



ICOMBO SCHOOL PLACEMENT OF MULTIPLES STUDY

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SUMMARY:

School placement of multiples was studied by ICOMBO in 2019, in answer to multiple requests from our members for assistance on this topic. Whether to put multiples together or to separate them in school is a thorny issue – one which many families don't have enough information or enough support when dealing with school administrators. We hope these study results will help parents and school personnel to be better informed when making decisions about school placement of multiples.

Abbreviations:

DZ – Dizygotic (“Fraternal”)

HOM - Higher-order multiples (Triplets, quadruplets, quintuplets, etc)

ICOMBO – International Council of Multiple Birth Organisations

MBO – Multiple birth organization

MOA – Multiples of America, formerly NOMOTC (USA)

MZ – Monozygotic (“Identical”)

NOMOTC – National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs (USA)

TAMBA – Twins and Multiple Births Association (UK) – now known as Twins Trust

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

As parents of multiples, many of us experience schools telling us where our children should be placed in school classrooms, instead of giving the parents input into the decision. When I was the Research Librarian for Multiples of America (formerly known as NOMOTC), before the advent of Facebook and other social media, the number one question I would get from families with multiples was about school placement of their multiples. The great majority of them were told by their schools that they had to separate their multiples, so they were looking for information that would help them to better prepare for meeting with school officials about their multiples' classroom placement.

Placement of multiples in school is a common issue universally. This has escalated in the past thirty years with the rapid increase in the births of multiple birth children – due to improved maternal health, fertility treatments and due to women delaying childbearing into their thirties (which increases the risk of a multiple birth). Multiples in school classrooms are now the norm instead of a rarity.

Many schools have policies, some written and some unwritten, about always separating siblings in different classrooms. Many reasons are given, such as “too hard for the teacher to tell the twins apart,” but often these reasons aren't backed up by studies or research.

For this reason, NOMOTC, now called Multiples of America, compiled information on the “Education of Multiple Birth Children” in two surveys. The first study was done in 1988-89 and the second was done in 1998-99. MOA is also now in the process of updating their pamphlet, “Placement of Multiple Birth Children in School – A Guide for Parents and Educators,” which includes information from many research studies about school placement of multiples.

Twins Trust (formerly TAMBA), the MBO in the United Kingdom, has also studied the issue of placement of multiples in school. An Analysis by Dr. Erika Fraser – MULTIPLE CHOICE, “The Educational Needs and Experiences of Multiple Birth Children” was released in 2009.

Many other researchers have studied this subject:

- “Educating Multiples in the Classroom: Together or Separate?” by Megan T. Alexander, Early Childhood Education Journal, 2012.
- Pat Preedy in the U.K. and David Hay, from Australia have done research on this subject, both individually and jointly
- “Twins in School – Should They Be Kept Together?” by Karen Thorpe, Queensland University of Technology, a study with Twins Research Australia
- “What Effect Does Classroom Separation Have on Twins, Behavior, Progress at School, and Reading Abilities” by Coks Feenstra, child psychologist from the Netherlands
- “Effects of Twin Separation in Primary School,” by M. van Leeuwen, et. al., from the Netherlands

Although there are bits and pieces of work that have been done in different countries there has been no large-scale international study to determine common issues. Hence, ICOMBO set about this piece of work to then determine if changes and or new resources are needed.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this international survey, conducted by the International Council of Multiple Birth Organisations (ICOMBO), was to examine trends in placement of multiple birth children in public and private schools; to ascertain if parents had problems or issues in obtaining their wishes with regard to their multiples’ placement in school; to obtain what tools or documents assisted parents with problem resolution; and to see what differences there are around the world.

METHOD:

A 24-question survey was distributed via Multiple of America’s Survey Monkey account. The survey was written in three languages – English, French and Spanish. Some questions had only one answer while others allowed multiple responses. Questions allowing multiple responses will be marked with an asterisks (*). The last three questions were for written responses, giving the respondents the opportunity to elaborate on their answers, share their own school placement issues and share any other school issues they had faced with their multiples. The survey was opened in October 2018 and closed in June 2019.

STUDY SUBJECTS:

Parents of multiple birth children whose children were three years of age or older and whose children had attended school for at least one year were asked to complete this survey on School Placement of Multiples.

A total of 2,842 parents of multiples completed this survey. The respondents were from over 18 countries:

COUNTRY	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
United States	33.5
Australia	21.3
France	19.5
Spain	9.3
Finland	4.8
Canada	4.6
New Zealand	3.3
Norway	1.0
Belgium	0.70
United Kingdom	0.69
Germany	0.39
Japan	0.25
Denmark	0.14
Switzerland	0.14
Chile	0.07
Czech Republic	0.04
Sweden	0.04
Other	0.32

Table 1. Country of residence for survey participants

The survey was written and distributed in three languages. 69.9% of respondents completed the English version, 20.9% completed the French version and 9.3% completed the Spanish version. A full breakdown showing language of survey by country of residence is shown in Appendix I.

Types of twins	%
Dizygotic boy/girl twins	26.3
Dizygotic female twins	17.2
Dizygotic male twins	16.9
Monozygotic female twins	15.4
Monozygotic male twins	12.7
Higher order multiples	8.6
> 1 set of multiples	1.8
Unknown zygosity	1.1

Table 2. The types of twins and multiples included in the survey

Age	%
3 to 5 years old	27.4
6 to 8 years old	32.8
9 to 11 years old	18.5
12 to 14 years old	9.0
15 to 18 years old	5.3
More than 18 years old	7.1%

Table 3. Ages of multiples who were included in the survey

78.6% of children who were included in the survey were 11 years of age or younger.

