

Interview #6

Name of Interviewee: Seamus Quillinan

Occupation: Special Education teacher at Mountain View High School

Date: 4/4/23

00;01;13;19 - 00;01;20;18

Speaker 2

Okay. What have these kids taught you that you would not have expected?

00;01;21;07 - 00;01;57;13

Speaker 1

What these students have taught me, I think, is to value every moment, to be grateful for what you have to be joyful to live in the moment and be present. And sometimes all that matters is that. That probably was enough.

00;01;57;17 - 00;01;58;08

Speaker 1

Yeah. Yeah.

00;01;58;18 - 00;02;00;04

Speaker 2

Would you choose this career again?

00;02;00;12 - 00;02;01;07

Speaker 1

Absolutely. Yeah.

00;02;01;20 - 00;02;08;16

Speaker 2

So what do you wish people understood about people with disabilities that they don't?

00;02;09;06 - 00;02;12;19

Speaker 1

Yeah, it's a big question. Can you ask one more time?

00;02;13;23 - 00;02;17;20

Speaker 2

What do you wish people understood about people with disabilities that they don't?

00;02;17;29 - 00;02;46;12

Speaker 1

I think that they have a lot to give to this society and that they are and should be valued members of the world and I think you see that in our classrooms, in our schools, and we try to always to be model and and I hope that I'm making the world a better place for for my students right now.

00;02;46;25 - 00;02;53;28

Speaker 2

What are any policies that you wish the school district would change regarding your students or classes?

00;02;55;21 - 00;03;04;21

Speaker 1

Can I give you an example of something that did change? That's a that's a that's a yeah, I think that's part of where I want to go with that. So.

00;03;07;08 - 00;03;43;10

Speaker 1

So last year, one of my students, Gabe Selaya, I really wanted him to be the MVLA student of the month and, and I, I feel like his student earned it. And in working with I believe some of the ASB commissioners and teachers also, they decided to see if we could make it happen. One of the challenges was students in our classrooms don't have GPAs.

00;03;43;10 - 00;04;09;16

Speaker 1

They get pass or fail grades. And I believe the rule or the practice, I should say at MVLA was you have to be a certain GPA. Have to be almost a college bound student to get the award. Well, with the help of other teachers and students in the ASB classroom and teachers in the classroom, we're able to change that.

00;04;09;23 - 00;04;38;20

Speaker 1

And they do the board, too. And last year in March, Gabe became the March student of the month. And it was really incredible for him because I wholeheartedly believe he earned it. And then to see how that changes continued, another one of our students in the Life Skills program actually yesterday got the same award. So I'm very happy about that.

00;04;38;20 - 00;04;40;28

Speaker 1

So.

00;04;41;28 - 00;04;52;25

Speaker 2

Um, so switching topics a little bit, how do you think programs like Spartan Buddies and Best Buddies are beneficial? How impactful do you think they are?

00;04;53;21 - 00;05;03;21

Speaker 1

Yes, So I think that I look back, which I think are impactful and I think...can you ask me one more time?

00;05;04;01 - 00;05;09;24

Speaker 2

How impactful are programs like spartan buddies?

00;05;10;04 - 00;05;47;00

Speaker 1

So I think Spartan Buddies is a really important part of our school and an important part of the lives of our students in our classrooms. Hopefully even all the peer buddies that are in the club, students, particularly with more significant disabilities, tend to have really small social networks of friends. And the club is a program, if you will, or a way to help build up their friendships and to make their world a little bigger.

00;05;47;14 - 00;06;30;26

Speaker 1

And over my career, best buddies and spartan buddies has been the best way to do that. And I mean, if, for example, as we've got to know you and get to know other wonderful students to come and get to know our population and it's like that's been that is really powerful. So I think overall, I mean, I think it's a really good experience for our students with disabilities, but also students without disabilities, they can be aware and more compassionate and accepting and respecting of our other people.

00;06;31;08 - 00;06;37;03

Speaker 2

Can you give a short description of spartan buddies?

00;06;38;18 - 00;06;50;07

Speaker 1

To make it really short, Spartan Buddies is a club on campus that pairs students with and without disabilities for the sole purpose of friendship. Yeah.

