

MULTICLASS TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS



When the description is over, this child then asks individual children to guess what he was describing,

e.g. "Kali, what do you think I was describing?"

"I think you were describing a packet of cigarettes."

"I am sorry, Kali. You are wrong. Lily, what do you think I was describing?"

"I think you were describing a box of matches."

"Well done, Lily. You are correct!"

You will find other language games in the *Talking to Learn* book in your school.

General knowledge quiz

Here you choose two teams of four (of mixed ability) and sit them at the blackboard with chalk ready. The teams could have names, for example, the Wild Horses, the Flying Fish, the Reef Sharks. You could group the questions, for example, eight questions on agriculture, eight questions on the history of Vanuatu and so on.

The teacher asks **one member of the Wild Horses Team** a question. If he answers correctly his team gets two points. If he answers incorrectly or has no idea, **any member of the other team (Flying Fish) may answer**. If they get it right they get **one point** (an extra, or bonus, point). Then The Flying Fish have their own question for two points, and so on.

To give everyone in your class a chance to take part, you must **change the teams regularly**. If, for example, you had a quiz like this to finish off every Thursday afternoon, you must change the teams every time so that all children participate.

To be a good multiclass teacher you should look for **other lively ways to unify your class** - to work with the children altogether. (especially when the year groups are close together). Have you tried these ideas?

- **Reading Stories aloud.** Children of all ages love having good stories read to them. It is an excellent way to help their language development.
- **Drama.** Acting plays, miming (school journal plays).
- **Creative Writing.**
- **Sports and Games.**
- **Singing and music of all kinds.**

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You can think of other sentence starters, for example:

“I went to Church today and I met **the priest.**”

or “I went to the reef today and I saw **a crab.**”

or “My uncle came from Port Vila today and bought me a **tee shirt.**”

or “I was very hungry at lunchtime so I ate **a banana.**”

or “At school today our teacher talked about **sharks.**”

Charades - a miming and guessing game

You again prepare small pieces of paper or card with an activity written on each one. You give one of these to one child who then reads it and acts what it asks for (without speaking)!

Here are some possible activities to mime:

fishing	climbing a tree
painting a house	washing the baby
preparing a meal	teaching a class
getting in the plane	getting in a speedboat

or jobs:

policeman	teacher
copra cutter	truck driver
housegirl	shopkeeper
secretary	nurse

The rest of the class watch the mime carefully and then, one at a time, and in good English, suggest what they were doing. The child who did the mime chooses which children are to ask, for example:

A: “Were you washing a truck?”

X: “No, I was not washing a truck.”

B: “Were you a doctor?”

X: “No, I was not a doctor.”

C: “Were you a policeman?”

X: Yes I was a policeman. You are correct!”

Describing an object or a person

Again you prepare small cards. A child comes forward and has to describe what is written on the card without saying the word.

Example: A box of matches.

“I am quite small. You can hold me in your hand. I am made of cardboard. When you open me you will find many small wooden sticks inside. When you hit one of these sticks on my side it will burn into flames. Then you can light a barbecue or a cigarette with it.”

- Was Salu's father right to be so angry?
- Will beating Salu make him behave differently next time?

Should the neighbour be happy to have his fruit eaten by a hungry boy?

Language games for the whole class

These are excellent ways of getting children talking. Most of the games suggested here are for upper primary children but they could be made simpler for younger ones. These games work well in the multiclass situation (provided the year groups are not too far apart). You play them with all the children altogether, the whole class.

Twenty questions

Before the lesson the teacher prepares pieces of paper or card, each with the name of something written on it. Here is a possible set of cards (you can make up your own).

volcano	moon	peanut
soap	bushknife	chicken
frangipani	Australia	Pacific Ocean
the Aloara	the Prime Minister	chair

One child is given a card by the teacher and sits in front of the class. The rest of the class now ask him questions to try and find what is written on his card. If the class find the answer before twenty questions have been asked, they have "won". If they fail, then the child at the front has "won". The class should be encouraged to ask **useful** questions rather than just wildly guess the answer, for example, "Is it alive?" "Is it a natural object?" "Is it man-made?" The child at the front answers in good English, for example "Yes, it is alive." "No, you cannot eat it."

The sentence game

The children sit around in a circle.

Child One. "I went shopping today and I bought **some bread.**"

Child Two. "I went shopping today and I bought **some bread and a bag of sugar.**"

Child Three. "I went shopping today and I bought **some bread, a bag of sugar and a box of matches.**"

Child Four.

No more than ten or fifteen children can play this at once. The rest of the class could listen and take their turn afterwards.

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Foreword

In Vanuatu many primary school teachers are being faced with the demanding situation of teaching two or more year groups in their classroom. We call this multiclass teaching. For various reasons, multiclass teaching will remain a common feature of our primary education system. We realize that multiclass teaching can be a difficult, challenging job and, for that reason, should have our very best teachers. We also believe that a well-run multiclass can be an excellent educational experience for children and one to be positively encouraged in our small schools.

In 1988 we started a long-term project on in-service education for multiclass teachers (both English and French medium) throughout the islands of Vanuatu. These regional courses are “unified” involving multiclass teachers from both our English and our French language schools working together to overcome their problems.

The first courses were led by our Technical Advisers at the Ministry of Education with the help of the Provincial Advisory Teams. The National Primary Advisory Team have now taken full responsibility of the running of these courses.

This handbook is designed to help you overcome your day-to-day problems in the classroom, and to look more positively at the challenges that face you. I hope you find it a useful and interesting handbook.

I however, must point out that this handbook is only a tool to help you in your work and its success will depend entirely on your efforts to put the ideas into practice in your class.

Kalmele Matai
Director
Pre-school and Primary Education
March 1998



Why is the old man planting a fruit tree if he stands no chance of living to eat its fruit?

An old man is planting a tree. His friend laughs at him saying he will not live until the tree bears fruit. Here get the children first to think whether this remark makes sense. In reply to his friend, the old man says with a smile that he has eaten the fruit from trees planted by his forefathers and he is planting that tree now for use by his children. Here get the children to discuss the wisdom of the old man's statement. Each group will come up with their opinions which could finally be discussed in the whole class.

Here is another example, this time using a story.

Pawpaw problems

It was as a Friday afternoon. Salu was walking home from school for the weekend. It was a long walk of four hours and he was getting hungry and very tired.

Soon he passed through a garden full of ripe fruit and lush, green vegetables. He saw a big sign - “Tabu! This garden is private property. Do not take the fruit and vegetables”.

Salu thought for a moment and then walked a few more steps. He stopped in front of an enormous pawpaw tree full of fruit. He looked all around him. There was nobody in sight. He took the biggest pawpaw and walked happily off down the path eating the fruit and thinking to himself how lucky he was.

Two days later, his father suddenly become angry with him. “Grandfather says he saw you stealing a pawpaw from our neighbour's garden! I am going to beat you for this! It is wrong to steal!” he shouted.

Before the children start discussing this situation in their groups, the teacher could suggest possible questions:

- Was Salu right or wrong to take the fruit?
- What would you do in the same situation?

Here is another:

Shipwrecked

Your ship is sinking. You only have time to take 3 things from the sinking ship before you swim to the deserted tropical island. Which three things will you choose?

a hurricane lamp	a box of matches	a bush knife
an axe	a bag of rice	a torch
a rope	a razor	a drum of drinking water

- Each person ranks them independently (chooses 3 items, in order of importance).
- Then members of the group try to agree on a "Top 3" by persuading one another.
- Finally, compare each group's results.

Here is a different kind.

A valuable job

Which of the following is the most important job in your opinion? Choose the top three.

doctor	V.M.F. officer
chief	farmer (growing vegetables)
teacher	Member of Parliament
church minister	string band leader

Variations

1. Which job do you think earns the most salary?
2. Which of them do you think **should** earn the most salary? Why?

Another group activity - problem solving

Here the teacher presents an imaginary situation or problem. The children are then divided into small, mixed-ability groups to discuss the problem and how they would solve it. Groups should be small (four or five children) so that every child gets a chance to say what they think.

After perhaps ten minutes one child from each group can report to the whole class what his group has decided. The lesson can be finished by briefly comparing the different groups' opinions.

A picture or a story can be a good starter for meaningful discussion. Here is an example from Nepal of a picture starter.

An Introduction

What is multiclass teaching?

It is the situation you, the teacher, face when you are responsible for two or more year groups in your primary school classroom.

Is it common in Vanuatu?

Yes. Most primary schools are likely to have to teach a multiclass at some time in their careers. Today about 20% of our teachers are in the multiclass situation and this will continue.

Is it common in other countries?

Yes. Multiclass teaching is found in countries throughout the world.

In Shanxi province, a mountainous and thinly populated area of China, 818 primary schools out of a total of 872 have multiclassrooms. Lessons in these schools concentrate on two aspects of the curriculum only - Chinese language and mathematics. In India 77% of primary schools use the multiclass system. Recent studies of multiclass teaching have been made in several Asian countries including India, Nepal, Malaysia and Japan.

Multiclass teaching is common too in the remoter parts of America, Africa and Europe. In Finland, for example, more than half of all schools are one or two teacher schools.

Here in the Pacific the situation is similar. Multiclass teaching is found in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, indeed most Pacific countries, including the remoter parts of New Zealand and Australia.

Why multi-class teaching?

