



Enlarged City School District

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Multi-Grade Classrooms

Multi-grade class organization is a time-tested and classic characteristic of an educational era that many of us have never known. In smaller or rural school districts, multi-grade classes are very common. In fact, our own Virgil School has a strong history and tradition of multi-grade class organization.

Multi-grade classes present some new difficulties and advantages. Most obviously, a multi-grade approach presents some dilemmas with curriculum and pacing. However, a multi-grade approach affords an efficient manner for remediation and enrichment. It is a tenet of differentiated instruction that all children are at various stages of readiness for any particular piece of instruction – multi-grade grouping allows for more purposeful organization toward that function.

Additionally, multi-grade organization is an efficient way to keep the neighborhood schools concept intact and maintain reasonable class sizes. This becomes possible when a class shrinks to a size below our recommended size guidelines, but is big enough that the elimination of an entire section would leave remaining sections exceeding those recommended sizes.

The implementation of a multi-grade configuration will depend upon the final enrollment figures in our elementary schools. *However, at present, all enrollment projections in all schools are within normal guidelines – meaning that we would not need a multi-grade configuration to level our class sizes.* We will continue to plan for the contingency, as it is quite typical to have some significant changes in enrollment between May and August. Key places where numbers make this a possibility are Barry (1st & 2nd), Randall (2nd & 3rd), and Virgil (2nd & 3rd). In either scenario, there will still be a small number of displaced students, as there are every year.

Not surprisingly, we have had a number of staff members ask to explore the multi-grade concept as a strategy to better serve children in the past few years. This seems like a very appropriate time to put some time and effort into concrete planning for this possibility. Staff who have expressed interest, or will be asked to teach a multi-grade class, will be given release time this spring to plan and collect concerns/needs, and there will be summer curriculum writing time allocated to this project. We want to be sure that this is a strategy that will take advantage of the benefits that can come from multi-grade and that we are well-prepared for implementation.

If you have questions or concerns about what multi-grade is and what it might mean for your child, please do not hesitate to give me a call or write me an e-mail.

Thank you,

Laurence T. Spring
Superintendent of Schools