



# PATHWAY TO INCLUSION: A Bainbridge School District and Woodward Middle School Story



## BACKGROUND

Woodward Middle School and Bainbridge Island School District joined as a RREI Demonstration Site District in 2024. Their work focuses on schoolwide inclusion, highlighting clear student support systems, a positive and inclusive school culture, and embedded social and emotional learning as core strategies—all aimed at ensuring every student has access, support, and a sense of belonging.

Woodward Middle School serves approximately 504 students in grades 7–8, with 10.3% receiving special education services and 21% supported through 504 plans. The school’s inclusive programs include a Resource Room, a Social-Emotional Learning Resource Room, and an Extended Resource Room that provide differentiated supports aligned with least restrictive environments.

## MISSION & VISION

Woodward Middle School and the Bainbridge Island School District are driven by the belief that all students should be welcomed, known, and valued. Equity and inclusivity are central community values, upheld through collective accountability between school, families, and the broader Bainbridge Island community. The district’s mission centers on ensuring that each student experiences meaningful learning in an environment grounded in belonging, respect, and high expectations for all.

## WOODWARD’S INTENTIONAL MOVES

Woodward's journey toward inclusive excellence is a collaborative effort as a part of the Bainbridge Island School District's strategic plan to become an inclusive organization that eliminates educational disparities and challenges traditional practices and norms.

Key intentional moves included districtwide executive functioning training, transitioning from “Right Response” to Safety-Care training to emphasize proactive and de-escalation strategies, and embedding state law and policy into staff professional learning. The district expanded training beyond special education staff, ensuring all staff were equipped to support students inclusively.

Structural shifts also supported student well-being: later start times for better adolescent alignment, nutrition and transportation improvements, and redefined program names to reflect inclusive language (e.g., "Behavior Program/Integrated Learning Classroom" to "Extended Resource Room"). Collaborative practices like co-teaching, grading for equity, and universal access to supports reflect intentional alignment between academics and social-emotional growth.



## **INCLUSIVE PRACTICE: CLEAR STUDENT SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

Woodward Middle School has developed comprehensive systems to ensure every student receives proactive, coordinated support. Multiple teams - including the Student Support Team, Attendance Team, Special Education Team, and Equity Committee - collaborate to meet students' academic, behavioral, and social needs.

Counselors serve as leaders in these systems, offering individual check-ins, mentoring groups, suicide prevention lessons, and high school readiness planning. This layered approach allows staff to anticipate challenges before they escalate, ensuring that students' needs are met with consistency, compassion, and collaboration.

## **INCLUSIVE PRACTICE: EMBEDDED SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)**



Social-emotional learning is fully embedded into Woodward's instructional and support systems. The Social-Emotional Learning Resource (SEL) Room provides a dignified space for students to self-regulate and develop coping strategies. Students engage in explicit instruction on self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and engagement, aligned with state SEL standards.

The school's Check-In/Check-Out system, sensory tools, and "reset" spaces serve as alternatives to restraint or exclusion, helping students navigate the full cycle of emotion regulation. Collaboration between special education and general education teams ensures that social-emotional skill building is integrated with academic learning.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Woodward Middle School continues to deepen its inclusive practices by refining systems and expanding data-informed supports. Current priorities include:

- Mapping and aligning MTSS frameworks for academic, behavioral, and SEL needs.
- Strengthening PBIS structures and defining clear expectations across environments.
- Enhancing data collection and analysis to guide school improvement goals.
- Expanding professional learning on accommodations, modifications, and inclusion in general education classrooms.
- Implementing relationship mapping and SEL screening tools to identify and support students more effectively.

Through these next steps, Bainbridge Island School District and Woodward Middle School remain steadfast in creating an environment where inclusion is lived daily—every student known, supported, and thriving in a community of care and high expectations.



## **INCLUSIVE PRACTICE: FOSTERING A POSITIVE AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOL CULTURE**

Woodward's commitment to belonging is evident in every aspect of its culture. The "Wonderfully Wild Wildcats" positive reward system, schoolwide assemblies like "Wake Up Woodward", and robust student leadership opportunities foster community connection.

The school embraces restorative practices, positive greetings, and the principle of "connect before correct" to reduce power struggles and discipline disparities. Clear expectations around kindness and respect are coupled with flexibility—like de-emphasizing clothing rules—to promote dignity and autonomy. Clubs, multicultural events, and student voice platforms ensure that all students see themselves represented and valued in the school community.

Learn more about the Woodward Middle School and Bainbridge Island School District Demonstration Sites below:

