



## Policy on Class Structures at Camdenville Public School

### Rational

There needs to be a clear and consistent policy in the formation and allocation of classes at Camdenville Public School. This is to ensure students and teachers are treated equitably and according to their needs within the organizational of the school as defined by DEC policy and guidelines.

### Forming classes

The school structure and the formation of classes at Camdenville PS must meet Department of Education and Communities policy and guidelines. The Principal in consultation with teaching staff designs a school structure that best meets the needs of students. Class structures are proposals based on the projected numbers for the following year.

This process begins in Term 4 and involves a great deal of analysis and discussion. Generally final structures cannot be decided until the total school enrolments are known the following year. A final decision on numbers is usually made a week into the new term.

The main factors taken into consideration are:

1. DEC guidelines, policies and current educational research:
  - Projected numbers related to a staffing formula
  - Various DEC policies designed to address equity issues for particular student groups
  - Current research about the organisational structures and management options that best cater for particular learning needs
2. The students: their educational, social and emotional needs and background
3. Organisational alternatives and decisions- class structures are formed in the best interest of ALL students and the school. The principal has the delegated authority and responsibility to determine the final make up of classes.

### 1. DEC policy, guidelines and educational research

#### DEC guidelines:

Schools are staffed according to the total number of students. There is no allowance made for the number of students in a particular year. The total number of enrolments is determined by the class structures that must be adhered to according to the department of Education Class Size Reduction Program. Currently classes are formed as follows:

- 20 students in kindergarten classes
- 22 students in Year 1 classes
- 24 students in year 2 classes
- 30 students in Years 3-6

Class numbers are averaged out across the state so classes **can exceed** the recommended number.

#### DEC Policy and current educational research

The DEC has policies in relation to particular student groups, (e.g. English as a Second Language, Special Needs, Gifted and Talented.) The purpose of identification is always to better cater for particular learning needs of students, NOT to label students. DEC policies are based on best practice and current research. In forming classes these policies must be taken into consideration along with equity issues such as:

- available staff
- resources and space

- the balance of linguistic, gender and cultural diversity

## 2. The students

In Term 4 the Principal begins the consultation process with teachers. The educational, social and emotional needs and background learning needs of individual students and particular student groups e.g. Special needs, Gifted and Talented, English Second Language, Language Support etc. are taken into consideration.

### Educational Needs

- Academic performance, particularly in Reading as this subject underpins all other subject areas
- Strengths, abilities and areas of need in different subject areas
- Readiness, interests and learning preferences

### Considerations relating to students' social and emotional needs

- Ability to work independently and cooperatively
- Interpersonal and intrapersonal characteristics
- General observations from teachers about student groupings
- Student leadership
- Friendship groups \*
- Whether a teacher and student have been together before

### Parent requests

Parental requests and any special considerations are to be made by Week 7 of Term 4. Parents need to direct their requests to the school principal in writing. Request can be emailed or delivered to the front office.

**Please note:** All requests will be given due consideration but there is no guarantee that the school will be able to accommodate parental or student requests.

## 3. Organisational alternatives and decisions

There are many different models of organizing classes and managing student instruction. At Camdenville Public school classes will be formed as follows:

- Students will be allocated to a class with one teacher for the year
- Most classes will contain a mix of students of different abilities, interests, learning preferences and needs
- Students who will benefit from being placed as a small group or 'cluster' (4-6 students) will be placed in a mixed ability classroom so they have a mini cohort.
- Clusters will consist of children with 'like learning' needs e.g. reading level
- The school will review and evaluate their processes throughout the year.
- Class structures are formed in the best interests of ALL students and the school. The principal has the delegated authority and responsibility to determine the final make up of classes.

*\* Where appropriate the placement with a friend will be given consideration as long as the relationship is not a distraction from the focus on the curriculum. Where teachers feel such a placement is not in the best interests of the student's learning, placement will be made in separate classes.*

## Class Structures- FAQ and Answers

### **Isn't it better if children are in a class of the same age and year group?**

Classes are made up of children of the same age or year group are part of our school system today simply because they reflect how educational administrators originally set up schools, not because they were found to reflect good educational practice. This model of schooling was intended to prepare workers for the factory societies of the 1850s.

### **What is a multiage or composite class?**

A composite class is where children from different year groups or stages are placed together in one class. Families are composite with adults and children of different ages and stages. How many of your adult friends are the same age as you?

### **My child is in a composite class. How can a teacher teach two years at once?**

The curriculum in NSW is organised as a learning continuum from Kinder to Year 12. Students can be anywhere along this continuum. This continuum is broken into stages, which usually correlates to two years of learning. Students are expected to achieve particular goals or outcomes by the end of each stage.

