

Corey Tafoya: Hello everyone, welcome back to Education Buzz podcast, the podcast coming monthly from Harvard District 50. So, we have two very special guests today, it's a kind of like an episode of Spies Like Us, Doctor, Doctor, Doctor cause we have Dr. Mary Cooke and Dr. Sara Weaver and it's for that reason we've invited them here. We were joking quite a long time ago that we should tell this story or these two should tell their story, because it's really an incredible story of how you both worked hard to just most recently graduate in December, right? So, first of all to both of you congratulations, it's one of the most amazing achievements I think there is academically amongst all things so congratulations.

Mary Cooke: Thank you.

Sara Weaver: Thank you.

Corey Tafoya: It feels good to be done.

Mary Cooke: It does.

Sara Weaver: Feels good not to be here every Saturday morning.

Corey Tafoya: Before we get into kind of the story a little bit, which I think is just so fascinating. Can you both introduce yourselves and just tell a little bit about your role in the district and what you really do for your side job when you're not writing dissertations?

Mary Cooke: Go ahead.

Sara Weaver: Go ahead. I'm Sarah Weaver. I am the division chair at the high school for science, agriculture, P.E, health and driver's education.

Corey Tafoya: That's a mouthful.

Sara Weaver: It is a mouthful. I also teach three science classes as well.

Corey Tafoya: Okay, great.

Mary Cooke: And I'm Mary Cooke, I am currently the Director of assessment curriculum and grants in the district, having been the literacy coordinator for a number of years, and previously a title one teacher for elementary as well as eighth grade language arts for 13 years.

Corey Tafoya: All total how many years have you two spent in District 50?

Sara Weaver: This is my 26th year.

Mary Cooke: And my 27th.

Corey Tafoya: Wow. So, 53 years of history of our school district just in this two chairs.

Mary Cooke: That's teaching if you count years as a students then-

Corey Tafoya: Oh, good point because both of you did K through 12 here as well?

Sara Weaver: No I was a good Catholic girl, I was-

Corey Tafoya: Okay.

Sara Weaver: I was kindergarten at the junior high which was an interesting location.

Mary Cooke: As was I, kindergarten at the junior high.

Sara Weaver: And then I defected to the Catholic side of first through eighth grade and then back to the high school.

Corey Tafoya: Okay, good.

Mary Cooke: I'm a K-12 lifer in District 50.

Corey Tafoya: So, that's like almost 70 years of combined Harvard... oh, I shouldn't say that aloud-

Mary Cooke: Yeah thanks for that.

Corey Tafoya: I know I already have a significant birthday, I should know better than to say such things [inaudible 00:02:33] other people might too. But the reason we want to talk is because there is a... I guess a lot of mystery in the idea of earning a doctorate, and like I said it's just really one of the most incredible journeys to go through having earned that myself. I just thought we would just celebrate you guys for a moment, and just that incredible accomplishment and start to understand what is in the brain of someone that really chooses to do this, because there's a lot of parts to this and every story... I think when you have a doctorate they should just allow you to tell your story a little bit and I thought this is the perfect format to do that.

Corey Tafoya: And hopefully to encourage other people that it's not impossible because when you hear about that, certainly look at me anyone can do it if they're just crazy enough to keep going, and so that's really I guess what I want to talk about. So, Sarah why don't you start and just maybe go back to way back when you got a masters plus like 80 hours or something incredible and you kept going, but where did it come into your mind that you know what I think I'm just going to keep going, and maybe tell everyone how that started and how you made the decision to pursue this and what actually your doctorate is in? People may not understand that you have to [inaudible 00:03:48] some choices along that path.

Sara Weaver: I think it was around 2010 actually, that Mary and I started talking about our desire to go after our doctorates, and I don't really honestly remember what spawned that conversation. But I think for me it was something that I always wanted to do, because I... it sounds cliché, but I really honestly love to learn and learn new things, and I've always been the type of person that just wants to keep pushing myself to be better and better.

