Happy Birthday Times 2, 3, 4…

Multiple Births
Multiple pregnancies are far less common than single pregnancies.
Multiple births have always been viewed with curiosity and questions.
Why do you think the rate has increased for multiple births?
Doctors use technological advances such as sound waves used for sonograms to check on the fetus’ health. The doctor is able to monitor the size, health and age of the fetus.
Doctors are often concerned about the health of babies in multiple births. Babies born before 40 weeks are more like to have low birth weight and risks of developmental disabilities, vision, hearing and mental problems. Doctors can also perform an amniocentesis to check for the presence of over 100 congenital problems. It usually checks for problems such as sickle cell anemia, Tay-Sachs disease and Down syndrome.

Women who are expecting more than one baby are at increased risk of certain pregnancy complications, including premature birth (before 37 completed weeks of pregnancy).
Fertility drugs help women get pregnant. Many of these drugs increase the chances of a multiple pregnancy.
Is there a family history of multiples in your family?
- Women receiving fertility treatments
- Mother's age over 30 years
- A personal or family history of fraternal (non-identical) twins
- Obesity or taller-than-average height
- African-American race (African-American women are more likely to have fraternal twins than Caucasian women, and Asian women are the least likely to have fraternal twins).
Also called monozygotic twins, identical twins occur when one sperm fertilizes one egg and the fertilized egg divide in two. Identical twins have the same genes, so they generally look alike and are the same sex.
Also called dizygotic twins, fraternal twins develop when two separate eggs are fertilized by two different sperm. Fraternal twins (like other siblings) share about 50 percent of their genes, so they can be different sexes. Fraternal twins are more common than identical twins. Fraternal twins generally do not look any more alike than brothers or sisters born from different pregnancies.
Conjoined twins (Siamese twins) are identical twins whose bodies remained joined in utero. They develop from the same fertilized egg, but the separation of the egg does not complete. Conjoined twins are identical twins, and are always the same sex. Births of conjoined twins, whose skin and internal organs are fused together, are rare. Approximately 40 to 60 percent of conjoined twins arrive stillborn, and about 35 percent survive only one day.
Are there any triplets here at our high school? 
Triplets and other higher-order multiples can result from three or more eggs being fertilized, one egg splitting twice (or more), or a combination of both. 
A set of higher-order multiples may contain all fraternal siblings or a combination of identical and fraternal siblings. 

Twin to Twin Transfusion Syndrome (TTTS) is a disease of the placenta (or afterbirth) that affects identical twin pregnancies. TTTS is treated with laser surgery to seal off the connection between the babies' blood vessels. It also can be treated with serial (repeated) amniocentesis to drain off excess fluid. Removing the excess fluid appears to improve blood flow in the placenta and reduces the risk of preterm labor. Both procedures can greatly improve the outlook for the babies.

For more information, visit http://www.tttsfoundation.org/
About 60 percent of twins, more than 90 percent of triplets, and virtually all quadruplets and higher-order multiples are born premature. The length of pregnancy decreases with each additional baby. On average, most single pregnancies last 39 weeks; twins 35 weeks; for triplets 32 weeks and for quadruplets 29 weeks.
More than half of twins and almost all higher-order multiples are born with low birth weight (less than 5½ pounds).
Women expecting twins are more than twice as likely as women with a single pregnancy to develop this complication characterized by high blood pressure, protein in the urine and generalized swelling. Severe cases can be dangerous for mother and baby. In some cases, the baby must be delivered early to prevent serious complications.
Women carrying multiples are at increased risk of this pregnancy related form of diabetes (high blood sugar). This condition can cause the baby to grow especially large, increasing the risk of injuries to mother and baby during vaginal birth. Babies born to women with gestational diabetes also may have breathing and other problems during the newborn period.
Sources

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  - Source: National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs, Inc.
  - A support group for parents of twins and higher order multiples

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  - Trusted health information

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  - Source: University of Maryland Medical Center
  - Facts about conjoined twins and how they are formed
  - [http://www.umm.edu/conjoined_twins/facts.htm](http://www.umm.edu/conjoined_twins/facts.htm)

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  - Source: MOST (Mothers of Supertwins)
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  - [http://www.mostonline.org/facts_outsideresources.htm](http://www.mostonline.org/facts_outsideresources.htm)

- **The Twin to Twin Transfusion Foundation**
  - Information Source for on TTT Syndrome