

# THE BENEFITS OF A MULTI-AGE CLASSROOM

At the PlayGarden we have children aged three- to six-years old in the same preschool group. We made the choice of running a multi-age classroom because we know from experience that having a variety of ages provides our children with a rich socio-emotional environment where children learn new things from one another, and younger students receive social scaffolding from older students. Scaffolding allows younger students to try new games, ways of playing, problem solving and experience greater duration of play and greater sophistication in their play. All experiences that they perhaps wouldn't have if they were in a three-year olds only classroom. In a multi-age environment, older students have the experience of sharing new ideas and skills, passing on knowledge and know-how, and developing nurturance and empathy.

We believe, it's healthy and normal for everyone to have friends of all ages, just as it is healthy to have friends of all abilities. In an inclusive environment, this multi-age aspect plays beautifully into developing the philosophy for our students, and in ourselves, that we value everyone for where they are academically, socially, and physically. There is no one standard, only our personal best. We celebrate that best as often as we can!

As a teacher, the multi-age classroom means we have a solid understanding of the development of three, four, five, and even six year olds. It means, like planning for an inclusive curriculum, we are thinking about how children of multiple ages will interact with a project, activity, concept, or experience, and how we can make it interesting for all students.

It also means that we observe the arc of our student's experiences over two or three years. We observe the way they use our space and interact with their peers and us teachers differently. We get to see the shy three year old evolve into the bold five year old, who knows school in and out, and is happy to give any visitor a full tour of the PlayGarden, and can explain everything with confidence and knowledge.

For more information on multi-age classrooms check out this article from the Stanford/Bing Nursery School: [Mixed-Aged Classrooms Provide Optimal Learning Environment](#) by Peckie Peters, 2016.

