



Combined Grades Show Student Benefits

In the time of the one-room schoolhouse, children of different ages would all learn together. Those days may be gone, but the “combined grade class” still lives on.

The term refers to cases where students from two or more grades are taught together by a single teacher in the same classroom. Combined grades occur from Kindergarten to Grade 8 in all Boards.

Due to the Provincial government’s cap on primary class sizes – no more than 20 students per class, with a few exceptions – the TDSB will be required to use teachers and space even more efficiently. This requires slightly more combined grades than before.

What is the impact of these types of classes on students? The research shows that there are many benefits. In fact, some schools in the TDSB choose to organize their schools with *only* combined grades because of the positive outcomes. Among the advantages:

- Students in younger age groups score higher on basic skills;
- Students in older grades can reinforce their previous learning;
- Students enhance their social development, acquire leadership skills and a stronger sense of responsibility;
- There are more opportunities to group students according to their skills; and
- With a balance of independent tasks and teacher-guided lessons, teachers can work with different groups and assess student learning in a greater variety of situations.

In any class, teachers teach the expectations of each grade. For combined classes, that means starting off with common expectations and focusing on the enduring understandings within a subject area to form a natural link between the two grades.

Our professional development in-service sessions, as well as resources from our Program staff, support teachers who are assigned to combined grade classes.

Principals also encourage the success of combined grades by assigning, where possible, teachers who have taught at least one of the grades. Principals carefully consider the needs of students when creating class lists for combined grades.

Whether students are in a single grade or combined, parents can be assured that teachers cover the curriculum necessary for each student’s future academic success.