CHEHALIS
SCHOOL DISTRICT

FRIDAY
CONNECT
Oct. 27, 2023

Supporting Students One Need at a Time

In the Chehalis School District, Student Support is an umbrella term for a broad spectrum of services aimed at helping every student find success. Students served by Student Support programs include:

- Between 450-475 students who qualify for Special Education services under Individual Education Plans (IEP)
- 80+ students with disabilities who qualify for 504 plans that allow for accommodations that remove barriers to their learning
- Preschool classes for for 3-5-year-old students who qualify for special education services (these classes also have spots for community peers)
- About 4-5 preschool students who drive in for therapeutic services with the district
- Support for students in foster care who transfer in and out of the district
- Health services, such as nurses and health room assistants, across the district

And like any aspect of education, our district's approach to providing student support is always evolving and growing. And there is no one approach to how to help students because every student's needs are different, explained Katie Howell, Executive Director for Student Support.

"The support we provide to students are unique to each student because every student's needs are different," Howell said.

In this edition of Friday Connect, we take a look at a couple of ways the Special Education portion of Student Support is finding innovative ways to serve students.

Matt Klovdahl answers a student's question while Whitney Price teaches to the rest of the class. The co-teachers take turns addressing the class as a whole or troubleshooting individual students' questions.

Two Teachers, One Goal

For W.F. West teachers Whitney Price and Matt Klovdahl, their approach is about meeting students where they are and also expecting they can do the work.

The pair are in their second year collaborating on a co-taught math class. Co-taught classes are one class comprising both general education and special education students taught by two teachers at once. Klovdahl, a special education teacher, had co-taught at a previous district and suggested the model might work for W.F. West. Klovdahl said he was thankful Price, a general education teacher, was willing to try it with him and the Chehalis School District was willing to support the endeavor.

"I think Whitney and I can be at the forefront to be models for our district of what co-teaching can look like," Matt said. "It's neat to see the district would have the foresight to say 'how can we lift up these kids' when, oftentimes, in other areas they just don't have a chance."

Before kicking off their own co-taught class, Price and Klovdahl visited the Ridgefield School District where they were able to witness co-taught classes firsthand. They found the model's emphasis on cooperative and group learning aligned well with the Chehalis School District's Student Achievement Initiative math core concepts.

"It's about getting kids to talk about math and not be afraid to take mathematical risks," Price said. "They can explore and make mistakes and be OK with that."

Klovdahl explained that there are many students who qualify for individualized assistance or special education services in the subject of math or English. But many students do not qualify for help in both subjects, which means that there are students who attend general education classrooms for all but one class each day. A co-taught classroom, where no distinction is made between the students who are considered general education and those who qualify for special education, takes the stigma away from special education and focuses the entire class on simply learning.

"What I've learned is that given enough time, kids can learn it. Kids with disabilities can learn the content and that's exciting for them and for us to see that," Klovdahl said.

Klovdahl also noted that the co-taught course also supports the SAI goal of having 60% of graduating seniors complete some sort of post-secondary degree or certification.

"We come at teaching from the same standpoint that all kids can be successful regardless of their learning differences or disabilities," Klovdahl said. "Co-taught classrooms are a bridge to allow kids the opportunity to access general education classrooms. We know just because kids have learning disabilities doesn't mean they don't have the desire to go to college."

We Stand with Ukraine
Welcome to the Jungle
Mrs. Johnson
Mrs. Lienhard
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SPED CREW
Welcome

Tammi Johnson starts every Fun Friday with a welcome message for students which includes topics such as what it means to be non-verbal and how to be appropriate and kind around students who may be different than themselves.

Making Learning Support for Everyone

At the Learning Support Room at Orin Smith Elementary, teachers Tammi Johnson, Traci Lienhard and Haley Slater use what is called a "push in" model, meaning the between 60-70 kids who qualify for specialized educational services do not miss out on regular classroom time in the process.

“Even if they do come down here for specialized instruction, for instance reading, they don't miss out on common core,” Johnson explained.

