Father McCormick's Stories of Teaching Through the Years

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Rose Schaner: So Fr. Paul if it is alright I am going to be recording you for an interview for my History of American, um, Education class and this will be put into the University of Dallas oral history depository. Are you okay with this?


RS: All right so, um, my questions are kind of, um, over the category of change over time, so I am wondering how come you chose teaching as your profession.

PM: Well it’s like a crawfish, you kind of back into it. You know? And so I was going to be a priest and came to the University of Dallas as a compromise with my par

ents, who weren’t too excited about my being a priest. And so I would go to a Catholic school that I would major in economic or business. They didn’t have business at that time and, um, and so that is what happened. And the economic department, I’m sure it’s still that way today, it’s right down the hall from the education.

RS: Yeah it is. Yes it is.

PM: So I would pass them everyday, but never. You know? And, um, never crossed my mind and then, um, a few years later, um, I discovered a vocation to be a priest here. And, um, I like the idea that priest could live in the community, I always thought a priest living in a parish by himself, feeling lonely. I had a pastor, who was kind of intellectually frustrated, I thought. You know?

RS: Yeah.

PM: And so that made me hesitate on the whole priesthood idea. And when I discovered these guys, uh, they were priest, but they lived in a community. And they teach, so they challenge each other, uh the boys are challenging them. So I thought it was kind of
appealing. And so I wanted to join this group and I’ll do what y’all do. If y’all make fruit cake, I’ll make fruit cake. You know?

RS: Yeah.

PM: But if y’all teach, I have always been a good student. So I had a lot of teachers. And so I wasn’t intimidated by the idea and, um, and so I jumped in and, um. At that time, unlike your brother, who is very involved in the school already.

RS: Yeah.

PM: At that time, the wisdom of that age, was you keep the young monks out of the schools, so they are focused on their spiritual development, discernment. And you didn’t want to get caught up in the craziness of the school. And, um, and so I joined in ’92 and I really didn’t do anything in terms of teaching until after my ordination in ’97. And I came back from Rome, uh, I think it was…July, late July early August. I was ordained on a Saturday, my first mass on a Sunday, and I was thrown in the classrooms on Monday.

RS: Well yeah.

PM: No pedagogy, nothing, nothing.

RS: Yeah.

PM: And at that time, that was the Cistercian way. You swim or you… You sink or you swim.

RS: Yeah.

PM: And um, and I think I had two, a couple things going for me. I think, um, one is, at that time, there were no vocations, not many vocations. Fr. Mark a couple years before was this…

RS: Yeah.
PM: And so I think the kids, and the parents, and everybody understood we got to make this work.

RS: Yeah.

PM: You know? And so I think that everybody was kind of working with me, to kind of, you know? So they don’t drive away the last vocation. And um, and so the teaching was fine. I though, and I mean, it was… you you learn. And the kids were very patient. Uh, it is fun, ironic. That some of the first, the first kids I taught sophomore theology. Uh,

Kassey Lastimosa and Ben Hokey. (3:45)

RS: Oh yeah?

PM: And they saw me at the rawest of moments. You know?

RS: Yeah.

PM: And so if you compare my class then to my class now, change over time.

RS: Yeah

PM: You see, uh, different at that time. I think a lot of us do this. We come right out of college. And we step in and we just start sharing all of that stuff that we acuminated and these kids are like, you know? Right? Um, and but I enjoyed it! I did enjoy it and um I did the sophomores, which is usually kind of an armpit year.

RS: Yeah?

PM: And the eight grade, which is kind of an armpit year. But I enjoyed it and the kids were good. And um, the trick was, I was also a Form Master that year, the first year.

RS: Okay.

PM: We got thrown in with these forty-two, ten year old boys from all different schools, getting to know each other. And uh, some of them had come to my ordination. So they
have seen me, change over time as a priest. And I was at the wedding of one of them on Saturday, which is kind of cool.

RS: Oh wow.

PM: Yeah, it is kind of like a reunion.

RS: Yeah.

PM: Um, and so I taught on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and then the Form Master period. Did you hear about that?

RS: No.

PM: You heard, you know the Form Master system, though?

