

Dear Parents of Multiples,

Two of the educational concerns you will face in raising your multiples is whether or not they should be together in the same class or separated and which type of placement would benefit each child's personal development. In some schools there may be enough classes of the same grade to facilitate each child being in separate classes. However, it is not unusual for some schools or school boards to have a policy that all multiples must be separated; or that all multiples should be together. In order to assist you in making the decision that would be right for your children, here are some issues to consider for your children.

Reasons to Separate:

Although there is no substantial evidence to support the policy that multiples must be placed in separate classrooms in order for them to grow and develop as individuals, there are sometimes circumstances which would indicate that separation is advisable. Here are some examples for when separation may be in the best interests of each child:

- Constant 'togetherness' is hindering the development of social skills in one, both or more of the multiples;
- A 'division of labour' exists;
- Insensitive comparisons by teachers, peers or even each other have led to feelings of inadequacy in one or more of the multiples;
- The multiples form a 'power unit' which is causing disruptive behaviour;
- The children use their multipleship to exploit, cheat or play tricks;
- One or more of the multiples appears to resent the lack of privacy resulting from sharing a classroom;
- One multiple proves to be a constant distraction to the other/s;
- In opposite-sex multiples, the female is overprotective or 'mothering' the male co-multiple;
- In skill-grouped classrooms where the abilities of one of the multiples are far above those of the co-multiple/s; and
- The multiples WANT to separate.

Reasons to Keep Together:

Sometimes there are valid reasons for keeping multiples together:

- Major emotional upheavals may have occurred with the family, eg. divorce, moving house, death, etc;
- Only one classroom is available;
- Unequal education will be experienced due to two different teachers employing different methods of teaching;
- Multiples are at or near the same skill level in a skill-based classroom.

Wise parents and educators will realise that some of the issues mentioned may be evident in one year but not the next. Evaluations/observations of the multiples' behaviour and development need to be regularly monitored.

Recommendations Regarding Classroom Placement:

1. It is not recommended to separate multiples who want to be together. Forced separation can damage self-esteem, inhibit language development and delay learning.

2. It is not recommended to automatically separate multiples in their first year of school. Such separation adds to the stress of starting school, and may actually increase the multiples' need to be together.
3. All multiples need as much independence as they are ready to handle. Multiples flourish when allowed to separate on their own timetable. Whether they are in the same classroom or not can and should be evaluated each year. As the multiples grow older, they themselves will also have input as to whether or not they should or want to be together.
4. Encourage multiples to choose separate classes as they gain confidence in the school situation.
5. Decisions as to whether or not the children should be together needs to be made by a 'team' approach – the parents, the teachers and the principal. Educators need to realise that parents know their children best, and it is important, for any easy transition to school and the development of the children, that parental opinion be considered.
6. If multiples are in the same classroom, they can be in separate settings within the class.
7. Especially if your children look alike, make it easy on the teachers and students to dress them differently so that they are easily recognised and seen as individuals.
8. Parent/Teacher interviews need to reflect how each child is progressing compared to the rest of the class, rather than in comparison with each other.
9. You may need to indicate that you would like separate parent/teacher interviews for each child. Sometimes teachers expect one interview to talk about all the multiples together, and that can be confusing and perhaps not fair to the children since it is more natural in that environment for comparisons to be about the children in relation to each other rather than to their peer group.
10. ICOMBO strongly recommends that placement of each of multiples be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, that placement evaluation occurs annually, and that parents, teachers, principals and the children be included in the decision-making.

Sincerely,

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The information in this letter was originally produced by Lynda P. Haddon for Multiple Births Canada (MBC). It has been reviewed by Pat Preedy Ph.D., M.Ed., B.Ed. (UK), John Mascazine Ph.D. (US) and Donna Launslager, MBC Health & Education Committee Member.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.twinsandmultiples.org - a number of downloads are listed below from this website.
<http://www.drncancysegaltwins.org/>

BOOKS

Emotionally Healthy Twins: A New Philosophy for Parenting Two Unique Children, Joan Friedman
Multiples in School, Australian Multiple Birth Association, 2010. Available through www.amba.org.au
Parenting School-age Twins and Multiples, Christine Baglivi Tinglof, 2007
Twin and Triplet Psychology: A Professional Guide to Working with Multiples, Audrey Sandbank, 1999
Understanding Multiple Birth Children and How They Learn, John Mascazine

DOWNLOADS: Public Education and Professional Development

Model for Relationships:

The [downloadable checklist](#) may be used to assess the nature of the multiple birth relationship. For more information visit - <http://www.twinsandmultiples.org/wmm/wmm5cc.cfm>

Speech and Language Checklist:

This [downloadable checklist](#) can be used as basic guide to a child's speech development. For more information visit - <http://www.twinsandmultiples.org/preschool/p2b.cfm>

School Readiness Questionnaire:

This [downloadable questionnaire](#) can be used to find out about the needs of multiple birth children when they start school. For more information visit - <http://www.twinsandmultiples.org/preschool/p3a.cfm>

Checklist for parent/teacher discussion of twin separation:

This [downloadable checklist](#) can be used as an aid to deciding whether to separate children into separate classes. For more information visit - <http://www.twinsandmultiples.org/school/sy2.cfm>

School Policy:

This [downloadable questionnaire](#) can be used by teachers for an initial assessment of new multiples entering their school. For more information visit - <http://www.twinsandmultiples.org/school/sy7a.cfm>

ADHD checklist:

This [downloadable checklist](#) can be used as a guide to whether more thorough assessment of the child for ADHD may be needed. For more information visit – <http://www.twinsandmultiples.org/sn/sn4d.cfm>

These tools have been developed and shared through the generosity of the following professionals:

[David A. Hay](#): Retired Professor of Psychology; Curtin University, Western Australia. Former national patron of the Australian Multiple Birth Association (AMBA)

[Pat Preedy](#): Adjunct Professor at Curtin University, Chief Education Officer for GEMS UK, Executive Principal of GEMS Sherfield School, UK; Director of Training and Research GEMS, UK; Education Research Consultant for the Twins and Multiple Births Association (Tamba)

[John Mascazine](#): Associate Professor of Education at Ohio Dominican University

[Nancy Segal](#): B.A. degree in psychology (with distinction) and English literature from Boston University (1973), and M.A. (1974) and Ph.D. (1982) degrees in Social Sciences and Behavioral Sciences from the University of Chicago

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