**Rationale**

St. Paul’s School has adopted Multi-Age groupings because research and Teacher readiness, indicated towards the end of 2009 that this approach would cater best for different ages and stages of development. Evidence tells us that Multi-Age groupings provides the opportunities for children to interact in a co-operative learning environment where curriculum areas are based on developmental principles, (very similar to peer grouping in the home/family setting.)

**Description**

Multi-Age is the acknowledgment that age and year levels are not appropriate criteria for learning expectations of children. The Multi-Age structure accepts that children develop at different rates.

Defining features of Multi-Age are:-

1. Multi-Age groupings help teachers to focus more upon mixed ability learning.
2. The teaching process is further enhanced when children are given the opportunity to work together in Multi-Age groupings.
3. In a Multi-Age setting, children are given a greater opportunity to learn from each other.
4. Multi-Age learning promotes a greater variety of learning activities and skills.
5. When a student is assisting another, he/she is in actual fact consolidating his/her own learning.
6. Children progress within units according to their individual stages of development.
7. Teachers are able to provide very specific teaching and intervention across the Developmental domains of the children.

**Implementation**

The Leadership, Unit Leaders and whole school staff are jointly responsible for the Multi-Age Program from P – 6 at St Paul’s.

**Explanations of groupings for teaching Multi-Age.**

The Rational and what we know about Developmental Learning, highlights the flexibility of the structure of various groupings allowing for freedom of change, as deemed necessary by teacher’s (whose job it is to know) For example, one year a prep/one/two unit may exist and the following year a two/three/four unit may be implemented or a 3/4 or 5/6 combination in a unit. It also is dependant on the number of children in a specific area of the school.
The characteristics below of Multi-Age are being implemented at St Paul’s.

♦ Leadership skills among the older children.
♦ A greater rapport within the school community and a respect for those older and younger within a learning group.
♦ Peer support and tutor programs are easily attainable and can be readily organised with in a class or unit.
♦ Recognition that children’s social and intellectual development is diverse.
♦ Children learning through the modelling of others.
♦ Children working in a co-operative environment as compared to a solely competitive one.
♦ Children working at their individual levels regardless of age.
♦ A flexible approach to teaching and learning.
♦ Opportunities for interaction between different age groups.
♦ The children are presented with open ended situations and are encouraged to take risks with their learning.
♦ Every child in a Multi-Age classroom is presented with situations which are appropriate to his/her own development, therefore older and brighter students are not held back.
♦ Children beginning school still have a ‘special year’ because there are only a small number of beginning students in the class as compared to an entire class of “Preps”.

Resources

The resources that we have to implement the Multi-Age program are:-

* Staff expertise
* Other Multi-Age schools (St Joseph’s Warnambool, Emmaus School Ballarat.)
* Extracts from educational journals
* School resources
* “First Steps’ Handbooks.

Evaluation of our Progress and Process

Evaluation will be carried out through parent surveys,(after they have experienced their child learning in a Multi – Age unit) monitoring the development of children, observations, questioning, and educational research findings.