

Special Services Celebrates Student Success

Special Services oversees all special education and mental health supports within Owatonna Public Schools. Approximately 900 students are eligible to receive special education services, representing 18% of our population.

Thank you to our Special Services staff who dedicate their time, passion, and professionalism to create opportunities for our students to succeed. Our staff have great achievements worth communicating and celebrating! As Megan Schultz shared, "During my birth-age 3 home visits with parents and caregivers, I am proud to see their growth in knowledge and confidence!" Jennifer Radel stated, "It is a joy to watch 3-5 year olds progress in learning how to "do school" and become more successful for their transition into kindergarten."

Elementary successes have included "the continued work to normalize self-regulation for all students. We have helped them recognize that the feelings they have are okay and build skills to manage their feelings," said Amanda Griswold. Danielle Nystrom indicated, "The biggest success has been collaborating with classroom teachers to ensure all our students feel a sense of safety at school and learn to advocate for their needs!"

James Tratz noted excellent progress in reading, "Our special education teachers indicated they are seeing students come to OMS with better fluency and higher reading accuracy than in past years!" Rachel Fox echoed the reading progress with, "Hillrap has been a wonderful new resource to help students. The progress and the response from students has been great!" Dana Vater also pointed out the "good reading improvement and students' growth in confidence!"

Student success was acknowledged by Ray Bissen, "I'm very proud to see how our students have thrived in the general education setting!" Kate Jordal celebrated "what has been the most effective reading program and trauma responsive system that I have ever had as a teacher! I have seen tremendous progress from many of my students as a result!"

The Elementary Stride program is also seeing success. "The most meaningful moments I have witnessed are when our students make positive connections with peers and adults. When they enter their general education classroom, they are greeted cheerfully by name and with high fives!" stated Joan Biegert. Sarah Kaley acknowledges success in the Elementary Discovery program, "We have one student fully integrated into a general education classroom, four integrating for one class or more, and are seeing progress as students understand how to regulate themselves!"

Faith Nomeland celebrated success at OMS in math, "I have seen students who have struggled with basic math skills being able to solve problems they never could before. The excitement of feeling successful in an area that is hard for them is why I do what I do!" Nancy Williams acknowledges "the progress and growth in a high school student who was debilitated by depression and anxiety to the point that they could not access instruction; who is now thriving

and will graduate on June 4!" Kerry Much, Marilyn Olson, and Michelle Ulferts acknowledged numerous successes in the OHS Stride program including "weekly volunteering to help package food for community members in need, community outings to fill shopping orders, painting classes, and multiple work experiences!"

Thank you to our students and families for your ongoing effort, support, and encouragement to maximize all types of learning and potential!

Danielle Theis
Director of Special Services