

## Covid\_wetig\_jaimie

*Interviewer:* The time is 11:08, the date is April 30th, 2020. In the interview is Destiny Lalicker and Jamie Wetig. Ms. Lalicker, you may begin.

*Destiny:* Will you please state your name, age and occupation for the record?

*Jaimie:* Jamie Wettig, born August 7th, 1975. Which makes me 44 years of age, A.D. Occupation is Superintendent of Schools for USD 220, Ashland, Englewood Public Schools.

*Destiny:* When did you first hear about the coronavirus?

*Jaimie:* I would say the first time I heard, it was on the news and that was really pertaining to what was going on in Wuhan, China. I couldn't really give you a date. I would assume it'd be back in February.

*Destiny:* What was your reaction then, when you were just hearing about it from China?

*Jaimie:* Initially, I thought that it would just be contained in China. I mean, I didn't think we would see this spread to a pandemic like we have. So maybe a little cynical at first.

*Destiny:* I think we agree. We need to update this question a little bit, but we're asking, do you have any children in the home or extended family who live in your home?

*Jaimie:* Right now, it's Robin, my wife, and Alec, our middle child, who works at Snake Creek Ranch.

*Destiny:* How old is Alec?

*Jaimie:* That's a great question. Twenty-three, I believe.

*Destiny:* When did the virus first become real to you? Or when did it first affect your life?

*Jaimie:* I guess it impacted me when we had the information about Sedgwick County being put on our quarantine list, if we had traveled to or we had individuals who come from Sedgwick County, you had to be quarantined. And it's more real because Brittany, my daughter, lives in Wichita, and therefore it really has restricted any decisions we've made or not made to travel and visit her in Wichita.

And I guess I would even go before that, because that's kind of jumping ahead, for me personally as a career, as an administrator, it was spring break. So, we had spring break the week of March 16th through the 20th, and it was that week in which the State Department came out and we started to have meetings, which really changed what my goals were for spring break. My goals for spring were to take the week off and enjoy it. I had even talked about trying to travel somewhere, but with the State Department coming out with information for public schools in Kansas, I spent that entire week prepping and preparing and communicating what was going on with the coronavirus.

So, yes, I guess for me as an educator, it would have been the week of the 16th. That's when I became aware that schools were not going to open up for an extended period of time, and that's when I started to go to work on putting together extended school closure plans and continuous learning plans. So all of our students and staff were on spring break. Yet, here I was planning and prepping that week for them coming back. That would be how it impacted me directly, because really before that, it wasn't too big of a deal, I suppose. Again, I was fairly cynical about it. Now,

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personally, it impacted me when, you know, our county put Sedgwick County, or the state put Sedgwick County, as a hot zone and we couldn't go see family.

*Destiny:* So it became a thing when you had to deal with the schools over spring break, but it really started to impact you when you couldn't see your daughter.

*Destiny:* What things changed right away for you, and how did you feel when the schools closed?

*Jaimie:* I was kind of shocked, I suppose, when the decision was made to close schools for the entire year. I, up to that point, knew that there were several schools that were extending their spring break, which made sense because there was that 14-day window everyone was talking about. I believe it was "15 days to flatten the curve" was how it was. My initial thought was we were not going to come back from spring break and we were going to take one more additional week off to get to that 14, 15 days of no contact. At the end of our first week back, I believe that's when Governor Kelly said schools are going to be closed. When I say "the first week back," that was that pre-planning week for us after spring break and maybe it was even at the end of spring break. I can't recall. I could go back and look a bit again. I thought we were gonna do that 15 days there, everybody was going to stay home and be isolated. Then all of a sudden, she came out and she closed schools for the remainder of the year. That was probably the initial point for me where I was kind of caught off guard and I thought, wow, this really is going to change how we do things. Have I answered your question?

*Destiny:* Yes, mostly just shocked. This was unexpected. So those were our quick changes. What things have changed slowly that you weren't aware of right away as schools closed? Are there things now that have changed that you didn't realize right away?

*Jaimie:* I don't know. I feel like that week I spent putting together our continuous learning plan for us. I feel like that has gone better than maybe expected. The teachers really have had to embrace the online learning in the Google classroom and how do they want to continue with their lessons.

So, for me, I think that things have gone as I expected them to go. What has been unexpected is, I feel like they've gone better for our district and our kids. Fortunately for us, we were a one-to-one district and we didn't have one to one devices K-12. We originally had them 7-12. We added fifth and sixth grade for classrooms. We added third and fourth for classrooms. And then this year, we decided to add the rest of the school.

