

Interview with Janet George – 7/15/2023

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Melissa Welz: Hi Janet, how are you today?

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Janet George: Fine, thank you. How are you, Melissa?

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Melissa Welz: I've seen better days, but I'm glad to see my colleagues on here and I can't wait to hear your answers for today's interview.

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Janet George: Alright.

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Melissa Welz: So Janet, I know that you're a math teacher in the Jersey City public schools. What grades do you teach again?

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Janet George: I teach from 9 to 12. It's like 9, and 12,

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Melissa Welz: Okay, and what classes are they?

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Janet George: It's geometry.

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Melissa Welz: Okay, wow. It's a hard subject. I remember taking that in school and you know, you know I'm a music teacher so....(pause)

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Melissa Welz: I had to know math very well because of all the rhythm patterns and stuff. So I remember I had to stay very motivated in math class.

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Janet George: Okay....

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Janet George: Depends on the teacher. It all depends on the teacher.

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Melissa Welz: Right, right. Okay, so talking about motivation, I know in, my subject area, I always had to learn....

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Melissa Welz different tactics in music, theater, dance. Now, math. **How do you learn new things outside of formal school with your subjects or anything of whatever you wanna talk about?**

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Janet George: All right. That goes back to the mentoring period when I started at.

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Janet George: The school I am in. My mentor really helped me a lot with, giving me different strategies and techniques.

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Janet George: It was great informal learning. Oh, she showed me how Promethean board works and the different tools were there.

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Janet George: And how each one functions ... She showed me also a couple of "YouTube" videos that I can use to help on my students.

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Janet George: So she was the beginning of, like my success in that classroom, she really, helped me a lot.....

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Janet George:to grow and she give me her experience her guidance all the time.

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Melissa Welz: So I remember math class. I always had a notebook, an eraser, and a pencil. That being said, how do you stay motivated with these trends?

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Melissa Welz: In the classroom. Like for instance you said you have a smartboard. And then you know you also go on YouTube.

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Melissa Welz: **How do you stay motivated to put all these new trends in your math classes?**

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Janet George: Okay, because she helped with me so she gave me the idea of not to stop at this level but I have to be creative. I have to think outside the box, right?

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Janet George: Because my students

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Janet George:are different than like because I work in urban areas so it's different than students in any other areas.

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Janet George: So when she showed me videos about the different kind of topics and how, different educators teach that, certain topic I thought about, okay, how about if I create my own videos and put it on YouTube.

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Janet George: And I watch a couple of videos about it. And I created my own videos. And I upload them on that YouTube and they are already there now.

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Janet George: It's like about different topics with the strategies and the explanations. So that was something that's informal learning.

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Melissa Welz: **So with YouTube, can you share an example of just a topic that you chose? To put on as a video on YouTube.**

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Melissa Welz: I'm assuming maybe it was something like a very hard math problem or just the technique that was hard for the students.

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Janet George: Yes because my students do not actually have the foundation. So, it's for them.

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Janet George: It's a very important that what they really struggling with is like how to solve an equation. How about if you have variables on both sides?

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Janet George: So that was really some or many of my students were struggling with. So that way when I was explaining to them, I placed it on Google Classroom.

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Janet George: How to solve equations with variables on both sides or even working with the circles given some problems.

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Janet George: So that helped my students in the classrooms. To, to grasp the concept.

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Melissa Welz: **Did you start using these YouTube videos prior COVID? Or did you did you start making these videos when COVID hit when everything went to online classroom learning and Google Classroom ...**

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Janet George: To be honest, I believe, when COVID hit because we were home. Having more time getting creative and you know I started, yeah, thinking about, okay, how to help with them more.

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Janet George: What can I do? Because like I don't see them face to face. Are there some alternatives to helping them out?

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Janet George: So that's why I started.

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Janet George: Okay, okay. And I know also When COVID hit, I remember myself again as an educator.

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Melissa Welz: I would always give like gamification and game based learning apps. Like I would give links to my students on Google Classroom.

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Melissa Welz: Did you do any of that as well? Give them math games just for a break or like an ice breaker in the beginning of that as well?

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Janet George: Give them, math games just for a break or like an ice breaker in the beginning...

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Janet George: Yes. Actually, we went last year during last summer institute. And to the escape room.

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Janet George: So I thought about, okay, that's a great idea. Why don't I try to utilize it for my own students.

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Janet George: So I went on YouTube and I created the visual. A virtual escape room. And, I give it to my students.

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Janet George: Through their Google Classroom and they answered the questions and it was sort of fun for the students as well.

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Melissa Welz: Yeah, must have been. That's great. They have a breakout EDU. I remember I used to always give my students when we were in the classroom.

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Melissa Welz: My sister introduced me to that. There was a couple of boxes with locks and everything and I had to make some music games but I remember those breakout rooms.

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Melissa Welz : God the kids love them. And I remember those breakout rooms. They absorb all that information.

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Melissa Welz : So I'm so glad you use these online learning methods and games and smart boards ... all this information that you see everywhere.

