

# Better Together: Lincoln Early Learning Academy “Big Friends”

Building Leadership, Connection, and Community!





# What is Big Friends?

Big Friends is a partnership between:

Lincoln Early Learning Academy

Wausau West High School Students enrolled in Early Childhood Services

Purpose:

- Build relationships
- Support early learning
- Build leadership, knowledge, and practical experiences in early childhood education for high school students



# What it Looks Like in Action

## Reading and language interaction

- Support early literacy by asking open-ended questions, expanding children's responses, encouraging vocabulary through conversation.

## Play-based learning support

- Engage alongside children in centers, helping extend play, problem-solving, and imaginative thinking.

## Professional behavior in a school setting

- Model positive relationships, patience, kindness, and respect while collaborating with teachers.



# Impact on Our Youngest Learners



## Social-emotional skills

- Extra language and social interaction



## Positive relationships with older role models

- Build a strong sense of belonging and emotional safety



## A sense of belonging and safety

- Increased engagement and confidence



# Impact on Wausau West Students



## Leadership and responsibility

- Taking initiative, adapting to the needs of young learners, practicing professionalism



## Real-world experience working with children

- Hands-on application of coursework



## Interest in education and service careers

- Exposure to careers in education and service

# Why this Partnership Matters

Big Friends shows us:

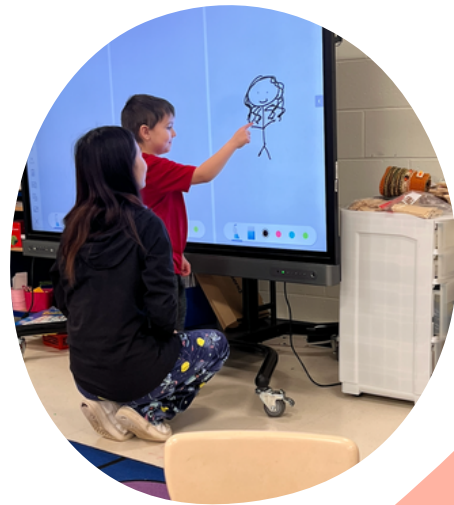
- Authentic career-connected learning
- Strong vertical alignment across the district
- Learning that is relational and community - based

## Voices from the Program

- "They don't just help - they belong here."
- "We love when big friends come to our class."







# Conclusion & Key Takeaways

Thank you to :

- Lincoln Early Learning Academy 4K Teaching Staff
- Wausau West students and Amanda Van Oosten

Big Friends reminds us that sometimes the most powerful learning happens through simple human connection.



# Thank You

Together, We Learn, Play, and Grow!