Using a push-in model also means that visiting the learning support room is part of the curriculum for all students at Orin Smith. On any given Friday, Johnson comes down and pulls a classroom for a visit to the Learning Support Room with a very appropriate "welcome to the jungle" sign out front. Students look forward to these visits she calls "Fun Fridays" where they get to enjoy snacks and take part in some sort of art project for the room's outdoor garden area.

“When the gen-ed classrooms come in here, our kids become the ambassadors,” Johnson said.

“It's really their opportunity to shine,” added Lienhard.

One of the more noticeable features of the Learning Support Room at Orin Smith is the houseplants. Johnson admitted she originally brought them in because she had run out of room for them in her home and greenhouse. The teachers incorporated caring for the houseplants into the work in their classrooms and quickly learned that many kids who struggled with behavioral choices really connected with the plants. “It calmed them,” Lienhard said.

Just last year they added an outdoor gardening space that includes a sensory walk painted on the sidewalk, and ADA accessible picnic tables, all built through grant funding and community donations. Fun Friday activities revolve around the garden space. For fourth graders, it's painting rocks that will go in the pathways. It gives them a connection to the garden and Johnson also ties it to their general curriculum, talking to them about how Oregon Trail travelers painted wayfinding markers on rocks. Plus, it's just fun.

“Our philosophy was to take the stigma off special education,” Lienhard said. “We wanted kids to want to come to learning support instead of being embarrassed by it.”

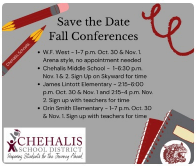
Johnson said she became aware of talks happening years ago around the subject of going to a push-in model and she began preparing teachers in her building for what was coming. These teachers said they have been grateful to the Orin Smith staff's willingness to lean in to this model of inclusivity, which they said has benefits for every student.

“There’s a sense of family here so when they go into the classroom, it’s their family. It’s about learning to take care of each other,” Lienhard said. “You see it in the hallways, knuckle bumps and high fives when they walk down the halls.”

“I think we’ve seen so much more growth when it comes to push-in,” Johnson said.

“Not just academically but socially, too,” added Slater.

Don't Forget Conferences Next Week


Save the Date
Fall Conferences

- W.F. West - 1-7 p.m. Oct. 30 & Nov. 1. Arena style, no appointment needed
- Chehalis Middle School - 1-6:30 p.m. Nov. 1 & 2. Sign Up on Skyward for time
- James Lintott Elementary - 2:15-6:00 p.m. Oct. 30 & Nov. 1 and 2:15-4 p.m. Nov. 2. Sign up with teachers for time
- Orin Smith Elementary - 1-7 p.m. Oct. 30 & Nov. 1. Sign up with teachers for time

Chehalis Schools
CHEHALIS
SCHOOL DISTRICT
Preparing Students for the Journey Ahead

Parents, don't forget that next week is fall conference week. W.F. West, Chehalis Middle School, Orin Smith Elementary and James Lintott Elementary will be on early release schedule. Lewis County Alternative School/Turning Point will be on regular schedule.

Click on the image on the right to view conference information for each building.

Padres, no olviden que la próxima semana es la semana de conferencias de otoño. W.F. West, Chehalis Middle School, Orin Smith Elementary y James Lintott Elementary tendrán un horario de salida temprana. La Escuela Alternativa del Condado de Lewis/Turning Point estará en horario regular.

Los horarios de la conferencia son:
W.F. West - 1-7 p.m. 30 de octubre y 1 de noviembre. No se necesita cita previa
Chehalis Middle School- 1-6:30 p.m. 1 y 2 de noviembre. Regístrese en Skyward para obtener tiempo
James Lintott - 2:15-6:00 p.m. 30 de octubre y 1 de noviembre y de 2:15 a 4 p. m. 2 de noviembre. Regístrese con los maestros para obtener tiempo
Orin Smith - 1-7 p.m. 30 de octubre y 1 de noviembre. Regístrese con los maestros para obtener tiempo

Notice of Non-discrimination
Anti-bullying Policy and Procedure