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.

One of the biggest challenges is dealing with the parents who are dealing with the grief of dealing with a child with special needs. There is kind of a process that parents go through when they realize, especially if it's a long term, life type of disability that the child is going to have.

Describer: Teacher sitting in a circle with students and parents playing a game.

The parents actually have to go through a feeling of loss that they go through in the potential of their child, of what they were hoping for, their dream of their child being, you know

Describer: Parent holding an infant student.

The great baseball player, or their child being the star actress in a play. Many times those kinds of dreams are lost in a way for these parents.

Describer: Parents, and teacher's aides interacting with an infant student.

And my challenge is for them to realize that there are new dreams there for this child. This child has potential. Your child has abilities but we just have to see them in another way. My biggest challenge is for them to get to that point where they can see that potential and have that dream for their child, once again a renewed dream.

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

The benefit that I have is that I get to see the parents once a week, on an average, and I can develop a rapport with them over time. It takes time to develop that trust, but over two or three weeks, there is more of a trust level there and they are able to feel comfortable with me. It's to a point where we actually develop somewhat of a feeling of friendship.

Describer: Teacher talking to parent in classroom gym, while also teaching infant student.

Even though it's not a friendship that they have actually chosen because it's something that I have come into their life because they have a difficulty with their child. But the idea is, after a while, once you develop that bond with a parent, you have an opportunity to be a sounding board for them.

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

And to assist them with anything that might be frustrating as well as to share in the joys that they have of the little increments of learning that their child has shown which some people might see as just minute, little steps, but for them and for their child, they know that it is a big, big leap.

California Department of Education, Special Education Division