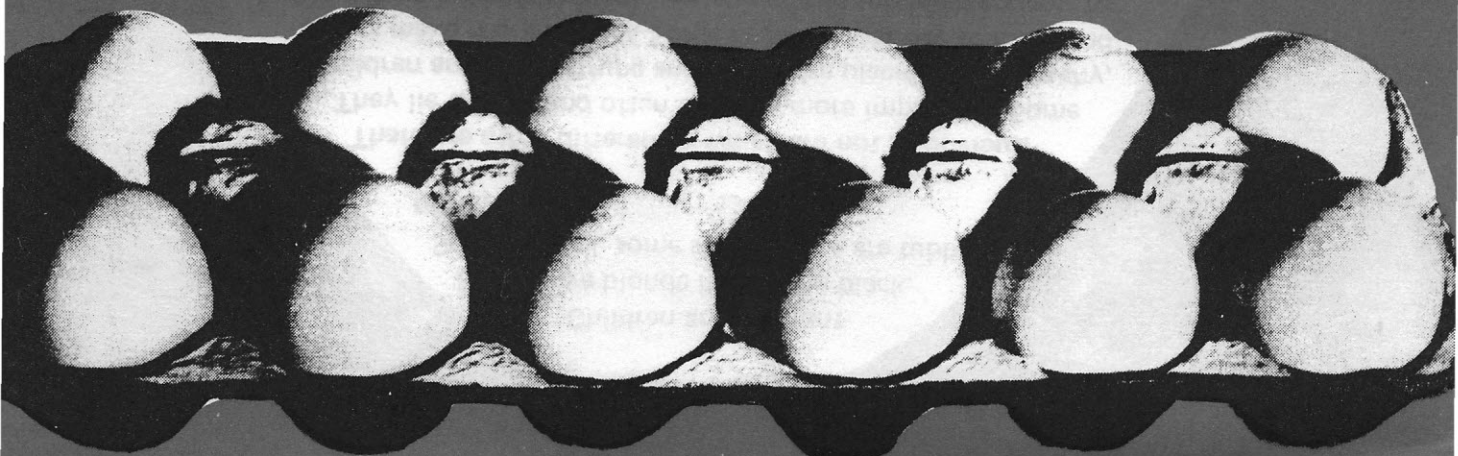


Education Department Tasmania

Has your child been graded yet?



Children are different

Some have blonde hair, some black.
Some are tall, some short. Some are tubby,
others thin.

There are other differences which are not so obvious.

They lie within, and often they are more important. Some children are highly strung and others are placid. Some are shy, others make friends easily. Some need the security of mum and dad, others are independent — sometimes too independent for their own good. Some learn quickly, some learn more slowly — but what they learn may stick. Some are interested in books, others are more interested in making things.

When your child comes to school, these differences are vitally important!

Schools sometimes ignored the differences. They taught all children as if they were the same and graded them like eggs — putting them in grade 1, and grade 2, grade 3 and so on. There still are "grades" in primary schools. But in many schools the word "grade" is only a label left over from an earlier time. In some schools the label is even being replaced. Teachers are now paying more attention to differences between children, helping each child to learn in a way that suits the individual rather than the grade, and are introducing new forms of organisation to assist them.

Different schools may use different words to describe the changes that are going on. You may hear about "vertical groups", the "blue" or "green group" or simply "Mrs. Jones' or Mrs. Brown's group" rather than "grade 1" or "grade 2".

These words indicate that children of mixed ages and abilities may be working in the same classroom to their individual capacities. One child does not face the problem of repeating a grade. A faster learner does not mark time waiting for others to catch up. The teacher will try to create a natural social group similar to a family, where members of different ages enjoy similar experiences, share ideas and help each other.

At the end of the year many or all of the children may stay with the teacher for more than one year. There will be no time lost in getting to know a new teacher and new classmates. Continuity in learning is maintained and so is security. Parents and teachers can get to know each other better, too. They are able to share information and advice more freely.

New ways of teaching are not easy to organise.

They make the teacher's job harder.

**But the results can make
the effort worthwhile.**