

Growing Through Multiage Grouping



This quarterly electronic bulletin aims to inform and to create links between the professionals of Education and all the persons who are interested in the development of the child by using the multiage approach. We publish also the *Newsletter on Multiage Grouping*, an occasional electronic bulletin which informs our recent members of the development of our association (in French only).

The day to day of multiage grouping

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Projet multiâge en installation, at La Douce Couvée childcare center (4 pages)

Le multiâge dans les services de garde, Jean-Marc Lopez (23 pages)

A new name for the Bulletin

Among the proposals, we have chosen the one from Mr Bertrand Corbeil, pedagogical assistant at *Les Maisons Enjouées* childcare center :

Growing through multiage grouping

The president's message

Multiage grouping is dear to our hearts and I can tell you that we are numerous to share this conviction. Actually, since the creation of the *Quebec Multiage Association* (QMA), more and more people have answered to our invitation. One of our goals is being to communicate with those who share this vision of the education, and we are particularly proud of our results.

People from everywhere are interested in what we do. And the echo of our call crossed quickly our Quebec and Canadian borders. Individuals and organizations are interested in this educational approach and demonstrate spontaneously their interest and their support.

The website *Le petit monde* offered us to be one of their contributors. They will pick up articles directly from our bulletin, and in exchange, they will create a direct link from their website to ours.

This craze for multiage grouping is very stimulating, we have the wind in our sails and we wish to exchange with you during our first :

QMA Annual General Assembly

Friday, October 7, 2005, in Montreal

N.B. : *Please note this date in your diary and the details of the AGA will follow. After the assembly, people interested to be actively involved in the QMA will be divided into different groups to reflect on our association.*

Manon Ladouceur,
President of the QMA and
Pedagogical assistant in a childcare center (CPE).

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The day to day of multiage grouping

Interview with Lilian Katz

Mrs Katz was in Montreal recently to attend the World Forum on Early Care and Education as an invited speaker. She is probably the more prolific writer on the subject of multiage grouping in early childhood. Founder of several reviews, Dr Katz is the author of more than a hundred publications including articles, chapters of a book and entire books concerning early childhood and elementary school education and the development of the child. She is actually an emeritus professor in Early Childhood Education at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Campaign).

We have prepared for you a summary of the different questions addressed by Mrs Katz, when she met Jean-Marc Lopez, on May 17, at the Sheraton Centre, in Montreal.

Montessori schools

In New York City, there are many « high class » Montessori schools which do not function by multiage even if Maria Montessori was very close to that pedagogical approach. Mrs Katz wonders why these schools made that choice which is in contradiction with the Montessori philosophy.

Multiage grouping

The question of multiage grouping reappears every 25 years in United States. The problem is that the mode of grouping by multiage is often used for administrative and not for educational purposes. Multiage

grouping is not very popular in daycare centres in the United States. She says that what is really needed is to have good researchers on the question of multiage grouping for early childhood.

During a conference in China, students asked Mrs Katz what was the best thing to be done with the 46 million Chinese children who were unique child of their family. She answered that the solution was to educate them in multiage to allow them to experience a life with children of different ages.

Fears of parents regarding multiage

Many parents fear that the older children will waste their time in a multiage group. It is important not to minimize this fear and to secure the parents on that question by presenting them well documented arguments.

Approach with children

It is necessary to appeal to their intelligence, to involve them on projects which will bring them knowledge, instead of « filling » them with theoretical knowledge.

Activity-projects with children

In an elementary school, children have studied all the aspects of balls : bouncing, different textures, forms, circumference, etc. They also used balls to knock down bottles filled with different quantities of water etc.

In a city, children created a tourist street guide for the tourists' children because they found that the existing guide at city hall for parents was « dull ».

Reproduction of texts from the ERIC Clearinghouse data base (USA).

Mrs Katz tells us there are no royalties to be paid if one uses texts available on Eric's data base. Therefore, all her texts can be reproduced or translated without any permission or costs. The only rule is that we must quote the author.

