

The Benefits of Grade-based Divisions vs. Age-based Divisions

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The Challenges

1. When does graduation or “promotion” happen?
2. What is the best grouping for the development and interest of the children?
3. How to facilitate the successful “bridge” efforts between the children and youth ministries?
4. We need to match (or mirror) the environments set by the school system as much as possible.
5. The curriculum publishers all set their curriculum in grade levels.

The Benefits of A Grade-based Program

1. **Promotion** – In a grade-based program, promotion can happen at a set date for all grade level classes. The children younger than 5 years-old would still be “promoted” at their birthdays. This provides the entire children’s ministry with a set date for ALL classes to promote up. In an age-based program, children would be “promoted” at various times throughout the year. This isn’t a consistent, planned, process. Unified promotion is best set at June.



2. **Age-appropriate grouping** – In an age-based program, the groupings of children tends to be broader than in a grade-based environment. Age-based groups can include such wide-ranges as “6-8 Year Olds.” This age group could actually include three grade levels. For those children who were “held back” for Kindergarten, and who entered Kindergarten at 6 years-old, could be grouped with first graders and young second graders. The team members who deal with this wide age range may complain about the diversity of learning abilities, interests, and attention spans.

3. **Successful “bridge” efforts** – In an age-based environment, fifth graders might be “sprinkled” into two, or three different classes. In order to create a “group mentality” among the fifth graders, and to pull them out of the children’s ministry and into the junior high or middle school ministry programs, it is much easier to do so with grade-level divisions.

Children's Ministry

Youth Ministry



4. **“Mirroring” the school settings** – Children and their parents need the security of knowing to what classroom their children go, and what they will experience in that classroom. In a grade-based program, the parents and children are comfortable with the grade their children are in, because it matches the school environment. In an age-based program, the parents and children are unsure of that environment, and who is in that classroom with their children. The age-based divisions cause confusion in both parents and children. It also adds to more work for the hallway assistants as they direct the parents and children to the correct classrooms.

5. **Aligning with the curriculum publishers** – In an age-based environment, the curriculum would have to be “sorted” differently and distributed to the various age groups. This would cause confusion for the team members and the leadership team.