66.2% of respondents are, or have been, members of a local multiple birth organization. For the surveys completed in Spanish, 87.9% of respondents were members of a MBO, 69.0% of those completing the English survey, and 48.6% of respondents who completed the French survey.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

Since this was an international study, it was difficult to write survey questions that would be inclusive of every country’s type of school system. We attempted to make this survey as inclusive as possible and apologize for the areas in which this wasn’t possible. Also, since we translated our final English survey version into French and Spanish, some of the nomenclature/words were hard to match to another language. Especially in the Spanish version, several of the original questions were changed or not written in at all, so there are several questions in which the Spanish responses are not included.

Since about two-thirds of our respondents were members of a MBO, most medical/scientific journals do not consider our results statistically significant since a large part of the parent respondents are dues-paying members of a MBO.

As the final interpretation of this survey was being done, the leadership of MOA changed, and I was no longer able have full access to the survey results on MOA’s Survey Monkey account. I would recommend in the future that ICOMBO get its own Survey Monkey account, or something similar, when we do our next international study.

RESULTS:

Type of school the multiples attend	%
Public school	71.8
Private school	16.8
Parochial/faith-based school	10.1
Other type of school	1.3

School classroom placement:

The parents were asked what their multiples’ school placement was for each year of school from ages 3 to >14 (Note that not all the multiples started school at 3 or even at 4 years old and some multiples had not reached the older ages).

The parent respondents were asked to choose from the following for their children’s school placement for each year they attended school:

- A. Together by choice
- B. Placed together by the school
- C. Separated by choice
- D. Separated by the school
- E. Attended different schools by choice
- F. Made to attend different schools
- G. Combinations: In some families the multiples spent part of the year in one school situation, and then changed to another school placement later in the year.
- H. Not applicable

Table 4. Type of classroom placement by age, %

<u>Age of Multiples</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>Total Number</u>
3 Years	54.6	13.0	6.8	6.7	0.1	0.1	2.0	16.7	2445
4 Years	52.8	8.1	12.3	9.3	0.1	0.1	1.0	16.3	2376
5 Years	49.6	10.9	22.0	10.6	0.1	0.2	2.1	4.6	2270
6 Years	39.9	8.1	34.6	13.1	0.1	0.1	1.6	2.4	2031
7 Years	33.4	8.3	33.7	12.5	0.3	0.1	0.2	10.1	1762
8 Years	29.6	7.4	33.6	13.1	0.3	0.2	1.5	14.2	1571
9 Years	24.3	6.8	32.3	13.2	0.1	0.2	1.1	21.8	1349
10 Years	21.1	5.8	32.0	11.8	0.8	0.3	1.1	27.1	1179
11 Years	18.7	4.5	29.3	10.7	1.2	0.2	1.1	34.3	1077
12 Years	14.5	4.7	25.5	11.1	1.6	0.2	0.9	41.5	976
13 Years	8.6	3.5	23.5	12.8	1.7	0.2	1.2	48.5	891
14 Years	7.0	3.0	21.8	10.7	2.4	0.2	1.6	53.2	825
>14 Years	4.9	2.7	19.2	9.6	3.3	0.4	1.5	71.4	780

Parent requests and how they were handled:

Almost one-fourth of the families (23.6%), who requested school placement for their multiples were denied their desired school placement at least one of the years their multiples attended school.

School policy	%
No fixed or set policy	84.6
Unwritten policies	11.5
Written policies	1.8
Doesn't apply or don't know	7.1

Table 5. School policies on placement of multiples in school

Classroom placement – together	%
Request multiples to be placed together each year	50.2
Request multiples to be placed together some years and apart in other years	15.4

Table 6. Parents who wanted their multiples placed together in the classroom

Reason	%
“My multiples won’t be happy if they are apart”	41.6
“I thought it would be easier communicating with one teacher”	35.0
“I thought it would be easier to keep track of school assignments”	34.5
“Teacher in that classroom is better than the other teachers”	9.5
Other	27.8
Not applicable	21.3

Table 7. Reasons given for wanting multiples placed together

Classroom placement – apart	%
Request multiples to be separated into different classrooms each year	38.9
Request multiples to be placed together some years and apart in other years	8.8

Table 8. Parents who wanted their multiples separated in the classroom

Reason	%
“I thought it would help their individuality”	39.3
One multiple was too dominant	18.5
The multiples were too competitive	8.8
One multiple had special needs – needed specialised instruction	4.7
The multiples fight all the time or generally don’t get along	4.6
Other	14.3
Not applicable	39.9

Table 9. Reasons given for wanting multiples separated in the classroom

Were the parents asked about placement	%
School did not ask the parents	46.5
School did ask the parents	43.0
Some years the parents were asked, others not	10.5

Table 10. Did school ask parents where they wanted their multiples placed?

