



Everyone has the potential to benefit when older adults and children come together in formal and informal activities. Older people feel useful, valued and connected to their communities. Children feel respected, appreciated and important. With increased contact, older people become more understanding of youth, and children develop healthier attitudes about the aging process.

Generations in Partnership

Rewards of Intergenerational Activities

Introduction

Changes in family structures and the way we live have limited the contact that children and older adults have with one another. The segregation of the generations has a negative impact on individuals and on society as a whole. Intergenerational activities provide a promising way to relieve tension among generations. Research has shown that intergenerational activities offer a wide range of benefits.

Objectives

By the end of this program, participants should be able to:

- List two potential benefits of intergenerational activities.
- Explain why careful planning of intergenerational activities is crucial.
- Provide two examples of intergenerational activities.
- Provide two tips for holding successful intergenerational activities.
- List one or two development assets that may be fostered by intergenerational activities.

Before the Program

- Review the leader's guide and fact sheet.
- Obtain a copy of the fact sheet for each participant.
- Optional: Copy pages 5,6,7 and/or 8 of this guide for each participant and cut out the coupons to hand out to participants.
- Optional: Obtain ingredients to make one of the recipes listed on p. 6.
- Have available a flip chart, chalkboard, or overhead projector to record group responses.
- Prepare yourself by thinking about intergenerational activities in which you have participated. What worked? What didn't work?

Resources

Kansas Intergenerational Network
132 South Main
Ottawa, KS 66067
(913)242-5466
www.ott.net/~kin/kinpage.htm

Kansas Health Foundation
309 East Douglas
Wichita, KS 67202-3405
1-800-373-7681
www.kansashealth.org

Youth Friends
1000 Broadway, Suite 302
Kansas City, MO 64105
1-877-842-7082 (Toll free)
www.youthfriends.org

Generations Together
University Center for Social and Urban
Research
121 University Place, Suite 300
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
(412)648-7150
www.pitt.edu/~gti

Generations United
c/o Child Welfare League
440 First St., NW, Suite 480
Washington, D.C. 20001-2085
(202)662-4283
www.gu.org

Search Institute
700 S. Third St., Suite 210
Minneapolis, MN 55415
1-800-888-7828
www.search-institute.org

The Importance of Intergenerational Activities

Describe why intergenerational activities are important. Discuss how our family structure and the way we live often limits contacts between children and older people. Mention that, as our population ages, developing intergenerational unity is particularly important. For example, political conflicts over scarce resources often pit young and old against each other, creating intergenerational tension. Describe how generations may develop negative stereotypes of each other and unhealthy attitudes about aging. Have participants:

- List some of the negative stereotypes that older people have of children.
- List some of the negative stereotypes that children have of older people.
- List attitudes that children often have about the aging process.

Record participants' responses on the writing surface you have chosen to use (flip chart, chalk board or blank transparency).

The Benefits of Intergenerational Activities

Discuss how intergenerational activities can be used to reduce the stereotypes and negative attitudes that were just listed. Write down the following benefits that have been derived from research. Ask participants to add to the list based on their experiences. Intergenerational activities have the potential to:

- Foster cooperation and sharing.
- Improve social skills.
- Build friendships and social networks.
- Enhance self esteem and morale.
- Reduce stereotypes.
- Improve attitudes about, and knowledge of, the aging process.

Activity Examples

Discuss the following types of activities that have been used successfully with older adults and children. Within each activity category, get participants to give examples of specific activities they have done that were successful.

- Teaching a game or skill to one another. Each group takes turns playing mentor and student. Older people might teach an old-fashioned game, while providing a history lesson in the process. Children might teach an activity they excel at, such as using computers.
- Sharing a meal and related activity, such as making ice cream or learning about different meal customs.
- Taking part in community service tasks, such as a neighborhood clean up. Including time for refreshments or a short, fun activity makes this task more enjoyable.
- Participating in an arts and crafts project. The project should fit with individuals' skill level and give everyone a chance to lead and follow.
- Sharing favorite things, such as favorite memories, books, foods, games, songs, family stories or jokes.

