



# Sandersville Elementary School

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## Classroom Placement Policy/Procedure 2009-2010

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I hope your child's school year has been successful, filled with new experiences and wonderful memories. The new building was certainly a huge asset to add to an already wonderful climate with great parents, students and staff members. We grew from about 500 students at Linlee to a whopping 700 students who will be enrolled for the upcoming year. With this in mind, I would like to explain to you how staffing and class placements are organized. Please look at the following information:

- We will be staffed at the primary level (K-3) at 456 students. The district divides this number by 24 (class size) and that gives you the number of teachers allocated for the primary program (19). We will be staffed at 243 intermediate students (4-5) and the district divides this number by 27 (class size) and this gives you the amount of teachers allocated for intermediate which are 9. This is a total of 28 homeroom teachers. We grew by one intermediate from last year.
- As you know, we have typically arranged for split level classes such as K/1s and 1/2s etc. This was mainly for staffing purposes, because in primary we must fill up to that magic number of 456, so a plan must be in place that will allow flexibility when children enroll, because we can't predict what grade level the child will be entering. That was indeed the case last year, as we anticipated 150 new students entering Sandersville.
- Fortunately, our numbers are now becoming stable, so we know approximately how many students will be entering each grade level based on the number of students in the building at the end of the year. The district will allow 110 kindergarten students to enter, and this keeps our overall number in line with the 700 students we can accommodate.
- With this in mind, and doing several different scenarios with staff for creating our classroom placements, it didn't make any difference with numbers as to whether we created split level classes or decided to have straight grade level homerooms. After much discussion with staff, we decided upon a "straight" grade level configuration for next year and it was passed by our SBDM. This allows teachers to plan instruction more effectively using the Core Content Standards for Instruction and Assessment. This will have no effect on students who were in split level classrooms such as a first grader in a 1/2 split repeating curriculum, as has been rumored.
- Accelerated classes will still be available, and honestly the majority of our students are now performing on or above grade level, so it is our goal to phase out this accelerated system within 3 years. Because ultimately it is our goal for every student to be proficient or distinguished. With the increased academic expectations, challenging instruction by teachers and a secure goal/vision in mind for our students we have been able to increase our student achievement index by over 20 points in just three years. This achievement data proves that we are meeting students at their educational level and accelerating their learning throughout the year. It is our goal for each child to gain a year's growth if they are on or above grade level, no matter how advanced they may enter the classroom. It is also our goal to accelerate each child who is reading below grade level to proficiency by the end of that academic school year.
- With these factors in mind it is important for you to understand that our role as educators is to meet each student at their educational level, especially in reading and math and to design



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instruction that will challenge, and require them to reach their highest academic performance level during the year. This is why teachers flexibly group for reading and math regardless of whether a student is in an “accelerated” cluster or a “regular” classroom setting. For example, if a child enters 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and our assessments clearly show that the child is performing above grade level in reading or math and shows a clear understanding of grade level content based on our pre-assessments, then that child’s instructional level will be raised and met either by grouping within the grade level team itself, or sending the child to another grade level for certain instruction.

- To clear up any confusion regarding classroom or accelerated placement; please visit our website that will soon have a link to all newly adopted Sandersville SBDM Policies.
- Accelerated placements do not necessarily mean that the student will be working on the next year’s curriculum. It does mean that we expect these students to learn the content at a quicker pace, which allows the teacher to do enrichment activities, independent projects, and differentiate instruction to meet the creative and academic needs of the child. Our goal is complete mastery of the content at the required grade level and a clear and thorough understanding of the content which allows them opportunities to use more critical thinking skills to get to the “whys” and “explanations” of concepts. If students do master the content, then yes, the teacher may introduce or move on to higher level content in reading and math, but honestly we do that in each classroom. Accelerated classrooms are not for every child, it doesn’t determine the “intelligence” of the child in the classroom, it just means that many students learn differently and in order to reach them through instruction it is easier when we cluster students together that move at a quick pace, and can be independent thinkers and learners. Work ethic plays just as important a role in selecting students for the placements as any other data.
- All classroom placements, including accelerated placements will be balanced to reflect the diversity of the grade level.
- Again, to reiterate, students will be placed in single grade level homerooms. Teachers may departmentalize and teach different content and/or levels among the grade level teams.
- Student assignments will be posted in the last report card. Teachers will work together for “blind placements.” If your child is chosen for an accelerated classroom it will be indicated on your placement card. We hope to have more than one accelerated cluster at each grade level, as again our students are performing at wonderfully high levels.
- Placements are made by committee decision of teachers, and always with the best interest of the student in mind. Placement requests are welcome and had a deadline of May 1<sup>st</sup>. Placements should not include specific teacher names, but should reflect the learning style or personality of the child.
- Placements are final. Once school begins and you have had several weeks of instruction, you may always request a parent/teacher conference to discuss concerns, and if that does not remedy the concern, then please feel free to contact me for an appointment to discuss placements. Have a GREAT “SHORT” Summer!

Ms. Mefford, Principal