Developing an Intergenerational Program in Your Early Childhood Care and Education Center

A Guidebook for Early Childhood Practitioners

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College of Agricultural Sciences

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Introduction

Overview

At an unprecedented level, new initiatives are emerging throughout the country that aim to bring young people and older adults together in various settings to interact, engage, educate, support, and provide care for one another. Our focus here is on intergenerational programs in early childhood education settings.

Just as there is no one way for a senior adult and a child to share a moment, there is no one way to establish an intergenerational program. In this guidebook, we share our experiences and those of some colleagues doing similar work. Our aim is to provide helpful suggestions for early childhood professionals interested in involving senior adults—whether they are volunteers, receive a small stipend, or are paid staff—in early childhood care and education programs.

Throughout this publication, we seek to provide practical, easy-to-use information on effective practices for finding and training senior volunteers, preparing staff, and integrating senior adults into the curriculum. This guidebook and supplemental materials are available online at intergenerational.cas.psu.edu/earlychildhood.html. To help us learn how you are using the guidebook and to give us guidance as we develop additional materials, please take a few minutes to fill out the evaluation posted on the Web site.

We will attempt to demonstrate that, with good support and training, senior adults can do more than assist with the existing curriculum that is developed by professional staff; they can become valuable curriculum makers and contribute to all sorts of positive changes in the entire early childhood setting.

To help bring key intergenerational practices to life, we draw heavily on pictures of programs in action and, as much as possible, sprinkle in the words of the participants themselves—senior adults, children, teachers, administrators, and parents with firsthand experience of intergenerational programs.

Why Go Intergenerational?

Why develop intergenerational programs in early childhood settings? We focus on two sets of reasons:

- Benefits for participating children
- Benefits for participating senior adults

Benefits for participating children

Depending on how an intergenerational program is organized, children can benefit in many ways. With good training and encouragement from the staff, senior adults can be very effective in increasing the level of affection and cognitive stimulation available to children in the classroom environment.

One senior volunteer "talked about how the children took notice of her skin today. She said they touched her arms and looked closely at her aging spots and wrinkles. We talked about the children's curiosity and how they can learn through touch, sight, and sound."
—Teacher, Bennett Family Center, State College, Pennsylvania

Being in a relationship that matters:

"Some of these kids don't have grandparents available, and it's like they adopt the older folks."
—Teacher, Seagull Schools, Honolulu, Hawaii

Helping children to be at their best:

"[Since we started the intergenerational program, children do more] smiling and giggling instead of whining and crying."
—Teacher, SKIPP (Senior-Kupuna in the Preschools Project), Honolulu, Hawaii

"The classroom ambiance . . . changes when the senior volunteers are around. It is surprising that one single senior volunteer can make a major difference in how the teacher is able to more effectively manage the class full of preschoolers. The children are mindful of the senior volunteer and somehow seem to make an effort to be in their best behaviors, to be more interested and excited about the activities."
—Excerpt from the interim report of the evaluator of the Senior-Kupuna in the Preschools Project, Honolulu, Hawaii

Expanding the circle of those who care:

"The children immediately responded affectionately to all the older adults who came into the center, reinforcing our thoughts that these children need the love that older generations can offer.

We want to make sure that the entire community can play a role in the development of our young children."
—Director, Bennett Family Center, State College, Pennsylvania

Enabling children to discover that aging is a normal and natural part of the life cycle:

"Children see that you can paint with waterpaints or finger paints when you are 2, but you can still do it when you are 90 or 80. . . . That those things are things we can do for life to enjoy. . . . This is an important lesson about the aging process."
—Parent, Child Development Lab, State College, Pennsylvania

Benefits for participating senior adults

Now that a substantial body of scientific evidence shows how regular physical activity can bring dramatic health benefits to older adults, let's figure out ways to apply this knowledge. What greater inspiration can there be for increasing physical activity than a young one wanting company for a walk, or a little hand reaching for help in climbing?

Sense of being valued:

"It's just a reminder that we all need from time to time, that we all have value regardless of age . . . and sometimes when we get older, we forget that." —Parent, Child Development Lab, State College, Pennsylvania

Giving and receiving:

"It is an ego builder. I mean, you come in, you get hugs, and you feel the love of the children. You always come out with new thoughts and a warm heart."
—Senior volunteer; reported in Newman et al. (1999), p. 29

The benefits of exercise:

According to a report from the surgeon general, regular physical activity reduces the risk of dying prematurely, developing diabetes, developing high blood pressure, and developing colon cancer. It also reduces feelings of depression and anxiety, helps to maintain healthy bones and muscles, and promotes psychological well-being (Manly, 1996).

Planning Your Program

Intergenerational programs require careful thought, planning, and continuous evaluation in order to succeed. In this section, we focus on preparing staff, finding and training senior participants, placing senior adults in classrooms, and organizing the environment.

As is customary in guidebooks of this type, we provide a loose roadmap of key steps and procedures to take in planning and implementing an intergenerational program. Yet, focusing solely on a series of planned steps would not tell the entire story about what is involved in establishing a successful intergenerational program. There is also an "organic" side to how programs develop, where the relationships between the children, seniors, and staff hold center stage in determining what takes place and how participants feel about spending time together.

We feel that paying attention to both domains of program development (i.e., to be deliberate in program planning and, at the same time, to be flexible so that interpersonal bonds emerge and influence how senior volunteers are integrated into the early childhood center) is important. In this section and the ones that follow, we will highlight both perspectives for valuing the contributions of older adults in the lives of young children.

Staffing

The ideal situation is to have enough funds to hire somebody on a part-time basis (10–20 hours/week) to be the intergenerational program coordinator. Alternatively, explore whether an existing staff person, parent, or a university student receiving internship or service learning credit can assist with all or some of the program coordination tasks in the box at top right of the next page.

Finding Institutional Partners

Sustainability is the current catchword in intergenerational programming circles. It seems that even when programs work well and generate a lot of excitement, they tend not to last. There are various reasons for this such as the departure of key staff people who were committed to the program and instrumental in its operation, dwindling numbers of

senior volunteers, and decreasing administrative and community support for the intergenerational program.

One thing that can be done during the planning phase to increase the odds that a successful program will be able to survive over time is to organize it as a partnership of interested, committed organizations, all with a similar sense of program purpose and expectations for how it will function. Good partnerships share resources equitably too.