RS: Yes, yes!

PM: So once a week, the Form Master gets all the boys together. You teach my sections, which is reasonable, twenty in a slide. But once a week you get them all together for mass.

RS: Okay.

PM: Once a week you get them all together for Master period. And there’s no guideline, what you do Form?... Well whatever the Form Master wants to do. You know? So moral theology, you have a curriculum and um religion or Latin or whatever, history, you have a curriculum. Form Master period is whatever you want to do. And so that makes it even harder for a teacher.

RS: Yeah.

PM: And so that very first week, so that very first Friday, my very first week. Um, I had all forty-two of them together in a classroom that was down in the basement. No windows, no natural light.
RS: Yeah.

PM: All closed in. And it was wild. It was really quite a wild and I know. And, and whereas for the older boys we kind of, we got to help them stay, we got to make this work. You aren’t gonna….(trail off.)

RS: Yeah.

PM: And so I remember it. I I tell the story a lot, is um. That was the last, I don’t know who planned the schedule wise. The last period on a Friday is not prime time, anyway, particularly not a boy’s school. And so the Form Master dismisses them. And so we did our little pledge or whatever we do, a prayer. And I dismiss them: “Have a great weekend.” And I walked out of the classroom, walked over to the monastery, hopped in one of those little Toyotas. I drove over to the University of Dallas.

RS: Yeah.

PM: I walked right past the economics department into the education department.

RS: Oh yeah?

PM: And Miss Clodfelter was there. And again, I didn’t know her.

RS: Yeah.

PM: Um because I heard such superb things about her. She was the, you know? And so I walk in, I introduced myself. I said, “You don’t know me. I am a young monk. And uh, I got forty-two little kids and I am looking for a book. Do you recommend a book on classroom management?”

RS: Oh yeah.

PM: And it was like a eh, I don’t want to exaggerate, but this is how I remember it. It was like a Yoda moment.
You know? Did you know who Clodfelter is? I meet her once. Yeah. “What you seek is not found in a book. It must come from within.” Now, that is very profound. Yes. And she didn’t. I don’t think she did. (trail off) And she didn’t. I don’t think she did. (trail off) little curriculum together. You know, then we kind of… I tell you what my, my inspiration was. Is I taught history that year. Okay. And I said, “Well there is forty-two of us, well it is almost like, you know, fifty senators.” Yeah. And so I turned them into, I gave, I gave them each a state. You are going to be a senator of this state. Do a fifteen-page history, do a fifteen page, uh, project, again no pedagogy.
RS: Yeah

PM: Fifteen pages, coming out of grad school that is not much.

RS: Yeah.

PM: And that was really kind if intimidating for them.

RS: Yeah.

PM: Can you image? I didn’t. but not in fairness I had I all arrange. The first page is only an introduction; summarize what you are about to tell me. And it doesn’t have to fill the page, it can be a little, you know?

RS: Yeah.

PM: Second pages I only want the geography. The third page I only want the economic. Fourth page… So it was broken up that way.

RS: Yeah.

PM: And some of those kids wow! They wrote to the state governors and they brought dirt from Arizona. And, and, so some of, theses kids are really.

RS: Yeah

PM: And uh, so that, so I tied my Form Master into my social studies. And I said, “Okay now, we are going to do kind of a practicome in Form Masters. And so you are going to elect a president of the senate.” Josh Hughes (9:12) was elected. And uh, sorry. And um.

RS: Oh wow.

PM: Is, isn’t that something?

RS: Oh, that is awesome.

PM: And you gonna have to… In a sentors rules of decorum, you know? You don’t talk disrespectfully for, you know? And um so.
RS: Yeah, no go ahead.

PM: And so uh, and so Josh was the brainiac of the bunch. And um, he pounded the heck out of that.

RS: Yeah.

PM: And, but it was, it was fascinating. It was fun. And uh, it was fun. And so uh, so I so survived.

RS: Yeah.

PM: Uhm they gave me gray hair, and…

RS: Yeah.

PM: And uh, but there is a special bonding so you… Your first class, our first, you know? So they are educating you, but you are educating them.

RS: Yeah.

