

FYI: INFORMATION ABOUT HOW CLASSROOM GROUPINGS ARE DETERMINED AT TCW

How are children grouped in TCW classrooms? Each year, we determine the age parameters for our classrooms based upon the composition of the group of children who are enrolled and those who have applied. This flexible approach allows us to create groupings that accommodate the needs and ages of the specific student population each year, instead of fitting children into a rigid, predetermined age range for each classroom. For example, one year we may find that we have a bulge in the number of four year olds and the next year, we may have an unusually large group of young threes and therefore, each year we have to plan based on the different demographics. Therefore, we may group children in classrooms with an age range of one year, in multi-aged classrooms in which the age spread may be up to eighteen months or, in a combination of both. What remains constant is that all of our classrooms reflect the knowledge that children learn and develop in their individual style and pace, that chronological age does not determine development and that all children work and learn best under the guidance of skilled and caring early childhood educators in an environment intentionally designed to accommodate individual temperaments, learning styles, interests and a range of developmental levels across all domains. Children are supported to build on their strengths and acquire new skills as they learn through play and exploration, interact with their peers and develop the self help skills and awareness of community that are crucial to their future school success. What makes this possible is our excellent teacher/child ratio, varying between 1:4 to 1:6, which enables teachers to get to know each child and individualize teaching strategies that will most effectively foster his/her growth and development.

Does each classroom have a designated age group that remains the same from year to year? No, as described above the age parameters in our classrooms may vary from year to year depending upon the pool of applicants. For example, one year the age range in the Bunny class was 2ys. - 2yrs.11mos and the following year it was 2yrs. 6mos. - 3yrs. 4mos.

What criteria are used for placement? Classroom groupings are created to maintain a balance in age, individual styles and needs and gender.

Do children always move on as a group from year to year? Not always. Each year, we are presented with a unique set of factors that determines how we create classroom groupings. We usually begin the placement process by placing an existing class of children together and then assess whether this achieves the required balance in age, individual needs and styles, gender and honors families' scheduling needs. In some instances this works out well, and sometimes it is beneficial to the overall needs of the program to divide the group. These decisions are made with a tremendous amount of thought about what is best for each child and every effort is made to ensure that several children returning from one class are placed together.

Why do some children "loop" i.e. stay in the same classroom for two years? When children spend a year as one of the younger students in a multi-aged classroom and that room continues as a multi-aged class the following year, many of them will be placed in that same classroom for a second year. In this case, children start the year being familiar with the classroom space and routines and take pride in being the "old pros" and mentoring their peers who are new to the classroom. Children benefit tremendously from having the same teacher(s) and starting the year off with someone who knows them very well and with whom they feel very comfortable. At other times, the variables determine that the classroom is no longer a multi-aged room or that some of the children move into other classrooms. In any case, children are placed in a group balanced by age, gender and individual needs, along with several children with whom he or she is familiar. Throughout this process, our primary focus is on meeting the educational, social and emotional needs of each child who is enrolled in our program.

Please don't hesitate to let me know if you have any questions.

Cheryl