A good partner for an intergenerational program in an early childhood education center would be a neighboring senior center or retirement community with a strong community service orientation. The goals and objectives for each organization are complementary. Further, both organizations share geography, and this makes it easier to address transportation and other logistical challenges.

Once the right partner(s) are found, it is useful to engage staff at all levels in interagency program planning meetings. These meetings will enable staff from participating agencies to learn about each others' program goals, objectives, and daily activities. Through such exchange and discussion, determining which curricular components can be developed as age-integrated activities will be possible. For example, if an early childhood center and a senior center partner each have arts and crafts activities five days a week, it may make sense for both institutions to devote one day a week to intergenerational arts activities. Then both age-groups can explore a particular medium, such as collage, over an extended period of time and share the process of learning together.

Such planning sessions will also enable staff from partnering institutions to identify unforeseen differences, such as in how their respective staff members view the older adult participants, and how they understand words like "interaction," "relationships," "collaboration," and "learning."

What Makes a Good Intergenerational Program Partnership?

- Choose partners wisely: Make sure that partners have complementary goals, objectives, and curricula.
- Articulate a shared vision.
- Build on respective strengths.
- Define and clarify as much as possible (i.e., objectives, actions, responsibilities, and timeline).
- Formalize the arrangement (e.g., by having administrators from each participating agency sign a memorandum of understanding that lays out agreements in terms of respective contributions, roles and responsibilities).

Intergenerational Program Coordinator's Role

1. Get projects started—plan and attend meetings with staff, parents, and partnering organizations to learn about their ideas for intergenerational programs.
2. Help develop and launch the senior adult recruitment plan.
3. Work with staff to develop project plans, program activities, and curriculum materials.
4. Organize training sessions for staff and seniors.
5. Develop and maintain a program operations chart with information on volunteer assignments, schedules, and activities.
6. Conduct periodic observations of classrooms while senior adults are in them.
7. Organize periodic meetings with staff and senior adults to assess the program's success and address future program planning.
8. Be available to mentor senior adults.
9. Conduct outreach tasks (e.g., take photos and develop articles for newsletters and write press releases).
10. Develop training and public relations materials to assist with presentations designed to facilitate program replication at other sites.
11. Coordinate student volunteers (if available).

Training and Support for Staff

Importance of gaining staff input and "buy-in"

Intergenerational programs do not run themselves, at least not at first. We have found that when teaching staff are enthusiastic about the program and they are involved in all aspects of its development, they can make huge contributions toward building up the excitement of both the young children and the senior adult participants.

Hence, even before the program starts, we suggest surveying the teaching staff to get their ideas about contributions of senior adult volunteers. Appendix A provides a format for such a survey. The survey can provide a window on age bias and misconceptions about older adults that might then become a focus of training sessions; it might also help to identify common themes that will shape the program goals.

To take the participation idea further, staff should try to include participants (old and young) in the planning process so that they too share in deciding how to spend time together. This is apt to lead to greater sustainability for the program over time.

> "I observed that the preschool teacher . . . has begun to use the visits to the senior center as privileges for the children. There were five children who were allowed to come to the center today. I also observed them running to the gate in a very excited manner because they were happy to be going to do a project with the seniors. . . . The senior center is seen by the children as a positive, fun place to go."
> —College student journal entry, Seagull Schools Intergenerational Program, Honolulu, Hawaii; reported in Kaplan, Wagner, and Larson (2001)

Training objectives

In this section we discuss what can be done in terms of training and support to help staff work effectively in intergenerational programs. In the least, all staff members need to be clear about the goals and objectives of the intergenerational program. All staff members also need to be clear about how they are to fit into the overall program.

We view staff training as a progression across three levels of competency:

- The "beginners" develop an understanding about what an intergenerational program is and how it can enrich the early childhood education setting.
- The "intermediate" level practitioners develop basic skills in intergenerational practice. These people are effective in working collaboratively with staff from partnering agencies to achieve program objectives. They are skilled in the mechanics of program planning and implementation; this includes being an effective facilitator of intergenerational activities.
- The "advanced" level practitioners have had previous intergenerational program involvement and, reflecting on this experience, are able to articulate lessons they learned regarding effective practice.

Introduction to the intergenerational programming field

The International Consortium for Intergenerational Programs, a newly formed organization based in the Netherlands, defines "intergenerational programs" as "social vehicles that create purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and learning among older and younger generations."

Intergenerational programs provide benefits for all who are involved. Civic-minded senior adults contribute to the educational process and make important contributions to the emotional side of children's lives as well. Conversely, children bring much energy, enthusiasm, and emotional satisfaction into the lives of seniors. These new relationships can take place in any number of ways; the continuum of intergenerational activity seems endless. What is essential is that they are mutually engaged.

There is increasing recognition, nationally and internationally, of the importance of intergenerational relationships in the education and development of children (ACEI, 2000; Newman, Larkin, and Smith, 1999). The literature is abundant with rich narratives about how children, as well as older adults, learn, find greater motivation to learn, and derive richer life perspectives from their intergenerational experiences.

Of the three basic models of *intergenerational care* in

early childhood noted below, this guidebook focuses on the second model, older adults as caregivers in early childhood settings.

This is an exciting time to be involved in the intergenerational programming arena. The body of literature, which has a history of over 25 years, is increasingly providing evidence as to the most effective ways to organize programs for maximum benefit for the participants. There are also new efforts to professionalize the field through specialized training programs and the development of guidelines and standards for practice (Rosebrook and Larkin, 2002).

Drawing on the intergenerational literature and resources provided by local and national organizations, each early childhood center can create its own bank of resources to introduce staff, volunteers, parents, and community stakeholders to the world of intergenerational programming. Information on a number of these resources will be provided in this guidebook.

