



Amarillys Berrios
Oakridge Middle School
Subject: English Language Arts
Grade: 6-8
Years Teaching: 8

Amarillys Berrios struggled to read as a child. This became her inspiration to pursue teaching as she turned her weakness into a strength, and now she helps her students to do the same and discover the joy of reading. Amarillys has implemented her high impact practice, "Making Differences Through Small Group," by fostering small group instruction for all students, which accommodates and targets the various needs of her classroom. Through flexible and strategic grouping, students are placed according to their strengths and weaknesses to effectively accommodate their learning style, target their areas of growth, and improve their confidence. Weekly rotations always include a teacher-led center, where individual student needs are the focus of every lesson. Amarillys' high impact practice promotes peer learning, encourages language development, provides scaffolding and differentiated instruction for all the various learning styles, and establishes a supportive environment where students feel safe sharing and engaging with complex content. Collaboration is encouraged as students grouped together can work together on projects, discuss concepts and texts, and support each other's learning. Small group instruction is also critical in helping her English Language Learners acquire and become proficient in the English language, building their literacy skills as well as their confidence.

Gina Manville DeJager
Barron Collier High School
Subject: Special Education/Entrepreneurship
Grade: 12
Years Teaching: 19

Gina Maville DeJager is committed to meeting her students' individual learning needs and ensuring that they feel accepted and included. Gina's high impact practice, "Preparing Students for L.I.F.E.," is a vocational training program for her students with disabilities that provides authentic structured work-study opportunities in a community-based setting. L.I.F.E. stands for "learning independent functional employment," and Gina has partnered with Royal Poinciana Golf Club to offer internships across 13 departments that teach hands-on job skills with guidance, support, and patience. Gina conducts visits to each intern for observations, where she offers praise for the skills they are doing well and constructive criticism for the areas that need improvement. She will break down a task into more manageable parts, reteach a skill, or help students learn to advocate for themselves or ask their supervisor for clarification of directions. Gina's high impact practice allows students to try new job skills with guidance and support in a positive and safe environment without the risk of being fired. Through the partnership with Royal Poinciana Golf Club, instructions follow an "I-do, We-do, You-do" method, where interns watch, then do it with guidance and eventually complete the task independently. Many of Gina's students who have gone through the program has secured successful employment across Collier County.



Erin Powell
Vineyards Elementary School
Subject: Elementary Visual Art
Grade: K-5
Years Teaching: 13

Erin Powell's first inspiration to become an art teacher was her parents, who prioritized positive art experiences in her life from a young age. Erin's high impact practice, "Visual Aids for Visual Arts," embodies the belief that everyone can connect with and create meaningful art. In her classroom, she uses visual aids to enhance learning, introduce vocabulary, and compare and contrast artists, art genres, and techniques. Traditionally, students in art class only see the finished project, which does not allow for all students to process the steps it takes to complete. Some may struggle in how to begin. Erin's visual aids bridge this gap, either in the form of sequential steps of a project on the whiteboard, images of craftsmanship and project rubrics, and/or instructional videos of herself teaching the project for students to reference. Her high impact practice not only helps all types of learners confidently create their own projects, allowing them to share ideas, talk through what they are thinking, and see the steps needed to feel successful. Erin's classroom is a safe place for students to be creative, show expression, and take chances – all of which are life skills needed for a successful future.

Sydney Whittaker
Lake Park Elementary School
Subject: ELA and Social Studies
Grade: 4
Years Teaching: 5

Sydney Whittaker credits her kindergarten teacher, who provided love, encouragement, and a joy of teaching, for inspiring her to follow the same career path. "Molding Leaders Through Meaningful Moments," Sydney's high impact practice, focuses on creating a positive environment full of meaningful moments that helps every one of her students engage more meaningfully with the learning material. She begins every morning with a song, where the class sings and uses hand motions to set intentions for the day. Her students then lead a review of their learning goals, using chants and music. As the lessons progress, students collaborate in groups, ensuring no one is left behind as they encourage each other. Towards the end of the day, students stand to share their group's learning progress, receiving two claps and a cheer for their contributions. They write shoutouts to classmates who helped them, which are celebrated every Friday. By making instruction positive and interesting, Sydney's classroom develops deeper comprehension, engages with the material, and retains information. Assigning a student to conduct meaningful moments fosters leadership in the classroom, with many eager to participate. Sydney's students feel valued as essential members of her classroom and actively contribute to everyone's overall success.