

Ingham Impact Episode 2: Heartwood School

Hello, and welcome to another Ingham Impact Podcast. My name is Lance Siegwald, and I am honored to serve as the building principal here at Heartwood. We service students with a number of unique challenges, and although this job is challenging, it also is very rewarding. I would like to introduce two of our dedicated teachers: Kirk Showers and Nicole Bondsteel. Nicole serves students in an SXI classroom, while Kirk services students in a moderately cognitively impaired classroom. Here are their stories. So this is my seventh year at Heartwood. I was hired for the position for severely multiply impaired at the middle school level, and I did teaching at the middle school level for the SXI population for five years and then was moved to the secondary level, which is where I am now. I had a brother who was severely multiply impaired who passed away two years ago, so my whole world was always in special ed and with the SXI population, and I would always go into his classroom and spend time with his teacher and I just really loved it. It was really meaningful to me. I've been here, this is my 20th year here at Heartwood. I started as a parapro and went back and got my teaching degree and now I'm a secondary MOSAI teacher, and have been a teacher here the last 14 years. There's no day ever the same, coming to work you never know what to expect, and I like that aspect of it. But I also like seeing the kids and the growth they make each and every day. We work on functional academics, functional living skills, mobility skills, just any skills that can make our students more independent. High school aged, so 15 to 20, are usually the age that I have, and we teach math, English/language arts, social studies, science, but we also get them ready for job sites. We do job skills, we do daily living skills, we teach them how to do laundry, dishes, all those kind of things that they need as well, so it's a pretty full day. My coworkers and I really work together, I mean, you can't do this job by yourself. We all have such a love for the population of students and we just love coming here, giving them opportunities, seeing them happy, enriching their lives. If it's something simple like providing them with a switch for communication, or getting them upright for the first time out of their wheelchair, giving them a different perspective on their world. It's those little things that mean quite a bit to my staff and I and that's kind of what keeps us going and keeps us motivated. Mondays are pretty quick because we get here from the weekend, kids look forward to swim; that's our swim time. Then we have about an hour break and then we go right to gym. Then we go to lunch which is pretty much every student's favorite time of the day. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday is more focused on our English/language arts and math. We do jobs in the classroom everyday, whether it be the laundry, washing of tables, all those kind of things. I do have students that go out to job sites, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, even Mondays. We have kids going to jobs out in the community and working, like one this year that we started is at the city hall, here in Mason. Kids are in and out, they get all their therapies as well, with speech and OT and PT, and they get the whole realm here. We get our students in,

we get them off the bus, we start our toileting curriculum that we use through the MOVE Program. After that we go into our morning meeting; we kind of go over the day and what's happening. Then we'll usually do either a math lesson or an English/language arts lesson. Occasionally we have specials in the morning such as library or music. Then we'll do our lunch routine where each kid is in a different chair using a different equipment for eating. And then we will have specials in the afternoon; we usually have adaptive PE, We swim, we have OT/PT group. With that, we're rotating their position every hour for our students. So each kid is on their own schedule embedded within our classroom schedule. I just look at my role as, I mean, these are learners, they do learn different ways, We have to find the way that they can learn. I see every kid as a way of being successful, so there's no student that shouldn't be considered a learner. Increments may be small, but there's always that little bit, and then when you get input from people that haven't seen that student in a while, saying "man, I can't believe how they have improved." It's just nice to hear, nice to see. It's very rewarding as a teacher and staff, I have to say give props to my staff, they do a lot and they help me out a bunch. You're following these adapted curricula that are great, but then you're tailoring it to each student's need and looking at their strengths and their needs while they're performing the task, and you're always doing an evaluation to try and figure out: is there something more we can do, is there something different? But just taking it down and looking at the individual and what they need, and then building on that, I think helps create the best opportunities. It's kind of looking at the umbrella and then breaking it down for each one individually. I just love working here. I wouldn't trade it for the world.

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