

Ingham Impact Episode 9: Itinerant Services

When I was younger I couldn't say my "R" sounds and a kid and I remember his name and face made fun of me for saying cow instead of car and that's when it hit me; that i sounded different from the other kids and I didn't want to talk in class anymore and so that just stuck with me and I wanted that to go away for other kids; I didn't want them to have that feeling of embarrassment. I'd always kind of had an interest in psychology and helping people and it just clicked for me it just felt natural it felt normal and I can't see myself really doing anything else. The idea of coming to work every day to work with students and to do your best to kind of help them remove some of their barriers that are keeping them from being their most successful. We work directly with students addressing you know a whole host of different skills that are needed for good handwriting and just to be able to participate in their day fully at school. We work in a consultative basis with teachers and staff and families; whatever their needs may be we'll offer up suggestions, try to plan some interventions. We're problem-solvers really is what we are. Well every day is different and every student is different. From day to day I never know what challenge I'll face or what behavior we'll try to problem solve but for the most part we figure things out and make things better for kids. The larger part of my job other than the speech is the language part of it. Students that have difficulty with vocabulary; not the vocabulary list in their science book but just knowing the words that they should know for their age. Being able to organize their thoughts well enough to tell a story, being able to understand what a teacher is saying; that is probably the biggest part and the most misunderstood part of our job. I'm an itinerant so that means you can be anywhere depending upon the year, so this is my third year with the ISD, and it's my third different set of programs. so I've had anything from preschool through high school and I've had two different center-based programs, including here at the SLC and Evergreen where I am now and I've worked with anywhere from students who are non-verbal to going to graduate high school and everywhere in between. It's stretched me and grow me as a person, and as a professional. We link typically developing students with students with autism spectrum disorder and within those groups we work on socialization and communication skills; a lot of the focus is play so different play activities that the students do together. not only is it rewarding for the students that are typically developing but it really creates friendships between the two groups of students and I feel it's my job and my role within the local district to make sure universal supports are in place for students so if the student needs a visual schedule, that's in place; if a student's having difficulty managing a certain behavior, helping them develop a self- management strategy so they can be independent in managing their own behavior. The great thing about my job is that it's all done through play and that's how kids learn; developmentally that is how they master these skills is through play. The fun part is finding that just right balance; that place where it's challenging for the student but they're also able to find some success in it so

that they can build on that. When I pull them out of the classroom and work with them, I'm trying to teach them new skills, but it doesn't matter if they can do the skill if they can only do it with me in this room so then I go into the classroom with them and help them generalize those skills so they're doing it with their teacher and their friends in a library and in the gym so they can truly use the skills that I'm teaching them. We have social work, speech-language pathology, psychologists; it's everybody it's the teachers, the principals, special ed director; we all work together to try to help these students be as successful as they can be at school. Really my goal is to take a look at, in a partnership with that student and say, "Alright this is what's going on, how do we move forward, how do we learn from this how do we grow how do we make a better decision." The idea is let's get the things that are in the way out of the way so you can grow up and be the best you possible. Everybody learns differently and everybody has a strength and weakness. My ability to give them those skills that they can then take and use them to learn is what's important. I don't teach math, social studies, science; I don't teach those subjects but I give them the tools that they need in order to learn those subjects. For me, it's not just how the student's functioning at school it's how they're doing at home. We offer up a lot of support for parents at home to work on those skills that we work on here, ideas for you know whatever they may be struggling with. Even though it might not pertain necessarily to their education; if they're not sleeping well at night you know i will offer up suggestions because that does impact they're there every day. It's the early intervention, it's inundating them with as much services to remediate the social skills the behaviors and the communication skills so that they're ready to be productive members of our community. The cliché phrase is "children are the future" right? well, it's cliché but it's also the truth. the more that we are available to help our students grow and mature and become you know more complete and well-rounded human beings, the better off we all are.

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