

Multi-grade Resources

Helpful Resources:

1. Appendix B: Strategies for Making Time from the book *Failure is not an option* by Blankstein. [Offers excellent tips.] http://books.google.com/books?id=lgMxE9WAnuEC&pg=PA40&lpg=PA40&dq=strategies+for+making+time+blankstein&source=bl&ots=IBvdM7gDVZ&sig=rFH0RXUHd66CnVKPzOyNi1b10Aw&hl=en&ei=hdMATsyCI4G2twflkqHWCQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&sqi=2&ved=0CB0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=strategies%20for%20making%20time%20blankstein&f=false
2. The Advantages and Disadvantages of Multiage Classrooms in the Era of NCLB Accountability from the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy. <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED504569.pdf>
3. Parents' Views of Composite Classes in an Australian Primary School by Linley Cornish. [Offers help for getting your parents to buy-in to multi-grade classrooms.] <http://www.aare.edu.au/aer/online/0602h.pdf>
4. Mixed Blessings: Split-grade Classes (Trish Snyder). [Offers help for convincing parents.] http://www.todaysparent.com/education/general/article.jsp?content=20050831_220604_4896&page=1
5. Split Decisions: The Reality of Combined-Grades in Ontario in 2001 (Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario). [Covers the issues for students, parents & teachers and addresses those issues.] <http://www.etfo.ca/Publications/PositionPapers/Documents/Split%20Decisions%20-%20The%20Reality%20of%20Combined%20Grades%20in%20Ontario%20in%202001.pdf>
6. From Teachers' Perspectives: The Social and Psychological Benefits of Multiage Elementary Classrooms (David Marshak). [Provides excellent quotations from students and teachers of multi-grade classrooms.] <http://eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED376966.pdf>
7. Split-Grade Classrooms. [Blog offers some advice to teachers from other teachers.] <http://www.devstu.org/blogs/2011/03/2/split-grade-classrooms-revisited>
8. Combined Grades: Strategies to Reach a Range of Learners in Kindergarten to Grade 6 (published by the Ministry of Education in Ontario). [Covers a lot of planning basics including how to plan literacy and mathematics instruction.] <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/combined.pdf>
9. Parents Guide to a Combined Grade Classroom (Peel District School Board). [Gives information to help parents accept multi-grade and to help their children succeed in multi-grade classrooms; helpful information for creating your own brochure.] <http://peel.edu.on.ca/parents/facts/parentsguidetocombinedgradeclassroom.htm>
10. Building Support for Multiage Education (Joan Gaustad). [Communicating with and involving parents.] <http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/digests/digest114.html>
11. Split Grade Classes 1. [Paper addresses principal support, parental support, classroom management, routines.] <http://thankyourteachers.blogspot.com/2008/10/split-grade-classes.html>
12. Implementing the Multiage Classroom. [Covers roles of teachers, administrators, principals.] <http://enc.org/simutis/goenc.files/content/graphics/FOC/004270/graphics/e0.pdf>
13. Teacher Helpline with Ruth Manna. [Blog contains a few helpful entries.] <http://community.scholastic.com/scholastic/board/message?board.id=emergency&message.id=1269>
14. Split-Grade and Multi-Age Classes: A Review of the Research and a Consideration of the B.C. Context [Includes reasons, advantages; reviews research; lots of help.] http://bctf.ca/uploadedfiles/publications/research_reports/2000ei02.pdf

15. An introduction to combined grades. [Brochure (Ontario) could be used as a model for creating your own.]
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/combinedClassrooms/combinedClassrooms.pdf>
- Another brochure (Vancouver) <https://www.vsb.bc.ca/sites/default/files/school-files/Resources/Combined%20Classes%202010.pdf>
16. Planning Time for Multi-grade Level Teachers (School Scheduling Associates). [Great help for scheduling planning time into the school day for multi-grade teachers. Includes a link to a sample schedule for one school.]
<http://www.schoolschedulingassociates.com/notes/?p=8>
17. <https://www.vsb.bc.ca/combined-split-classes> [a public school's webpage with answers to parents' questions; explains/supports multi-grade classrooms]
18. <http://thecornerstoneforteachers.com/free-resources/your-teaching-scenario/combined-classmulti-grade-classes> [blog of tips for teachers of multi-grade classrooms]
19. <http://educationnorthwest.org/resource/1680> [multi-grade handbook in 7 parts; free to download]
20. <http://www.waldorflibrary.org/journals/22-research-bulletin/905-spring-2010-vol15-1-combined-grades-in-waldorf-schools-creating-classrooms-teachers-can-feel-good-about> [Attn: Waldorf is a specific type of multi-grade and we would disagree with some Waldorf philosophy of education; however the tips and research might be useful.]
21. http://pub.schoolwisepress.com/expert/images/combination_classes.pdf [teachers' views about combination classes]
22. <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/title1/resource/research.pdf> [advantages/disadvantages, addresses concerns]
23. <http://westbayfield.edublogs.org/files/2013/09/A-parents-guide-to-a-combined-grade-classroom-1xc1dk6.pdf> [public school (Ontario) answers parents' concerns]
24. http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-03-14/news/ct-x-multi-grade-classes-20110314_1_multigrade-classes-mainstream-classes-grades-last-fall [recent article in the Chicago Tribune about multi-grade classrooms in suburban Chicago]

Additional possible resources:

<http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED352110.pdf>

<http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED309388.pdf>

<http://forums.atozteacherstuff.com/showthread.php?t=62733>

<http://multiagelearninglabs.com/Research/Cognitive%20and%20noncognitive%20effects%20of%20multigrade%20and%20multi.pdf>

http://www.crossofglory.org/home/140001642/140005475/Advantages_Multigrade_brochure.pdf

<http://www.jrre.psu.edu/articles/v7,n2,p3-12,Miller.pdf>

<http://www.devstu.org/product/the-lesson-planning-handbook>

<http://splitmultigradeclassroom.blogspot.com>

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001259/125919eo.pdf> [multi-grade handbook for teachers]

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 and discover how you can help your child succeed in school.

