

GJUESD Board of Education:

My name is Kristin Szyper. I am a kindergarten teacher at Valley Oaks Elementary. I have been a teacher for 32 years. I spent several years working with the California Reading and Literature project as an author and presenter in literacy instruction.

During a SIPPS training, I learned that K-4 teachers are required to teach SIPPS “whole class” next year. No data or research supporting this change was shared. No one has ever expressed concerns about SIPPS instruction in our district. We have received praise that our scores continue to improve, that we had top scores in our County, etc.

If Lois had met with or surveyed teachers, we could share how centers look in our rooms. I do ALL my SIPPS instruction with my students. Students have adult support at 3 centers. They are getting grade-level material, and it is differentiated based on student need.

How would whole-class instruction best serve my returning TK students who are already at Book 40 and students who haven't attended Preschool? Whole-class instruction for SIPPS may benefit 1/2 the class. Everyone else will be bored or overwhelmed. The number one rule of classroom management is lesson design. SIPPS is great for teaching reading in small groups, but it is not high on engagement for whole-class instruction.

If we are going to need to provide intervention for all the struggling students, and those readers who will not benefit from rereading 40 Books, then I will basically be doing small groups the way I currently am, but I now will be spending 20-30 minutes doing whole-class instruction that will have very little impact.

We have always prided ourselves on differentiation, individualization and meeting the needs of all students. We have now (in an instant) moved to the opposite extreme! “One size fits all” is going to be the district mantra for teaching students to read. This goes against everything I know about quality teaching. I am truly horrified that this is the direction our district leadership is choosing to go without trying anything else first. I am also angry that no teacher input was solicited about what is working or not working with SIPPS instruction. There was no data shared to show that this implementation yields better results.

I hope the Board understands that this isn't in the best interest of students. It scares me that we may wait 8 years to see how these students are reading in Middle School before realizing we have completely failed them. Please listen to your teachers who are working with students EVERYday and want to help them be successful readers and writers.

Kristin Szyper