

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS on B-LEVEL CLASSES

1. Why this sudden decision to change the existing model?

As far back as 2007, administrators, teachers, school counselors, special educators, and members of the Special Education Local Advisory Committee (SELAC) began to analyze data from disaggregated course enrollments through the grades to address the access of rigorous coursework for all students. It became increasingly more apparent that students enrolled in B level classes did not have access to the curriculum needed to achieve proficiency on the State assessment (NECAP). It became increasingly more apparent students enrolled in B level classes would not be in a position to graduate from high school in 2014 when all students must earn a proficient score on the State assessment in both math and reading.

2. What planning has taken place to make this move away from B level classes?

For the past year, a team of teachers, school counselors, and administrators have been meeting to determine how best to address this issue. This group has recommended to the Superintendent that the elimination of B level classes begin with the Class of 2014, next year's freshman class. The change will take place in science, math and social studies. English has not had B level classes for several years, and self-contained English classes are being phased out.

3. What about students who excel in their coursework? How will they be challenged?

Honors and Advanced Placement classes have always been an option in the upper grades. For incoming freshmen, an honors Earth Systems science class and an honors Western Civ. Class has been added to the 9th grade curriculum. There are specific requirements created for freshmen wishing to enroll in these classes.

4. What supports have been provided for teachers to effectively instruct these heterogeneous classes?

The district is providing a 5 day workshop on differentiation this summer. This spring, teachers were given a survey that enabled them to select from a range of options for professional development including a text-based discussion on instructional strategies and differentiated instruction.

Teachers choose their own professional development goals as part of the Teacher Learning Center process. By contract, teachers are able to determine their goals and strategies to improve teaching and learning. In the past, several have selected to address differentiated instruction. It is anticipated that more will chose this focus next year.

In addition to the Teacher Learning Center, there is a requirement for each teacher to complete 12 hours of job embedded professional development. Again, many have

selected to focus on differentiated instruction and more will select that focus going forward.

In addition to these opportunities, over the past three years teachers have attended national conferences to learn from leading researchers on current educational issues. Some have visited the nation's leading high school for intervention and differentiation – Adlai Stevenson High School in Chicago.

Conferences attended in the past two years, include the following:

- Co-teaching
- Strategies for teaching academic vocabulary
- Practical activities for strengthening teaching physics concepts in your science class
- Using innovative technology
- Accelerating the academic success of struggling readers and writers
- Classroom strategies for inclusion
- Motivating the unmotivated
- Innovative strategies in science
- Reading and writing strategy instruction for social studies content
- Strategies for strengthening students learning of algebra
- Writing for understanding
- Learning difference awareness conference

5. How will this be phased in over time?

Students in South Kingstown have been heterogeneously grouped at every grade level from K through 8. While the plan now is to phase this in one year at a time, it could easily be implemented at a faster pace.

6. Will teacher assignments be based on their readiness to teach heterogeneously grouped classes?

We believe all teachers are equipped and skilled enough to teach heterogeneously grouped classes. Many do now.

As for teacher assignments, that is determined at the department level. Department chairs work with their department colleagues to determine who will teach which courses and grade levels.

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