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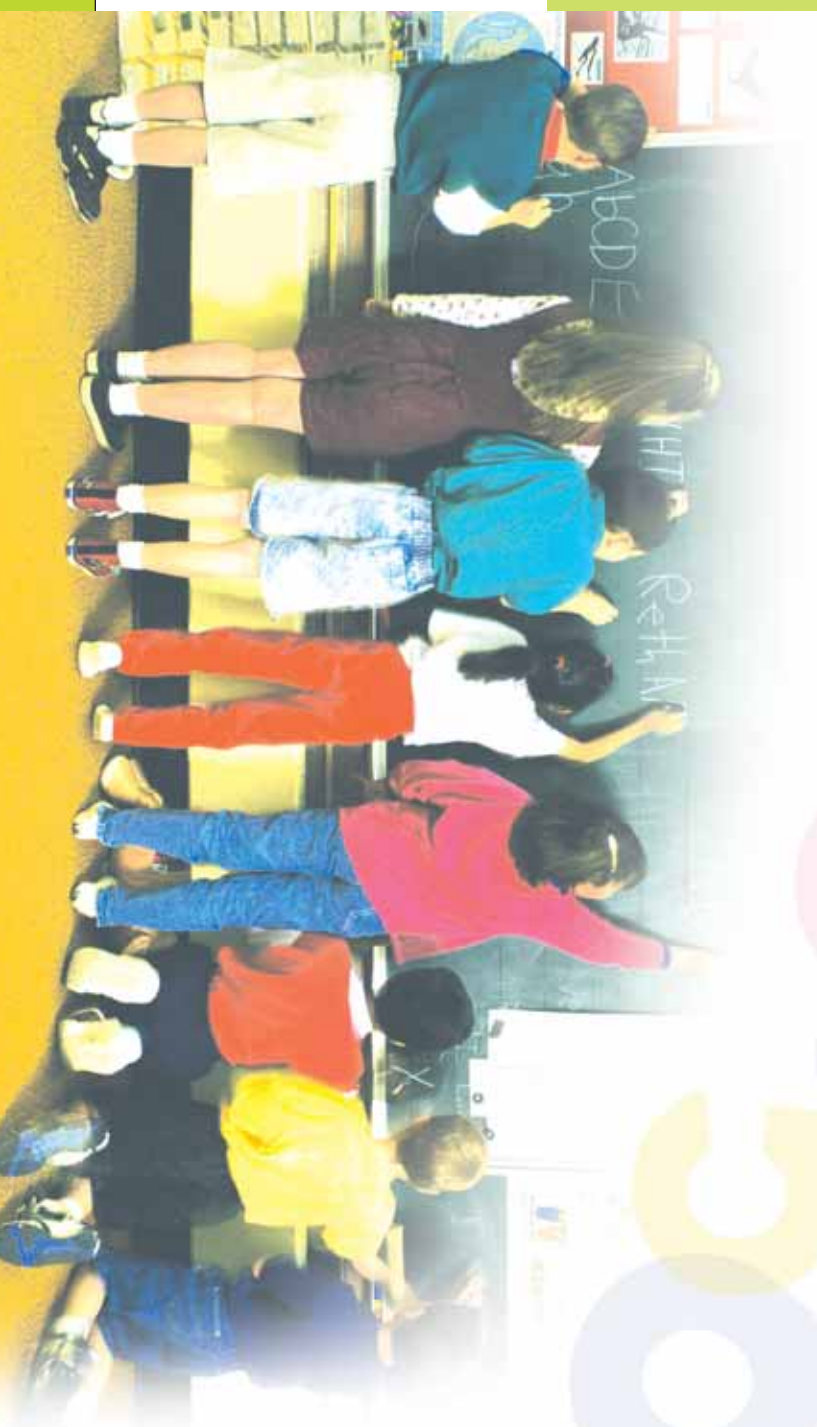


Ontario



Ontario

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.



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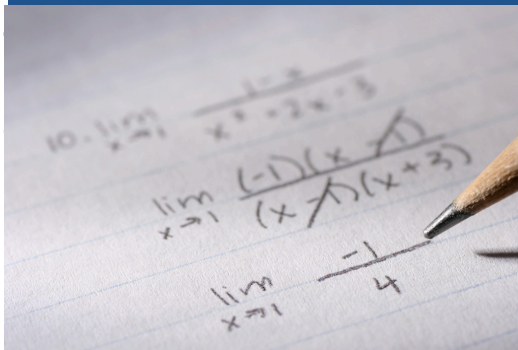


How Can I Help My Child Succeed?

1. Get involved in your child's school life. Ask about their day-school work, friends, and their teacher.
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An Introduction To



West Alabama Christian School

1504 Cardinal Ave, Demopolis, AL 36732

www.wacschool.com

Combined
Grades

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Since teachers are usually required to teach the same class for two years, they become more familiar with the student and their families. This results in a strong sense of continuity. Research also shows that on the first day of school, both students and teachers felt more relaxed and calm than the students in single-age classrooms.

Research done with a Kentucky Public School multi-grade classroom shows that over time students' academic achievement and teacher's preparation time increased.

IMPROVED SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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- Learn how to work on their own and as part of a team
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processes and skills requiring continuous development. This requires a sophisticated approach to integrating knowledge and skills but it can be done in ways that do not repeat or “miss out” prescribed curriculum.

I am concerned that my child will not do well in a combined class and will not be ready to move onto the next grade.

Detailed studies like John Goodlad's in 1987 (The non-graded Elementary school) have shown that on average a five year span of development is typically found in a single grade group and six years in a combined class. Additionally, the results of a study published in 1999 by Dr. Joel Gajadharsingh (University of Saskatchewan) found that, using standardized tests, students did as well or better in combined classrooms in Math, Language, Science and Social Studies. He also found that students in combined classes performed better than students in single grade classrooms in the following areas: independence, responsibility, study habits and attitude towards school. This is one of the compelling reasons that some schools such as Charles Dickens Elementary have gone to multi-age groupings.

How Can I support my child in a combined class?

Parents can support their children in the same ways they would if they were in a single grade class. Staying interested and concerned about school work and activities, monitoring a child's homework and keeping in touch with the teacher and attending the school whenever possible are ways the parents can support the child's learning. If you have concerns about your child's learning, you should speak to the classroom teacher.

A survey of literature on combined classes, published in 2001 and available on the internet (ERIC Identifier ED 448935) states:

“Advantages for multi-age students have been shown to increase the longer students remain in multi-age classrooms. Students in multi-age classrooms demonstrate more positive attitudes toward school, greater leadership skills, greater self-esteem, and increased pro-social and fewer aggressive behaviours, compared to peers in traditional graded classrooms. Statistical analysis demonstrated that students from multi-age classrooms achieved greater academic outcomes in relation to their abilities and demonstrated greater increases in academic achievement than students of the same and higher abilities from single-age classrooms when all classrooms employed developmentally appropriate teaching practices.”



How Your School System Works Combined Classes (often referred to as Split Classes)

 **Vancouver School Board**
September 2010





What is a combined class?

A combined or split class refers to a class that is made up of students from two or more grades. Combined classes occur most frequently in elementary schools and are the combination of students in two different grades with one teacher teaching both curricula. For example, a school might have a grade 2/grade 3 class combination or a grade 6/grade 7 class combination. At the secondary schools, combined classes may occur, for example a Spanish 9/10 combination or a Ceramics 10/11/12 combination.

It is important to know that students in combined classes are not held back to the level of the younger children nor are the children in the lower grade expected to do work beyond their abilities. The prescribed learning outcomes are grade appropriate for all students, whether or not they are in a combined class.

Why do Schools create combined classes?

There are several reasons why schools create these classes. When school staff look to organize their students, that is to place the students in their classes with teachers, they have to balance the educational needs of their students with the staffing they receive from Human Resources as well as with legislated contractual considerations.

A school calculates enrolment. This is then verified by the Human Resources division of the Vancouver Board of Education. Based on this figure, teaching staff (both enrolling and non-enrolling) is allocated. The Principal, working with the Staff Committee of the school, then constructs classes based on these factors and the educational interests of each student. In many instances, combined classes result.

How do Schools decide which students to place in combined classes?

In an effort to ensure all students are placed in appropriately balanced classrooms, school staff (teachers, Principals and Vice-Principals) use such criteria as age, range of ability, special learning needs, gender, social groupings, and support staff recommendation.

Also, just as they do when allocating students to non-combined classes, the Principal and Vice-Principal work together with the classroom teachers to best match the learning styles and needs of the student. In many schools parents are given the opportunity in June to submit their preference for a learning situation for their child



for the next school year. All these factors are considered before allocating classes for students.

Will the teacher teach the entire curriculum to both grades?