In conclusion, Mrs Katz mentioned that she is very interested in the AQM and that she wishes to be informed of the activities and the development of our association.

Question-Answer on multiage grouping

By a professor in Didactics, at the University of Montreal.

Q: " What do you mean by *multiage*? The grouping of children of various ages in a childcare center? "

A: Effectively, as defined by the Quebec Department of Daycare Services for Early Childhood (Office de services de garde à l'enfance, 1989), multiage grouping corresponds to a "group formed by children of various ages". However, for educational purposes, multiage grouping becomes a concept directly bound to the needs of development of the child. It refers then to a deliberate decision to form groups with children of different ages, to facilitate their better social and cognitive development. Shreeve and Lowry¹ consider that, from an educational point of view, multiage grouping is a mixed combination of

children of different ages, levels of development, cultural background, personalities and interests.

Reference :

1. Shreeve, K, and Lowry, V. (2001). *Planning and Implementing Multi Aged Groups*. Denver : Community Development Institute.

Implementation of multiaged group

The implementation project of multiaged group at the childcare center *La Douce Couvée*

By J-Marc Lopez.

The CPE La Douce Couvée is located in Acton Vale, in the region of the Eastern Townships. The childcare center had prepared a very interesting document explaining in a simple and clear way the implementation of the multiage grouping in its daycare centre, in September 2004. The observations, noted by the CPE throughout the process, give us valuable information which allows us to learn significantly on the subject of the development of projects in a multiage daycare center.

The project is based on educational objectives

We have to underline that the CPE had first of all EDUCATIONAL objectives when it decided to dash into the adventure of developing multiage grouping.

The CPE wished to offer a stability to the child, by preventing the multiple changes of educator and groups that occur in a traditional daycare center. The underlying idea in the stability was

to create significant emotional links among the children and the educator. Another aspect which deserves to be underlined is that the CPE La Douce Couvée wished that the children of the same family have the possibility to be in the same group. The third reason was to facilitate the integration of the few new children arriving in the group every year, in replacement of those leaving the daycare centre. The last objective of the CPE was to form groups taking into account the NEEDS and the peronality of the children instead of their age. It is the bonding between the children and the group that was important and therefore, we could conclude that it was all about social interactions among the children.

The CPE involved the educators in its project from the beginning

Meetings, spread over several months, were organized with the staff working directly with the children, to allow them to better understand what multiage grouping could bring. They used the method of De Bonnot « hats ». At the end of that process, a consensus was made among the participating educators to create multiage groups for the children from 2 to 4 years old.

The parents were informed about the changes

The chosen mode of information was to hold an information booth to announce the implementation of multiage grouping. In that change, the element which contributed the most to secure the parents was the fact that the children would benefit from more stability with the educators.

The effects witnessed on the daycare centre following the switch to multiage grouping

Everything was not upside down after the switch to multiage grouping because half of the children only were touched by the modifications in the groups. It was also noticed that the educators as well as the parents adjusted easily to the change.

As for the implications for the children, it seems that their mode of grouping by multiage have been beneficial because the educational goals expected from the initial project seem to have been reached. It was also observed that the dynamics of the multiage grouping reduced tantrums of certain children and that the groups are more calm.

Concerning the administrative aspects, the change in the grouping of the ages of the children had positive effects. For example, the waiting list became easier to manage than it was it with groups of the same age. It is also easier to foresee when the parents will have a place for their child; it then improves the service to the parents.

The CPE also noticed a reduction of the side effects induced by maternity leaves and growing age of the staff with the functioning in multiage.

The switch to the multiage grouping required modifications at the level of the organization of premises. For example, there were no changing tables or toilets in every room and it was necessary to remedy it.

It was finally noticed that some children arrived lately in the group, had more difficulty to adapt. On the other hand, with a functioning in graded age groups, they would not have been admitted by the daycare.

The document of the CPE La Douce Couvée (4 pages) is entitled "Projet multiâge en installation" and you will find it in attachment.

