

Student Grouping

Current school practice:

Students are grouped by age and previous grade completed into homerooms. These groups study all content together and the group remains the same for one entire academic year.



Change in practice:

Students will remain in the same grade level and homeroom for the entire academic year, but will be grouped by appropriately challenging content and moved for reading in 3rd-5th and mathematics instruction K-5th.

Why?

This will maximize the time a student spends learning within his or her zone of proximal development. A student who learns within his or her zone of proximal development and experiences success will develop a sense of self-efficacy. It is this belief in one's ability to complete tasks and reach goals that builds perseverance and stamina for learning over the long term. When used with fidelity, SuperKids (our K-2 reading program) is designed to accommodate a variety of reading levels within a single grade level.

Student Grouping

Current school practice:

Students are grouped by age and previous grade completed into homerooms. These groups study all content together and the group remains the same for one entire academic year.



Change in practice:

Students will potentially change ability group every four weeks for core content instruction in reading and math.

Why?

By grouping and regrouping students frequently, students will be able to progress at a pace that is appropriate for them. Students will not be frustrated because they are asked to learn material that is too hard or too easy.

Student Grouping (Primary)

Current school practice:

Primary students are taught all core content by their homeroom teacher. Each teacher forms several groups within her classroom for leveled instruction and coaching, especially in reading. Students may get only 10-15 minutes of appropriately leveled direct instruction and coaching with the teacher each day.



Change in practice:

Students will be sorted and sent to a classroom for reading and math instruction where most or all of the students are on the same level and need the same type of instruction. Instead of teaching 4-6 leveled groups, a teacher will on have to teach 1-2 leveled groups.

Why?

Students will get direct instruction and coaching from the teacher for at least half of the reading or math block and maybe for the whole reading or math block. Students will make greater academic gains and form more thorough understandings when the time spent being instruction and coached by a teacher in increased.

Student Grouping (Upper Elementary)

Current school practice:

Upper elementary students switch among teachers for each core content area



Change in practice:

All teachers will teach all subjects in two switches per day: reading and math with social studies and science content embedded into the reading and math instruction.

Why?

Much instructional time is lost as students gather their things, move through the hallways and into another classroom, then get themselves settled 4 times a day. Even though students will be sorted into ability groups, there will only be one mid-day switch each day. This combined with the embedding of social studies and science content into reading and math classes will greatly the amount of time students will spend learning content each day.

Content

Current school practice:

Students receive separate instruction in language arts, mathematics, science and social studies



Change in practice:

Science and social studies content will be incorporated into reading and math instruction through nonfiction reading and lab experiences.

Why?

Time spent teaching and learning reading and mathematics will be maximized if science and social studies content is embedded into the reading and math lessons.

Planning

Current school practice:

Teachers plan their instruction on an individual basis.



Change in practice:

Twice a month, our faculty meetings will be spent in team planning. Because everyone is teaching the same strands or similar content at the same time, they will plan together for all of the levels that will have to be taught for each strand. They will also go through the assessment data so that student instructional groups can change every four weeks.

Why?

Teaching the same strand or similar content across the grade levels allows students to receive the level of instruction that is appropriate for a 4 week period then move into a different instructional group if it is appropriate for the next strand or content without missing content over the course of the year.

Reading and Math Specialists

Current school practice:

One reading specialist serves all grade levels to provide content support to teachers and small group reading instruction to students. There is no equivalent for math.



Change in practice:

Our school will have one reading specialist and one math specialist to provide content support and small group instruction and remediation.

Why?

There will be content specialists in both reading and math. They will work with teachers to improve their instruction and with students to fill gaps.

Math Instruction

Current school practice:

Current math instruction uses traditional methods and follows the county curriculum framework. Not all teachers regularly incorporate the use of manipulatives and few teachers use mathematical modeling as part of their instruction and assessment.



Change in practice:

All teachers will be trained and coached by the math specialist in the use of manipulatives in their instruction and assessment. All students will complete a math modeling (authentic task) project for every strand of their mathematics curriculum.

Why?

Physical representations and physical manipulations of materials help many students gain a better understanding of math concepts. All students need opportunities to do their math and show their learning with manipulatives. Richly embedded with math content, math modeling projects also build the 21st century skills of problem solving, collaboration, and communication. The authentic nature of these tasks make them highly engaging for students, as well. Math modeling projects can provide an additional method of assessment for our school to use as we document student growth.

Grade Advancement (Math)

Current school practice:

Students have the opportunity to grade advance in math. Beginning of the year SGA data is used to demonstrate mastery of grade level content before it is even taught. In 5th grade, these grade-advanced students take 6th grade math using Edgenuity – an online platform for instruction.



Change in practice:

Students will continue to have the opportunity to grade advance in math. In K-3 students will move among the grade levels in order to receive appropriate instruction by strand. Students needing 3rd grade math instruction will receive it from the classroom teacher, gifted teacher, and/or math specialist.

Why?

Students should not have to sit through class instruction on material they have already mastered. Every student deserves to learn something new and to be challenged every day. Accommodations must be made to meet a student where he or she is academically, whether that is below grade level or above grade level. We don't want our students to be frustrated because the work is too hard, nor do we want them to be frustrated because the work is too easy.