Three Basic Models of Intergenerational Programs for Early Childhood

(1) Young children visiting with frail older adults in adult day or long-term care settings in which the child may be viewed as the one giving care.
(2) Older adults as caregivers (volunteers or paid staff) in early childhood settings (i.e., child care, preschool, or Head Start).
(3) Co-located care in which adult day care and child care share a facility or an environment.
—Excerpt from Newman, Larkin, and Smith (1999), p. 43

Viewing intergenerational programming in an early childhood development framework

An important element in training early childhood professionals to conduct intergenerational programs is to draw on their previous knowledge about the care and education of young children. Early childhood educators already understand how to engage children in hands-on learning experiences that are "developmentally appropriate" (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997) and that allow for creativity, self- expression, and dynamic interaction with concrete materials, peers, and adults. An early childhood educator is sensitive to the way young children learn and will likely see children's interactions with older adults as filled with opportunities for promoting positive feelings about the aging process as well as for expanding their understanding about the social world. It is important to recognize this knowledge base and encourage early childhood professionals to share it with senior volunteers in a collegial way.

Tuning into the contributions that older adults can make to the early childhood education center

We encourage early childhood staff to view and treat the seniors as true partners and curriculum makers, not just passive program participants. To achieve such a partnership, the lines for two-way communication must be continually open. Undoubtedly, questions will come up regarding curriculum planning, child development, behavior management, and how seniors are expected to function in the classroom setting. Good communication will allow for differences of opinion to be exchanged and for agreements to be negotiated so that a respectful collaboration unfolds.

Learning to facilitate intergenerational exchange

The value of an intergenerational program is tied to the quantity and quality of interactions between participating children and older adults. The early childhood professional who is in the position of conducting or helping to run an intergenerational activity needs to learn to "thread the needle" between underfacilitating (i.e., not providing needed direction) and overfacilitating (i.e., being too much in control). With the goal of allowing the interaction between the children and seniors to take on a life of

Intergenerational program facilitators should not lose track of theory-guided notions about what is considered "developmentally appropriate practice," the goal of which is to provide children with "self-guided experiences of exploration and discovery." Dewey noted that a non-authoritarian atmosphere is most conducive for stimulating social interaction, Vygotsky emphasized the importance of adults sharing their knowledge and culture, and Montessori emphasized that adults should provide children with a free choice of activities and provide them with guidance without being over-demanding or overly directive. (Paraphrased from Newman and Smith, 1997, pp. 5–9.)

In one study of older adults working in childcare settings, it was found that even though most of the senior adults had no formal training in early childhood development, they took on a number of constructive roles and had a beneficial impact on the classroom environment. The authors concluded that these effective behaviors were "learned from roles and relationships that older adults had experienced in a family context. As parents, grandparents, aunts, or uncles, they had learned their styles of nurturing and caring for younger generations, and it was these behaviors that they brought into the classroom setting" (Newman et al., 1999, p. 19).

Tips for Facilitating Intergenerational Activities

1. Keep in mind that interaction does not necessarily happen by itself; nor can relationships be forced.
2. Think in terms of "facilitating" rather than "directing" activities. (Set up opportunities for participants to chat informally, choose what to play together, and share common activities at their own level.)
3. Keep a flow to the activities; know when to end an activity, and always have "back-up" activities if you have to stay within a specific timeframe.
4. Try to develop long-range curriculum plans with follow-up activities or ongoing projects so that participants build a relationship over time.
5. Work to further the skills of participants by modeling and problem solving.
6. Aim for the "normalization" of intergenerational relations. In other words, participants should come to view multigenerational experiences as commonplace.

its own, facilitators need to be ready to step back. They walk the fine line of needing to provide clear directions and role expectations to support an activity, while at the same time being cautious not to interfere with interpersonal connections. If the staff facilitator exhibits too directive a style, there is likely to be very little interaction and initiative exhibited by the participants. As previously discussed, child development theory speaks against such overdirection of activity with children.

In organizing activities for intergenerational groups, it is important to pay attention to the pacing of the activities. Often an activity ends abruptly as evidenced by a decrease in interaction and an increase in distraction or noise. This is a good cue for knowing when to end one activity and move on to others. If planning a series of activities, try to vary the pace by including, for example, storytelling, singing, and physical movement.

When an activity succeeds in capturing the interest and imagination of the participants, it makes sense to plan follow-up activities and allow discussion time. For example, some naturalistic observation of spiders in the back garden and group singing of the song *Eensy Weensy Spider* would be nice follow-ups to an "Eensy Weensy Fingerprint Spider" art activity. Activities with follow-up potential can also serve to help build relationships.

Another way to view the staff member's role is as an "amplifier," i.e., working to strengthen the skills of the participants so they are better able to engage (stimulate, encourage, teach, etc.) each other. An example would be working behind the scenes with a retired singing teacher to help her find the music, prepare instructions, and copy songs for a singing session she will lead with the children. If the intergenerational singing activity goes very well, the "hero," the one who shines in the children's eyes, will be the senior adult rather than the teacher. This is likely to increase the senior's self-confidence and provide the children with an example of a senior adult as a competent, knowledgeable individual.

When facilitating intergenerational activities, another thing to consider is whether the interaction that is taking place has a natural rather than a formal feel to it. Are participants able to joke around with each other? Is there an opportunity for spontaneous conversation?

Ongoing training and support

One way to encourage staff to reflect on, discuss, and work to improve their intergenerational programming skills is to hold periodic additional training sessions focused solely on the intergenerational program. The statement below was made at a staff training meeting held six months into one intergenerational program. (See Appendix B for the meeting agenda.)

An important part of such staff training meetings is that staff members learn from each other. Group exercises will enable inspired individuals to share their enthusiasm and ideas with other staff members. Here are some topics to stimulate such discussion:

> "Consider the senior with whom you work to be a Maserati—with 6 speeds and that can do 160+ miles/hr.—this isn't hard to do if you focus on the senior's assets (knowledge, skills, interests, etc.) gained over a lifetime. How fast is the Maserati in your center allowed to go?"
> —Statement made at a staff training session, Bennett Family Center, State College, Pennsylvania

"The senior–child pairs drew faces on hollowed-out eggs, put topsoil in the hollow shell, and planted alfalfa seeds in the soil. The next week the two groups enjoyed the results of their joint efforts as the sprouts grew out the top of the egg heads like green hair. With the egg faces requiring water and care in subsequent days, this task in effect created something that the children and seniors could do together and talk about over a period of time. This ongoing activity readily led to other conversations and greater interpersonal familiarity."