Point of Clarification on the Support of the AQM to its Members

The *Quebec Multiage Association* was not created in order to bring direct support to the childcare centers or other members wishing to implement the multiage or to improve its quality in their organization. THE QMA does not see itself as the protector of a unique thought through which multiage would have a unique face. However, we refer, at the same time, to what many authors observed in their researches on the multiage and to what the practitioners notice in their day-to-day experiences of multiage grouping. We want to contribute to spread the ideas on the education in multiage grouping trying to keep a balance between these two pendulum swings. As we said it in our first bulletin, the AQM wants to be an intermediary between its members and to organize a network of contacts and services. We plan to make a list of resources having the expertise to go on the spot to propose their services for the implementation of multiage grouping. It will then be up to the members to estimate if the support proposed is convenient for them, taking into account its own vision of multiage grouping and if there is coherence between " the offer and the demand ".

On the other hand, even without giving direct support, the AQM wishes nevertheless to develop tools that will largely help the members. For example, it could prepare information leaflets for particular categories of persons as parents, educators, providers in family daycares, etc. The publication of documents with theoretical or practical character is also a part of our objectives as well as the organization of conferences or forums on multiage grouping, to give members the opportunity to get answers on numerous questions they might have.

Ours actions

The government of Quebec decided to modify the content of the educational program of childcare centres in 1997. In order to get the opinion of the professionals working in daycare centres, it had set up 2 working groups whose mandate was to make proposals: a revision committee composed of a dozen of persons and a smaller « reading committee ». Members of the AQM are present in the 2 committees and it is possible that the changes in the educational program go in the direction of an official recognition of multiage grouping for early childhood.

Resources and references

Publications of the OMA

(in French, later on in English on our website).

Those will be supplied free of charge to our members (pdf file) and then

accessible on our website.

Our first publication is now available and it is attached to this bulletin. You will find information useful for the definition and the understanding of the education in multiage grouping:

Lopez, J-M. (2005). *Le multiage dans les services de garde comme contexte éducatif favorable au développement de l'enfant : analyse critique de la documentation scientifique*. The lecture presented during the 72nd conference of the Association francophone pour le savoir (Acfas). Montreal: Quebec Multiage Association.

We read

Bourque, L., Désilets, L., Marchand, D. (1991). Mieux vivre le multiâge, In : Actes du colloque québécois sur les services de garde à l'enfance, *Nos enfants, c'est sérieux*, Québec, OSGE, p 111.

Summary

Louise Bourque, Louise Désilets and Danielle Marchand are among first persons who spoke about multiage grouping in childcare centers in Quebec. In 1991, these persons, two of them being pedagogical assistants in a family daycare, animated a workshop on the multiage, within the framework of an event organized by the *Office des services de garde à l'enfance*. The summary of the workshop has only one and a half page but the point of view of the three authors testify of their sense of observation of child development. They indicate first of all that the multiage environment in the childcare centres allows the younger children to meet older brothers and

sisters that are so-called "model children » that they may imitate. They see the older children as stimulating agents but also intermediaries and defenders. They add that the older ones also get something out of it because the younger ones allow them to learn the sense of the responsibility and, at the same time, to notice how much they grew and progressed. The children can progress at their own pace in a multiage environment because the "baby" behavior is accepted and they can rely on it occasionally to express their feelings.

In the balance of their text, the authors address the question of the organization of the premises and of the time to function appropriately in multiage grouping. They conclude their document by noticing that the current resources are insufficient to help the practitioners to work in multiage grouping because Quebec's educational system do not take into account this reality. The educators or the home childcare service providers (HCSP) should therefore use their creativity to modify the rules and the environment created for groups of children of the same age.

The text of these three authors is available in various libraries, among which that of the Ministère de la famille et de l'enfance, the colleges and the universities.

Cripps, S. Blackall's junior school features at conference. *The Barcoo Independent*, pp1, 3, 18 march 2005.