Corey Tafoya: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sara Weaver: And I remember we had a conversation about it, and then we said, "This is really not a great year," and I don't remember what it was if Mary had something with one of her kids and I had... I'm teaching a new class, and so we said well, maybe next year. And so then 2011 rolls around and we had the conversation again in the fall, should we apply? Well, this isn't a great time we've got this going on and that going on, and it was in... I think [inaudible 00:04:57] we started in 2012 so I might need to back up a couple of years. But I think at some point I just... I remember I think I called her on the phone or an emailed her I don't remember which, and I said, "I did it, I filled out the application. I'm going for it."

Corey Tafoya: Wow.

Sara Weaver: We've wasted enough time talking about it we're just doing it, and then I remember her saying, "Okay, I'm going to fill mine out too".

Mary Cooke: Right.

Corey Tafoya: And that's how-

Mary Cooke: We drove off the cliff together.

Corey Tafoya: And truly [inaudible 00:05:20]. I mean Mary as you think about that, the ability to say, "Well, I'm not ready or this is in the way" that happens not only at the start of the journey, but in throughout the journey. So how did... I mean when you got started what was the commitment? Or was it kind of let's just see how this goes, or what was the idea between following along?

Mary Cooke: It was kind of the let's see how it goes. The girls had been on me to coach their softball teams because [inaudible 00:05:50] coached the boys, and I had said, "Well, let me get through these classes and we'll go from there." And our classes were very conveniently located at George Williams. So, William's bay was an easy drive in the morning so that was a big plus that it was local, and then the DPI and the state of Illinois started fighting with each other and then they withdrew all of the Ed courses at George Williams when we were midway point for our classes. And initially it was that we were going to have to go to Aurora for classes, and we kind of said-

Corey Tafoya: And this is before the Woodstock campus probably?

Mary Cooke: This was before the Woodstock campus was hosting doctoral programs right?

Corey Tafoya: Yeah, right.

Mary Cooke: And so kind of their midway point was to Skype our classes because there were two girls from Woodstock, as well as some people from Rockford that were in our cohort and so for the Rockford people to go to the Aurora campus was a huge imposition. And so Sara and I would meet at the district office on Saturday mornings and Skype our classes, because we both decided that between two legged critters at my house and four legged critters at her house, there's no place to hide for it to be quiet enough to Skype and to focus.

Sara Weaver: And if you're at home there's always a tendency to say, "I'm going to go through a load of laundry and then I'll come right back up and get to work." And so then I would go down and throw a load of laundry in and realize I should really vacuum this floor while I'm here.

Mary Cooke: And you mute the computer and nobody knows what you're doing as long as you show up once in a while.

Corey Tafoya: There probably are people around town that wonder why the two... why the red car and the big van are not in front of district office every single Saturday, because probably how many Saturdays for how many years has that been?

Mary Cooke: Well, our claim to fame is that we finished our dissertations in just under eight years. So, we were out there for a long time as well as Fridays in the summer because then we traded in the summer, we traded our Saturdays for the Fridays when we went to four day weeks.

Sara Weaver: And there were some gaps in there, I know I had to take about a year and a half off because my mom was ill and eventually passed away, and Mary was a kind enough friend to take that year and a half off with me.

Corey Tafoya: Oh, what a giver Mary.

Mary Cooke: I don't have to work on this right now, but seriously I did think about continuing so it could get done. And then I thought well, if it were switched I'd be like "Well, okay go ahead."

Corey Tafoya: Mm-hmm (affirmative). All right, yeah.

Mary Cooke: And I thought I would understand but I would be sad, that she was finishing and I was not due to family circumstances.

Corey Tafoya: Sure, yeah.

Mary Cooke: And then the roles switched, and then we had to take a little time off with my dad. And so that's what we said is that we're kind of a real example of, the best laid plans but life kind of gets in the way and you have to roll with it.

