

Dilworth School

COMBINATION CLASSES

Combination classes-combining two grade levels in one class-exist in all our elementary schools. Combination classes are a common occurrence, so it is important to understand why they are informed, how they are formed, and how they work.

Why do we have combination classes?

Combination classes are simply the result of how many students come to a school at a given grade level. We staff our elementary classrooms at a ratio of one teacher to 31 students (one to 20 in first, second, and third grades). Students, however, don't come to us in neat numbers. When we have too many students for two single level classes and not enough for three, a combination class must be created. Numbers of students at one grade level also affect every other grade level in the school, so combination classes reflect the total school enrollment. The school principal must look at the total enrollment when setting up grade level configurations for the whole school.

How are students assigned to combination classes?

Principals and teachers assign all students based on their professional assessment of where and with whom a child will have the greatest opportunity for success. All of our classes-combination and single grade level-are heterogeneously grouped. In each classroom, there are students of varying ages, abilities, and achievement, as well as at different stages of physical, social, and emotional development. Within each class, students may be grouped and regrouped to meet individual needs, interests, and learning styles, or to capitalize on individual and group strengths. Each student is assigned to a class-combination or single grade level-only after careful thought and discussion by the principal and teachers as to the best educational placement.

How do combination classes differ from single level classes?

In reality, they don't. Students assigned to combination classes receive the complete curriculum appropriate to their grade level, as do students in single grade level classes. All students have opportunities to extend their learning based on individual abilities and achievement. All students have learning and play experiences in which they function independently or cooperatively in groups. In all classes, teachers at times work with the whole class and at times work with groups of students or individual students.

Are there ways you can help?

We want our students to succeed and enjoy learning. You can help your child by being positive about the classroom assignment. You can help the school by sharing your knowledge and insights about your child with the classroom teacher and school principal-information that will assist them as they make placements. Thank you for respecting the expertise and judgment of these professionals as to the best educational placement of students. When school and home work together supportively, children have a better adjustment to their classroom assignment, a good overall school experience, and increased success in learning.