Multiclass teaching can arise for a number of reasons including:

- teacher shortage.
 - i) general shortage of trained teachers
 - ii) lack of funds for salaries etc.
 - iii) unwillingness of teachers to work in remote rural areas.
- small size of school populations in remote areas.
- shortage of classrooms.
- deliberate policy - to take advantage of the educational/social benefits of the multiclass situation.

Can we succeed with multi-class teaching?

It is probably true to say that most teachers in Vanuatu and elsewhere believe that multiclass teaching, compared with straight teaching of a single year group,

- i) is difficult;
- ii) leads to lower standards of achievement.

Certainly multiclass teaching can be a difficult and demanding job and weak, badly organized teachers will find success difficult to achieve.

You will have to use additional teaching methods besides the usual teacher-at-the-blackboard, chalk/talk method. A good multiclass teacher will see the many problems as challenges and will plan to overcome them. Research by experts has shown that, provided total class numbers are not too high, multiclass children can do better than their single class friends.

Let us look now at positive ways to improve our multiclass teaching.

Chapter 7

Some lively learning activities to try in your classroom

A group activity - ranking

Ranking means deciding an order of priority. This can be a very useful and enjoyable group activity in the upper primary classroom. It develops the children's language and their reasoning ability.

- **Firstly**, the teacher writes a prepared list of items on the blackboard and describes a situation.
- **Secondly**, each child studies the list and writes down their own list, in order of priority (without discussing with anyone).
- **Thirdly**, the teacher divides the class into (about 5 in each group). Now each group discusses their lists and agrees on one list only per group.
- **Fourthly**, the teacher asks each group to read out their list. All lists can now be compared. A final class list could be agreed.
- **Finally**, if possible, the list could then be compared with "expert" opinion, using interviews, books and so on.

Here is an example.

Safety in the open

Here are some things you could take with you on a day's walk in the bush. You can only take three things. Which would you choose? Put a number beside each one to show how important it is for you, that is, put 1 beside the one you think is most important, 2 beside the next and 3 beside the next.

- () an umbrella
- () a pair of thongs
- () some bread
- () a bottle of water
- () a radio
- () a rope
- () a bush knife
- () a plastic bag big enough to crawl into

Here is one example of a peer teaching technique in reading.

The paired reading technique

This technique is based on:

1. the alternation between
 - a. joint reading aloud by both tutor and learner and
 - b. independent reading by the learner.
2. the sensitive use of positive comments to reinforce correct and independent reading.

The child tutor is trained

- to introduce the book in an encouraging, motivating way.
- to delay correction of errors until the learner has tried to correct for himself.
- to discuss the passage after it has been read.
- to check up on their own performance as a teacher and on the learner's progress (by completing report cards and check-lists).

Peer teaching in other subjects

Peer teaching can be effective in other subjects too - in other language areas, maths, music, physical education, general studies. Why not try it!

Chapter 1

Multiclass teaching - a summary of points in favour and against

When multiclass teachers sit down and discuss their work with colleagues in similar situations, they usually find they have many problems in common. On the other hand they also find certain advantages with this way of teaching.

Here is a summary of points which multiclass teachers all over the world usually raise.

Difficulties often faced by multiclass teachers in small schools

1. **Too many students** in the classroom. Some experts say 30 is the maximum possible, with 20 in one year group being the maximum.
2. **Classroom too small and crowded.** Efficient group work is difficult in a small, poorly-equipped room.
3. **General shortage of teaching/learning resources** - supplementary reading books, textbooks, library, audio/visual aids, art/craft materials, and so on. An adequate supply of the correct textbooks for each year group is an essential minimum requirement.
4. **Reduced instruction time.** Teachers have **less contact time** with children in basic subjects and so fall behind in the work planned.
5. Ineffective "**occupation**" activities for one year group while the teacher is busy with the other.
6. **Disturbances to the year group working on its own** from teaching activities in the other year group (such as listening to humorous incidents, new subject matter).
7. **Most curriculum materials designed for one year group only** (for example, maths: no maths book for a combined year 1/2).
8. **Most curriculum materials** (textbooks and so on) **unsuitable for independent** (unsupervised) **study** by children (i.e. little self-instructional material).
9. **Year 5/6 combination. Exam pressures** force teachers to concentrate on Year 6.

10. **Inadequate teacher training.**
11. **Wide range of abilities and interest levels** in one classroom.

Some advantages of multiclass teaching in small schools

1. Very small schools can better meet **the needs of the individual** child, especially in the area of personal relationships and responsibility.

Smallness provides a **sense of belonging** where each individual is valued for his/her unique qualities (while in the big schools the individual is "lost" in the crowd).
2. The same **teacher teaches the same group of children each year**. The teacher will know the child as an individual better and will thus be able to give him the right kind of help and guidance.
3. Good multiclass teachers do not use just the chalk/talk style of teaching. They have to be flexible and use **other excellent teaching methods** (individualised instruction, independent study, team-teaching, group project work, cross-age peer group help etc.). They become better all-round teachers capable of tackling a wide variety of situations.
4. These flexible methods **encourage children to be independent** and to find out all-out things for themselves - they gain the skills and attitudes of "learning to learn".
5. It brings together children of different ages and development in a learning environment which mirrors society and how it learns, i.e. **a more natural learning situation**. For example, older children naturally help younger ones.

In a sense, all teaching is multilevel teaching. Even in a single year group classroom, the children are never, of course, all at the same level.

We could say that all good teachers are multilevel teachers!

1. It helps the teacher meet the individual needs of students. Children's explanations to each other can sometimes succeed where the teacher failed (since children obviously do not approach problems from an adult point of view).
2. It promotes a co-operative rather than competitive approach to learning. It builds mutual respect and understanding between the children working together:
 - a. the helping child takes a pride in his teaching and himself learns from the situation. Children benefit greatly from being given recognised responsibilities in the classroom.
 - b. for the young learner, on the other hand, building a relationship with his own older "helper" can be a rewarding emotional experience.

Peer teaching usually involves older/abler children helping the slower/younger learners with number work and reading. Abler, older children might finish their own work and then help the younger, slower learners. On the other hand you might set a special time each day for maths or language help in small groups. Older children (even of only average ability) can gain a great deal from helping younger children with their work.

Peer teaching in reading:

Usually peer teaching has been used to help "slow readers" or to provide extra reading for all the younger children in the class. It can have a positive effect, educationally and socially, on both the child teacher (tutor) and the child learner (tutee). It can be a very practical and efficient way of providing individual help with reading. Also, perhaps surprisingly, the tutors' reading level often improves. Reading tutors can sometimes be "slow readers" themselves - helping younger ones gives their own confidence a lift!

The amount of time the younger child is actively involved in reading is increased using this technique. The younger (or weaker) child benefits greatly from the undivided attention of the older (or abler) child. The multiclass teacher himself often does not have enough time to give this kind of individual help to every child. He must, however, explain carefully to the child tutor exactly what he wants him to do. The child tutor must understand what the teacher expects of him. The teacher should encourage the child tutor to work with the youngster in a quiet, friendly and supportive way. Impatience, teasing and so on should be avoided at all costs.

In fact very few learning resources for these groups are available in our classrooms. The different year groups have their own textbooks and these are often the only resources the children work from (for example, while Year 3 has a lesson on fractions with the teacher, Year 4 does silent multiplication tables work from the Year 4 textbook).

Wider resources for group work - activity worksheets (speedily marked by teacher or children), problem-solving cards etc. - are often unavailable. Shortage of funds to buy materials is partly to blame for this, as is shortage of preparation time for busy teachers. The good multiclass teacher must, however, try hard to provide meaningful, interesting work for these groups and use his imagination to succeed in this.

When you have set the groups working and you begin direct teaching with one group, do not forget about the groups working on their own. You have to keep one eye on them all the time, to make sure the work is going as planned with no huge problems blocking progress and of course no children misbehaving. At the end of the lesson, all work done without the teacher's supervision should be checked at a glance and marked thoroughly later (with the children, if at all possible).

Use peer teaching (children teaching children) in your classroom

Children have always picked up considerable knowledge just from being with other children. This starts in the home and continues naturally throughout their school life (social skills, physical skills, break-time games and so on). These days many children teach their friends about computers and calculators (and sometimes do it quicker and better than adult teachers would). Children can learn very well from other children, especially in solving problems through discussion and activity. Children teaching children (peer teaching) is not a new idea; it has been around for thousands of years. In England in the nineteenth century many developments were made using students to help younger, less able students.

In more recent years peer teaching has been common in small rural schools in, for example, New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America. Peer teaching is a practical way to help hard-pressed teachers faced with large classes and wide age-ranges.

Nowadays, peer teaching is recognised as being educationally a very worthwhile technique because:

Chapter 2

Year group combinations - some possibilities for headteachers to consider

Headteachers of small primary schools have to decide how best to combine their classes to make the most efficient use of the teachers available. You, the headteacher, must look carefully at the total numbers in your school and at trends in future enrolments. You must look too at the level of training and the competence of your teachers. You should also seek the advice of your Provincial Education Officer and the Primary Schools Adviser before making your decisions.

Schools with Years 1 to 4

Case A

A Year 1 to 4 school with one teacher

If the total number of children is small you could group the class into three as follows:

- small ones - the newcomers (year 1)
- middle ones - the year 2 and 3 children
- big ones - the older, more mature children capable of working some of the time without the teacher (mostly year 4).

Every year the class would gain new Year 1 students and lose Year 4 students. This can work well in a very small school.