Corey Tafoya: Sure, because they designed cohorts intentionally so that people kind of develop some camaraderie in that cohort, and so they can know how many people are in the course, and so that cohort model really does work because I can remember being a part of multiple cohorts in my experiences too. But you two are more than that, I think you too are just as a story to encouragement and friendship, and this is no joke because this podcast people can't see this... maybe can picture but these two are wearing... both are wearing purple sweaters. I mean you guys-

Mary Cooke: And we didn't plan it.

Corey Tafoya: And didn't plan it, I mean this is incredible.

Sara Weaver: When we realized that we were wearing purple sweaters both of us independently said that's disturbing.

Corey Tafoya: It is but I mean this may embarrass you a little bit, but that friendship and that encouragement and supporting each other through tough times, [inaudible 00:09:25] big part of the story wont you say?

Mary Cooke: Well, interestingly aside real quickly Mike Prombo was in the first class that we attended. We started in a January second semester and that group had all been in a class to begin with, so it kind of goes back to that idea that all roads lead to Harvard.

Corey Tafoya: There you go, right.

Mary Cooke: Well, I think a lot of that goes back to we were union president and vice president for a number of years too. And so we kind of bonded over that because we learned very quickly you don't make everybody happy. And so we had to kind of commiserate sometimes and grow thick skin together, and I feel like we had to grow thick skin again getting through this and especially when they changed it because we lost that cohort cohesiveness. In class we had some people from other districts that we had kind of gotten to be friendly with and bounce ideas off of and talked about different projects, and hey what do you guys do for this in your district, and through the Skyping part you just... you can do it but not to the extent that you do in person.

Mary Cooke: So, I feel like we kind of lost that part but the two of us always being here Skyping or working we were able to continue doing that and share information that we had gathered from other districts to our projects. I mean obviously very different, mine was on homeless students and Sara's on science prep programs, but we're able to share information and connections that we had made with

other districts through that process. So, we had it but not to the extent that we would have had by that networking in person.

Sara Weaver: And I think the classes were finished in about three or three and a half years, and shortly after that is when things became challenging and I think it would have been... had I been on my own it would have been very easy for me to say I'm done-

Mary Cooke: For sure.

Sara Weaver: I'm quitting. Because the road ahead at that point looked really challenging, but then there was always a part of me that said, but I can't let her down we committed to this, we're doing this, she's depending on me and so then that that kept me going I know for sure.

Corey Tafoya: Yeah. Well, and I think those roles probably overtime flip flop, the one was the encourager and one needed the kick in the [inaudible 00:11:32]. So, you kind of traded turns in that, but I'm glad you mentioned that Sara because sometimes I think people think the road to a doctoral degree is just writing the dissertation but it's more than that, the coursework... maybe just for people that are thinking about it or don't know, what were all the things that you've accomplished along the way?

Sara Weaver: I think the coursework is the easy part, because you [crosstalk 00:11:56] you have to be there-

Corey Tafoya: I agree.

Sara Weaver: And you have that time and then dissertation nobody really cares if you're writing it.

Mary Cooke: And frankly we wouldn't be at this point if we didn't love taking classes and know how to do that well. [inaudible 00:12:11] yes.

Sara Weaver: And we didn't want to have ABD after our name.

Corey Tafoya: Yeah, let's talk about ABD because I think there was a point where I finally became familiar with that term. ABD is All but dissertation for those people that get in the program, and they just wear out and their dissertation just never gets written or something happens life intercedes, and at first I was like oh, man why would anyone ever do that? Because I think the numbers are pretty staggering that most doctoral students that enroll in different universities have different percentage rates, but I think some of them are like in the 10s, 20s. It is a very low completion rate, so used to never understand ABD but then when I was in the middle of it I'm like Oh, I totally get it.

Sara Weaver: There were a number of people from our cohort that didn't finish, then there's a couple that have said within the last couple of years we're still working, but I know there's one or two that said we're done, we're not going to finish.

