

Nelson Elementary Reading Specialist Cari Wencewicz Helps Her Students "Unlock The Reading Code"

by Mary Ann Mitchell
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EDWARDSVILLE - As a first grade teacher, Cari Wencewicz quickly learned that her favorite part of the day was sitting at the reading table working with small groups of students to become better readers. It was that love of figuring out what they were struggling with and helping them grow that drew her to being a reading specialist.

Wencewicz is in her 17th year of teaching, 16 of which have been in District #7. After spending eight years teaching first grade, she is in her ninth year as a K-2nd reading specialist.

“Being a reading specialist allows me to focus all of my energy on one area,” she said. “I get to really zoom in on the reading process and find what works and doesn’t work for each student.”

Wencewicz said her favorite thing about being a reading specialist is that is incredibly rewarding.

“To know that I have helped hundreds of children unlock the reading code and go on to be successful students and adults is pretty wonderful. There’s nothing quite like seeing my students grow into real readers!”

She added that she also loves the data analysis side of being a reading specialist that she didn’t have quite as much capacity for as a classroom teacher.

Wencewicz comes from a family of teachers, so education has always been a focus for her family. Her parents, her sister, and even her grandma taught in District #7. Her husband is also a teacher at EHS and his parents were teachers as well.

“I really love working with young children and feeling like I truly make a difference in the world,” Wencewicz said. “And first grade is such a unique grade level to work with. They come to me in the fall barely knowing all of their letter sounds and many of them finish first grade as full-fledged readers. The growth is so much fun to watch.”