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Melissa Welz : **Do you ever go online? Like at a learning community like as such as Facebook or Reddit or I don't know ... even if you googled it.**

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Melissa Welz : **Do you go on these online learning communities to understand how to use apps? For educators?**

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Janet George: I go online to, to learn how to use actually there is app called that I wanted my students to work on it because it was great one.

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Janet George: So, I went online and I listened to a couple videos to see how I can utilize it to my students so you can use it efficiently.

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Janet George : And how I can like group their work, how I monitor their progress and how I can give them grades and the duration that they want on the app.

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Janet George : So it was really great. Yes.

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Melissa Welz : **Great. But is there any other online communities that you look for trends or just to talk to other math teachers? Anything else that helps you for the classroom?**

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Janet George: So it's definitely collaboration with the other teachers. Great help.

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Janet George: I see other math teachers in the school. We chat with each other sometimes like before, like because first period we have off math teachers ... which is a great thing in our school.

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Janet George: That we come together and we talk and exchange ideas and learn from each other.

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Melissa Welz : So you like to see the teachers face to face instead of being on a computer just like looking at you know reading ideas.

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Janet George: Both ways. It's like we can learn through the computer like using the different...

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Janet George videos and ads and also talk to my supervisor and I learn from them. Learn from each other getting some, you know, hints.

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Janet George: So help our students because that's our goal to get these students, you know... advanced.

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Melissa Welz : What's better for you though? What do you like more.... talking to people face to face?

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Janet George: Okay. Okay.

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Janet George: Definitely face to face is great. Definitely. It's like if we have that meeting in person that would be perfect but you know, oh well.

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Melissa Welz : Right. Okay. **Okay, and my last question is , “Can you describe a time when you face a challenging topic or subject while learning**

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Melissa Welz **Outside of formal education?**

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Janet George: That's a good question.

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Janet George: When I find something, that is a little bit challenging, for me, even if when I search it or Google it or watch many videos about it and I still have a problem grasping it or find like how I can utilize it in my classroom....

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Janet George:that's when I like, go to my colleagues asking them, you know, questions, how do I do this?

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Janet George: How do I give that?

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Janet George: So that's it.

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Janet George: Hmm. I know sometimes like you have to go to a physical class. That's what I've seen.

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Melissa Welz : I had something, it was like this was like 10 years ago. I remember I had the flu for a week and I was watching Breaking Bad.

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Melissa Welz : Did you guys ever watch that show? There was a scene where he puts lye in a bathtub and he's trying to

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Melissa Welz : To disintegrate a body like to be so harsh. And I'm like, wait, what is lye?

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I had to look it up. And then I went on YouTube and I typed what is lye and then all of a sudden it had videos of how to make soap.

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Melissa Welz : And I said, oh my goodness, this is how people make soap out of lye? So you know, it's a harsh chemical and I remember just looking through YouTube videos and trying to learn and then I tried doing it myself.

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Melissa Welz : And I didn't realize that I had to wear work gloves. I forgot that.

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Melissa Welz: And then I wanted to wash the dishes really quick. They didn't tell you that on YouTube.

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Janet George: Oh.

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Melissa Welz : I burned all my hands. Like I had burns, severe burns all over my hands. So I said, you know what, instead of going on YouTube, I'm gonna go to a physical place where there's a teacher in the classroom where she tells me, okay, this is what you have to do because that was dangerous and I felt yeah I learned

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Melissa Welz : a lot of tips on YouTube but then I had to go to a physical classroom because I was dealing with chemicals.

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Melissa Welz : Now I know with math, I don't think you would have any severe burns with any math.

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Melissa Welz : But like, is there anything, something like that where you knew this wasn't gonna work just being online.

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Melissa Welz : Like, did you have to go physically to I don't know, like, a seminar, a workshop.

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Melissa Welz : Someone that like was your mentor that you said I have to go to speak to somebody and understand this.... like maybe the smartboard right where you're physically telling you how to do it.

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Janet George: Yes, definitely the mentor was helping me because that was in person and that was one on one. So yes, as like the Promethean board, I was using what she taught me how to use a ruler. This is a protractor.... or how this is the compass and how you get these tools

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Janet George:how you use them, how to meet a different functions if we're at the Promethean board because at that time it was a from that board.

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Janet George: So yes, definitely that's better than, like online or something because sometimes online is good, but of course in person that's great.

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Melissa Welz : Yes.

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Melissa Welz : Yeah, so much better. I know. You know that you can call the Promethean company because when I got a board I remember they came in and they did a demo and there was some things I wasn't getting.

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Melissa Welz : So the company... if you do call them they'll say okay I'm gonna come in at 1230 and I'll help you out and they actually give you like all this free stuff so I just want to let you know.

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Janet George: Oh, perfect. I should have learned this earlier. Yeah.

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Melissa Welz : I'll give you the phone number and I'll give you the guy who helped me out a lot.

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Janet George: Perfect.

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Melissa Welz : He's really, really great. All right, Janet. So is there any questions that you wanna ask me or something that we didn't cover that you wanted to speak about?

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Janet George: No, that was a really interesting questions and thank you for the interview.

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Melissa Welz : Thank you.

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Melissa Welz : Great Janet thank you so much. You must be an amazing math teacher and I can't wait to see you next week in Summer Institute.

END OF INTERVIEW