Corey Tafoya: For some people it's hard to understand what's the motivation and there's got to be some intrinsic motivation, I mean it's 90% intrinsic really that just allows you to do that, because I can remember kind of sputtering along and it really... the key was... I don't know if I've even told either one of you these story. My advisor called me it was mid August and I was kind of getting close, I was doing work but I wasn't... He said, "Hey, Cory I need you to finish your dissertation this semester because I'm moving to Fiji." And I thought he was kidding me but he actually... his name is Dr. Bob Decker and he had been my advisor, trustee all along and was patient with me, but he was retiring from the University of Northern Iowa and he was going to be the... I guess the education [inaudible 00:13:53] for all of the Pacific [rim 00:13:56] Church of Latter-Day Saints schools for the whole Pacific.

Corey Tafoya: So, he was moving to Fiji and he was in charge... from Japan to Hawaii. And so he was not going to be around and... but that's what got me to get started. And so I did I finished in that up in about three months, and it was hell for a little while getting that done. And so what was the hardest moment where you thought, Okay this is my moment where I can decide if I'm going to step up and do it or not... and that was my moment because I thought about saying, no this just isn't worth it. Did you guys have a moment like that?

Sara Weaver: I feel like we had a conversation about a year ago in the spring a little bit later in the spring like March, and said we can do this at this point we can... We had talked to our advisor, Faith had said you don't have to enroll in a class this summer you can still do your data meeting and we can defend the final in September, and then just have to pay for one more class because we were way over our allotment of dissertation hours.

Mary Cooke: Way over our hours.

Sara Weaver: And I take that back. It was more than... it will be two years ago-

Mary Cooke: I would say it was about two years ago.

Sara Weaver: Because we had to defend our proposal, it'll be a year and a half... It's a year and a half since we did that. So, I think we... that was really our kick in the pants that we really are on the cusp of the homestretch and we're really dumb if we don't get going and get this done.

Mary Cooke: And we kind of had to sit down and make out a plan like we pretty much had it sketched out, about from the proposal all the way through what the steps were in what was required and I think that helped too, that we had that sketched out.

Corey Tafoya: People that know you Sarah are really probably very shocked by that timeline approach, check this, do this-

Sara Weaver: That scientific part?

Corey Tafoya: Scientific, yeah. But you need that don't-

Sara Weaver: And I remember saying to Mary a couple of times because we had always had this, it had sort of become a part of who we are. We always had the dissertation to work on, and I remember saying to her on a couple of occasions, I'm getting a little freaked out we may actually finish this.

Corey Tafoya: Right.

Mary Cooke: Then it became not a fear of not finishing but a fear of finishing.

Corey Tafoya: Yeah, because-

Sara Weaver: And what are you going to replace it with in your life? Because it was a huge piece of it.

Corey Tafoya: It does seem [crosstalk 00:16:12] change your life. Well, let's leave that topic for a little bit later because that post dissertation life is something that is a little bit different. But let's talk a little bit about actually coming to a decision of what to write about it, and I think that's a very personal thing. How did you both choose... We'll talk about your topic and Mary mentioned it a little bit but talk about your topic, how you chose to decide those things, what was the interest and what did you actually end up studying? And what did you learn through the actual study?

Mary Cooke: I'm one of the dumb people who change their topic midway through after collecting 77 articles for-

Sara Weaver: Only 77?

Mary Cooke: Only 77 because we had to do at least 70 the first semester with identifying articles and journaling and blah, blah, blah. And it was after we had switched to Skype and we were downstairs and we were reviewing an article, Faith was teaching us how to do vignettes that kind of thing. And the article was about homeless women a long time ago, and I got thinking I'm might... I don't know that we do that great of a job not just Harvard across the board, identifying students who are in need of assistance, especially the ones that are in high school because they don't want to be identified. And we had a student from Harvard that we were helping and he really should have been considered that way, but he wasn't because he had kind of bounced from relative to relative even though his family had moved to Mexico. So, it kind of opened up a few

questions for me and that was ultimately what I changed to. So, I had to start over with my collection of articles.

