

Sina Rowe Loves Her Work As Special Education/Autism Spectrum Teacher

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - Sina Rowe has spent 21 years teaching special education – 16 of those in District #7 at the K-2 level – including the last nine years with the CASTLE (Collaboration for Autism Spectrum Teaching, Learning and Excelling) program.

She said that although she did not really choose the CASTLE program and that instead it chose her, it felt like coming home.

“With this population of kids, it’s very communication driven. If you think about how hard it would be if you could not say what you needed to say or ask for what you wanted, those kids are dealing with that times a hundred. So those kiddos have my heart and I have really found my home here in the CASTLE program.”

Rowe began her stint in D7 by teaching cross-categorical at Leclaire before moving to Goshen when the autism program. She then returned to Leclaire with CASTLE seven years ago.

“I do like challenging behaviors, and I do like problem-solving behaviors,” she said. “Everything is so unique and there is not one answer. One strategy might work for one student, but not for another, so you’re always problem solving and doing what you can to get a better response.”

When Rowe was in high school, she signed up to be a tutor and that is where she found out she liked special education. She also did competitive dance and worked at a dance studio as a student assistant teacher, working with young dancers.

“I really liked working with the kids and had a knack for it. So those two things led me to teach special education.”

Rowe said she initially thought she wanted to work with middle school-aged students, but then found that she liked being part of the foundation of their younger years.

“With special education students, they are in school until they are 22 sometimes. So, I feel like it is a huge opportunity to not only get my students off to a good start but to get those families off to a good start as well. I like being that initial doorway where we’re going to set you up for success.”

She praises District #7 for their excellent special ed programs and their genuine care about serving kids and whole families.

“Not every district has an autism program, and it really gives those kids the opportunity to be educated in their home district and to have their services go all the way from kindergarten up to 12th grade. Our administration puts an emphasis on wanting to serve kids here and that makes us stand above.”

While there are plenty of challenging times, it is the kids that make it rewarding.

“When someone gets a skill they didn’t have before or when a parent calls to say they see the behaviors generalizing to home or when the kids finally get what I’m asking for, those are all pretty awesome moments and that’s what I do it for – to see those communication pieces come on board.”