



FAQs for Mantua K-2 Grade Parents

I keep hearing about “families” of classes. What does that mean?

From kindergarten through second grade, students are placed into one of three Families – Family 1, Family 2 or Family 3. Each family has one or two classes each of kindergartners, first-graders and second-graders. Most students stay in the same family for kindergarten through second grade. All three families are supported by Mantua’s specialists (Reading, Learning Disabilities, ESOL, Technology and Total Communications).

The teachers within each family work together. Students sometimes have different teachers within his or her family. For example, your first-grader may be very strong at subtraction. For that subject, she might be in a classroom with mostly second-graders in her family. Likewise, if she needs extra help learning to tell time, she’ll be grouped with children with similar needs in the same subject, perhaps more first-graders and kindergarten from her family. This is called “flexible grouping.” Still, most of your child’s day will be spent with her primary classroom teacher. In addition to enabling the teachers to meet a wider range of student needs, the families also provide a comforting “small-school feel” to younger students.

What is a multi-age class?

Multi-age grouping is the practice of purposely placing children of more than one age and ability level together. Children in multi-age groups are expected to vary in experience, maturity and strengths. Mantua Elementary offers K-1 and 1-2 multi-age classes in addition to “single-grade” kindergarten and first- and second- grade classes. Each K-1 classroom has a balance of kindergartners and first graders. Our single-grade kindergarten classes as well our K-1 classrooms have a heterogeneous group of students with a variety of strengths and needs.

How does a multi-age approach differ from single-grade programs?

Single-grade classes, too, include students with a range of abilities and needs. Single-grade teachers plan for and differentiate instruction based the individual students. This is the essence of effective teaching! However, a mixture of ages places the emphasis on individuals and takes the emphasis off comparisons within a “grade level” framework. In a multi-age setting, the teacher constantly plans for a wide range of abilities, with many opportunities for small group and individualized instruction.

How long will a student stay in a multi-age class?

Students who enter a multi-age class as a “younger” will spend two years with the same teacher. Parents, teachers, and children develop a relationship that can begin immediately in September. In any given year, half the class will know the teacher’s routines, expectations, and management systems. Summer anxiety is reduced and September begins more easily as half the students can act as role models for their new classmates.

What students might particularly benefit from a multi-age classroom?

There is no right answer that fits all children. Some children may benefit from a single grade configuration, some from multi-age, and others from either setting. There are many similarities between both. A multi-age classroom may appeal to the child who benefits from projects, small group instruction, and cooperative work with peers. There may be more varied experiences occurring simultaneously within the multi-age setting, resulting in a carefully orchestrated but active environment. The personalities of children also should be considered, for some may gain confidence and leadership by assuming the role of “older,” if not this year, then the next.

Fortunately, at Mantua, your child will probably have the experience of both a single-grade and a multi-age experience during their K-2 years. Often our students who begin in a K-1 classroom then move to a second grade classroom. Other students who begin in a kindergarten classroom, then move to a multiage 1-2 classroom for the next two years. Parents report their children have benefited from both experiences!

*Excerpts taken from Kings Park Elementary Website