

## Teachers and parents ask

### What are the benefits of mixed-age groupings for the older child?

- ★ Older children help younger children and take on the role of mentor thereby developing leadership skills and in turn enhancing their self-esteem and confidence.
- ★ Cognitive skills are improved through the opportunity to enhance, reinforce and consolidate knowledge through sharing with younger children.

### What are the benefits of mixed-age groupings for the younger child?

- ★ Security, trust and independence develop much more quickly as there is immediate support and assistance from their older “buddies” in the class.
- ★ They are exposed to models of positive social, emotional, physical and intellectual behaviours.
- ★ They benefit from the stimulation of a wider range of interests, personalities and abilities.

### Will children in a mixed-age grouping function academically at a level comparable to children in a same-age classroom setting?

- ★ Available research to date shows that children in a mixed-age group will be functioning academically at least at a level comparable to those in a regular class. Moreover, research consistently indicates that there are significant gains in positive self-concept, positive attitudes towards school and learning and in co-operation in the classroom.

## Comments

They learn so much from others. The older children feel important and confident. The younger ones stretch themselves to try to imitate.

*Teacher, Simcoe County District School Board*

My children don't know that there are two grades. They all fit in happily at their own developmental level. They just think of themselves as a Kindergarten class.

*Teacher, Simcoe County District School Board*

This grouping invites role modelling while encouraging good communication skills and understanding of individual needs.

What better setting for the development of future life skills.

*Early Childhood Educator*

All the fears I had before it started just evaporated. The older children are much more mature. They are confident and feel important helping the younger ones. The younger ones catch on to the routines very quickly and work independently much sooner than expected.

*Teacher, Simcoe County District School Board*

## Mixed age grouping in the Kindergarten years



**Mixed-age grouping is a classroom placement model where children who are at least one year apart in age are grouped together in the same classroom.**



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# Introduction

Children's early learning experiences have a profound effect on their development. In Kindergarten, children's receptivity to new influences and capacity to learn are at their peak. During this period, they acquire a variety of important skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will affect their ability to learn, their personal development, relationships with others, and their future participation in society.

Young children today begin to develop their skills, knowledge, and attitudes in a variety of environments— in their homes, in childcare and community settings, and in Kindergarten programs. Positive early experiences with school are of paramount importance to young children. The learning they do in Kindergarten provides the basis for the acquisition of literacy skills (including technological and computer literacy), mathematical skills, and science skills, and prepares them for successful learning experiences in later grades.

Children arrive at school with different backgrounds and experiences and at different stages of development. To give each student the best start possible, it is essential that Kindergarten programs provide a variety of learning opportunities and experiences. Teachers, early childhood educators, members of the community, and families must work together to provide constructive and consistent learning experiences that will build students' confidence, encourage them to continue to see learning as both enjoyable and useful and provide a strong foundation for their future intellectual, physical, and social development.

*The Kindergarten Program  
Ministry of Education and Training, 1998*



Programming for mixed-age Kindergarten classes is learning centre based and developmentally focused. It is founded on the following beliefs.

- ★ a child's emotional, physical and intellectual development may vary from the child's actual age; and
- ★ levels of social/emotional, physical and intellectual development may vary, one from another for each child.

The educator's aim is not to create sameness among children, but rather to provide for broad experiences that are enriching, motivating and appropriate for individual children.

## Factors leading to success

- ★ Parents, teachers and administrators who understand child development and are committed to the success of a child-centred program.
- ★ Solid programming that supports and extends development through play.

# Benefits of mixed-age groupings

Programming in the mixed-age group environment creates opportunities for:

- ★ individual and small group instruction;
- ★ the natural extension of home, daycare and nursery school mixed-age settings;
- ★ continued emotional, social and cognitive learning with minimal adjustment at the beginning of the second year;
- ★ positive and nurturing interactions;
- ★ acceptance and celebration of differences;
- ★ individual differences to be accommodated at a wider range of developmental levels;
- ★ a range of ages, interests and abilities to stimulate a wider range of learning opportunities.

