



Combined Grades

Questions and Answers for Parents and Guardians

What is a combined grade?

A combined grade refers to a classroom that includes one teacher working with students from two consecutive grades. Students engage in learning experiences that allow them to meet the curriculum outcomes of their specific grade level.

Why does a school create a combined grade?

A school creates a combined grade when class caps are reached in a single grade class and there are additional students, but not enough to make an extra class. When this occurs in two consecutive grades, a combined grade class can be formed. The Newfoundland and Labrador model will have a class cap of 18 students in a combined grade class.

How are combined grade, multi-grade, and multi-age classrooms different?

A combined grade classroom includes students from two consecutive grades. The school also has at least one other single-grade class of each of the grades being combined. For example, a school may have a grade 2 class, a grade 3 class, and a combined grade 2/3 class. Students may be part of a combined grade one year but not the next.

In a multi-age or multi-grade classroom all students of two or more grade levels are grouped together. Each class is the only one in the school containing those grades. Students may remain with the same peer group and teacher for more than one year.

What are the benefits of a combined grade?

Students in combined grades demonstrate stronger leadership skills, higher self-esteem, more positive peer interactions, and greater independence when learning. Younger students observe and imitate older peers while older students show leadership skills related to behaviour, responsibility, and peer teaching. Students develop confidence and important social skills when they have opportunities to interact with peers who are not in the same grade.

Fast Facts

- Combined grades are capped at 18 students.
- Combined grades are possible for Grades 1 to 6.
- Only two consecutive grades will be combined; e.g., Grades 3/4 or 4/5.
- Combined grades may also occur in French Immersion.

How and when do schools decide which students will be part of a combined grade?

Administrators work with teachers to ensure that all classes in a school are balanced in as many different ways as possible. When grouping students into classes, a variety of factors are considered, including learning styles, social skills, academic strengths and needs, emotional development, peer relationships, gender, and student interests. School decisions regarding class lists will be finalized in September.

My child is in the older group of a combined grade. Will he/she be challenged? My child is in the younger group of a combined grade. Will he/she be academically overwhelmed? My child needs extra support (or extra challenge). Will this be available in a combined grade?

Teachers of both single and combined grades assess the skills, abilities, knowledge, and interests of their students. They share with students the curriculum expectations for their grade. Using differentiated instruction, teachers design whole and small group activities to address varying student strengths, needs, and interests. In a combined grade, the main focus continues to be the learning needs of all students.

If my child is in a single grade the following year, will he/she have missed important content?

No. When two grades are combined in the same room, the curriculum outcomes for both grades are taught. The teacher's expectations, guidelines, and/or resources will reflect the grade level of each student.

Is a combined grade placement intended for students who struggled with the work of their previous grade?

No. The creation of a combined grade is not intended as a means for remediation nor for acceleration. The composition of the class is heterogeneous – it has a mix of students with various abilities, interests, genders, strengths, and needs. A combined grade is a welcoming educational setting for all students.

How is my role as a parent different if my child is in a combined grade?

There is no difference in how you support your child if he or she is in a combined grade. Maintaining communication with your child's teacher, supporting your child's academic progress, and building a relationship with the school community are always important, whether your child is in a single grade or a combined grade.

Are combined grades new?

No, combined grades are not new. In Canada, more than 20% of students are registered in combined grades and that number is growing.

Will my child be in a combined grade the following year as well?

Being in a combined grade one year does not mean your child will necessarily be in a combined grade the following year. Decisions will be made on an annual basis.

