

Caregiver Chronicle

3 SIMPLE TIPS TO TEACH MIXED AGE GROUPS

Have you ever wondered how you can successfully balance a mixed age group? These are [classroom management tips](#) to teach mixed-age groups, so that you can help all of your students, whether they have just entered preschool or if they are about to head to kindergarten.

The first year that I worked with mixed-ages was a complete culture shock to me compared to the years I had taught just 3-year-olds. Initially, I thought that putting mixed ages together was crazy! Some days it felt that my 3- to 5-year-olds were five years apart instead of just two.

How was I supposed to meet the emotional needs of the younger children and prepare my older ones for kindergarten? And at the same time? I had little ones who could barely speak sentences or follow directions, and I was desperately trying to help the older ones learn to write their names and find activities that were at their level.

I wanted to divide them all: the 3s, the 4s, and the 5s. I insisted that they didn't belong together. Even though I felt like I didn't accomplish hardly anything that year, I didn't run away from teaching mixed age groups — and the unexpected happened. I started to like my mixed-age class. In fact, I love mixed-age classes so much that I actually prefer them now.

Teaching Tips for Mixed Age Groups

Here are my tips for teaching mixed-ages that really work.

1) **Set out open-ended activities.** Unit blocks, magna-tiles, LEGO bricks,

play dough, and sensory tubs became my staple learning activities (as well as any other open-ended materials). Children of all ages love them, and a 3-year-old has as much to learn from using them as the 4- and 5-year-olds.

While a younger child at a water table is mastering pouring, scooping, and cause and effect . . .



2) Put out materials that interest children and support them where they are and beyond.

When you arrange an environment with learning centers, you can easily meet the needs of children by having materials with various difficulty levels. A writing center with alphabet stamps, markers, crayons, and pencils allows opportunities for children to explore literacy at all levels . . .

3) Encourage peer learning.

It is no secret that children interact differently with their peers than with adults. One of my favorite sights is seeing children help one another and teach one each other. It comes quite naturally to many of them. And in any classroom, even with same ages, children have different abilities and skills . . .

For the complete article, visit : [\(https://www.pre-kpages.com/teaching-mixed-age-groups/\)](https://www.pre-kpages.com/teaching-mixed-age-groups/)

BIO: Katie Turner writes at [Preschool Inspirations](#) and has been teaching and administrating preschool and early childhood programs for a total of 14 years. Classroom management is a favorite topic for her and you can read her take . . .

Contact Us:

Sydney Lindenfelser
763-783-4881
slindenfelser@accap.org

Doreen Jackson
763-783-4891
djackson@accap.org

Allison Frey
763-783-4823
afrey@accap.org

Stacy French
763-792-8759
sfrench@accap.org

Tara Johnson
763-792-8713
tjohnson@accap.org

Ashley Skogen
763-783-4736
askogen@accap.org

Annette Borman
763-783-4711
aborman@accap.org

Lori Schmidt
763-783-4973
lschmidt@accap.org

Terri Hoffman
763-324-2362
thoffman@accap.org

Gail Wincek-Balcerzak
763-783-4750
gwincek-balcerzak@accap.org

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Language development is central to most academic learning and social relationships, and it begins long before children speak words.

Ann Derr brings more than 30 years of experience in early childhood special education, with a focus on linguistically diverse families, in this Mom Enough show. On behalf of **Help Me Grow**, who sponsored her appearance, Ann provides guidance on supporting optimal language development; understanding the effects of bilingualism in early childhood; recognizing signs that language development might not be on track; and knowing where to turn if you have questions or concerns. Listen to this important conversation and share with parents and other caregivers of babies and young children. <http://momenough.com/2016/10/young-childs-language-development>



Week of the Young Child—April 8-12

<https://www.naeyc.org/events/woyc>

Join the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) April 8–12, 2019 for five fun-filled, themed days to celebrate of our youngest learners! The Week of the Young Child™ is an annual celebration hosted by NAEYC to spotlight early learning, young children, their teachers, families, and communities.

This year NAEYC is asking members, centers, higher ed programs, and everyone else in the early education community to Step It Up (SIU) during WOYC™. We kept the same daily themes, but we challenge YOU to expand them! Spread the word about the importance of high-quality early learning, and the critical role early childhood educators play in a child's development and learning.

