

## **Benefits of Multi-Age Grouping in Preschool**

- Children are able to spend longer periods of time with the same teacher. This allows the teacher to develop a deeper understanding of a child's strengths and needs, and is therefore in a better position to support the child's learning.
- Children have several years to develop, and are able to see themselves as progressive, successful learners.
- Children are viewed as unique individuals. The teacher focuses on teaching each child according to his or her own strengths, unlike in same-grade classrooms that often expect all children to be at the same place at the same time with regard to ability.
- Children are not labeled according to their ability, and children learn at their own rate.
- Children develop a sense of family with their classmates. They become a "family of learners" who support and care for each other.
- Older children have the opportunity to serve as mentors and to take leadership roles.
- Children are more likely to cooperate than compete. The spirit of cooperation and caring makes it possible for children to help each other as individuals, not see each other as competitors.
- 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 are invited to take charge of their learning, by making choices at centers and with project work. This sense of "ownership" and self-direction is the foundation for lifelong learning.

- Children have almost an extra month of teaching time, because the teacher does not have to spend the early weeks in the school year getting to know each child.
- Children are exposed to positive models for behavior and social skills.

**Resources:**

On the Merits of Multiage Classrooms DAVID PRATT, PH.D.I

The Case for Mixed-Age Grouping Lillian Katz, NAEYC

Some Benefits of Multi-Age Grouping The Association for Childhood Education International

## **How Our Shepherd Teachers Manage Multi-Age Classrooms**

- We offer open-ended materials that can challenge children at many different developmental levels.
- We plan specific activities that offer new challenges to older children.
- We have appropriate expectations of younger children and offer extra support when they need it.
- We cultivate a strong sense of community and recognize each child's unique contributions to the classroom.
- 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.
- We support each individual child's learning and development and plan special challenges just for them.
- We facilitate the development of relationships across all ages.

## Frequently Asked Questions

- **How will my 4 year old be challenged?**
  - Teachers will utilize a small group time and differentiate instruction as needed.
  - Teachers will use intentional teaching practices to challenge older children
  - No better way to show comprehension than “teach”
- **How will I know my four year old will not become bored in the second year with the same teacher?**
  - Beauty of the project approach- learning skills are developed in a different way each year
  - The project approach is based on student interest, so it is rare that the same topics are studied year after year
- **How can I be sure that my three year old will not be pushed too soon?**
  - Teachers will utilize a small group time and differentiate instruction as needed.
  - We have appropriate expectations of younger children and offer extra support when they need it.
- **How do I know that my child will be properly prepared for kindergarten?**
  - Differentiated instruction in small group time
  - Careful observation and developmentally appropriate assessments
  - Closely work with the kindergarten teacher to ensure that areas of readiness are carefully monitored