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## Multiage education

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### Abstract

This paper is a review of the literature relative to multiage practices in education. The primary focus of this paper is to review the benefits and problems of multiage practices in today's elementary classroom. The intent of this paper is to present a balanced view of the pros and cons concerning the education of children in a multiage environment. This discussion focused on some of the problems educators face in trying to do so.

The conclusion of this study found the teacher, the parent, and the administration are vital as a cooperative unit in educating a child, as each teaching situation is different and there needs to be compromise when facing the unique challenges of multiage education.

**Multiage Education**

**A Graduate Project**

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**Department of Curriculum and Instruction**

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**UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**

**By**

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## Abstract

This paper is a review of the literature relative to multiage practices in education. The primary focus of this paper is to review the benefits and problems of multiage practices in today's elementary classroom. The intent of this paper is to present a balanced view of the pros and cons concerning the education of children in a multiage environment. This discussion focused on some of the problems educators face in trying to do so. The conclusion of this study found the teacher, the parent, and the administration are vital as a cooperative unit in educating a child, as each teaching situation is different and there needs to be compromise when facing the unique challenges of multiage education.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Multiage education is becoming an increasingly popular way to restructure schools. It is currently receiving much attention from educators and school systems and it is attracting attention because of decreasing class sizes and declining performance by students in traditional classrooms. Educators and school system administrations are looking at multiage education as a solution to these problems.

The pursuit of knowledge becomes the objective in the multiage program. The rewards of learning are internalized and are therefore more valuable. The multiage classroom resembles the family. It contains groupings of children of various ages working and playing together, clusters of youngsters learning from one another, as well as from their own endeavors. Multiage classrooms are made up of little people fighting, arguing, displaying impatience and frustrations as they learn to tolerate the diversity of others. It is a multitude of abilities, talents, and styles as well as a spectrum of ages.

#### History

Multiage classrooms are not a new concept in education. Mixed age grouping has its roots in the one room schoolhouse. One room schoolhouses were the center of American education prior to the industrial age. One room schools represent the beginning of education in our country in the 1600s. Teachers were scarce, sending a child to school cost money, and students attended irregularly for a variety of reasons, including severe weather, distance to travel, perceived importance of schooling, and required work at home. School was frequently held in a building, such as a church, that already existed. Students sat on crude benches (later

at desks) and worked from hornbooks (later slates and tablets). They memorized their lessons and recited them in turn during class.

After textbooks were available, students used them to study. Rote memorization and drill made up the curriculum. Students were grouped according to their capabilities, regardless of age. As a student achieved, he or she moved to another level or group. Teaching involved helping students learn the required curriculum, regardless of how long it took at any one level. Students of all ages worked in one room, some reading, some writing, some memorizing, and some reciting, all at the same time. They learned to work in this setting, concentrating on their own studies. If the teacher was busy, more capable students may have helped other students.

One room schoolhouses existed because of convenience and economic constraints when more people moved to a given area. Publicly supported education was adopted, and when compulsory education was enacted there was a need and desire for multiroom schools. Approximately 70% of the schools in the United States in 1918 were one room schools, while less than 1% of schools in 1980 were one room schools.

Schools increased as the population grew and students were broken up into smaller groups, and, ultimately, into one level grades for instruction. Teachers became better trained and specialized in levels of instruction. More attention was paid to what needed to be taught in each grade. Subject matter was the central focus as detailed curricula were developed for each grade in each content area. Schools became very business-like and took on more and more roles as society relinquished more and more of the responsibility it had held in the past to help develop good, moral, educated citizens.

There are many reasons why the change took place from the multiage classroom to the single age or graded classroom. The change may have occurred as a means of administrative



practicality. This concept was first introduced by Horace Mann in Massachusetts in the mid-1800s, which followed practices found in Prussia at that time. It is suggested that one reason that gradedness became popular was the development of graded material, such as the McGuffey reading series, that consisted of five separate readers following one another in levels of difficulty.

Multiage classrooms flourished again during the time of the open classroom concept in the 1960s. Early childhood programs that have used nongraded approaches include Froebelian Kindergartens, Montessori schools, and the more recent open education models such as British Infant Schools and New Zealand Schools. The popularization of stage theory, which is the idea that children's development follows predictable stages, has worked against widespread implementation of mixed ages grouping (Freedman, 1982). This is the assumption that children should be grouped according to their stage and that their age roughly predicts their stage. During the 1980s, developmentally appropriate practice became a popular theory and showed a way of thinking that opened the door to mixed age grouping. This is the concept that children develop at their own rate.

