

2310 INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPING

Underlying all of the goals of the Westfield Public Schools is the commitment to enable our students to achieve their maximum potential. To that end, students will be grouped for instruction in such a manner that the learning process, K-12, represents a continuing ladder of progress providing educational opportunities which foster the highest possible academic achievement without negatively impacting a student's sense of self-worth and self-esteem.

The goal of the Westfield Public Schools in grouping students for instruction is to create a challenging learning environment which encourages students to continually reach higher and to develop a lifelong commitment to learning.

Students will be grouped to ensure steady, developmental growth in a manner which encourages academic mobility as they mature chronologically, emotionally, socially and intellectually.

The Board of Education recognizes the prevalence of research which suggests that the grouping of children by ability does not always lead to improved learning and may have detrimental effects on the development of a healthy self image.

The Board also recognizes the successful experience of Westfield's professional staff and the value of some instructional groups based on achievement in certain subjects. Heterogeneous groups shall be the most common grouping pattern, particularly in the elementary grades. To a limited extent and in specific subject areas, students may be grouped by demonstrated achievement.

Practices which lead to "tracking"--either deliberate or "de facto"--in the elementary grades are contrary to the policy of the Westfield Public Schools. Tracking in this context is defined as the placing of students in the same ability group for all subjects or the absence of movement between achievement groups as students progress through the grades.

In all grade levels, special programs and classes shall be provided to meet the individual needs of children who require a program beyond that offered in regular classrooms. Such programs shall include special help for "at risk" children, resource rooms, special education classes, advanced learning classes, and independent study.

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To further the development of individual potential in all students, it shall also be the policy of the Westfield Public Schools to:

1. Offer regular staff training programs which focus on teaching strategies and skills for working with students of varying abilities, achievement levels, and learning styles.
2. Annually monitor professional research on the role of grouping in the teaching and learning process.

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Revised: March 11, 2014

R 2310 INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPING

The following administrative guidelines have been developed to implement Policy No. 2310 on Instructional Grouping.

Elementary Grades (K-5)

The primary organization for teaching and learning in the elementary grades shall utilize heterogeneous grouping with attention to individual differences in maturation, development and ability which are present in all groups of children.

All homeroom classes shall include a heterogeneous group of students in terms of academic ability and achievement.

All regular academic instruction in grades K-1 shall take place in the homeroom class with the homeroom teacher. In grades 2-5, World Language shall be taught by someone other than the homeroom teacher. In grades 4 and 5, science and social studies also may be taught by someone other than the homeroom teacher.

At the elementary level, effective instruction demands that each child be a member of different groups throughout the school day. These groups must necessarily be flexible in order to reflect the stated objectives within each curriculum and differing rates of development among children. In this context, the term flexible means that students shall have the opportunity to experience a variety of skill/learning groups throughout the year. The intent of these regulations is to ensure that individual students are not limited to a single group experience for the entire school year.

Intermediate Schools

Grade 6

Students shall be grouped heterogeneously for all subjects.

Grade 7-8

Students shall be grouped heterogeneously for instruction in all subject areas. An exception may be made for mathematics. Mathematics groups may be offered based on achievement. These groups shall be flexible with opportunities for students to move from group to group.

High School

Grade 9

Students may be grouped by achievement in mathematics and world languages. Class groups in all other subjects shall be heterogeneous.

Grades 10-12

Students may be grouped by achievement in mathematics, science, social studies, world languages and English.

High school grouping practices shall also be governed by the following:

1. Accelerated or advanced classes shall be elective for recommended students who wish to take more challenging courses.
2. Provision shall be made to provide opportunities for students to move to higher level courses in all subject areas if their interest, abilities and achievement level warrant such a change during their high school years.