- Alternatively, especially if total numbers in this one-teacher school are tending to increase, it might be best to admit new children to Year 1 only every two years, not every year. This is known as **Alternate Year Entry** (sometimes called alternative year admission or biennial intake). In this way you avoid the enormous problems of teaching a large class of more than two groups.

Alternate Year Entry is also often the best answer when the pattern of enrolment is uneven (for example, very small numbers one year, more the next year, and so on).

For a Year 1 to Year 4 school with one teacher, using the Alternate Year Entry system, the pattern might look like this:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
1998	class	-	class	-
1999	-	class	-	class
2000	class	-	class	
2001	-	class	-	class

In 1998 you have a combined Year 1 and 3 to teach.

In 1999 you have a Year 2 and 4 to teach.

In 2000 you have a Year 1 and 3 to teach.

In 2001 you have a Year 2 and 4 to teach, and so on.

Of course, this system means that the age of entry of Year 1 will vary a little. Some six year olds will have to wait until they are seven years old for the new Year 1 to start up. That new Year 1 will then, of course, have six year olds and seven year olds in it.

You certainly have a challenging task. You always have children of very different ages and abilities in the classroom. Also every year you must change from one work programme to the other.

Alternate Year Entry has to be carefully explained to parents if they are to accept and support its use. Naturally enough, parents are initially worried about the delayed start in Year 1. Teachers should explain the reasons behind it well in advance of putting it into practice.

Alternate Year Entry is often used in areas of low population where it is impossible to find enough children each year to form a whole new Year 1 (eleven is the minimum number to start a Year 1 in Australia, for example). Starting a Year 1 class only every two years is sometimes the only way a small school can be allowed to stay open.

Use extra human help as much as possible

The multiclass teacher needs to build a good relationship with parents and with the community at large. When people realise the importance of education and of supporting the primary school teacher, then they will often willingly help on a volunteer basis to the best of their ability. This help can take two forms:

1. **the visiting speaker.** Here a local person can come and give a talk to the class on his/her special knowledge or special work. Examples: The doctor, the nurse, the village chief, the the pastor/priest....
2. **the teacher-helper.** This person comes regularly, say once a week, to help the teacher (perhaps for one hour or half the day). It might be a mother helping with the girls' weaving, a father helping train the football team, an older sister helping children with reading difficulties, or perhaps an old man teaching the youngsters traditional stories and songs.

In Vanuatu we have young people in the villages who either missed the chance of secondary schooling or left at Year Ten but have been unable to find work. You might know someone like this who would be pleased to help you sometimes in the classroom. Such a person could be very useful to you. They, in turn, will perhaps feel proud of themselves for helping others.

Bringing voluntary helpers into the classroom can help the busy teacher in many ways. It might for example, give the teacher a "breather" when he can catch up with some remedial work or marking with individual children. The children will benefit from the occasional different voice and different personality and some might gain new interests and motivation.

Ensure groups not being taught are purposefully working on their own

One of the greatest problems every multiclass teacher faces after dividing the children into different groups is **how to keep all the children purposefully busy** while he/she concentrates on teaching basic skills such as reading or maths to one particular year group or ability group. Ideally the teacher should be able to provide for all groups a wide variety of materials that are self-teaching or for giving interesting practice! Many experts feel that **activities for groups to work alone on should not be just mechanical repetition exercises** like mathematics and language drills. More active, creative involvement by the children is recommended. Problem-solving activities involving creative thinking are suggested.

Display ideas

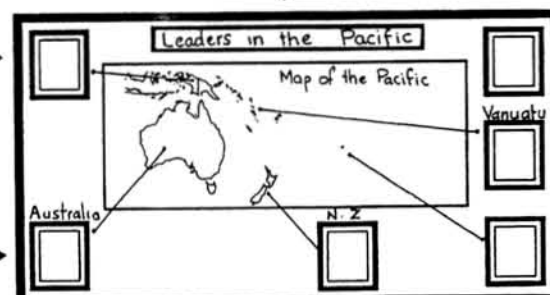
Materials:

Map of the Pacific
Coloured string
Drawing pins
Magazine or newspaper cut-outs of leaders of the Pacific region

Method:

Cut out the pictures carefully.
Mount them on coloured paper - or paper the students have coloured.
Use string and drawing pins to point out the countries.

Information Display for Environmental Studies Years 5 and 6



Art and Craft Display

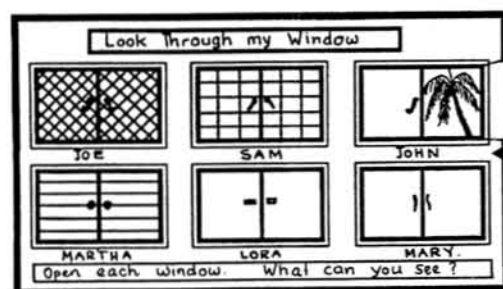
Method:

Draw a picture on one piece of paper.
Use another piece to make a window.
Stick it round the edges.
Cut it so that it will open.

Materials:

Two pieces of paper for each student,
scissors and glue.

May be used for all ages. Involves many skills - drawing, cutting, measuring.



Getting to know Years 1 and 2

Back your board with large pieces of paper.

Method:

Each child draws and colours a large portrait of himself.
Cut them out and stick together to make a class group.

Write out some greetings the children would use on meeting or leaving each other.



Art and Craft

Prepare your display board first.
Pin up paper to cover the whole area.

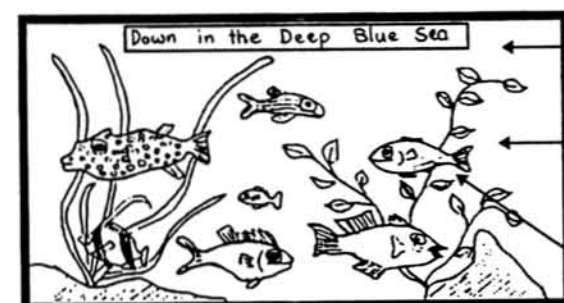
Now paint a background.

In this display paint:
- blue sea
- rocks
- green seaweed

Now each student draws and colours a fish.
Cut out and stick on the prepared background.

Other Ideas:

Birds in a tree
Butterflies in the bush

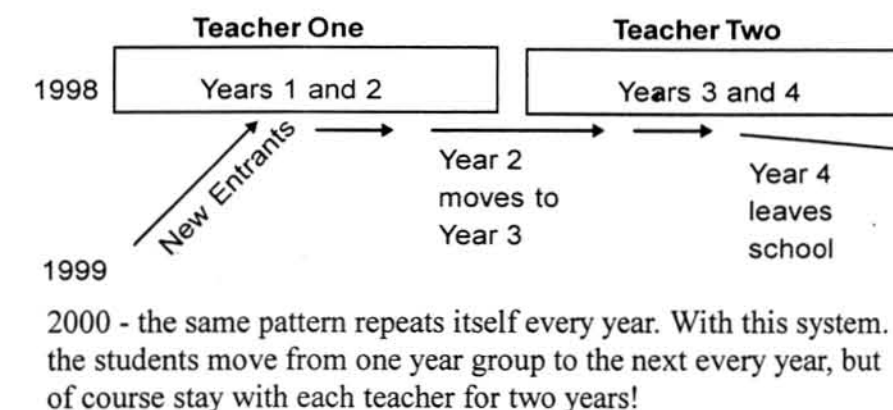


Case B

A Year 1 to 4 school with two teachers

Alternate Year Entry is not usually needed in this situation. It is usually best to teach Years 1 and 2 together, and Years 3 and 4 together. You have two year levels in the classroom but they are closer together. There is more opportunity for combined activities to which both groups can contribute equally well.

Such a school would work like this:



Schools with years 1 to 6

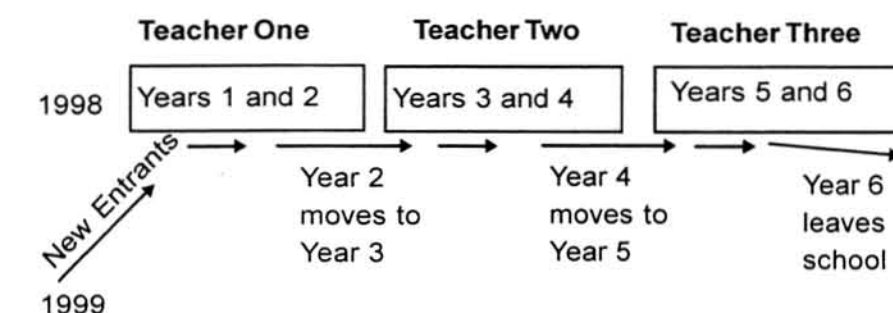
Case C

A Year 1 to 6 school with one teacher

You could group the children in a maximum of 3 groups, broadly Years 1/2, Years 3/4, and Years 5/6. This grouping could be done basically by year group but maturity and ability could be factors too. A one-teacher school with such a wide age-range can only work efficiently if the total number is quite small.

Case D

A Year 1 to 6 school with three teachers



Again here, the students move from one year group to the next every year, but of course stay with each teacher for two years. Each teacher always has a combined class to teach.