The School Act, which governs British Columbia schools, stipulates that all teachers, including teachers of split classes, must teach the prescribed curriculum. Therefore the teacher is obligated to teach the entire curriculum to both grades. Teaching strategies that address diversity, meet individual needs, and satisfy Ministry requirements with respect to content and processes of learning work well in both combined and single grade classrooms.

What are the challenges for teachers?

Teachers need to be familiar with the curriculum for both grades and the variety of resources available in the school and in the district. Teachers of students in combined classes, like those in single-grade classes, employ their skills and strategies so that each student is challenged at the level at which he/she can succeed. For example, a teacher might use a thematic approach to teach a unit. This approach enables the teacher to address

A parent's guide to a combined grade classroom

Your child is learning in a combined grade classroom. This fact sheet is designed to help you understand how this type of classroom works and answer questions you may have.

Schools group students from two grades in one classroom to balance class size across the school and to keep the number of students in primary classes (kindergarten to grade 3) at or below 20. Combined grade classes are not new—they have always been a common part of the school experience.

Teachers are highly trained to balance individual learning needs

Walk into any classroom, and you will find children at various stages of social, physical and intellectual development. No two children are exactly the same, even if they're the same age. Each child has unique learning needs—strengths and areas that need improvement. Learning styles and preferences are unique to each student. That's true of same-grade classrooms, just like combined grade groups.

Teachers are highly trained to adjust the learning program in the classroom to the needs of each student's individual learning needs. In combined grade classes, teachers use these same strategies to teach the curriculum for both grades.

Teachers use a variety of strategies to balance the needs of both grades

Students in a combined grade class follow expectations for their specific grade. Just as in same-grade classes, teachers in combined grades use a wide range of teaching strategies to make sure they cover all of the curriculum expectations. Children in combined grade classes will spend time learning as a whole class, in small groups and individually. Sometimes they will be grouped based on a specific task and other times the teacher will group them based on their learning needs.

In many areas of the Ontario curriculum, the overall expectations do not change from one grade to the next, but students learn the skill with a greater level of complexity as they progress from grade to grade. In a combined grade 3/4 class, all of the students would spend time reading to improve their comprehension. The grade 3 students would be learning to restate important ideas from a text, while the grade 4 students would be learning to make an outline of a section of reading. The same students might then do a writing assignment. The grade 3s would be expected to use joining words to combine simple sentences, while the grade 4s would be required to use sentences of different lengths and complexity.

The teacher may have the whole class participate in a common activity, followed by small group or individual work on grade-specific curriculum expectations. For example, in a grade 1/2 combined grade class, when teaching the life systems strand of science, the teacher might start by showing a video about a specific animal. The grade 1 students would do a follow-up activity to identify the characteristics and needs of living things, while the grade 2 students would focus on growth and change in animals.

Students are not always learning new information or concepts—they also need to review, consolidate and refine their learning and build on previous learning to do a more complex task. In a grade 5/6 combined grade math class, for example, the teacher might review the concept of place value with the whole class. Then the students would work on the grade-specific expectations. Grade 5 students would be practicing math problems with place values up to 100,000 and decimals to hundredths, while grade 6 students would work on problems with place values up to 1,000,000 and decimals to thousandths. Or if working on measurement, the whole class might work on an activity requiring them to estimate, measure and record perimeter and area of various items. The grade 6s would need to demonstrate a greater level of accuracy, based on the curriculum expectations, than the grade 5s.

Even in subjects, such as social studies and science, that have different topics to cover in different grades, the curriculum expectations in each grade are not just about the facts students are expected to learn. There are many common skills for students to learn, such as research, scientific inquiry, experimentation and

problem solving. The teacher might present research skills to the whole class, and then assign grade-specific research projects.

At other times, the teacher will present two different lessons to the students, based on the different curriculum for the two grades. While working with one grade level of students, the teacher will have the other students do individual or group projects or work in learning centres in the classroom.

Studies show that students in combined grade classes learn as well as other students

You may be concerned about how well your child will learn in a combined grade class. Years of research show that students in combined grades do just as well academically as students in single-grade classes. In fact, some students actually do better in language and reading.

You may also wonder about the emotional impact on your child—will your child receive the same amount of individual attention from the teacher in a combined grade as in a single-grade class. It's important to understand that the number of students in the class, not the grade structure, determines the amount of time the teacher has to spend with each individual student.

Students in combined classes often do better emotionally and socially. Combined grade classes have been found to foster greater independence, better social skills and increased motivation to learn.

In our experience, parents may be concerned when their child is first placed in a combined grade class, but once they become familiar with the concept, they feel more comfortable, and they're pleased with their child's progress and school experience as the year progresses.

Help your child succeed in a combined grade class

You're important to your child's success—in a combined grade, the same as a same-grade class. The more you know about your child's education, the more you will be able to help your child learn and succeed.

Here are some ways you can support your child's learning.

- Become familiar with the curriculum for your child's grade. You can find it on the Ministry of Education website at www.edu.gov.on.ca or in your school library.
- Read information from your child's teacher and school. Ask your child to tell you about schoolwork that is brought home. Talk with your child about her school experience.
- Communicate with your child's teacher about his individual learning needs. If you have questions, talk to the teacher about the strategies that are being used to cover the combined grade curriculum.
- Connect with the school. Attend parent information nights and other school events. Volunteer at the school if you have the time. Attend a school council meeting.

Tips for Teachers of Multi-Grade Classrooms

(Most of these tips apply to the elementary classroom. In most cases multi-grade in the junior/senior high is covered by arranging alternate years of instruction. In the other instances, the tips below may be helpful.)

1. Cut spiral binders off teachers' books and place pages in a ring binder or file folder. Pull out the pages needed for a week or a unit. Put these into the appropriate grade's ring binder (use a different color notebook for each grade). You do not have to carry all of your teacher's editions around/home each night.
2. Don't try to grade everything. Have students check each other's papers. Grade quizzes in class (exchange papers) and record grades immediately.
3. For an absent student record the missing assignments (you or a student can do this) as you go through the day and accumulate any worksheets/handouts, etc. Put in folder or large envelope to send home or to place on student's desk.
4. Alternate groups. Teach one class then they work on seatwork/homework while you teach the other class, etc. Write assignments on the board so that students know what to do. If you write assignments on the board for the day, you may instruct students not to begin their work until after you have taught that subject in order to eliminate the issue of students doing a complete assignment wrong and of being "bored" during the teaching phase.
5. Use a subject planning form. Plan your year (semester) so that you can keep on track. It is better to eliminate some extra assignments or interesting rabbit trails in each unit and keep on track than to finish the end of the year far behind in text books or rushing through the last units.
6. Keep lesson plans (on the computer if possible). Use last year's plans to write this year's. Jot notes ("this was too much for one lesson," etc.) to help with next year's planning.
7. Have activities planned for downtime. Insist that they work on homework and unfinished class work before "playing." Plan review games they can do with each other. Have a reading table, puzzle table, and extra worksheets. Students should have one or two library books at their desks to read. Encourage reading during downtime. A goal can be to read 10 times their grade level in pages every two weeks. Laminate drill pages from math books and laminate spelling lists. Students can use these for drill or to quiz each other. Explain your schedule and when they are allowed to do what.
8. Cycle the curriculum/subjects.
9. Combine subjects/concepts into one lecture. Then give grade-appropriate assignments, or grade-appropriate grading scale/requirements.
10. Develop independent learning. Teach the students to work on their own.
11. Use coded hand signals to minimize interruptions for things such as students needing a tissue or needing to use the restroom or sharpen a pencil.
12. Have older students help younger. Develop their leadership skills. Allow them to lead drills, read Scripture, etc.
13. Define and establish routines.
14. Announce transitions clearly. Start with the grade first so that students know who should be listening to the instruction. E.g. Fourth grade, come to the reading table with your reader, a pencil, and piece of paper.
15. Inspect what you expect. Randomly check those quizzes and papers that you are allowing them to exchange and grade.
16. Teach students to transition QUIETLY so that they do not disturb the other class.

