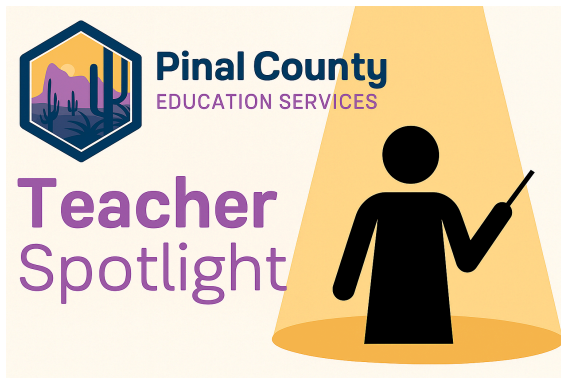




January 2026 Spotlight Teacher - Stephanie Nicholson

Stephanie Nicholson is an exceptional center-based special education teacher serving students with autism at Cottonwood Elementary in the Casa Grande Elementary School District. She approaches her work with remarkable dedication, patience, and heart. Her classroom blends clear structure with a warm, steady presence—creating an environment where every student feels safe, supported, and understood.

Stephanie knows her students deeply. She anticipates their needs, recognizing when a student requires sensory input or a quiet moment even before they ask. This attentiveness allows her to respond thoughtfully and proactively, fostering a classroom where students can learn comfortably and confidently. She is also a trusted role model for newer teachers. Through purposeful routines, compassionate communication, and intentional planning, Stephanie demonstrates how a learning environment can be transformed.



Colleagues regularly seek her guidance, drawn to her calm confidence and genuine care. Her expertise as an IEP writer is especially noteworthy; she clearly and accurately captures each student's strengths, needs, and goals while ensuring families feel included, respected, and heard.

What truly sets Stephanie apart is the way she honors each student's individuality. Students in her classroom are valued for who they are and encouraged to explore their interests, express themselves, and take pride in their identities. The joy and laughter that fill her room are powerful reminders that her students are not only learning—they are thriving.

Stephanie's work exemplifies the very best of special education. She creates a space where students are consistently loved, supported, and celebrated. She is more than deserving of recognition through the Pinal County Education Services Teacher Spotlight.