When this pandemic hit and we were forced to go online, we were very lucky, I suppose, that we had made the decision to add the younger kids into that one-to-one device. So that was something that I felt we were blessed, or fortunate, or lucky to have made those decisions. And then we were again, very fortunate that with the students that didn't have that access to the internet, United Wireless reached out, or when we reached out to them, they reached back and they gave us the ability to give access or provide access to those kids.

So, I just think that we were well-suited and in a better situation than a lot of districts.

*Destiny:* At home, have there been changes at home that hadn't been expected?

*Jaimie:* For me or for students?

*Destiny:* For you.

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*Jaimie:* You know, not really. I mean, I think just staying in, in the sense of I like to get out and do a lot of things outside of Ashland, and that's been the biggest changes. And I think, if I was not with my wife, I would maybe, maybe not follow the rules very well. But she's the one that keeps me...

*Destiny:* Keeps you from sneaking out?

*Jaimie:* Yes.

*Destiny:* What's your job situation right now? Obviously, you're still working and keeping the school going.

*Jaimie:* I think the number one role and responsibility for me at this point, since we're halfway in and almost done with their online learning, is maintaining that communication. That's with our staff. That's with our parents our patrons. You know, I have weekly meetings with the Clark County Emergency Management Team. We use our resources and avenues to reach out to our families, you know, from our social media to our student information system, when they send me information, I'll put it out on social media sites. I'll send it out through our student information system and I'll put on our web page. So communication.

*Destiny:* So just a lot more time in meetings and communicating more often.

*Jaimie:* I feel like I have been in more meetings since we haven't had school, through Zoom, than I have had meetings all year long.

*Destiny:* Maybe I was projecting because I definitely feel that way too. That almost becomes overwhelming, just the communicating back and forth. When do you think life will get back to normal? And why at that time?

*Jaimie:* I don't know what normal is going to be. And I think that every time I try to predict something, I'm always wrong with it.

You know, today the governor is going to come out and make this announcement about returning to business with some restrictions. I don't know, I wish I had a good answer. People ask me about school, but, you know, even at the State Department level, when we attend those meetings, they say we're preparing to open schools in August. However, be prepared to have a different style, format, model of learning. So, do we open schools in August with mandates that every kid wears a mask? Do we open schools in August with the mandate that we have a limited number of kids in the classroom? Do we have a modified schedule where we have half the school in the morning, half the school in the afternoon?

I just really don't know what to expect. I feel that some people don't understand the pandemic and other people do. And I would say that at the beginning, I was more on the side that didn't understand it. If you do look at all the information that's coming out, you'll see that the virus itself is more contagious than the flu.

We need to take it seriously, but I can't predict what's going to happen. I would like to say, "Let's return back to normal so we can all go to summer vacation spots." I just don't know.

*Destiny:* So it's still on the topic of, "What if." What do you think are some temporary changes and what do you think would be maybe long term?

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*Jaimie:* I think temporary changes, you might see more mandates to wear masks in public and that certainly might go through the summer. Long term changes, I think is what you hear about is businesses are going to restrict how many people can come in, they're going to reduce the number of tables. There is just going to be a lot more focus on creating space for people. Again, schools, I would say the same thing, maybe there'll be a mandate about masks. Maybe there'll be a mandate about the number of kids that can be in an area at the same time. Social distancing is probably going to be around for a while.

*Destiny:* So what's your reaction now that we've gone through it, to where we are today? Emotions, feelings, plans for the future, all of that. Where are you now?

*Jaimie:* I don't know, that's a good question. At the point where I am right now with school, I'm very happy. So I guess, complacent at this point, just waiting to put a plan in place. We've implemented the plan, I feel like we've done well with it. Our teachers have done well. Of course, there's some struggles, but overall, on that side of it, I think things are fine.

I'm just kind of "hurry up and wait." First, in life, I'm ready to get back to being able to travel, interact, go to Wichita, go to the casino. Just get out in public and not worry about the virus. But I certainly don't want to get sick. I don't want to put myself or anybody in the position to where I'm being irresponsible as well.

*Destiny:* Do you worry or fear about getting sick?

*Jaimie:* Maybe the biggest fear is the unknown because of what you hear on the media with some people, it's very... actually, I don't know what's the right word. You know, it's devastating, I suppose. I mean, I don't know what the word would be, you know? It impacts everyone differently, from being asymptomatic to being put on the ventilator. And maybe a lot of that is just watching the news and seeing the media put that out there. But, I don't want to get sick and I don't want anyone that I know to get sick. So...

*Destiny:* Those are all the questions that I have.