



Why would I want a mixed-age class for my child?

Our classes are developmentally appropriate, allowing every child to approach the activity at their own pace and progress to the next stage of music development on their own timetable. Mixed-age classes provide children with the opportunity to interact with groups of different ages, to be models for younger children and have older children, parents and teachers model for them.

“Mixed-age classes provide a rich and diverse environment in which children can learn¹. They promote prosocial behaviors such as helping, sharing, and turn taking which support socialization and cooperation². Children’s vocabulary growth is facilitated through their interaction with peers³. Research finds that younger children in mixed-age groupings demonstrate a capacity to participate in more complex activities when they are initiated by an older peer. Older children benefit not only from the opportunities to utilize and demonstrate prosocial skills and altruism but from the confidence, insight, and empathy they gain into how their own skills have strengthened and how others are still developing¹.”

Source 1:

<https://bingschool.stanford.edu/news/mixed-age-classrooms-provide-optimal-learning-environment>

Mixed-Age Classrooms Provide Optimal Learning Environment

Little children have peer models that are much easier to imitate and learn from than adults are, and the older children look back and pace their growth and see how they learned.

so that awareness of growing and sympathy with growing is a part of it....

mixed-age groupings because they most closely duplicate what children might experience in their home environment

when children were segregated by age they missed out on the opportunities to learn from the experiences, knowledge and abilities of older peers.

Lilian Katz, professor emerita of early childhood education at the University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign, found that younger children in mixed-age groupings demonstrated a

capacity to participate in and extend more complex activities when initiated by an older peer than they could do if they were by themselves.

older children model more sophisticated approaches to problem-solving for their younger peers, it increases the older children's level of independence and competence.

children perceive that they belong to a social group (e.g., when they are told that they are part of a "Blue Group"), they are more motivated to persist on challenging tasks such as puzzles (*Child Development*, 2013). And third, older children view younger children as needing their help, whereas younger children perceive that older children can offer instruction and leadership. When these two forces combine in mixed-age classrooms, it creates an environment of cooperation, which is beneficial to all.

it feels nice when an older child offers support and nurturing.

Children need "opportunities to gain insight into the feelings of empathy and sympathy, altruism and compassion, generosity and kindness," stated former head teacher Beverley Hartman in the 2004 *Bing Times*. The added benefit of these experiences is that as younger children become the older children in the group, they also emulate these behaviors, and the culture of the classroom continues to reflect this compassion. In fact, research confirms that mixed-age groupings enable children to appreciate how their own skills (such as writing or climbing or cutting) have developed, and also to acknowledge their own progress and to realize that others are developing as well.

teachers play an important role in facilitating play, encouraging collaboration and reminding children to be mentors to others, rather than gloating over their higher-level skills when children are not yet able to do it for themselves.

mixed-age groupings provide a rich and varied environment in which children can learn.

They learn to compromise and collaborate; to plan and negotiate; to work in a group or by themselves. It is much like a family grouping in that there is a wide range of competencies"

Source 2: <https://www.ericdigests.org/pre-9212/mixed.htm>

Mixed-Age Groups in Early Childhood Education

Because mixed-age grouping invites cooperation and other prosocial behaviors, the discipline problems of competitive environments can often be minimized.

Prosocial behaviors such as help-giving, sharing, and turn-taking facilitate interaction and promote socialization.

Source 3: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5029468/>

Classroom Age Composition and Vocabulary Development Among At-Risk Preschoolers

children's vocabulary growth is facilitated through their interactions with peers, it may be important for younger children (e.g., 3-year-olds) to have opportunities to interact with older preschoolers, as would occur in mixed-age classrooms that serve 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds.

supports the theoretical assumption that interaction with more able peers results in optimal learning for younger children (Vygotsky, 1930=1978).

which highlight the importance of children's social interactions with more knowledgeable conversational partners in promoting language skills (e.g., [Bruner, 1983](#); [Justice & Ezell, 1999](#)).

High-quality behavior management was operationally defined in the present study as one in which teachers provide clear and consistent behavior expectations, monitor behavior, and use effective strategies to prevent and redirect misbehaviors (CLASS; [Pianta et al., 2008](#)). In fact, preschool teachers' behavior management is a key teaching skill and has been linked to child behavior and literacy learning, such that positive behavior management strategies were related to less child severe misbehavior ([Kim, Stormont, & Espinosa, 2009](#)) and more gains in children's language and literacy skills ([Dobbs-Oates et al., 2011](#)).