

How do split-grade classrooms affect learning?

Split-grade classrooms include students spanning two grades and are frequently deployed to balance class sizes, so that teachers aren't teaching classrooms with too many students, and classrooms with too few students don't stretch school district resources.

According to research about the experience of teachers and students in split-grade classrooms:

- Social outcomes (e.g.: student self-concept, social contacts and groupings, and leadership skills) show positive results for students in split-grade classrooms.
- Strategies teachers can use to improve outcomes in split-grade classrooms include cooperative learning, peer tutoring and ability grouping, and formative assessment. These classrooms may also allow teachers to better differentiate student needs.
- Because of the blended ages and grades, teachers have a range of additional tools they can use in split-grade classrooms. As a result, they need professional development in these differentiated strategies, as well as administrative support, including increased planning time and tailored curricular materials.
- Parents' concerns about their child's academic success in split-grade classes are reduced over time, so educators should focus on engaging and educating parents of children in these classes.
- Newer research is needed since much of it was generated in the 1990s.

When split-grade classrooms are carefully implemented to support differentiated teaching and include appropriate professional development, as well as curricular and planning resources for teachers, the learning experiences for students in these classes are positive.

For online resources as well as the research references that inform this issue, please visit:
www.cea-ace.ca/facts-on-education

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