



Melrose Public Schools Administrative Offices

360 LYNN FIELDS PARKWAY, MELROSE, MA 02176

Telephone: (781) 662-2000 V/TTY
FAX: (781) 979-2285

JOSEPH F. CASEY
Superintendent of Schools
Email: jcasey@melrose.mec.edu

GREGORY ZAMMUTO
Business Manager
Email: gzammuto@melrose.mec.edu

September 3, 2009

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to the new school year! Over the past few years, the Melrose Public School system has been studying and reviewing a variety of instructional models as we establish the expectation of excellence for all. This has been and will continue to be an evolving process, but starting early this fall you will notice some positive changes in your child's classroom aimed at increasing academic achievement for all.

The Melrose Public Schools Administrative Team, in partnership with our staff, has expanded upon an instructional model designed to better meet the needs of all learners. As part of this model, elementary classrooms across the district will incorporate, "cluster grouping" and, "flexible grouping" in Mathematics and English Language Arts to target students at all levels.

What does, "cluster grouping" mean?

Cluster grouping is a term that is typically used to describe a group of students who have been identified as gifted, and then put together for instructional purposes. This year, gifted clusters will be together for Mathematics and English Language Arts classes so that the students in the clusters can take advantage of instruction and curriculum at an appropriate and challenging level.

What does, "flexible grouping" mean?

Flexible grouping is a model where all students are placed in instructional groups that are not static. Groups are based on each student's performance, ability level, and need. Flexible grouping can enable teachers to spend more time providing focused instruction to a narrower range of students. Some students will demonstrate they have mastered certain skills and concepts, other students will show that they still need help with particular skills. Increased focused instruction promotes higher student achievement. The flexibility to move students from one group to another is an essential component that keeps students engaged and challenged. Ongoing assessments will be used to guide teachers as they move students through flexible groups.

What is the goal of cluster grouping and flexible grouping?

The goal of *cluster* grouping is to place gifted students with similar abilities together, so that teachers can tailor instruction and curriculum to meet the specific needs of students in that group. The goal of *flexible* grouping is to ensure that all students are being challenged but are not being taught beyond their instructional level. Both approaches together mean that teachers will be able to focus their teaching in more effective ways and without duplication of efforts, so that all students get what they need.

What will this look like in elementary schools?

It's important to recognize that each elementary school has variables which include the number of classes at a grade level and the size of clusters. With these differences in mind, the model may appear different at each school. However, the common elements of gifted students placed in cluster groups and the incorporation

of flexible grouping for all students will be similar. Your child may receive Math or English Language Arts instruction from a teacher other than his/her homeroom teacher. Principals will be working closely with teachers throughout the year to help facilitate the flexible group instruction process.

Where can parents get more information?

At our first **PTO meeting on September 16th @ 7:00**, Mrs. Clery will be addressing parents about this instructional model. For specific questions about how cluster grouping and flexible grouping are implemented in the classroom, please contact your child's principal. Parents can also go to the Melrose Public Schools website and click on the presentation, "Meeting the Needs of All Learners, Including the Academically Advanced and Gifted."

A District-wide Parent Information Session on Meeting the Needs of All Learners will be held on Thursday, October 8, 2009 at 7:00 PM at Veteran's Memorial Middle School. Additionally, parents may also contact Pat Muxie, Melrose Public Schools Curriculum Director, at 781-462-3257.

We will need your feedback on how this expanded model of teaching and learning is working in the Melrose Public Schools. A survey will come home in backpacks later this fall to get comments from parents, and the results will be shared in January. At that time, please take a moment to give us your valuable input so that we may determine what changes need to be made. This will continue to be an evolving process.

We appreciate your support as we make changes and establish the expectation of excellence for all.

Sincerely,

Note: This letter was sent by each building principal for grades K-5