Volunteering Helps Others

Describe how intergenerational activities might be used as a way to address needs of elders and youth. Describe how these activities not only help the ones who are receiving the services, but also provide benefits to the volunteers. Make sure to point out that in order for volunteer programs to provide safe and successful opportunities for youth and elders, they should be run by experienced leaders. Get participants to provide answers to the following questions and record their responses:

- What volunteer tasks might youth do to help older people?
- What volunteer tasks might older people do to help children?
- What are some benefits that volunteers receive from taking part in these activities?

Importance of Planning

Discuss the crucial role of planning in order to develop successful intergenerational activities. Provide the following example from the research literature. Children who visit nursing facilities without preparation often come away with more negative attitudes toward older adults and the aging process than those who don't take part in such visits. Make sure to stress the fact that simply getting the generations together is not sufficient to ensure a rewarding event. In fact, it may do more harm than good. Careful planning, along with knowledge of the needs and abilities of the participants, is essential to the success of intergenerational activities.

Tips for Success

Review the following tips for success. Get participants to add to the list based on their experiences.

- Make planning a participatory activity. Let participants help plan the event to give them ownership of the outcome.
- Provide advance education. Educate participants about each other in advance of the activity. For example:
 - Tell older adults about the skills and behaviors to expect from the children with whom they will be working.
 - Tell children that most older people live in homes just like their own. Only about 4% of adults 65+ live in nursing homes. Stress that many older people are healthy and independent.
- Give everyone a role. Help insure that everyone gets involved in the activity by giving them something meaningful to do.
- Encourage interaction. Choose interactive, participatory activities. Activities where everyone is moving around and “learning by doing” are much more successful than lecture and discussion formats.
- Let each group serve in the teaching role. If only one group plays the teaching role, the other group may be forced to sit and listen during the entire activity. Promote interaction by allowing both groups to play the roles of teacher and student.
- Make participation voluntary. Not all older adults want or need to be around children. Pressuring them to participate will only backfire. Children may be required to participate due to school or club rules. If so, involve them as much as possible in the planning of the event so that they are eager and willing participants.

Selected Research Articles

Aday, R.H., Rice, C., & Evans, E. (1991). Intergenerational Partners Project: A Model Linking Elementary Students with Senior Center Volunteers. *The Gerontologist*, 31, 263-266.

Hirshorn, B.A. & Piering, P. (1998-99). Older people at risk: Issues and Intergenerational Responses. *Generations*, 22, 49-53.

Kaplan, M. (1993). Recruiting senior adult volunteers for intergenerational programs: Working to Create a "Jump on the Bandwagon" Effect. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 12, 71-82.

Keuhn, V.S. (1996). Evaluating your Intergenerational Program: Four Recommendations for Human Service Practitioners. *The Southwest Journal on Aging*, 12, 27-32.

Newman, S., Faux, R., & Larimer, B. (1997). Children's Views on Aging: Their Attitudes and Values. *The Gerontologist*, 37, 412-417.

Seefeldt, C. (1987). The Effects of Preschoolers' Visits to a Nursing Home. *The Gerontologist*, 27, 228-232.

Short-DeGraff, M.A., & Diamond, K. (1996). Intergenerational Program Effects on Social Responses of Elderly Adult Day Care Members. *Educational Gerontology*, 22, 467-482.

Developmental Assets

Intergenerational activities may provide good opportunities to foster "developmental assets" in children. (Optional activity: Circulate copies of the handout on the 40 Developmental Assets on p. 5 of this guide.) Point out that the developmental assets are a list of 40 skills, experiences and beliefs that help children to become productive, contributing members of our society. These assets are considered by the Search Institute to be the building blocks of healthy development. Read and discuss the following examples of assets that may be addressed by intergenerational activities. (If participants have the handout, get them to pick out assets that are likely to be fostered by intergenerational activities and record their responses.)

