

My name is Gabriela Cazares. My students call me Ms. Gabby. I am currently teaching at Gus Franklin Jr elementary. I teach grades K-5th in a Profound Moderate to Severe classroom. I have worked with children with special needs since 2011. I began my career in the Applied Behavioral Analysis field also known as ABA as a behavioral therapist. This allowed me, under the supervision of a Program coordinator, to learn how to work closely and take data with children that exhibited challenging behaviors due to various reasons such as difficulties in communication, access to tangibles, escape from non-preferred activities, or solely for sensory input. Once I obtained my Bachelors in Psychology and Child development (2015), I was promoted to Program Coordinator. I had the responsibility of conducting the initial Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs) along with creating the programming that therapists would use when working with our clients. Other responsibilities were meeting with my clients parents weekly, and discussing their concerns and child's progress. As a program coordinator I was given the opportunity as an outside agency to work with various schools as a behaviorist specialist. I was able to work closely with Admin and the teachers. I quickly fell in love with being inside the classroom. I noticed how comfortable I felt there and how the students gravitated to my presence as well. I made the decision to change my career and enroll in the Masters program of education to become a special education teacher. This has been a long, stressful, but rewarding journey.

As a special education teacher I have learned to navigate classroom management, building rapport with my classroom staff, students, their parents, co-teachers, and administrators. I am responsible for my students' IEPs, knowing their health plans and ensuring that I document all or any accidents that occur inside the classroom or out in recess. I have learned to keep constant communication with all my parents in order to ease their minds. I have learned to create a classroom schedule, make frequent changes to my schedule to meet the needs of my students. In addition, I am constantly thinking of new ways to accommodate and modify my lesson plans and activities to ensure all of my students are able to participate.

Why Do I teach?

This might sound cheesy but one thing I learned as an undergrad student was to do what makes you happy and invest your time in what you are good at. I am really good with making connections with every student I come across. I am good at learning them, understanding them, and bringing out the best out of them. I am where I am supposed to be. Seeing a student that used to come in, with his head down, no eye contact with anyone with a spinner in his hands to a boy that comes in smiling, making eye contact for just a few seconds with a spinner in his hands is a tremendous accomplishment. This makes me happy! If I am completely honest these small monstrous mile stones get me fired up to keep going. I have a career where I get to laugh, be amazed, get emotional (in a good way) and continue to learn. This is why I teach.