



STEPS PLUS PROGRAM

Program Description

The STEPS PLUS Program serves students from 5 to 21 years of age from elementary through secondary school.

Main Office

Administration
Business Services
School Improvement
Technology & Media
101 North Grape Street
Medford, Oregon 97501
(541) 776-8590

Phoenix Office

Special Education
Migrant Ed/ELL
5465 S. Pacific Hwy.
Phoenix, OR 97535
(541) 776-8555

Students enrolled in this program represent a distinct population of students, who present difficult and challenging behaviors. They have multiple, severe disabilities, cognitive deficits and/or significant medical/health needs. The disabilities may include developmental disability, hearing and vision impairment, communication disorder, orthopedic impairment, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, autism and behavioral disorders. Students' projected achievement level does not typically exceed 2nd grade benchmarks. These students lack social, behavioral and communication skills required for success in other self-contained life-skills classroom placements. Their behaviors are so severe that they require a staffing ratio of 1:1. Some of the students may require a 2:1 or higher staffing ratio in order to keep them safe and provide safety for the staff and other students.

Instructional program for these students focuses on determining the cause of severe behavior and teaches skills to communicate, self-regulate and manage behaviors in a more positive and effective way. The program is characterized by a low student-staff ratio, individualized special instruction, special equipment and materials, and a team of specialists providing additional instruction, therapy, staff training and consultation services. *STEPS PLUS uses evidence-based curriculum to teach fundamental behavioral communication goals (i.e. using picture cues to request) and it implements sensory strategies and adult-supported behavioral regulation to help children tolerate typical environmental stimuli. STEPS PLUS programming does NOT include 'levels' type of behavioral systems that are more appropriate for students with more sophisticated cognitive capacity.* Focus is on teaching students behavior regulation and management, social and communication skills to be able to eventually function more independently in a less restrictive environment, whether it is a regular self-contained life-skills class, community, recreation or a work program. It is understood that some students may continue to require the highly structured environment and 1:1 staffing to be successful in the learning environment.

Grants Pass Office

Special Education
409 N.W. 3rd
Grants Pass, OR 97526
(541) 479-5135

Early Childhood Services

Gilbert Creek Child Dev. Ctr.
1021 N.W. Highland
Grants Pass, OR 97526
(541) 956-2059

Entrance Criteria

Students considered for placement in the program should fit the majority of the following criteria. Specific Criteria can be waived for individual students as determined during the Referral Process.

The student engages in:

1. Severe self-abusive behaviors (head banging, biting, etc.) that causes physical injury
2. Aggression towards others
3. Disruptive behaviors that frequently interfere with learning for self or others
4. Destruction of property
5. Dangerous activities (bolting down street, throwing desk across room, etc.)
6. Low frequency behaviors that are of such great intensity that each occurrence results in injury to self or others

Klamath Falls Office

Special Education
Migrant Ed/ELL
2685 Foothills Blvd.
Klamath Falls, OR 97603
(541) 850-1138

Other factors to consider

1. Is the student's access to educational opportunities limited and/or progress impeded due to the behavioral patterns described in the criteria above?
2. Does the student need a highly structured environment in which to learn?
3. Does the student need a 1:1 or higher student to staff ratio to succeed in school?
4. Does the student have multiple, severe disabilities? Cognitive deficits? Significant medical/health needs?
5. Is the student's projected achievement level at/below 2nd grade benchmarks?
6. Does the student need/benefit from a "levels" type of behavioral system? Does the student have a medical diagnosis of Conduct Disorder and/or Oppositional Defiant Disorder? Does the student have a criminal history and/or violence risk assessment rating at moderate/high level?
7. What sorts/levels of task demands trigger significant behaviors?
8. To what extent does the student engage in & benefit from social interaction with his/her peers?

Upon obtaining a Release for Information, the Referral Team (STEPS/STEPS PLUS Supervisor, District Rep, SLP and Psych from STEPS PLUS) will review the following information:

1. A current IEP and Behavior Support Plan (BSP) is in place.
2. At least two behavioral interventions have been tried, each implemented for a 6-8 week period documented and updated as needed.
3. History of seclusion/restraint; NVC/CPI/OIS techniques implemented.
4. Communication strategies and support systems have been assessed and documentation of systems and strategies implemented over at least a 6-8 month period.
5. Modifications to the student's schedule - concerning length, sequence and demands of activities - have been made. Caution: modification means the student is still expected to be participating and learning, just not in such an intense manner as usual.
6. Environmental modifications have been made, as needed, to assist with behavioral needs (limit distractions, etc.)
7. Evidence that appropriate school based, licensed consultants have been utilized (for assessment of behavioral needs, implementation of appropriate interventions, and fine-tuning the BSP).
8. Evidence that teaching techniques, matching the student's learning style, have been utilized.
9. Relaxing/calming activities and motivators have been identified that will prevent and/or de-escalate the student's severe behaviors.

