Teach California

Ask a Teacher Virtual Interview Series

The following is a text transcript of the *Virtual Interview of teacher Michael Bernardis,* which is made available by the California Department of Education's Special Education Division.

Describer: Header reads – Make a difference of a life time. Teach. - Teach California – Your first step toward becoming a teacher is just one click away.

Describer: A teacher sitting in his classroom participating in an interview.

People always want to know what it takes to be a teacher in special education. One of the things you always hear is you must be so patient, that it's patience that is the key thing.

Describer: Teacher working with students in a classroom.

I kind of roll my eyes when I hear that answer lots of times because I don't see it as patience; I see it as seeing the potential, looking for the potential in every human being. Every child who is challenged by special needs, you don't look at what they are challenged by; you look at what their strengths are. You look at the strength and you say," How can we help this child to grow even more?" and see the potential in each child. You find that teachable moment within the play situation so you've got to be very flexible with what you are doing. You've got to be very flexible with how that is going to be implemented and what your plan is. Sometimes it may be something completely different than what you had planned. But the main thing is you are going there with a plan; you are prepared so it's not just something haphazard that happens. Something might go in a different direction.

Describer: A teacher sitting in his classroom participating in an interview

You may have language in mind, you want the child to express new words but the area in which the child is really taking off in is his ability to walk. He wants to get up and start moving and so you say, "Ok, let's go with walking right now." We're going to stress his ability to walk and.

Describer: Teacher's aide walking with a student.

Encourage him to take steps or side step along the furniture and then move over here as well as try to implement the language as you go along. One of the things you need to ask yourself is, "What is my heart's desire?

Describer: A teacher sitting in his classroom participating in an interview

What is it that I really feel my life is going to be all about? Is my life one that I want to have a life of service to others?" And this is really an area where you can be of service to people and get paid for it. And granted, you know, education is not an area where you are going to make lots and lots of money, but there is more to life than just that. That's a cliché, that there's more to life than just money, but it's the truth. Unless you are doing something that is beneficial, to where you are being of service to others, I don't think it's a life that's really worth living. So it is very

important for you to consider that if you want to be of service to others, this is the field to go into. If you feel like you are being called to do that, then go for it.

California Department of Education, Special Education Division.