

Multiage Grouping in Childcare

In Quebec, nearly half the children under the age of 5 attending childcare are in multiage groups. It is mostly the case in Family home daycare, recognized by a coordinating office, but we are also seeing it more and more in ICS installations. This document is an introduction to a global conception of the education of young children.



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How does multiage grouping work ?

The children in the group are at least 2 years apart in age.

The group is characterized by the concept of time that brings stability to the educators and the children.

The educators establish an educational program according to the different levels of development in children.

The educators and the children work in cooperation with each other.

What is multiage grouping ?

- It is an intentional grouping of children of various ages.
- It is an educational concept that keeps in mind the advanced discoveries in science and human psychology.
- A way to use the differences between children to favor their development.
- A vision of education attached at a philosophy of the life.

What are the principal advantages of multiage grouping ?

- Permits the integration of brothers and sisters in the same group; therefore, making life simpler for the parents.
- Reduces stress in children by avoiding a change of group every year.
- Allows the children to progress and grow at their own rate.
- Increases the children's social skills through their multiple interactions.
- Raises the self-esteem of the older children.
- Favors the integration of handicapped children or children with special needs.
- Permits follow-ups between the educators in their daily interventions.
- Offers a better service to clients.
- Eases the financial stability of childcare services with a better management of the groups.

What educators in Family home daycare have to say about multiage grouping ?

“Everyday life is more agreeable.

Children learn more quickly from other children than from adults.

The educator must have a good knowledge of the children's development and keep a watchful eye on them.

The children are less aggressive because the age difference alleviates competition.

The notion of sharing is more developed than among same age groups.

The children learn respect by having to adapt to the pace of each child.

There is a larger variety of games and use of toys.

The bonding and sense of belonging of the children is very strong.

It is easier to work with children of different ages.

The children learn much more easily to mend their differences because the older ones can become mediators”.

What educators in childcare centers have to say about multiage grouping ?

“The integration of brothers and sisters favors the family’s stability - The children do not feel excluded- Mutual assistance is important and comes naturally; the older children help the little ones - The multiple social relations between the children are in their favor when they start school - Children use to live with younger ones, that contribute to lower violence at school - The younger child learns more quickly, even when it comes to potty-training- The children’s self-esteem is enhanced because the group becomes one - The handicapped child does not carry a label because the levels of development are different for each child - The children learn respect for each other at an early age - The group knows stability - The bond child-educator becomes stronger and more solid - The relationship with the parents is one of real cooperation - There is something magical and very strong that hovers over the whole group - The thinking process is more driven, because the older child must explain things to the younger one and do so in a language that he or she will understand - The dynamics of multiage alleviate tantrums -The older children develop a social responsibility, the concern for others and a respect for diversity- The educator is not the only source of learning, for the children also learn from their peers.”



Family home daycare *Muse et Museaux*, of Montreal

References: *Growing Through Multiage Grouping*, journal of the Quebec Multiage Association.

Objectives of the Quebec Multiage Association

1. To promote the education of multiage grouping for it fosters the development of the child.
2. To create links and a network of contacts between people interested in multiage grouping.
3. Awaken the world of childcare to an effective method of pedagogical interventions.
4. Assist in the understanding and implementation of multiage grouping.
5. Distribute information.
6. Organize events that will spread the idea of multiage grouping.

QMA exists since 2005 and its members are essentially ICS and coordinating offices in Quebec, but also childcare services and people from other countries.

QMA has already organized two forums on multiage grouping; in 2007 and 2008.

Learn more about QAM visit our Internet site at: www.multiage.ca

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Actions of the Quebec Multiage Association

- We maintain an Website and an *Multiage Document Center* : www.multiage.ca
- We publish a quarterly paper; *Growing through Multiage Grouping*.
- We publish texts and documents.
- We carry-out interviews with researchers, college and university professors and also with workers from the world of childcare; such as, directors and educators from childcare centers and educators from Family home daycare, etc.
- We conduct visits to childcare services using multiage grouping.
- We maintain relations and exchange information with researchers and medical practionners.
- We hold conferences in Quebec and in other countries.
- We offer training to educators.
- We organize forums on Multiage grouping in childcare.

Future Projects of the Quebec Multiage Association

- To work out a program of improvement specialized in multiage.
- To produce a DVD and other practical tools on how to use multiage grouping.
- To establish our Internet site and our journal in english.



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