The following examples show the expected outcomes for Reading in Stage 2 and 3.

- Stage 2 Reading: Reads independently a *wide* range of texts on increasingly *challenging topics* and *justifies own interpretation of ideas, information and events*.
- Stage 3 Reading: Reads independently an *extensive* range of texts with *increasing content demands* and responds to *themes and issues*.

You will note the expectation for Stage 3 is more challenging and complex. It is quite possible for students to be studying the same text with a completely different set of expectations. It is not the age of the child that determines what students are ready to learn next. If that were the case every child would learn to walk, talk or read at the same age. Students are at many stages of readiness in any classroom, regardless of whether the class is a straight class or a composite class. Teachers cater for differences in readiness by grouping children according to purpose and setting curriculum goals appropriate to the needs of the students.

### **Why group?**

It all depends on purpose. Grouping can be based on:

- Readiness
- Interests or
- Different ways to learn, such as collaborative groups, independent study, peer tutors, or online learning.

We now have a curriculum that is developmental, stretching from Kinder to Year 12 in all Key Learning Areas (subjects). Students can be anywhere along this continuum so grouping students according to subject, or achievement readiness makes a lot of sense.

Groups can be formed full time or part time. Groups can be formed within classes, across classes or can operate as pull out groups. Grouping in Maths and Reading is formed on the basis of readiness so that students are learning content that is 'new'. That is, the content is just difficult enough so students are challenged but not so hard they want to give up.

Research tells us that grouping in Maths and Reading is highly effective in terms of student learning and growth. Groupings can be formed within the class, within stages or across stages. Groupings can be full time or part time or just some of the time.

**Will the children in the composite class get the same opportunities as the children in the single stage class?**

Children in all classes will follow programs constructed to help them progress at their own level, regardless of whether or not they are in a composite class or single year or stage class. In addition the school will make every effort to involve children in any one year group in activities, which bring them all together. However it is important that the natural identity of each class is maintained and the school will ensure this happens.

**My child has been put in a composite class with students from a stage or year below him/her. Is he/she being kept back?**

No this is certainly not the case. You can be confident that classes have been constructed to make best use of available staff, resources and space. Children will progress through learning experiences appropriate to their developmental level.

**My child's friends are in another class. What should I do?**

You should be assured that your child's teacher will be sensitive to the needs of children in his/her class and will be encouraging the class to develop working relationships with each other. It is important that children learn to adapt and not be fearful of change. Children usually make friends very quickly and can cope far better than adults imagine. Children will spend time in the playground mixing with their friends and there will be many opportunities for your child to continue to be involved with his/her whole year group including some curricular activities and social activities such as playtimes.

**Can I refuse to have my child in a composite class?**

No. The management of the school is the responsibility of the principal. Class structures are formed with a great deal of consideration. We understand parents only want what they believe is best for their child, as do we. Parents will be able to make any requests for special consideration in Term 4. However there is no guarantee that we will be able to accommodate special requests.

**When will my child know which class they are in?**

Until we know exactly how many students have returned to school we are unable to identify which class students will definitely be in until the end of the first week. On the first school day students will be organized into new classes with the understanding changes may happen. In very exceptional circumstances, classes can sometimes be restructured at any point during the year.

**How can I help my child adjust to their new class?**

The teachers and school executive consider each child's academic, social and emotional needs when forming class placements. While friendship groups are considered in forming classes, friendship groups are not the basis for constructing classes. This is an opportunity to put our school vision and value statements into action. We need to help children know that they can:

- learn to make new friends
- learn to work with people other than their friends
- learn new routines
- learn that they can adapt and change
- learn to explore the world with courage.

Some children adjust well to change. Others find it harder. Your child will look to you for guidance. Be positive and reassure them that adjusting to change takes time. Let them voice their concerns but try not to step in to solve the problem for them. It takes a lot of time and thought to put new classes together. Moving your child to a different class might seem an

easy solution but it is not always possible. It is important that your child's year begins on a positive note and those we all work together to build strong and supportive partnerships.

**If you need to discuss any concerns or issues in regard to your child you should:**

1. Firstly have a chat with the class teacher then-
2. If you need to discuss the matter further please make an appointment with the appropriate Year supervisor, the Assistant Principals- Hollie van Ravenstein, Joel Shreltschenko or Alysia Rickman.
3. If the matter remains unresolved or requires further attention please ring the school office on 9557 5505 and make an appointment to talk with Sue Smith, the school principal.