

Episode 1 Final - Pantoja.aiff

David Simpson [00:00:05] Hi everyone and welcome to our life in the middle podcast. I'm your host David Simpson and I'm the principal here at Northern Hills Middle School. Every episode I'll be sharing updates and happenings from HMS along with bringing guests to share advice and tips on how to help us all navigate these middle years. Thanks for tuning in. Welcome to our first episode of the life in the middle podcast. Over the next three episodes we are going to be interviewing all the teachers that are new here to Northern Hills Middle School. This year it is definitely an exciting time as we've started the school year and have gotten the ball rolling.

David Simpson [00:00:45] Our first guest on the podcast is Emily Pantoja. Welcome Emily.

Emily Pantoja [00:00:51] Hi good morning. Thanks for having me.

David Simpson [00:00:53] Yeah. So it's a wonderful Friday here at Northern Hills and Emily has gone through her first two weeks of school. And so we're gonna start with a fun question. Emily are you ready for that. Go for it. All right. If you could have one song play every time you walked into your classroom what would that song Be And Why.

Emily Pantoja [00:01:11] So I actually do have a song that plays every time we walk in and it's actually a video and it's a waterfall with some relaxing music in the background and it just helps like lower my blood pressure and help like get me ready for like a more peaceful day. And I hope that it does that for students too. So nothing crazy but the waterfall music for sure.

David Simpson [00:01:31] Do you do you think your students noticed that as they walk in they made the comments.

Emily Pantoja [00:01:35] Yeah this morning actually someone said this song gets stuck in my head the whole day. And sometimes kids say that they use it when they're at home to relax. So yeah they've made comments. It's kind of burned into their brain now.

David Simpson [00:01:48] Awesome awesome. So you had a good first couple of weeks of school.

Emily Pantoja [00:01:51] Yeah yeah. It's been a rush it's been good. I feel like I'm on a good level with students now. So we're high fives in the hallways got all the names down it's off to a good start.

David Simpson [00:02:01] So Emily not only are you new to northern hills but you're new to forest hills. So I guess the question you know what's your story gonna bring us up to speed yeah.

Emily Pantoja [00:02:09] So yeah I'm not from this area I'm from a small town just south of here but I went to Michigan State and I did that because I knew I wanted to get out and just have some new experiences in life. And that led me down a path I ended up living in Orlando Florida for a few years working at the Walt Disney Company and then the past three years my husband and I have been living in Indonesia. So we've been teaching middle school and high school there.

David Simpson [00:02:34] So you're Indonesia what was that like.

Emily Pantoja [00:02:38] Yeah. So Indonesia is beautiful weatherwise it's about 88 degrees every single day. We lived in one of the rainiest cities in the world so a lot of rain but then immediate sunshine afterward. And Indonesia is home to a huge percentage of the world's biodiversity. So plant and animal life is super important there and it really opened my eyes to thinking about caring for the environment and getting kids to care for it too. So it was a great experience.

David Simpson [00:03:05] So when you think about your time in Indonesia and you think about the students you were teaching there same different what are kids like across the world compared to here at Northern Hills.

Emily Pantoja [00:03:13] Yeah you know it's interesting. It's pretty comforting to be here because I'm reminded of just the joy and some of the innocence that comes with working with young learners and so it's cool to see that some of those like emotional needs are universal so caring for kids here is the same as caring for kids there and just putting them first and thinking about you know what they need. Before we teach them anything culturally. It was extremely different to live in Southeast Asia. So I had to re learn a lot of ways of doing normal things like driving checking out at the store learning a new language. So I have almost reverse culture shock coming back but it's good because yeah the kids are kind of what grounds me and remind me why I'm here.

David Simpson [00:04:03] Awesome so if you think back to your first day here you went home worried what were your thoughts.

Emily Pantoja [00:04:09] I was just saying to my husband how fast the whole day went. It's not common in many jobs to meet one hundred and fifty new people on one day. And so it's just a really unique thing. It happens once a year and if you're new to you know a building it only happens once and so it's a unique chance to really start off on the right foot.

David Simpson [00:04:30] But definitely a whirlwind if you could think about looking back when you're looking for a job here back in the States. There are a lot of opportunities. Why NHMS Yeah.

Emily Pantoja [00:04:42] So I wasn't able to physically come in for an interview. So we did that over Google Hangouts and I just remember seeing a whole team of people sitting at tables and just that it was interesting because the connection I was able to have with some of the staff members here Becky tells real comes to mind over video really just put my mind at ease and kind of just reminded me of like being around friends in a way. So that came across and then being able to teach students over the Internet was interesting as well. And I just really appreciated that you wanted to see an evidence of teaching style because. It just showed that you know you're interested in getting to know someone personally but also seeing how are they going to be in the classroom that you're really envisioning that when you look for teachers So I appreciated the thoroughness of it.

