



# ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

## COMBINATION CLASSES

6152

Procedure No.

February 15, 1979

Date

- I. **PURPOSE:** To provide guidance to administrators and teachers in organizing combination classes in the elementary school.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** Combination classes may be organized when grades do not distribute evenly, when mobility is high, when more flexibility for placing students is needed, and when instructional needs of students can be met most effectively through combination classes.

- III. **DEFINITION:**

Combination classes: those classes to which students at two or more grade levels are assigned.

- IV. **PROCEDURES:**

- A. Organizational Procedures

1. **General Planning:** Planning for the formation of combination classes should be initiated at the end of the school year when preparations are being made for the following year. Early planning is necessary to assure appropriate selection of teachers, student placement, and parent orientation. In many schools these plans will need to be revised and adjusted at the beginning of the new school year to provide for changes in enrollment.
2. **Communication with Parents:** Parents need to be oriented to the organizational structure of the combination classes as early as possible. If the combinations are being established for the first time or in a way new to the community, more time must be given to parent orientation. The county's parent brochure describing combination classes should be provided for parents along with a letter which describes the school's organizational plan for combination classes and other information which the principal and staff determine to be appropriate. Principals of schools in which combination classes have been formed should schedule an orientation meeting for parents to provide an opportunity for principals, teachers and parents to discuss questions related to combination classes. The principal may wish to include in the discussion with parents information such as:
  - a. How classes are organized.
  - b. Class sizes for primary and intermediate classes.



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- c. The similarities and differences in combination classes and other classes.
- d. What content should be covered for both grades.
- e. How special needs will be met (both academic and social).
- f. Why combination classes have been formed.

It is recommended that the date for the orientation meeting be scheduled as early as possible so that parents can be informed of it during the first few days of school. Some schools may prefer late afternoon meetings while others may select an evening meeting time.

If changes in enrollment after September 30 cause significant changes in school or classroom organization, a special meeting may need to be held to explain these changes and respond to parent concerns about them.

3. Selecting Teachers: Teachers who teach combination classes must deal with a group of students which represent different age and instructional levels and with a varied curriculum. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers for combination classes be selected from the previous year's experienced staff.
4. Assigning Teachers to Teams: When a combination class is organized, the teacher should be assigned to a specific team, rather than two teams or grade levels. It is recommended that this assignment be made to the higher of the two grade levels, unless the higher class group is only a small fraction of the total class. This same assignment should remain in effect for cafeteria, playground or other activities.
5. Class Size: Class size in a combination class need not be different from that of other classes. The maximum class size for primary or upper grades should be established at the beginning of the year and maintained as long as possible. Unless the students' instructional needs clearly can be served best through placement in the combination class, new students should be assigned to the non-combination classes until these classes reach the maximum size, plus 10%. When new students are placed in the combination class, available data should be reviewed to ensure that these students can be grouped appropriately with other students. As student enrollment declines care should be taken not to have either a



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combination class or non-combination class enrollment in excess of the maximum class size.

6. Selecting Students: Instructional levels of students vary in the regular classroom and will vary in the combination class. However, when assigning students to combination classes every effort must be made to avoid extremes in instructional levels. Avoiding extremes in instructional levels is necessary so that teachers can provide balance to the instructional program. The necessity for a large number of subgroups in any single area limits the time teachers have to work with students in other content areas.

In general, when selecting students for placement in a combination class, these guidelines should be followed:

- a. The social and physical development of students in the combination class should be such that a compatible group (i.e., a group in which students can work and interact in a cooperative manner) is formed.
- b. The class should be balanced in terms of race and sex. Where possible, the balance should reflect the balance in the total population of that school.
- c. Careful consideration should be given to the skill needs and ability levels of students so that:
  - (1) One grade level does not place a “ceiling” on, or limit the other grade level’s academic progress.
  - (2) Enough students have developed satisfactory independent work habits to make frequent sub-grouping manageable.

No single combination works best for all school situations. Numbers of students, achievement levels and skill needs of students, and experience of teaching staff are factors, which must be considered. Placing students in a combination class for two consecutive years or more than twice during their elementary years should be avoided when ever possible.

7. Location of Combination Classrooms: The combination classroom should be located within close proximity of comparable grade levels. Isolation of the combination classrooms either physically or educationally must be avoided.



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### B. Instructional Procedures

#### 1. Planning for Instruction

- a. A total school instructional plan is necessary. The reading, language arts and mathematics programs should be designed so that all students progress at their individual rates through a planned sequence of skills.
- b. In planning instructional procedures, teachers and administrators must be certain that concepts and skills are presented in a sequential and continuous manner in all classes. If the entire school follows a carefully designed skill sequence in planning for instruction, repetition or omission of instruction will be avoided.
- c. Science and social studies instruction should be organized to avoid repetition and to ensure that all students in the combination classes receive instruction in important topics and skill areas. Some schools may find it possible to regroup students for social studies and science instruction.
- d. Where there are programs restricted to a specific grade level (e.g., drug education), arrangements must be made to group all students on that grade level for the specified instruction.
- e. Advance planning must be done to determine which field trips, special activities and programs should be scheduled for classes and for which specific grade levels. (Note: Ways to schedule grade six activities and “special events” should be determined when sixth grade students are part of a combination class.)

Refer to the Elementary Instructional Guidelines and appropriate subject area curriculum guides for specific information on adapting curriculum for combination classes.

#### 2. Sub-grouping for Instruction

- a. Instructional procedures used in the typical classroom are appropriate for use in a multi-level or combination classroom.
- b. Combination classes need not be taught as two independent units, since students are all on the same skill continuum.
- c. Instruction may be given to the class as a whole in some situations (e.g., viewing instructional films, creative writing



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activities) and it may be given in a small group setting in others (e.g., grading and mathematics instruction).

- d. Grouping is flexible, and groups may be changed according to the interests, abilities, and needs of students. Groups may represent students from more than one grade level.
- e. Children's specific needs are met by individualized attention.
- f. Audiovisual aids and manipulative materials are used, as in any other grouping plan.

V. **RELATED INSTRUCTIONS:** None as of date.

VI. **MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THESE PROCEDURES:** These procedures originate with the Division of Instruction and Pupil Services. This procedure will be reviewed by the Coordinating Director of Instructional Services and updated as required.

VII. **CANCELLATIONS AND SUPERSEDURES:** The procedures cancel all informal memoranda or other writings of an earlier date which may exist on this general subject.

VIII. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** February 15, 1979.

Approved by:  
Edward J. Feeney  
Superintendent of Schools