Mary Cooke: But I was very, very, very passionate about it at that point, I joke that I no longer care about homeless students.

Corey Tafoya: You get to that point, I remember that point very clearly.

Sara Weaver: And I make sure that people know I'm kidding, because of course I do truly care about them, but writing about them I'm done.

Corey Tafoya: Yeah, because there is a point where you just... you've exhausted every potential avenue to find research on the topic and you think you're done but yet your... sometimes your committee says no there's probably more out there, and then there's just these layers of frustration that you get to that's like, Oh my gosh I have to be closer now I can't imagine changing my topic, although I think Sara maybe you'll agree with me, there's a certain point where despite your passion for the topic you just kind of say, "oh, whatever you want I'll just do it let me get done with this stupid thing," because it just... there's a frustration but you as a science teacher and talk about teacher training you as actually a university professor on your own right. How did you come to the topic and I mean what did you learn about it? Was there anything that surprised you in the research?

Sara Weaver: A little bit, I actually had been teaching a class for Rockford University, it's a Methods class for future science teachers and when I started back around 2001 I created the class I didn't really have any resources and, I looked for what little I could find online then. And so I constantly over the years wanted to make sure that I was meeting the needs of my students because I know I took... for example I took a secondary methods class when I was becoming certified to teach and we talked about cooperative learning. And I remember that the professor actually passed us out a notes page and we sat in class and discussed it, and we didn't actually do any cooperative learning to learn about that concept.

Sara Weaver: And so I didn't want my class to be like that I wanted the things that I taught them to be things that they actually experienced, so that was my interest in the program and then also having been in the district 26 years, and mentoring new teachers I could see where their struggles were when they came in, things that they felt really well equipped to do in the classroom and things that they struggled with. And so I kind of wanted to make sure that they... I could do my part to make sure that they felt more confident to do any type of lab investigation with their students.

Corey Tafoya: Right, wow I... but that's kind of how it starts you have this interest in something and then you just get to it, and when I completed mine someone told me and it kind of shocked me from it when they said, "Consider this, you are the world's

most knowledgeable person at this point on that topic when you graduate, there's no one worldwide on that topic that has more research, done more examination on that very topic." And [inaudible 00:20:39] that was kind of an awe inspiring moment for a minute where you think wow, then you think about the frustration of looking up 70 plus articles then asking for 50 more and then they don't think you're there yet. And you do find another one that's interesting, but at one point... and they also reminded me that that then fades Five days later when you stop working on that, but it's pretty inspiring to know that you wrote worldwide would be considered a leader in this research.

Sara Weaver: Interestingly, one of my committee members in the meeting after my... the public part of my defense said to me, "You need to be more aggressive in your chapter five in your conclusions," he said, "You are the expert on this topic." He said, "You need to be aggressive and put your ideas out there." And that that freaked me out a little bit I'm not going to lie.

Corey Tafoya: Yeah, so there is a couple types of dissertations; qualitative and quantitative, what was your style?

Mary Cooke: Qualitative both qualitative. We had at one point wanted to move into a mixed method because there was another teacher that we had that had talked to us it was like, "If you did [qual 00:21:41] and you did this, this and this, you could be done like that." And we were like, "Oh, my God you're right." We're like, "We're so stupid."

Corey Tafoya: Yeah, yeah.

Mary Cooke: Like when they talked about statistics we were like, "Oh, god no."

Corey Tafoya: Right, right and that's the big conundrum is that... to kind of handle the stats part of it, and that's an interesting part of it. So, in the end how long these dissertations in terms of pages and references found, did you ever even bother to make yourself crazy enough to look?

Mary Cooke: Well, yes because we had to have our pages numbered.

Corey Tafoya: Of course yes.

Mary Cooke: So, a dissertation, resources and references and Bibliography I think mine was about 148 pages.

