

20 April 2017

As we start to look toward the end of one school year and the beginning of another one, the staff begin the class loading process where staff build PRELIMINARY classes for the next school year. This is a rather lengthy process that occurs over several weeks and continues into September of the following school year. It is also a process that is constantly changing because there are so many external factors at play that parents may not be aware of, such as students registering and leaving the school, staffing levels changing based on enrolment, etc. As a result, this process takes time and is not accomplished simply or just in one go.

Some of the considerations the professional staff have when placing students in classes for the next school year are:

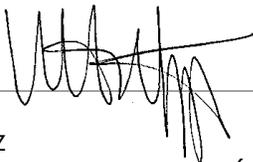
- **The learning needs of the child** – do students require additional support, extra challenge, etc?
- **Social emotional development** – are there children who should be separated from each other, learn best together, small groups that work well together, etc?
- **Balancing classes** – we strive to provide for a range of learning needs and styles within our classrooms as well as opportunities for students to demonstrate leadership skills. We also try to have a balance of boys and girls whenever possible as well as an appropriate number in each grade in a combined class.

Of course we make every effort to consider all relevant factors when placing students in classrooms and spend a great deal of time doing this. The process is a very collegial one with all staff, including resource staff, so as to attempt to create as balanced a class as possible. If you have **specific and relevant information about your child's intellectual and social emotional learning needs** (including outside testing or assessment information), please pass this information along to us for **CONSIDERATION** in our class placement process.

Please note that you are welcome to include relevant information as noted, however, **requests for specific teachers WILL NOT be accepted**. Please also note that information will be shared with all staff involved in the class placement process – classroom teacher, support teachers, EAs, and District Staff. Classes will be finalized in early September once we receive final approval from the School Board. This is the case for both our **French Immersion and English programs**.

Should you choose to submit written information regarding your child's needs, we would need to receive this not later than **Wednesday, May 31, 2017**. This allows us sufficient time to consider this information as we usually have initiated the process in early June. **Please note that late requests will not be accepted.**

Sincerely,



Mr. W Hiltz
Principal / directeur and École Seaforth Elementary School Teaching Staff

Combined-Grade Classes

Learning Together

Each child is guided to succeed within their grade appropriate learning outcomes

Burnaby School District is committed to creating balanced classes that focus on a student's individual learning strengths and the needs of the whole child. Additional factors that influence the formation of classes include shifting enrolment, class size/composition, and school staffing. Often, particularly at the elementary level, schools will form combined-grade classes.

In a combined-grade class, students from different grades are grouped together in a classroom with one teacher (eg. Grade 2 and Grade 3). Combined-grade classes are common in Canada. In fact, a Canadian study on classroom organization found that one out of every five Canadian students is enrolled in a combined-grade classroom. This means, it is very likely that your child will be in a combined-grade class during their elementary years.

Do children “learn” differently in combined-grade classrooms?

Children learn and mature at different rates. Intellectual, social, physical and personal development is not grade level dependent. In every classroom, combined-grade or single-grade, there is a wide range of children with varying skills and abilities. Teachers are aware of these individual differences and structure learning activities within the curriculum, according to the needs of each learner.

Students in combined-grade classes are not held back to the level of younger students nor are they expected to handle work beyond their ability. Whether a child is an advanced learner, or requires additional learning support, each is guided to succeed within the grade appropriate learning outcomes.

There are also social benefits to combined-grade classes. Research shows that combined-grade classes:

- allow students to learn from one another
- encourage students to work together
- provide models for younger students
- help older students see what they have already learned
- promote social responsibility
- help students to become independent
- foster a positive attitude towards school

There are many social benefits to combined-grade classes

How do teachers “teach” in combined-grade classes?

The combined-grade structure does not make a difference in how a teacher teaches students. Teachers of combined-grade classrooms are familiar and knowledgeable about the curricula for the grades and subjects they are teaching.

Learning has shifted away from memorizing facts to a more holistic approach that focuses on engaging the learner through a lens of inquiry-based learning, critical and creative thinking. This approach lends itself well to combined-grade classes where the emphasis is on teaching students how to evaluate ideas, make judgements, transfer and apply knowledge, understand processes and access information.

How can I support my child’s learning?

Children in all class formations thrive when parents are involved in the learning process. Here are some ways to become involved and help your child learn:

- Take an interest in your child's school work and activities
- Monitor their homework
- Communicate with the teacher
- Offer to volunteer in the school

Parent involvement supports student success