



# Bridge Program

## Vision

The vision of the Bridge program is to provide each student with structured and supportive specialized education services and supports needed to access the general education setting when appropriate. There is a focus on helping students develop social skills, self advocacy skills, and emotional and behavioral regulation. Students will be provided exceptional, personalized learning with structured and supportive specialized education services to meet individual student needs. Students in the Bridge program will feel a sense of safety, comfort, and belonging in order to practice lagging skills in a quiet, calm environment surrounded by supportive staff. This center-based program acts as a bridge to general education settings and the broader community.

## Program Description

The Bridge program provides each student with individualized instruction, supports and services. The goal for each student is to access the general education setting in order to generalize social skills and to access academic instruction. All district center-based programs are multi-categorical based on student needs. This program primarily serves students who have qualified for special education services under the categories of Emotional or Behavioral Disorders (EBD) and Other Health Disabilities (OHD). Individuals appropriate for this program are those that require a higher level of specialized instruction than can be provided in the students' community or general education classroom due to their behavioral needs.

The Bridge program is highly structured and uses a systematic approach which incorporates evidenced based instruction, along with the use of dynamic instructional strategies and methodologies. The Bridge Program utilizes natural environments for instruction, positive behavioral programming, peer engagement, social skills development, and inclusion into the general education classroom with mainstream peers and activities as determined by the Individualized Education Plan team. Instructional methods and curriculum are based on individual student needs and goals. The Bridge program utilizes curriculum and evidenced based instructional strategies that develop appropriate behavior, emotional and social skills, as well as strong study and organizational skills. The continuum of services elementary to high school focuses on highly structured, individualized programming in:

- Social skills training
- Communication and advocacy training
- Behavior skills training (Emotional and behavioral regulation)
- Study skills and organizational training
- Mental health support or self-help skills
- Organization and study skills training

- Academic skills
- Transition skills including independent living, community participation, recreation and leisure, post-secondary and employment

Students will be provided instruction and participation in the classroom at the grade level of their non-disabled peers to the greatest extent possible. Curriculum for specialized services will be selected based on individual student need and Individualized Education Plan team determination with consideration of the curriculum being utilized in the general education classroom. Students' Individualized Education Plan goals and objectives are continuously monitored to guide all specialized educational services and curriculum decisions. Staff focuses on individual students' positive attributes and strengths to assist in developing proficiency in skill areas. Program students receive specialized education services in the least restrictive environment (LRE) which could be a combination of the general education classroom, special education resource classroom, and the special education center based classroom. The least restrictive environment placements are based on individual student needs.

### **Service Delivery Model and Staffing**

A full continuum of services are available and provided as indicated on a student's IEP. Services may be delivered in a variety of ways including individual and small group instruction in the center based classroom for all or part of the school day, as well as specialized educational services being provided within the general education setting. All students in the center-based programs participate in activities with non-disabled peers to the extent that the interactions are of benefit and appropriate.

Each Bridge center based program classroom/caseload consists of approximately 6-8 students with one licensed special education teacher and paraprofessional support. Additional services and supports are available based upon the student's Individualized Education Plan goals and needs. Support staff may include, but is not limited to: occupational therapist, speech/language pathologist, school psychologist, social worker, developmental/adapted physical education teacher, physical therapist, behavior specialist, job coach, work experience coordinator, vision specialist, deaf and hard of hearing specialist, teacher of the physically impaired, and school nurse.

### **Placement**

For placement in a center-based program, such as Bridge, students must be eligible to receive special education services. Prior to program referral, school teams must consult with the building facilitator and special education team, and attempt specialized educational interventions in the student's current environment. The district referral process, utilizing the Elementary Review Team, Middle School Review Team, and Secondary Review Team, needs to be closely followed as outlined to ensure that each student is educated in his or her least restrictive environment (LRE). A person knowledgeable in the student's primary disability category must be on the student's Individualized Education Plan team. Program placement is an Individualized Education Plan team decision based on student needs and supported by the current evaluation and intervention results.

### **Location**

District-wide program currently located at Scenic Heights Elementary (K-5), Minnetonka Middle School East (6-8) and Minnetonka High School (9-12).