



What is a “gradeband”?

After kindergarten, classrooms are composed of two grades together.

- Hawks and Falcons are both 1st and 2nd grade rooms
- Ravens and Jays are grades 3 and 4
- Condors and Ospreys are grades 5 and 6
- Herons are grades 7 and 8

Each homeroom is designed for two equal co-teachers and about 20 students.

Each room is an approximately equal mix of the two grades.

Classes are not formed by leveled placement, but by personality and SEL to create groups that can work well together.

Students typically stay in the same room for both years, and no distinction is typically made between younger and older students in the same room.



Why multi-year gradebands?

The two-year format has several advantages:

Children develop a relationship with their teachers that lasts for two years.

Kids are able to interact with a wider range of peers, and create community across the school.

Every year, some students return to the same classroom and are able to model how the class works for those who are new; this helps create a less hierarchical class culture, since kids are able to learn these basics from each other.

We are able to create themed instruction in a two-year cycle instead of a shorter one-year cycle, which allows for a more natural clustering of standards within the Expedition.



Why does this matter for gifted children?

Gifted students are asynchronous - they develop unevenly so they seem to be many ages at once.

In some ways, a younger student might cluster with an older group; in other ways, an older student might still be learning the same skills as some younger peers.

The mixed format reduces pressure to see all students as ahead or behind their own grade level, and encourages a view of them as individuals with unique needs.

The two-year range also normalizes striving for high goals that students need time to meet. It's important for students to see their growth, and it's also important that they never feel they have finished learning - a particular hazard for gifted kids.

What might be different from a single-grade classroom?

Different individuals in the same room may have different goals for learning.

- These may or may not correspond to age.
- Good because it pushes us to recognize individual differences.
- Hard for parents to see if their child is doing well, because comparison with other students is less useful.



What might be different from a single-grade classroom?

The jump in expectations from one gradeband to the next.

- When a student enters 3rd grade, they are encouraged to make progress toward the goals of both 3rd and 4th grade.
- Two years later, these skills are comfortably met, and teachers begin giving them a taste of what 5th grade looks like.
- When they enter 5th, they are encouraged again to see a scale of progress toward the goals of 5th and 6th grade.



How We Prepare Students

We work with students explicitly in the fall to help them see gradual, partial progress toward a goal so that they are not overwhelmed.

Maintaining this growth mindset can be stressful for students who are used to setting goals that are only one step away from their current level.

**EVERY DAY
IS A GOOD
DAY TO
LEARN.**



Where can I find more information?

Talk to everyone! Talk to parents in your own or the next gradeband when you see them on campus.

Learn about your own gradeband from the teachers, at Back to School night, conferences, and through newsletters.

Visit other gradebands' Celebrations of Learning.

Reach out to Linda Zadik (linda.zadik@heliosschool.org) if you have questions about how the gradeband structure works for Helios students!



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