

Upon the completion of the 2006 school year, I had the opportunity to be on a special team of teachers for the purpose of reviewing our language arts curriculum. I was one who ***truly never expected*** to have a change of mind as to the way I had been teaching for the past thirteen years at the second grade level. However, I strongly welcomed such a change to become heterogeneous for the first time here at Penn View. From what I had seen, there was no question that our students would have a more complete and authentic education by doing so. Our elementary classes have been homogeneous only for mathematics and language arts throughout the years. I often had yearned for opportunities to integrate across the curriculum during the other subject areas which have been heterogeneous. In the later climate, students do work wonderfully together like in the real world. Finally, with the adoption of self-contained classrooms, my instruction will impart just that! I trust that learning should make even more sense to all of our students.

--Ruth Maxwell

Since I attended PVCS myself (1st-8th), I understand the positives and negatives of our current system of grouping from both a teacher and student perspective. In contrast to my own elementary school experience, my college education courses prepared me to teach primarily in self-contained classroom situations (non-grouped). This gave me the opportunity to compare and contrast these two approaches to teaching on a regular basis. I do still believe there are positives and negatives to both approaches; however, I feel that self-contained classrooms do lend themselves better to many good teaching strategies such as subject integration, flexible grouping and scheduling, more opportunities for practical application of skills taught, among many others.

Having said that, I am certainly excited about the organizational changes that will be occurring next year. I feel that there are two, undisputedly, positive effects that will be a result of this change. These two things will benefit students, teachers, and parents alike. Firstly, we, as teachers, will be able to integrate subject areas much more effectively. This will produce deeper, richer, and learning experiences. It is also a more interesting and fun way to learn and teach! I am very eager to do this and have been brainstorming different "theme studies" for next year where we will focus on a specific topic within many subject areas. Secondly, the teachers will know each of their students more fully. To me, having the same group of children all day is an opportunity rather than a boundary. The students (and parents) will more quickly become comfortable in the routines and expectations of his/her teacher, rather than juggling the differences between two or three. The teachers will get to know their students much faster and will therefore, be able to meet all of their individual needs in more timely and effective ways. This will also produce a more intimate and safe learning community that will reflect the ideas and characteristics of all of the students' gifts and abilities – much like the students will experience as they go throughout their lives.

Although this change will take time for all involved to adjust to, I am confident that we will not regret it!

- Laura Sigmans