

## **Definition of a Multiage Classroom:**

There are different definitions of what a multiage classroom is, in the Hillsborough City School District a multiage classroom contains students of different ages and grade levels who stay with the same teacher for multiple years. In a single classroom, the chronological age of students in the same class can span two years. The philosophical approach is that students learn at their own pace and the teacher meets the students' developmental needs academically and social/emotionally. The learning is student centered.

Research has found that children are able to learn at their own rate in multiage settings, as teachers must individualize learning for each student across a wide array of ages and abilities. Students, therefore, have more time to master content and vocabulary. Multiage groups tend to be more collaborative and less competitive than traditional grades. In this setting, the older children model and support the new, younger students in learning, a very different structure than traditional dual language immersion programs (Katz, 1995).

Because half of the students in the multiage classroom are returning to the same classroom each new school year, start-up time is faster as the teacher knows half of the class well already and student role models are present for the new classmates. Remaining with each teacher for multiple years also enables teachers to get to know students better, assess progress more accurately and with appropriate context, and build greater trust with each student, therefore better meeting their social and academic needs (Stone, 1998; Veenman, 1996).

## **Rationale:**

The rationale to create a K/1 multiage classroom comes from several events and circumstances that have occurred throughout this year at several sites:

1. Drop in enrollment: According to the district demographer, lower birth rate in our area has resulted in lower attendance for 2017-18. This has also been the case in all the other elementary schools.
2. Need to differentiate instruction for students at different developmental levels: As students enter kinder and first grade, we have noticed a diverse range of academic needs within the same grade level. Some students enter the kinder classroom with high skills while others lack preschool experience. Multiage classrooms allow teachers to differentiate instruction based on the students' needs and independent of their chronological age.
3. Need to build strong social/emotional support for students: Students are coming in with a wide range of social/emotional needs in the same classroom. Multiage classrooms allow the students to be with the same teacher for two years, which in turn supports them in building stronger relationships with the teacher and other students in the class.
4. Teacher preparation: We have teachers in our staff who have experience teaching multiage classes and who are willing to support this at our schools.

## **Similarities and Differences Between a Traditional Class, Combination Class, and a Multiage:**

The multiage classroom is not the same as the combo/split classroom. The multiage classroom is intended to function as a single learning community. The students collaborate with each other during the day. In the traditional split/combo students are separated and do not mix during the day.

The instruction is kept separate and students do not have the opportunity to collaborate with their peers in the different age groups.

	Traditional	Combination	Multiage
Students	<p>Differentiation mostly within the same grade level</p> <p>One year with the teacher</p>	<p>Differentiation mostly within the same grade level. Teachers meet with the students at different times of the day for small group instruction</p> <p>One year with the teacher</p>	<p>Differentiation within two grade levels and age groups.</p> <p>Students learn to interact and learn from students from different age groups</p> <p>Two years with the teacher-deeper relationships</p>
Teachers	<p>Collaborate with teachers only in their grade level</p>	<p>Collaborate with teachers from the two grade levels at different times</p>	<p>Collaborate with teachers from two grade levels at the same time</p> <p>Know the students and parents well over two years</p> <p>Greater flexibility to differentiate instruction</p>

### Summary of Benefits of a Multiage Classroom

<b>Parents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger relationship with teacher</li> <li>• More opportunities to take an active role in child's education</li> <li>• Child is more positive about school</li> <li>• Child is given appropriate support/challenge depending on their individual achievement level</li> <li>• Child learns to be pro-social, independent and responsible</li> <li>• Child learns to self initiate</li> </ul>
<b>Educators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger relationship with students and parents</li> <li>• Better able to address individual student needs</li> <li>• Longer time to monitor students to recognize effectiveness of teaching</li> <li>• More stimulating, creative work environment</li> <li>• More job satisfaction</li> <li>• Helps the teacher to use differentiated instruction and to perform at a high level of teaching</li> <li>• Fewer discipline problems in class</li> </ul>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allows staff more options for placement of high maintenance students and/or difficult combinations of students</li></ul> |
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**Supports/Resources:**

- Curriculum - The multiage classroom will receive curriculum for the two grade levels
- Human Resources - The multiage classroom will receive additional instructional aide time to support the teacher with small group instruction
- Program Visits - Teachers teaching in a multiage classroom will have the opportunity to visit other sites where similar models are followed: San Carlos and Palo Alto

**Class Configuration:**

- Birthdate consideration: all classes
- Behavior: social & emotional development
- Academic: balance between different academic levels
- Success for all classes: balance across the two grade

**Other Areas for Consideration:**

- Specialists: The specialist schedule could shift to support the students from the multiage classroom as one rotation
- Collaboration Time: The multiage teachers will be provided with time to plan and collaborate as a cohesive team with the other grade levels
- Team Teaching and Regrouping: Teachers can have block times for ELA and math that will allow students from the multiage classroom to be grouped in homogenous groups to support their academic needs in ELA and math
- AM/PM placement: Kinder students in the K/1 multiage classroom will have the same schedule (AM), which will allow the first graders to have small group instruction in the afternoon

**Research/ Articles on Multiage:**

<http://www.mun.ca/educ/faculty/mwatch/win2000/mulcahy.html>

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[http://www.choosingmultiage.com/presentations%20and%20articles/Ball\\_Multiage\\_Groups.pdf](http://www.choosingmultiage.com/presentations%20and%20articles/Ball_Multiage_Groups.pdf)

[http://www.choosingmultiage.com/multiage\\_approach.php](http://www.choosingmultiage.com/multiage_approach.php)