

FRAMEWORK
VALUING CHILDREN (P.8)

The Curriculum Framework values children as “curious and communicative individuals” who are “actively constructing, co-constructing and reconstructing their understanding of the world within various communities of learning (p8). This view of children remains consistent whether children are in centre or home-based care, and whether they are grouped in same-age or mixed-aged groupings.



Mixed-Age Groupings

Katz (1998) highlights the many advantages of working with mixed-age groupings. These groupings better resemble the groups children encounter in family and community life, where everyone makes a contribution according to their ability. Grouping children in this way reminds us of the richness of diversity, prompting us to provide contextually relevant tools, materials that appeal to a wide age-range, and opportunities for children to teach and learn from each other.



Mixed-age groupings are not without their challenges, especially when ages range from infancy to school age. Materials and tools that are appropriate for four-year olds are not always safe in the hands of toddlers. Some materials may need to be stored out of reach and made available to older children only when the younger children are otherwise occupied or sleeping. Some spaces may be off limits for boisterous play, to protect crawling infants and toddlers. Educators and children need to be extra vigilant. ‘Looking out for’ the younger or more vulnerable children should not be onerous, but rather the hallmark of a caring community.

Same-Age Groupings



When children are grouped according to age, differences may be less obvious, but are no less important. Within every aged group there is always a wide range of ability and experience. Ensuring each child’s full engagement and contribution requires that educators observe and respond to children’s diverse strengths and passions.

Sometimes different groups of children rotate through the space (e.g. morning and afternoon classes) and educators need to consider how each group can gain a sense of ownership and responsibility whilst acknowledging that others occupy the space in their absence. Communication between groups is essential and can be accomplished through letter writing, documentation, and displays of children’s work, all mediated by explanations from educators. One group’s work might inspire the other group to undertake a similar project, and lead to the ongoing cross-pollination of ideas.



“I feel the biggest difficulty with mixed ages is trying to have enough supplies that range through the age groups.”

“I adore having a mixed age group... we learn something new from each other every day!”

COMMUNICATION · IMAGINATION · SPIRITUALITY · ZEST FOR LIVING AND LEARNING · INCLUSIVENESS AND
 INDIVIDUALITY & INDEPENDENCE · COMPASSION AND CARING · LIVING DEMOCRATICALLY · AESTHETICS · SPIRITUALITY · ZEST FOR LIVING AND LEARNING · INCLUSIVENESS AND
 INCLUSIVENESS AND EQUITY · SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY · COMMUNICATION · IMAGINATION, CREATIVITY & PLAY · SPIRITUALITY · ZEST FOR LIVING AND
 AND INDEPENDENCE · SOCIAL

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PRIMARY AUTHOR

Tara-Lynn Scheffel, UNB Early Childhood Research and Development Team

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

- Karen Clark, Clark's Early Learning Program
- Catherine Kuwertz, Eastwood Play & Learn
- Lee Russell, Bookworm Preschool
- Valerie Russell, Teddy Bear Day Care
- Cassandra St. Louis, Precious Gems Play Centre
- Cindy Quinlan, Cindy Quinlan

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

- Heather Adams, Heather's Community Daycare
- Sylvia Arsenault, Sylvia Arsenault's Preschool
- Karen Clark, Clark's Early Learning Program
- Catherine Kuwertz, Eastwood Play & Learn
- Roberta Miller, Big Bear Preschool
- Karyn Richard, Cranberry Kids Daycare
- Lisa Richard, Backyard Treasures
- Valerie Russell, Teddy Bear Day Care
- Cassandra St. Louis, Precious Gems Play Centre
- Cindy Quinlan, Cindy Quinlan



EDITORS

- Pam Whitty, University of New Brunswick
- Pam Nason, University of New Brunswick



EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE, UNB