



**BLENDED CLASSROOMS:
OVERCOMING THE BUDGET
SHORTFALL**

Estacada School District 2011-12

WHY ARE WE HERE?

- Then: (2008-09)
 - 3 Schools
 - 7 Grades (K-6)
 - 2 teachers in each class, 1 kindergarten teacher for two half-day sessions = 39 teachers
- Now: (2010-11)
 - 3 Schools
 - 7 Grades (K-6)
 - 4 classroom teachers lost to retirement...10 classroom teachers per school + kindergarten = 33 classroom teachers



WE MUST BE CREATIVE IN HOW WE GROUP OUR STUDENTS SINCE WE NO LONGER HAVE ENOUGH TEACHERS FOR 2 SEPARATE CLASSES FOR EACH GRADE LEVEL AT ANY OF OUR SCHOOLS.

- Some schools put two (or more) grade levels in one class and one teacher teaches everything to two grade levels. This is called a 'split' class.
- Some schools put two (or more) grade levels in one class and both teachers work together to teach everything to both grade levels. This is called a blended class.



WHAT IS A SPLIT ?

- Split classes are the old-fashioned way of combining two grade levels when there are too few kids to have another class. Very small district and schools still use splits.
- Split classes are isolating and force one teacher to do all of the work by teaching the curriculum from two grade levels.
- Split classes create an imbalance in class structure as perceptions are created about which students are placed in the blend. Are they the more able students? The more independent workers?
- Split classes create differences between schools and teachers no one to partner with (PLC..early release)
- Split classes make it difficult for the teacher to reach the wide-range of abilities within the classroom because she is working alone.



WHAT IS A BLEND?

- Blended classes combine more than one grade level and allow teachers to collaborate and distribute the workload and the range of students' abilities through shared teaching.
- Blended classes 'break out' for instruction that is grade-level specific, such as math. They also redistribute students for language arts to narrow the scope of curriculum that each teacher must teach.
- Blended class homerooms are formed heterogeneously and often combine looping as a way to further build on relationships formed between students and teachers.
- Blended classes do allow for more normalcy as enrollment declines and create a 'contraction model' that minimizes change year-to-year.



BLENDED CLASSES, CONT.

- Blended classes allow for cross-district PLC meetings, helping to ensure that instruction happening in schools is consistent across the district.
- Blended classes may help mitigate the loss of Title I specialists by supporting the Learning Center Model. When teachers have a smaller range of small groups to teach, they can spend more time with each small group.
- Through shared teaching, students can be taught at their instructional level independent of their grade level. Our current data indicate that the top 25% of students are not meeting their growth targets in reading at all elementary schools. Again, when teachers have a more narrowed focus to teach, they can reach students at both ends of the spectrum rather than just in the middle.
- Blended classes do not place a 'ceiling' on what is learned. Students can grow no matter their grade level in the blend.



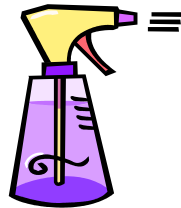
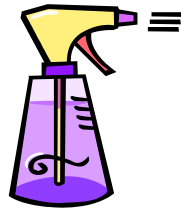
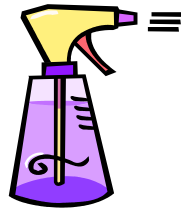
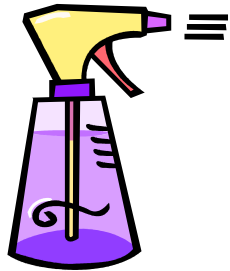
TAKE A LOOK AT THE READING DATA: CAN A SINGLE TEACHER MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS IN A CLASS?

Met Growth 65% Quadrant 1	Did Not Meet Growth 25% Quadrant 2
Met Growth 2% Quadrant 3	Did Not Meet Growth 8% Quadrant 4

- This is a peek at reading scores last year at all three elementary schools. Although the percent meeting data for each school and grade are not the same, the percentage of students above standard not meeting their growth target is consistent. Above the standard, students are not expected to make a year's growth to meet their growth target. ☹



Q: WITH BOTH TAG AND TITLE CUTS, HOW CAN BLENDING, COMBINED WITH PLC'S ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF THESE STUDENTS BETTER THAN THE CURRENT MODEL?



- In addition to being able to address the needs of higher-level students, blended classes allow us to reduce the % of students requiring intervention outside the classroom to the 25% level recommended by the RTI model. Currently an average of 40% or our students receive intervention outside of the classroom. We cannot continue this model with fewer resources, nor is it best practice.



MINIMIZING CHANGE OVER THE LONG-TERM

- One consideration this year was to close an elementary school. This year, the majority of cuts have been made and closing a school would have minimal financial impact unless class sizes greatly increase at the receiving buildings.
- Another consideration was to redistribute teachers and students into three buildings based on grade bands. This would create tremendous staff and student movement.
- Administrative decisions were made to use a blended model that would require neither of these changes but one that would support long-term downsizing.
- Teachers evaluated three blending models and prefer one over the other three.



THREE SUGGESTED BLENDED MODELS

- Option A: 1 & 2, 3 & 4, 5 & 6
- Option B: Keep first and 6th separate, blend at grades 2 & 3, 4 & 5
- Option C: Keep first and second grade separate, blend at grades 3 & 4, 5 & 6

- Teachers are in support of Option B, although removing classes from blends will increase class sizes at the classes that are blended.
- Take a look at the pros and cons of each blend



FIRST...SOME CRITICISMS EXPLAINED

- Research supports multi-age groupings both socially and academically. This research supports why some schools blend classes when they do not have to.
- Teachers in schools where classes are not blended often 'share instruction' by grouping students by ability levels for instruction to lessen the gap.
- Wide-spread change is often not popular and not taken into consideration until we have to think creatively so solve a solution, in this case a budget shortfall.
- Students at the top will not be held back, in fact they should receive more advanced instruction.
- Not blending (to take time to study the proposal) would place students in class sizes of up to 43 students in some grades in some schools.



HOW CAN BLENDS BE ACCOMPLISHED?

- Collaboration at all grade-level blends planning and delivering instruction
- Professional Development: PLC leaders trained and train their teams
- Ample instructional materials
- Literacy blocks and thoughtful scheduling
- Supportive administrators
- Working together as a team, our teachers make the difference! There is experience at each blend and time built into the week to share and learn. PLC's work together (district and school) during Friday early release time (1:35 pm) each week.



QUESTIONS

- Thank you for coming!