Parents made request to:	%
Principal or head teacher	52.2
Teacher	43.8
School superintendent/Local education authority	16.2
Administrative staff	13.9
Head of year group	3.6
School board	0.8
Archdiocese/head of faith based school	0.3
Other	4.1
Not applicable	7.9

Table 11. Parental request for school placement

Were the parents asked about placement	%
In person	71.2
Letter	13.6
Telephone	5.0
Other	0.3
Not applicable	11.0

Table 12. How the request for school placement was made

Who offered input	%
Mother	79.3
Father	59.4
Head or main teacher	46.3
One or more of the multiples	29.7
School principal	29.3
Other teachers	9.7
Therapist	5.3
Other school administrator	4.6
Other	4.8
Not applicable	8.2

Table 13. Who offered input regarding classroom placement of the multiples

Level of difficulty	%
Achieved desired placement after 1 contact with school	69.5
Achieved desired placement after 2 contacts with school	7.9
Achieved desired placement after 3 contacts with school	2.6
Achieved desired placement after >3 contacts with school	1.4
Constant contact/higher administrative level to get desired placement	1.4
Not able to achieve the desired results even with multiple contacts	4.6
Other	3.6
Not applicable	9.5

Table 14. Level of difficulty parents faced when requesting school placement for their multiples

Reason	%
Resistance from school administration	11.8
“school policy”	10.3
Resistance from teachers	7.7
Choice of teachers at the children’s grade level wasn’t optimum	1.3
Curriculum issues	1.2
Resistance from the multiples	0.7
Other	8.3
Not applicable	71.6

Table 15. Reasons why the family’s desired school placement was difficult to achieve

Reason	%
Laws in place	13.0
No laws in place	3.5
No laws in place, there are decrees or resolutions	3.0
Not sure	60.5

Table 16. Laws in the family’s state, province or country to protect a parent’s right to decide on their multiples’ classroom placement

Information to support parents in their decision making:

Just over half (53.4%) of the parents were aware of publications, presentations (research) and books to assist them with classroom placement of their multiples.

Information was received from a MBO	%
No	41.0
Yes	32.5
Not applicable	26.4

Table 17. For parents who were in a MBO, did they get any information regarding school placement from their MBO?

Information was received from a MBO	%
No outside resources used	49.8
Information from other parents	11.5
Information from the internet	11.5
Booklet from a MBO	4.9
MBO facebook group	3.2
Letter from an educator	1.5
Book from a store or an online purchase	1.2
MBO magazine	1.1
Book from a MBO	0.8
Book from MBO’s library	0.3
No outside resources used	9.0
Other	26.8
Not applicable	

Table 18. Resources and references that were used when requesting desired school placement of their multiples

Other information:

Just over a fourth of the parents (26.1%) shared stories about their placement issues or how they went about getting the placement they wanted for their multiples.

When asked if they had other school issues they faced with their multiples, 37.0% of the respondents shared their experiences.

26.2% of the parents wrote other comments they had regarding this School Placement of Multiples Survey. Examples of some of the many comments (2539 comments in all) can be found in **Appendix II**. They are categorized by subject topic. There were actually more comments about “other school issues” than about school placement issues!

CONCLUSIONS:

School placement for multiple birth children is a huge issue all around the world. This was demonstrated by the huge response we got on this survey. It was completed by 2,842 parents of multiples from over 18 countries.

The key findings were:

Lack of policies on school placement:

A majority of the parents said that their school didn't have a fixed or set policy on placement of multiples, yet it was often difficult to achieve the school placement they wanted.

Parents' wishes are not always accommodated:

Almost one-fourth of the families who requested school placement for their multiples were denied their desired school placement at least one of the years that their multiples attended school.

There is a common desire to place multiples together:

Just over half of parents asked for their multiples to be placed together in the classroom at some point in their school years. The three most common reasons were: Multiples wouldn't be happy apart; easier to communicate with one teacher and easier to keep track of school assignments.

Some parents recognized a need to separate their multiples at school:

Just over 40% of parents asked for their multiples to be separated in the classroom at some point in their school years. The three most common reasons were: To help their individuality; one multiple was too dominant; and multiples are too competitive.

The desire of parents to have their multiples together or apart changes with age:

From our study results, it is clear that at younger ages, especially three to six years old, the parents were more likely to request that the multiples be placed together in the classroom. However, when the multiples were seven years and older, the parents were more likely to ask that they be separated at school and this percentage became larger as the children advanced in school.

Gaps in knowledge and resources:

The four most common resources/references used by parents to try to get the desired school placement were: Information from other parents; information from the Internet; information from a MBO booklet and discussions on a MBO Facebook group. However, over half of the parents weren't aware that there were publications, research and books to assist them.

Only a third of the MBO members said that they got information from their MBO that helped them regarding school placement.

Many districts/states/provinces have laws that protect the parents' right to choose school placement for their multiples, but many are unaware these laws exist.

In conclusion:

The clear message for educators and school policy makers is that they should be making placement decisions for multiple birth children based on the individual needs of each child. No

two sets of multiples are exactly the same so fixed school policies don't take each child into consideration.

Schools should respect the close bond that the multiples have while also encouraging individual abilities and strengths.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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Many thanks to Marion Gevers, ICOMBO Treasurer from Australia, for translating the survey into French, and to Lucila Menendez, ICOMBO Board member and President of the Madrid Association for Multiple Births (AMAPAMU), for translating the survey into Spanish.

Finally, many thanks to Marion Gevers and Carolyn Lister, ICOMBO Board member from New Zealand, for their assistance in proofreading and finalizing this document.

APPENDIX I.

