

Special Education Board Report

October 2023

Submitted by Elizabeth Jorgensen, Director of Special Education

Elementary Stepping Stones

Most students at Unity School District who receive Special Education services are served within the regular education classroom with push-in teacher support or through time in the Resource Room setting. Sometimes, though, students may need more intensive support socially, emotionally, and behaviorally to develop skills to be successful in the regular classroom environment.

Stepping Stones is offered as an alternative setting within the elementary building for students. During the morning, students work on academics in a personalized learning setting or the classroom. In the afternoon, they are provided opportunities to learn social and self-regulation skills and academics with the goal of developing skills and returning to the mainstream setting. Students progress in mastering their grade level standards and are supported in a gradual transition "one step at a time" to gain further success in school. The afternoon activities include 1) Sensory and Regulation Tools: Using putty, play dough, weighted items, fine motor activities, etc. 2) Focusing on Active learning and Individual Goals: These topics can be skill-specific or project-based. 3) Fine Arts: Learning through Music, Art, and Physical Education Activities. 4) Peaceful Playground: Learning positive behaviors, mentoring younger students, cooperative play, etc.

The program is flexible and allows alternative programming, classes, and schedules to support all students on the path to success in school.

Educator Effectiveness Professional Development

The district is offering an "optional" after-school work session, on Wednesday, October 4, to support all certified teachers with the beginning of the year Educator Effectiveness requirements. It is a great time for staff to look at student data, develop learning objectives and professional practice goals, plan to collect pertinent artifacts, complete the teacher self-review, and network with other teachers throughout the district.

Administrators will be available to assist teachers. Over 60 special and regular education teachers have signed up to attend.

"Every child deserves a champion—an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be."— Rita Pierson