

Teaching and Learning in a Composite Class

Some frequently asked questions....

Why are composite classes used in a school?

Composite classes provide schools with more flexibility and options to ensure even class sizes and a balance of student social and academic needs within and across year levels.

Does the placement of a child in a composite class mean that they are more or less able?

In every year level children have diverse needs, skills and abilities. When placing children into class groups we aim to represent the full range of student abilities from a given year level, whether in a single year level class or a composite class.

What are the benefits of a composite class?

Children in a composite class have the opportunity to mix socially and academically with a wide range of students. Children are able to work at their own rate within a community of learners and are able to learn from, and with, each other. Younger students have the opportunity to learn alongside older peers, and older students can show leadership and demonstrate high level understandings and complex thinking skills to model and explain their learning at designated times.

How do teachers cater for a range of abilities?

Teachers are trained in differentiating the curriculum to meet the varying abilities of their students. We have a very clear understanding of the curriculum requirements and expectations for each year level. Effective assessments of student learning ensure we know students' needs, strengths and future learning points. Here are some strategies that we use:

- Planning open-ended tasks that cater for a range of different abilities and allow learning to be demonstrated in different ways
- Planning tasks that allow for different entry points and provide opportunities for extension and problem solving
- Provide targeted small group and individual instruction based on learning needs and specific teaching points
- Setting individual goals, challenges and projects which encourage children to demonstrate independence and responsibility in their learning
- At times students will separate into year level groups for instruction; this may include linking with another composite class.

“Research shows it makes no difference to performance whether students are in a straight year group or in a multi-age class – it’s the teacher who makes the difference.” Multi-age or composite classes:2008 to 2014, NSW Department of Education and Communities, January 2015