Children learn so much as they enjoy music, explore food and cooking, build together, create art, and celebrate their families! Get inspired by the activities below and start planning your celebration today!

Music Monday

On April 8, NAEYC's 2019 WOYC™ kicks off with Music Monday! When children sing, dance, and listen to music, they develop their language and early literacy skills while being active and encouraging movement. Make up and record your own unique version of a song or write your own, and share it on NAEYC's Facebook WOYC event page or post to Twitter and Instagram using the hashtag #woyc19

Tasty Tuesday

On April 9, focus on healthy eating and fitness at home and school! This fun, food-themed day is about more than just cheese and crackers. Cooking

together connects math with literacy skills, science, and more. With the rise in childhood obesity, you can encourage healthy nutrition and fitness habits at home and in the classroom. Create your own healthy snacks and share the recipes and photos of your creations.



Work Together Wednesday

NAEYC's 2019 WOYC™ rolls along on April 10 with Work Together Wednesday! When children build together they explore math and science concepts and develop their social and early literacy skills. Children can use any building material—from a fort of branches on the playground to a block city in the classroom, or a hideaway made from couch pillows at home. Build and share pictures of children's creations.

Artsy Thursday

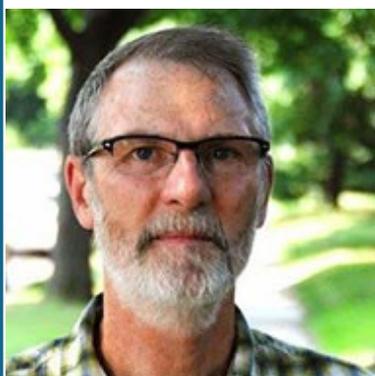
Think, problem solve, create! NAEYC's WOYC™ continues on April 11 with Artsy Thursday. Children develop creativity, social skills and fine motor skills with open-ended art projects where they can make choices, use their imaginations, and create with their hands. On Artsy Thursday celebrate the joy and learning children experience when engaged in creative art making. Use any materials—from crayons to paint, clay to crafts! Create and share photos of your children's creations.

Family Friday

WOYC™ wraps up with Family Friday on April 12. Engaging and celebrating families is at the heart of supporting our youngest learners. NAEYC applauds family members' role as young children's first and most important teachers. Share pictures and stories about your family.



Join Us in Anoka County for a Conversation About Powerful Interactions With Our Guest Jonathan Fribley

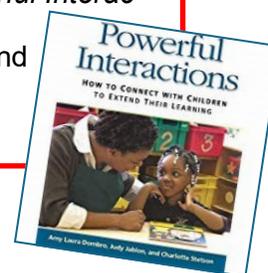


Jonathan Fribley's passion is to assist early educators in bringing our best selves to our lives with children. Jonathan supports the growth of early educators and young children as a learning partner – coach, mentor, facilitator. His work addresses adult-child interactions and relationships, early language and literacy, assessment and children's thinking. He develops and leads workshops, coordinates projects, and collaborates with early educators and administrators. Jonathan has over 30 years of experience as an early educator and in guiding educators, including coordinating and leading professional development for major federal early childhood grant projects. He has assisted public schools, Head Start agencies, nonprofit organizations, childcare providers, charter schools, and state agencies in over 20 states—connecting professional development to practices that make a difference in the lives of children and early educators.

This Professional Learning Community Meeting will be held Tuesday, March 12, 2019

6:30pm to 8:30pm at:
Blaine Human Service Center
1201 89th Ave NE, Suite 345
Blaine MN 55330

Meeting participants will receive a copy of the book *Powerful Interactions*, by Amy Laura Dombro, Judy Jablon, and Charlotte Stetson (while supplies last!)



PLEASE RSVP TO ANNETTE BORMAN
aborman@accap.org or 763-783-4711

Space is limited!

You are invited to the Washington County Professional Learning Community

Join the meeting with Lori Hameister to learn about the discipline method 1-2-3 Magic!

Kids are just kids! In addition to being delightful, charming and affectionate, child can also present the adults in their lives with a steady diet of difficult behavior: whining, arguing, teasing, fighting, yelling, tantrums and pouting. The 1-2-3 Magic! program has practical and easy to use discipline techniques for families and educators. You will come away from his training with some techniques that are down to earth, kid friendly and make a dramatic impact in a short time.