In the 1990s, many schools, school districts, and even entire states, began experimenting with multiage classrooms again. The intent of multiage grouping in the 1990s was to accommodate increased or decreased enrollments of students to meet a desired class size ratio.

There has been tremendous growth in multiage classes during the past five years. Nationally, multiage classrooms are still a small percentage of the whole. One study shows 3 to 7% of classrooms are multiage, but interest is growing (Houtz, 1996). Currently the states of Kentucky, Mississippi, and Oregon have mandated multiage programs in all primary grades

(k-3). Each of the states has set up different criteria to follow in their programs. Alaska, California, Florida, Georgia, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Texas are also considering the implementation of multiage education.

### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to determine if multiage classrooms are more beneficial for students than single age classrooms. To accomplish this purpose, this paper will address the following questions:

1. What is multiage education?
2. What are the benefits of a multiage program?
3. What are the problems involved in setting up a multiage program?
4. What are the implementation needs for a multiage program?

### Need for the Study

Multiage education is becoming an increasingly popular way to restructure schools. It is currently receiving much attention from educators and school systems. It is attracting this attention because of decreasing class sizes and declining performance by students in traditional classrooms. Educators and school system administrations are looking at multiage education as a solution to these problems.

### Limitations of the Study

The literature examined for this study was mainly limited to materials presently available from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Limited access to professional materials

was accommodated by Iowa Western Community College, Inter-Library Loan System of Iowa, and materials in the professional library at Loess Hills Education Agency.

### Definitions of Terms

For purposes in this paper, the following terms will be defined in the following way:

**Authentic Assessment:** Performance assessment closely connected to the *real world*.

Usually done by observations.

**Cooperative learning:** Children involved in face to face interaction and in sharing responsibility for learning, and shared leadership.

**Cross age tutoring:** Different competencies of children of different abilities or ages as they work in pairs.

**Developmentally appropriate practice:** Providing curriculum and instruction that addresses the physical, social, intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic needs of young learners and permit a student to progress through an integrated curriculum at the student's own rate and pace.

**Looping:** Having teachers stay with the same class for two consecutive grade levels.

All of these are used to mean looping: teacher-student progression, multiyear teaching assignment, and the 20 month classroom.

**Multiage grouping:** Placing children who are at least one year apart in age into the same classroom groups. All of these are used to mean mixed age grouping: heterogeneous grouping, vertical grouping, family grouping, and mixed age grouping.

**Nongraded schools:** Intended to homogenize groups for instruction by ability or developmental level rather than by age.

**Peer tutoring:** A one to one teaching process in which the tutor is of the same general academic status as the tutee.

**Public Law 94-142:** The Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975.

**Zone of proximal development:** Distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Benefits of a Multiage Program

Terms such as multiage, blends, vertical or family grouping, nongraded or ungraded, multigraded, multiage continuous progress, and mixed age are used to describe the placement of children in varying ages, grades, and ability levels in the same classroom with the goal of improving learning for all of them. The goal is to let students develop at their own pace, ignoring age, and to encourage students who have mastered skills to help teach others those skills. In multiage classrooms, which are more common at the primary level, students often remain with the same teacher or team for more than one year. In these nongraded programs, grade distinctions are often eliminated or de-emphasized.

There are benefits for both teachers and students in a multiage classroom. Some of the positive effects are easily seen and measured and others are more intangible. Most of the benefits stem from how the child learns in a multiage classroom and the increased amount of time that teachers and students work together, since most multiage programs pair the same teacher and students together for two or more years.

One benefit is that the school adjusts its curriculum to the child because many children develop in one area more quickly than in another. Each child has his or her own timetable and that timetable comes with the child (Grant & Johnson, 1995). Multiage programs provide an efficient, effective learning environment, and some research tends to favor more academic achievement in multiage rooms because there are more opportunities for students to work at

their own level. The multiage model is based on a philosophical commitment to the needs of the individual rather than the group. Instruction itself is learner centered.

Most children are not equally mature in all domains of development at a given time. For example, a child might be considerably more able in verbal reasoning but less socially adept than age mates. The mixture of ages may increase a teacher's awareness of developmental discrepancies within a particular child.

