

Twins in school: same or separate classrooms?

✖ A parent was interested in our thoughts about placement for twins in school: Should parents separate them into different classrooms or keep them together?

Results of studies that look at how twins fare academically and socially when placed together versus in separate classrooms come as no surprise – it depends on the twins. Most teachers recommend placing twins separately to avoid competition and to encourage a stronger sense of self-identity. The importance of self-identity should not be taken lightly. My twins at seven, who look nothing alike and who do not dress alike, still refer to “*our* birthday” rather than “*my* birthday.”

Ask yourself, would putting them together help make each individual child more confident, more able to accept new people and situations, and encourage better behavior? Or would the two children cause one another to become more competitive? Does one tend to speak for the two of them? Does one become jealous of the other if one tries to befriend another child?

Twins, just like singletons, have endless personality differences. Some twins truly are like “two peas in a pod” while others could not be more different from each other. Sometimes one twin has more difficulty learning, or socializing, or behaving than the other twin. In some cases, placing these twins in the same class may inspire confidence, improved behavior, and security. Or placing them separately may help the “weaker” twin to “grow into his own.”

While parents should take into account the teacher’s recommendation, parents need to trust themselves to make the correct decision. Some schools give parents the final vote and some schools insist in separating twins unless, of course,

there is only one class for the given grade. I had a family place their first grade twins apart only to have one join his sibling half way through the year to cure his separation anxiety and daytime “urine accidents.” Reuniting these twins helped both to perform better for the rest of the school year. Although they did poorly with separation in first grade, two years later they adjusted fine to separate classrooms.

Try to refrain from doing what is easier only for yourself. Of course one set of homework and one birthday party class list is easier for a parent but it’s more important to do what is right for the twins. Parents can encourage individual interests, hobbies, and athletic abilities, even if that means forming carpools to make sure that each twin can make his own team practice or music lesson. It helps to think of twins as “two children with the same birthday” rather than “one set.”

Although we encourage our twins’ individuality, sometimes they just want to be alike. I cracked up when my twins came downstairs both dressed in blue jeans and Eagles t-shirts and said, “Look, Mom, we’re TWINS!”

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