

# Fast Facts

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## *The Advantages and Disadvantages of Multiage Classrooms in the Era of NCLB Accountability*

### *What —*

The CEEP Education Policy Brief, *The Advantages and Disadvantages of Multiage Classrooms in the Era of NCLB Accountability*, by Ruiting Song, Terry Spradlin, and Jonathan Plucker, explores the advantages and disadvantages of multiage education, as well as highlights some state programs using a multiage model, in order to deepen understanding about, and advance effective implementation of, multiage education programs.

### *Why —*

Although the multiage education philosophy is supported by historical research to be effective, the multiage program movement has recently declined in the U.S. due to the grade-level standards and testing requirements imposed by No Child Left Behind and other accountability laws. Recent research has also been published questioning the effectiveness of multiage education. With such importance placed on education in the U.S. today, it is important to explore in depth the implementation and effectiveness of all viable education models, including multiage education.

### *How —*

Possible benefits of multiage programs include increasing students' social, emotional, and verbal skills and self-esteem; enabling students to learn at their own pace; and improving student attitudes toward school. However, multiage programs may prove difficult to implement and operate. Parental dissatisfaction and rejection, lack of teacher buy-in and preparedness, and administrative difficulty with federal and state accountability laws may be obstacles in any multiage program.

### *Recommendations —*

- High-quality research on the effects of multiage education is needed via a randomized control trial or a quasi-experimental study to validate the existing body of research that generally point to accelerated gains by students in language development, reading, and mathematics.
- Parent education and teacher preparation are essential for efficient and effective implementation of multiage classrooms. Schools implementing multiage programs should offer professional development workshops on multiage education and differentiated instruction for teachers and provide detailed information to parents.
- Due to the difficulty of implementing multiage programs in traditionally organized schools, it is necessary for administrators to create “space” for multiage classrooms within the school and to let multiage classrooms exist outside the graded system.
- School administrators should consider multiage classrooms as a smaller learning community for those students who may be underserved or not thriving in the traditional classroom, and should provide adequate support and leadership to ensure program success.

To read this Education Policy Brief, go to:  
<http://ceep.indiana.edu/>