17. Start with the hardest subject first (for younger students this is reading, for older students this is math). This allows you to teach while you both are at your best. It also allows you time later in the day to make adjustments to your schedule as needed in order to finish the other material for the day.
18. While presenting a lesson (math, reading, etc.) watch for students who comprehend and assign them to be a helper for that subject. Teach students how to help without giving answers. Instruct students to get help from today's helper if you are busy with the other class. Allow for quiet talking as students do this. Keep an eye on it while you are instructing the other grade. You will know if students are abusing this privilege.
19. Teach spelling lists by grade level. (This is one subject where parents really perceive that students are at a disadvantage if they are either using the older grade's spelling list (too hard for younger) or younger grade's list (too easy for older). Give the quiz by alternating this way. "Number 1 for 5th grade is ..., Number 1 for 6th grade is..." Grade for penmanship at the same time.
20. Teach science, history, Bible, and health on an alternating year. Use an easier grading scale for younger students if they are in the older grade's curriculum. (Second graders may memorize longer verses than first graders. You can still drill together but test just for the material required by the specific grade level.) Or use books from both levels each year: Some teachers cover $\frac{1}{2}$ of lower level text book year 1 in approx. $\frac{1}{4}$ of year, the $\frac{1}{2}$ of upper level text book during remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ of year. Next year cover the second $\frac{1}{2}$ of lower text book and the second half of upper level text book in the same manner.
21. Between subjects throughout the day take time to answer students' questions.
22. Read a book to the whole class. This builds class rapport and unity. This can be done after lunch for 15 to 20 minutes per day. It is worth the sacrifice of time to have this shared experience.
23. Teach for understanding of the subject rather than for rote memory.
24. In subjects like language arts and math, where it is not possible to alternate years as you can with Bible, science and history, whenever possible give a joint explanation with grade-specific assignments. You may have to take some things out of order, but you can save yourself work in the classroom by spending some preparation/planning time.
25. Limit the amount of time you spend on non-educational issues (e.g. collecting lunch money).
26. Group students by ability rather than by grade when that is advantageous and possible.
27. Find the new normal. Focus on teaching core material.
28. Add little fun activities even if you can't do the big events that you might do with a single-grade class. When possible share the fun activities with both classes.
29. Allow the students to learn from each other. As long as students are completing their own work, it is fine for them to hear what the other class is doing. This is either exposure for the younger class or review for the older class.
30. Work ahead as much as possible with your planning.
31. Begin your day with some drill. Start early in the year with things the students will need to know later. By the time you get to that chapter/unit, they will already know the memorized requirements (states and capitals, presidents of the US in order, identification of states on a map, metric conversion, etc.).
32. When teaching alternate years of subjects try not to teach all of one grade one year and the other grade the next. For example, during the first year teach 5th grade science and 6th grade history, the second year teach 5th grade history and 6th grade science. This keeps the students from being as overwhelmed.
33. Assign each student a number to use for keeping things in order. Along with their name, they can put their number on each paper (and be required to turn in their papers in numerical order); put their number on their pencils, textbooks, etc. Lost items can be easily returned.

34. Communicate to parents through a class website.
35. Plan to teach each lesson in half of the time (or less). For example if you would spend 1 hour on math in a single-grade class, spend ½ hour teaching and helping the 1st grade before spending a ½ hour teaching and helping the 2nd grade. Since the students will be doing seatwork during the other ½ hour, they are really getting the full dose!
36. Help younger distracted students pay attention by building a ½ wall in your classroom; you can see over it but they cannot. This can be made from short bookshelves or from PVC or metal piping with a curtain. It can be portable so that it can be moved for times when it is not necessary.
37. Keep them busy. Don't allow one class to keep another from learning. Teach them to do their tasks in a disciplined order (schoolwork, seatwork, stations, fun reading, homework).
38. Get a teacher's aide – a high school student, a parent, a college education student. They can be reading buddies for younger students, change bulletin boards, file papers, record homework grades, make photo copies. Adults can supervise recess, lunch, or restroom breaks.
39. List your teaching materials with your lesson plans. Gather them the night (or weekend) before the lesson.
40. Teach students to problem solve before getting help from you or from the student helper. They must (1) pay attention when the lesson is taught, (2) re-read the directions, (3) look for the answer on their page, (4) ask the teacher or student helper. One teacher's rule: "Ask three, then ask me."
41. Require students to turn in complete work (all questions answered, name on page, etc.).
42. Use the same schedule for both classes (Math 3, Math 4, Reading 3, Reading 4, ...)
43. Correct in class as much as possible.
44. Invest \$100 (or your amount) to make posters that can be used for drill, class rules, etc.
45. Drill at the beginning of the day for 15 minutes. (Presidents, metric system, multiplication tables— anything the students will need to know by the end of the year. As you get to this unit they will be prepared. Do the same material with both classes. Your students will know it very well!)
46. Use lunch or recess to help students who are far behind.
47. Merge classes when their material synchs. This will probably be easier at the beginning of the school year. It works better if you are using the same publisher for the same subject, e.g. all language arts from BJ Press, math from ABeka. This can be done with different work (by grade level) for the same concept.
48. Set your class schedule based on the things that cannot be moved (e.g. recess, lunch). Invest uninterrupted time in the hardest subjects. Once your schedule is set, keep an eye on the clock just as high school teachers have to keep up with the bells and dismiss class on time.
49. Let older students help.
50. Use the staggered time instruction/seatwork method when whole-class instruction is not an option.
51. Combine lessons whenever possible. (Prep time is harder, but there is much of this that can be done.) You may have to take some material out of order.
52. Review. This can often be done with more than one class at a time and can be done with games & other activities that add interest to the classroom.
53. Have two separate collection boxes for student work (one per grade level) to ease your sorting. Choose a class color (red for 1st, blue for 2nd grade) and use this to help with all kinds of organizing (labeling textbooks and teacher's guides, notebook and folder colors, etc.). You can even find colored tape and markers to use for labeling items.

