

Position statement on schooling multiples

The International Council of Multiple Birth Organisations (ICOMBO) believes:

- multiples need to be treated as individuals, while also fostering the unique bond that they have with each other
- just as each child is unique, each set of multiples is unique — some multiples thrive in separate classes while others are best in the same class
- what works for a given set of multiples one year might not work the next year
- blanket policies to always separate or to have multiples in the same class are inappropriate.

Thus, decisions about classroom placement of multiples should be made at least annually, on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the parents of the children concerned and the children themselves.

Background:

Two educational concerns that parents will face in the raising of their multiples is whether or not they should be together in the same class or separated, and which type of placement would benefit each child's personal development. In some schools there may not be enough classes of the same level to facilitate each child being in separate classes. However, it is not unusual for some schools or school boards to have a policy that all multiples must be separated; or that all multiples should be together. This may not always be beneficial to the multiples themselves and does not take into consideration their needs and rights.

The ICOMBO [Declaration of Rights and Statement of Needs of Twins and Higher Order Multiples](#)

contains a number of points relevant to an educational setting:

- The bond between co-multiples is a vital aspect of their normal development. Therefore, the bond between co-multiples must be considered in all circumstances and settings. Co-multiples have the right to be placed:
 - i. together in foster care, adoptive families and custody arrangements; and
 - ii. together or apart in educational settings, taking into account the wishes of the parents and the multiples themselves.
- Multiple birth individuals are sometimes treated as a unit by parents, professionals and the general public. As with any other human being, they have the right to be respected and treated as individuals with their own needs, preferences and dislikes.
- Twins, triplets and higher order multiples have unique conception, gestation, and birth processes; health risks; impacts on the family dynamics; developmental environments; and individuation processes. In order to ensure their optimal development, multiples and their families need early access to health care, social services and education systems where staff understand, respect and address their needs understanding that they are different from single-born children.



- In order to support the learning and development of their children as individuals and as multiples, it is important that parents, carers and families are provided with information about, and have access to, a wide variety of disciplines and services such as health professionals, social services, relationship counsellors, employment services, education, and the multiple birth community.
- Training and professional development should be available consistently to educate health, social services and education professionals to ensure they can provide the multiple birth community with the best possible health care and educational experiences.

Supporting statements:

"It is important to assess each child's development and needs from year to year. To have a firm policy of separation or not denies the individual growth of each child and how their bond may or may not affect their ability to concentrate and learn."

Monica Rankin, BSc, Grad Dip Ed; ICOMBO Chair

"The most recent research on the placement of multiples in school states that the best policy is a flexible policy, where the needs of each child are evaluated prior to making the placement decision. It is also important to re-evaluate the needs of same-age siblings if their educational needs are not being met, and not waiting until the following academic year."

John Mascazine, PhD; Associate Professor of Education, Ohio Dominican University and co-developer <https://twineducation.org>

"Putting multiple birth children into separate classes requires careful consideration. The needs of each child must be considered both as an individual and as a multiple. No decision should be irreversible – flexibility is the key both for parents and teachers."

Pat Preedy, PhD; Education Research Consultant for Twins Trust (UK) and co-developer <https://twineducation.org>

Resources:

- TWIN EDUCATION: Resources for Parents & Teachers of Twins and Multiples - <https://twineducation.org>. This is a great resource and includes a section 'together or apart' with a checklist which is free to download. The checklist is for parents and teachers to complete to help provide a more informed view for decision making.
- *Parenting School-Age Twins and Multiples* by Christina Baglivi Tinglof. This book brings together scientific literature and interview with 44 families as well as the authors' personal experiences as a twin mum.
- Further information can be found on the ICOMBO website <https://icombo.org/resources/classroom-placement/> and <https://icombo.org/classroom-placement-resources>

About ICOMBO:

The International Council of Multiple Birth Organisations (ICOMBO) is a voluntary organisation that champions the rights of multiples. We are passionate about ensuring the unique needs of multiple birth infants, children, adults and their families are understood and met. We have developed the Declaration of Rights and Statement of Needs of Twins and Higher Order Multiples, which is a key document that outlines what we believe are the fundamental requirements to assist in delivering positive health, wellbeing and educational outcomes, foster inclusion and ensure freedom from discrimination of any kind. For more information visit: <https://icombo.org>