00;06;51;29 - 00;07;04;17

Speaker 2

Are there any particular students you remember that Spartans Buddies Club or the best buddies club that you're part of had a profound impact on a student?

00;07;05;00 - 00;07;38;25

Speaker 1

I do remember. Yeah. Okay, so through the club now, this is kind of best. I'll just be vague because they are best buddies. I'm talking about doing it to be really specific about. Okay, so in the service. So yeah, so prior school and in our Best Buddies program, um, the club has this, you know, so the club provided friendship for some students in our classroom and through that of one of our students in the past.

00;07;38;25 - 00;08;05;03

Speaker 1

His name is Cody, absolutely adored by so many of his buddies in the club. And through that he asked someone to the senior ball and it was a big deal. Like I didn't have that set up. And the person he asked happened to be in the cabinet and accepted. And I think that was a really great experience for both of them.

00;08;05;03 - 00;08;09;11

Speaker 1

Had a great time. So yeah.

00;08;10;06 - 00;08;15;11

Speaker 2

What is your biggest challenge connecting spartan buddies with their peers? Here's how you think that's going to improve?

00;08;15;20 - 00;08;50;00

Speaker 1

I'm finding people to consistently attend the club and to become authentic friends. I want my goal or dream sometimes is to have the students be real friends outside of campus, and sometimes that doesn't happen. So that would be like the next level club. And this, I guess, is that they're that they're not just it's not the club is not just on Thursdays it's people coming other times weekends and that would be the perfect.

00;08;50;04 - 00;08;59;04

Speaker 2

So how important is it for students in your class, with disabilities, to integrate with other kids in high school?

00;08;59;19 - 00;09;30;07

Speaker 1

I think it's really important because that's the other. I think we are all high school students and how do we meet their needs in a classroom, but also socially spartan buddies is one way. Having them included in general education courses is another way. So as much as we can, I also believe that our community outings are part of integrating our students in the real world.

00;09;30;26 - 00;09;45;24

Speaker 1

The truth is, high school is like high school. Us for years is not the rest of your life. So you pair particular our students to be out there, to be safe in the community, to be able to be socially appropriate. And that's what we do as we have our community outings. So that's very important.

00;09;47;03 - 00;10;02;16

Speaker 2

Is just one more.

00;10;02;29 - 00;10;03;12

Speaker 1

Are you ready?

00;10;03;17 - 00;10;04;00

Speaker 2

Yes.

00;10;04;26 - 00;10;12;28b

Speaker 1

And occupation? Yeah. My name is Seamus Quillinan and I'm a high school special education teacher.

00;10;27;24 - 00;10;32;02

Speaker 2

How important is it for students to integrate with other students in high school?

00;10;33;07 - 00;10;53;22

Speaker 1

I think it's very important. We have to look for, particularly for our students, we have to meet their academic needs in a different environment and their social needs in a different environment. But how do we include all students? And I said the better the first time. Ask again, I got this.

00;10;54;27 - 00;10;59;06

Speaker 2

How important is it for students in special education to integrate in high school?

00;10;59;18 - 00;11;07;12

Speaker 1

Very important. First, I look at students. We look like we like to think of students. It was, yeah, what I'm going to make out this year. First, we like to think of students as being role Mountain View high School students first. Right? And then how do we meet individual needs? Like the students in my class come to my class for particular needs, right? And then we go into the general education classrooms to meet some of their art class, music class and dancing.

00;11;33;13 - 00;11;53;13

Speaker 1

So there's our classes where they're included with the general population, and we also go in the community too, just because I think that is important to get our students ready, particularly my students in my class ready for life as an adult. And the truth is, you only spend four years in high school. It's not your full life. So we want to get them out there.

00;11;53;13 - 00;12;07;04

Speaker 1

Being safe, socially appropriate, and also, you know, ready for the real world. So if I could pick out something out of those three right there.

00;12;07;04 - 00;12;10;06

Speaker 2

What was the biggest learning experience being a teacher for students?

00;12;10;24 - 00;12;28;25

Speaker 1

My gosh, that's a big question and big. It's a learning experience. I mean, that's a big question. Give me another one.

00;12;29;00 - 00;12;32;15

Speaker 2

Yeah, but what brings you the most joy in your job?

