

SCHOOL PLACEMENT OF MULTIPLES



The majority of schools have no fixed policy on placement of multiples. However, almost one-fourth of the families (23.6%), who requested specific school placement for their multiples were denied their desired request (be that together or apart) at least one of the years their multiples attended school.

| School policy | % |
|-----------------------------|------|
| No fixed or set policy | 84.6 |
| Unwritten policies | 11.5 |
| Written policies | 1.8 |
| Doesn't apply or don't know | 7.1 |



<http://icombo.org/school-placement-survey/>

Worldwide, the start of the 2020 school year is nothing like that of previous years. The adaptation to new learning environments (whether at home or at school), shifted calendars, and limited resources are only some of the changes to consider when you have multiples. While, in the past, you may have been firm on your stance on whether or not to separate your multiples, the pandemic has added new factors that must be considered when deciding your preferred placement. Weighing the best interest of each child alongside the family's accepted risk level is compounded by the fact that parents of multiples may currently have additional control that parents of multiple singletons do not, in terms of overall bubble size of exposure. The following article from the July 2020 newsletter issued by the International Council of Multiple Birth Organizations (ICOMBO), addresses some of the current factors affecting school placement during the COVID-19 crisis.

2020 has proven to be challenging for parents around the globe dealing with the COVID-19 crisis that has greatly impacted each of our daily lives. One of the biggest impacts has been adapting to school closures and the new learning environments that have been created for students. And, those environments are often driven by local governments that each have their own variation of how learning will occur. Variations continue to evolve as the impacts of the virus ebb and flow through our communities:

- Online learning
- Assignments sent home to be completed and returned
- Home Schooling
- Return to the classroom
- Online learning coupled with limited classroom

How our children adapt to their new learning environment is impacted by many economical and social factors. For instance, not all students have access to the internet and hardware needed to learn online for a variety of reasons including limited funds of the local school municipality, location of internet services, or limited resources at home.

Some children have a harder time adapting to online learning as they are very social and miss the interaction with other students.

And in many cases, the at-home and online learning need to be supervised by a parent who is ready, willing and able to provide the structure and discipline required for the learning experience to be successful.

Sound familiar? These factors and many more have made the 2020 learning experiences and options stressful for parents and students. And, as we layer in the return to classrooms, whether fulltime or partial, we add in the anxiety of keeping our children and families safe from a virus that is not yet fully understood.

If you are heading into a new school year, you may be making decisions on how to proceed; or, you may have clear instructions from your government on how they will proceed with schooling. As parents of multiples, you may have previously taken a stance on school placement and whether or not your multiples would be separated in school. You made those choices, or, you are getting ready to make them using clearly defined resources, including the school placement survey and materials provided in this newsletter. The need to consider each multiple and what is best for each as individuals is still

important; however, during this pandemic event you may want to also consider some short-term impacts that may be best for your entire family. As a mother who always preferred separation for my multiples; my choice this year would be very different to ensure anxiety and safety considerations for the entire family.

Here are some considerations for keeping multiples together in the upcoming school year even if that is a short-term decision as we ride out the impacts of COVID-19.

- ♦ ***How much time do you as a parent have to balance multiple online schedules/plans?*** It's a balancing act; school, home, work outside the home, family time.....it all adds up to more than a fulltime schedule. If one online learning plan and schedule simplifies your schedule it may warrant placing multiples together this year. And, another plus is they have another "classmate" at the table if virtual learning includes online class participation.
- ♦ ***Is your school combining online learning and classroom learning by splitting classroom schedules to accommodate smaller class sizes?*** If your multiples are assigned different classroom schedules because they are not together, this could add stress to everyone involved. Try and keep things as simple as possible for the entire family.
- ♦ ***Do you have concerns about creating multiple "bubbles" by having your multiples in two separate classrooms?*** Science tells us that limiting our impact to "safe bubbles" can limit our exposure to the virus. The more individuals your family is exposed to, the higher the chance of being exposed to the virus. Keeping your multiples together can limit that exposure.
- ♦ ***Is overall anxiety in your household spinning out of control?*** A pandemic adds stress and anxiety to an already hectic world. Many parents are concerned about work, family safety, additional tasks to ensure a safe environment, and, missing loved ones who they can not readily visit. That anxiety is felt by all members of your household whether intended or not. Our children are not immune to those same feelings. If not separating your multiples is one less anxiety that they need to deal with this year, then that may be the best overall decision for your family for the immediate future.

Stay safe and enjoy your multiples.