PM: And again, this weekend we had eight or nine of us together, and half of them are married, baptized the second kid of one. And uh, they look back on that and discipline was kinda always an issue. And so I came up with the idea, of.. Cuz in P.E. they are running. And so I came up with the idea, “okay we are gonna, you are going to run laps.” You know? In P.E.

RS: Yeah.

PM: And one of the dads calls me a few weeks later. He says “You know I hate to tell you this, Fr. Paul.” Cuz I always hated running.

RS: Yeah, me too.

PM: It was punishment for me. “I hate to tell you this, Fr. Paul, but my kid loves to run.”
RS: Yeah.

PM: It’s not gonna end up working that much. And so, then I came up with, uh, I think they had to write, uh, Psalms.

RS: Oh okay.

PM: Write, write Psalms. Which one? I don’t care which one you pick. Well they figured out pretty quickly that 117, is like two lines.

RS: Is the shortest one?

PM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, so it was trial and error.

RS: Yes, yes.

PM: It was trial and error. And and you got good kids and good families and good fellow faculty members you can learn from. And you’re humble. You’re humble and so I think parents will give you the benefit of the doubt if you’re… and they know you’re trying, you want the best, you care. Uh they can be very patient and understanding.

RS: Yeah.

PM: And they work.

RS: Yeah.

PM: So I guess a long…

RS: Yeah.

PM: So I guess I didn’t choose teaching, it kinda choose me.

RS: Yes. Alright.

PM: It kinda choose me.

RS: And then what about, so have made any major changes or even little changes from that first year to teaching in the future?
PM: Yeah I guess. Um, yeah, yeah, technology has changed.

RS: Yes, yes.

PM: Technology changed. One of my handicaps as a teacher, one of my huge handicaps is my writing is illegible.

RS: Oh okay.

PM: And those poor kids. Those poor kids are so patient. And uh, and sometimes the harder I tried, the worse it is. And so, gosh! Ten years ago… I guess I’ve been at this for twenty years now, but about half way through we had these computer carts, for the projects on the carts.

RS: Oh yes, I remember.

PM: We would wheel it down the hallway. And you could do a PowerPoint. So I learned how to do PowerPoint and and, badly!

RS: Yeah.

PM: And uh, and so that’s a dramatic difference. And I still kinda use that as too much of a clutch, I think. (trail off)

RS: Yeah.

PM: PowerPoint, but. But now you can do a PowerPoint with video and now you can do a PowerPoint with…

RS: Yeah, so many things.

PM: And the kids, yeah you know? I don’t think the comraderie kids really appreciate that PowerPoint as much as those kids who did, who saw the…(tail off) take notes.

RS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah so would you say, um, technology effected your teaching in a negative, or positive way or both?
PM: Both.

RS: Both?

PM: I think positive is uh. There are so many resources now, online.

RS: Um, yes.

PM: And so I think one of the challenges in Theology, it can be a challenge. Uh, not so much if you only teach one or two courses, over the course of eight years. A kid… But eight years, six weeks a semesters of it for an adolescent.

RS: Yeah.

PM: You know, for a sophomore or junior it’s like, Church History what, what really do I care about the Western Schism? You know? I’ll memorize it to get into college and if it will to get me the grade, I’ll get the grade.

RS: Yeah.

PM: Uh, but when I can go online and, and you know? And um, the Patriarch of Moscow was on his way to, uh, Mexico. Francis meet him in Cuba for the first time at the, you know? They never meet.

RS: Yes.

PM: Why is it such an important thing. So relevance. So, so I can show them relevance.

RS: Yeah.

PM: And um, and also music. You know? Or Martin Luther King. I use to, uh, go to the library and use those eight track, not the eight track tapes, the little cassette tapes.

RS: Oh okay, yeah.

PM: You know? And have the kids listen to it. And the sound quality wasn’t very good.

And now. You know? I can, you show them the video.
RS: Yes. Yeah

PM: Along with the sound.

RS: Yes.

PM: And Martin Luther King comes alive. Gosh! So technology that is the positive. The negative, the negative I guess is... Is that it is true that when you are lecturing. When I was lecturing it seemed like going to the board and writing this down and come back and around. That there was more dynamism. The lights were all the way out and more. You know?