Tips for Principals in Schools with Multi-Grade Classrooms

1. Provide outside help to free up some of the teacher's time (parent volunteers, students teacher's aides, paid aides [pay scale for aides is lower]). Student helpers can be reading buddies, can tutor younger students, change bulletin boards, tear worksheets out of books, check-in ungraded homework, and make photo copies; adult helpers can collect lunch money, take duties (playground, lunch, recess, restroom).
2. Utilize computer programs for recording & reporting grades. Provide a computer in the classroom.
3. Schedule a volunteer to teach art, P.E., music, etc. Arrange the schedule so that teachers alternate who has recess duty, lunch duty, etc. A few free minutes each day or on alternate days is a huge help.
4. If successful, don't move teacher from one grade level/combination to another. The second year is so much easier than the first.
5. Allow/encourage a teacher to be flexible with her scheduling both of the curriculum cycle and of day schedule. Recognize that the flexible scheduling may adversely affect some standardized or grade-level annual testing scores but that these should even out as the students complete the off-schedule classes. Communicate this to parents/teachers.
6. Schedule courses on a rotating schedule as much as possible. This works particularly well with high school classes.
7. Group students in order to give the teacher fewer preps. In the elementary, combine 4 grades for PE, art, etc. Give these classes to an aide, volunteer, or one teacher. For example the 1st grade teacher may teach music to all grades on Mondays, but have an hour free on Tuesday while the 3rd grade teacher teaches PE to all grades and have Thursday free while all grades have art. On the high school level teach US History this year to all 9-12 and World history next year to all 9-12. The history teacher now has one prep instead of 2, 3 or 4. Even if the class is taught two class periods, it is still one prep. (Students who transfer in can take the class again – different teacher will approach differently, or supplement with ACE or Alpha Omega or other independent work that is supervised and graded.)
8. Provide more prep time than you might provide for teachers of single grades.
9. Move as many staff as possible into the classroom, even if the office must work harder/smarter.
10. Give students more time w/each teacher. Longer periods of time are helpful for the teacher of a combined class. Transitions eat up valuable time.
11. Facilitate communication. Make sure parents know how it works. Provide Parent-Teacher Fellowship program to allow each teacher to explain how she makes this work. In a program have a "sample school day" section of one multi-grade class. Increasing the parents' knowledge of how the class operates is one of the best ways to improve parent attitudes about multi-grade classrooms. (Linley Cornish, p. 137)
12. Provide opportunities for teachers to fellowship, participate in professional development, network.
13. Utilize teachers' God-given skills and training to the fullest. If your 3rd-grade teacher is "artsy," maybe she can teach all elementary art in exchange for not having to teach science, etc. This improves use of time and talent and makes for happier teachers.

Plan A	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4	
	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem
7 th	Grammar 7	Grammar 8	Lit 7	Lit 8	Grammar 7	Grammar 8	Lit 7	Lit 8
8 th								
9 th	Grammar 9	Grammar 10	Lit 9	Lit 11	Grammar 9	Grammar 10	Lit 10	Lit 12
10 th								
11 th	Grammar 11	Grammar 12			Grammar 11	Grammar 12		
12 th								

Advantages:

1. **Students** get their grammar in order. The difficulty level for 9-12 literature is somewhat mitigated: each year in 9-12 there is one “easy” literature (9th or 10th) and one difficult literature (11th or 12th). No student goes from taking 8th grade literature one year to taking 12th grade literature the next semester without taking a mid-level (9th or 10th) literature first.
2. Using this plan, students get their grammar in order, and the English **teacher** has either 3 preps or 2 depending on the year. (If the number of 9-12 students is too many for one classroom on literature years, the teacher can teach 2 sections of the same prep. Or the plan below could be used. If the plan below is used, the teacher will have 3 preps every year; students will get all literature and grammar in order.)

Disadvantage: A full year of grammar (or literature) can be long, but I found that the advantages (particularly allowing the students to take grammar in order) far outweighed the disadvantages.

Plan B	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4	
	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem	1 st Sem	2 nd Sem
7 th	Grammar 7	Grammar 8	Lit 7	Lit 8	Grammar 7	Grammar 8	Lit 7	Lit 8
8 th								
9 th	Grammar 9	Grammar 10	Lit 9	Lit 10	Grammar 9	Grammar 10	Lit 9	Lit 10
10 th								
11 th	Grammar 11	Grammar 12	Lit 11	Lit 12	Grammar 11	Grammar 12	Lit 11	Lit 12
12 th								

Samples: Plan A: Joe begins on year 1 in 7th grade. In 7th grade he takes Grammar 7, then Grammar 8. At the end of 7th grade he is “ahead” in grammar but behind in literature. In 8th grade he takes Lit 7, then Lit 8. He is now right on schedule in both grammar & lit. In 9th grade he takes Grammar 9, then Grammar 10. Again he is ahead in grammar but behind in literature. In 10th grade he takes Lit 9, then Lit 11. In 11th grade he takes Grammar 11, then Grammar 12. In 12th grade he takes Lit 10 then Lit 12. He has completed all grammar in order & taken all lit, slightly out of order.

Plan A: Susan begins on year 2 in 7th grade. In 7th grade she takes Lit 7, Lit 8. She is ahead in Lit but behind in grammar. In 8th grade...



Combining English Classes While Preserving Sequence

By Grace Collins Hargis

If a school has too few students to support more than one full-time teacher per subject area in grades 7–12, it needs to find a way to reduce teacher load. Teachers in any subject area would have a problem with six daily preparations week after week. The problem, of course, is more acute for the English teacher, who cannot teach literacy and writing skills without assigning and evaluating a significant amount of writing.

In general, an obvious solution to the load problem in a small school is to combine certain classes. For example, seventh- and eighth-grade Bible can be combined on a regular basis, using the seventh-grade text one year and the eighth grade text the next. Ninth-grade algebra and tenth-grade geometry can alternate similarly, as can the appropriate adjacent years of science and of history.

In some of these combined classes, the teacher may need to do some remedial teaching to compensate for the reversed sequence experienced by half the class; but usually the problems are not great. The area of writing and grammar, however, calls for a somewhat different solution.

The Importance of Preserving Sequence

Maintaining proper sequencing is important in the area of writing and grammar. Let's see why.

If a writing and grammar program is to achieve a good balance between the two areas—the teaching of writing (both the skills and the process) and a systematic coverage of English grammar—it cannot take the futile approach of trying to wade

through all the facts of grammar year after year. Such an approach necessarily neglects the important area of writing. Furthermore, it does not even work well for grammar: the few “good students” (who already know the grammar) are bored by the repetition every year; and the rest of the students are frustrated and perhaps confused by the great mass of material.

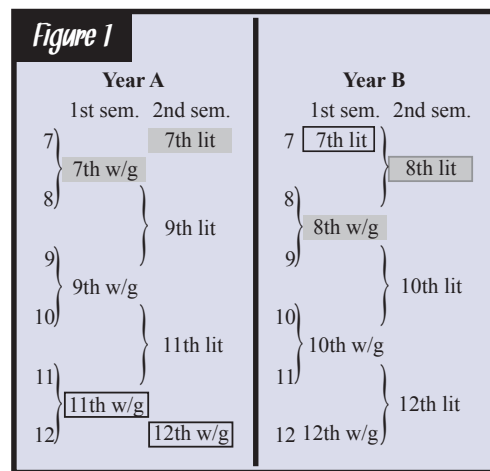
To achieve a useful balance between writing and grammar, English teachers can use an approach that enables them to teach grammar more effectively and in less overall time. This approach begins by teaching grammar concepts selectively in the early years in order to teach the basic concepts well. Later years build on the ones before them. Each year includes some review but never an attempt to plod through everything in a single grade. This approach makes room in the schedule for real teaching of writing, which is also sequenced.

We might say that the teaching of the facts and concepts of grammar needs to be more like the teaching of the facts and concepts of math. On the elementary level, we teach addition before multiplication, and basic multiplication facts before multiplication of large numbers, and so on. In high school, we teach mainly algebra in the algebra course, rather than reteaching the elementary facts of addition and subtraction and gradually working up to algebra near the end of the course.

A Plan for Preserving Sequence

If sequence is important in secondary writing and grammar, how can it be maintained in the face of the need to combine classes in a small school? The answer is fairly simple.