Lori has operated Little Bit of Guidance: Early Childhood Training & Mentoring since 1999. She specializes in trainings relating to theme-based curriculum, behavior guidance, "I am Moving, I am Learning" and the Business of Family Child Care.

With 20 years of experience operating her own family child care business, Lori enjoys sharing many of her own experiences with other early childhood professionals in hopes that it will help them to enhance their professional careers.

This Professional Learning Community Meeting will be held Thursday, March 21, 2019

6:30pm to 8:30pm at:
Peace of Mind Early Education Center
9025 Tamarack Rd.
Woodbury MN 55125

**PLEASE RSVP TO:
ANNETTE BORMAN
aborman@accap.org
or 763-783-4711**

We hear a lot about academics and early childhood education. For some, that means reducing or removing some of the “play” stuff and doing more activities that focus on literacy (and math). But the great thing about early childhood education is that all of these things can be woven together. Opportunities to write fit easily with **dramatic play** in the preschool classroom.

Why Incorporate Writing?

Preschoolers learn more when they are interested and engaged. If your preschoolers are interested in writing, they will want to do it. If they see that writing is a part of their play, they will want to do it. On the other hand, if they are not interested in writing, they will not be ready to learn it. We cannot make their brains be ready for learning. So, if we offer the tools and include writing as a part of whatever else we’re doing, then writing becomes a part of play. Preschoolers have a reason to want to write.

Writing for adults is a tool – for learning, for remembering, for sharing ideas, for helping others. Look for ways to help preschoolers see you use writing (both in the classroom and in your personal life). Comment that you are writing a note so you will remember to bring something tomorrow. Tell them you are writing a note to moms and dads so parents will know what you did at school today. Make and post a list of things you are doing in the classroom...and check them off as you do them. When preschoolers see you write with a purpose, they will be more motivated in using writing themselves.

Simple Ways to Incorporate Writing in Dramatic Play

Add notepads and pencils to your home or dramatic play area. Encourage preschoolers to use them in their play. We always use pads and pencils when we are using telephones. Kids naturally begin to take notes or jot down numbers. They may also use notepads in their home play, writing notes to one another about things that need to be done.

When you play grocery store or bookstore (or other store-related dramatic play), offer pads and pencils for making lists. Provide self-stick notes so children can make price tags. Offer paper and markers to make signs. Think of ways that writing naturally fits in the store setting and add related tools.



Clipboards and forms (real or pretend) are great for medical play and office play. Kids see adults filling out forms and checking boxes, so this is another natural connection between play and the written word. Include forms in any kind of doctor play, vet clinic play, or office setting.

Restaurant play also provides natural opportunities to write. Menus and server pads encourage writing. We see children copying food words from menus or signs.

Add clipboards with paper and pencils when you are using tools. Preschoolers can jot down measurements, draw plans, and add notes to other workmen.

Writing Is Communication

Use waiting lists. We use waiting lists at the easel or for other activities that only one or two kids can do at a time. Kids add their names to the list. As kids finish, the next child is called and offered an opportunity to do it. When we had a keyboard for office play, several kids wanted to play at a time. One boy asked for paper and started a waiting list on his own. THAT’S using purposeful writing.

And, of course, post office and communication play is a great way for written communication to take center stage. Provide different kinds of stationery and envelopes. Add small boxes or cubbies for mailboxes. Labels or small stickers make great stamps. Include a list of all the children’s names so friends can write to one another.

As you think about your different types of dramatic play, you can see where opportunities to write would fit: school, police officer, library, garden, farm’s market, and gift wrap center.

If you do not regularly have a writing center, store paper and tools on a shelf or table in a corner of the room.

Teach kids that these tools are always available and ready for use. Then your children can go and get them when they need to jot a note or print words as they play.

And sometimes, you get a treasured keepsake written just for you.

<https://www.pre-kpages.com/writing-dramatic-play-center/>

BIO: Scott Wiley, an early childhood educator for over 25 years, is managing editor for Pre-K Pages. He blogs at **Brick by Brick**, exploring the connection between play and learning. Connect with Scott on **Twitter**, **Facebook**, and **Pinterest**.