Corey Tafoya: Mm-hmm (affirmative), right.

Mary Cooke: Right around there.

Sara Weaver: I don't actually remember, but I think it was in the vicinity of 150 give or take.

Corey Tafoya: Right, yeah. I think mine was somewhere in that same range too.

Mary Cooke: And like 20 some pages of reference.

Corey Tafoya: Yeah, and that's the incredible part. One of the things that is true is there's a lot of things that in academia stay traditional, and I think that research and the dissertation has stayed very traditional that your APA is your guide, you need to learn that very well. And then you have to really declare that but it still is a very traditional approach to earning that degree wouldn't you say?

Sara Weaver: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Mary Cooke: Mm-hmm (affirmative). A lot of hoops.

Corey Tafoya: There are a lot of hoops and then you get to the point where you're like, "Wow, I just I didn't know that." And so it says... has anyone learned about your research and then reach out to you knowing that you completed?

Sara Weaver: I remember when the announcement for my defense went out through the Facebook, there's a Facebook group for doctoral students that I belong to and the announcement went out through there, and I actually shared it then on my own Facebook page and a former co-worker of mine sent me a message and said, "I may actually read that I'm working on my doctorate as well." So-

Mary Cooke: High words of praise, I may actually read that.

Corey Tafoya: All right. Well, it's funny too because I've been done for around six years or so I don't know, but on the Northern Iowa website all the dissertations get electronically filed and I think I looked it up a year ago so, and over that whole period of time I think like 19 people had look mine up. I'm like-

Mary Cooke: That's not bad.

Corey Tafoya: It's about right, who's reading that kind of thing or actually downloaded it or whatever... but I think it's been made a little bit easier with some of the things you can do because the articles now you can just hit a link and it APA formats it for you, rather than the caveman version I was doing like trying to have the book out and making sure my semicolon was in the right place, that's exhausting.

Mary Cooke: That's exhausting and the other part is having taken the amount of time that we did, I think there's been at least three revisions to the-

Sara Weaver: I lost count of how many.

Mary Cooke: To the style guide for the university.

Corey Tafoya: Oh, yeah.

Mary Cooke: So, then we had to look at that and figure out what we already had and what had changed so that ours matched what the expectations were now.

Sara Weaver: The proposed... the outline for the proposal changed a few times, so we had to revise that every time it changed and keep updating that and so-

Mary Cooke: APA went from the fifth version to the sixth in the meantime.

Corey Tafoya: Right, and so you both actually... and I was lucky enough to be there and listen, you both defended your dissertation to your committee and your committee were three people, right?

Sara Weaver: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Hers was four.

Mary Cooke: Yeah, mine actually had four because there was a person from Harvard [inaudible 00:25:10] that had been part of that as well.

Corey Tafoya: So, talk about that process because anyone that's maybe thinking about this, talk about standing up in front of this committee who you've known really well for some period time, and who kind of theoretically is already read this that moment of like talking about your topic and helping people understand your expertise in your research outline and all the process.

Mary Cooke: Well I think the theoretical is a key word on that, because when we did our proposal meeting and proposal defense to begin with it was via Skype, and we were downstairs and I had the luxury of going first where Sara had the luxury of going second and learning more about that at a time. But it was very clear at that point that our committee members had not read our proposals, so that was one thing that we had to take into consideration too is making sure that we laid it out very clearly so that even if they hadn't read it, they knew where we're coming from without a lot of additional questions. But I think the biggest thing about the defense was nerves first of all, and then just that... remembering that at that time you are the expert and sharing that information.

Mary Cooke: And after the public part was over for mine, it was not what I was expecting. I think we both kind of had in our head for that meeting afterwards that it was like, they're holding machine guns and firing questions away at you, and you had to hurry up and answer them and... because they threw us at the proposal defense meeting because they started talking about our theories, I hadn't looked at my theories in months at that point.

Corey Tafoya: Sure.