Elementary Age Students (5-11 years): The program will focus on determining the cause, if possible, for the severe behavior. Exploring sensory needs, eating problems, communication and emotional and self-regulation issues. Teaching these students to use alternate communication cues to maneuver through their daily schedule and teaching these students how to independently monitor and regulate their own sensory system. The primary focus will be on communication and behavior with continued work on academic, vocational and other skills, as the team agrees are appropriate, and the student demonstrates the ability to learn from instruction in these areas.

Middle School Age Students (11-14 years): for students continuing from the elementary age STEPS-PLUS program, instruction will focus on independence and maintaining the highly visual and structured environment and fading staff as team agrees is appropriate. Building on skills, the student already has, and introducing community, as the student's behavior allows. For those students who are referred for the first time, the goals and focus of the elementary age students will take precedence and instruction will focus on behavior and communication (see above).

High School Age Students (14-18 years): for students continuing from the middle school age STEPS PLUS program, instruction will focus on continued independence in communication and managing own behavior with specific plans. Also: on continuing to provide the visual and structured environment needed for independence, and building on skills that the students have, and desensitizing them to community and community activities as their behavior allows. This is

important for this age students for future adult placements and activities. For those students, who are referred at this level for the first time, the team will focus on determining the cause of the severe behavior (see elementary age students).

Transition Age Students (18-21 years): For those students continuing in the STEPS-PLUS program, the instruction will focus on continued independence and self-care, behavior management, communication and unmet transition needs in an appropriate off-campus transition-age setting and functional environment. The program will focus on what the student will need for adult life after school. Continuing to provide the visual and structured environment needed for independence and building skills students have in the areas of social communication, functional vocational task and adult recreational activities.

At all levels of the program, students are served by Speech and Language Pathologist, Nurse, School Psychologist/Behavioral Consultant, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist and Autism Consultant, as needed. The setting is highly structured so students can learn and maneuver throughout their school day. All staff are trained in using alternative communication systems as well as positive behavior supports. CPI/NVCI is the positive behavior management system used by the SOESD in these classrooms and all staff are trained in this system.

Exit the Program:

The goal for each student entering this program is to transition as soon as possible to a less restrictive placement, whether it is a regular self-contained life skills program or another appropriate district placement. The following are considerations to be made in transitioning a student out of the STEPS-PLUS program:

1. Student has a plan in place for functional communication system and for the continued development of his/her communication skills. Student is showing progress in communication skills and is to some degree independent in his/her use of the functional communication system.
2. Student demonstrates tolerance for change, of staff and daily schedule, and sensory stimuli to where behaviors around these issues are minimal.
3. Student has a plan in place to manage own behavior using strategies learned.
4. Student demonstrates minimal disruptive behavior throughout the school day on a consistent basis, with no need for seclusion/restraint for at least 3 consecutive months. Behaviors occur with less intensity and are managed with minimal staff direction.
5. Student demonstrates the ability to function in a group setting with minimal disruption.
6. Student is able to function and learn without the 1:1 staff ratio for large parts of the school day.

IEP Team:

1. Take regular behavioral data to be able to identify when students' behaviors indicate a readiness for re-integration. Track exit criteria for 3 months prior to re-integration.
2. Develop IEP goals based on skills needed for that student to transition to a less restrictive environment.
3. Continually assess student progress in these areas and make necessary changes to focus on skills identified and addressed in the IEP. (Progress reports as per hosting district's grading periods)
4. Determine when the IEP and behavioral needs exhibit levels of success which indicate readiness for a less restrictive environment and need to begin planning for the transition to another placement.

Re-Integration/Transition to a less restrictive environment:

1. IEP team identifies potential receiving location/staff with the LEA. Involve SPED director and STEPS PLUS supervisor of site chosen.
2. Begin Phase-In Plan to new site 2-3 months prior to move. Complete this plan during an IEP review meeting focusing on skills and systems needed to make a successful transition.
3. Phase-In plan should include teacher and staff to exchange visits so receiving teacher can see how student functions in current placement and begin to plan how they can set up similar systems and environment for transitioning student. This is very important, the receiving team should be looking at how they can set up the environment and systems for the success of the student, not how to change the systems the student is using successfully.
4. Phase-In Plan should include 1:1 staff accompanying student to new site for a period of time to be determined by IEP team and developed plan. The plan should include steps to fade out familiar staff and begin building in new staff to work with student. The plan should also include a plan to phase-out 1:1 staff and incorporate student into the regular functioning the new site.
5. At this point if student is being successful move to new site is complete if not the IEP team including both exiting and receiving teachers should meet and revise or develop a new plan.

**The mission of STEPS Plus is to teach success for life
through team work, dignity, trust, respect, and safety.**

For more information, please, email: andree_johnson@soesd.k12.or.us or call: 541-776-8551.