1. Treat the writing and grammar semester for each year separately from the literature semester for that year. Many schools do this anyway. (This necessary administrative division does not keep the creative teacher from regularly including an occasional short piece of literature in the writing and grammar semester, nor does it prevent the regular inclusion of some writing in the literature semester.)
2. Have two alternating schedules for combining classes. We can call one the Year A schedule and the other the Year B schedule.
3. Every second year (on the Year B schedule) have the seventh-graders take two semesters of literature, those for seventh and eighth grades. Until their senior year,

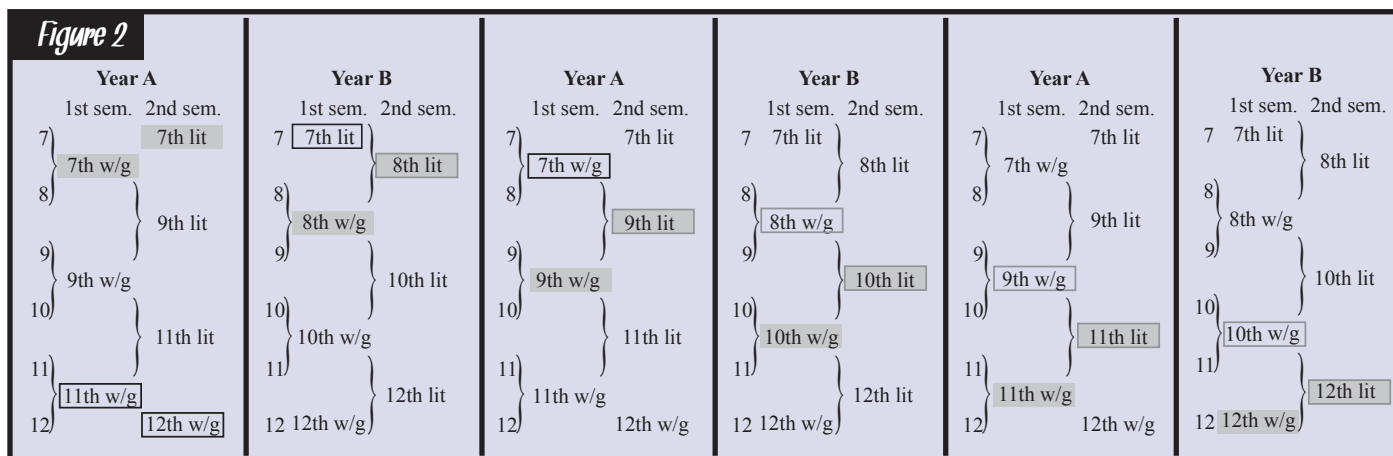


these students will be a year ahead in the literature curriculum and a year behind in writing and grammar. They will therefore be in combined classes with the grade above them for literature and with the grade behind them for writing and grammar.

4. In their senior year, have these same students take two semesters of writing and grammar, those for eleventh and twelfth grades. They will then have had all of their writing and grammar and all of their literature—and all in correct sequence. (The Year A seventh-graders take all of their English courses in the normal years.)

The plans for Year A and Year B are shown in Figure 1. The numbers 7–12 down the left side of each column refer to the grade levels of the students themselves. Under the two semesters in each year’s plan are the subjects studied by the combined groups of students, with “w/g” for writing and grammar and “lit” for literature. In each semester the school offers either three or four English classes instead of all six, and only one semester-length course is taught in each classroom.

Figure 2 tracks representative students through their six years of English classes. The first year’s seventh-graders go through their six years in the classrooms represented by the shading. The second year’s seventh-graders go through their six years in the classrooms represented by the outlined boxes. Their senior year, a Year A, is shown back on the first year.



As can be seen in Figure 2, the Year A seventh-graders will always be on grade level for both subjects. The Year B seventh-graders, who take two literature courses in seventh grade, are always a year ahead in literature. They catch up in writing and grammar in their senior year. From semester to semester, every grade alternates being with a younger group and being with an older group.

Some schools might choose to reverse the handling of the two components of the English program, having the Year B seventh-graders get ahead in writing and grammar in seventh grade and having them catch up in literature during their senior year. These schools can still use the plans shown here, simply by permanently reversing all the “w/g” and “lit” notations.

Transitioning to the Plan


A medium-sized or smaller school that has been offering all six courses of English every year can change over to this plan after one transition semester with six classes:

1. Begin with Year A, and temporarily modify just the first semester as the transition semester. Grades 7, 9, and 11 will take the appropriate writing and grammar classes already indicated for them in the first semester of Year A.
2. Grades 8, 10, and 12 should take the literature for their grades. All the students will then be ready in the spring for the usual second-semester classes shown for Year A.

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Very small schools . . . will want to tailor their schedules to their own needs.

A small school which has already been teaching some combined classes may not need a special transition at all, particularly if a change in textbooks is also being made. Very small schools or those with special circumstances will want to tailor their schedules to their own needs. Even so, the principles behind this plan should be helpful to all schools with limited resources.

Dr. Grace Hargis teaches courses in English, linguistics, and the teaching of ESL at Bob Jones University, where she heads the Linguistics Department.

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Effective Management in a Multi-Grade Classroom

By Shannon B. Steuerwald

The modern-day, one-room schoolhouse, also known as the multi-grade classroom, is not a concept that most education classes prepare teachers to face. Furthermore, many administrators and teachers think multi-grade classrooms are mainly found at small Christian schools that must combine grades just to be financially sound. More as an educational experiment to improve learning, multi-grade classes gained popularity in the public sector in the 1990s; but they eventually declined as the No Child Left Behind Act began to be implemented in schools.

It is true that most Christian schools make the decision to have multi-grade classrooms because of financial situations; but, surprisingly, many public schools still have many multi-grade classes where more than one grade level is represented in the same classroom. Mariano and Kirby (2009) report that in the Los Angeles school district, one of the largest districts in the country, multi-grade classrooms are found in 3.8% of its enrollment, and 18% of schools in the district report having at least one multi-grade class. These statistics exclude special education classrooms where these classes are almost 100% multi-grade in nature. Although these percentages seem small, they account for thousands of students and many teachers. In conclusion, Mariano and Kirby (2009) found difficulty in determining if multi-grade classrooms are helpful to student achievement because teachers seemed ill-prepared and curriculum did not suit multi-grade settings. They referred in their summation to the research of Russell and agreed that “multigrade teaching is demanding—teachers may have little energy to pursue potentially more effective grouping strategies in their teaching and may end up using many of the same practices as in single grade classes” (Russell, Rowe, & Hill, 1998, p. 15).

There isn’t a teacher who disagrees with those conclusions. Multi-grade teaching is difficult. Students suffer when teachers are stretched too thin and when teachers feel there aren’t enough hours in the day to accomplish the goals

of the curriculum. The majority of teachers and administrators consider multi-grade classrooms an inferior method to organizing class structure. At best, they don’t see it as ideal. I know firsthand the demands of multi-grade classrooms, for I was a student in a multi-grade setting from 4th through 12th grade, a parent whose children have been educated for over 10 years in multi-grade classrooms, and a teacher and administrator for over 15 years in a school where every class is multi-grade. Having been a participant at every possible angle of multi-grade classrooms, I understand the challenges and blessings. I have been the recipient student of many experiments as teachers tried new strategies, and I have tried many different teaching strategies on my students in order to capitalize on my minutes when my “to do” list was so long.