—Observation of intergenerational activity at Seagull Schools in Kapolei, Hawaii; reported in Kaplan, Wagner, and Larson, 2001

- Compared to younger adults, what do seniors have more of (for example, time, knowledge of cultural traditions, long-range perspective on life's meaning)?
- Consider how the following activities will look differently when done with a senior adult versus a younger adult: show-and-tell discussion about a new toy, planning a holiday celebration, a nature appreciation walk around the neighborhood, a cooking (baking) activity, and a presentation on careers for men and women.
- What other activities might be appropriate, considering the special assets of senior adults and the needs of children? Successful intergenerational programs with young children and senior adults have included activities such as gardening, choral singing, pen pals, storytelling, creative dramatics and dance, computers, and quilt making.

Keep in mind that no program goes along without problems or challenges. Accordingly, such meetings can provide an important opportunity for staff to articulate their concerns and explore potential solutions. The important thing to remember is: *Never underestimate the contributions that senior adults can make to your program!* Include them in the problem-solving process.

Working with Senior Volunteers

Just as early childhood centers take great care at the initial enrollment of a child to acquaint children and their families with the center, so too do senior adults deserve a careful introduction and orientation to the early childhood setting. Do not assume that the seniors are familiar with the child care environment, with the chain of command and routine procedures, or with how decisions are made in the center. Expect that they will need plenty of guidance in figuring out things as varied as the center's child care philosophy, the kinds of help for which they are needed, and how they will fit into the center.

When they arrive, there is already a schedule and a rhythm of activities in each classroom. However, over time, as they begin to develop relationships with children and staff, new activities become possible. The intergenerational component of the curriculum emerges based on the seniors' interests, the children's response, and the relationships that grow spontaneously among the participants.

In all facets of working with senior adults—including the recruitment drive, the training program, and the process of placing them in classrooms—respect what they have to offer even if their beliefs about child guidance may seem "outdated." The senior adults bring with them a host of life experiences that contribute to their capacity to be nurturing, caring, and effective caregivers and educators.

Yet, it is equally important to provide seniors with training and ongoing support. As they learn about center policies, philosophy, and child care/education techniques and practices, their effectiveness as

"Research into how senior adults function in early childhood education settings indicates that they tend to gravitate more toward roles in which they are the caring, nurturing, attention-giving ones, with the teachers taking responsibility for setting limits and maintaining discipline (Cheang, 2002; and Larkin and Newman, 2001).

caregivers and educators is boosted along with their self-confidence. They learn to see themselves as a member of a professional team of caregivers and educators, as well as to recognize where their expertise is limited.

Recruiting senior volunteers

Here are some tips for planning a senior volunteer recruitment campaign:

- Before launching a recruitment marketing campaign, be ready with a job description that includes information on tasks, responsibilities, time commitment, and needed qualifications.
- Recruit from multiple sources: e.g., RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program), senior centers or social service agencies such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Foster Grandparents program, faith-based organizations, newspapers (Volunteer Opportunities listings), and flyers with a contact phone number.
- Create a number of volunteer roles at the early childhood center; this ties into the idea of providing choice, with different types and lengths of volunteer assignments.
- In planning formal recruitment/program orientation sessions:
  —Try to partner with senior organizations willing to actively promote the event(s) with their membership.
  —Create a senior adult recruitment display for exhibition at key places where seniors frequent. (See Appendix C for an example of a senior adult volunteer recruitment poster.)
  —Proactively publicize the meetings (e.g., send a press release to local news outlets and distribute flyers to local organizations).
- Plan informal as well as formal recruitment events at the early childhood center. An example would be an "intergenerational tea" event, organized as a big gathering of children, family members, teachers, and senior adults who have some connection to the center (e.g., as grandparents of children at the center). Unlike the formal recruitment sessions, no registration materials are distributed; the goal is simply to provide prospective volunteers with a chance to mingle with those who are already involved in the center.
- Consider establishing an *incremental recruitment* system; rather than ask for a major commitment during the first meeting, try to involve prospective volunteers in stages. For example, begin with an informational meeting. Then provide interested seniors with an opportunity to meet the children. Next have them do an activity with the children, and, finally, invite them to join the program on a consistent basis. The desired sense of commitment and belonging doesn't happen over night; relationships take time to form. (For more information on this strategy, see Kaplan, 1993.)
- Draw on people's personal contacts; center staff, parents, and children are likely to already have relationships with older adults in the community. Try to tap into these relationships to spread the word about the program. Many volunteers want to be asked in a personal way by someone who can assure them that they have something to offer.

An important part of the recruitment process is to get a sense of the skills and interests of prospective volunteers. An efficient way to obtain such information is to have them fill out some sort of questionnaire. We provide two questionnaire formats, one a long form (the Senior Volunteer Talent Bank Form, see Appendix D), and the other a short form (the Senior Volunteer Information Form, see Appendix E). At a minimum, discuss with each potential recruit their previous experience, education and/or training, and their knowledge of and interests in the community.

The first onsite senior recruitment meeting is a crucial one and should be carefully constructed to generate interest and facilitate signups. Beyond learning about the center's philosophy, policies, and general operational procedures, prospective volunteers appreciate the opportunity to take part in organized classroom activities that give them the chance to meet and interact with the children.

As a final note about signing senior volunteers up, we suggest that you make sure to establish a clear procedure for conducting background checks. Explain to prospective volunteers that this is a matter of routine (and law), a process that all staff and volunteers need to go through.

Orientation and training for seniors

- Introduce them to program/center philosophy and policies (and provide written materials that they can refer to later to digest the information).
- Inform them about the tenets of professional practice in the early childhood field. Here are some examples of key principles to note:
  —Good learning environments allow students to explore ideas, make choices, and learn to express feelings appropriately.
  —Learning is a hands-on, interactive process; a young child learns through discovery in a social context where adults and peers alike will respond to his/her expressions of thought and feeling.
  —Children need frequent opportunities to use their five senses, language (dialogue), and motor skills to build their knowledge.
- Clarify staff expectations regarding senior adults' roles in the classrooms.
- Acknowledge that seniors' life experiences are seen as a valuable component of what they can contribute to the center/classroom.
- Encourage seniors to interact with and learn from one another. This can be done by incorporating social time into the training. This will help to establish a sense of collective energy, purposeful activity, and meaningful relationships that many

Using the Internet to Find Senior Volunteers

The following Web sites host databases for people looking for volunteer opportunities. Listing volunteer positions on these databases can increase exposure for reaching potential recruits. Each database has its own step-by-step method for registering volunteer opportunities. Additional Web connections can be found by doing a search with the term "volunteer centers" (or "volunteer resources") and your local community name.