It is possible to use the **Alternate** system here too. Then each teacher would teach only one year group. The pattern would look like this:

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total Classes
1998	class	-	class	-	class	-	3
1999	-	class	-	class	-	Class	3
2000	class	-	class	-	class	-	3
2001	-	class	-	class	-	class	3
2002	class	-	class	-	class	-	3
2003	-	class	-	class	-	class	3

In 1998, the school has a Year 1, 3 and 5. In 1999 no new Year 1 is allowed. Last year's Year 1 becomes Year 2, and so on. You have Years 2, 4 and 6. In 2000 a new Year 1 begins. Last year's Year 2 becomes Year 3, and so on. Each teacher has only one year group at a time. For example, the Year 1 teacher teaches Year 1 in 1998, Year 2 in 1999, Year 1 again in 2000, and so on.

Making use of other outstanding teachers to help out your multiclass teacher

Headteachers should recognise subject specialists and talented teachers in their schools and use them, in a planned and organised way, to help the multiclass teacher.

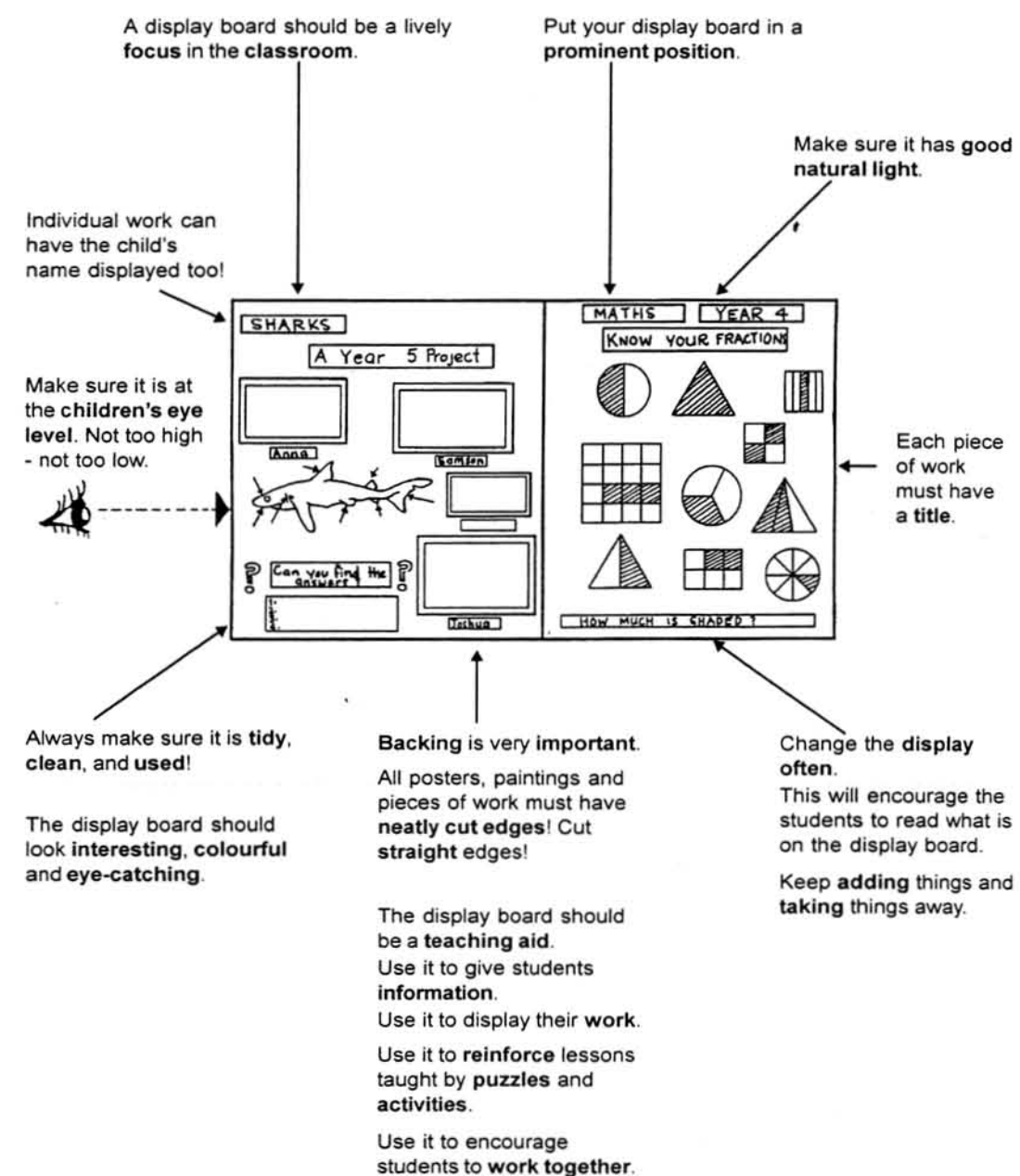
Exchanging classes or taking out year groups for certain subjects are the usual ways of doing this. This can be organised on a regular, timetabled basis.

Here is an example:

Year 1/3 multiclass. One Teacher. Thirty children.

Year 4 single class. One Teacher. Thirty children.

Making good use of a display board



Maintain an interesting and changing learning environment

Your classroom should be an exciting and stimulating place for children to be: proper display of your educational charts and your children's work should not be neglected. In some classrooms walls are empty and sad; in others they are over-decorated with poor quality work, carelessly displayed.

1. It is essential in the multiclass situation to make full use of available display space. Each year group could have their own special display area.
2. The classroom environment should be interesting for the whole range of children in that classroom. All children should feel it is their classroom.
3. Children's work should be displayed carefully and thoughtfully. Another teacher in your school may have a special talent for displaying children's work. You can learn from her. Also, look out for good display ideas when you visit other schools.
4. Children can learn something from discussing with the teacher which work should be chosen for display. In the multiclass situation, the whole class could discuss and choose together from works presented by various children (for example, "What makes this picture attractive? Why is this story so exciting?").
5. In the multiclass situation it is always essential to ensure a balance of children's work is being displayed - from the brightest to the dullest, from the youngest to the oldest. Multiclass teachers must avoid the trap of displaying only the work of the brighter, older children.
6. Remember too that children like to see their names by their work. The teacher (or child) should write a neat, attractive name label (and perhaps, title of the work) on a small, separate piece of paper or card and display it with the work.
7. It is never a good idea to leave the same display on the wall for too long. It is advisable to change all the display regularly. This keeps the children's interest up and allows all the class to have some good work displayed at some stage during the term. Regular (but not too rapid) change of display creates a stimulating and exciting learning environment where the children feel they themselves are contributing to the quality of that environment.

The Year 4 teacher is an excellent social science teacher. The head could ask her to take out the Year 3 group every Tuesday and Thursday morning and teach social science with Years 3 and 4 together. This would give the multiclass teacher the chance to concentrate on language skills with his Year 1 Group. There might be another teacher who is an expert on action songs and rhymes for Year 1 - another possible way to help the multiclass teacher.

*Deciding between Alternate Year Entry systems and multiclass possibilities is a difficult task for the headteacher and the provincial education team. **There are many factors at work, the most crucial of which are:***

- *Simply the **numbers** of children in each year group.*
- *The pattern of **future enrolments** in Year One.*
- ***The availability of teachers in the school with the ability and know-how to handle the multiclass situation effectively.***
- ***The availability of teachers in the school with special subject interests or abilities who can be used to support the multiclass teacher through timetabled exchanges for certain subjects.***

Chapter Three

Grouping children in the classroom

We could say that teachers can use **three strategies** for multiclass teaching:

- Whole class teaching
- Individual teaching
- Group teaching

Let us look at each of these briefly.

Whole class teaching

Here the teacher teaches the students in the multiple class as a whole. It is the most economical strategy because it saves time and effort on the teacher's part. Only one lesson needs to be planned. This lesson can be aimed at the average ability of the class.

In multiclass teaching, this strategy is often used in such subject areas as physical education, music, social and basic science, art and drama. Whole class teaching helps children to feel they "belong" to a class. Collective discussions will enrich learning at all levels.

Individual teaching

The teacher teaches the student here on a one-to-one basis. The rest of the class must be engaged in purposeful learning activities while the teacher gives personal attention to one child at a time. All children benefit from individual attention but often teachers only have time to work individually with the children with learning difficulties (that is, remedial teaching). Teachers should try to plan for individual teaching, but in large classes of, say, forty students it is impossible to do it very effectively.

Group teaching

This strategy is very useful in the multiclass situation. There are several different ways of organizing groups in the classroom. Grouping enables the teacher to oversee the activities of all the students and gives the teacher time to pay personal attention to those children who need it.

What different types of group are possible in a multiple class situation?

Chapter Six

Towards successful multiclass teaching - some golden rules to follow

Plan the use of your time wisely

You must plan how best to use your time. You must have a clear plan of the day ready before the children enter the classroom. Your blackboard must be prepared beforehand and should clearly set out work for the various groups within the class.

You should try to plan your timetable to give yourself time for marking and remedial teaching inside the school day. It is always best to correct children's books with the children present. Children learn far more from being with the teacher when he is marking their books. Try to avoid long queues of children waiting to have their work checked. You could have another activity ready for them and just have one child come out at a time. On the other hand you could do the walking by moving from desk to desk to check work. You could also try reducing your marking level by using children to check work. This could be done by, for example, preparing self-check workcards (question cards with answer cards) or by children marking each other's work (partner marking - older ones checking younger ones).

Be flexible

We talked earlier of teaching strategies (whole class, individual and group teaching) and of the various types of group possible. Be more flexible in your choice of strategy and your choice of group type.

