

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

	200 – INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS &	CODE:	AP 224
SECTION:	MATERIALS		
PROCEDURE:	MULTI-GRADED CLASSROOMS		

BACKGROUND

Multi-grades classes may be organized when grades do not distribute evenly, when mobility is high, when more flexibility for placing students is needed, and when instructional needs of students can be met most effectively through combination classes.

Many teachers, administrators, and parents continue to wonder whether or not multi-grade organization has negative effects on student performance. Research evidence indicates that being a student in a multi-grade classroom does not negatively affect academic performance, social relationships, or attitudes.

Miller (1990) reviewed 13 experimental studies assessing academic achievement in single-grade and multi-grade classrooms and found there to be no significant differences between them. The data clearly support the multi-grade classroom as a viable and equally effective organizational alternative to single-grade instruction.

In the interest of providing the best education for all students, it may from time to time be necessary to divide and combine class groups into mixed classes, which are smaller in size and offer a better pupil-teacher ratio.

PROCEDURES

The following procedures have been established to serve as a guideline for school principals in the selection of students for a multi-graded classroom:

1. At the time of planning the classes for the coming year, the Principal will look at the overall number of students in each grade and the number of teachers available to teach them. The Principal in consultation with the Director will decide how best to organize classes with a view to providing the best educational opportunities for all children.
2. Care should be taken in the selection of teachers for multi-grade classes. The individual should have a positive attitude regarding the class and good organizational skills. Preferably, teachers with experience at both grade levels should be selected for the combination class and, whenever possible, experienced teachers should be placed in a combination class.

3. Organizing and Planning for Instruction:

- 3.1. In the multi-grade classroom, more time must be spent in organizing and planning for instruction. Extra materials and strategies must be developed so that students will be meaningfully engaged. This additional coordination lets the teacher meet with small groups or individuals, while other work continues.
- 3.2. Six key instructional dimensions affecting successful multi-grade teaching have been identified from multi-grade classroom research (Miller, 1991). Note that each of these points has some bearing on the related issues of independence and interdependence. It is important to cultivate among students the habits of responsibility for their own learning, but also their willingness to help one another learn.
 - 3.2.1. Classroom organization: Instructional resources and the physical environment to facilitate learning.
 - 3.2.2. Classroom management and discipline: Classroom schedules and routines that promote clear, predictable instructional patterns, especially those that enhance student responsibility for their own learning.
 - 3.2.3. Instructional organization and curriculum: Instructional strategies and routines for a maximum of cooperative and self-directed student learning based on diagnosed student needs. Also includes the effective use of time.
 - 3.2.4. Instructional delivery and grouping: Methods that improve the quality of instruction, including strategies for organizing group learning activities across and within grade levels.
 - 3.2.5. Self-directed learning: Students' skills and strategies for a high level of independence and efficiency in learning individually or in combination with other students.
 - 3.2.6. Peer tutoring: Classroom routines and students' skills in serving as "teachers" to other students within and across differing grade levels.

4. Alternative Year Course Rotations:

- 4.1. Where low school enrolments require students to be placed in a multi-graded classroom in successive year the school principal may approve a course rotation cycle in any subject with the exception English Language Arts and Mathematics.
- 4.2. The school principal must ensure that students in multi-graded classrooms do not repeat courses or units of instruction in following school years. For example, when students will not be placed in a multi-grades classroom in the following school year the classroom teacher must teach each course to each grade.

5. Multi-Graded Class Design:

- 5.1. Criteria for students being placed in the class should be one of the first considerations.

- 5.1.1. Streaming by ability or achievement level is not a consideration in the placement of students in a single-graded or multi-graded classroom.

There is no student on the same academic, social, behavioral, or socioeconomic level as another. Classrooms, single grade or multi-grade, should evidence the diversity of population represented in the school body, academically, socially, and behaviorally. Though many administrators, districts, and teachers elect to place high academic achieving students in combination classrooms, or students with little to no behavioral issues, it has not been proven to be the most beneficial to that class, nor the school. In fact, research findings have demonstrated little advantage, if any, in multi-grade classes specifically comprised of higher achieving students.

(Mason & Burns, 2)

- 5.1.2. Differentiated instruction is necessary in any single-grade classroom and should occur because of various ability levels, diverse cultures, behavioral issues, and age-level differences, based on individual student needs. A multi-grade classroom should mirror this same type of student diversity as well as differentiated instruction based on the needs of the students. If the multi-grade class is assigned certain types of students, an imbalance occurs in the school as a whole.
- 5.1.3. The combination classrooms involve integrated curriculum, learning stations, and differentiated instruction. However, this should not be extraordinary compared to the single-grade classroom. When teaching a combination class, the teacher should realize extra planning is involved, but if well-prepared, the lessons will run smoothly.
- 5.2. In consultation with the class teacher, and if necessary with previous teachers of the classes involved, lists of possible groups are drawn up.
- 5.3. Attempts will be made to include a minimum of eight/ten students from each grade in a multi-graded classroom.
- 5.4. Attempts will be made to include a minimum of 4 students from each gender from each grade.
- 5.5. Two or more siblings, in different grades, will generally not be placed in the same multi-graded classroom.
- 5.6. Generally, special needs students will only be placed in a multi-grade classroom for programming purposes.
- 5.7. A multi-graded classroom will generally have fewer students than a single-grade classroom.

Example: Grade 5 - 28
 Grade 5/6 - 24 (14/10)
 Grade 6 - 28

- 5.8. Social considerations will be factored into the placement of students. Students will not be separated from all of their friends. It will seldom be possible to satisfy all demands

for groups of friends to be kept together. This decision will lie ultimately with the Principal, who must consider the needs of every child in the class.

5.9. Attempts will be made to not place students in a multi-graded classroom in successive years.

5.10. No parent will receive special consideration outside the stated procedures otherwise all parents would be entitled to the same consideration leaving the task of dividing the group impossible.

5.11. Where the Director and Principal determine that enrolment changes may necessitate the splitting of classes during the school year, the Principal will arrange a parent meeting to share the administrative procedures and determine the view of the parents regarding the need to split the classes.

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