

Teacher Interview

Erica Johnson

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1. Tell me about yourself as a teacher.
 - a. Why did you decide to enter teaching?
 - b. How many years have you been teaching?
 - c. What grade levels and/or subject areas have you taught?

Mary decided to enter teaching because as a child she always wanted to be a teacher. She once considered being an architect, but she did not like all the math it involved. She has been teaching for thirty five years. Mary has taught first, second and third grade. She has also taught remedial reading.

2. Tell me about your classroom and teaching strategies.
 - a. How is your classroom arranged to optimize learning?
 - b. What are your strategies for effective classroom management?
 - c. What types of lesson plans do you create? How do you incorporate state standards in the curriculum?

Mary said she is constantly walking around the classroom. There is no front or back of the classroom. The desks are arranged in groups of four. She has a designated area in the classroom for reading groups. She uses her “Elmo”, which is an overhead projector quite often. Mary said they have a lot of technology at their school and they are very lucky to have it as a resource. She lets her students know her expectations on the very first day of class. She also goes over rules and regulations regularly with her class so they don’t “forget”. She has certain rewards for students with good behavior. She also has consequences for students who do not behave. In each textbook she receives state standards. She plans her lessons around these standards and make sure she includes what needs to be included.

3. For you, what are the most exciting aspects of teaching and your work?

Mary said “I love it when I see the kid’s minds just click!” She loves being able to help children read. She said it was an amazing feeling knowing that she has helped a child learn something that day

4. Who has given you the most support in learning to be an effective teacher?

Mary said her fellow teachers have given her the most support during her career. Her family also has been very supportive.

5. How do you encourage involvement of parents and families in the school and your classroom?

Mary writes weekly notes home to the parents about their child's behavior and progress. She also corresponds through emails. She encourages parents to work with their children at home with their homework and reading. She also gets back to parent questions in a timely fashion.

6. How much time do you spend outside of the work day on preparation and grading?

Mary said she spends about two hours every day after school working on grading papers or preparing a lesson. She also has to dedicate time on the weekends for preparation.

7. What do you think are the most difficult challenges for teachers?

Mary thinks the biggest challenge is when people try and tell her how to teach her class. She has been teaching for thirty five years and has her "own" way of teaching. She also thinks it can be a challenge to get parents involved as much as she wants them to be.

8. What do you see as the pros and cons of ISTEP? In what ways, if any, has ISTEP affected your teaching?

Mary believes that ISTEP can scare a child. Standardized testing should not determine a child's future. She said ISTEP really does not apply to her since she teaches first graders.

9. What were your thoughts on your very first day of teaching?

Mary said she was so nervous on the very first day of teaching. She thought everything was going to go wrong! She also thought she was doing everything wrong. Her students listened to her very well though!

10. What do you think is the most effective philosophy to use in the classroom?

Mary said Critical Theory and maybe a little Perrenialism. She thinks it is important for children to be critical thinkers and to learn how to solve problems on their own.

11. What is your most exciting memory as a teacher?

"Too many to count"

12. How do you continue your professional development? What is required to maintain your teaching license?

Mary's license is a lifetime license. She does not have to do anything to renew it or update it. She likes to attend different conferences just for personal improvement.

13. How do you know you are successful?

Mary said she knows she is successful because she can see it in the kid's eyes. When they begin to understand something they have a totally different look on their faces.

14. What advice would you give to a future teacher?

BE PATIENT! Mary said to think of your students as someone else's child who is loved very much. Always make them a priority in your life. If you are not dedicated to helping your students learn and achieve their goals in life, don't be a teacher!

Mary Keyes has been a teacher for thirty five years. She has seen many different changes in the education system. According to our textbook to be a good teacher you must be: knowledgeable, alive, articulate, innovative, patient, committed, and able to find joy in teaching (Koch 11). I think Mary has all of these traits as a teacher. She is very alive! She is always happy to see her students learning new things. She is always looking for new and exciting things to teach her students. She stated in my interview, "To be a good teacher, you must have patience". She is very patient with her students. She believes that being a mother has helped her be more patient with her students. She is definitely committed to helping her students to the best of her ability. She stays after school on most weekdays to help students that need remediation. She said she has always loved teaching and always will!

I think that Mary is a lot like me when it comes to teaching. She involves her kids in a lot of activities. I do not like the old structure of a classroom. I believe the students should be able to think on their own and figure out answers on their own. I love the way she has a great relationship with all of her students. I am very happy and "alive" with my students during service learning, like she is with her students every day. I feel like I am very patient with young children just like Mary. For some reason I can be very patient when it comes to children. I also feel like I am committed like Mary is. I always want my students at School 58 to try and make an improvement by the next time I volunteer. I have also stayed past the designated time to help the students. I love helping each of the students reach certain goals that they have set for themselves.

Mary strongly agreed with the critical theory philosophy. In this philosophy the teachers role is to "guide the students to think critically about social injustice and challenge oppression"(Koch 60). She wants her students to be able to solve problems on their own because

they aren't always going to have her there to help them work out their problems. She also brings in newspaper articles sometimes to read to the students. I did not realize that teaching was going to be so time consuming outside of school hours. Mary told me she spends at least two hours a day working on lesson plans and grading papers. I am willing to take the extra time needed for my students because I want to help them be successful in their education.

This interview made me more excited to be a teacher than I already was. I have always wanted to be a teacher. Based on some of the stories Mary has told me in the past, first grade is going to be the grade I want to teach. Mary has definitely reassured me that teaching is what I want to do for the rest of my life!

Message: RE: permission letter

Subject: RE: permission letter

Date: Wed, 19 Oct 2011 16:02:48 -0700 [10/19/2011 07:02:48 PM EDT]

From: William Keyes <drbillpod@sbcglobal.net>


To: Erica Johnson <ejohnson135@ivytech.edu>


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Erica, you have my permission to use the interview regarding the answers provided for the 1st grade at Christ the King School. Good luck in your teaching career.

Mary Keyes

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