A mixture of ages within a class can be particularly desirable for children functioning below age group norms in some areas of their development. These children may find it less stressful to interact with younger peers in areas in which they lag behind their age mates. Such interaction with younger peers can enhance motivation and self-confidence in other children (Katz, 1990). Multiage grouping also provides younger children with opportunities for more complex pretend play that they could initiate themselves.

Peer tutoring in multiage classrooms reinforces learning for all students involved. Younger children have a preview of what they will eventually be able to do. This is advantageous because it provides the opportunity for *academic eavesdropping* and other ways to move ahead at their own rate (Grant & Johnson, 1995). There is an opportunity for all children to be both the younger and older members of a peer group. Many children do not possess the skills and characteristics that enable them to emerge as a leader in a group of peers; however, with sufficient age disparity, most children can attain leadership status with younger children. Therefore, mixed age groups provide appropriate contexts in which children can practice leadership skills.

Children of different ages are usually aware of the differences and attributes associated with age. Consequently, both younger and older children in mixed age groups differentiate

their behavior and vary their expectations, depending on the ages of the participants. Multiage group interaction elicits specific prosocial behaviors such as helping, sharing, and taking turns, which are important in the social development of children.

Another benefit involves cooperation and collaboration. The classroom does not focus on competition between same-age children. A child can work with children of similar skill level but of different chronological ages. A child can reinforce a newly learned skill by teaching it to another child. When older children *teach* newly learned skills to younger classmates, they strengthen their own understanding of these skills. Collaboration is developed through cooperative learning. Students may become more accepting of themselves and others. Multiyear placement encourages trust, bonding, and a sense of belonging.

Some people believe that the growing diversity of the student population works to the advantage of multiage programs. Two reports stated that “multiage education may have special benefits for boys, African Americans, underachievers, and students of lower socioeconomic status” (Daniel, 1995, p.53). Some students’ backgrounds may make it more difficult for them to learn. The program accommodates diversity and inclusiveness. It has been found that at-risk students can be completely mainstreamed through the team teaching continuous progress model of the multiage classroom. This is the model in which teachers can serve as consulting teachers or learning lab teachers. Also, better mental health and greater self-esteem occur in multiage programs (Daniel, 1995).

There are many benefits associated with teachers and students working together for more than one year. At the start of the school year, the teacher already knows a majority of the class, and students do not worry as much about starting a new school year as they would with an unknown teacher. The children will also know what the teacher expects in terms of

behavior and academics, it will save a lot of time, and it will allow for more academics to be taught. A multiyear program also gives the teacher more time to understand the family situation and to learn the impact that it has on the child's school performance. Sometimes a multiage class may be the most consistent aspect of a student's life.

Another benefit for having the same students another year is that the teacher does not have to accelerate and squeeze everything in one year. The teacher knows when a student is struggling with a certain concept. Also the teacher can make sure that the material is understood. This professional can get a better understanding of childrens' needs, their strengths and weaknesses, and how they learn best. Most of all, having two years to work with a group of children means having twice as much impact on them.

Children are not *promoted* nor do they *fail* in a multiage program. Because children progress through sequential curriculum at different paces, they are allowed to progress in all areas as they acquire competence. Retention is avoided because of its serious impact on self-esteem and the practice of retaining children in a grade for another year disproportionately affects the following groups: males, minorities, the very young, and low income children. The program is designed to fit the needs of all children.

What is new in education is often what is old. And so it is with the new *old* practice of teachers remaining with the same students for more than one year. Though most commonly used in Germany, looping is not a new idea in this country. It has been around since the one room schoolhouse. Research does not support greater cognitive or affective growth in children who have experienced looping.

Student success is determined, in part, by the teacher's knowledge and understanding of the student learner: the student's learning style, academic strengths and weaknesses, and



personality traits. With the multiyear experience, teachers have a longer time frame with the students during which they can relate, interrelate, and integrate the curriculum to meet individual student group needs. When teachers know they have at least two years during which to cover curriculum, content, and skills work, and to review content and assess progress, they have more flexibility and can be more creative.

Teachers are more accountable for student progress and achievement. They teach the students for two or more years and are aware of the increased responsibility on themselves to ensure their students' progress. Because students and teachers know they will see each other again in August, the summer is an ideal time for teachers to maintain a connection with the students through projects, journals, and correspondence. Further, the first few weeks of the new school year are not devoted to *getting to know you* activities.

