was a song and then the movements. So she was learning that, and we were benefiting from it. So we would do her fitness classes every week. She hasn't done them super recently, which I'm sad, I want her to come back. (Laughs) But it was very fun.

**Luis 37:14** What was your favorite soundtrack?

**Gabby 37:16** Oh my gosh. I love--I know it's so silly--but I love any songs that are from the mid

to late '90s. I think, because that was like when I was a middle schooler, (laughs) and so it holds like a special nostalgic place in my heart. So anytime there would be things like that, I would love it.

**Luis 37:41** Did you watch much movies? Do you remember anything of that?

**Gabby 37:46** Some, yes. I would watch some things on, like, Netflix, like *Stranger Things*. I really liked the show. They just came out with a new season, actually. Not a ton of TV, but definitely some. And I have friends who they would send all kinds of recommendations in like a group text. "Have you seen this? You need to watch this. You need to watch this." But a lot of them are into, like, true crime things, which is great, but it's not big for me. I don't know, I (laughs) I get too frightened (laughs).

**Mandella 38:24** I'm curious a little bit about your mental and emotional health. Because you've talked a lot about how you tried to receive your kids at school, but what--how do you think you managed your own mental health and emotional health during this time?

**Gabby 38:45** So I think physical health, I--before the pandemic, I had had a little bit of a situation where I was having high blood pressure, and with all of the added stress and uncertainty, I was concerned about that. And I wasn't really sure what to do, but I started taking some--I looked into, like, some herbal remedies and things, and just what I could do. That was actually a big part of why I started getting more physically active as well. To lower my blood pressure. And so like, yeah, taking more, like, supplements and more physically active, I think was a big part of me, physically. And I did finally--it's terrible. I had not been to the doctor in a *long* time. It's, like, embarrassing. But I finally went back and my blood pressure's good. So I was happy about that. (Laughter) Mentally, you know, I think trying to take time to do some grounding exercises of, oh, my gosh, I've been looking at my phone too much, or I need to stop checking emails or whatever, and just sitting. I like to sit outside if possible, and just breathe and look around and just take in nature and sights and sounds. Almost, I guess, meditative in a way. Trying to be more intentional about that. Reading, talking with friends, I think that's what's helped a lot. Yeah.

**Luis 40:47** Health blood pressure, kitchen. (Laughter) What was your experience in the kitchen? With--were you eating, whatever, delivery? Or what do you do?

**Gabby 41:01** I cook, but I'm not great at it. And I also sometimes don't know what to cook. Like, it's not a big hobby of mine. So, yes, some takeout for sure. And had a good repertoire of places that I would go to. Yeah, trying to eat well, but also, you know, sometimes you just got to order some cookies, or (laughs).

**Luis 41:29** So there's no new knives in Gabby's kitchen.

**Gabby 41:34** No. I can't say that there really is, no. No. I have a good friend who was baking a lot. She liked to bake before, but during the pandemic, she would say, "Hey, guys, I made a new

cake." Or three days later, "There's scones." Or, you know, I mean she was baking, baking, baking all the time.

**Mandella 41:55** Well, I do want to note, we're coming up to around the 45-minute mark. So maybe we can start to shift either to questions and things that you want to make sure to answer or talk about, or maybe bring it kind of closer to the present moment in time.

**Gabby 42:15** Yeah.

**Mandella 42:16** Yeah.

**Gabby 42:19** I would say, you know, just overall thinking about everything that's gone on, it's strange because sometimes it feel- even though we're still in it, technically right, sometimes some of the things that we had to do seem like a strange dream almost. Like when, especially when I'm back in school with the kids and they're all around and everything's good, I think back to, wow, there was a time not too long ago when this room was totally empty. And that sometimes I would teach from school. It was empty, but I would teach from school because it helped me put myself more mentally in that space. But that was very, very trying, mentally too, because it was just empty, dark hallways. And especially when the kids weren't on the laptop, it was silent. And I think that was one big takeaway for me. Is it helped me appreciate just being together. Because I so desperately missed kids. Even if they were driving me crazy (laughs), I missed them being in the room. You know? And so I think that was a big takeaway as well. Helped me just, I don't know, reconsider how much I really do enjoy what I do. You know? Even during hard times.

**Mandella 43:57** Is there anything that you hope that we keep from this time?

**Gabby 44:03** Oh, gosh. I really can't think of anything super specific. Other than--oh, actually okay, I just thought of one. So when we would do parent conferences, virtual, that could actually be very helpful for parents who are not able to get off work, but they can step outside and be on their phone for 15 minutes and get an update on their child. That's been very, very helpful.

**Luis 44:38** So is that staying?

**Gabby 44:40** I would--yes. So far it is. So far we've been given permission to give an option for in person or virtual that has actually been very helpful. Yes. I hope that stays.

**Luis 44:56** And. It's a wrap?

**Mandella 44:59** Are you asking me? (Laughter) No--

**Luis 45:01** It's a wrap.

**Mandella 45:01** No, it's not a wrap. It's now--now it's is there anything that we should have

asked you? Are there any questions--

**Gabby 45:07** No honestly, I think--

**Mandela 45:08** --on the sheet that you think that you know, compel you--

**Gabby 45:12** --I really don't--

**Mandella 45:12** --to want to put an answer into the record books of history?

**Gabby 45:15** Yeah, no I think just, you know, having gone through everything that we've gone through and being able to think of how much we've all grown, sometimes in ways we don't even realize. Being a little more patient with each other and understanding that everybody's going through something, I think that's a big takeaway.

**Luis 45:42** Right. I was thinking as a final thing, if you want to send a message into the future: once upon a time, there was something. What would you say to people listening? What was the pandemic? Yeah, something about it, right?

**Gabby 46:04** Yeah. I would say life is short and be as understanding and forgiving and patient with people. I'm telling this to myself too (laughs). As you possibly can, because life really is short, and it's a beautiful thing. And if we can get through this, we can get through a lot of stuff together.