

Helping All Learners Succeed

By Maggie Goldade, Early Childhood Supervisor

“Tick tock goes the clock, two more minutes to play.” Children see a quick flicker of lights as they hear this sing-song warning. Two minutes later a timer goes off and the class sings, “Hi-ho, hi-ho, it’s off to group we go.” Children quickly arrange their materials, push in their chairs, and head to the carpet. When they get there, some sit in a carpet square, others in a cube chair for a defined space, and some in a floor rocker so that they can move to help them focus on the teacher. One other student didn’t make it to group. He takes a moment behind the classroom cubbies to talk with the paraprofessional, reviews expectations, and joins a few moments later.

The children review the visual schedule for the day, dance and sing a song together, and listen to the book “The Rainbow Fish.” With this book, they are exploring the aspects of friendship and what makes a kind interaction. Later in small groups, they sort through what makes kind interactions for the fish, but also for the kids in their preschool classroom. Children moved into these small groups by finding the red tape on the ground which directs them where to move next. At another station, children are using various art materials to create their own slippery fish. At a third station, children are playing a game that helps them identify letter names and sounds.

This was one short scene in a Bright Beginnings preschool classroom on a late March morning. This particular class is taught by Nikki Weber (Early Childhood Teacher) and Jenika Roy (Early Childhood Special Education Teacher). Together, they co-teach a group of up to 16 preschoolers.

The co-teaching model allows them to collaborate on how to meet the needs of all learners. The highly structured environment with clear expectations and routines allows all students to experience a comfortable foundation to grow and learn from. Visuals, timers, routine language, adapted seating, and small group individualized experiences are imperative for some learners yet beneficial for all.

Across our early childhood program, and our school district as a whole, adults are working to ensure success for all learners. Ongoing assessments in language, literacy, math, motor skills, and social skills allow teachers to see where students are making progress and where further support is needed. Some students qualify for an Individualized Education Plan where instruction is tailored to their specific needs in particular areas. Specialized instruction is woven into the naturally occurring classroom routines during group time, snack, play. It’s an art form to make it all work and one in which we see our students and staff excel!