- The Points of Light Foundation (www.pointsoflight.org) has links to volunteer centers throughout the country, most of which maintain local databases of volunteer opportunities. Since it has a local focus, it is a good place to post a request for local senior volunteers.
- The USA Freedom Corps Volunteer Network (www.usafreedomcorps.gov) is a government-sponsored centralized volunteer site.
- Network for Good (www.networkforgood.org) is a partnership of national nonprofit organizations and some large Internet companies.
- The Senior Corps program offers JASON (www.joinseniorservice.org), a senior service registry that enables organizations to list independent volunteer opportunities or be a part of Senior Corp's RSVP program, a national program that places older adults in volunteer assignments in localities throughout the country.
- SERVEnet (www.servenet.org), a project of Youth Service America, posts volunteer opportunities for people of all ages.

Note: Information presented in this section was compiled by the Center for Intergenerational Learning (Temple University) and will be published in *Connecting Generations, Strengthening Communities: A Handbook for Intergenerational Programs* (Bressler, In Press).

retirees miss from their pre-retirement years (as noted in the Civic Ventures 2001 report, "Recasting Retirement").

- Share opportunities for further training (e.g., discounted college courses in early childhood development). Note: Many states allow senior adults to take courses at public universities for free when space allows after the initial registration period.

For the two scenarios pictured on pages 15 and 16, how might the teacher share with the seniors some information about autonomy to strengthen their skills as educators? How might teachers and senior adults together explore the topic of autonomy's importance throughout the life span?

If senior adults tend to do projects for children rather than helping them to do something by themselves, watch first to see if the children mind this modeling. Later, you can suggest that caregivers look for a sign of distress or a request for help before offering to take over. An intergenerational relationship will develop better if the participants learn to trust each other. So, try not to interfere unless they need help communicating.

Placing seniors

Beyond providing information to senior volunteers, it is important to learn about them and from them what special contributions they can and want to make to the early childhood setting. This includes gaining a sense of their knowledge about the community; their expertise, interests, and hobbies; and any previous experience and training they might have had in child care. The information collected about each senior's skills and interests during the preliminary recruitment

A note of caution: While we would not want to see older women automatically relegated to the jobs of preparing snacks and sweeping floors, they often gravitate to these housekeeping responsibilities because they feel confident about their ability to be helpful to teachers in this way and because it is a domain where they can function autonomously (Larkin and Newman, 2001).

"Hey, can we try?"

"No thanks, I'm happy if you just do it for me."

meeting can be used in the placement process. This is an advantage of using the longer recruitment form (the Senior Volunteer Talent Bank in Appendix D).

We have found that many senior volunteers know exactly what they're looking for. In one of our projects, for example, three out of nine seniors wanted to work with children who were similar in age to their grandchildren so they could learn effective ways for relating to their grandchildren. Obviously, such requests need to be considered in terms of addressing the needs of the early childhood center, but this also points to the volunteers' eagerness to learn.

One way to approach the challenge of figuring out how to best utilize senior adult volunteers is to lay out multiple roles for the volunteers to choose from. Based on information provided by teaching staff and administrators, a long list of volunteer options can be created, each fulfilling a real need in the center. It would be largely up to the senior volunteers to consider which assignments to take, based on their interests (hobbies, talents), skills (including occupational experience), and preferences.

Another strategy for helping seniors make informed decisions about available volunteer options is to first provide them with trial opportunities in each of several roles, for example, playground facilitator, field trip organizer, storyteller, and baker.

Ongoing communication with the seniors

Ideally, senior adult participants will attain the status of true partners in the sense of being valued members of the staffing team.

In some cases, this means participating in staff meetings and activity planning sessions. The extra time may have implications for commitment, compensation, transportation, and the like, so be sure to make this optional and the schedule flexible enough to accommodate their participation as much as possible.

"The more we get to know the seniors, the more we know how to integrate them into the program. . . . For example, we found out by talking with Gloria and getting to know her that she loves bugs and she loves to be outdoors. . . . And now, we think that when the weather is nice and Gloria is here it ought to be an outdoor day . . . a 'take-a-walk day'. . . . She gives us inspiration to get the kids out there and exploring."—Director, Child Development Lab, State College, Pennsylvania

> "I always come to the team meetings with my lesson plans complete. They are always in pencil and I always bring a big eraser (in case) anybody has any ideas or if an idea I have sparks another idea."
> —One of the teachers profiled in the "To Help Somebody's Child" video (Newman, Larkin, and Smith, 1999)

Through open and ongoing communication with the teachers and administrators, seniors will be more likely to work with the same philosophy and objectives.

> "There's one little girl in there who speaks Portuguese and she comes up to me and she speaks Portuguese. I try to get her to speak English too." This quote is from a bilingual foster grandparent participating in an early childhood center located in a multicultural urban neighborhood.
> —One of the seniors profiled in the "To Help Somebody's Child" video (Newman, Larkin, and Smith, 1999)

At some point conducting center-wide training sessions for seniors and staff together makes sense. Such sessions can be organized to focus on how senior–staff teams in each classroom are working together and to identify and resolve possible sources of conflict or confusion. These sessions should be regularly scheduled and include everyone at the center who is involved in the intergenerational program including seniors, teaching staff, administrators, and other volunteers. These sessions will help to further clarify the seniors' roles and responsibilities.

Seniors should also have their own discussion groups where they share their experiences and insights with one another. For many, the social aspects of being involved in the program are key to their enjoyment and long-term commitment. One way to format regular senior volunteer meetings is presented in Appendix F.

Acknowledging senior volunteers

From simple thank-you acknowledgments to formal recognition ceremonies, letting volunteers know how much you appreciate them will likely strengthen their commitment and lead to an even more sustainable intergenerational program. See page 18 for various ideas for acknowledging seniors.

Curriculum Development

So far we have focused mostly on what can be done to prepare and support those who are involved in an intergenerational program. In this section we turn our attention to the curriculum itself and its impact on intergenerational relations.