Ask yourself some questions:

- Do you use a mixture of all three strategies in your classroom?
- If so, are there any better ways to combine the three that you could try out?
- Are you, for instance, giving enough individual help to your slow-learners?
- Do you simply group your multiclass by year groups because it seems easiest?
- Have you tried cutting across year groups and dividing the children up by ability in, say, reading?
- What about mixed ability groups for art and craft?

Competent teachers the world over try to combine a number of strategies to provide for children's individual educational needs.

Lesson Notes

Writing your lesson notes in your **Lesson Plan Book** is the end product of the thoughtful business of lesson preparation (and not a substitute for it).

Lesson notes are an essential part of good lesson preparation for the following reasons:

1. They ensure that the teacher has **thought clearly and deliberately** about the lesson.

N.B. **improvisation** (making the lesson up as you go along) can be a dangerous thing, and should never be relied on as a regular technique!

2. They provide a useful record of work done and work planned, for the teacher himself, and for other professional visitors to the classroom. It is vital to keep your lesson plan book **up-to-date**. A visiting teacher, a stranger to your classroom, should be able, by reading from your Lesson Plan Book, to carry on confidently with you lessons planned for that day.
3. They give the teacher time to concentrate on the reaction of his students during the lesson and to adapt easily to the different needs of the lesson as they arise.
4. They help the teacher to **evaluate** the day's work - in the evening and before preparing the next day's lessons, a chance to look back at the achievements of the day,

e.g. Was the lesson successful?
Who needs more help?
Will some general revision be needed?
How can the teaching method be improved?

In this way the teacher can keep a check on the progress and difficulties of the students.

5. They help the teacher to keep his place in his monthly scheme of work.

Remember! The Lesson Plan Book is for **your** own use. It is a practical document to help you in **your** work. Do not waste time copying from class textbooks into your Lesson Plan Book. Keep your notes brief but complete in all **useful** information. **Clear presentation and readability** are two of the key qualities of good lesson notes. **Don't forget too**, the success of the lesson and the quality of the preparation are judged by what goes on in the classroom and not by the quality of the notes themselves!

1. The Same Ability Group

Here the children are grouped into advanced, average and low ability groups across the age range. A big advantage here is that the students in the group are able to work together at more or less the same pace. They can be given the same learning materials and the same tasks.

Same Ability Groups are very useful in subjects such as mathematics and language.

2. The Mixed Ability Group

Here the group is across the age range again but contains a mixture of children, from low through to high ability. This group provides a pool of human resources - a variety of skills and strengths. It can work particularly well in "project" work where the teacher involves the children in a theme which cuts across many subject barriers.

Weaker ability children usually have strengths in some areas. It is the teacher's job to try and find these strengths and build on them. The mixed ability group can then draw on these strengths (for example, the football "expert" who gives valuable help to the group's projects on "Sport in our village."

Less able, less confident children can often benefit greatly from the small group situation. They can feel important and proud because they have something useful to offer.

3. The Same Age Group

This kind of grouping is based on the chronological age of the children. It is normally the **year group**.

This grouping is made on the assumption that children of the same year group make progress at more or less the same speed.

This is the common grouping found in Vanuatu's multiclass schools. For example, a year 3/4 combination is usually divided into two groups - the Year 3 group and the Year 4 group. This year grouping has its advantages (the main one being the availability of textbooks and learning materials for two year groups).

On the other hand, this grouping gives the teacher other organisational headaches! Within each year group he has slow, medium and fast learners, indeed there is always an overlap between the brightest in Year 3 and the weakest in Year 4.

4. The Social Group

This grouping is based on the compatibility of children. Children who get on well together or who have close friendships or family ties are grouped together. There is a harmonious, non-competitive feeling about the group. For example, in a one-teacher school a group might include an eleven year old boy and his six year old sister. This type of grouping is again useful in building self-confidence in the weaker class members.

Of course this kind of grouping based on the sociability of children overlaps with the mixed-ability grouping already mentioned. In other words, you probably think of social factors when you plan the membership of your mixed-ability groups.

A wise multiple-class teacher uses all three teaching strategies at different times: whole class, individual and group teaching. Indeed wise teachers with just one year group do not restrict themselves to whole group and individual teaching alone. Group work can be seen in successful classrooms all over the world.

Lesson Plan Ideas

Class 3/4 Pendut School

Teacher: Amos Willy

To include:
Textbook to be used,
Page and exercise numbers,
Material needed,
Charts to prepare etc.

The step to be taken is
the lesson and the
methods to be used.

Term One 1998 Week 3
Tuesday 17th February

	Year/Group	Subject	Title	Aims	Teaching Aids/Preparation	Method	Comments
2.00 p.m.	Year 3	Maths	Solid Shapes				
2.30 p.m.	Year 4	Language	Spelling				
	Ability Groups A B C	Language	Reading				
3.00 p.m.	Four Mixed Groups (Whole Class)	Sport	Volleyball				
3.30 p.m.							

Make it clear here which children are being taught what!
Is it the whole class?
Is it the year groups?
Is it same ability groups?
Is it mixed ability groups?

The place for **your** comments.
Was your lesson understood?
How could it be improved?
Which children need special help?
Is more work on the topic needed?

For example,
A nutrition lesson for Year 2.

Title: Custom stories about food.

Objective: to help children appreciate and value local food as providing a nutritious, balanced diet.

3. HOW can the objective be achieved?

This is the methodology of the lesson.

Preparation of teaching aids and materials

Many lessons fail because of inadequate preparation - of the blackboard, of a wall chart, of an experiment and the equipment needed for it.

An assessment of the length of the lesson is very important

A lesson which is too long ... the children lose interest and the objectives are not achieved; a lesson too short ... the children do not have enough time to take in and understand the knowledge or skills being taught ...

The internal progression of the lesson

That is, the successive steps taken in the lesson to achieve the objective. This progression often goes like this:

- brief revision of the previous lesson so that a clear starting point is determined.
- the starting point of the lesson should be clear to everyone.
- the lesson then takes the form of series of stages of learning which the child passes through, finally reaching
- exercises, in which the students apply the knowledge and skills learned.

Chapter 4

Organizing your classroom

Good classroom organisation is essential for effective teaching. No matter how well the lesson has been prepared, a poor classroom arrangement will reduce the effectiveness of your teaching. A badly organized classroom means a disorganised crowd of students. The chances of a successful lesson are greatly reduced.

A multiple-class teacher has to pay special attention to the arrangement of the classroom. You have different groups at work on different activities at different times during the school day. The organisation of desks and chairs for students and teacher must be thought about carefully. The distribution of storage furniture, blackboards, work tables and so on must also be planned carefully.

Here are some basic guidelines:

A. Display areas

Decide which parts of the classroom are appropriate for display of the children's work, charts, and so on. Make the best use of the space available for display. It is not usually a good idea to block the light by covering up windows with posters and paintings. Display boards (such as softboard) painted white are very useful. You can pin or staple work on them and change displays easily and quickly.

B. Traffic

Bear in mind that children and teacher need to be able to move freely between the desk groups. Try to avoid jamming children's desks and chairs against the wall.

C. Light

Think about the position of the sun as it shines into the classroom. Arrange the desks as far as possible so that the children do not have to work facing into direct sunlight. The light should come from the side of the child (his left side if possible, if he is right-handed).

D. Heat and ventilation

Make sure the children do not have to sit in the direct sunshine and that the classroom is properly ventilated at all times.

E. Blackboards

- Two blackboards - one at either end of the classroom - are very useful for multiclass teaching.
- Portable blackboards that can be moved for group work can be very handy too.
- Beware of mounting blackboards too high on the wall - children should be able to reach the board easily to write on it.
- Do not put the blackboard right next to a large window - the children will have great difficulty reading the board.

F. Children's desks and chairs

Avoid the use of fixed desk/chair combinations. These make changing the classroom around for groupwork very difficult. Also make sure you match the size of the desks and chairs to the size of the various children in your class. Exchange furniture with other teachers so that your children "fit" their desks and chairs.

G. The teacher's table

This should be carefully placed to give the teacher an unobstructed view of the whole classroom. Of course, the effective teacher spends very little time sitting at his or her desk!

H. Activity corners

You may want to have activity corners in your classroom. Decide carefully where these "corners" should best be placed. So that children can work in these areas without disturbing other groups, you might need partitions - simple screens made from local materials (such as bamboo) would work very well. In many classrooms it is possible to change odd and empty corners into interesting learning corners. Here are some ideas:

1. The reading corner

The children come to this area for quiet, personal reading or to receive individual attention from the teacher. The children's reading records could be kept here, along with books, flashcards, reading games and so on.

The corner should be comfortable with a piece of mat or carpet, plus chairs or cushions if possible. A partition of bamboo and dress material could easily be constructed. Even though reading books may be in short supply, a good teacher must always be on the lookout for interesting reading material for the children - magazines, newspapers, travel leaflets and so on. This corner could also house a puppet theatre for presenting plays.

class about measurement. Whole class discussion can be helpful for everyone (a class "theme" approach in maths). Also the same teaching aids can be prepared just once by the teacher, for use by the whole class.

One more idea - ability groups, instead of year groups

Year groups are the usual choice because with limited textbooks and other learning materials they make teaching easier. If, however, you do try ability groups this should be clearly marked on your timetable and in your Lesson Plan Book.

Many teachers in Vanuatu develop a timetable which is a mixture of the types outlined above. During one day a teacher might "split" the timetable for certain subjects (e.g. oral language and maths), "combine" the class for others (e.g. singing) and also "ability-group" the class for yet another (e.g. reading). Provided the whole class is being taught in a balanced and efficient way, this mixing of approaches makes a great deal of sense.

