

**Elementary News**  
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**(This appeared in the January school newsletter.)**

**MULTIAGE CLASSROOMS:**

The other item I would like to alert you to this month is about multiage classrooms. This concept is something the staff and school board have been studying for a few months now. We are considering moving to this concept next year in Corning. I have been in contact with principals at districts who have had multiage classrooms for many years now, and am in the process of setting up visits for our teachers to go see them in action. We have been reading about several benefits, and will be sharing more of these with you as time goes along. I want to start giving parents information as you need to be aware of what we are looking at and why. It would be a big change to the way we do business at the elementary, but so far the information we see shows us it is worth looking at.

First of all, you need to know what we are talking about. Multiage classrooms include groups of students that have an age span greater than one year. There are many ways in which schools set up multiage classrooms, but our plan would be a classroom with students in two grade levels. For example, instead of having first grade classroom and a second grade classroom, we would combine students into two mixed 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> combination “multiage” classrooms.

Students would be with the same teacher for two years. The older students would move on to another teacher at the end of the year, and the younger students would then step up and become the older ones in the classroom as another younger

group would then come into the classroom the next year to take their place.

One advantage to this would be that half the students already know the expectations of the teacher at the beginning of the year. Less time is spent teaching classroom routines as the younger students learn from the older students. The teacher knows exactly where the older students left off the previous year, so less time is spent reviewing concepts than in the traditional approach that we do now.

Multiage classrooms develop into “family”, with emphasis on caring, cooperation, and collaboration. Children are learners and teachers, the older and more advanced students guide and provide models for younger, less advanced learners. Teachers who have taught multiage share that the older students really step up and feel a responsibility to their younger classmates. This is how the family feeling develops. They report having less behavior problems than in their traditional classroom experiences.

A multiage classroom offers many opportunities for students to develop skills intellectually, socially and emotionally. Students work in a collaborative environment, paralleling workplace. A multiage classroom offers all students a chance to assume leadership roles in areas in which they excel, regardless of age.

The younger children become the older children the following year. Some of these students would never have the opportunity to assume a leadership role in a single-age classroom, but now they can become the leaders as the older students.

This gives you some knowledge as to what we are looking into. More

information will be coming, so be sure to keep watch. I also invite you to do your own research and read articles. There are some good websites out there. I have talked with more and more principals who had utilized multiage in their districts, had gone away from it for one reason or another, but are now starting to go back to it as they found it to be successful for their students. As always, I invite you to call me with any questions or concerns. I'd be more than happy to discuss the multiage approach with you if you are interested.