

Summit School Special Education English Teacher Discusses The Benefits of Prioritizing Mental Health in High School

Amelia Bainton shares how a smaller ratio of students enables her and her team to really help students when they are struggling. See the full interview here.

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EINPresswire.com/ -- Q: What is your official title?

A: Special Education English Teacher. I'm also the English Department Team Leader.



Amelia Bainton, Summit School at Nyack Special Education English Teacher

Q: How long have you worked at Summit School at Nyack?

A: I started working here in September, 2014. Initially I was a Teaching Assistant, and briefly a [1:1 Aide](#). In March of 2017 I took on the role of English teacher.

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Amelia Bainton

Q: If a stranger asked you what you do for a living, what would you tell them?

A: When people ask me what I do, I tell them I'm an English Teacher at a high school that specializes in helping [students who struggle with emotional issues](#). When people ask me why, or say that they would never be able to do something like this, I usually explain that it's challenging but it's just something that has always made sense to me. Although our kids have specific problems that most teenagers do not have, the way our school is structured is something, I believe, all teenagers would benefit from.

Summit offers our students a support team of adults.

Thinking back on my high school career, I was one of the students that was somewhere in the

middle. I was always very shy and easily lost in a sea of 25 other students in my classes. I was able to get by, however I often wonder how different I could have been had there only been say 11 other students in my classes. Our kids have such great support systems here with their teams (teachers, social workers, teaching assistants, cottage staff). Although I had a great support system with my parents, it would have been so wonderful for me, growing up, to have had trusted adults at school that really took the time and energy to get to know me and understand me. So to answer the actual question, I want to be the person that a 16 year old version of me would have felt comfortable with and genuinely loved to talk to and learn from every day.

Q: How does the team approach at Summit School help you successfully overcome the challenges you're faced with?

A: I've learned that regardless of how planned and prepared you are for the day, there will always be unexpected challenges here. We quite literally must expect the unexpected every single day. I don't mean that in a bad way, it's just the nature of the job. You need to be on 100% of the time when you work at Summit. Doing this alone, without a team, would be impossible. Having a teaching assistant is fantastic. Also, having a team on the same floor that all work with mostly the same students is truly a life saver. We can discuss what works and doesn't work with our students to really be able to individualize everything for our kids. We also have an 'open door' type of relationship down here. If I need help, I know I can call anyone on my team or walk into their rooms for guidance. They also feel comfortable coming to me for the same reasons (and because I have a microwave in here).

Q: How do you feel students are prepared for life after graduation?

A: Going to college is difficult for every young person. It's a new environment that they must learn the ins and outs of to become successful and feel as comfortable as they once did in their old 'safe' environment. I think by understanding what helps them during stressful situations (using proper coping mechanisms), they will be successful in any situation. Our students are always encouraged to reach out for help when they need it and so I think if they continue to have that same mentality (in college or in a job) as opposed to not admitting when they need the help, they will also be successful after graduation.

Q: What are the underlying benefits students gain from a well rounded program like Summit?

A: Students learn to prioritize their mental health. I don't think this is something that is a high priority in other high schools. When high schools have large classes, it's easy for students to fall between the cracks. Unfortunately, mental health is often stigmatized which is such a shame. It wasn't until I started working at Summit, in my early twenties, that I truly was able to see just how important it is to keep your mental health in check. With a [smaller ratio of students](#) here, we can really help them when they are struggling. We provide them with the tools they need to be successful.

Q: Do you have a student success story you would want to share?

A: Last year, for the first time ever, we had a panel of three former students who got to share their success stories. I had the opportunity to work with all three of them many years ago, so it

was such a joy to see how far they have come. One student in particular, is now in the process of getting her PhD. I wrote to her after the panel and told her how proud I am to see how well she is doing. There was once a time where she was exactly like our current students. She was scared and unsure of where her future was going to go. Now, she is a happy and successful young adult. She acknowledged that it wasn't easy, however the tools she acquired at Summit helped her out tremendously.

Jennifer Robertson

The Summit School at Nyack

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