



Mineola Unified School District

This AASA Lighthouse District emphasizes Learning 2025 Accelerator A2: Early Learning. The New York district provides access to high quality early experiences for all children, preparing them for success in their K-12 educational journey and life. Mineola Unified School District (MUSD) is clear that early learning is the key foundation for subsequent student achievement and success. It has also made significant strides in addressing changing demographics in the context of an instructional and assessment system that ensures the growth and progress of all learners.

Like all Lighthouse Districts, MUSD emphasizes the importance of high-quality strategic planning, including the inclusion of early learning goals in its strategic plan and school improvement plans. Metrics for monitoring Pre-K students' progress are incorporated into all plans. A unique feature of the district's approach to planning is its comprehensive badge book process, a driving force in its approach to continuous improvement. Currently, 49 badges are identified in literacy, mathematics, and Pre-K skills, with badges incorporating criteria and practice opportunities associated with each skill or concept.

Early learning education in MUSD is a holistic, integrated process in which curriculum, assessment, instruction, and support resources are carefully aligned. The district uses *Creative Curriculum* from Teaching Strategies to guide instruction in its Pre-K program. This written curriculum is comprehensive and developmentally appropriate, organized around key concepts and themes. Supported curriculum includes extensive professional learning provided to staff for all programs (public or private) to support quality and continuous improvement. Finally, assessment of early learners' progress and program effectiveness is continuous and in alignment with the district's badge system. To celebrate each child's unique strengths and needs, learners earn badges at their own pace based upon their individual strengths, needs, and developmental levels.

Programs include opportunities for learners to build their growth mindsets, gain foundational skills to become effective learners, readers, writers, mathematicians, artists, and scientists. Perhaps most significantly, learners are invested, engaged, and become advocates for their own growth and development, a key component of AASA's Learning 2025 emphasis upon the learner as a co-author of their own learning process.

Like all Lighthouse Districts, equity is a major priority in MUSD. The district ensures that high quality learning experiences are available to all learners, regardless of economic status, religion, race, gender, or disability. For example, the Mineola early learning program offers full-day Pre-K to all learners, including those with disabilities and those who are language learners (following the Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum). The district also offers a program to all residents to access early literacy supports and services through "*Footsteps2Brilliance*." A full-day Pre-K program (including Dual Language options) allows the district to meet all students' needs in effective and immediate ways. A major commitment is ensuring that families and instructional teams are prepared to support each learner during these important early moments in learning.

Once again, cross-institutional partnerships are a key component of this district's success. Plans to support early learning programs serve to support providers and connect the school district to early learning providers. Outreach includes informational meetings, reinforcement of Dual Language protocols and requirements, and collaboration with providers on strategies to support children in the badge book process.

MUSD employs strong communication processes and strategies to provide caregivers with practical strategies and support. The badge book, for example, provides detailed descriptions of each badge skills, the criteria learners must meet to earn the badge, and resources/activities caregivers can use to help students practice. The badges incorporate criteria and practices opportunities as well as suggestions for families to help their children master each skill or concept. In addition to parent and family outreach, district leaders in MUSD create awareness among key stakeholders of the need for early learning programs, advocating for funding at the local and state levels. A range of outreach programs include use of federal title grants to support this process and the reinforcement of community awareness via the *Footsteps2Brilliance* literacy program with all community members, regardless of their enrollment in district schools. Additional outreach services include principals' hosting tour on request, parent-child orientation sessions, Meet the Teacher nights, PTSA-run events, and Parent Universities run for various stakeholder groups.