

Differentiated Instruction

The Next Level

Plum Cove Elementary School
2009-2010

Our Mission Statement

Plum Cove is dedicated to meeting the diverse needs of children with both traditional and alternative instructional methods.

We believe in supporting and challenging all learners to achieve and succeed.

Differentiated Instruction

- Is teaching with the students' needs in mind.
- Means starting where the students are, rather than “one-size-fits-all” teaching.
- Teachers introduce general concepts to the whole class, and then work with small groups based on achievement levels.
- Is Current Practice at Plum Cove School

Current Practice

- Classroom teaching is a blend of whole-class, group, and individual instruction.
- In Literacy and Math, students are grouped based upon ability levels, and receive direct instruction according to their academic needs.
- Groupings are interchangeable throughout the school year based upon the students' progress in each content area.

Plum Cove's Structure

Plum Cove has been studying the feasibility of the readiness levels and appropriateness for the next level of Differentiated Instruction:
Multiage Classes & Teacher Looping

Based on extensive collaborative research
we will introduce 2 multiage classrooms
One for grades 1/2 and one for grades 2/3
One teacher will “loop” from 3rd to 4th grade

Definition of Multiage and Looping

- *“Multiage education” refers to classrooms in which students from more than one grade share a teacher in an integrated ‘rolling’ two-year curriculum cycle. Students are not taught separately within one room as ‘first graders’ and ‘second graders’. Rather, they are taught together as one class spanning a wider age range.*
- *“Looping” is when a teacher moves to the next grade with his or her students.*
 - At Plum Cove in 2009-2010, approximately 50 - 60% of the class will follow this year’s looping teacher.*

Plum Cove's Structure

The only difference from our current teaching and classroom structure is that the multiage classrooms will have a wider age range and students can stay with a teacher for 2 years

Other classes will retain the single-grade structure continuing Differentiated Instruction

This is a school-based decision with the full support and approval of the District Office

Our new structure will be implemented for the 2009-2010 school year

Quote

- *“Based on research and observations to date, the increase in the range of academic, social and behavioral development introduced by extending a class to two grades is not expected to significantly increase the complexity of teaching that class beyond what is already present in today’s typically heterogeneous single-graded classroom. Single grade classrooms already possess such a wide range of skills that the incremental change in skill range does not pose an untenable burden. Present teaching methods, for literacy and math in particular, already provide a great deal of individualization, and as repeatedly found in other school systems, these methods readily extend to accommodate a multiage classroom.”*

Next Level

Educational Benefits

- The better a teacher knows a student, the easier it is for the teacher to provide appropriate instruction.
 - Better and longer time to monitor students in order to recognize effectiveness of teaching
 - Builds stronger bonds between teacher, student and parent
- Smoother transitions: Routines, academic expectations, and curriculum planning are established more quickly
 - Leads to more learning time
 - Consistency over time brings more results to student learning & successful teaching

Next Level Educational Benefits

- Students advance from one concept level to the next regardless of age or grade
 - Student-centered
 - Child is given appropriate support and/or challenge depending on their individual achievement levels
- Independent, self-directed learning is a goal with teacher as facilitator
 - Enhanced student independence
 - Child learns to self initiate

Next Level Educational Benefits

- Students develop leadership and social skills
 - Increased Self-esteem, Confidence
 - If a child can teach it, then they have learned it
- Students become more socially and emotionally competent
 - Learn to interact more effectively with wider age range of friends
 - Have more time to develop deeper friendships
 - Understands diversity - we all learn differently and at various speeds

New Grade Structure

Grade	Size
K (2)	20 each
1	21
1/2	11 (gr.1) + 10 (gr.2)
2	19
2/3	8 (gr.2) + 15 (gr.3)
3	23
4 (2)	16/17
5	22

Note

Placement into a Multiage classroom does not in any way reflect any individual students' academic status.

Placement Process

- Our primary goal has always been, and will continue to be, to create equitable and diversified classrooms, whether they are single-age or multiage. We try to balance each class by gender, by academic and social needs, by abilities, and by learning styles.
- Placement is an important decision and one that involves close collaboration between classroom teachers, specialists, and the principal. At the end of each year, this group repeatedly collaborates regarding the best placement for each child for the following year to meet his/her academic and social needs.
- This will continue to be the case and teachers will now also consider which classroom style (single age or multiage) will foster and encourage that child's specific learning style so that the child can achieve academic and social success.

Curriculum

- Math and literacy skills will continue to be taught using the Differentiated Instruction approach.
 - Teachers focus the instruction on students' learning needs.
 - Instruction is customized to students' stages of learning.
 - Teachers constantly monitor the instructional needs of the students.

Curriculum - continued

- A concept-based curriculum such as Science and Social Studies lends itself to multiage teaching. Themes and the teaching of “big concepts” are taught to all, but essential understandings are specific to students’ grade levels.
- Physical Education, Health, and Art are taught through themes. Modifications are made for grade-level skills.
- Minor adjustments will be made to Music curriculum to accommodate all learners.

Curriculum - continued

- District curriculum is uniform for grade levels and common benchmark assessments are being developed for literacy and math.

Resource Access

Our physical resources and access to Specialist services for all students will be the same whether a student is in a single age or multiage classroom.

Actions for Success

- More planning work for teachers initially
 - Working directly with Program Leaders in Math, Literacy, and Science
 - Summer Study Group for Collaborative Teacher planning
 - Visitations to schools with successful implementations
- Teachers will support and collaborate with each other
 - Providing weekly common planning time
 - Scheduling content areas at common time

Actions for Success

- Particular attention will be given to teaching math
 - Units for Grades 1 and 2 parallel each other.
 - Units for Grades 2 and 3 do not parallel so easily; therefore there will be two teachers teaching 3rd grade math and one teacher working with a Resource teacher teaching 2nd grade math.

In Summary

- Continuing the Differentiated Instruction Model
 - Using the Next Level - Multiage and Looping
- Our mission statement remains the same
 - Achieving academic and social success for all students
- Teachers and students will remain accountable to meet local and state educational standards
- This new structure is being implemented for enrichment of educational opportunities.

Gloucester School Committee Minutes

~ February 25, 2009

Multiage Classes

Val Gilman gave an overview of the goals and objectives of the Multiage Task Force and presented a PowerPoint presentation 'Multiage Classrooms Gloucester Public Schools 2009'

The Committee noted that:

- ❑ Multiage classrooms are not experimental: they have been used in educational settings for a long time
- ❑ There is agreement among sub-committee members of the multiple benefits of multiage classrooms
- ❑ The School Committee, along with the superintendent, and multiage task force members are all in agreement that multiage classrooms are an arrangement that the educational community in Gloucester should grow to be comfortable with.

Upon a motion by Mrs. Gilman, seconded by Mrs. Harrison, it was VOTED unanimously to endorse multiage classrooms as an educationally sound arrangement under appropriate circumstances.

Questions and Answers