



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

COMBINATION CLASSES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

6152

Procedure No.

September 5, 2019

Date

- I. **PURPOSE:** To provide guidance to administrators and teachers in organizing combination classes in the elementary school. This procedure does not apply to established program models with multi-grade grouping (e.g. Montessori).

- II. **BACKGROUND:** The Department of Curriculum and Instruction does not promote the use of combination classes, as it does not allow teachers to effectively address the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards (MCCR). However, based on extreme circumstances, such as when grades do not distribute evenly, when mobility is high, or when more flexibility for placing students is needed, then combination classes may be organized to meet the instructional needs of students.

However, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and sixth grade students should not be part of a combination class.

- III. **DEFINITIONS:** “Combination classes” are those classes to which students in two or more grade or curricular 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 ensure 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 must 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. Principals of schools in which combination classes have been formed should schedule an orientation meeting to provide an opportunity for principals, teachers, and parents to discuss questions related to combination classes.

The principal may wish to share the following information with parents:



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- a. How classes are organized.
- b. Class sizes for primary and intermediate classes.
- c. The similarities and differences in combination classes and other classes.
- d. The content that will be covered for both grades.
- e. How needs of students will be met (both academic and social).

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.

If changes in enrollment after September 30 cause combination classes, 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 engage 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 comfortable and understand the curriculum.
4. Assigning Teachers to Teams: When a combination class is organized, the teacher should be assigned to both teams or grade levels for instructional planning purposes. It is recommended that the teacher be assigned to one grade level team 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.

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



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declines, care should be taken not to have either a 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, 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.



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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.

B. Instructional Procedures

1. Planning for Instruction

- a. A total school instructional plan is necessary. The Reading/English 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, to exclude Pre K, Kindergarten and Sixth grade students.

2. Sub-grouping for Instruction

- a. Instructional procedures used in the typical classroom are appropriate for use in a multi-level or combination classroom.



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- b. Instruction may be given to the class as a whole in some situations (e.g., viewing instructional films, mini lessons and writing instruction) and it may be given in a small group setting.
 - c. Grouping is flexible, and groups may be changed according to the interests, abilities, and needs of students.
 - d. Audiovisual aids and manipulative materials are used, as in any other grouping plan.
- V. **MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE:** Principals must have a documented plan for their combination class that can be reviewed by their Instructional Director and Associate Superintendent. A copy of this scheduling for combination class plan should be filed in the office for easy access.
- VI. **RELATED PROCEDURES:** None.
- VII. **MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THESE PROCEDURES:** These procedures originate with the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and will be updated as required.
- VIII. **CANCELLATIONS AND SUPERSEDURES:** This Administrative Procedure cancels and supersedes Administrative Procedure 6152, dated July 1, 2013.
- IX. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** September 5, 2019