

Combined-grade classes: Learning together

Combined-grade classes consist of students from consecutive grades grouped together in one class. They are common both locally and internationally, with “one out of every five Canadian students enrolled in a multi-grade classroom” according to at least one study. There is a good chance that Surrey children will have the experience of being in a combined-grade class during their elementary school years. The term “split class” is no longer used as we view students in a class as a “community of learners”.

Organizing classes to best meet the needs of all students is a complex process. While practical factors such as shifting enrolment, class size and composition influence the formation of classes, the Surrey School District is committed to creating balanced classes that focus on student’s learning strengths and the needs of the whole child.

Students in combined classes, as in every classroom, display a wide range of skills and abilities. Studies have found that on average, a single-grade class includes students whose development spans five years. Children mature at different rates in various aspects of development. Intellectual, social, physical and personal development is not grade level dependent. Teachers are aware of these

individual differences and structure learning opportunities to meet the needs of each student.

Research shows that there are both academic and social benefits to combined-grade classes and that successful learning is less dependent on how students are grouped into classes, than on the quality of instructional practices. Every child will be encouraged on their learning journey as much in a combined class as he or she would be in a single-grade class. The curriculum with its focus on engaging the learner through a lens of inquiry-based learning using critical thinking is well suited to combined classes of learners. As well, the Curriculum Core Competencies which include: communication, creative and critical thinking, positive personal and cultural identity, social responsibility, and personal awareness and responsibility are easily supported in a combined class of learners.



Children in all class formation thrive when parents/caregivers are involved in the learning process. Talk to your child about their day, communicate with the teacher and spend time reading with your child.