



INSIGHTS FROM TWINS RESEARCH AUSTRALIA

TWINS IN SCHOOL - SHOULD THEY BE KEPT TOGETHER?

A big decision for many parents as their twins approach school age is whether to keep them in the same classroom or not.

Everyone seems to have an opinion about whether twins should be separated at school or not – but how do you know what decision is best for your twins?

Dr Karen Thorpe from the Queensland University of Technology conducted a study with twins from Twins Research Australia, looking at the experiences of twins starting school. She maintains that parents nearly always make the right decision, revealing that only 10% decide to separate their twins when starting school.

Current data from Twins Research Australia's health and lifestyle questionnaire supports this statistic with nearly 80% of respondents making the decision to keep their twins together for the first year of school.

Reasons why parents may prefer to keep their twins together are usually related to the comfort that the inter-twin relationship provides. Dr Thorpe reveals that "many parents believe the twin relationship provides emotional support and familiarity in the new environment of the school and the choice of keeping twins with their co-twin on transition to schooling was viewed as the least disruptive option".

Dr Thorpe's research aimed to address what rationale parents' use in making a decision regarding the class placement of their children and how this differs between children who are separated versus those who are kept together. She discovered that most parents made the decision to place their children in the same class at school entry, but often opted to separate as

the children grew older.

Our research supports this theory with 42% of TRA parents deciding to separate their twins for Grade 1, and over 50% of parents deciding on separate classes for their twins by Grade 3. Nearly 80% of TRA twins no longer share a class by Year 12.

There can be many reasons why parents do make the decision to separate – and this can be unique to each family. There may be co-dependency issues or unfair comparisons between the twins for example which the family feel may be helped by separation.

Professors David Hay and Pat Preedy from Curtin University of Technology have also researched the educational needs of multiple birth children and acknowledge that while many parents do not have a choice to separate or not, a school policy for multiples that is flexible is helpful. They maintain that while there is not yet any good evidence about the benefits or otherwise of separating multiples, it is clear that "separation is not a universal solution to issues that may arise with multiples".

Ultimately however, there is no right or wrong answer. It is up to your family and what will best suit your twins. Parents who responded to our questionnaire reported that their decision was primarily influenced by the twins themselves, with many also valuing the advice of teachers.

If you are interested in learning more about Twins Research Australia or joining in a study, please visit www.twins.org.au.

If you have not yet completed our Health and Lifestyle Questionnaire and would like to do so, you can learn more at our website.