Mary Cooke: Because I was focused on the methodology at that point and so I brushed up and I had notes on the theories, and they never asked one single question about

the theory but it was all about our chapter five and the results and it's kind of that idea like Sara had already said about being more aggressive as far as promoting that idea and following through and working with that.

Sara Weaver: I feel like as Mary said, I feel like I cheated along the way a little bit, because she's a year older but she went first-

Mary Cooke: Whatever.

Sara Weaver: On everything so, when we did our proposal she went first and I remember us both exchanging looks like I've never had a colonoscopy, but I imagine it feels as bad... this is horrible.

Corey Tafoya: Right.

Sara Weaver: This is horrible and then when we had our data analysis meeting Mary went first, and so she went... I was very nervous the day of the defense but I got to sit through hers and experience it with her. And so by the time I rolled around, I wasn't nervous at all but I had watched hers, and so I had that advantage of having-

Mary Cooke: Your welcome.

Sara Weaver: Her go first. Thank you.

Corey Tafoya: Well, but that that is an important part of it too its just kind of understanding what's to come, and that's hopefully one of the benefits of this if anyone's out there listening. Hopefully few people listen to this because you do kind of want to know what you're getting yourself into, and it's hard to know if you're not really with someone and seeing it, because even I think for the committee members who are supposedly guiding you and your chair who's supposed to be your guide for all this, it's hard for them to remember everything because there are things like "Oh yeah I forgot to tell you, you got to do this or that," and so there are these moments where you're like, "Oh, I wasn't seeing that come at all." So, there are different styles to when people get done, does it still kind of weird you out when anyone calls you Dr. Weaver, Dr.cooke?

Mary Cooke: Completely. Completely.

Corey Tafoya: That's a weird feeling isn't it?

Mary Cooke: Yeah. It was very much like wait [inaudible 00:28:35]

Corey Tafoya: It's a weird feeling Sara you kind of had that to where it's like well, it takes a little while. I mean you really hear it more when people go from Mr or Miss or Mrs-

Sara Weaver: It's especially weird for me because the students at the high school I didn't ask them to call me doctor and they've just done that. And so it's very weird to me when I'm walking down the hall and I'll see a student I'll say, "Hey, how's it going?" They'll say, "Hi, Dr. Weaver," and I kind of take a step back, it just feels weird.

Corey Tafoya: Because I think we've all known people that were really caught up in that, like you better call me that I studied so hard but you better call me... But you two don't strike me as the people that kind of did it for that moment just to kind of have that, but it is a weird thing when you hear someone refer to you as that.

Mary Cooke: I think when at the [inaudible 00:29:30] when Jason introduced our panel, and he said, "But doctor," I'm like what "Oh, yeah that's right. We did do that."

Corey Tafoya: Yeah, that's right.

Mary Cooke: But I think that idea of getting caught up, we both had a teacher for research that had just finished before I had her, and then I think you had her the next year or two years after that. And was teaching masters right?

Sara Weaver: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah.

Mary Cooke: And was taking us through how to do a proficient search, and had given us the terms that we were supposed to put in and everything and so we did that and lo and behold, guess whose dissertation arrived first and the list of topics and "Oh my goodness, I had no idea." And she did the same thing was Sarah's class, and I'm like, "Oh, for the love of God." So, we committed at that point that should we ever do that we would never do that to a class of people.

Corey Tafoya: [inaudible 00:30:16] But there is that just kind of getting used to that for a while. The other thing to get used to is because every Saturday at least for three, four hours you spent time here and at class whatever, you have this kind of vacuum of space and time and there is this weird period of time. And I can remember telling people who'd asked me if I'd seen this TV show or that TV show and as you both very busy in your careers, to accomplish this while having big successful careers and families and animals and all these things that are part of your life, It's really a testament to your [inaudible 00:30:55] effort and work ethic that you completed it but then you have this big vacuum. How have you been adjusting to life without Saturday's and all the work that happens [crosstalk 00:31:09]

Mary Cooke: I know and my kids aren't very happy because I'm [crosstalk 00:31:10], "Have you cleaned the bathroom yet?"