Intergenerational activities

Most activities that work well for children can also be modified to work well for an intergenerational group. The activity is really just a vehicle for connecting the younger and older generations. The essential element is that it engages the participants, so it needs to be inviting, easy to execute, and allow for individuality in the process. Participants may work side-by-side or collaboratively. The most successful activities involve decision-making or problem-solving challenges, sensory experiences, and sufficient time to be completed. The possibilities for intergenerational activities are boundless. Some diverse examples can be found in the box on page 19.

Good activity planning is just the beginning. There is more to running a successful intergenerational program than exposing participants to a potpourri of intergenerational activities. Attitude change and relationships take hold through many shared and meaningful experiences and regular contact. This is true for influencing young children's attitudes toward older adults (research suggests that stereotypes begin to form as young as 3 years old, and positive attitude change is greatest when there is prolonged contact), and we believe it holds true also when working to build meaningful and satisfying relationships for all participants. The social and emotional connections among participants are at the heart of the intergenerational exchange. And emotion is connected to learning. (For more reading on this, see Rushton and Larkin, 2001.)

Show Them You Care: Expressing Appreciation to Senior Volunteers

Formal Recognition: Recognition, when done as a group celebration, is a formal way to honor volunteers. Planning for these events should include staff, children, and parent groups.

- *Certificates, awards, and pins:* Special certificates, awards, pins, and decorative plaques engraved with volunteer names can be presented by children during special events.
- *Intergenerational tea:* A nice way to say thank you and show how much you appreciate your volunteers is to host a brunch or tea. This special event provides the time for volunteers to get to know one another and develop a sense of fellowship. Send out invitations and encourage volunteers to bring along a friend. Children can help to greet the guests as they arrive and escort them to the party room.
- *Newsletter/newspaper feature articles:* Another way of providing formal recognition of the contributions made by volunteers is to feature them in newsletter or newspaper stories. Make sure to personalize the article by including some background information and anecdotes about the senior adult.

Informal Recognition: Take the time to share a few words to acknowledge your volunteers' contributions and let them know what a difference they make. These casual, heartfelt acknowledgments are the building blocks of making dedicated volunteers. Volunteers also benefit by knowing what types of things are most appreciated and helpful to the classroom.

- Statements such as the following place value on specific contributions:

  —"The children loved the story you shared and talked about it all week."

  —"Thanks for coming today, we needed an extra set of hands."
- Take notice of an absence, illness, or vacation by saying a few words that let the volunteer know they have been missed.

  —"The children could hardly wait for your visit today!"

  —"We missed you when you weren't with us on Wednesday."
- Ask your volunteer to help with projects or special activities; this fosters the positive feelings of being helpful and needed.

  —"We are working on a baking project next week. I remembered you said you have a great fudge recipe."

  —"Could you share some interesting facts with the class about your trip to Alaska?"
- Sending notes or cards lets volunteers know they are thought of and remembered. Add a short message highlighting some of the activities for the upcoming week. Consider sending e-cards to your volunteers online. Keep the following in mind: birthdays, holidays, and opportunities to send "thank-you," "missing-you," and "get-well-soon" cards.

Excerpt from Davis (2002)

Curriculum is more than activities

When developing a curriculum for an intergenerational program or any early childhood setting, far more is involved than the planning of distinct activities. Here are a few questions aimed at stimulating a more comprehensive view of intergenerational curriculum development:

- In what ways can the physical environment reflect a lifespan perspective and accommodate differing capabilities?
- What can be done to encourage staff to see the seniors as part of the curriculum (e.g., capitalize on teachable moments when children ask questions about wrinkles or grandparent relationships)?
- How are images of aging integrated into photographs, pictures, storybooks, and exhibits at the center as prompts for conversation?
- What cues can be given to the children and to the seniors to encourage them to interact with one another and get to know each other in a personal way?
- How can activities build on prior real life experiences that children and older adults have in common?
- How might language (vocabulary) need to be explored as a mechanism for increasing intergenerational understanding?

Ideas for Intergenerational Activities

Baby Picture Contest
Baking—Now and Then
Creating a Butterfly Habitat Garden
Cost Comparison
Dance Down
Family History Museum
Family Photo Tree
Holiday Traditions
Grandparent-Grandchild Look-Alike Contest
Movie Kits
Neighborhood History Treasure Hunt
Self Sufficiency Bingo
Sketching Intergenerational Scenes
Sports Day
Storytelling
Time Capsules
Walk-About-Talk-About
Water Quiz

This is a partial list of the activities described in the *Intergenerational Activities Sourcebook* published by Penn State Cooperative Extension (Kaplan and Hanhardt, 2003).

> "I remember my son, when he was two years old, enjoying reading with her [the senior volunteer in his classroom]. . . . And how when he saw her dance, he thought, 'Wow, she could do both.' So, in the mind of a two-year-old, this was quite impressive."
>
> —Parent, Child Development Lab, State College, Pennsylvania

Introducing the concept of aging

The first activity early childhood teachers often suggest for older adult volunteers in their classrooms is to read a book with the children. If we are going to promote closer ties among generations and dispel their stereotypical ideas about one another, then we want to present literature that contains authentic age-related images. For a handout on age-related bias in children's literature, see Appendix G. See Appendix H for a selected list of some of our favorite intergenerational books for young children.

Don't worry about sparking children's questions on the topic of illness or death, because at the preschool age, their interest is typically matter-of-fact and not fraught with emotional distress. They are curious and the images that surround them on a daily basis should reflect the outside world as realistically as possible so that they can ask questions and become comfortable with individuals who are physically different than themselves.

Planning developmentally appropriate activities

The children and older adult participants of an intergenerational program bring certain competencies with them when they come together. The challenge is to develop activities in a manner that capitalizes on each person's capabilities. Consider the following:

- How can a storytelling activity be developed to take advantage of children's natural curiosity and many older adults' natural abilities to tell stories?
- How can an arts and crafts activity be developed using the interests of older people to extend young children's uninhibited readiness to create and explore?
- How can quiet time be organized so that a senior with nurturing tendencies has the opportunity to be with a child who has recently experienced the loss of a loved one?
- How can play experiences be organized to engage children and senior adults in physical activity that is healthy exercise for both?