- Asset 7. Community Values Youth. The young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
- Asset 8. Youth as Resources. The young person is given useful roles in the community.
- Asset 9. Service to Others. The young person serves the community one hour or more per week
- Asset 14. Adult Role Models. The young person sees parents & others model positive, responsible behavior.
- Asset 26. Caring. The young person places high value on helping others.
- Asset 34. Cultural Competence. The young person has knowledge of, and comfort with, people of different backgrounds.

Optional Activities

Pass out the sheet of fun recipes for intergenerational gatherings. Review the recipes with participants and, if desired, prepare one of the recipes with participants to have as a snack during the program.

Pass out the sheet of successful intergenerational activities. Briefly describe the PATH project and make sure participants know how to contact the PATH office. PATH stands for Personal Actions to Health. The PATH project is a K-State Research and Extension project funded by the Kansas Health Foundation. The current focus of the PATH project is to promote intergenerational activities among older people and children throughout Kansas. You can contact the PATH office at 1-800-681-7284. Review the three activities listed on this sheet. Ask participants to share how they might implement these, or similar, activities.

Pass out copies of the coupons to participants. Point out that these coupons are based on the developmental assets. Get participants to share how they might use their coupons. Discuss other ways they might promote developmental assets in their interactions with children.

Community Service Activities

Have participants turn to the "Helping Adults and Kids Build Relationships," (page 3 of fact sheet). Review together the list of suggestions under "Encouraging Others to Build Intergenerational Relationships." Have participants talk about how they might implement one or more of these suggestions.

40 Developmental Assets

The Search Institute has identified the following building blocks of healthy development.

Search Institute, 700 S. Third Street, Suite 210, Minneapolis, MN 55415; 1-800-888-7828; www.search-institute.org

External Assets

Asset Type	Asset Name and Definition
Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family support. Family life provides high levels of love and support. 2. Positive family communication. Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s). 3. Other adult relationships. Young person receives support from three or more non-parental adults. 4. Caring neighborhood. Young person experiences caring neighbors. 5. Caring school climate. School provides caring, encouraging environment. 6. Parent involvement in schooling. Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.
Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Community values youth. Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth. 8. Youth are resources. Young people are given useful roles in the community. 9. Service to others. Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week. 10. Safety. Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.
Boundaries & Expectations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Family boundaries. Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts. 12. School boundaries. School provides clear rules and consequences. 13. Neighborhood boundaries. Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behaviors. 14. Adult role models. Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior. 15. Positive peer influences. Young person's best friends model responsible behavior. 16. High expectations. Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.
Constructive Use of Time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Creative activities. Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theatre or other arts. 18. Youth programs. Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs or organizations at school and/or in the community. 19. Religious community. Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution. 20. Time at home. Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" 2 or fewer nights/wk.

Internal Assets

Asset Type	Asset Name and Definition
Commitment To Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Achievement motivation. Young person is motivated to do well in school. 22. School engagement. Young person is actively engaged in learning. 23. Homework. Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day. 24. Bonding to school. Young person cares about her or his school. 25. Reading for pleasure. Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.
Positive Values	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 26. Caring. Young person places high value on helping other people 27. Equality and social justice. Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty. 28. Integrity. Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her beliefs. 29. Honesty. Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy." 30. Responsibility. Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility. 31. Restraint. Young person believes it's important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol/drugs.
Social Competencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 32. Planning and decision- making. Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices. 33. Interpersonal competence. Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills. 34. Cultural competence. Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds. 35. Resistance skills. Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. 36. Peaceful conflict resolution. Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.
Positive Identity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 37. Personal power. Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me." 38. Self-esteem. Young person reports having a high self-esteem. 39. Sense of purpose. Young person reports that "my life has a purpose." 40. Positive view of personal future. Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

Useful Books

Friedman, B.M. (1999). *Connecting Generations: Integrating Aging and Education and Intergenerational Programs with Elementary and Middle Grades Curricula*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

James, H.F. (1996). *Across the Generations: Selecting and Using Intergenerational Resources*. Fort Atkinson, WI: Highsmith.

Newman, S., Ward, C.R., Smith, T.B., Wilson, J.W. & McCrea, J.M. (Eds.). (1997). *Intergenerational Programs: Past, Present and Future*. Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Francis.