Education is constantly changing. In a school with multi-grade structuring, change requires a teacher to be willing to teach different grade combinations from year to year, so “being comfortable” with teaching a particular grade level or combination is not a valid expectation for a multi-grade teacher. Furthermore, Christian teachers do not have the luxury to say, “I’m called to teach *except* in a multi-grade setting.” We do have the luxury of saying, “God has called me to teach and will give me the grace to do His will with His power for His glory.” Whether a teacher is given the task of teaching in a single-grade or multi-grade setting, he will face opportunities that will require him to manage the classroom so that he can effectively teach those God has placed in his care.

Understand Reality

First, an effective teacher in a multi-grade setting as well as administrators who oversee multi-grade classrooms need to understand reality. Multi-grade classes have their benefits and limitations. To ignore these and fail to address them reasonably would leave a teacher feeling alone in his endeavors to help a school financially and teach his students properly.

Benefits
Students review and learn concepts from being exposed to higher and lower grade lectures and drills.
Older students develop leadership roles as they assist younger students.
Teachers get to know students better and can develop better relationships with families from having a student for multiple years.
Teachers waste little time in diagnosing student academic abilities at the start of a year if they had the same student the year before.
Classroom is similar to home environment.
Limitations
Teachers spend more time preparing for the next day.
Students have to learn “independent learning skills” necessary for success in this environment.
Creativity is essential to managing and handling the many transitions throughout the day.
Teachers feel inadequate. Curriculum is not always written for multi-grade settings, and education classes do not prepare future teachers for multi-grade teaching.
It makes parents nervous.

Many of the limitations are “fixable” with proper communication, good planning, and quality training that address these issues. The key is that a teacher heads into the classroom knowing the demands, understanding the need for a battle plan, and having the essential artillery to face the onslaught of multi-grade demands.

Confirm Your Calling

Second, effective multi-grade teachers need to be certain of their calling to teach. If God is a good God who always gives His children what is best and who is in control of the circumstances of His children’s lives, then every Christian teacher can with confidence enter a classroom knowing God

will give grace for the situation at hand. Without this theology in action, the teaching demands will be too great for a teacher to handle. As with any teaching position, a multi-grade teacher needs to see the purpose for multi-grade settings, needs to make teaching a ministry, needs to be a servant, and needs to possess a sense of urgency. Prior to entering the classroom, multi-grade teachers should reflect on these questions.

- Am I willing to help the school in this way?
- Do I recognize the benefits and limitations, and can I remain content in this setting?
- Do I believe the Lord will honor my efforts as I lean on Him?
- Am I willing to work extra hours if necessary to serve my students?
- Are students my ministry, or do I want to just get through with my day?
- Do I believe that I can help these children in this setting?
- Do I pray for my students?
- Am I striving to reach the heart of my students more so than the head of my students?
- Can I master a new skill in order to be more usable for Christ?
- Can I be joyful in being a teacher to so many grade levels?
- Am I motivated to see excellence in academics?
- Do I truly want to educate?
- Am I willing to be “doing something” every minute of the school day?
- Am I focused on getting the concepts taught in a way that shows my students that this is important?
- Am I organized enough to get the job done “decently and in order”?

Plan the Curriculum

Third, effective multi-grade teachers teach a well-planned curriculum. Managing curriculum begins by working with an administrator to determine which subjects could be cycled and combined. For instance, possible multi-grade classroom divisions in the elementary are K–2, 3–4, 5–6 or K–3, 4–6. The basic rule of thumb in multi-grade settings is that the earlier the grade, the less a teacher can combine and cycle. This means that kindergarten students could not do first-grade work, and a first grader could not do second-grade math.

Tips for Lower Elementary

With fewer options, a teacher of lower elementary grades has to determine what is most important. In doing this, here are some options that could be considered in helping a teacher handle three to four grades in one class.

Combine Bible class for kindergarten through third grade, but require third graders to work pages in Bible that have them digging deeper.



Cycle first- and second-grade history and science. One year a teacher teaches first-grade science to first and second graders. The next year the teacher teaches second-grade science to both grades. This same cycle could be done for history. In many curriculums the science and history are seen as extra readers and helpful for more reading opportunities; but in a multi-grade setting, these subjects can be reduced to a weekly subject instead of a daily subject.

Find games and drill options that combine all the grades at once. This drill time can be done during kindergarten nap time. Instead of doing drill at the beginning of every subject, the teacher does a 30-minute block of drill that has students moving and interacting and even “catching on” to some of the fundamentals of the older grades.

Pre-record instructions for basic math concepts and have the students access the computer to watch those instructions and then work independently on their work pages. Teachers can record audio or video instructions.

Reading, writing, and arithmetic continue to be the most important academic subjects for these younger grades. A teacher needs to emphasize these three subjects without feeling inadequate that he is not giving the students a well-rounded education. If students master these three fundamentals, they will do well when other subjects are introduced.

Teachers shouldn’t feel guilty for using what some critics might call “busy work” in the classroom. If students are reviewing or practicing through the use of the work and it is helping maintain control in the classroom, teachers should find ways to award neat and accurate busy work and use it well. Busy work is not always bad work if a teacher has a method for making it useful and meaningful.

Tips for Upper Elementary

In upper elementary, cycling and combining subjects is more common. Here are some suggestions for determining what is important to fit into the daily curriculum:

Fourth grade is the transition grade in elementary and tends to be one of the hardest years for an elementary student. For this reason, teachers and administrators need to consider doing as little combining as possible in this grade. Bible and penmanship are the easiest subjects to combine. The jump from fourth- to fifth-grade level reading is extensive, so the average fourth grader may struggle if fourth and fifth grades

are combined for history or science. It is doable, but not ideal especially if the fourth graders are average readers.

Bible and penmanship (creative writing) can be combined in grades 4–6 so all grades are doing the same grade level. The teacher then uses a different grade level in these subjects the following year so that a sixth grader will have been taught all grade levels of those subjects but not taught them in sequential order.

Teachers should consider cycling fifth- and sixth-grade reading, history, and science (although teachers should be cautious with science because sixth-grade science tends to be more difficult as publishers begin to encourage independent study skills before students enter junior high).

The core subjects are not easily combined or cycled in these grades with the exception of possibly fifth- and sixth-grade reading. Otherwise, math and language are taught at grade level. These subjects build on each other and need to be sequentially taught through elementary.

An important part of preparation is going through teacher textbooks and mapping out the topics taught and when they are taught. For instance, will the concept of fractions be taught on the same day for fifth and sixth grade? Can diagramming be taught simultaneously even though each grade level is using a different book? A teacher can determine which lectures could be combined even when teaching multiple grades using multiple books if the books cover the same topics in a similar order.

Teachers and administrators can use the benefit of multi-grade classrooms to their advantage. For instance, when a fifth grader struggles in math but does well in all other subjects, he is easily placed in the fourth-grade math class, but never moves his desk, walks to another classroom, or deals with a new teacher. This same practice could be used in all the core subjects for struggling students in the elementary.

Tips for Secondary

In the secondary classes, cycling subjects works very well by combining grades 7–8, 9–10, and 11–12. A teacher can teach seventh-grade grammar to 7th and 8th graders and then the next year teach eighth-grade grammar to 7th and 8th graders. By the time students complete junior high, they will have received both years of junior high subjects; and taking them out of order is not harmful in the least. The same is true for grades 9–10 and 11–12. The only downside to cycling these grades is handling transferring students coming in or going out. The upside is that teachers are honest with what can be taught well without a debt issue or stretched-too-thin teacher. Schools can do this kind of cycling and combining of subjects in every class with the exception of foreign languages.

