



Frequently Asked Questions Northpoint Multiage Classrooms

May 2022

Northpoint Elementary will implement multiage classrooms as part of our learning design for the 2022-2023 school year. Specifically, students in kindergarten will be in graded classrooms with only other kindergarteners. Students in first and second grade will be in multiage grade 1-2 classrooms, and third and fourth graders will be in multiage grade 3-4 classrooms. Overall class sizes will continue to be small with up to approximately 24 students.

What is a multiage classroom?

A multiage classroom is one in which children from two or more traditional grades are placed with one teacher. Students typically will use core resources from both grade levels with personalized instruction allowing for modifications to the learning experience as needed. When appropriate, and as the opportunity arises, content is taught in an interdisciplinary, cross-grade-level manner.

What are the benefits of multiage classrooms?

Studies of academic achievement reveal children from multiage classes perform just as well or better on achievement tests than those from a single-grade setting. Researchers generally agree that students in multiage classrooms tend to excel in study habits, social interaction, self-motivation, cooperation and attitudes toward school.

How is multiage similar and different than looping?

Multiage is similar to looping in that students remain with the same teacher for two years (grades 1 and 2 or grades 3 and 4). It is different from looping in that each year a new group of younger grade learners join the remaining learners from the preceding year. Thus, half of the students return to the same classroom and teacher each year and half are new each fall.

Why implement multiage classrooms?

Children learn and grow at varied times and rates and multiage classrooms provide a more flexible classroom learning experience. In a multiage classroom, children's progress is assessed by looking at their own growth rather than by comparing them with others in their age group. This design for learning is an intentional choice that fits well with our focus on personalized learning. Teachers in multiage classrooms tailor learning experiences to where each student – whatever their formal grade level – is in their learning. The teachers of our multiage classrooms have been asking for this model for a number of years. After piloting the model at Northpoint last year, teachers are now excited to scale this across the whole school.

How are curricular resources used given two grade levels in a classroom?

The teachers who taught in multiage classrooms last year mapped our core resources and learning targets and taught the following in multiage groupings: language arts, science, social studies and health. Math continued to be taught in grade level groupings. We anticipate a similar approach for this coming year.

What did you learn through the pilot of multiage classrooms in 2021-22?

We learned so much from our pilot of multiage classrooms in 2021-22. A group of 11 teachers implemented a total of eight multiage classrooms starting in the fall of 2021 – four grade 1-2 and four grade 3-4 multiage classrooms.

These teams mapped our core resources and learning targets and taught the following in multiage groupings: language arts, science, social studies and health. Math continued to be taught in grade level groupings.

As we progressed through the school year, the multiage teachers continued to refine their programming, experiencing student success along the way. Students have been deeply engaged in their learning. Students of all ages are emerging as leaders, and we have seen evidence of increased student achievement. Student surveys indicate great satisfaction in being part of a multiage classroom, and parent feedback has been very positive.

What if my child is in the lower of two grades in a multiage classroom be left behind?

Learners in the younger of the two grades in a multiage classroom can count on the teacher to answer their instructional questions and can also get assistance from older students in the class. Students in the lower grade also benefit from enriched learning through exposure to curricular material designed for a higher grade.

Will my child in the higher of the two grades in a multiage class be challenged?

Older learners in multiage classrooms are stretched toward more nuanced and sophisticated thinking and skill development. They understand expectations and develop a strong bond of trust with their teachers, which spurs them to work harder to produce high-quality work. In addition, older students often have opportunities to share their learning with others in the classroom and this deepens their own personal understanding of the content.

What about children with an IEP or identified for gifted and talented programming?

In multiage classrooms, our teachers are ready to personalize instruction to meet the individual needs of all learners, whether they need access to additional interventions or enrichment.

How do multiage classrooms align to innovative and personalized learning?

Each multiage classroom (and all classrooms at Northpoint) will focus on the core elements of personalized learning – competency-based learning, learner profiles and maps, and flexible learning environments. We are excited to serve our children in every classroom, providing them with a differentiated experience based on interest, strength, and needs.

How does the placement of students into multiage classrooms work at Northpoint?

Our teaching team will consider the unique needs of each student and the balance of students among various classrooms as they place students.

Do you have any additional resources I could review to learn more about multiage classrooms?

For families that would like to learn more, we can provide you with a list of resources which include both research based articles and more anecdotal accounts of firsthand experiences. We acknowledge that our program will not look exactly like any one program described in these resources.