RS: Yeah.

PM: Where as, there is the danger when you turn off half the lights and then the PowerPoint.

RS: Yeah.

PM: Uh, and you know? It use to be if you were just talking and writing the kids have to really... Keep up. Whereas the PowerPoint the faster kids. And so um. They kinda zone out or get bored or so.

RS: Yeah.

PM: Yeah, so. And so it, at the same time, now that I am a Headmaster too. I don’t can’t, I don’t do as much as I would like to do in terms of prep.

RS: Yes.

PM: Um, I think I could do, um. And so I can... This is my third year teaching this particular course and so um.

RS: Yeah, so would you say that the amount of technology used in a classroom today is good amount, less, more?
PM: I guess I would like to use the PowerPoint, rely on the PowerPoint less.

RS: Yes.

PM: I do try to always bring in supplemental, original sources to read and have the kids read or I’ll read or. But I do think, uh, it slows down class… (trail off)

RS: Yeah. Um, well back to the first year teachers would you have any tips, um, to give, uh, first year teacher.

PM: Yeah I think, um, mentor. Find a great mentor. Whatever school you are at. Every school has those individuals who get it.

RS: Yes.

PM: And not just in the obstruction, but with the kind of kids in that particular school. And there is a reason why they have been there so long, the reason why they are so successful. Well it’s that…

RS: Yeah.

PM: Trying to figure out that what that is and try and get that from them, um. And that perseverance is tough. The first year if tough. (trail off)

RS: Yeah.

PM: Every quiz is new, every lecture is new, every test is new, every assignment is new.

RS: Yeah.

PM: Maybe not, well the kinks can be anticipated, so just stick through the first couple of years. It’s no fun.

RS: Yeah.

PM: It’s not.

RS: Yes.
PM: Um, but um, but I can’t think. I have said it so many times, what career could you do that could be more rewarding. You know?

RS: Yeah.

PM: And so like when I was at that wedding the other night, I might be over stated, obviously, but they insist that hanging around me, that changed the trajectory of their… You know? They see the world differently.

RS: Yeah.

PM: And, uh, now if you could so that for one or two kids, I mean that’s. 

RS: Yeah.

PM: Uh, what could be more rewarding… (trail off) You know? Engineering, if that is your vocation, I am with you, but you know?

RS: Yeah, it is very beautiful. Yeah, um so how did make that transition from classroom teacher to Headmaster? Were you just like, Fr. Abbot was like you are Headmaster now or do you.

PM: Yeah there just wasn’t very many options. So there was just a of dearth vocations. And uh, so uh, uh it was kind of evident that some point Fr. Denis would have to retire, cannon law. Some point Fr. Peter would have to be abbot and so who was next? I mean there’s not that many options.

RS: Yes.

PM: And so um, I think Denis and Peter seeing the future. You know? Gave me jobs along the way to kinda prepare me for that.

RS: Okay.
PM: So I did everything you could think of doing. I did community service. I did student counsel sponsorship. I did admissions. I was middle school head.

RS: Okay.

PM: Assistant head. And so um, so it was gradual it wasn’t… And um, and Fr. Peter, I think brilliantly, the last couple years of his Headmastership would have a meeting with me every week. And whatever issues can up. We would talk about them, make sure them and um, and so um, it was very smooth in that regard.

RS: So when you were making this slow transition were you also like slowing like losing teaching like subjects or…

PM: Not really.

RS: So you are just adding more onto your plate.

PM: Now again at that time we didn’t have luxury of, you know, fourteen monks in the schools.

RS: Yeah.

PM: You know? And uh, and you will find that out too, whatever school you teach at. That um, budgets are always tight. And so people wear many hats, everybody wears many hats. And uh, and so you are… You teach and! Uh and so I guess that really only changes when I did become Headmaster. So now I am down to, I’m not Form Master any more.

RS: Okay.

PM: And I miss that.

RS: Yeah.

PM: So I am down to one full time class.
RS: Okay.

PM: And uh.

RS: Is that theology?

PM: Theology.

