

Gina Rollete

Me – Where were you born?

Gina – I was born in Yackama Washington

Me – Why did you become an ESL teacher?

Gina – I was first a classroom teacher, I taught second grade for two years and fifth grade for two years, when I first came to Oregon looking for a job people assumed I wanted to be an ESL teacher because I spoke Spanish. They also offered me ESL positions but coming from Washington. In Washington at that time you had to be certified to become an ESL teacher so it hadn't even entered my mind to be an ESL teacher. As I got to know the population a little more I realized that Hillsboro pretty much mirrored the population of Yackama. Very migrant large Hispanic community, so as a classroom teacher I saw a lot of the needs of the ESL students and the opportunity arose and I figured why not.

Me - What are some of the biggest needs of ESL students?

Gina – Some of the biggest needs of biggest needs of ESL students right now is for districts to be aware of their academic needs being different teaching strategies a variety of teaching strategies in the class room. They are aware, and now they are working on training teachers on how to best deliver instruction that's most effective for them in order for them to do that, and also of course for ESL to provide solid oral development in a reasonable amount of time.

Me – What do you think are some of the most important teaching methods and things that the need to focus on? What do you really focus on when teaching ESL students?

Gina -When I have the kids in here, there is a focus in our school this year on reading. One of the things we look at is their oral language fluency. We pre teach what the teacher is teaching in class. So for example we parallel the program a day or two ahead of the teacher. We pre teach vocabulary we pre teach comprehension skills to really get them going so by the time they get back to class and do it with their teachers they are able to participate more and maybe get more out of what the teacher is teaching them. So its content English that's their biggest need.

Me – what does content English encompass?

Gina – what content English encompasses what it is, is when kids arrive people notice that little guys pick up English so quickly, But if you really talk to the child, that child picked up play ground English. Of course their gonna do that because its something that they need in order to get along you know to play with their friends and what not. The English we teach is more academic. So we do stuff like reading that's considered academic English. Or for an intermediate, we might pre teach social studies, and really hit vocabulary and really make sure students understand because a lot of these kids are

learning English and Spanish at the same time or any other language. Some of them have had education in Mexico; some of them are from families from other Spanish speaking countries. So their parents may or may not have been educated and their parents may or may not have that vocabulary in Spanish, let alone English. For example my mom was educated in Mexico. I'm in high school I'm chugging along and I get to chemistry, hated it. She could only teach it to me in Spanish because she didn't have the knowledge in English and I didn't have the knowledge in Spanish. So were trying to teach the kids academic English because that's where they struggle. They don't understand how that system works.

Me – How long have you been an ESL teacher?

Gina – This is my second year

Me – is there any thing that you're not getting support on or that our district doesn't notice that you feel is important?

Gina – As far as our students go, the support I feel like were not getting yet because is that it needs to be uniform and systematic through out the district, and it's hard for such a big district, is we need social support we need a social outlet for the parents. Parents come to us and we notice that the kids come to school with the same cloths every day. The kids have dental needs, they have doctor needs, the parents want to take English classes they don't know where to go. We don't have those basic need things. And its not just our ESL children is any school that has a high poverty rate. In some schools that have had high poverty rates for a long time. They have those resources that have those names of who to call. The district needs to make some sort of resource or some body that would be that person that we could call, you know if somebody needs legal aid or something like that. Schools have sort of turned in councilors in general and it would make our job a whole lot easier if those basic needs could be met.

ME – are there any programs that are pushed but that aren't really helping?

Gina – Not really, not right now, I think you only get the programs that you ask for.

Me – How is the support from parents?

Gina – The support from parents, that's always been something that's been confusing for staff and teachers if you come from middle class America. The only reason I say that is some of the parents have been educated in different countries for many years and some have not. So they either come with no knowledge of a school system or knowledge of a different kind of school system. If you come to the United States the parents are very involved, or assumed to be very involved in their Childs education. So the parent support that we only get comes if we teach parents how to work in our main stream system. And that's what I focused on this year. I start a series of parents meetings were we talk about different aspects of the school system and how they can ask questions, what their rights

are, what their children are doing, what the vocabulary is that the teachers talk about. They want to participate they just don't know how.

Me – With Union America can you tell me a little bit about the news letter.

Gina – Ya, Union America is something that stemmed out of the Hillsboro strategic plan, I forget what strategy it is. Its one of the strategies, in the strategic plan, that Joe Rodriguez started when he came in his first year. One of them was to reach out to the Hispanic community to provide better communication and just better relationships. One of the things that stemmed from it was Union America which was started a few years ago. Union America is a group of Hispanic certified teachers and administrators. We come together about once a month or once every other month. At the beginning we talked about all the different needs with in the district and just a hodgepodge of things and now they are really trying to stream line what the purpose of our group is going to be. The funny thing is its really nice to get together socially with other Hispanic professionals in the district because it's just a nice base really to go back to. There aren't really all that many of us, as far as classroom teachers and administrators. WE really need to define what are goals are because we haven't been getting very good attendance recently because of every thing that's been going on and peoples schedules. Its kinda to bring people up to speed on what the kids are doing. Union America started from the original Hispanic out reach plan. Its not a translating service

ME -What's your part in Union America?

Gina - Last year I headed it up help with projects that kinda stuff. This year cuz of the classes I'm taking I haven't been able to go much

Me - What are you doing to help your kids out and how are they doing with the state reading test?

Gina – Moo Berry is a reading first school as I'm sure you know. That means that all the kids are required to have 90 min of reading time in the English language each day. We used to have Spanish literacy for an hour a day. So we would have a group of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders or a group of second graders down to kinder. The way those kids were identified was if Spanish was their dominant language or if Spanish was spoken read or written at home. Research shows that if the kids can become proficient in their own language they will be able to transfer the knowledge quicker to English and at a higher level then they would if they had come in other wise. Unfortunately that program has been chopped in half because of scheduling and the reading first grant. So we haven't seen that component and Spanish literacy has almost turned into an intervention. As far as what were doing in k through 3 we pre teach and parallel what's being taught in the class. We don't actually do phonics we do vocabulary, comprehension skills and grammar and high frequency learning.

Me – How are you kids are doing in the reading tests, do you think the ESL program is helping?

Gina – I think we've defiantly seen a really good start, because they are assessed with a spot check type of an assessment called D.I.B.B.L.S. it was designed by the University of Oregon its part of our reading first grant. They are tested on every thing from letter recondition to orally fluency and how well they can read. You can visually see the kids progressing up to that grade level goal. We do see some kids are making progress and some kids that are doing really well and of course some of the kids are struggling. And the kids that are struggling we look at other things in their day and we start to see more clearly kids that might have learning disabilities learning disabilities. But over all they are doing well teachers has seen huge improvements in class participation. And ya they are doing really well.