

Twins and triplets at school -Tips for study counselors

The school has a significant role in strengthening the individual experience of a multiple sibling. Therefore, it is important that the educational professionals at school encounter multiple siblings as individuals by default.

Mutual relationship

Being a multiple child forms a natural part of the identity of a multiple child. It is not something a multiple child should get rid of to enable one to develop into one's own person. Individual identity generally pertains to one's understanding of oneself, (which for example responds to the questions as what I have been and what am I now).

The identity of a multiple sibling includes an individual aspect as well as a shared experience for example as twins, triplets or as quadruplets (responding for example to questions such as who we have been and who we are now).

As multiple siblings grow up in the same kind of environment at the same time, there are more shared experiences than in conventional settings. Individual development should be supported and therefore disregarded from the mutual relationship. The Finnish study shows that adult multiple children have highlighted the teacher's willingness to get to know their students as an individual. This has positively supported multiple children's individual development.

Mutual roles may occur among multiple children. These roles can be for example of a leader- surrender, or of a spokesman. Leader-surrender may be identified as a spiritual leadership (forming an opinion), physical leadership (physically strongest), or a spokesman (takes care of matters). The relationship is good if the same multiple siblings does not lead in every of these areas. If the same multiple sibling takes the lead in everything, he/she should be restrained. The surrender should be provided with opportunities to show one's skills and receive strengthening to one's self-esteem thereupon. Leadership/surrendering will typically decrease by age.

Multiple siblinghood may be recognized as extremely positive during class. Multiple children are used to taking turns, negotiating and may therefore be more social than the average.

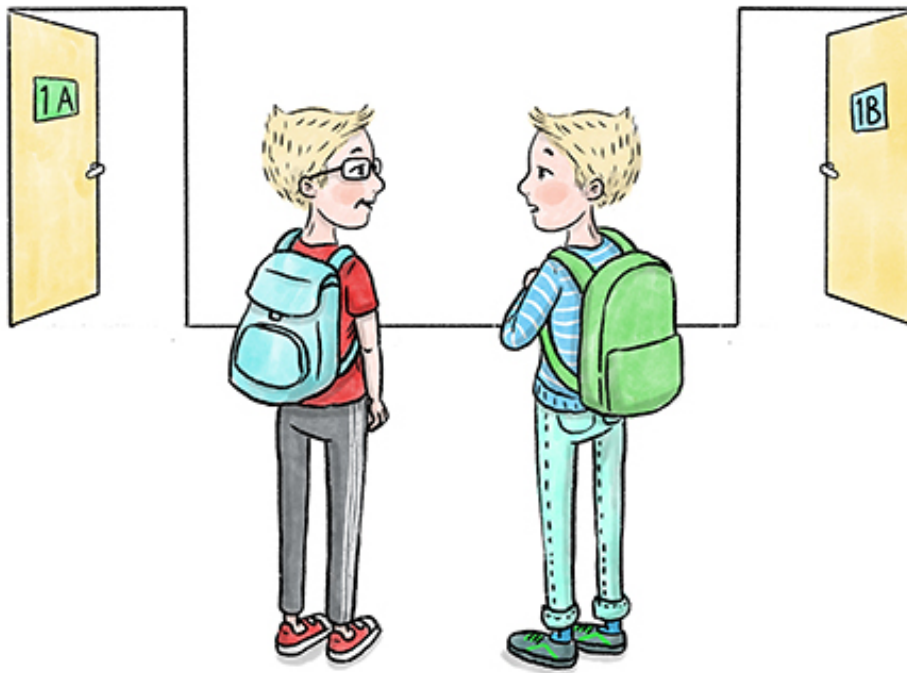
Interdependence among multiple children

Interdependence among multiple children is normal, as it is the affection and dependence of people close to each other. Dependence is formed when multiple children spend a lot of time together. Their interdependence is mainly consequences of children's active togetherness, rather than that multipleness would be a reason for interdependence. Interdependent relationships are especially strong in childhood and youth. Interdependence decreases by age.

Mutual comparison

Instead of comparing children's performance to one another, the development of each child should be monitored individually. The development of multiple children may vary from very similar to very different from each other. For that reason, the expectations regarding talent, study results, accuracy or behavior of multiple children should not be the same.

A constant comparison may weaken children's self-esteem, and children already tend to compare themselves in different situations. It is not appropriate to hide one's success from another, as life itself constantly offers encounters to compare one's performances. It is important for a child to experience oneself as an individual, free from constant competition against others. It is equally important for the parents, youngsters themselves, teachers, and other school staff to discuss how to best support individuality of multiple siblings at school. The best practices are found by discussing these all together. Practical tips to support individual development at school will be further handled in the *Twins and triplets at school-* guide (in Finnish).



To the same or different classes?

The research shows that a certain choice of class (same class / different class) does not improve the individual development, academic success, cognitive development, or behavior of multiple children at school. The decision should be annually reviewed. Regarding what would be the best for the child is that, an eventual change should be timed in a period, wherein changes would come out anyway. When proceeding from the elementary school to the junior high, the class choice should be re-evaluated individually for each child.

To the junior high and to upper secondary

When transferring to the upper secondary, the central criteria in the process of a class- and school selection is the multiple children's own area of interest, if possible.

It is important that each one of multiple youngsters is heading to the kind of education which they consider truly interesting. As the relationship of the multiple children is more concise than the one of separately born children, it may be seen as a difficulty in making independent choices or as a delay in it. The sibling relationship plays an important role in the life of multiple children; however, it should not restrict the making of study or career plans. The Finnish research shows that especially twin boys did not make educational choices, or they chose to be left out from further studies due to mutual dependence.

Postponing may complicate the process of choosing an educational path in junior high when one should make individual choices of interesting further educational paths. At times, the twins end up making very similar choices because they prefer not to take separate roads in studies. Therefore, it would be good, that multiple children would practice operating alone and making their own decisions already at early age as a child and also as a youngster at school. The main focus in study counselling is motivating the multiple youngsters to consider the future educational area according to one's personal interest.

Additional information can be found at www.monikkoperheet.fi *Twins and triplets at school -guide* (in finnish) and *Towards adolescence with multiple children of same age -guide* (in finnish).

More information can be found in *Twins and triplets at school -guide* (in finnish) (www.monikkoperheet.fi). This is a summary of that guide. Translated by Ulla Ceesay. The guide is published by Finnish Multiple Births Association (Suomen Monikkoperheet ry), edited by Ulla Kumpula, illustrated by Anne Muhonen and folded by Tiina Matala. The specialist workgroup was M.Ed Suvi Alamaa, PhD Kristiina Heinonen, B.Ed Nelli Helle, M.Soc.Sc Ulla Kumpula, M.Ed Hanna Lenkola, bachelor of Social Services Elina Santala and M.Ed Virpi Vuolteenaho. The guide was edited by MD, PhD Irma Moilanen. The international research review was made by B.Ed Nelli Helle.

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