RS: Okay

PM: For juniors

RS: For, okay.

PM: And um, and so that downside of course is I use to always teach in middle school and upper school. And so I knew everybody.

RS: Yeah.

PM: Not just know their name their faces, but I knew them and they knew me. Um now that I am only teaching juniors, this is the last group of kids I had in junior high.

RS: Yeah.

PM: Oh okay.

PM: And so I’ve had them for a semester for four in a half years. And so um, or four and three quarter years and so uh, form now on. So all the other, I work in admissions still, so I know them, but it’s more removed.

RS: Yes, yeah.

PM: Removed.

RS: Yeah um, so what exactly are your duties as Headmaster? And yeah.

PM: Yeah, so it is um, it is kinda like a little executive. Uh, in the sense that the board kinda sets the values and the, you know? Made the trajectory and you are the one who runs the day-to-day operations.

RS: Okay.
PM: And um, and so it’s many different aspects. So um, from facilities to personal, HR to uh development, you know? Um, obviously to hiring and firing, which we don’t do often, thank the Lord.

RS: Yeah.

PM: (trail off) I guess. And then there is the cause admissions part of it. There is, there’s lots of different aspects of it.

RS: Yes.

PM: Which, um, if I had to do it all it would be impossible. Back in the Fr. Denis-days, he use to do it all.

RS: Yeah.

PM: Fr. Bernard kind of inherited that and began to diversify, Fr. Peter and so. So now, I mean, we just incredibly blessed. Financially we can do this. So we have a development director, who I just oversee.

RS: Okay.

PM: And she does the leg work.

RS: Yeah.

PM: And we are at a capital campaign, which I hope we rap it up this year. Uh, and facilities, I got a wonderful facilities manager. (trail off) In terms of um, the academic, wonderful dean of studies. In terms of upper school, got a great upper school reading head. And so I got a great registrar here.

RS: Yes.

PM: And so um, because you know I am just surrounded by very very talented, dedicated, loyal individuals. My jobs is kinda to just keep in touch with them and make
sure that we are all pulling in the same direction. And the board kind of holds me accountable to that.

RS: Okay, so would you ever like go into a classroom and observe other monks or teachers? For fun or…

PM: I should and I need to. So so I really, subsidiarity, right? I, uh, even though I don’t do all the stuff, just overseeing all the stuff takes a lot of time.

RS: Yeah.

PM: So I am meeting constantly. Uh with devision heads or Form Masters or facilities directors or the science building construction, the architectural team.

RS: Yeah.

PM: I’m constitently meeting. Uh, yesterday was a circus of meetings, you know?

RS: Yeah.

PM: And uh, and so I… Conciously, not just cuz of time, but to empower the department heads to be department heads, is uh, that they are required to visit every class once a semester.

RS: Okay.

PM: Ah, if you are a new teacher, under two or three years and then that’s more frequent. Plus you have your mentor visit your class, plus you have your, uh, Form Master sometimes visit the class.

RS: Yeah.

PM: So classes are being visited so I’m. And they report back to me in writing. And so, um, I guess as a cause of that, I have not been in the classrooms as much as I would like to be.
RS: Yeah.

PM: But I can remember saying to myself in December that next semester I’ll gonna really make an effort to visit classes.

RS: Yeah.

PM: And now we are starting the fourth quarter and I really want to visit classes.

RS: Yes.

PM: Uh, and, but I guess I’ll put it on the calendar.

RS: Yeah, so if students come to different, um like, head… Well not Headmaster because you are like the one. But if teach… If students go to staff members to talk about, I don’t know, if they are having trouble or anything. Do you like hear about that or would they come to you?

PM: That is wonderful. We are blessed. We are so lucky. So we have the Form Master system.

RS: Okay.

PM: Which means for every forty boys there is one person whose primary job is watching out for those boys. Emotionally. Socially. Academically.

RS: Okay.

PM: Uh athletically, right? And so they see things and yeah they’ll bring it to my attention. And I try to give them my counsel based upon my twenty years or whatever. And um, and um so listening from others when necessary.

RS: Yeah.

