



## Composites - Stages not Ages

Dear families and friends,

As the planning for a new school year begins, parents begin to wonder which class their child will be in the following year. This planning by the teachers at Kensington Public School, is very thorough and takes into account a broad range of information and considerations. Some parents express concern about their child being placed in a composite class. As I do each year I thought it may be helpful to share with you some information about these classes.

In primary schools, classes are organised in a wide variety of ways. Composite classes are one such type. Naturally, questions arise for parents who might find their children in such a class, for example, for the older group - will my child be held back? For the younger group - will my child be able to keep up?

Classes that are made up of children of different year levels have traditionally been called composite classes. In recent times, these classes have also been labelled multi aged or stage classes. There are two reasons why these classes are formed:

- Administrative - this is where there is an uneven enrolment in school years and classes need to be formed across a number of school years. This occurs in most primary schools.
- Educational - where classes are formed on the basis of educational rationale as they are seen to have educational benefit for the student.

Classes are formed following either of the above criteria or a combination of these criteria.

The key to understanding composites is realising that growth is determined in stages and not by ages. Composite classes teach children who are at compatible stages - not ages. *Even within the same grade class, children will be at different levels.* Teachers recognise this and cater for those who learn more quickly and give attention to those who require more time to learn the concepts and skills. This situation is also evident in classes of only one grade as there will always be a range of abilities and differences amongst the students in any one class.

Teachers at Kensington Public School are knowledgeable and skilful in teaching programs in single grade and composite classes. There is a myth that older students are held back in composite classes. This is not the case. *Teaching programs in all classes are structured for the different groups of students according to their level of development.* Sometimes these activities will be the same, other times they will be different.

Composite classes can provide significant benefits to both the younger and older students in the class. The Department of Education has published overseas research that shows children in composite classes do no better or worse academically than their peers in a straight grade class, but that, socially, their development is enhanced. They are more confident, can operate better as part of a group, are more assertive, become more independent learners and better problem-solvers. They also make friends outside of their standard age-groups.

I hope that this has provided you answers to questions that you may have been considering as we approach the end of the school year.

Warm regards,

Ms Louise Stone  
Principal