

## SCHOOL: TOGETHER OR SEPARATE?

### The Big Debate

Whether or not to separate multiples in a classroom situation remains controversial. There is no scientific evidence that supports separating multiples in school as a general policy. Yet, the traditional viewpoint of most schools is that they should be separated for their own benefit.

Some policy makers believe that separation is best despite the lack of research which validates this theory. Proponents of separation believe it promotes individuality and independence. Teachers also typically favor separation since it's easier for them. Separate classrooms minimize the need to constantly differentiate multiples, both physically and academically.

Opponents of blanket policies feel that mandatory separation denies individuality since it does not allow children to separate on their own timetable. They believe that separation is not always advisable and could even be harmful. Some feel that children forced apart before they are ready may suffer learning problems and loss of self-esteem.

Most experts now conclude that decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis regarding separation of multiples. Several factors must be taken into account including the multiples' age, learning styles, personalities, and social needs. Preschool and kindergarten-age children are sometimes best left together since they need time to adjust to a new environment and being away from home. The classroom situation must also be considered. Sometimes it's better to separate multiples if teachers refuse to treat them as individuals and always refer to them as a unit.

In summary, the best policy is *no policy* regarding separation of multiples. Parents and teachers must work together in order to determine the best educational environment for each child. Parents' opinions and the children's needs should be respected when making this important decision.

#### Sources:

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