



# The Benefits of Multi-Age groups

*"Multi-age groups that bring together children aged three to five years old offer unique opportunities for learning and development. In communities where children are more likely to grow up in smaller families the benefits of learning from younger or older peers is significant "* -Department of education and training-

- Play is often more complex as older children extend younger children's ideas or younger children follow the ideas suggested and contribute to the play.
- Children's language development is fostered as older children role model for younger children and surround them with language of different levels and complexity. They are able to modify their language, behaviours and expectations based on the ages and understandings of the other children. In turn they become adept at 'reading' younger children's non-verbal cues and respond accordingly.
- Older children have the opportunity to serve as mentors and to take leadership roles
- Older children model more sophisticated approaches to problem solving, and younger children are able to accomplish tasks they could not do without the assistance of older children. This dynamic increases the older child's level of independence and competence.
- Children build co-operative learning skills, e.g. sharing, turn-taking, listening, mentoring, negotiating, considering alternative points of view, mediating and resolving conflict in social situations

## What teaching looks like in a multi-age classroom?

- Children are viewed as unique individuals. The teacher focuses on teaching each child according to his or her own strengths
- Educators adapt the curriculum and their teaching strategies to support children's development and maximise the educational benefits for the group.
- Educators view learning as an interconnected, ongoing, lifelong process that is not limited to a rigid, prescribed curriculum, but one which is responsive and which dynamically reflects the learning community
- We encourage the older children to take on leadership roles in the classroom.
- We encourage younger children to seek out the help and support from older children throughout the day.
- Educators understand that learning is a "phases of learning", rather than as "age or year level appropriate" learning
- Teachers concentrate on what children can do, rather than what they can't do. There is less fear of failure, which builds confidence.