Manage the Classroom

Fourth, effective multi-grade teachers run a tightly managed classroom. Every minute counts. Multi-grade teachers have a sense of urgency in their schedule that is unlike any single-grade teacher’s schedule. Daily schedules are more detailed on paper and less flexible in practice. Transitions are more structured. Teachers facing multi-grade teaching for the first time need to find sample schedules to help them

plan their day well. (I will send any samples by email upon request.) Within the schedule, the teacher needs to label what is “directed teaching” (teaching to one grade at a time) and “group teaching” (teaching to multiple grades at one time). Brainstorming on making the classroom run efficiently almost always involves preparation. More so than single-grade teachers, multi-grade teachers have to be prepared for every minute of the day because there is no “squeezing in a quick review or read” for a teacher before a lecture.

- Pull out visuals the night before so they are easily accessible. With multiple grades in the elementary, this can be a lot of visuals and charts. Materials must be organized and stored so that they are accessible and the classroom is uncluttered. Some teachers have built metal frames that allow them to create flip charts for all the many visuals needed in the classroom.

**With fewer options,
a teacher of lower
elementary grades has
to determine what is
most important.**

- Don’t feel guilty about not covering everything in the curriculum. Publishers always give more than what is needed in order to address as many learning styles as possible. Choose the best for your class. Furthermore, don’t try to grade everything. Use a buddy system for grading seatwork. Quizzes checked orally in class should be recorded immediately. Try to avoid multiple steps to recording grades, but occasionally collect papers for accountability checks.
- To avoid having several teacher keys and lesson plans books with you during the day, cut the spiral binders off books and use three-hole binders for a week’s worth of plans and keys. Having a binder for each grade is better than having six books per grade that you have to keep track of each day.
- Inspect what you expect. Be consistent with classroom procedures and teacher expectations. Multi-grade classrooms move quickly and intensely so procedures become imperative. Have a procedure for transitions, for entering and exiting a classroom, for interrupting, for asking for help, for grading or checking classmates’ work, for paper headings, for storage of personal items, for classroom cleaning, and for homework.
- Have learning centers set up for down time. Students will have down time at different times throughout the day as the teacher cycles through subjects and grade levels.

Just as seatwork or “busy work” in the lower elementary grades needs to have value, so does the down time of upper elementary students. Rotate games and puzzles often through the year.

- Set up a form of classroom communication without needing to say a word or by simply saying one word. These codes or fingering systems are helpful when a teacher doesn’t need to stop a lecture but does need to address a student’s need.

Support the Teacher

Fifth, the effective multi-grade teacher has the support of his administrator and the parents. A multi-grade teacher has two groups of people that are his lifeline throughout the year: the administrator and the parents. The teacher of a multi-grade classroom is the hero of every administrator. Administrators need to help a teacher be effective: show appreciation, provide resources, encourage innovation of existing resources, and provide training to help the multi-grade teacher. Stress is the number one factor for teacher burnout. Although no administrator can remove stress from the classroom, he can help teachers address and manage the stress biblically, professionally, and creatively. Small behavior issues can become huge time investments within a multi-grade class when the teacher’s every minute is being used. Administrators need to act quickly in supporting and offering solutions.

In publishing a UNESCO-approved handbook for multi-grade teachers in third world areas where education is making a comeback, Mathot (2001) writes that parents are important partners in multi-grade efforts. Engaging them in the process is important to the classroom’s overall effectiveness. If secular education recognizes the need for parents to be in support of and help in the multi-grade setting, then Christian parents need to catch the vision and purpose and be an important piece of the school’s success in making multi-grade classrooms effective and beneficial. Engaging the parents is best done by administrators by giving them ideas for involvement, by



Every minute counts. Multi-grade teachers have a sense of urgency in their schedule.

communicating the importance of their role, and by describing to them a typical day in the life of a multi-grade teacher. A teacher then follows up with parents by asking them for help throughout the year.

Conclusion

Effective multi-grade teachers are honest about the challenges ahead of them, are confident of their calling, are committed to teaching the most important subjects for the grades they teach, are prepared and consistent in managing their classrooms, and have the support of administrators and parents. Multi-grade classrooms can be one of the most effective organizational structures in providing a child with an excellent, well-rounded education; and many schools can "make it their niche" by mastering multi-grade teaching so that the school offers more advantages to families than a single-grade structured school offers.

Shannon Steuerwald has been a multi-grade teacher and is the administrator at Ironwood Christian Academy (Newberry Springs, CA), a multi-grade structured school. She is the author of three books. She can be reached at shannons@ironwood.org.

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Intermediate 2**Reading Vocabulary**

Content Clusters	
Synonyms	
Multiple-Meaning Words	
Context Clues	

Reading Comprehension

Content Clusters		Process Clusters		Standards
Literary	Initial Understanding	Interpretation		Determine explicit sequence of events
				Apply ideas from text to new situations
				Categorize, classify, compare, or contrast details
				Draw conclusions from supporting details
	Critical Analysis			Extract implicit main idea or theme
				Interpret a character's traits, motivation, or behavior
				Analyze text structure
				Identify characteristics of genre
	Strategies			Determine unknown words from context
				Determine explicit sequence or action
Informational	Initial Understanding			Determine explicit causes or effects for events
				Determine explicit supporting details
				Categorize, classify, compare, or contrast details
				Determine implicit causes for or effects of ideas
	Interpretation			Extract implicit theme or main idea
				Form hypotheses from ideas in text
	Strategies			

Intermediate 2

Content Clusters		Process Clusters		Standards
Informational	Critical Analysis			Analyze author's purpose, assumptions, or viewpoint
				Evaluate sufficiency of information
	Strategies			Select an appropriate reading strategy in a given situation
				Set purpose for reading
Functional	Initial Understanding			Determine explicit actions or sequence of events
				Determine explicit causes or effects for events
				Apply ideas from text to new situations
				Distinguish important from less important information
	Interpretation			Make predictions based on text
				Analyze author's purpose, assumptions, or viewpoint
				Analyze author's tone
				Distinguish fact from opinion
	Critical Analysis			Determine likely source of text
				Discern literary devices
	Strategies			Determine if needed information is within text
				Select an appropriate reading strategy in a given situation
				Set purpose for reading

Mathematics Problem Solving

Content Clusters		Standards		Process Clusters
Number Sense and Operations				Communication and Representation
				Identify the place value of a digit in a whole or decimal number
				Identify alternative representations of rational numbers
				Identify and use order of operation rules

Intermediate 3

Reading Vocabulary

Content Clusters	
Synonyms	
Multiple-Meaning Words	
Context Clues	

Reading Comprehension

Content Clusters	Process Clusters	Standards
Literary	Initial Understanding	Determine explicit detail Determine explicit sequence or action
	Interpretation	Compare details from text Determine implicit main idea or theme Draw conclusions from details Interpret character traits, behavior, or motivation Make predictions based on text
	Critical Analysis	Discern literary devices Interpret figurative language
	Strategies	Select an appropriate reading strategy in a given situation Set purpose for reading Apply text structure to reading task Determine unknown words from context
	Initial Understanding	Determine explicit causes or effects of events Determine explicit supporting detail
	Interpretation	Categorize, classify, compare, contrast elements of text Determine implicit main idea or theme Determine important and less important information Form hypotheses from ideas in text
Informational		

Mathematics Problem Solving

Content Clusters	Standards	Process Clusters
Number Sense and Operations	Identify the place value of a digit in a whole or decimal number Identify and use order of operation rules Round whole or decimal numbers to a specified place value	Communication and Representation