Hands-on Learning Opportunities

Current school practice:

The gardens in the Outdoor Learning Center are used for math remediation during summer school.



Change in practice:

The gardens will be used to support math and science instruction and remediation for all students from September through May, as well as during the summer.

Why?

Measurement, geometry, and fractions instruction will be supported and enriched by hands-on experiences in the gardens. Several science topics across grade levels will also be supported and enhanced by greater use of the gardens.

Science Instruction

Current school practice:

Teachers are encouraged to use the Foss lab kits to enrich their science instruction.



Change in practice:

There will be a classroom set up and designated as a Science Lab. Teachers will be expected to use this room and its materials to provide weekly opportunities for all of their students to do science investigations and experiments.

Why?

If science is our way of describing and understanding how the world works, then our students need opportunities to see, touch, smell, hear, and maybe even taste all that is the world. This is not possible without frequent, hands-on science investigations and experiments.

Field Trips

Current school practice:

Each grade level takes one field trip each year to support their content and curriculum.



Change in practice:

Teachers and specialists in the building will explore ways for additional “field trips” to come to us. This could include local experts and college students bringing their expertise and experiences to our building, students taking virtual field trips online, and participating in webinars and live stream events.

Why?

Students who have all of their senses engaged and who interact with the same content from several sources are more likely to understand and retain what they’ve learned due to the strong memories that have been created and attached to that content.

Enrichment

Current school practice:

Students do not have regular opportunities to pursue topics of interest.



Change in practice:

A weekly time will be designated for school-wide enrichment. Students will choose from a wide variety of classes covering many topics and skills. Classes will last 4 weeks.

Why?

Teachers, staff, and community members will join forces to offer a wide array of enrichment classes for our students. Classes will cross ages and grades and students will participate based on choice. Students who are allowed to choose how they spend part of their day and what they study and learn about are more engaged and happier in school overall.

Breakout Boxes

Current school practice:

Every student in every grade level has participated in one Breakout Box challenge.



Change in practice:

Teachers will be encouraged to create quarterly Breakout Box challenges that support their content and curriculum.

Why?

Breakout Box challenges provide a highly engaging opportunity for students to practice their problem-solving and collaboration skills. If carefully crafted and aligned to specific content, these challenges can potentially provide assessment data, as well.

Technology Skills

Current school practice:

Classroom teachers are responsible for teaching technology skills, online research, and internet use and safety to their students.



Change in practice:

Our school will have a designated technology who will teach students K-5 how to use a desktop computer, laptop computer, Chromebook, and iPad. She will teach keyboarding, how to do online research, and internet safety. She will set up Google Classroom for all 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders. She will assist students with alternative assessments and teach them to use Google education tools and other programs such as Prezi, Glogster, Blabberize, Educreations, Popplet, etc.

Why?

Students will be brought up to date with technology and be able to use it to enhance their learning. They will have increased opportunities to demonstrate their learning with technology-enhanced projects and products. Teachers will be able to work efficiently with students, parents, and colleagues through Google Classroom and with the use of Google education tools.

Technology

Current school practice:

The school is equipped with two computer labs – one with 30 laptops and one with 30 desktops, a cart with 23 Chromebooks, and a cart with 20 iPads.



Change in practice:

The laptops will be moved to a cart, which can be moved from classroom to classroom. Two additional teachers will apply for grants to get 1:1 technology in their classrooms. The school division is providing up with an additional 30 Chromebooks on a cart.

Why?

More technology will significantly increase the opportunities our students have to use technology to do classwork, research, and homework and to showcase their learning in new and differentiated ways.

Resource

Current school practice:

Each class attends resource daily.

- PE – 2x per week
- Art, Music, Library – 1x per week



Change in practice:

Students will attend resource daily, but not with their homeroom classes

- PE – 2x per week
- Art, Music, Computer/Technology – 1x per week

Resource times will take place during the ½ day math or ½ day reading block and students will attend with their group.

Students will still have the opportunity to check out books from the library as needed.

Why?

Less instructional time will be lost if whoever is currently in the classroom when it's time for resource class goes. Over the course of a week, all students will still get all resources, only in potentially mixed age groups.

Responsive Classroom

Current school practice:

All homerooms begin the day with Responsive Classroom Morning Meeting.



Change in practice:

Students will have a community meeting using the Responsive Classroom format with the members of their homeroom class before lunch each day. This time will also be used to practice table manners and social etiquette.

Why?

This will allow us to continue with our Responsive Classroom practices of building community and teaching social skills at a time when students will immediately have a chance to practice when they are learning around the lunch table with their classmates.

Lunch

Current school practice:

Students eat lunch for 30 minutes in the cafeteria and are not permitted to leave their tables.



Change in practice:

Students will eat lunch and then be able to be dismissed to areas of choice. These could be: “Walk and Talk” in the gym or on the field outside, book check-out and quiet reading, board games and puzzles on the stage, “Legos in the Lobby”, AR testing in the computer lab.

Why?

This will reduce the behavior issues that often develop as students struggle to stay seated and calm in a large, crowded, and noisy cafeteria. Students who need to move will be able to walk and talk, students who need a quiet space will be able to read or play games.