

## A look into the classroom

It is difficult to define success in the classroom, especially in a Residential Treatment Center. Mostly because the students who come to our program have not experienced success in the areas that matter most in life such as; social skills, academic growth, being able to self-monitor behavior and school work. I have watched every one of my students grow in all three areas. It is joy to watch students begin to take risks on challenging tasks, initiate and maintain friendships, accept difficult feedback and mentoring around unhealthy choices and mostly begin to trust that they are competent and valued.

Over the course of a year, our students learn they can achieve success by becoming less dependent on adults and more confident in their own ability to set goals and meet them. My students have an end of the day self-reflection where they can assess whether or not they were able to be safe with their body and words, responsible with school work, and respectful in their interactions with both peers and adults. This allows them to take ownership of their school day and visually see their personal growth with a sticker chart. By the end of treatment, the student can see that the reward really isn't a sticker, or a positive reward, but rather it is an intrinsic one of feeling good about their daily choices and hard work.



Looking to the year ahead, I hope that the classroom will be an engaging, challenging and rewarding environment that students want to come to everyday. Also, that each child discovers how they are smart. Whether that is in math, interpersonal relationships, nature, athletics, all kids have gifts and talents they possess, so it is just a matter of getting to know each student both academically and emotionally. One of my favorite quotes that I keep in my desk is by Michelangelo. 'I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free.' I find being a teacher is a very similar process of carving away the unhealthy patterns, or beliefs in a child's life and helping to bring out his/her value that was already there from the beginning until the end result is nothing less than a beautiful masterpiece of a child being free to make mistakes, learn from them and have hope for a positive future.

—Kathy Brandt, Special Education Teacher  
Intermountain Residential

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