00;12;32;27 - 00;12;58;19

Speaker 1

I've seen the kids smile, connect with them, build relationships, and then over a long period of time, kind of, you know, seeing them grow, seeing them improve. But I mean, I think yeah, I think the best classes are classrooms that are full of joy. And that's something I always emphasize. So I love to see happy students.

00;13;01;28 - 00;13;06;04

Speaker 2

Do you think it would be beneficial to have more integrated classes along with your class?

00;13;06;21 - 00;13;37;09

Speaker 1

Yeah, I do. If done appropriately, I think that's what we will try to do as far as possible. But this isn't a class, right? But we do a little bit of that was as buddies, you know, that is okay you should know so I guess buddies of that we started about nine nine years ago with Mr. Gerard Mr. Darby and it's basically as be in our class hanging out and we did a art project right over there last Wednesday and it's like a social justice art project.

00;13;37;14 - 00;14;07;12

Speaker 1

It's like kickball. We just hung out bagels together. We've had little holiday parties and so it's a lot of fun. So that's something. But it's against during class time, but it's not an official class, right? So it's wonderful when students like you come and be our it's actually the I think the best way to really get to know our students on a long up to the up the good and the bad up in the down you know the challenges that they go through.

00;14;07;22 - 00;14;12;25

Speaker 1

So that's something you can't like I don't know. It has happened naturally.

00;14;13;10 - 00;14;18;00

Speaker 2

So what are your hopes and dreams for these students?

00;14;19;22 - 00;14;41;28

Speaker 1

To be happy, to be friendly, to be safe, to be able to take care of yourself as much as possible, to get a job at some level and to have a community that people around that they can call, they can hang out with. And I mean, one word to be happy, though.

00;14;43;17 - 00;14;52;13

Speaker 2

And then is there any other student or memory you have to share in this documentary

00;14;53;24 - 00;15;01;24

Speaker 1

Oh, man. There again, this is just there's a lot, I think, a memory.

00;15;02;20 - 00;15;07;03

Speaker 2

Of being.

00;15;07;03 - 00;15;37;05

Speaker 1

So this is what I guess is the longest documentary you ever write. I keep on telling you that there's a student in my class. I use names or, you know, whatever. So this student, my second year, came here and I really bonded with me in the program. And through that, we became really close to their parents, whatnot.

00;15;37;05 - 00;16;19;14

Speaker 1

And this incredible young lady, she lived in a group home for a little while and from clothes, and she had to go back to her parents house and the program just met her needs. And then recently she has a younger brother and recently her younger brother did a TED talk at Saint Francis. And it just so happens a TED talk was about being the younger brother to his sister with disabilities and his her brother quoted me in our program and saying that it was we who were the best teachers that she could ever have.

00;16;19;27 - 00;16;24;07

Speaker 1

And I was just recently. So it was a pretty powerful moment. Her story for me.

00;16;24;07 - 00;16;28;01

Speaker 2

So and then going back to that earlier.

00;16;28;22 - 00;16;31;16

Speaker 1

Yeah, that one.

00;16;31;16 - 00;16;33;06

Speaker 2

What is your biggest learning experience?

00;16;34;16 - 00;17;18;09

Speaker 1

I think my biggest learning experience has been a big personal learning experience, right? I think about how my students are teaching me to kind of have the question. You ask me to slow things down, to be present. And what matters is our relationship, not necessarily as individual skill level, but looking at everyone as an individual and measuring them on their individual growth only.

00;17;18;23 - 00;17;42;28

Speaker 1

And it's probably probably the biggest learning experience that I've had, as from the perspective of the teacher, you can't compare to students and you have to look at them as individuals and treat them that way. The big teacher term is called differentiated instruction and not known to learners or to learners are the same.

00;17;43;13 - 00;18;03;12

Speaker 1

And that's something that we have always been kind of naturally good at but gotten better at. Whereas you can have, you know, Kylie is not in levels in my class, but they all work together, right? So that's probably what I've learned. Like you have to look at them as individuals and then figure out how they all kind of work together.



00;18;07;20 - 00;18;08;04

Speaker 1

All right.

00;18;08;22 - 00;18;09;03

Speaker 2

Thank you.