

Combination/ Multi-Age Classroom Information

Purpose and Rationale

- Enables students to become self-directed learners
- Opportunity to loop students and build strong relationships between teacher and student
- Allows for vertical collaboration and teaming with teachers
- Opportunities for peer collaboration, peer teaching, and problem solving
- Provides for balanced class size
- Provides frequent opportunities for development of student leadership



Why Children Might Benefit From a “Combination” Classroom

Taken from Psychology Today (May 18, 2015):

- Research has shown there’s no difference in academic achievement between children in split classes versus straight grades.
- Split-grade students are less competitive with one another and more cooperative than students in same-grade classrooms.
- Children learn at different paces. Blended classes offer a wider range of curricula across 2 grade levels. Advanced students can be more easily challenged with higher-level material; struggling students can more easily return to earlier material.
- Younger children gain self-confidence and maturity by being exposed to older students; older students learn to be positive, mature role models for the younger students. (Most children come from a home environment with siblings of different ages).
- Children will benefit by having the same teacher over two years, as the teacher comes to know the students’ abilities better. This is called “looping.”
- Students in blended classrooms tend to take greater personal responsibility for their learning.
- There is greater peer-to-peer learning in blended classrooms.
- Students develop friendships across grade levels and blended classrooms instill a greater sense of responsibility for one another, and a better sense of community. As one teacher tells her students, “we are like a family who cares for one another.”



Combination/ Multi-Age Classroom Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Combination Classroom?

A combination classroom consists of students from two or more grades housed in the same classroom but taught, at least some of the time and commonly for most of the time, as separate grades.

From: Lloyd, Multi-age Classes and High Ability Learners

What is a Multi-age Classroom?

Multi-age classrooms are composed of students who are more than one year apart. Students remain with the same teacher for more than one year. Multi-age classrooms are made up of a mix of abilities and ages. Students are not grouped based solely on academic performance. Multi-age classrooms reflect the natural groupings found in our neighborhoods, communities and in the world, and provide opportunities for the exchange of ideas, modeling of behaviors, practice of responsibility and nurturance, and development of leadership and social skills.



Several principles and practices are foundational to multi-age classrooms:

- Teacher is the facilitator of learning (rather than the keeper of knowledge)
- Developmentally appropriate, child centered, continuous learning
- Integrated Curriculum
- Attention to the education of the whole child

How are children selected for multi-age classrooms?

The process used to assign students is a comprehensive one. As a staff, we take the responsibility of class placement very seriously. Many factors are considered in the process of placing every child. Our class placement procedure is extremely child-centered and begins with extensive conversation about each individual child. Our goal is to create classes which is conducive to learning for all students. We attempt to accomplish this by analyzing characteristics which influence the classroom dynamic while continuously revisiting who the individual children are who comprise the class. Our teachers spend many hours and put much professional thought and effort into placing their present students into next year's classes.

How are art, PE, music and special education accommodated in the multi-age classroom?

Multi-age classes are considered one class. When students attend art, PE and music, they go as one class, and they are not separated out by grade level. Special education teachers and classroom teachers collaborate for the benefit of the children. Sometimes special education services can be provided within the multi-age classroom, and sometimes it is provided via pull-out sessions.

What happens if my child goes from a multi-age classroom to a traditional graded classroom as a transfer?

Sometimes families move and the student must be relocated to another school that does not provide multi-age classrooms. Experience has shown that children who are in multi-age classrooms are more confident learners and quickly adapt to same-age classrooms. One positive aspect is that they have had time to enjoy seeing themselves as competent learners.

From: The Expedition School Journey of Excellence <http://www.theexpeditionsschool.com/about-2/multiage-classrooms/>