

Multi-Grade Classes in Portland Public Schools

Many of Portland Public Schools' elementary schools and K-8 schools will begin offering multi-grade classes during the 2026-2027 school year. While this decision has been made as a cost-saving measure, we intend to uphold the district's commitment to high quality, grade-level instruction for every student.

Evidence of Potential Positive Effects

Multi-grade learning, also called blended, multi-age learning or mixed-age learning, is an educational model that groups students from multiple grade levels together in one classroom. Over the last 25 years, many research studies have been conducted that show that students' academic achievement in well-implemented multi-grade classrooms is comparable to single-grade classrooms. In early grades (K–2), students often show small academic and social-emotional benefits, likely due to peer effects on learning, mentorship from older students, and increased collaboration. Multi-grade classrooms are also associated with stronger peer relationships, increased student autonomy, leadership development for older students, and positive social-emotional outcomes such as cooperation and reduced behavior issues, particularly in lower elementary settings.

Potential Challenges

Potential challenges associated with multi-grade classrooms include increased planning demands and curriculum adaptation for teachers. Research emphasizes that effective multi-grade models require intentional scheduling, curriculum alignment, and instructional support to avoid teacher overload, making implementation quality the key driver of success, not the grade blend alone.

Click here to read the full research brief.

Our Commitments and Next Steps

The PPS Academics team is committed to ensuring that educators have the guidance, resources, and training they need to successfully teach in a multi-grade model. Using evidence from published research and feedback from school leaders and teachers in our district, schools will be provided with guidance and recommendations for teaching 1st-2nd grade blends as well as 4th-5th grade blends.