Which language (English, French or Spanish) was used to complete the survey respondents, according to where the respondent lived

Country	%
United States	47.9
Australia	30.5
Finland	6.8
Canada	5.9
New Zealand	4.8
Norway	1.4
United Kingdom	0.9
Germany	0.5
Japan	0.4
Denmark	0.2
Spain	0.2
Switzerland	0.1
Belgium	0.05
Czech Republic	0.05
France	0.05
Sweden	0.05
Other	0.025

Table 1. Residents of these countries completed the survey in English

Country	%
France	93.1
Belgium	3.2
Canada	2.2
Switzerland	0.34
Germany	0.17
United Kingdom	0.17
United States	0.17
Other	0.67

Table 2. Residents of these countries completed the survey in French

Country	%
Spain	98.9
Chile	0.8
United States	0.4

Table 3. Residents of these countries completed the survey in Spanish

APPENDIX II

WRITTEN RESPONSES

Here are some examples of the written responses, listed according to subject. Also included are some comments related to specific countries.

A. Issues about school placement of multiples:

- “I feel as though there is a bias to separate twins that is based on opinion rather than research. The twin relationship is unique, and I think treating twins as ‘singletons’ does not help.”
- “We moved countries at age 5 and age 10 so we felt strongly that after such a big move that they should stay together and have at least one friendly face in the class. The teachers agreed with us.”
- “We asked to be kept together, and principal refused stating teachers thought they’d do better apart, promised a review after a month which never happened. Was a disaster. Twins’ relationship seriously adversely affected by separation. Had to move schools to get them back together. Both thriving now.”
- “Being a solo mom, my main argument for them being in the same class is that I can’t split to attend meetings at school for each child. It is out of the question that I would have to choose which meeting or outing or activity to attend.”
- “As a mother of triplets, I ask myself a lot of questions about the schooling of my girls. I’m looking for information from other parents, not theories or statistics.”
- “Administration has control of the teachers. They do not listen to parents, the children, the pediatrician or research. It makes no sense.”
- “Educators and others without twins do not understand how hard it can be to ‘rip’ them apart when they have been together or nearby 24/7 since birth.”
- “We brought up the subject with the teachers involved and asked what their thoughts were before we said what our preferences are. They said that there was no need to separate unless we wanted them to be. We asked pros and cons for our school’s environment. Also the twins didn’t want to be separated. It may change in following years. Each year will be decided one at a time.”
- “My daughters actually had an interview with the principal in year 7 giving him their reasons for staying together as it was school policy to separate. He did place them together and they are the only multiples to do so.”
- “I wanted to keep my boys together and have fought every year to have them together but have been denied every year.”
- “We are a military family. Our twins have been to 3 different schools in 3 years. It was important to us that the one thing the kids had constant in the midst of so much change was that they had each other.”
- “Our goal is the best teacher(s) possible vs. a definite preference for together or separate.”
- “My identical twins have autism and ‘feed off’ each other, so separating them was better for all involved.”
- “I was told by parents that our school principal made you split up multiples. My husband and I had a meeting with her before K5 and discussed this. We felt she had good points and it all worked out and was better for our kids to be split up. We see the benefits now.”
- “No problems at all. We discussed our wishes with our school and that was respected.”
- “Separating was good for one twin (the dominant one) and bad for the other. I’m not sure I did the right thing.”
- “The separation of my twins is affecting the whole family. One of the twins has started peeing in her clothes and she is very aggressive and having tantrums. She is suffering from the separation.”
- “School has asked me and I always said I’d keep them together until/if it affected their learning.”
- “School was fantastic. In prep and grade 1 they were in neighboring classes and school left decision to us. By grade 2 my boys were so independent they were fine to be in classes at opposite ends of the school. They can share different school stories at the dinner table now without the other brother butting in.”

- “My only issue was that I had to continually have the conversation every year. My daughter is significantly disabled but my son is not. Her personality and needs make her very visible in any classroom. I wanted him to shine on his own.”
- “It was not a problem since I felt being separated was best for my sons.”
- “When in kindergarten my triplets were separated by choice, the boys in 1 class, girl in the other. In high school my daughter chose a Catholic school and the boys chose a public school.”
- “Our school only has one class per year. So multiples have to be in the same class. They do lots of group activities etc and they are separated as much as possible.”
- “My boys’ year 4 teacher suggested something for year 5. One had started hiding in the other’s shadow. The hiding one didn’t want to shoot up but his brother did. We tried separating them and the hiding one blossomed and stepped up. He hasn’t looked back, although it was tricky that first year with vastly different styled teacher, but it was worth it. They’ve both achieved well.”
- “The separation of my twins in school created a rift between them because of inequalities in opportunities, friends, experiences, etc. It destroyed their once-strong twin bond.”
- “My twins have different special needs and each required different types of instruction.”
- “The decision to separate my girls was based on very different academic abilities. One is average and one is gifted and talented. The one with age-appropriate skill compared herself to her sister leading to low self-esteem. Separation has been an excellent thing for them both.”
- “Our local public school had a policy of splitting twins, which I felt would be unnecessary and psychologically difficult in kindergarten. For that, and other reasons, we placed them in a public charter school that listened to us and the parents and kept them in the same class.”
- “In retrospect, I might have separated them before 3rd grade. I kept them together through 2nd grade as that is what the research suggested (Ohio University).”
- “It was our own decision to put them in separate classrooms, but it turned out to be a bad decision. Our twins were so sad and missed each other every day. We had to have a psychologist come and meet with the principal. Now our twins are together, they are happy and love school.”
- “Our pediatrician recommended they be placed together the first few years due to high anxiety in my son. Once he was comfortable, we started separating because they were both so different and we didn’t want them to be compared.”
- “Public school had an issue with keeping my twins together the first year of middle school when they were 12. I insisted because it was their first year in a large public school and they wouldn’t know anyone else – they went to a small Montessori school from ages 4-11. We did get the desired placement together the first year, and then after that they were fine with being in different classes.

