

Multi-Age Education

What is Multi-age Education?

Multi-age Education is the placing of children of different ages and abilities in the same classroom. Within the classroom, students are often regrouped into different learning abilities, rather than being taught at age level. As adults, we are all different. We learn differently, we excel in different areas, and we have different emotional maturity. Children are no different.

Consider the Multi-age classroom as a path. Some students will run along the path, others would walk or slowly wander all at their own pace.

No student is disadvantaged by being educated in a multi-age class.
In fact research has proved that students benefit not only academically but also socially and emotionally from learning in a multi-age classroom.

How is it determined who is going into the Multi-age class?

There is in-depth discussion amongst the teachers and principal about the student's placement in the multi-age class.

Usually the students of the younger Year group in the multi-age class are children who are independent and self-motivated learners with good social skills. There is also a readiness on the student's part to be receptive to the next year's educational knowledge and skills.

The students in the older Year group of the multi-age class are of mixed ability.

There is no academic grading of students in any class at Ss Peter and Paul's School.

The teacher teaches both year groups their correct level of syllabus work according to the Board of Studies and Catholic Education, otherwise the school would breach its registration as a school.

Parents may also request placement of their child in the multi-age class. Due to limited placements not all children can be accommodated in the multi-age class.

What are the main components of a Multi-age classroom?

The main components of a multi-age classroom are:

- a minimum 2 year age span
- the classroom becomes a "family" - with better relationships between students, teachers, and parents
- children learn to see each other in terms of personal qualities and capabilities
- teachers structure learning activities to meet the needs of the individuals
- the students help each other and learn together
- collegial sharing of subject programming amongst the teachers in that stage
- team teaching of some subject areas
- students will combine with other students in their year group for activities
- students may move to different rooms for different subjects
- groupwork in some subject areas

What are the advantages of Multi-age Education?

Research shows that multi-age grouping promotes cognitive and social growth. The active learning environment encourages the students to perform to the best of their ability. The teacher is better able to focus on the individual child's learning. The students are encouraged to learn from each other, as well as teachers and visitors to the classroom. Multi-age education recognises the natural development of the child.

Research has indicated that the advantages for students of Multi-age Education include:

- quality relationships with teachers
- a positive classroom climate

- better learning and enhanced self-esteem from increased inter-dependence
- increased independence from teachers
- a wider range of roles within the group for students
- peer tutoring - students learn from each other
- small grouping – groupwork
- enriched academic activities
- respect for individual differences and increased socialisation amongst students
- the focus is on success, the student moves forward, building on prior knowledge

Research has revealed that the advantages for teachers include:

- better relationships with students and parents
- less stress and more productive use of time
- increased continuity in planning
- a more satisfying teaching experience
- integrated curriculum
- flexible grouping to take advantage of each activity

What are some of the difficulties of implementing Multi-age education?

The biggest challenge to multi-age implementation is the misunderstanding about 'what it is and is not'. For many people, when you talk about multi-age, they picture a split class.

A shift in the demographics of the school can lead to Multi-age education.

Setting up and managing a multi-age class requires extra work initially for the teacher. The teacher will need to re-configure the curriculum into manageable class topics in order to be accountable to the school system.

Please google 'Multi-age classes' for additional information

Allison's Multi-age Education Page: www.petalli.bigpondhosting.com/edumultiage.htm