Bourbonnais Elementary School District #53

281 W. John Casey Road, Bourbonnais, IL 60914
www.besd53.org (815) 929-5100 FAX (815) 939-0481

Dr. Margaret Longo
Superintendent of Schools
Longom@besd53.org

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Good afternoon parents and guardians,

On Tuesday evening the Board of Education approved piloting an acceleration model known as Whole School Cluster Grouping for all 3rd grade classrooms in 2020/21. I want to give you some details regarding this model that I am advocating for but also tell you that grades 4-8 will continue with the current SAIL Acceleration Program for 2020-21. Mrs. O'Gorman will be working with students for SAIL in grades 4 and 5 and the identification process will remain the same in grades 4-8. Mrs. O'Gorman will also spend a small amount of time working with teachers to support the needs of high achieving students throughout the entire day.

Whole School Cluster Grouping is defined as a cluster grouping model that takes into account the achievement levels of all students and places students in classrooms yearly in order to reduce the number of achievement levels in each classroom and facilitate teachers' differentiation of curriculum and instruction for all students and thus increase student achievement.

Our goals for the model are as follows:

1. Reduce strain on teachers by managing the range of abilities in each class.
2. Increase equity and access to acceleration by historically underserved groups.
3. Increase achievement for all students.
4. Expand access to highly effective strategies typically reserved for targeted groups.

The grouping or clustering is accomplished by looking at the achievement levels of all students. This is done using a combination of student performance in the classroom, as identified by their teachers, and achievement testing results. In this model there is no set number or percentage of students to identify for gifted services. Rather, all students are identified yearly based on their performance and using five categories defined as follows: High, Above Average, Average, Low Average and Low. There are no set percentiles used to make the groups, but rather some general guidelines and parameters to help teachers and principals with the work.

It is also important to understand the following:

1. Identification categories are designated to assist with placement of students into classrooms in this model, not as definitive, permanent labels or indicators of expectations. Teachers in the students' current grade make initial recommendations based on data and student work as they know the students the best and then the principal makes final decisions and teacher placements in coordination with the staff.

2. Categories change as students grow, learn, and develop. A specific identification category might not drive instructional placement for students identified in average, low-average, or low-achieving categories.

3. Identification takes place yearly for classroom placement, and students will improve as they progress through school.

4. In this model there are high achieving students in every classroom as well as students that struggle, thus our plan is to provide professional development to all teachers in terms of meeting the needs of high achieving students. This will be done with the help of Northwestern University's Talent Development Team.

Should you wish to read more about this model, Purdue University has done a lot of work and research and you can find that here. You can also view my recent webinar on this topic using this link and entering this password: 2W!7033Q

Please feel free to reach out to me should you have any questions regarding this model or our plan. I hope you are doing well and staying safe and I cannot wait to see more of you in person!

Sincerely,
Dr. James Duggan
Director of Instruction

The mission of Bourbonnais School District #53 is to:

- *Collaborate with staff, students, families, and community;*
- *Provide a safe learning environment with innovative instructional practices; and*
- *Inspire all students to reach their unique potential as globally conscious learners.*