Sara Weaver: Have you vacuumed yet?

Mary Cooke: Where it was like noon before those questions came so now it's more 9:30 or 10 o'clock.

Corey Tafoya: Right.

Mary Cooke: Let's go.

Sara Weaver: I actually... I've had enough to do there's been plenty to do that has kept me busy but I... there's a couple things that I would like to do. One of the compliments that one of my committee members paid to us I thought was he said after my defense that, "We were probably one of the best examples he'd ever seen of a partnership that worked."

Corey Tafoya: Absolutely right.

Sara Weaver: That sometimes people they either end up hating each other or their dissertations start to blend and he... I think that we've talked about writing an article just putting it out there, what are some strategies for-

Mary Cooke: Going on a book tour.

Sara Weaver: Going on a book tour.

Corey Tafoya: There you go that's your next thing.

Sara Weaver: But the other thing that I have started working on I'm actually writing a book, it's personal. It has... it's about growing up with my father and mother on horse racing circuit and all of the experiences that we had, and it's kind of a tribute to him because he is really the one that I think probably pushed me educationally the most and so it's kind of a tribute to him as well. So, I'll sit down and it's easy writing I don't have to cite my sources.

Mary Cooke: You can have your own thoughts.

Sara Weaver: I could have my own thoughts, but it's a lot of memories for me. So, it's a lot of fun to write and-

Corey Tafoya: Fun writing what a concept, all right.

Mary Cooke: For sure.

Corey Tafoya: That's good. And then Mary you're writing grants non-stop [inaudible 00:32:53]

Mary Cooke: Yeah there's that. [crosstalk 00:32:54]

Corey Tafoya: That's probably not as fulfilling as writing fun stories.

Mary Cooke: Well, it is to a certain degree yes, it is fulfilling.

Corey Tafoya: Yeah.

Mary Cooke: But some of my time has been traded for being able to focus on the work at hand to, and looking at Curriculum Units that have been turned in and... Excuse me.

Corey Tafoya: So, if you had advice for anyone considering this, they're sitting in your position with maybe a friend or two they're tossed around this idea, what advice would you have for them to pursue?

Sara Weaver: I think we both said have a buddy, because that accountability I believe is really important because we were both accountable to each other for getting it finished. And I think both of us at different times when family things were going on we would have understood, but it was really nice that also understood that it's nice to finish together.

Mary Cooke: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And we did everything together like at the whole stage of the game proposal, data meeting, defense I mean everything was at the same time. [crosstalk 00:33:48]

Corey Tafoya: It really is an incredible story, the way you guys kind of stayed together through this and the story of hard work and academic prowess and friendship, all that it's really an awesome story. Doctor-

Mary Cooke: Doctor.

Sara Weaver: Doctor.

Corey Tafoya: It's been really fun to watch this all and certainly allowing us to kind of celebrate your accomplishment with you and all that, and if anyone has any questions they can find you both on Twitter I suppose if they're listening elsewhere, otherwise-

Sara Weaver: They can.

Corey Tafoya: Just come to Harvard and you can find both of you, because chances are you're not going anywhere if you've been here this long [crosstalk 00:34:20]

Mary Cooke: And Sarah still thinks she needs an office in this building [crosstalk 00:34:24] we can share a table again.

Corey Tafoya: But personally just thank you both for all your commitment to our schools and all this, and I think it does say a lot about a district when you have people in such leadership positions as both of you that have pursued academia to its

highest point, and you guys both make us very proud. So thanks for joining us everyone and-

Mary Cooke: Thank you.

Sara Weaver: Thanks for having us.

Corey Tafoya: ... and absolutely it's fun to tell your story and brag about you both though [inaudible 00:34:49]. So, until next time this is Education Buzz and we'll be talking to you soon.