David Simpson [00:05:40] Yeah. So what are your passions. What are you passionate about.

Emily Pantoja [00:05:44] I could talk for an hour on this so I'll keep it short but I mentioned earlier just environmental issues and wildlife conservation. That's huge for me and I think

that that's something that students should also be aware of knowing that they are they truly are the future. As cliché as that sounds. But we're leaving the world in their hands and so I want them to start thinking about that. I also really love natural health and I like studying the human body and physiology.

Emily Pantoja [00:06:13] I love comedy movies and TV shows and just you know the trivia that comes along with that and dogs and you know being outside and being with my family.

David Simpson [00:06:25] Now and knowing you for a couple of weeks now I think your students know there is another passion that you have and that's for a local restaurant here in the States probably across the world this restaurant exists. Can you tell our listeners a little bit about that because I think that's it's interesting.

Emily Pantoja [00:06:41] Yeah. So I am not sponsored by Taco Bell but Taco Bell franchises if you're listening you can find me at Northern Hills Middle School. I my husband I love Taco Bell. And when we lived in Indonesia we couldn't go so we would travel like and we'd go to South Korea and we'd find Taco Bell and we would eat like the food of the different countries that we went to but we would always stop at Taco Bell.

David Simpson [00:07:04] It's just it's comforting. It's vibrant. It's always good. And it's the cheapest option for Mexican food and that's pretty much all we eat besides like tropical fruit. So I love Taco Bell so my students call me Mrs. T which stands for Taco Bell which is not accurate. But I'll take it.

David Simpson [00:07:24] So you said you grew up in a small town. So did you have a Taco Bell growing up or where did this love of Taco Bell start.

Emily Pantoja [00:07:29] Oh yes. So we ate at Taco Bell and we also had like six other fast food restaurants and there was not a lot to do in our town. So my friends and I would do something called Fast Food fiasco and we would go get one item from every fast food restaurant and then eat it like at a park. And so when I was younger he had a super unhealthy and now one you know very concerned with health and Taco Bell is like my my side track and I do that. But otherwise pretty healthy.

David Simpson [00:07:58] The misconception oftentimes is that we live in our schools as educators. What do you do outside of school and do you talk a little bit earlier I heard you talk about dogs your family. So what does that look like outside of school hanging out with your husband and your dogs.

Emily Pantoja [00:08:12] Yeah. Yep. So my husband he's also a teacher and we have a puppy named Java named after the island that we lived on in Indonesia. So we like walking we like taking him places going and trying new food. We're both very interested in culture and language. So we have we just have really good discussions and we're always constantly helping each other with our teaching craft. But a lot of my time outside of school is spent developing like zero waste materials and eventually I would like to publish like a book on how people can live a more sustainable lifestyle. So I make all my own toothpaste and deodorant and cleaning supplies. And so he gets to test those out and so I'm oftentimes like trying new recipes or crafting things for that.

David Simpson [00:08:59] Speaking of recipes you came in here with something to drink and it's not a cup of coffee it looks. It's in a mason jar it looks red. What are you drinking today.

Emily Pantoja [00:09:10] Yeah a lot of kids think that this is salsa or tomato juice but it is just simply watermelon blended up in a blender and then poured into a jar. So every morning I eat half of a watermelon and I just pour that in to like three or four jars and that gets me through the first couple hours to finish up today.

David Simpson [00:09:30] One first of all on behalf of our entire school we welcome you and our husky community and we're glad that you're part of our Husky crew.

Emily Pantoja [00:09:36] Thanks. Me too.

David Simpson [00:09:37] So as you reflect on this year let's let's fast forward. Let's pretend it's the end of the year. It's the last Friday of school. What would you say would make this a successful year if on that Friday you reflected and said OK this is this is what happened and this year were successful because of.

Emily Pantoja [00:09:54] I always think that if my students and I are emotional about leaving each other and about closing out the year I think that's reflective of just the bonds that we've built. So the emotional component is part of it but also just having students think about where they started and even for me as a professional where I started the beginning chaos of the year and trying to get things set. Just really looking back and seeing that this isn't just another year in. Life. This is a pretty formative piece for all of us and what we've accomplished and how we've connected with each other and with the community. I hope to be able to see some like physical evidence of that.

David Simpson [00:10:38] Well Emily we love having you part of our husky crew. And thanks for spending little time today on our first episode of the life in the middle podcast. Would you be okay if we ever welcome you back to the show and get some updates on things.

Emily Pantoja [00:10:50] Absolutely. It was an honor. Thanks for having me.

David Simpson [00:10:53] Thanks again for listening to life in the middle podcast. I would like to thank Kevin McCloud for composing the music featured on this show. Have a great day.