

Ms. Michelle Fenwick, Madison Senior High School Teacher
Transcript of interview for the Madison Historical Society Oral History Project.
Interviewed by Earnest Davenport, Madison High School Social Studies Student
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Earnest Davenport [ED]: [Recording starts] Good afternoon, I am here to interview Miss Fenwick. Miss Fenwick, I have a couple of questions for you. The first question would be about when and how did you end up in Madison?

Michelle Fenwick [MF]: So, I had been a teacher for about 10 years. And I had done alternative schools the whole time. And I applied to become the English teacher here at the high school, but I was turned down for the job. But I was hired by the alternative school MSSC. And that was in 2006. So, I've been here for 17 years.

[ED]: Could you give a brief description about the everyday things that a teacher such as yourself, and Madison does?

[MF]: Um, you know, there are a few things that I do every single day, I always try to greet my students and let them know that I'm happy to see them every day I try to leave my own garbage and like, bad mood at my house. I never come in here with any baggage, because I don't feel like my students deserve to deal with my baggage. And then as far as like operational things, I try to make sure that my students have ample time in class to get their work done. Because I know that being such a small school, kids wear a lot of hats. So, you might be on the basketball team and in the National Honor Society and in, you know, a music program. So, you're already doing things extracurricular, that take up your time. So, I try to make sure students have time to finish their work in class. But my main goal every day is to make sure that every single student feels like they're valued in my classroom, and that every single student walks out of here, knowing a little something more than they knew the day before.

[ED]: Have any significant events occurred while you were in Madison that you could tell us about?

[MF]: Do you mean like if Madison events things that happened here? I mean, we've had a lot of really cool stuff go on with with sports programs, and you know, almost getting to state the year of the Coronavirus. And then, of course, the Coronavirus itself changed everything about how I did my job, and how you guys did your jobs. And it was a learning experience. A lot of people really hated it. And I hated being isolated from my students. But I learned a lot during that time about being flexible, and how to be---parenting my kids while I'm doing my job, and helping my students stay caught up as best they could. And then as far as like things that really changed me as a person. I lost a student in 2015, I believe it was. He was shot and killed here in town, and that, that really messed up a lot of the way--- I don't even know how to say it. From that day forward, I didn't let kids leave out of my room without a smile or I'll see you later or, you know, just letting them know that I'm looking forward to seeing them again.

[ED]: The final question, Miss Fenwick. How do you feel about the Madison community?

[MF]: I love this community. I feel comfortable here. I have participated in things at Mount Nebo Baptist Church. Over the past 17 years I've been in and out of there many times for worship but also in doing volunteer programs when I was at MSSC. And so, I've gotten to know members of the community outside of the school. And I really love it here. I feel safe. I feel comfortable. And I feel not exactly like I'm a part of the community but that I'm always welcome in the community.

[ED]: Thank you, Miss Fenwick for your time.

You're so welcome.