A reminder. Your timetable is a tool to help you to work efficiently. At the start of the year, try your new timetable out. After a week or two you might want to make some improvements. **Adjust your timetable until you are happy with it**, then it will work well for you for the rest of the year.

2. Lesson preparation

It is absolutely clear that thoughtful lesson preparation is the key to effective teaching and learning.

Lesson preparation is a process in which the teacher asks himself three groups of questions: Who? What? and How?

1. Who will be learning?

What is their age and ability? What do they already know? What is the level of the students?

2. What new knowledge or skills should the students have acquired by the end of the lesson?

This is the definition of the objectives. A clear idea in your own mind of the objective of the lesson is essential.

N.B. It is vital not to confuse

- the title of the lesson with
- the objective (goal) of the lesson.

- Consider the **maturity** and **attention span** of the students. Young children need to change activity frequently, so their lessons must be shorter. They need more frequent physical activity too, both inside and outside the classroom (Remember it is not normal for a six year old to sit still for long periods!)
- **Balance** evenly the different **curriculum areas** and consider the sharing of the school resources. A multiclass timetable should perhaps provide longer than usual amounts of time for language and maths (to allow enough time within the day for proper organisation and group teaching).

There are two main types of timetable:

Type One: In Vanuatu, for multiclass teaching, we usually use the “split” timetable where year groups work on **different subjects at the same time**. For example Year 3 work on maths while Year 4 work on English. The timetable is “split” at certain times and “combined” at others. It is possible to be flexible here; for example, a bright Year 3 child might be ready to join Year 4 for maths (and vice versa).

Type Two: Another way of organising the timetable is to have your year groups working on **the same subject at the same time** (for example, all the children doing mathematics, but at their different levels). Organization can be simplified using this approach. There are two possibilities here.

a. Same subject/same time but different topics

e.g. in maths	Year 2 Addition
	Year 4 Shapes

Here it is time for maths for everyone, but the different year groups work on different topics. This can be a useful approach when the year groups are spaced well apart. In this example, Year 2 might be working from the Year 2 student’s book on addition while Year 4 is busy constructing cardboard models of solid shapes.

or

b. Same subject/same time and same topics

e.g. in maths	Year 3 Measurement
	Year 4 Measurement.

The teacher plans carefully so that Year 3 students can do work on the “measurement” chapter in their textbook while Year 4 students work on the “measurement” chapter in their textbook. The advantage here is that the teacher can sometimes talk to the **whole**

2. The science/nature corner

Children at primary school have an enormous curiosity about the natural world around them. Every classroom should have a science/nature corner where children can collect together the things that interest them. They may grow seeds here, collect fruits and nuts or display their leaf rubbings. They may keep insects, reptiles, small mammals or fish in transparent containers. Small river fish and, of course, tadpoles are very easy to keep in the classroom and are an excellent way to study animal life-cycles.

3. Art and craft corner

This is where the art and craft materials are stored and, if there is enough room, where art and craft activities can take place. If there is a sink and tap in the room the Art/Craft corner should be located here. Scrap materials could be stored here - cardboard, string, wire, tape, pieces of dress material, plastic and so on.

4. The store

In lower classes the class store is valuable for children’s social, language and mathematical development. The children play the roles of storekeeper and customer. Empty tins (with lids) and packets can fill the shelves and coins and bank notes can be made from cardboard and paper. Avoid using glass bottles or empty tin cans - these can be dangerous in the hands of young children.

5. Construction play corner

For Year One, a construction play corner could include building blocks, wheels, rollers - simple wooden materials for youngsters to “build” with. Young children learn about their world through practical activity - through doing. Here they will learn about solid shapes, weight, size relationships etc. They will use their imaginations to build their houses, bridges, boats.

6. Home corner

Here children could play at “families”, “hospitals” and so on. This kind of role-play activity is vital for the social development of young children in Year One and Two. Simple “dressing up” clothes could be collected and kept here.

I. Storage

Make the best use of available cupboards, shelves etc. by placing them sensibly to fit your needs. Children should have easy access to the books and materials they need. Clean out cupboards and dry everything in the sun from time to time. This will avoid the problems of damp and mould.

Facilities for storage vary. Many classrooms are short of space and short of proper, purpose-built storage units.

Here are some general hints:

1. Store similar things together.

Classify according to size, shape, subject, frequency of use, etc. Naturally some equipment will fit into several categories and there is bound to be an overlap.

2. Collect similar-sized containers.

The children will help collect ice cream and margarine containers and so on. Swap flimsy/awkward-sized boxes for sturdy plastic boxes which can be stored more easily. These can hold puzzles, maths and reading equipment, art and craft materials, and other pieces of equipment.

3. Label boxes clearly.

Use a broad felt pen and cover the writing with plastic film so that it will last longer.

4. Label shelves and cupboards.

This is helpful when student teachers are in the classroom and also if another teacher has to take your class. It is, of course, useful for the children's language development.

5. Let the children share in the maintenance.

They should know where and how things are stored. That means you have to show them. Draw up a roster of children to have responsibility for specific storage areas.

6. Have a regular check.

Put time aside, for example once a month, to check over one area - make sure everything is there in good, clean condition.

7. Throw out things you do not need.

At the end of the year if you find you have not used this or that then get rid of it, but not to the rubbish bin. Store these "could be useful" objects in a school storeroom if you have one. If not, then at least do not let them take up space on shelves which are used every day.

8. Whatever individual storage units you have, make sure you clean them out every few weeks.

If you do not do so, the children who are not naturally tidy (and that means most) will get into a hopeless muddle. Their desks/pigeon holes will gather an amazing collection of half finished drawings, forgotten notes to and from school, rotting pieces of fruit, mislaid rubbers, "lost" library books and so on. Set aside a special time for this clean-up (perhaps every two weeks).

You might divide the available time like this for upper primary classes:

Language	11 hours per week
Mathematics	6 hours per week
General Studies	4 hours 30 mins per week
Sport	2 hours per week
Practical Arts	2 hours per week
TOTAL	25 hours 30 mins per week

Younger children might need slightly longer language time. They might also need less general studies time but more practical arts time. **It is up to you to decide.**

Breaktime

A **maximum of 30 minutes per day** is allowed during school working hours. With older classes you might choose to take a 30 minutes break in the morning and no break in the afternoon. On the other hand, you might prefer a 20 minutes break in the morning and a 10 minutes break in the afternoon. With Year One it is usually a good idea to break the day up with three short breaks of 10 minutes each (two in the morning and one in the afternoon).

Other factors to consider:

- Your timetable should be planned to make sure that you, the teacher, are able to give the maximum amount of attention to the different year groups in your classroom and that **you are able to teach all the necessary subjects.**
- **Some subjects may be taught to the class as a whole** (especially if the year groups are close). Such subjects might include language work (for example, story-telling, creative writing) and general studies.
- Other subjects may be taught either **in year groups separately or in "same ability" groups.** These include aspects of language (for example, reading, oral language) and mathematics. For example, while one group is doing a mathematics exercise you are able to concentrate on doing oral work with the other group.
- All timetables should be **displayed clearly**, and be familiar to students.
- When preparing your timetable you must make sure that you **balance teaching time equally** - so that sufficient attention is given to students at each level.

Chapter 5

Planning your work

Multiclass teachers must plan their work carefully if they are to be successful. At the start of a school year, your planning should go through the following clear stages.

Stage One

The teacher studies the **syllabus**. This is the broad outline of the subjects to be taught for each year group. After this the teacher prepares his **timetable** of daily lessons.

Stage Two

Schemes of work are prepared. The teacher here plans how to cover the work in the time available. The broad subject (for example, maths) is broken down into topics and time to be spent on each topic estimated.

Schemes of work are often monthly programmes.

Stage Three

Lesson preparation. The final stage, when the scheme of work is broken down into individual lessons.

We will look closely here at two aspects of planning which give special problems to multiclass teachers:

1. The timetable;
2. Lesson preparation.

1. The Timetable

Preparing your timetable - the first questions to be answered.