Participants also have limitations that sometimes need to be taken into account in developing activities. For example, when an older adult has difficulty walking, it may be necessary to arrange transportation to set points along the path of a nature hike. Similarly, some modification of classroom layout may be quite helpful in reducing the amount of bending required

Helene Block Fields, an intergenerational and grandparenting specialist in Illinois, provides the following activity ideas for introducing the concept of aging to children:

- The preschool teacher can show pictures of herself/himself as a baby and as a young child and then show pictures of her/his parents and grandparents. Children can bring family pictures of their parents as babies and those of themselves and their siblings, or artifacts such as baby shoes from each generation in the family. These can be placed on a bulletin board or in a shelf display with a timeline.
- Have the class take a walking trip outdoors. Notice the changes in the season. Collect leaves and twigs in different stages of growth or decay. Make collages of the materials gathered.
- Read stories about pets and discuss children's own pets. Include pictures of newborn puppies and kittens. Talk about older pets and how they change. Imitate sounds and movements of younger and older pets.
- Have the children make a family mobile. Discuss members of their families who live in their houses and family members who live in other places. Then cut out magazine pictures corresponding to their families to glue onto cardboard circles of various sizes. Use yarn and wire hangers to assemble mobiles. Hang the mobiles in the classroom.

Note: These are excerpts from Block Fields (1990); reprinted with permission. Helene Block Fields, professor emeritus, Oakton Community College, Des Plaines, Illinois.

of a senior volunteer working with toddlers. Different sizes of chairs can be provided so that children and adults are seated comfortably around a table for projects. Acoustics and lighting are other considerations in creating an intergenerationally friendly environment.

In all high-quality early childhood settings considerations of what is developmentally appropriate guides the selection of materials and curriculum. Knowledge of the developmental areas of growth that are occurring for young children is essential to being able to identify an idea, activities, or materials as appropriate to the age and capabilities of the children. To find out more about what "developmentally appropriate practice" means from an early childhood development perspective, see the NAEYC position overview available online at naeyc.org/resources/position_statements/dap2.htm, and their statement of key principles that inform developmentally appropriate practice online at naeyc.org/resources/position_statements/dap3.htm.

In an intergenerational environment,the mosaic of human interaction and growth is also influenced by the senior adults' cognitive, social, emotional, and physical levels of functioning. Hence, it is important for the staff to have at least a fundamental understanding about older adult as well as early childhood development.

Fortunately, there is significant overlap between what children and older adults like to do. Exercise and physical activity, for example, are crucial to the health and well-being of both groups. Other activities that have a universal (multigenerational) appeal include: working with tools and sensory materials, storytelling, singing, laughing, and eating.

Donna Couper and Fran Pratt, known for their groundbreaking work in teaching and learning about aging, provide the following checklist of items to consider regarding how seniors are represented in written and pictorial materials in an educational setting.

Written Materials

Below are several questions that can serve as useful guidelines for revising existing materials or producing new ones that adequately and fairly deal with issues of aging:

1. Is information about aging accurate and current?
2. Is there a balanced and realistic view of aging?
3. Is the diversity among older people reflected?
4. Are age and cohort differences among the older population noted?
5. Is undue emphasis on disease, disability, and death avoided?
6. Is information sharing with adult family members of students encouraged?

Photographs and Drawings Guidelines

Illustrations should reflect the heterogeneity of older people. Without ignoring physical decline common in later life, illustrations can best present the prospects for remaining healthy and productive. The appropriateness of photos of older people will vary depending on the subject and the kind and purpose of material being developed.

Are older adults in pictures and illustrations . . .

- Proportionally represented?
- Living independently?
- Serving others?
- In active roles?
- In diverse roles and dress?
- With noted accomplishments?
- In mixed age-groups?
- Non-stereotypical grandparents?
- With different physical abilities?
- Without deprecating humor?

These are excerpts from Couper and Pratt (1998); reprinted with permission. Donna Couper is the director of National Initiatives for the National Academy for Teaching and Learning about Aging at the University of North Texas. Fran Pratt resides in rural Maine.

The emergent curriculum: Creating a program based on relationships

Central to early childhood programs that adopt an emergent style of curriculum is the belief that the curriculum *emerges* from the children. We would take that a step further and suggest that in an intergenerational program it is the *relationships developed with and around the children, in a carefully planned environment, that create the curriculum*. If relationships are the core of the curriculum, then all of the developing relationships of the program are important and worthy of attention. All of the people in the early childhood setting—including senior adults—are curriculum makers in that they contribute to the construction of learning opportunities.

If we are carefully observant of the older adults who are involved with the children, we will see curriculum emerge and develop before our eyes. We recall stories of the first time an older adult was with the children for a day and how their natural interests flowed in the conversations and interactions of the day. We watched a woman pick up the worms on the playground along with the children and find that she has always had an interest in nature. Another senior brings in items from their home garden to share. An older adult tells us that he swims half a mile every day. Another loves to cook, needs to use a parasol in the sun, and knows how to do the jitterbug. All of these snippets of observations have the potential to become sources of curriculum explorations.

And all it takes to catalyze such rich learning is a simple question by a child. What *is* a parasol? Can you help us plant a garden? How do you crack an egg into the bowl for our cake? Can you come along to the insect center or the pool with us? Would you like to dance?

> "On her first day, J. [senior volunteer] was preparing to go out on the playground with the children. . . . And she said, 'Oh, I need my parasol to go out on the playground.' Several children (3–5 yr. olds) stopped and said, 'What's a parasol?" J. proceeded to tell the children about the difference between an umbrella used for rain and a parasol used for the sun. Following this, she answered questions from the children about why she likes to use a parasol, and noted that she couldn't get too much sun on her skin. . . . Without realizing it, a teachable moment had occurred, with the children learning another vocabulary word and reflecting on the sun's impact on the skin."
>
> —Director, Child Development Lab, State College, Pennsylvania

As relationships are forming, careful and observant teachers can engineer curriculum opportunities that may occur quite naturally but also require materials, idea sharing, and documentation in order to blossom meaningfully. The elders in the program also have an important role to play in helping to plan, negotiate, and bring to life these emergent learning opportunities.