This article reports the experience of a school from the North-West of Australia, as presented during a conference organized by the *Queensland Council of Parents' and Citizens' Association*. The 34

youngsters, from kindergarden to the 3rd year of elementary school, are in multiage groups according to their skills rather than their grade. The teachers, Kelly Egan and Rowena Morrison, underlined the results of the children's reading. 75 % of the pupils exceed the averages of the district for the same grades. Furthermore, the older pupils makes the adaptation easier for other pupils to the school environment. « We have been identified by QSA¹ as an example of best practice _ we are leading the way in Queensland in early childhood education ».

Dr Nita Lester, president of the Multiage Association of Queensland, was the guest speaker at that conference. She values the learning by the peers and the confidence that results from the connection to the reality of the community. The multiage classes acknowledge the differences and encourage the autonomy of the children. These children develop strategies to adapt to the changes and build their own "resilience". Dr. Lester considered that about 40 % of the elementary schools of Queensland have multiage programs.

Reference :
1 Queensland Studies Authority

You can find the complete article at the following address:
<http://www.blackall.qld.gov.au/images/Barcoo%20Independent/18March2005.pdf>

Web resources

All these sites are in English.

A virtual bookshop where it is possible to order books on the subject of multiage grouping:

<http://www.multiage-education.com/bookstore/index.html>

Doctoral thesis on multiage grouping

Michelle Pancoe (USA) has created a Website to reveal numerous very relevant information about multiage grouping. The advantages of multiage grouping are very well documented.

<http://multiageinfo.com/>

Answers to your questions on multiage grouping, on the web

A website for teachers, where it is possible to ask questions to colleagues who work in multiage grouping:

<http://teachers.net/mentors/multiage/>

Some websites from schools working in multiage grouping all around the world.

In Indonesia, *High Scope Indonesia* :
<http://www.highscope.or.id/academic.php?aid=4>

In Japan, *New International School* :
<http://newinternationalschool.com/>

In Australia, *Lyons Primary School* :
<http://www.lyonsps.act.edu.au/>

In United States
The multiage program of the *Ross Valley School* is interesting:
<http://rvsd.marin.k12.ca.us/manor/map/rvmap.html>

Shoal Creek Primary School :
<http://powayusd.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/Pusdscs/newsite/FAQS.htm#Multiage>

Mail

The creation of the QMA has given rise to many comments in Quebec, with which you have essentially been already acquainted in the *Latest News*. Here is an e-mail sent to us by Mrs Nita Lester, président of the *Queensland Association of Multiage*.

« I have read your special conference bulletin dated April 14 2005 and repeatedly the words 'excitement', 'future' and 'individuality' hold my attention. These were the same sentiments that drew me to multiage education in my first years of teaching and they have stood the test of time. I now promote multiage philosophy in the Teacher Training university sphere. I have the honour to witness more young teachers take up the multiage banner.

Jean-Marc Lopez asked me to write a

few words of encouragement and I do this without hesitation. My wish for success and growth is with you and your members.

Enjoy professional collegiality and rejoice in the knowledge of knowing you are making a difference ».

Dr Nita C. Lester
President of the Queensland Association of Multiage
University Lecturer, Griffith University.

<http://www.maaq.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=905>

Training on activity project

A very interesting summer course is given at the University of Illinois, by Dr Lilian Katz and Dr Sylvia C. Chard, from August 7-11, 2005:

www.conferences.uluc.edu/engaging

Study trip in New Zealand on the subject of multiage education

From July 16-27, 2005.

For several years, the *National Multiage Institute Center for Excellence in Education of Northern Arizona University* organizes this kind of trip :

<http://coe.nau.edu/academics/Programs/nat.multi.inst.php>

Miscellaneous informations

Conferences on the multiage

In Brisbane, Australia, from July 8-10, 2005, national inaugural Conference of the *Australian Association of Multiage Education*.

QMA website Here is a first glance of our association's website.

Accueil | Plan du site | Pour nous joindre | English



Qu'est-ce que l'AQM?

Historique



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Nos objectifs

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QMA membership

This list contains only the persons and the associations which agreed to have their name published in the bulletin.