The potential for building stronger school home partnerships is greater with multiyear organization. Rather than having to establish communication with families each year, teachers need only reconnect and move forward in the second year and beyond. Teachers and parents communicate better because they have a longer term relationship.

Providing stability in our young children's lives is critical. Given today's less than traditional family situations, a multiyear model is a way to provide stability in the often unstable lives of children.

School leaders who use looping say it reduces discipline problems and increases attendance for both students and teachers (Grant, 1996). In a looping class, the first several weeks of the school year are spent on the curriculum, not learning names, going over classroom rules, reviewing the previous year's material, and assessing students' skills.

For young children lagging behind their peers, especially in reading, looping can also keep them from repeating a grade or being referred to special education. That is because teachers do not have to make those crucial decisions based on a single year's performance.

Looping is about giving children extra time (Grant, 1997). For many teachers, looping also increases job satisfaction because they get to see children learn concepts that were initially beyond their grasp. Educators using looping are far more certain about the social benefits than they are its ability to boost academic performance.

Looping generally gets high ratings from parents, however, some said their children had suffered in school by having a poor teacher for two years. Looping advocates agree that there must be alternatives available to parents and students who do not want the same teacher for two years.

Multiage programs also have the benefit of bringing together practices at the forefront of current teaching techniques. Some of these techniques include team teaching, cooperative learning, literature based reading, and it reduces pull out programs for remedial and special education students. Multiage programs also provide long term benefits because learning is experienced as something personal and it lays the ground work for life-long learning.

## CHAPTER I I I

### PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN SETTING UP A MULTIAGE PROGRAM

Multiage programs have problems as well as benefits. In fact, what some people might see as a benefit, others will see as a problem. For example, students learning at their own pace is seen as a benefit to a multiage program; however, other people see this situation as not pushing the child to achieve his or her potential. As mentioned earlier, community support for the program is important and many people will not support radical changes.

There is no guarantee student's learning will improve in a multiage grouping. Research only shows that students in a multiage classroom perform, about the same academically, as students in a traditional classroom (Brynes, 1994). Multiage classrooms can be noisy and disruptive, which, according to some educators, is not conducive to learning. Some students may excel in a multiage classroom, but others will not. If a teacher and student have a personality conflict, the child may be forced to stay with that same teacher for two or more years. This could cause serious learning problems for the child.

Multiage environments not only affect students, but also the teacher. Teachers must be flexible and willing to change to this type of program and some teachers are not. If teachers give full support to a multiage program, then learning will occur. If teachers are not fully behind the program, then less learning occurs.

It is difficult to find suitable textbooks because most textbooks are generally designed to follow grade level curriculum. Some materials for whole language reading, manipulative math, and technology writing are suitable for a multiage program. The lack of materials for

ungraded approaches makes it difficult for teachers who may want to implement a program, but do not have the confidence to strike out on their own (Daniel, 1995).

Multiage classrooms are more expensive because teachers need materials that appeal to a diverse group. It is more costly because a good program requires trade books, manipulatives, and new furniture, such as tables instead of desks to accommodate cooperative grouping. More personnel, such as paraprofessionals or volunteers, are required because of the diversity of curriculum being taught at any one time and the fact that most teachers are not trained to handle at-risk or gifted students. Training must be considered and even experienced teachers will need more guidance, support, and administrative help, especially during the first year.

Time and preparation demands on the multiage program will be greater than those imposed by the traditional single age program. Teachers will spend much more time planning and keeping records. Time for teachers to plan should be built into the school day, but usually this does not happen. There is also more strain and pressure on teachers who are trying to reach each child's abilities.

Another problem is that *kid watching* also takes time (Daniel, 1995). The teacher needs time to make notes on each child's progress and time is needed after class to organize the notes. Setting aside 15 to 20 minutes each day for *kid watching* may be necessary. Focusing on a specific number of kids each day, which would enable the whole class to be covered once a week, is recommended. The teacher also has to learn to *tune out* trouble makers and focus on the specific students for the day.

In a multiage classroom, there needs to be a balance of boys, girls, gifted, remedial, at-risk, and handicapped students, and usually there is not (Moyer, 1992). Too many disruptive

students will strain any program and a multiage classroom is no exception. If too many students fall into the high or low category, there is the possibility that the other end will be overlooked.