PM: So that’s an incredible blessing here. That, um, sophomores going through the beyond the norm angst and depression that, um, that Form Master has a six year
relationship. Uh with the family. So he not acting the same, are you seeing it? I’m only seeing what we see here.

RS: Yeah.

PM: The trust is there. And so. And valuable. And so, again in one step removed from it, but that is a high priority that they keep me informed. You know? So we were not always over reacting.

RS: Okay.

PM: Uh, then we are blessed that we just had a coach, who is had a nature gift with kids. And Walsh, (27:00) I don’t know if you know Walsh.

RS: I don’t.

PM: Incredible. And so, my predecessor, Fr. Peter, had the wisdom to say well why don’t you go get a degree in counseling.

RS: Yeah.

PM: We’ll pay for it.

RS: Yeah.

PM: And so he just finished his degree at SMU with flying colors. Was one of the top.

RS: Okay.

PM: Students.

RS: Wow. Yeah.

PM: And uh, and so he reports to me every week.

RS: Okay.

PM: We got through a list of, uh, form Form One to Form Eight, uh, concerns.

RS: Okay.
PM: And uh, respected confidentiality, but, you know, also trying to keep me in the loop. Cuz that’s, you know, pretty much in this day and age. That’s, that’s top responsibility. Make sure the kids are safe. You know? Physically, emotionally.

RS: Um are the Form Masters usually monks? Or can they also be teachers?

PM: They’re also lay. And so um.

RS: Okay.

PM: We are no monks (trail off) organize. It was um, at one point we had four, four lay Form Masters, half and half. Uh with all these young monks, now, we have one lay Form Master.

RS: Okay

PM: And uh, the last lay Form Master graduated his class last year.

RS: Okay.

PM: And so it was an option to make them all monks. Um, but decided to do it differently, uh, so we recycled one of the lay Form Master before the one this year.

RS: Okay.

PM: And the logic there was, one we don’t want to create the impression that it’s only monks. So that should we ever have to go back to the lay. Well you know. Step down.

Well it is not a step down. Uh, second, um, we as Form Masters have to meet bi-weekly and uh. I just think it is wonderful to have a layman’s perspective. Uh at those meetings, so Form Masters, as a group, we’re dealing with something. Well you know as a dad, as a husband and as well as a teacher.

RS: Yeah.

PM: You know, I think you might want to consider this.
RS: Yeah.

PM: So it is invaluable having a lay perspective in that group.

RS: So if, um, a Form has a lay professor or um, Master, then you know when you are saying that y’all have mass together. Is there like um, kinda like co, cuz I think Br. Raphael is kinda like a side.

PM: So each Form Master has an assisant.

RS: Okay.

PM: And and Cistercian is a unique place, uh. It’s one school. But particularly in the middle school, From One does everything by them…only with Form One.

RS: Yeah.

PM: Athletics, sciences, curriculum, uh activities, outings. All, all one. Very low contact, if any, but with Form Two, Three, Four. That is all the way through middle school.

RS: Okay.

PM: Some, Third, Fourth Form, little bit of, they might do speech team together.

RS: Okay.

PM: Very rare. And the Form Master is really like the principle of that little group.

RS: Okay.

PM: And so like I said that Form Master period, he do what he wants to do. (trail off)

Activities on weekends and, you know? And…and so he really is like… So you can have a Form Master who has this skill set or this comfort level. So you do these kinds of theses, you know? And then other Form Masters. (trail off) Father, what do they call him? Fr. Easy-Go-Lucky or uh, I don’t know. I forget his name.

RS: Yeah.
They kinda…

Yeah

And, uh, so you are experience as a Cistercian student can be very different.

Yes, yes.

They all have the same teachers and same schedule, but your experience at Cistercian can be very different for that individual. And so that is why it is kind of a neat thing; when the alumni come together, at other schools… You know? What year were you… What year were you?

Yeah.

At Cistercian, when alumni come together they say, “Well who’s your Form Master?”

Yeah.

And so if Fr. Roch was the Form Master of the class of ’73 and the class of the, uh ’00, and the class of whatever. So they could be a decade apart, but have so much in common.

Yeah. Yes.