1. *What are the subjects that must be included?*
2. *How much teaching time is available in the week?*

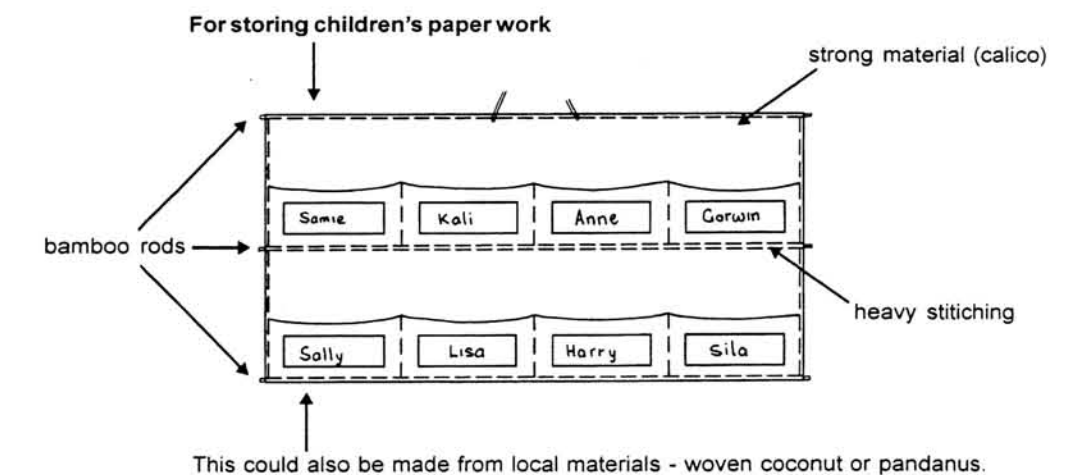
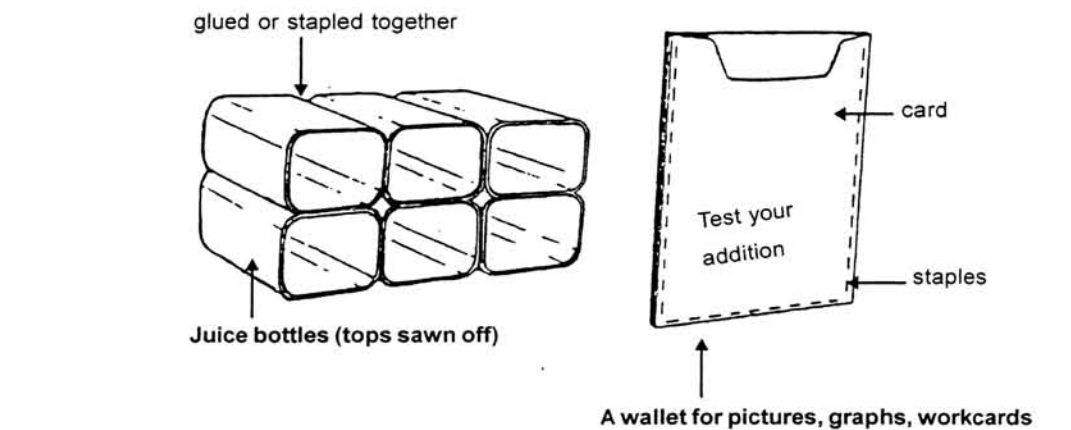
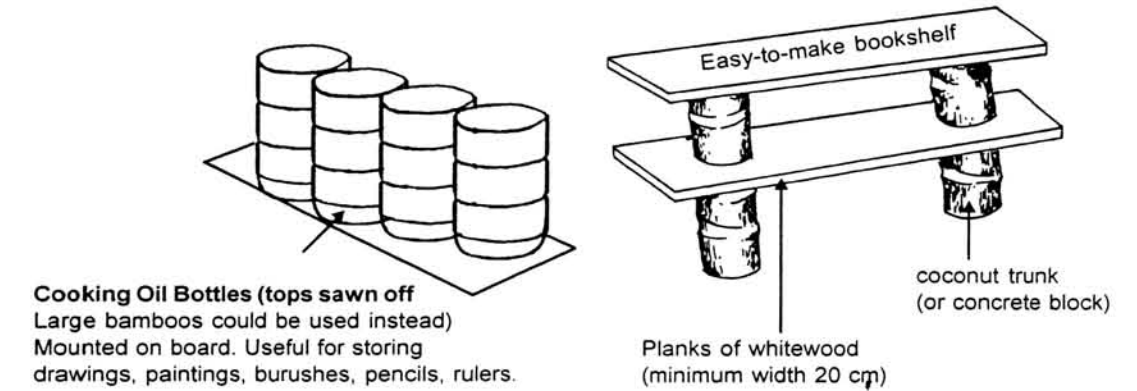
School working hours in Vanuatu are as follows:

Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays: 6 hours
(maximum break-time 30 minutes)
Fridays: 4 hours.

On **Friday afternoons** there is no school for students but **teachers work at school**.

3. *How much of this available time should be given for each subject (for each year group)?*

Storage Ideas

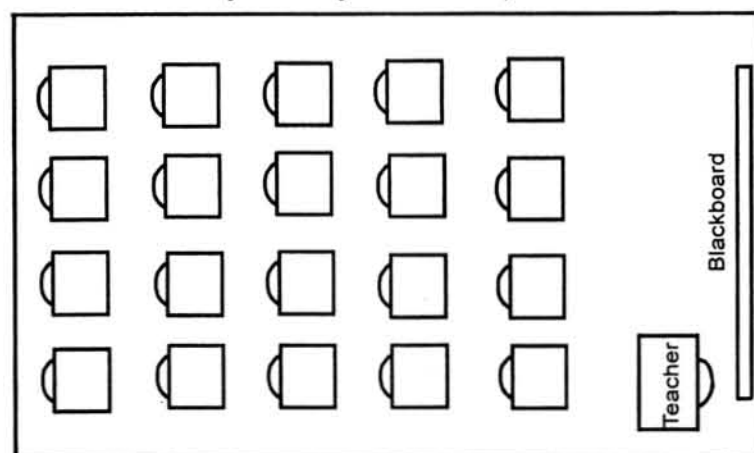


Do not use dangerous containers in the classroom - never use empty tins or glass bottles (children can cut themselves very badly.)

J. Seating plans

As we saw in the previous chapter, there are several different ways of grouping children in the classroom.

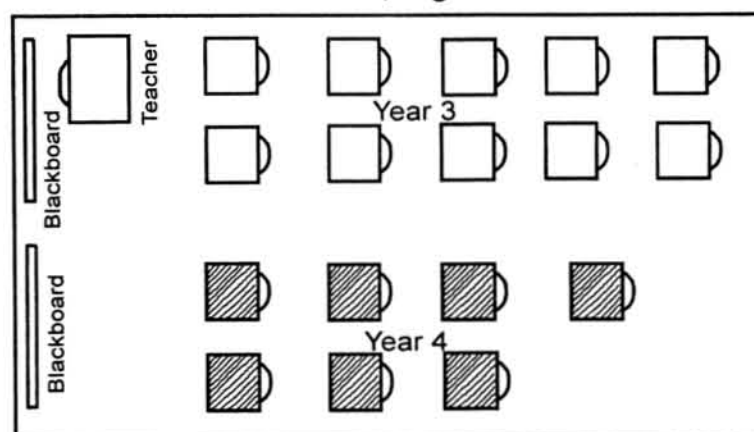
In a single year group classroom, the **traditional seating plan** (still used successfully in many classrooms) looks like this:



Example 1
Year 4
20 children

This is a very **formal** arrangement. The children are facing the teacher and not their classmates. They are also all facing the blackboard.

A simple variation of this for the teacher with, for example, a **combined Year Three and Four**, might look like this:

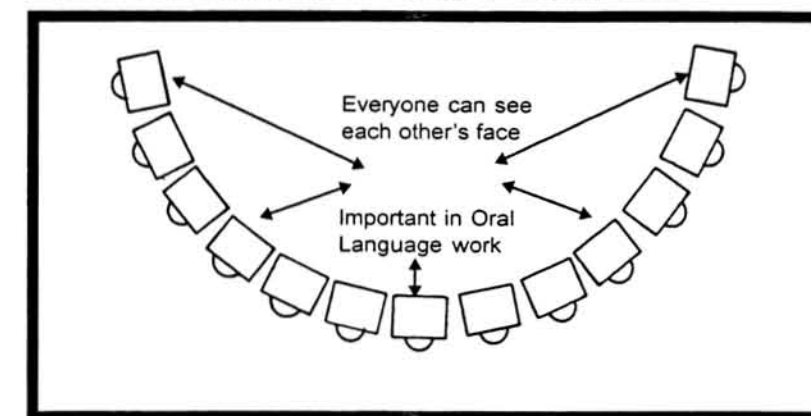


Example 2
Multiclass - Years 3 and 4
10 children in Year 3 and 7 children in Year 4.

With this layout the teacher can easily teach the whole class at

These Year “teachers” can be a big help to the hard-worked multiclass teacher.

Here is an unusual pattern of desks in a classroom:



Example 7

This layout is very useful for oral language work - getting children talking! The children can see the eyes and mouths of everyone in the room. The teacher - or a student - leads the discussion, the story-telling, the vocabulary game and so on. If this desk arrangement is not suitable as a permanent layout, you could re-arrange just the **chairs** like this for your special oral language lessons.

How you arrange your classroom is up to the individual teacher. It is not vital to follow exactly one of the set patterns shown in this chapter. What is important is that you have **good reasons** behind the layout you choose.

Be willing to change the arrangement whenever necessary. Some layouts work so well that you will keep them for a very long time with only slight alterations. Others will be less long lasting. It is worth remembering that **a change of classroom layout from time to time** can liven the class up and give a boost to both teacher and children.

Whatever happens, your classroom layout should help you in your daily work. It should make life easier for you, not more difficult!

Be imaginative, too, in your use of working spaces outside the classroom. For example, a group making a wooden model or painting, might be less disturbing to the rest of the class if they worked out on the verandah or in the dining hall. If you have an over-crowded class, why not send them in small reading group to practice their School Journal play under the big mango tree!

With same ability groups, we must remember that **children develop** during the school year **at different speeds**. The teacher needs to watch the progress of the children. He must be **prepared to change children from one group to another** as necessary.