Frustrations are perceived as growing out of limitations set by school district expectations for student outcomes, parental expectations, and lack of understanding, textbook and material inappropriateness, lack of planning time, traditional teacher antagonism, and lack of space. Multiage grouping is not a remedy (Moyer, 1992). It will not create good teachers or schools out of poor ones. It will not automatically create a better learning environment or greater opportunity for students. As with any innovation, the individual teacher is the key to success. It takes a knowledgeable, caring, and committed teacher to successfully implement multiage grouping.

## CHAPTER IV

### IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTIAGE PROGRAMS

One of the main reasons for the resurrection of multiage concepts has been the change of the primary focus in education, from subject matter to the needs of each child. Children develop at different rates, at different times, and in different ways. Multiage grouping, when thoughtfully planned, can allow children of various abilities and age levels to work and learn in an environment where they can be successful at their own developmental level. The multiage classroom gives students more time to develop, grow, and understand. This is not unlike the one room school of the past.

Dynamic interaction among children of different developmental levels, interests, skills, and learning styles happens in a multiage program. Hallion (1994) wrote that the social-emotional benefits of the multiage classroom are the following:

The older students in the program have improved leadership skills, while at risk students achieve greater social success. Students with behavior problems are able to control their behavior because they are asked to remind younger students to follow and obey the rules.

In multiage classrooms younger children are stimulated by and model the behavior of older children. Older children act as tutors to younger classmates while reinforcing their own learning in the process.

Alternative assessment in a multiage classroom takes the place of test scores and report cards. Students are made to feel they are responsible for their own learning and are always winners in their attempts. They *continually progress* and participate in assessing their progress. Children do not fail in a multiage classroom.

Teachers should try to implement various forms of assessment. Authentic assessment is evaluation that is continuous. It reflects actual learning experiences that can be documented through observation, anecdotal records, work samples, journals, and conferences. Performance tasks, such as demonstrating one way to solve a math problem, are informative for teachers, students, and the class. Journals can be a source of evaluation of students progress in writing. When used as ongoing assessment tools rather than just collections of work, portfolios are a very valuable means of assessment. Anecdotal records and checklists of age appropriate skills are probably the most beneficial forms of assessment for the teacher. An important, but often forgotten, part of evaluation involves self-evaluation and peer evaluation. These forms of evaluation can be some of the most honest and valuable in assessing student progress.

In a multiage classroom, the role of the teacher changes from that of a teacher in a single age room. The multiage teacher must move from the role of giver or dispenser of knowledge to that of curriculum developer and facilitator for a child's learning (Daniel & Terry, 1995). Teachers must be trained for their new roles in the classroom because it is critical for both teacher and student success.

Six key instructional dimensions have been identified by Miller (1991) from research that affects multigrade teaching which include: 1) instructional organization and curriculum planning; 2) classroom organization; 3) classroom management and discipline; 4) instructional delivery and grouping; 5) student self-directed learning; and 6) peer tutoring. Instructional organization and curriculum planning is based on an integrated curriculum which was a thematic approach. When organizing the classroom, the environment must provide enough space for students to work in small groups, large groups, and independently. Classroom management requires that procedures and routines be used. Instructional delivery

and grouping should be a combination of whole, small group, and individual instruction. Self-directed learning occurs when students have the opportunity to learn how they can help themselves and others in the class. Peer tutoring involves children, who have mastered a concept, helping others who are still in the beginning stages. Teachers need to keep these dimensions in mind when working in multiage settings.

A tremendous step is taken when making the transition from a single age classroom to a multiage classroom. It would be unrealistic to say that schools can be completely reorganized into multiage classrooms in a few months or even a year for the following factors must be considered: teacher training, parental support, and communication tactics.

Teachers need adequate training for a smooth transition because they have been trained to think in terms of grades. Unfortunately, when changing to multiaged programs, schools tend to jump on the bandwagon and do not adequately prepare teachers for dealing with this new concept. Often this leads to failure of the program. Some teachers may not be prepared for major structural changes. Studies on the effectiveness of multiage grouping reveal that the most critical factor is the skill of the teacher. Teachers must have the proper training before implementing the program.

