

Student Placement and Multiage Multi-grade Combined Classrooms

Parents generally do not have concerns when their child is placed in a “straight grade” classroom; however, some parents are concerned when their child is placed in a “multi-grade” or combined classroom. Often there are misconceptions with regards to how we configure combined classrooms. Let’s say for example that we are building a grade 2/3 classroom. When this grade 2/3 class contains 19 grade twos and 5 grade threes, generally the concerns come from the parents of the children in the older grade. They believe that their child will be redoing grade two work and their learning needs will not be met.

That is simply not the case. Teaching professionals in both multi-age and straight grade classrooms differentiate the curriculum to ensure that the Core Competencies and the Curricular Competencies are taught for each grade level. Learning standards are scaffolded grade to grade repeating and building on learned competencies from the previous year. Additionally, as a child progresses, teachers differentiate curriculum to ensure that learning is achievable, yet challenging for each child. Teachers are available to meet with any parents to discuss their child’s educational program and provide suggestions and ways of supporting their child’s learning at home. In addition to their own professional skills, classroom teachers also have a plethora of resource professionals at their fingertips. Teachers have access to non-enrolling Special Education teachers which include Learning Assistant and Integration Support teachers. They work with classroom teacher to ensure programs are developed and support is provided to address individual and group learning needs. All school based professionals have access to School District Curriculum Resource Professionals that offer additional support to ensure that each child’s educational needs are met, regardless of the classroom configuration.

Much like a doctor that looks out for your child’s well-being and healthcare needs, teaching professionals are entrusted to make decisions that are in the best interest of your child. This process begins each June when we conduct our class configuration meetings. We make collaborative decisions regarding class placement that are in the best interest of your child, and support positive group dynamics in each classroom.

What are the benefits of multi-age classrooms?

- Research on learning in combined classes and our own experience over the years, is clear and consistent. Students in multi-age classes do as well or better than students in single grade classrooms in all academic areas. These same students often excel in social areas including independence, study habits and a positive attitude in school
- It provides older students the opportunity for leadership
- Builds a greater sense of classroom and school community (acceptance of other aged children)
- Creates a more nurturing and empathic school community accepting younger children
- Multiage classrooms enable teachers to provided scaffolded learning
- Provide teaching professionals with a greater number of placement possibilities to ensure balanced classes
- Leads to independent learning
- Multiage classrooms provide teaching professionals greater opportunity for collaborative teaching. This builds children’s capacity with regards to different teaching styles and better prepares them for future years.

What do teaching professionals consider during the class configuration process?

A student's current and past performance is carefully reviewed along with input from teaching professionals. For each class we consider many factors, including:

- ◆ The number of students permitted in each class (Class size limits are determined by Ministry and School District Guidelines)
- ◆ Individual social emotional needs of the child
- ◆ Social/emotional development balance
- ◆ Student learning style and teacher learning style
- ◆ The history of the child
- ◆ Behavioral balance
- ◆ Gender balance
- ◆ Group Dynamics
- ◆ Balance of independent/dependent learners
- ◆ Academic balance
- ◆ Balance of students with special needs
- ◆ The need to separate certain students
- ◆ The provision of support staff (learning assistance, Integration Support, Teaching Assistants)
- ◆ Students' birth dates (particularly in grade 1)
- ◆ Benefit of being with the same teacher two years in a row

Please keep in mind, the fact that your child wants a locker is not something that we consider when configuring classrooms. Also, placing children with their friends unless for educationally sound reasons will not be considered. Friendships are maintained regardless of class placement through recess times, classroom buddy activities, and other school community activities. With an increasing school population, an additional two portables will be installed at Lakewood over the summer months. Unless your child has mobility or personal care issues, requesting that your child not be placed in a portable will not be considered.

As a parent, how do I have input into the class configuration process?

Please refer to the [Parent Meetings Lakewood 2019](#) notice. This outlines the process and criteria that can guide a conversation with the school Principal or Vice Principal. Although there is an opportunity to meet with us to discuss your feelings regarding your child's educational needs, ***it does not guarantee that your request will be granted***. The meeting with administration ensures that your voice will be heard during the configuration process; but in the end, the final decision rests with the teaching professionals.

When does this process occur?

For those of you that have sent in notes to the office, talked to your child's classroom teacher and told them which teacher you want, please be advised that those correspondences do not follow the Student Placement Policy and will not be considered. Please review the Student Placement Policy. This is an opportunity to discuss your child's educational needs; it is not a meeting to "pick" your child's teacher. You will be able to set up an appointment with school administration between May 6th and May 17th. Please contact the office to set up an appointment.