

#EducationMatters

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Teacher Feature Bianca Ruiz-Hernandez



The path to career discovery and passion is different for every person. Some people are born knowing what they want to do, some people think they know what they want, only to find their calling is elsewhere; and still, others find that, in one way or another, their careers find them. Bianca Ruiz-Hernandez, a Quincy local, never planned on being where she is now, but as life would have it, she found her calling working with students with special needs and is currently working as the Special Day Education teacher at Quincy Elementary. The Special Day Class is for K-6th students with moderate to severe disabilities.

Each student in Ms. Ruiz-Hernandez's class has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and spends different amounts of time in her classroom. Bianca shared, "My job is to provide each student in my class with specialized academic instruction along with supports and modifications to help them succeed in general education. I work with many people, including aides and specialists, such as the behavior specialist, occupational therapist, speech pathologist, school psychologist, and general education teachers to help my students succeed. All my students

have different abilities, needs, and schedules. In my classroom, we work on academics, social skills, and life skills.”

Due to the varying range of abilities, needs, and schedules of the students, Bianca’s job can be very challenging, but according to Linda Gay, her local support teacher and mentor, “Bianca has done an amazing job coordinating and balancing each student’s schedule in order for them to get the most out of their day.”

Bianca’s journey to her current position started with an office position at Head Start in 2013. She shared, “ Growing up being a teacher did cross my mind, but I never thought my passion was working with children with disabilities”. However, while working at Head Start her supervisor told her about a job opening with Hand in Hand, working with children with disabilities 0-5 years old. Bianca shared, “Though that was my first experience working with children with disabilities, I immediately fell in love with the children I was working with and just knew I wanted to learn and do more.” Therefore, while working with Hand in Hand Bianca decided to also take a job as an aide at the Special Day Preschool (SDPS) working under the SDPS teacher Linda Gay.

Bianca worked as an aid in the SDPS from December 2015 until June 2016 and then with the encouragement of many, including her mentor Linda Gay, she applied and received the position as the Special Day Class Teacher at Quincy Elementary, in the Fall of 2016. While teaching, she is also currently a student at Chico State, working on her Moderate/Severe Special Education credential as an intern.

Bianca shared that her favorite part of her job is watching her students achieve their goals. She stated, “I feel so fortunate to be able to work with my kiddos from K-6th grade. I really get to know them and watch them grow. While this is only my second year teaching, I worked with some of them at Head Start, at Hand in Hand, and at the preschool. I really enjoy working on social and life skills along with academics. I have also really enjoyed working and collaborating with our behavior specialist. Learning about and being able to implement the strategies she shares with me has been a very fun and rewarding learning experience.”

Bianca went on to share, “As an education specialist, it is all about individualized education programs. Finding the right group/strategy/program for each child is a great challenge, but I really enjoy learning more about programs and implementing them in my classroom. I have high expectations for all my students and strive to build relationships, create a safe and fun environment, and also hold them accountable for their choices. Collaboration with aides in my classroom, general education teachers, other specialists, and my student’s families is crucial.”

According to her colleagues and mentors, Bianca is a natural working with students with disabilities. Linda Gay shared, “ Bianca sees the potential within each student and uses a variety of tools and strategies to help them maximize that potential. She is a self-motivated young lady who is dedicated to her students and works hard to assure that their needs are being met. Her students are very lucky to have her!” Jennifer Kimball, the Special Education Inclusion Coach shared, “ Bianca is a wonderful asset to our special education department and

PUSD. She has an exceptional intuition in regards to the needs of her students, she is a good collaborator, and parent educator, who strives for student equity, and has high expectations of her students. She provides a warm, loving, and academic environment that is very dynamic and engaging.”

According to Bianca, her parents have been the biggest influences in her life. She explained, “Watching my parents work as hard as they work and always having their support has shaped me into the person I am today.” As far as her career, she is thankful to Katie Windle one of her supervisors at Hand to Hand, who encouraged and helped her improve her teaching methods and approaches to working with kids with special needs. She is also very thankful to Linda Gay, her mentor and local support teacher, who encouraged her to apply for the job, and supports her every day. “I text/call her close to every day. I even show up at her house or at her children’s practices and she is always happy to help me,” Bianca shared. “Working with Linda and learning from her teaching style and philosophy of special education has greatly shaped my philosophy and approach to teaching.”

Another huge support at Quincy Elementary is Jennifer Kimball, who Bianca shared is always there when she has a question and is always ready to help her in the classroom. Additionally, Bianca explained that her first and second-grade teacher in Mexico was really influential in her life. She stated, “I remember clearly some of her hands-on lessons, the way she talked to us, and the meetings my mom would attend in the evenings to support my sister and I. When we moved to Quincy, I did not speak any English and I was so lucky to have teachers who helped me feel welcome and safe in their classrooms. Even though we could barely communicate with each other they did so much to help me. I will always be thankful for Mrs. McMorrow, Mrs. Bequette, Mrs. Gallagher, and Mr. Thomas.”

Bianca has come a long way since she first moved to Quincy from Mexico in the 6th grade. Bianca’s story displays the power of positive role models, leadership, and mentors to help each of us find our passion and potential. It’s always exciting to see local Plumas County kids discover and use their skills and talents to serve our communities. Plumas Unified is very proud and thankful for Bianca’s dedication and service to our students. We are so grateful to have you on our PUSD team!