

## DAN BLANCHARD

Daniel Blanchard's Interview of Educator and Author Angela Mahoney!

**Angela Mahoney, M.Ed., is the author of "I Can Work" a pre-vocational program, as well as a special education case manager at Rogers Park Middle School in Danbury, Connecticut. Angela has worked with students of all ages in a variety of settings for the past thirteen years. Her career includes a tenure at a private school where she worked with over seventy-five middle school and high school-aged students on a weekly basis, running an inclusion-based elementary program for students with autism, as well as co-teaching core academic classes as part of a team comprised of fellow middle school educators.**

- *Angela, did you always know that you wanted to serve others and help today's youth?*

*Yes. My mother is a special educator, and from a young age she would bring me to her classroom and share with me the wonderful experiences she had with her students. It truly sparked something in me and by high school I was volunteering for the Special Olympics as well as playing on a unified sports team. The passion and compassion for working with a variety of children with a range of needs developed from there.*

- *Can you walk us through how you first got started in your career path?*

*My first job in the role of a special educator was at the young age of 21. I was so eager and ready to start teaching! I accepted the role of "Work Skills Teacher" in a private school setting working with middle and high school students. Although I was excited, I was completely unsure of what the role of a pre-vocational teacher did, but I am never one to shy away from a challenge. That first year was a learning curve. I taught 110 students weekly in my classroom, each working on pre-vocational tasks, wrote and marked quarterly goals related to their progress and continued to research new and effective vocational lessons and activities.*

- *How did you handle the bumps in the road? Were there any moments when you wondered if all your hard work was worth it?*

*Working in a private setting with students who faced extreme challenges each day with a smile taught me to take the bumps of life in stride. Much of my struggle initially was finding appropriate leveled material to teach students how to prepare for the workforce. I was constantly re-inventing the wheel, as most teachers face as a challenge, but through it all I knew my students were improving in their skills and their confidence and success outweighed the challenges ten fold for me.*

- *I'm wondering if you can help us understand what you attribute your success to?*

*I attribute much of my success to my parents. They are truly remarkable people who have always encouraged me to succeed as well as modeled hard work and perseverance. Additionally when I began teaching I had a wonderfully supportive supervisor. She always listened to my concerns and ideas as well as allowed me room to grow from my ideas and experiences. She gave me direct, honest feedback that was reflective but not demeaning.*

- *Angela, what do teens need today more than anything else?*

*I sincerely feel that teens today desire a strong role model. Whether that person is a parent, family member, coach or teacher, young adults today are seeking that non-verbal guidance that can be observed and modeled in ways many adults do not even realize they are doing.*

- *What would you tell a teen who was struggling?*

*I often share my story with many of the teens I work with daily. I too struggled with a learning disability and high school was not a positive time in my life. Focus and commitment did not come easy to me in high school. Fortunately in my junior year the reality of my future goals clicked and I learned to ask and accept the help I needed. With the help I was able to bring my grades up and graduate high school with an acceptance to college for the fall. I often stress is it okay to ask for help. That is step one toward success!*

- *What else do you want to tell us about what you do and what you want to eventually be doing?*

*Working with young adults is a true passion of mine. I never anticipated loving the middle school age group, but it has been a true joy over the past 6 years. I would love to continue to develop and implement pre-vocational programs in a variety of settings across the United States and continue to see progress, growth and feelings of confidence excel in a multitude of students.*

- *Can you please share with all of us something else that I should have asked you?*

*If you have worked hard on a project, an idea or a program, take the chance and share it with someone! You truly never know where it will lead you. Had I not shared my program with a colleague to which she then connected me with publishers she had used in the past, I never would have had my program published which has now positively impacted the education of many young adults across the United States.*

- *How can people get in touch with you if they have additional questions?*

*People can reach me via 617-710-7071 or email at [mahona@danbury.k12.ct.us](mailto:mahona@danbury.k12.ct.us)*

*You can also learn more at <http://icanwork.therapro.com>*

Thanks for your time Angela and keep up the good work! Our youth needs more people like you!

Daniel Blanchard

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