

Minnehaha Elementary School

For the past three years, staff at Minnehaha Elementary School has rolled up their collective sleeves to improve the instructional experience for the students on three different fronts:

1. Response to Intervention (RTI) to help staff focus on the quality of core literacy instruction for all students;
2. Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to help staff develop, and teach clear behavior expectations;
3. 'Expect to Respect' bully prevention effort to help students and staff recognize and respond proactively to bullying situations.

The teachers, support staff, and principal are united at Minnehaha as they've woven these three student-centered approaches together to improve school climate in an effort to help their students feel safe and secure. In addition, the teacher-librarian and school psychologist partner to teach students internet safety, called 'i-Safe' beginning with third graders.

The Safe and Supportive Schools Initiative at Minnehaha is embedded into the 'Minnehaha Big Three' which is 'Be Safe, Be Responsible, and Be Respectful.' Staff at Minnehaha utilize 'Stop and Think Social Skills Curriculum' in each classroom. This program is designed to teach students how to make good social and behavior choices, even when confronted with difficult situations. Three times a year, the entire staff participates in a 'Behavior Expectations Expo' to teach and model appropriate expectations for all areas of the school. The 'Expect Respect' bullying prevention curriculum is designed to teach students and staff how to identify and respond to bullying behavior. Students, staff, and the community are involved in the national anti-bullying movement, 'Stand-Up Day.' As one fifth grader put it, "It's nice to go to school where your classmates have your back." This emphasis on teaching students behavior expectations and then acknowledging students for demonstrating pro-social behavior has yielded favorable results. For example, over the past three years, office referrals for major behavior violations went from 180 in 2009-10 to 106 this past year.