

GGUSD School Board Meeting 11/16/2021

Topic: Combo Classes

There are currently 106 combination classes (combos) with 106 teachers.

Research has established that combination classes are **particularly effective when the participating students are carefully selected**. Combination classes **may have** a more positive impact on social growth and the development of independent learning skills than single grade classes. Take note that **it may have a more positive impact, this would be a result of when students are carefully placed in a combo. Many of our combination classes no longer carefully place students.**

Having just returned from a remote and hybrid 2020-21 school year, combination classes had impossible challenges of meeting student needs and providing adequate direct instructional minutes for both grade levels.

COVID-19 has harmed students' social-emotional wellbeing, making it even more difficult to learn and students missed critical academic milestones during school closures. Understand how the pandemic increased mental health problems for students and the effect trauma has on a student's learning.

"Time and support are the greatest resource for our students. Placement in a combo class significantly reduces both. The teacher is expected to deliver dueling content, often differing greatly between grade levels, and must do so within the school hours. This limits instruction, reduces support, and negatively impacts our students. There is less opportunity to reteach, pull small groups, indulge meaningful academic discourse, and give the students time to practice and feel supported as they do." (GGUSD teacher#1)

"Combination classes deprive students of optimal instruction conditions and are successful only when the students in a combo class have previously demonstrated the strong ability to thrive independently in a classroom setting." (GGUSD teacher#2).

"Students are struggling with a "business as usual" pacing expectation that gives no acknowledgement that learning losses have occurred and significant resources and time must be spent reviewing, building in extra supports and scaffolds to lessons, and providing extra exposure and practice to key concepts." (GGUSD teacher#2)

During this pandemic, the district was eager to get the students back to in person full time because they felt students did not get enough direct instruction from teachers during distance and hybrid learning. Students who are in a combo class are still learning in a hybrid format. They are only getting ½ the time and attention of their teacher each day. They are not getting the same learning opportunities as students in a single grade class." (GGUSD teacher#3)

Irvine Math Project, Close Reading, Twig Science and TI History/Social Studies are very teacher directed programs. In a combination class, with only ½ the time, can these truly be faithfully implemented as intended?

Our students, your students, need every support at the district's disposal within a normal instructional year, under ordinary circumstances. We are definitely not teaching in normal circumstances.

In a nutshell, combo students are getting $\frac{1}{2}$ a teacher, spend more time on independent work, and have less time to interact with the teacher.

At this time and more than ever experienced before in my teaching years, our ask is that support be provided by hiring temporary teachers and aides with the use of ESSER III monies.