Individual members

Jean-Marc Lopez, director in CPE	Montreal
Manon Ladouceur, pedagogical assistant in CPE	Montreal
Violaine Gagnon, teacher, parent, BOD member in CPE	Montreal
France Bachand, home childcare service provider (HCSP)	Montreal
Cécile Bonin, assistant director in a Community organization	Montreal
Danielle Paradis, secretary-receptionist in CPE	Montreal
Yves Lambert, pedagogical assistant in CPE	Magog
Clara Urra, pedagogical assistant in CPE	Montreal
Dr Nita C. Lester, University Lecturer	Brisbane, Australia
Sylvie Boisclair, (HCSP)	Baie-Comeau
Eva Benarroch, pedagogical coordinator in CPE	Montreal
Pierrette Blais, pedagogical assistant in CPE	Ste-Genevieve-de-Berthier
Linda Ulrich, pedagogical director in CPE	Boisbriand
Sylvie Provencher, trainer in early childhood	Charny
Louise Plourde, trainer in early childhood	Montreal
Marie-Claude Lemire, lawyer, parent in CPE	Montreal
Monique Ménard, educator in CPE	Sainte-Madeleine
Nadia Oussadi, (HCSP)	Montreal

Associative members

Childcare centers (CPE)

CPE La trottinette carottée	Montreal
CPE Chez nous c'est chez vous	Laval
CPE Les Petits Lutins	Drummondville
CPE La Girouette	Plessiville
CPE Pitchounette	Sainte-Foy
CPE des Jardins	Sainte-Foy
CPE La Maison du Panda	Dollard-des-Ormeaux
CPE Clé de Sol	Beauport
CPE Les Copains	Sainte-Foy
CPE Pierrot la lune	Longueuil
CPE Le Fou Rire	La Tuque
CPE Lachine	Lachine
CPE Calou	St-Joseph de Beauce,
CPE Monsieur Grosse Bedaine	Beauport
CPE Magimo	St-Denis-de-Brompton
CPE La Petite Bande	Princeville
CPE La Petite École	Daveluyville
CPE Chapeau de Paille	Stanstead

CPE La Petite École
CPE Les Petits Doigts
CPE Blé d'Or
CPE des Deux-Montagnes
CPE des Belles Rivières
CPE L'Enfanthèque
CPE des Jardin Jolis
CPE Le Chez Moi des Petits
CPE Grande Ourse
CPE Le Cheval Sautoir
CPE Ton Ami Pipo
CPE Les Petits Cailloux
CPE Chez Tante Juliette
CPE Fanfan Soleil
CPE Les Jeunes Pousses du Québec
CPE L'Anse aux lièvres
CPE Les Bourgeons-Soleil
CPE La Relève
CPE Les Petits Collégiens
CPE Familigarde
CPE Force Vive
CPE Centre Communautaire Les Trotinettes
CPE Vire Crêpe
CPE Tirelou
CPE Mafamigarde
CPE Au Petit Brin de Foin
CPE La Grenouille Rose
CPE Premier Pas
CPE Des Amis des Prairies
CPE La Marelle des Bois-Francis

Greenfield Park
Repentigny
Charlemagne
Deux-Montagnes
Sainte-Foy
Alma
Riviere-du-Loup
Laval
Ste-Julie
Trois-Rivieres
Saint-Eustache
Chicoutimi
Stoke
Sainte-Thérese
Napierville
Beauport
Terrebonne
Vaudreuil-Dorion
Trois-Rivieres
LaSalle
Laval
Verdun
Charny
Rawdon
Saint-Hyacinthe
Repentigny
Montreal
La Tuque
Notre-Dame-des-Plaines
Victoriaville

Others associations

Network Services in Early Childhood of Eastern Quebec
Child and Family Vision (Quebec)
Manitoba Child Care Program

Rimouski
Sillery
Winnipeg, Manitoba

You wish to write a small word of support for the multiage grouping, for our association, to draft an article, to offer your support for the implementation of multiage grouping, to speak about your practical experience of the education in multiage, in early childhood, in school or elsewhere?

Please, write to us!

info@multiage.ca

Growing through multiage grouping

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