

## HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD SUCCEED?

### 1 Get involved in your child's school life

Ask about their day – school work, friends, their teacher. Let them tell you about the best part of their day, and about what was not so good. This will help you share their successes and uncover any problems.

### 2 Stay connected with the school


Talk to your child's teacher. Ask questions. This can be as simple as sending a note to school with your child. Or check with the school to see if you can volunteer to help.

### 3 Make learning fun

Learning is not limited to the classroom. Simple activities can build your child's skills and confidence. Talk about prices on a trip to the grocery store to help older kids with math. Make reading fun for younger ones by pointing out the words all around you – on street signs, posters, even cereal boxes!



The Ministry of Education has many tools to help both teachers and parents. Visit [www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca) and discover how you can help your child succeed in school.

 Printed on recycled paper  
06-377  
ISBN 978-1-4249-3388-4 (Print)  
ISBN 978-1-4249-3390-7 (PDF)

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Cette publication est disponible en français.

This publication is available on the Ministry of Education's website at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca>

## AN INTRODUCTION TO COMBINED GRADES



## WHAT IS A COMBINED CLASSROOM?

Combined classes group children from two or more consecutive grades in one classroom. Schools combine classes for a variety of reasons. This includes organizing classes to meet student learning needs and combining grades to balance class size.

All classrooms include students with a range of skills and abilities. Combined classes are neither better nor worse than single-grade classes. They are simply one of the many ways schools meet students' academic and social development needs.

## HOW ARE STUDENTS CHOSEN FOR COMBINED CLASSES?

Principals and staff consider a variety of factors when grouping children into classes, including:

- Learning styles
- Social skills
- Academic needs
- And many other factors

All classrooms, whether single-grade or combined, include students performing at a range of achievement levels. In every case, schools strive to create a classroom environment that will support the needs of all students.

## HOW WILL A COMBINED CLASS AFFECT MY CHILD?

### ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Several studies have found that students in combined classes do just as well as students in single-grade classes. In fact, some students actually do better in language and reading.

### IMPROVED SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Canadian studies show that children in combined classes have **more opportunities for emotional and social growth**. The rich social environment helps students:

- Learn how to work on their own and as part of a team
- Build leadership abilities as they work together and help each other
- Develop decision-making skills, and become more self-motivated and responsible
- Learn in an environment that reflects the real world. The diverse ideas and opinions of classmates help expand students' perspectives.

## WILL MY CHILD GET ENOUGH INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION?

Every day, in both single-grade classes and combined grades, teachers work with large groups, small groups, and individual students. But students in combined classrooms also benefit from a broader support structure.

Younger children can ask students from the higher grade for help. Older students learn by explaining problems to their younger peers. In fact, peer tutoring can help higher achieving and older students reinforce their knowledge and positive social behaviours.

## HOW CAN THE TEACHER TEACH MORE THAN ONE GRADE AT A TIME?

Teachers use many different strategies to teach students in combined grades. They may:

- Introduce a common topic then give each grade a different task or problem.
- Break students into groups to study different problems and report back to the class. These groups can be flexible, including students with varied interests and skills.
- Bring students together for activities like health, physical education, and the arts.

The Ministry of Education has developed strategies that help teachers reach a range of learners. For example, teams from every school in Ontario have been trained in differentiating instruction. This is a strategy that looks at the individual learning needs and progress of each student. The teacher can then identify the range of needs in the classroom and plan a program that meets the needs of all the students.

