

What is a blended

Kindergarten/

Grade 1 class?

A blended K/1 class refers to a class that is made up of students from both kindergarten and Grade 1. The total number of students will not exceed twenty children with one teacher teaching the curriculum for both grades.

It is important to know that students in a combined K/1 class are not held back to the level of the younger children, nor are the Kindergarten children expected to work beyond their level of ability. All students follow the prescribed learning outcomes for their specific grade level, as they would in a straight-grade class.

Why do schools create

blended K/1 classes?

Schools combine classes for a variety of reasons. This includes organizing classes to meet student learning needs, and combining grades to balance class size averages, according to the Ministry of Education guidelines.

All classes include students with a wide range of skills, interests and abilities. Blended classes are neither better nor worse than single-grade classes; they are simply one of the ways schools meet student academic and social development needs.

In fact in some schools and districts blended classes are the preferred choice of configuration because of the benefits of mixed-age groupings.



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KINDERGARTEN

GRADE 1

BLENDED CLASSES

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Information for parents about
Kindergarten/ Grade 1 Blended
Classes

How are students chosen for blended K/1 classes?

Principals and staff carefully consider a variety of factors when grouping children into classes, including:

- Learning styles
- Social skills groupings
- Academic need
- Gender
- Range of ability
- Special learning needs
- And many other factors

All classrooms, whether single or blended, include students performing at a wide range of achievement levels. In every case, schools strive to create a classroom environment that will support the needs of all students.

How will a blended K/1 class affect my child academically?

Several studies have found that students in blended classes succeed just as well as students in single-grade classes and in fact, they perform better in language and reading.

The curricula for kindergarten and Grade 1 follow a developmentally appropriate continuum, and teachers develop programs according to the individual needs of the children in the class. Even in a single-grade classroom, there will be children working below or above the curriculum expectations of that grade level.

How will a blended K/1 class affect my child socially?

Children in multi-age classes are more likely to cooperate than compete. They see each other more as individuals than competitors. Canadian studies show that children in blended classes have more opportunities for emotional and social growth. They learn independence and cooperation; they build leadership abilities as they work together and help each other.

Students in blended classes develop decision-making skills, become more self-motivated and responsible, and have been found to have more positive attitudes toward school, themselves and others. Their perspectives are expanded by the diverse ideas and opinions of their classmates.

How can the teacher teach more than one grade at a time?

Teachers use many different strategies to teach the students in blended grades. They may:

- Introduce a common topic, then give each grade a different task or problem;
- Break students into groups to address their specific learning needs. These groups can be flexible, focused on student varied interests and skill.
- Provide hands-on, open-ended learning experiences that encourage inquiry and accommodate personalized learning.

Through strategies like Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction, teachers are trained to meet the individual needs of all learners.

Will my child get enough individual attention?

Each day, in single-grade and blended classes, teachers work with large and small groups, and with individual students. Students in a blended grade benefit not only from their teacher's attention, but also from a broad network of peer support. Older students take a leadership role in helping their younger peers, and all of the students develop a greater sense of independence and responsibility for their own learning.

How can I help my child succeed?

- Get involved in your child's school life: Talk about their schoolwork, friends, and school activities
- Stay connected with the school; get to know the teacher, ask questions and participate in school events.
- Make learning fun. Try to incorporate learning activities into their daily routines. Read to your child, play games, have conversation, encourage your child's interests and curiosity
- Take advantage of community opportunities such as the library, parks, and recreation centres.
- Encourage healthy development through good nutrition, sufficient sleep, and opportunities for play.
- Make sure that your child arrives at school on time and ready to learn each day.