



Guide to Multi-Age Groupings

WHAT IS MULTI-AGE GROUPING?

A multi-age class has children from different ages intentionally grouped for learning. Examples of this in a school could be Years R/1, Years 3/4/5, Years 6/7, Years R/1/2.

WHY DO WE HAVE MULTI-AGE CLASSES?

Children belong to a variety of groups. Some of these groups have a diverse age range. Within families, neighbourhood and friendship groups, sports and clubs, younger and older children play and learn together.

In schools, the arrangement of classes into multi-age groups provides the opportunity for children to work with others of various ages and benefit from the broad range of knowledge, skills and experience in the class.

This way of organising classes assists schools by:

- Providing more options for placing children and teachers
- Allowing junior primary classes to begin the year with a small group of children and admit reception children throughout the year
- Providing flexibility in class structures to provide for needs of individual children and identified groups enabling even class sizes and even distribution of boys and girls across classes
- Building long term relationships between teacher, child and parents when children stay with the same class teacher over a number of years
- Giving students opportunities to work and associate with others on the basis of skills, abilities, interests, personality and age
- Providing an opportunity for a wider range of relationships and social experiences
- Allowing children of different ages to be supportive of each other
- Providing an opportunity to appreciate the diversity of talents, skills and abilities of classmates
- Allowing teachers to meet the needs of individual learners

HOW ARE THE “CONDITIONS OF LEARNING” MET IN MULTI-AGE CLASSROOMS?

- Students are *immersed* in a broad educational environment and wide range of activities.
- Students have opportunities to *demonstrate* their skills and understandings to their classmates as well as learning from others.
- We expect students to be successful learners. In a multi-age classroom these *expectations* are placed within a broader framework of educational outcomes.
- Students are encouraged to take *responsibility* and to make decisions about their own learning. They have the opportunity and responsibility to be supportive and be supported.
- Students in a multi-age classroom have a real life opportunity to use, *employ* and practise their developing skills.
- Learners need to receive relevant, appropriate, readily available, non-threatening *responses* through exchanges with others more knowledgeable. In a multi-age classroom this is met by peers as well as adults.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF MULTI-AGING? ADVANTAGES FOR CHILDREN

- It allows the individual growth of each child. They can find their own levels in social, intellectual and physical areas.
- The classroom is more secure as a group of children usually remain the responsibility of the same group of teachers over an extended period. Newcomers enter a stable and ordered atmosphere.
- Older children are encouraged to develop responsibility and independence. Children are able to care for each other. They are able to learn from each other both in behaviour and “work”. Children can provide reading and writing models for each other.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF MULTI-AGING?

- Children have more opportunity to show initiative and independence when working in small groups or individually.
- Children are able to work at their own levels in smaller groups where more individual help is available.
- Children have the opportunity to:
 - Move from youngest to eldest in the group
 - Work together and learn from each other
 - Work at their own rate, experience success and acknowledge the success of others
 - Accept, value and care for others as individuals
 - Be in the same class as other members of the family group
 - Foster a 'sense of community' as they share the responsibility for learning
 - Stay with same class teacher over a number of years enabling teachers to develop a realistic and detailed understanding of each child, their ability and their potential

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Does the placement of my Year 6 child in a Year 5/6 class rather than a Year 6/7 mean he/she is less able?

Year levels indicate the length of time spent at School and not the knowledge, skills and experience of children in that year level. Classes/groups of children are made up of individuals operating at different rates and levels.

In determining the placement of children in multi-age classes, teachers consider maturity and independence, gender, friendship groups, length of time spent with the teacher, balance of class numbers, physical layout of the school and parent/caregiver requests.

Will my child miss out on any work or have to go through similar work again, as a result of being in a multi-age group?

When children move from class to class they continue to work at their own rate with support and encouragement from the classroom teacher and the classroom program.

There are times when children do 'revisit' particular topics or concepts as a part of learning. This enables them to develop their thinking, build on previous knowledge and explore other possibilities.

Records of each child's learning are kept in a variety of ways by schools, to assist teachers in identifying growth and levels of development. This information is shared with other teachers, parents and the child. These records form the basis of planning and programming future activities that build on the knowledge, skills and experience of each child.

Will my child's learning be hampered in any way if he or she spends time helping other children?

This interaction assists each individual's learning. When children work together cooperatively, each child's ideas and understandings are clarified and developed through sharing, explaining and exploring with others.

Working with others gives children opportunities to practise what they have already learnt, to use skills in a variety of situations and to share different learning styles and strategies.

These experiences also enable children to develop skills in cooperation, communication and leadership, to build confidence and self-esteem, and to accept and value difference in each other.

With the wider age range in multi-age groups, is it more difficult for the teacher to provide individual attention to my child?

In any class there is a range of abilities and teachers are able to cater for individual differences. Teachers work in a variety of ways, sometimes with the whole class, perhaps for a class story, discussion or sharing time; but more often with small groups or individuals. In the process of learning children use resources and materials, explore, plan and design, experiment, talk, share and record their investigations and achievements. Throughout this process teachers monitor children's learning and record it in a variety of ways.

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