

In 2016, we will be introducing multi-age grouping at KCCC. Read more below about this exciting new initiative and how this will provide additional learning and developing opportunities for your child at KCCC.

Multi-age Groupings

Message from Sigi



What's happening?

In 2016, we will be introducing multi-age grouping at KCCC. We believe this exciting new initiative will provide additional learning and developing opportunities for your child at KCCC. The below information explains what multi-age groupings is, how it works and the proven benefits and opportunities it can bring to children.

What is multi-age grouping?

Multi-age grouping is a way of grouping children where the children's age range is larger than a year - sometimes two years or more.

In Centres that offer multi-age groupings, children stay with the same educator for several years developing strong, learning relationships. For example, in a room with children who are 1-3 and 3-6 years old, the children who enter at the age of one remain in the same room, with the same educators for 2-3 years.

What is the value of multi-age grouping?

In *The Benefits of Multi-Age Grouping* (1995), Katz provides a clear understanding of what "mixed-age grouping" means. She writes that "although humans are not usually born in litters, we seem to insist that they be educated in them."

In most families, children are born one at a time and if the parents decide to have more than one child, the children are spaced out over a few years. In the home, the older children help the younger ones with certain tasks. In this helping relationship, the younger and older children work together to help the younger child learn new skills.

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What is the value of multi-age grouping?



For example, take the scenario of dressing themselves. Older children who have mastered this skill will often help younger siblings who are watching them. The older child has the opportunity to develop her patience, as well as the verbal skills necessary to communicate the steps to the younger child, while the younger learns how to dress themselves.

Often, an older child may read a story to a younger child, occasionally pointing out pictures and verbalise these as they read. The older child has the opportunity to develop and solidify literacy, while the younger has an opportunity to develop listening and early literacy skills.

These sorts of opportunities occur naturally in a home environment. However, as more parents join the work force and children enter child care settings where they are grouped according to age, there are fewer opportunities for children to learn from older or younger children in a natural way.

Multi-age groupings allow this sort of interaction between older and younger children to occur.



How does multi-age grouping improve learning and development?

The research supporting multi-age classrooms indicates that achievement, learning and development is the same as, or better than, the achievement, learning and development of children in multi-age groupings.

Multi-age groupings do not negatively affect a child's achievement, learning or development and children in these centres have significantly more positive attitudes toward community, education and care themselves, and others (Stone, 1998; Veenman, 1996).

The Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) lists the following benefits of multi-age groupings for children:

- ✓ Children are able to spend several years in the same room and educators. Settling in each year is minimised. This allows the educators 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 and care.
- ✓ Children have several years in the same room to develop and are able to see themselves as progressive, successful learners.
- ✓ Children are viewed as unique individuals. The educator focuses on caring and educating each child according to his or her own strengths, unlike in same age based services that often expect all children to be at the same place at the same time with regard to ability. Children are not labelled according to their ability. For example, children in same age grouping may be labelled "below level" or "low." These children may be disenchanted or stop trying, while those labelled as "above level" or "high" may not feel challenged.
- ✓ Children learn at their own rate, with no fear of retention. In same-age groupings, children are retained if they do not master content by the end of the year or what is being implemented. In multi-age groupings children have more time to master content, and this empowers children to achieve and learn more.
- ✓ Children develop a sense of family with their peers. They become a "family of learners" who support and care for each other.

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Improving learning and development cont.



- ✓ 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 and provides them with a sense of 'ownership' and self-direction which is the foundation for lifelong learning.
- ✓ Children are more settled at the beginning of each year and this enhances learning opportunities, because educators do not have to spend the early weeks in the year settling children into new rooms and groupings getting to know each child.



What it means in 2016 at KCCC

We are currently planning the 2016 groups in line with the educator to child ratios and multi-age grouping approach.

What our groups will look like in 2016:

Long Day Care rooms

Future rooms (2016)	Multi-age groupings	Comprising current room/s (2015)
Babies room	0 – 12 months	No change
Under 3's rooms	1-3 year olds	Gumnut, Wattle, Banksia and Waratah
Over 3's rooms	3-6 year olds	Boronia and Acacia
Kindergarten	4-6 year olds	No change

Important points to note:

- An even spread of children of 1, 1 ½, 2, 2 ½ year olds will be in each room (e.g. In a room of 12 there would be 3 of each age group).
- Parents requests will try to be accommodated (e.g. some families may wish to have their siblings together).
- Children are required to have turned four years old by 30 April the year they attend kindergarten.

Multi-age grouping at KCCC



In summary:

- In 2016, we will be introducing multi-age grouping at KCCC.
- We are committed to quality education at KCCC. We believe by introducing multi-age groupings in 2016, significant benefits for children and improved learning and development opportunities will result.
- In preparation, KCCC educators have undertaken specific professional development and learning workshops on integrated service delivery and the benefits of multi-age groupings.
- In 2015, professional development for KCCC educators on program and planning was undertaken, enhancing educators knowledge around curriculum development, assessment and planning. Educators will continue to develop programs that are based on individual children's interest and needs.
- Our skilled educators will closely manage the group dynamics to encourage learning and empathy across ages.
- Careful planning of groupings will ensure ages are spread evenly within the groups.
- Multi-age groupings are currently operating at centres such as Gowrie and all of the City of Melbourne centres.

Your feedback and questions are welcome

If you have any questions on the multi-age groupings, please contact me on 9376 4565 or email to generalmanage@kccc.org.au