B. Methods used to achieve the desired school placement:

- “I researched current academic journal articles and hit the school with about 15 research papers showing multiples shouldn’t automatically be separated. Also schooled them on how being forced apart is detrimental to their mental and physical health.”
- “Chose a school with a record of listening to parents.”
- “I told the school that my twins’ psychologist had advised it would be better to keep them together.”
- “The Curtin University questionnaire was really helpful.”
- “Parents in our state got together and were able to get a law passed in 2007 that allowed parents the right to choose placement of their multiple birth children in school settings.”
- “I fostered a relationship with the President of the School Board and the Superintendent of our School District and name dropped when the school’s Principal tried to deny my requested placement.”
- “I looked up recent research from England that showed MZ twins particularly did better emotionally and academically when kept together in the early years. I showed the research to the teacher who agreed.”
- Curtin University questionnaire and studies from Cambridge were mentioned by several parents
- “Keep an open and respectful dialogue with the school. Document as much as possible!”

- “I had the preschool teacher write a note to the elementary school that my girls were able to get along in class and that she recommended them being together.”
- “I had to apply to the academic inspector and get support from medical specialists.”
- “A letter from their pediatrician recommending placement together was the most influential. However it only worked through Kindergarten.”
- “Both of my boys had an IEP (Individualized education plan) and one is autistic. We went to court with our district over the autistic twin’s placement.”
- “I located UK/Canadian research as very little in Australia. Used this to make my decision re: placement and liaised with schools/advocate for shared classes until my twins were ready to separate.”
- “After push back from the front office, I faxed a letter requesting our twins be placed together citing the Florida statute. Included a printout of the Florida statute with my fax.”
- “Start initiating the conversation earlier than at the end of the year. Put your wishes in writing to the principal and get the teacher to back you.”
- “Arranged a meeting with the school and prepared documents to support my position.”
- “I am a twin myself so was able to speak from first-hand experience and advocate for my twins.”
- “Checked with the state body that governs school policies, presented research we had based our position on, and tried to keep to facts, not emotion.”
- “Researched the Australian twin registry and my Uni. library.”
- “We pulled them out and chose a school that allowed us to keep them together.”
- “I asked my twins separately what they wanted and we have always fought for what they wanted. I used published research – printing off the articles as well as a supporting letter.”
- “I presented a study that I found online, the articles were by Coks Feenstra.”
- “I leaned on articles by Coks Feenstra and studies from the Universities of Cambridge and Amsterdam.”
- From a parent in Spain: “I presented studies that I found online, articles by Coks Feenstra, a court ruling of a case in Badajoz, and a report from the nursery school where they spent two years together without any problems.”
- “I used a publication by child psychologist, Coks Feenstra, titled, ‘What effect does classroom separation have on twins, behavior, progress at school, and reading abilities?’ and a publication from M. van Leeuwen, et. al. in Amsterdam titled, ‘Effects of twin separation in primary school.’”

C. MBOs and school placement of multiples –

- “I read so many different stories on the MBO FB page. It is definitely a dialogue that needs to keep going and educational institutions need to be aware of the topic and its implications.”
- “When my girls were starting preschool I shared information from NOMOTC (now MOA) with the preschool director as she was initially not wanting to put my girls in the same class. After reading the article and talking to me she decided they could be placed together.”
- “Local MBO was rather poor support. International association had better resources!”
- “MBO has a school-aged multiples at school evening workshop that presented useful information.”
- “Provided professional learning and research to educators from Multiples of America.”
- “AMAPAMU, our association in Spain, was very helpful when I needed help with school placement.”
- “The Twins and More Federation works a lot with the Scientific Committee on the issues of schooling of twins. But we have a hard time making ourselves heard by the government. We have proposed a Directive which has not yet been the subject of a decree.”
- “Thank you for doing a survey like this. Please send the results to the clubs. This is a hot topic over the years on our MBO Facebook page.”
- “My MBO members informed me our state has a parent’s right to choose law.”
- “I attended our local MBO convention where they offered a share shop and the topic was placement in the classroom.”

- “I have helped several members in my local club (SJMOM, in USA) by giving them a copy of the New Jersey legislation when they have run into opposition from their school district.”
- “Wrote letter to school principal regarding the reasons for wanting to keep them together (or separate) and attached a copy of the MBO booklet, Elementary School Placement; thereafter only a letter to the principal of the school that they were to attend was needed.”
- “I’m a dad so no access to information from support groups mostly for moms.”
- “I gave the director of the school a flyer from our association, Jumeaux (France).”
- “Our multiples club spearheaded the effort to get a placement law passed in my state.”
- “Our MBO was crucial in pushing for legislation in our state regarding parents’ right to choose.”
- “I am a member and volunteer with Multiple Births Canada and try to support other families with information about school placement decisions.”

D. School placement of multiples in specific countries –

Australia

- “We live in remote Queensland, Australia. Our school only has 36 kids in it, so no option to separate them into different Kindy or Prep classes.”
- “In Australia it is standard to keep multiples together starting school (it is rare to split them up).”
- “We sought help from a clinical psychologist in Melbourne who specializes in twin studies and she came to the school to advocate for us. She was invaluable.”

Belgium

- At age 8, we wanted to enroll our children in a language-immersion program in their school. It’s on a first-come, first-in principle, electronically. We had difficulty getting twins in, different codes needed. The order had to be amended by the Minister to recognize the right of twins to be enrolled simultaneously. We won but relations with the school deteriorated as a result.”