You know? It’s, it’s fascinating.

Yeah.

The other thing that is fascinating and the lay people remark on this true. And it is so true. And I don’t know how to explain it. uh, but by senior year, particularly. The Forms all them have different kids and you know? And the same teacher and everything and every Form resembles the personality of that Form Master.

Yeah, that is what Br. Raphael was saying. It’s fun…
PM: Shocking!

RS: Yeah.

PM: It is absolutely shocking!

RS: Yeah.

PM: And uh, it’s absolutely shocking. Uh, and that is a heavy responsibility, you know? Cuz I think, that um, you get that from the moms that for good or for evil. That in psychology of a young man, I mean they perceive you as truly a spiritual father. Whether you are a laymen or what. So uh, and so your words and your expectations and your perceived love of them or lack of love of them is a huge impact on their growth.

RS: Yeah

PM: (Trail off)

RS: Um, so do you like miss teaching more than one class or do you like…

PM: You know I think, I think one of the hardest things I do every day is, is teaching.

RS: Yeah.

PM: You know, so I seat at meeting like this and talk about…

RS: Yeah.

PM: Manage the budget and… It’s not a real challenge, you know?

RS: Yeah.

PM: But to stand in front of a group of very intelligent students. And not just, you know? Know the material, but know how to communicate in a way that’s… I hate to say it this way, but it is true… Entertaining.

RS: Yes.

PM: You know?
RS: Yeah.

PM: Um… Engaging, uh, that’s… A challenge and um… I… That is more challenging than going to a board meeting.

RS: Yeah?

PM: It really is. You know? Um, and it’s fun. I have a teacher now on staff, teaching part time. Uh, he’s a surgeon.

RS: Oh wow.

PM: Highly…(trail off) He’s, uh, immunologist, I guess.

RS: Okay.

PM: One of the most highly respected ones in the city. And, uh, he offer to teach an elective, in the upper schools. He’s got sophomores and juniors. And, but he has done surgery before. And um… and he said, “Fr. Paul,” he said. I just… last week, two weeks ago. “Fr. Paul, I…” Kay he is just coming out of classes and he says “I don’t know how y’all do it. I just don’t know y’all do it. All I have is a little bitty elective, twice a week. And I’m so emotionally distressed and drained and, and.” You know?

RS: Yeah.

PM: “This is worse than surgery. This is worse than, you know, being with dead, dead… dying people all the time.”

RS: Yeah.

PM: And uh, so, so this is… you know? And uh, and I laughed, of course. And uh, but it’s true. There is a reason why, you know the students get out for the summer, but teachers get out for the summer too.

RS: Yeah.
PM: Cuz it’s just emotionally… It’s, it’s, um…. And I do think that our program… here, the expectations are so high. And that has happened before, when we hired people from other places. Uh, when it hasn’t gone quite as smoothly as we would like it to have gone. Part of the problem is that they don’t know how much… to challenge the kids. And if there are more of them and you are new, or you don’t know your stuff. And you, you give them busy work and you are new. Uh they can be tough, almost, almost want to use the word mean.

RS: Yeah.

PM: Um because they kind of become custom to a certain way of caliber. And um, and they are forgiving if you’re sincere and you are passionate and you are perceived as doing your best. They can be very forgiving. But if you’re perceived as being unjust and uncaring and not preparing as you should…

RS: Yeah.

PM: Yeah.

RS: Yeah, um well is there anything else you would like to add about teaching or anything?

PM: Oh, I… I… It is just a great profession.

RS: Yeah.

PM: And just… incredibly impactful. And uh, I think you see it really with those who are retiring, right? So Miss Greenfield is about to retire this year after twenty-four years.

RS: Oh yeah.

PM: Bod Haaser, he’s been here forty eight, as far as I think that’s right.

RS: Yeah.
PM: Um, and they, they just have the same passion as they had, I'm sure, the first… you know? And so I think that being around the kids keeps you young, it keeps you young.

RS: Okay.

PM: Alright.

RS: Well thank you for your time.

PM: Thank you! Thank you! And so when do you start teaching?!

RS: Um, I don’t know yet. Um, Sara, she is….