



# The Press-Enterprise

## **Pink-slipped teachers switch to special ed in Cal State San Bernardino intern program**

By Dayna Straehley

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The California Teacher Corps is recruiting pink-slipped teachers from general education to earn credentials in special education.

Teachers in the special education intern program at Cal State San Bernardino say they're glad they switched, and not just because they're still working.

"I'm actually surprised how much I like it," said Shannon Garibay, who now teaches a special day class of second- and third-graders at Maple Elementary in Hesperia. "I love the individualization and resources to help each kid."



**William Wilson Lewis III / The Press-Enterprise**

James Cordes, who taught general education, now teaches resource specialist English at Redlands East Valley High.

Garibay is one of 100 interns in the credential program for special education for students with mild to moderate learning disabilities, said professor Marjorie McCabe, coordinator of that program and early childhood special education intern programs.

The mild to moderate special education credential is for kindergarten through 12th grade.

Half of the students who started the program last fall got at least preliminary layoff notices if not final notices, McCabe said. The federal stimulus saved most teachers' jobs for the current

school year but even with furlough days, most Inland districts are laying off teachers for 2010-11.

McCabe said she is contacting personnel officials in districts that sent final layoff notices but want to keep skilled and talented young teachers.

"It breaks their hearts to let them go," she said.

The program serves districts with alternative certification through intern programs and fills high-need areas with experienced teachers, McCabe said.

That experience is a big help in writing lesson plans and organizing classrooms in addition to all the extra paperwork required of special education teachers, McCabe said.

James Cordes teaches ninth- and 10th-grade resource specialist English classes now at Redlands East Valley High School instead of the general English classes he taught last year.

"I would say the biggest benefit of having a general education teacher in there is you don't set your expectations low," Cordes said.

Special education students want to rise up to meet those higher expectations, said Tabitha Foraker, a Loma Linda resident now teaching a special day class for kindergarteners and first-graders at Maple.

McCabe said she often visits Cordes' classes as intern supervisor. She heard his class analyzing "To Kill a Mockingbird" recently at the same intellectual level as any other 10th-grade English class, she said.

Cordes said the best part about teaching special education is the same as in general education: the moment when the teacher sees a student really understands.

Classes are expected to follow the same curriculum as all others, although the pace in special education is often slower and they don't cover as much material, he said.

"The difficulties all seem the same no matter where you are," Cordes said. "It's classroom management."

At the beginning of the year, he said he started teaching the same way he taught last year, by lecturing. But students started misbehaving. He changed the class schedule to switch activities, such as from lecturing to reading or writing, about every 15 to 20 minutes and students concentrated on their tasks.

"They need structure and routine," Cordes said.

That structure would help most students, McCabe said.