Canada

- “No problem at all in Ontario, Canada. Our school asked what we wanted and respected our choice.”
- “In Alberta, Canada our faith-based Catholic school system is publicly funded due to our Charter of Rights provincially. I am a member of TTMAC locally and MBC nationally.”

Finland

- “In Finland we fill out an application form for the school. I requested there that I wanted the twins to be in the same classroom. No other contact was needed.”
- “In Finland the school days are short so sharing the same timetable at first was important for all of us (so you don’t have to leave for school alone in the morning). The competition was something we thought a lot about but in the end decided that they will do it somehow anyway regardless of being in the same or different classes. The support for each other was the thing that mattered in the end for placing them in the same class.”
- “In Finland children start school at age 7. When the twins started school we lived in a town where there was a small school and only one class for each year. Then we moved to a larger town and we talked with the twins about would they want to be separated or in the same class? They wanted to be in the same class. We thought that maybe later we will encourage them to be separated.”

France

- “We accepted the separation the first year under certain conditions. They had to be together for recesses, and at meal and nap time. We had to repeat this request several times during the year.”

- “It’s a shame the questionnaire did not ask questions about rural schools. Right here there is no choice of different classes for twins since only one class per level.”
- “We had difficulty getting the twins placed together in kindergarten. We had to reference a report of the General Assembly, and brought in the nursery educator where they came from. Since then, they have always been in the same class. When they get older we will ask them what they want.”
- “No problem. In France, the school system is most often very benevolent about the reception of multiples.”
- “In the city of Le Havre, parents with multiples in public institutions can’t choose. The decision is one-sided. Most parents don’t know that there are publications to help.”
- “Another school in our hometown said it was the decision of the educational team. That’s why we opted for the private school to meet our girls’ needs.”
- “We have never encountered any problem in our public school in Paris.”
- “Our children were separated without our consent. It was a disaster and the children did not talk any more, thinking that their separation was a punishment. We fought for them to be put back together and then everything is back in order. The school jeopardized the family balance.”
- “We had a mediation following the categorical refusal of the director to leave our 3 years olds together. Mediation was in favor of the director. Now I have to find another school.”
- “We found a report of a lecture by Fabrice Bak about separation or not of twins at school, stating clearly that there was no bias in the document but it exposed the effects of each situation. Since then, we have not had any more fights with the faculty and every one of our decisions has been respected.”
- “School has many multiples. Every parent decides for his children. No problem.”
- “We had a lot of luck. The director, during the registration, told us he preferred separation of the twins but left the parents the final choice.”
- “What I regret is the lack of listening and trust regarding our knowledge as parents.”

Germany

- “The head of the school asked us how and why. We didn’t get advice or pressure. He said ‘You know your children best’. Our triplets were separated because they have different learning tempos and we didn’t want them to compare themselves.”
- “There is no such thing as ‘placement’ in public schools in Germany. So it was hard to answer some of the questions.”

Japan

- “In our case, at the age of 7 (the first grade of the elementary school in Japan), one of the twins had a highly experienced teacher, and the other had a teacher who was in the first year as a teacher and unbelievably immature and the class was in confusion. After that, we’ve changed schools to one that understood our problem and placed them in the same class.”
- “In Japan, parents are expected to participate in school events such as sports day, parent’s day and some school festivals. However, if our multiples are in different classrooms, it’s impossible to attend completely.”

New Zealand

- “Modern Learning Environments in NZ means that it is often hard to find a school that has two separate classrooms at a specific year level to be able to separate out twins. Also smaller schools have only one classroom option at a year level.”
- “Our national MBO in New Zealand keeps the content of our FB page so that it’s a safe space and has relevant topics.”
- “Too many New Zealand schools are going towards modern learning which means twins can’t be offered separation.”

- “In New Zealand we have large open-plan classrooms – 90 kids and 3 teachers. No longer an option to separate twins. No separate classrooms available.”

Norway

- “We lived in the USA for 1 year when they were 5 years old and we placed them in separate classrooms and liked it. In Norway, classes are grouped according to address, such that we wanted both twins to have their friends in the immediate neighborhood. They were both in shared and separate rooms in daycare in Norway and we thought both solutions were fine.”
- “Norway seems to listen to parents. The school recommended the twins be separated but our year had 4 sets of twins and the parents all chose to keep them together. We will see how it is for middle school. It will be their choice.”

Spain

- “Our daughters have been together since they were 3 years old and there has never been any problem.”
- “It is a struggle against the center and sometimes there is fear of reprisals against our children.”
- “The acting director would not make the decision to leave the children together, so we had to speak to the school board. We told them about the new law going into effect, and that the community of Madrid was a pioneer in letting parents decide whether to leave the children together or separate them. We provided this documentation.”
- “Although the law in my region says that parents can choose, most schools force them apart.”
- “I had no chance to choose. The school’s policy is to separate all multiples and respecting the parents’ opinion about it is ‘only a recommendation’.”
- “I managed to get them in the same class because I looked for a school with only one class per course. I had problems in other schools and that’s why I looked for one with only one line.”
- “Thanks to the regulations of the Community of Madrid, which requires parents are at least asked about schooling together or separately, we were able to school our daughters together.”

Switzerland

- “I have two boys and a daughter a year younger. The school held the boys back (local language learning issues) so it means all 3 were in the same year (2 classes for each year). I was not consulted about which boy my daughter should be in a class with. They chose the worst combination. They refused to allow the boys to be in a class together and she be in the parallel class as their policy is to split twins. We moved and consequently moved schools. At the recommendation of the teacher, they did as I suggested: boys together and her alone as it had been a nightmare for the previous class teacher with my daughter and 1 boy together.”
- “Switzerland has rules. They are inflexible. There’s no point challenging because then you’re singled out.”