Implementing a multiage classroom is hard work and teacher burnout, especially in the first couple of years, tends to be high. This is because the teacher has to blend two or more years of curriculum into lesson plans that will work for one mixed age group of students. This explains why the move to multiage programs is more successful when teachers are involved in the planning as well as the implementation.

Family support in a multiage program is vital. Without support from parents, the program is destined for failure. If a new program is not understood by everyone involved,



word of mouth can be damaging. Making a family/teacher partnership work takes a lot of time and energy on the part of the school, and most importantly the teacher. Families need to be kept informed and updated on changes or community support will erode. Schools should hold meetings to explain the change to multiage programs. More than one meeting may be necessary because not everyone will be able to attend at the same time. The school should also send newsletters to the parents with basic information about the program and encourage questions from the families. In addition, schools should invite families and community members to visit the classrooms. By seeing the program in action, parents are able to make better informed decisions about the program. Open communication is vital to the success of the multiage program.

There is a rule of thumb that one-third of any group of families will be happy to follow the teacher's advice about their child's placement (Grant & Johnson, 1995). Another one-third will want more information, especially if it is a new program. The final one-third will be unhappy with change of any kind. They will not accept change and they do not want their child to be a part of it. When a multiage program is implemented, it should not be a *this or nothing* program in the school. Within the school, there should be room for family choice. Options are needed when implementing a new multiage program. Families should be able to choose if they want their child in the program or not. If schools respect the families wishes, they involve community support and increase the chances of success.

It would be very unusual to have complete satisfaction of all families, especially during the first few years of the program. Families who were slow to become involved during the first year often become more active in the second year. The second year families are

invaluable to teachers in reaching out to new families and helping them to understand the program.

There is no one way to set up a multiage program because a successful program in one school may not meet the needs of another school. Most multiage programs are similar, but not identical. It is recommended to those thinking of implementing a multiage program to study other successful multiage programs and adapt those practices which are right for their own schools.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to analyze the literature that describes the practices of a multiage program. The focus was to determine what is multiage education, the benefits, the problems, and implementing such a program. The following questions were addressed:

1. What is multiage education?
2. What are the benefits of a multiage program?
3. What are the problems involved in setting up a multiage program?
4. What are the implementation needs for a multiage program?

Multiage programs are supported by the research of prominent multiage advocates such as John Goodlad, Jim Grant, Robert Anderson, and Lilian Katz. Problems, however, were found to be the following: teachers must be willing to change to this type of program, parental concerns about the structure of the program, and limited resources and money for many multiage programs.

True nongradedness is still relatively rare and must be developed in conjunction with other educational innovations, such as team teaching and heterogeneous grouping, if it is to flourish. Strategies for planning, implementing, and testing programs must be perfected and extensive teacher retraining programs must be organized and carried out. If multiage programs are to become a meaningful and working alternative to graded education, then a thorough overhauling of the entire educational system will be required.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, the lack of understanding about multiage programs on the part of many parents, teachers, and administrators is largely the result of professionals' failure to clearly articulate what they do, and how they do it.

The following conclusions were made from this study:

1. There are choices in education and there needs to be balance in the extremes of educating young children. Setting up an environment conducive for learning at all developmental levels is not an easy task. One must be realistic relative to the problems and hurdles that educators need to try to overcome and deal with individually.
2. Operating in a professional manner, from a knowledge base of early childhood research and theory, will enable success to prevail for the learner only if the teacher is allowed to become autonomous in the teaching, decision-making process concerning a given classroom of students.
3. The teacher, the parent, and the administration are vital as a cooperative unit in educating a child; however, each teaching situation is different, and there needs to be compromise when facing the unique challenges of multiage education. There does not appear to be one single exact prescription for the best approach. Some middle ground must be found with the teacher using his or her natural instincts about what is best for the child.

Clearly more research is needed, but evidence reported, thus far, gives us confidence in the value of developing appropriate curriculum and teaching strategies for mixed age grouping in the early years.

## Recommendations

Having completed the study, the following recommendations are suggested for improving the implementation and acceptance of multiage programs:

1. There needs to be a balance between multiage practices and problems and needs arising from the policies and interpretations of the concept.
2. Parents need to be informed prior to implementation of any multiage program, relative to the program content and curriculum philosophy.
3. Adequate training and resources need to be available for the multiage programs to be successfully implemented.
4. There needs to be a clear understanding of multiage education for parents, staff members, and administrators.

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