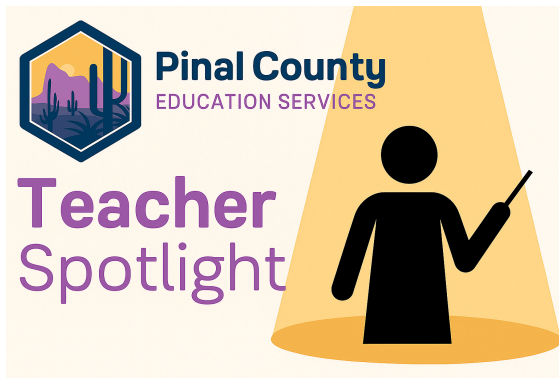




May 2025, Stephen Sims

Pinal County Education Services is proud to spotlight Stephen Sims, a dedicated educator at Hope School within the Pinal County Youth Justice Center. With over 31 years in special education, Stephen's career reflects a deep commitment to helping students who need it most.

Stephen began as a paraprofessional and behavior specialist before transitioning to teaching in Arizona. Though hesitant at first to work in a detention setting, he quickly found purpose in supporting students others often overlook.

"My whole career has been working with the toughest kids," he says. "If I treat a student like they are smart, they will act smart."

At Hope School, many of Stephen's students have dropped out or struggled with learning and trauma. He offers personalized instruction, patience, and a belief in their potential. "The best part is that 'Aha!' moment when a student finally understands. It makes it all worth it."

One of his proudest achievements is helping students earn their GEDs—often a turning point in their confidence and future. "The change in their attitude—that they are somebody important—is priceless."

Stephen hopes his students remember not just the skills they gained, but that they are survivors, not victims. "There's a light at the end of the tunnel. Life doesn't have to be all bad."

Now in his eighth year at Hope School, Stephen continues to make a lasting impact—one student at a time.