Fun Recipes for Intergenerational Gatherings

Preparing food together can be fun, while also providing opportunities to teach children about food preparation, nutrition, and even history.

Here are two fun recipes to use as intergenerational activities:

Apple Smiles

Ingredients

1 medium red apple, cored and sliced
Peanut butter
Miniature marshmallows

- Spread one side of each apple slice with peanut butter.
- Place three or four miniature marshmallows on top of the peanut butter on one apple slice.
- Top with another apple slice, peanut butter side down. Squeeze gently.
- Eat right away. Makes 6 to 8.

Homemade Ice Cream in a Bag

Ingredients

1 T. sugar
1/2 c. milk (no skim milk)
1/2 t. vanilla
6 T. salt
ice
1 quart zip-lock bag
1 gallon zip-lock bag

- Mix sugar, milk and vanilla in a quart zip-lock bag and seal bag
 - Place sealed quart bag into a gallon zip-lock bag
 - Add 6 T. salt
 - Fill gallon bag half full of ice and seal.
 - Shake bag 5 minutes or until mixture has turned to ice cream
 - Wipe off salt from the outside of the quart bag
 - Enjoy your ice cream right from the bag
- 1 bag = 1 serving

Related Activity: One way to expand upon the ice cream activity is for an older participant to bring an old-time crank ice cream maker and show the children how it was used. This might lead to a general discussion of how food was prepared before modern conveniences.

Successful Intergenerational Activities

The PATH (Personal Actions To Health) Project is working with sites around the state of Kansas to hold intergenerational activities for older adults and young children. PATH is a project of K-State Research and Extension that is funded by the Kansas Health Foundation. Two activities that PATH sites have found particularly successful are teaching children about the games of another generation, and holding intergenerational potlucks with special themes. Descriptions of these two activities are included below, followed by an explanation of “Listening Posts,” a program used successfully by other organizations. To learn more about the PATH project, call 1-800-681-PATH.

Games of another generation

Teaching games to children that were popular when their grandparents and great grandparents were children has been a well-received intergenerational activity at PATH sites. In some cases, a group of older adults have made arrangements with a local elementary school to meet with the children during recess to teach them old-fashioned games. To give children leadership roles, opportunities are also provided for the children to teach some of their favorite games to the older adults. This activity is not limited to schools and could be done with a variety of groups (e.g., scouts, 4-H, sports programs, etc.). A related activity is teaching the children how to make simple toys that the older adults played with as children. One example is to teach the children how to make simple stilts using coffee cans and twine. Careful supervision is an important part of this activity!

Intergenerational Theme Potluck

PATH participants (both older adults and children) have greatly enjoyed intergenerational theme potlucks. One successful theme is “School Days.” For the School Days potluck, the older adults bring mementos from their school days to display, including a school photograph. The children also bring things from school to display. Seating is done carefully to ensure that there is approximately the same number of adults and children at each table. Sheets of questions are placed at each table to help open conversations between adult-child pairs. Questions might include: What was/is your favorite thing about school? What is your favorite school memory? Who was/is your favorite teacher and why? Who was/is your best friend from grade school? Tell something about him/her. At some point during the potluck, the children are asked to work together to guess the identities of the people in the photographs. After the guesses are in, the older adults come forward to identify themselves and claim their photos.

Listening Posts: Older adults providing a listening ear

Some communities around the country are providing school programs where older adults join children at lunchtime. One such program is called the “Listening Post” program. Adults are stationed at special places throughout the lunchroom. The children know that they can sit and talk with the older adults about anything that is on their minds. Schools using this program have seen a meaningful reduction in discipline problems during the lunch hours when the older adults are present.

Instant Winner

Smile at a child and the future will smile back.

Making a difference for a child only takes an instant. Simple things like smiling or remembering their name show children you care. Children who feel loved are more likely to grow up healthy and secure. And that makes everyone a winner.

Valuable Rebate

Say hello to a child and get back one healthy future.

Children who feel valued have a better chance of growing up healthy and secure. Something as simple as saying hello shows children they are worthwhile. It takes less time than clipping a coupon. And its value can't be discounted.

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