United Kingdom

- “In the UK we were offered a place for one twin at one school and other twin at another – there was no consideration of their needs. In the end, we got them in one school but they had to be in different classes.”

United States

- “We are lucky that the state of Minnesota has a law in place allowing the parents to choose whether multiples are placed together or apart. However, even with this law we know many families who struggled to get schools to allow a choice.”
- “Initial resistance when enrolling in kindergarten (pre-school was no issue) due to unwritten ‘policy’ of separating multiples. Requested them to be placed together and principal approved. However issue arose when there was a new principal (twins in grade 5). Letter was ‘lost’ and only classes available didn’t have room for two children (suspect at best!). Didn’t

feel like fighting it so I let them be in different classrooms (even though Texas law would have backed me if I had wanted to raise a fuss).”

- “For 1st grade I requested they stay together. Teacher separated them without any discussion with us.”
- “Talked to the Principal at open house. He said he would look into it and get back to us. Left a voicemail that he was going to keep them separated based on a conversation with our kindergarten teacher. My husband called and discussed with him and had to tell him that our state (Minnesota) has a law that it’s the parents’ right to choose. Our principal then placed them in the same class.”
- “I am glad Texas has a law that gives the parent the right to choose what is best for their multiples.”
- “I found out North Carolina law is parents choose and I educated the principal and provided her with resources to help other parents of multiples decide the best placement for their children. Principal was supportive and started checking with me every year.”
- “I had to tell them I knew Virginia had a law that I get to decide and that they would have to prove that it would be detrimental.”
- “My state has a law that states parents decide placement (Massachusetts, USA). I requested placement together in Kindergarten but the school principal placed the twins in separate classrooms from her personal family bias. When my spouse told her about the MA law she did research and learned the law. She apologized and explained this was new information to her. The principal has honored our preferences from that time on.”
- “I live in the state of Virginia and we have a state law that requires schools to listen to parents of multiples if they want their children in the same class.”
- “I live in New Jersey in the USA and our state passed legislation years ago that says it is up to the parents how the multiples are placed.”
- “I have had to fight year after year with the principal of our school to get my boys in the same class even though there is a law in Tennessee. They won’t even look at the research and try to tell me my kids needs counseling if they are needing to be in the same class.”

E. Other school issues:

- “We got school reports that clearly showed the teacher had no idea about which child was which and reports with different grades but identical comments and even a grade for a subject that one of the boys hadn’t taken due to an injury.”
- “I met a lot of resistance when trying to keep my multiples back a year due to being well behind in their learning and behaviours.”
- “Both twins have since been diagnosed with formal learning disabilities, which was a result of their prematurity.”
- “The kindergarten teacher wanted to hold my son back because she was comparing him to his twin sister who was/is very social and a quick learner. I said ‘Hell no!’ He did just fine academically and graduated from university!”
- “Comparison between boys and girls (when in the same class) leads to disadvantages and worse grades for the boy.”
- “I have had trouble getting the school to challenge my gifted son. Also had problems getting them to help my other twin, since they only help when he is two grade levels below.”
- “The main problem has been that our son likes his sister and her friends, and other boys ended up bullying him because he refused to be mean to the girls.”
- “Nothing major. Just things like different teaching techniques (i.e., one teacher assigns spelling words for spelling tests and the other uses phonetics).”
- “One class is sending home projects and activities and the other isn’t. Makes it hard to explain why one kid has to do it and the other one doesn’t.”
- “I have boy-girl twins and once they reached Jr. High dating became an issue – they had to decide whether or not their friends were off-limits. I left that discussion up to them.”

- “We are currently in a parochial school with one class per grade. The uniform rules are strict and don’t allow our identical twin girls to dress differently, or wear jewelry, etc. so their friends can’t tell them apart. Finally, for the winter months, we put their names on their gym sweatshirts which they are allowed to wear every day and this has helped.”
- “Bullying in elementary, middle & high school. One dresses in boy’s clothes, is autistic and a tomboy. The other isn’t.”
- “This year a teacher seemed to punish both for an issue involving one child. We did bring it to counselor and principal.”
- “Questions about home study habits of multiples would be good.”
- “One of my boys thought he was dumb because he needed a few seconds to think of an answer and his brother didn’t. I reasoned that by separating them they would both be able to shine. They are currently in the same class because their school is only single stream, but they are separated within the class.”
- “Both have apraxia of speech. Our school has been very accommodating.”
- “School staff calling the girls not by name, but general ‘twins’.”
- “A teacher getting them mixed up even though they look nothing alike, and putting the same thing on each of their report cards.”
- “The morning educational assistant thanked me for choosing to have the girls in separate classes. Apparently they fight a fair bit at school, or do not want to play with other kids. They are together for less than 2 hours a day there.”
- “I had a first-time teacher call me about one twin and from the way she was speaking about her I said, ‘Do you know she is a twin?’ And she said, ‘No. I know of another girl with the same last name and I assumed the one in my class failed’.”
- “The more challenging/needy twin always got the great teacher; the easy-going twin often got the less desirable teacher or the one that other parents wanted their child transferred out of. We often felt he was not getting as ‘good’ an education.”
- “Constant comparing at senior school aged 11. We addressed this. It stopped.”
- “Different teachers meant differing amounts of homework which was frustrating for the twin with little to no homework.”
- “Teachers often do not try to see the children as an individual person.”
- “In Middle School, it was much easier to have them placed in separate classes but with the same teachers which was automatically done by the counselor.”
- “I find that teachers are not aware that having a twin or being a twin is an asset for the child. Too often it is considered a handicap.”
- “The one year they were together (new middle school), I had two teachers remark publicly to one of my twins, ‘Why aren’t you doing as well as your twin brother?’ Devastated that twin. Had a very heated discussion with the teachers and administration to stop that kind of talk.”
- “Different teachers means different homework and class expectations. The twins naturally compare themselves and there are inequalities between classes that can make it difficult to parent beyond the ‘life isn’t fair’ point.”
- “In high school, one was accepted to a private school. The other was not. However he was accepted at the best public high school in our city, which was better suited to his special needs/IEP.”
- “Teachers NOT trying to tell them apart!”
- “One of my twins has Asperger’s Syndrome, which dictated much of his schooling.”
- “One has dyslexia.”
- “Nothing due to them being twins. Just the girl’s ADHD.”
- “They have a big brother who will be repeating a grade. The new issue is to keep all three in different classrooms.”
- “Separate busing – request to keep them together on the same bus to the same school was denied.”