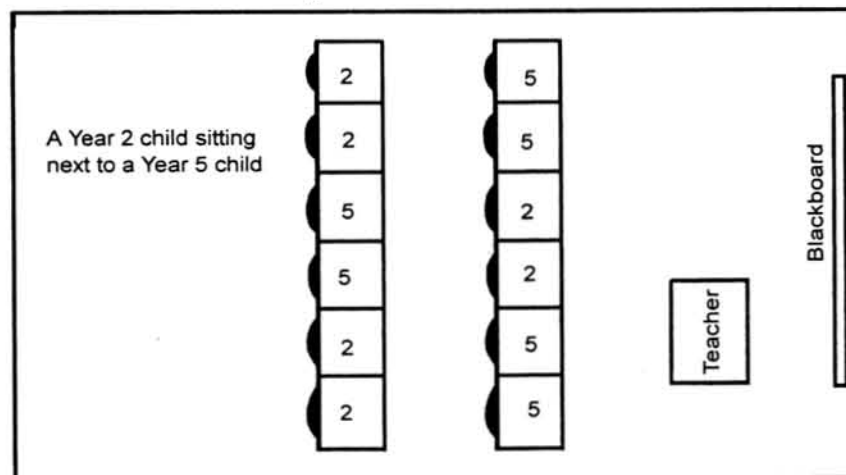
Paul might be moved in Term 2 from the low maths group to the average maths group. On the other hand his friend John, still finding maths very difficult, might be kept in the lower group for the rest of the year.

The teacher needs to check and re-check continually to ensure that each child is in the best possible group for him. This continual checking helps the teacher enormously. Every child's progress is watched carefully and no child is "forgotten".

Two points worth remembering:

- **Children gain a great deal from changing groups from time to time.** We all need a "change of scene" now and then. Children should have the chance during the school year to sit and work with as many of their classmates as possible.
- Children need a "**home-base**" - a particular place to sit in the classroom which is "theirs". They come back to this place after working at other tables for maths, reading, art or whatever.

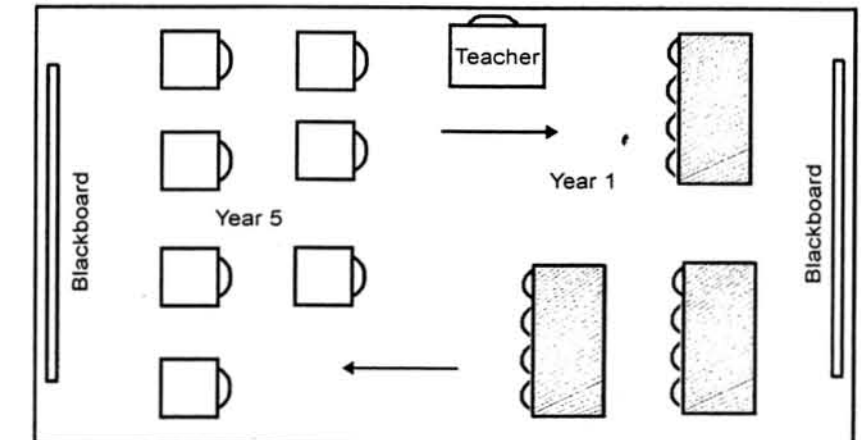
There are many other possible ways to arrange your classroom. Here is **one final example** from a school on the island of Tanna:



This teacher knows that the older children can help the younger ones in their learning. This is called **peer teaching**. It is talked about in more detail in Chapter Six. In this example, a child in Year 2 is sitting with another Year 2 child and also with a Year 5 child! He turns to the older child when he needs help to understand something. The older child can even help him to learn to read and write.

once or teach the two year groups separately. The children all face the blackboards but they are divided down the middle into two year groups. This is a very common layout in Vanuatu classrooms. It can work very successfully, especially if the year groups are close together in age.

If, on the other hand, the year groups are far apart in age, another layout is sometimes seen.



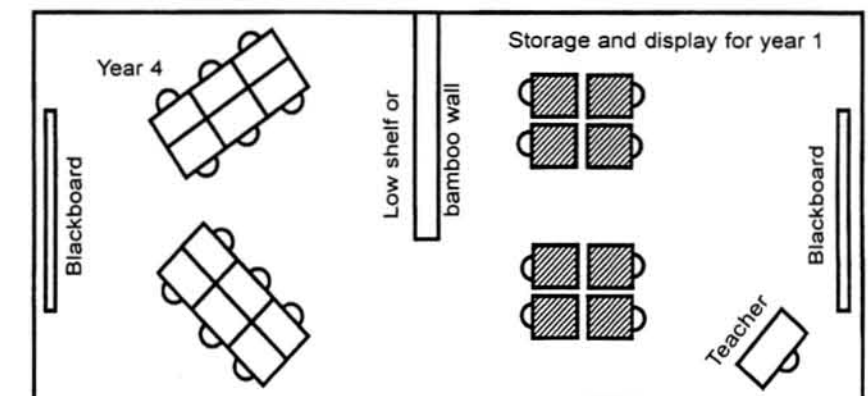
Example 3

Multiclass - Year 1 and 5.

12 children in Year 1 and 7 children in Year 5.

Here the two groups are at opposite ends of the room, with their backs to each other. There is enough space in the middle of the classroom for the teacher to bring the children together at certain times (for singing and so on). However, most of the time the two groups work separately from each other. The teacher has to be very active, moving continually from one group to the other.

Another seating plan based on year groups could look like this.



Example 4

Multiclass Years 1, 3 and 4

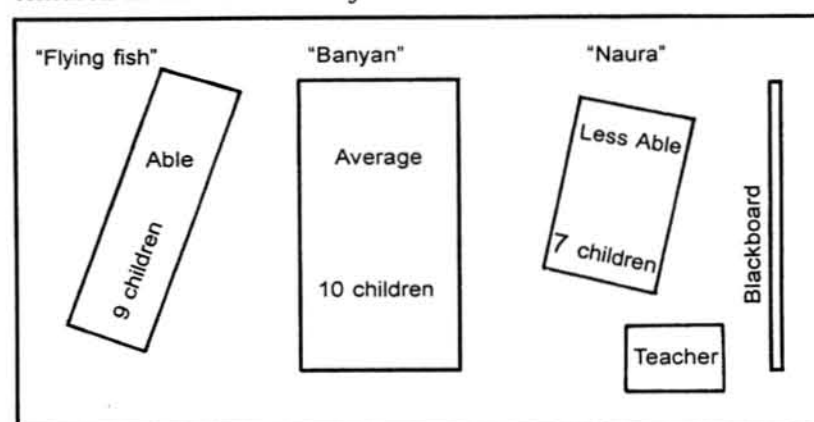
6 children in Year 4, 6 in Year 3 and 8 in Year 1.

This is more **informal**. The desks are not arranged in rows all facing the teacher at the front. Here we have a more **sociable** way of seating the children. They sit in small groups next to and facing their friends. The teacher here is encouraging the children to talk together, to cooperate with each other in their school work. The children are not expected to be silent, only speaking when the teacher asks them a question. If the work they are doing is interesting and enjoyable there should not be too much of a problem of excessive noise or bad behaviour.

The classroom has been divided up into **three areas**. For example, **Year 1 have their own part of the room**. They have a blackboard close by and their own area for displaying work and storing books and other teaching aids.

- Notice that the **teacher's desk is near the Year 1 students** - he knows they will demand much of his minute-by-minute attention. Of course, the successful multiclass teacher spends very little time sitting at his desk. Indeed some teachers prefer to have no special desk and chair. Instead they continually move around the classroom, talking to the children and helping them with their work.
- Notice too the use of a simple **partition** to screen one group from another. This could be a low bookshelf, some spare desks or a low wall made of bamboo. This screen will help to prevent the Year One students from disturbing the others or being distracted by them. This screen could also help by providing extra storage or display space.

Another layout we might look at is one based on **same ability groups**, that is, groups based on the achievement levels of the children in the various subjects.



Example 5
Multiclass 3 and 4
10 children in Year 3 and 16 children in Year 4.

The children in this classroom are **grouped according to learning ability**. It is assumed that the brightest children will need the teacher's time and attention less than the others. For this reason the brightest children can be placed furthest from the teacher.

The less able children are placed closest to the teacher and at the front of the room. There are two main reasons for this:

1. Some children have learning difficulties which are associated with **problems of poor eyesight or hearing**. The teacher can help these children by seating them closest to the front of the class.

N.B. It is a good idea to look closely at your "low" group to identify why they are achieving so poorly. Is it simply low ability or are there other factors at work (physical, social, psychological)?

2. **The less able children can easily become frustrated and bored** in the classroom, causing discipline problems. With them seated near the teacher, he can help them more easily with their work and also instantly spot the beginnings of restlessness and disturbance and do something about it before it becomes a problem.

This type of layout is very common in primary schools these days - both in the multiclass and the single class situation. Teacher's problems of organisation are reduced. He can prepare work for the three groups at their different levels. **The children will work well when they are operating at the speed and level they feel happy with.**

In the example 5 above, most of the "able" group would be Year 4 children, with a few bright Year 3s. Most of the "less able" would be Year 3 children, with a few poor Year 4s. In the "average" group we would normally find a half-and-half mixture of Year 3s and 4s.

It is a good idea to give the groups their own special names (for example, "Flying Fish", "Naura", "Banyan"). It is best to avoid at all costs labelling children as poor or slow learners!

Some teachers might choose to group the children like this **just for certain subjects**, for example, maths and language. A child in such a class might think of himself as being in "Flying Fish" (the able group) for maths and "Banyan" (the average group) for language. For social and basic science, art, P.E. and so on he may not be put in ability groups at all. Instead the teacher may sensibly use year groups or other mixed ability groups.