

Two Families, One Path to Success

When Nicole Jackson's son, Kalen, was diagnosed with ADHD, Nicole was worried that she wouldn't be able to find a school that could give him the support he needed. She thought about this often, until one morning Nicole answered her door to find a smiling woman on the other side. "Have you heard about Stepstone Academy?" the women asked, handing Nicole a pamphlet.

Nakisha English had never heard of the school featured on the postcard in her mailbox, but was intrigued by what she saw. Her daughter, Talijha, was starting first grade and the school, Stepstone Academy, looked friendly. "Why not give it a try?" Nakisha thought. After all, she wanted to open as many doors for her daughter as possible.

The woman who had first showed up at Nicole Jackson's door was Millette Tucker, *Stepstone Academy Assistant Principal*. After choosing to enroll Kalen at Stepstone, Nicole spoke with Mrs. Tucker daily. Mrs. Tucker was always willing to discuss Kalen's behavior, both good and bad. But even on his difficult days, the school didn't suspend him or threaten to kick him out. Instead, they introduced Nicole to other services that could help. Kalen received School-Based counseling and saw a psychiatrist through



Nicole Jackson and her son.



Nakisha English and her daughter.

OhioGuidestone, and Nicole even used the OhioGuidestone Pharmacy to fill the prescriptions he received. Nicole wasn't sure what school would have been like for Kalen somewhere else, but she did know that Stepstone Academy felt like home.

Nicole loved Stepstone so much that she started volunteering at parent meetings and family events. When a Program Aide position became available, she jumped at the opportunity and was thrilled when she got the job. "I love working here!" she says. "It's like I'm part of a big family."

Meanwhile, Nakisha appreciated that Stepstone staff were willing to help her get any support she needed. From making sure she knew about upcoming school events to helping her look for employment, Nakisha knew that Stepstone really cared. She saw firsthand that parents and teachers working together could really make a difference, and she worked even harder to make sure Talijha's education was her top priority.

Nakisha never thought she'd have the opportunity to work at a place like Stepstone, but when she was hired as a Food Service Aide, she knew it was the right fit. Now, she is able to make sure the scholars receive nutritious meals, but she also nourishes them through relationships, connecting with them and giving them encouragement when they seem down. "I have found a place I can retire from!" she says.

When they pass each other in Stepstone Academy's hallways, Nicole and Nakisha smile. While their stories are different, they share a history of support from Stepstone 360° and OhioGuidestone. Thanks to Stepstone Academy, they not only have a great environment for their children, but also jobs that allow them to help other families work toward successful futures.