- “Entrance. We were wait-listed for openings because they are placed by age into preschool. We kept getting bumped for singletons (one child would age into the next class, but since we required two slots to start, they would pass us and fill the one opening with a singleton).”
- “Challenges with sports with one making the team or starting on the team. This resulted in some competitive resentment and frustration.”
- “Even though in Montessori they move at their own pace and work independently, one twin noticed that the other twin was moving faster when they were in the same class. We separated them so they wouldn’t compare themselves to each other. They have both soared in their separate classes. My struggling twin feels successful with her accomplishments and gets proud of her journal work.”
- “Now they are starting to distract each other so we are considering separating them for kindergarten.”
- “My twins are micro-preemies who next extra assistance with school work.”
- “One twin struggles with mental health issues because of the trauma of their twin bond being destroyed through the forced separation and encouraged ‘separateness’.”
- “When they graduated from high school, they each won a scholarship. At the event, the moderator called them up at the same time. I was annoyed as I know what hard work they each put in. Years later, we were driving by the school and my son said he was really angry that evening. His comment, ‘They brought us up together. I didn’t say anything then but if it happened today, I would.’ Whether they are in a classroom together or separated, they are individuals who need to be treated that way.”
- “One child needed an IEP and services because he has cerebral palsy.”
- “Left out of yearbook because they thought it was a duplicate picture.”
- “I think we may be unique in our public school which is an IB, International Baccalaureate program. Overall thinks out of the box.”
- “One child was named sports leader, but the picture of his twin was displayed in the presentation.”
- “Mixing up comments in their reports.”
- “They had to repeat kindergarten.”
- “One twin underwent serious neurosurgery last year resulting in time away from school.”
- “One had significant learning difficulties – had he not been a twin we would have repeated him in grade 2, but as he was a twin and after speaking with a psychologist it was recommended we don’t ever repeat one and let the other go on.”
- “One twin has emotional regulation issue and is prone to outbursts. The teachers tell him to sort it out himself. The other kids pressure the other twin to go and help him. She is conflicted and doesn’t know what to do.”
- “IEP’s were difficult to attend with both.”
- “More issues with being special needs rather than the fact they are twins.”
- “Very interesting comparing teachers teaching the same level to three boys the same age. We were able to clearly see teachers’ strengths and weaknesses.”
- “Separate classes meant more work for me keeping track of homework. Girls had different curriculum.”
- “Their needs changed over time.”
- “Finding time to help both of them with reading practice as they are competitive and make critical remarks about the other if they hear the other’s attempts.”
- “Our school is very academically-focused so the book smart twin gets lots of assembly certificates. The equally bright but artistically driven twin gets lots of small certificates for singing, etc. but they don’t hold these in such high regard.”
- “This year we have a new diagnosis of Asperger’s in twin 2 only. This has brought up a whole new set of challenges.”
- “First year of school teacher chose not to give one twin a class award as couldn’t pick between the two and didn’t want the other twin to feel left out.”
- “Different ages for puberty affected sports selection and peer groups.”

- “On their first day another kindy child stared inappropriately, open-mouthed, and asked his mother loudly, ‘What ARE they?’”
- “One twin struggles a little more in math than the other. The school wanted to remove her from all higher-level classes. I did not want to damage her self-esteem and felt it was better to have a challenge in one subject than to ‘dumb’ herself down in the rest of her classes.”
- “Bullying due to smaller size.”
- “I faced problems with their speech therapy as I was told they couldn’t be in the same program. As a result one twin had to wait for his speech therapy.”
- “Occasional issues with school technology kicking one out because it can’t handle two kids with the same last name, address and birthday.”
- “One child was gifted and the other was on the autism spectrum. It was difficult to decide when to start them at school. In the end we catered to the gifted one possibly to the detriment of his brother.”
- “One with special needs needed to move schools due to no resources available to her at the other school.”
- “Teachers not knowing who is who although they are fraternal.”
- “In grade 5, our triplets were invited to attend a different school with a program for gifted/talented students. Ultimately, 2 chose to go there and 1 remained in our neighborhood school. Both options were good so we allowed them to choose what felt right.”
- “Bullying of one twin. She had some medical challenges.”
- “With separate classrooms, school trips are on different days. This is tricky as I can’t usually help on both, so do neither or one?”