

5 Young Drive
Brampton, ON L6Y 0P4
t- 905-451-2217
f- 905-451-0168



Principal
L. Rathbone

Vice Principal
J. Trafford

Office Manager
A. Longstreet

Office Assistant
K. Byng

September 19, 2018

Dear Copeland Families:

Each year, our school starts off with a certain number of classes and teachers—these numbers are based on estimates made the previous spring about how many students will be enrolled during the next school year.

As you may be aware, the Ministry of Education has class size goals that all school boards are required to meet. When the Peel District School Board organized its schools in the spring, they adhered to this ministry expectation.

Each September, the board reviews the enrolment and staffing needs through a re-organization process. Through this process, administrators compare actual enrolment numbers to the numbers projected by the board in the spring. We have now completed this review, and some Copeland students may move to another class in order to balance class sizes so that we can adhere to government expectations. **As a result, Copeland has been reduced by one classroom and we will be losing one classroom teacher and one Designated Early Childhood Educator. As well, some students in our Kindergarten and students in both English programs and our French Immersion programs are moving to another classroom in order to balance class sizes so that we can adhere to the government's expectation.**

Mrs. Jones (our DECE in EK4) you will be greatly missed and yet we know new friends at another school are waiting eagerly for your arrival! Mrs. Kuphos, we only just met you but we wish you all the best as you move on to teach at another school! Copeland thanks you both for all your dedication and support!

This ministry initiative has also resulted in a number of combined grades at our school. A combined grade is where children from two different grades learn together in the same classroom. Please see the attached fact sheet for more information on combined grades.

If your child is affected by the change, you will receive a letter with details following re-organization. Every attempt will be made to notify families by telephone by the end of this week and throughout the weekend. I understand that you might have concerns about these changes. Please be assured that these changes will not affect the quality of education your child will receive at Copeland. Our staff have the skills, training and resources to work effectively with students in a variety of settings.

As always, we will do what is in the best interest of students and families. At the same time, the school board has an obligation to comply with the ministry's requirement. School staff will work to minimize the impact on students resulting from the primary class size re-organization and ensure a smooth transition. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me or the vice-principal.

Sincerely,

Leanne Rathbone
Principal

Parent *Fact* Sheet

A parent's guide to a combined grade classroom

Your child is learning in a combined grade classroom. This fact sheet is designed to help you understand how this type of classroom works and answer questions you may have.

Schools group students from two grades in one classroom to balance class size across the school and to keep the number of students in primary classes (kindergarten to grade 3) at or below 20. Combined grade classes are not new—they have always been a common part of the school experience.

Teachers are highly trained to balance individual learning needs

Walk into any classroom, and you will find children at various stages of social, physical and intellectual development. No two children are exactly the same, even if they're the same age. Each child has unique learning needs—strengths and areas that need improvement. Learning styles and preferences are unique to each student. That's true of same-grade classrooms, just like combined grade groups.

Teachers are highly trained to adjust the learning program in the classroom to the needs of each student's individual learning needs. In combined grade classes, teachers use these same strategies to teach the curriculum for both grades.

Teachers use a variety of strategies to balance the needs of both grades

Students in a combined grade class follow expectations for their specific grade. Just as in same-grade classes, teachers in combined grades use a wide range of teaching strategies to make sure they cover all of the curriculum expectations. Children in combined grade classes will spend time learning as a whole class, in small groups and individually. Sometimes they will be grouped based on a specific task and other times the teacher will group them based on their learning needs. Here are some examples of how a teacher of a combined grade class might cover the curriculum for two grades.

In many areas of the Ontario curriculum, the overall expectations do not change from one grade to the next, but students learn the skill with a greater level of complexity as they progress from grade to grade. In a combined grade 3/4 class, all of the students would spend time reading to improve their comprehension. The grade 3 students would be learning to restate important ideas from a text, while the grade 4 students would be learning to make an outline of a section of reading. The same students might then do a writing assignment. The grade 3s would be expected to use joining words to combine simple sentences, while the grade 4s would be required to use sentences of different lengths and complexity.

The teacher may have the whole class participate in a common activity, followed by small group or individual work on grade-specific curriculum expectations. For example, in a grade 1/2 combined grade class, when teaching the life systems strand of science, the teacher might start by showing a video about a specific animal. The grade 1 students would do a follow-up activity to identify the characteristics and needs of living things, while the grade 2 students would focus on growth and change in animals.

Students are not always learning new information or concepts—they also need to review, consolidate and refine their learning and build on previous learning to do a more complex task. In a grade 5/6 combined grade math class, for example, the teacher might review the concept of place value with the whole class. Then the students would work on the grade-specific expectations. Grade 5 students would be practicing math problems with place values up to 100,000 and decimals to hundredths, while grade 6 students would work on problems with place values up to 1,000,000 and decimals to thousandths. Or if working on measurement, the whole class might work on an activity requiring them to estimate, measure and record perimeter and area of various items. The grade 6s would need to demonstrate a greater level of accuracy, based on the curriculum expectations, than the grade 5s.

Even in subjects, such as social studies and science, that have different topics to cover in different grades, the curriculum expectations in each grade are not just about the facts students are expected to learn. There are many common skills for students to learn, such as research, scientific inquiry, experimentation and problem solving. The teacher might present research skills to the whole class, then assign grade-specific research projects.

At other times, the teacher will present two different lessons to the students, based on the different curriculum for the two grades. While working with one grade level of students, the teacher will have the other students do individual or group projects or work in learning centres in the classroom.

Studies show that students in combined grade classes learn as well as other students

You may be concerned about how well your child will learn in a combined grade class. Years of research show that students in combined grades do just as well academically as students in single-grade classes. In fact, some students actually do better in language and reading.

You may also wonder about the emotional impact on your child—will your child receive the same amount of individual attention from the teacher in a combined grade as in a single-grade class. It's important to understand that the number of students in the class, not the grade structure, determines the amount of time the teacher has to spend with each individual student.

Students in combined classes often do better emotionally and socially. Combined grade classes have been found to foster greater independence, better social skills and increased motivation to learn.

In our experience, parents may be concerned when their child is first placed in a combined grade class, but once they become familiar with the concept, they feel more comfortable, and they're pleased with their child's progress and school experience as the year progresses.

Help your child succeed in a combined grade class

You're important to your child's success—in a combined grade, the same as a same-grade class. The more you know about your child's education, the more you will be able to help your child learn and succeed.

Here are some ways you can support your child's learning.

- Become familiar with the curriculum for your child's grade. You can find it on the Ministry of Education website at www.edu.gov.on.ca or in your school library.
- Read information from your child's teacher and school. Ask your child to tell you about schoolwork that is brought home. Talk with your child about her school experience.
- Communicate with your child's teacher about his individual learning needs. If you have questions, talk to the teacher about the strategies that are being used to cover the combined grade curriculum.
- Connect with the school. Attend parent information nights and other school events. Volunteer at the school if you have the time. Attend a school council meeting.

Get more information

- Talk to your child's teacher or principal.
- Visit the Ministry of Education website at www.edu.gov.on.ca.
- Call the Curriculum and Instruction department of Peel District School Board, 905-890-1010 or 1-800-668-1146.
- Visit the Peel board website at www.peelschools.org.