Helene Block Fields, intergenerational and grandparenting specialist in Illinois, describes another emergent curriculum process where the catalyst for intergenerational exchange is the preschoolers' curiosity about the senior in their classroom. This process, called "Jump Start Interviewing," begins with the teacher interviewing the senior adult and using this information to create a simple scrapbook that highlights the senior's key experiences, interests, hobbies, etc. Next, with the senior present, the teacher reads the scrapbook to the children and elicits questions and statements of interest focused on the senior. Helene notes that the process does several things:

- Builds curriculum. Almost any piece of information about the senior, such as a bell collecting-hobby, can be used to generate ideas for rich, interactive intergenerational activities.
- Helps the children get to know their senior volunteers as individuals.
- Honors senior adults for their life experiences.
- "Jump starts" relationships.

Webbing: An emergent curriculum planning process

How can one plan for an emergent curriculum if an emergent curriculum is one that arises from the current interests of those involved in the classroom? In our view, the answer is straightforward. Think in terms of creating a *process*. There needs to be some kind of process to capture ideas, gather information, and guide development of a project. One process known as "webbing" uses the interests of the children to formulate an emergent curriculum plan.

This *web* begins with the initial interest that is expressed by the children and then brainstorming commences to broaden the scope of the original interests. The initial topic of the web presented in Appendix I is shoes. In this case, a discussion about shoes was expanded to touch on many other topics and connect with early childhood curriculum themes. Discussion touched on topics such as which shoes are appropriate to wear in which settings/weather and which kinds of shoes young people prefer compared to older adults.

Everyone in the child's environment—including teachers, parents, senior volunteers, and student teachers—can have input into this webbing process. The web may develop over a longer period of time than the initial planning session. Additional ideas can be noted throughout the stages of development of curriculum on the web or on the Emergent Curriculum Plan Form (Appendix J).

The Emergent Curriculum Plan Form can be a good tool for facilitating communication with the curriculum designers. The current interest is noted at the top of the form to identify for everyone which web would be guiding the plan. "The Developmental Skill Being Addressed" is identified by using child assessment results and/or developmental milestones (as noted in the NAEYC publication on developmentally appropriate curriculum, available online at naeyc.org/resources/position_statements/dap3.htm) to further guide appropriate targeted needs of the children. Consider identifying parallel benefits for senior adults in terms of supporting physical activity, building self-esteem, enjoying sensory experiences, engaging in problem-solving challenges, and so forth.

These skills, along with the curriculum interests, should be visible to all of the designers to aid in generating activities to be developed for classroom implementation. This form again is a working document for all of the designers to formulate ideas, goals, interests, and finally specific activities to best plan classroom curriculum.

Some Tenets of the Emergent Curriculum Concept

- Everybody has a role in the curriculum.
- Staff members are trained to capitalize on seniors' interests rather than give the senior adults a plan to follow.
- Seniors are encouraged to be observant about the interests of the children and play off these interests in their conversations and activities with the children.
- By providing new information and materials, staff and volunteers have an important role to play in sustaining children's curiosity and interests.

Preparing the Environment

The environment of an early childhood setting is also a teaching tool. The way we design, decorate, equip, and care for the environment creates powerful messages for those who occupy the space. One of the first exercises in an intergenerational program is considering how we already create an image of older people in our environment. Look for their presence. Are there photographs of older adults? Do the photographs depict adults in a variety of activities and roles and are they representative of the many cultures of the community? Are there props that support role play that includes older persons? Is the idea of growth that is presented to the children inclusive of old age as part of the life cycle? Is literature available that includes the roles of older people in the text and illustrations?

Think in terms of everything the child touches—materials, props, toys, books, etc. Is there any reflection of aging concepts or gender biases that are out-of-date in today's world? (E.g., the drivers in toy cars—are they all young males?) What about clothing

and props used for role-playing? (Do they include paraphernalia such as old-fashioned hats, vests, paper mustaches, gray wigs, etc.?)

Often simple things can be done to enhance the comfort level of the seniors as well as the children. In seating, for example, senior volunteers should not be expected to sit in chairs designed for young children. Also, provide some personal space for each volunteer, including, for example, a place to hang a coat, store a purse or a snack, and receive mail or messages.

"I overheard a conversation between two 4-year olds. 'My grandmother drove me here today.' 'No, grandmothers don't drive.' 'Oh yes, they do.' 'No they don't.' 'Well, my grandmother drove me here today.' This exchange got our staff thinking. What evidence did the child have for insisting that grandmothers don't drive? We realized that of our dozens of toy vehicles with drivers, not one was with an older adult woman driver."
—Director, Child Development Lab, State College, Pennsylvania

A distinctive aspect of the University of Findlay (Findlay, Ohio) intergenerational childcare program is its "family room" approach. To radiate a home-like atmosphere, the preschool room includes couches and a large stone fireplace. In the dramatic play area of the room, there are dressers, lamps, end tables, and coffee tables. The children store their play items in the dressers and in baskets rather than the primary colored shelves or office-like cabinets typical of most early childhood learning centers.

It is also important to pay attention to the entryway and hallways of the facility. A display area with photographs and displays of artwork and crafts by the seniors and the children will convey the message that the center is a place in which people of different generations come together and contribute to each others' lives.

"Children have a natural curiosity for new things in their environment, which, at the same time, is tempered to some extent by a fear of the unknown, of new things. In the context of exposing children to the world of aging, it is possible to take advantage of their curiosity by placing things like geriatric walkers and wheelchairs in the environment. This not only stimulates their cognitive development (recognition), but also desensitizes them to old people and the hardware that frequently accompanies them" (from Kaplan, Wagner, and Larson, 2001).

Nourishing Relationships

Promoting Senior-Child Relationships

The process of integrating senior adults into classroom activity is a gradual one. So, too, is the process of forming relationships between senior adults and children; it takes time.

When people who are involved in successful intergenerational programs describe their experiences and perceptions of their programs, they often employ the metaphor of "family" to describe the relationships that emerge.

> "Now [after a six-month period], the project is more relationship based. The seniors are starting to be integrated into the classes as sort of extended family members."
> —Director, Bennett Family Center, State College, Pennsylvania

For intergenerational relationships to thrive, children and older adults need opportunities to actively engage one another. This may sound obvious, but many activities, such as movie watching and special presentations by visitors, provide little opportunity for intergenerational communication unless such interaction is programmed into the activity. For example, a special presentation conducted by a dog trainer and her dogs can be followed by a period of unstructured play in which children and the senior(s) can throw a ball amongst themselves and the dogs.

Another way to build intergenerational relationships is to be thoughtful in how children and seniors are grouped for activities. One strategy is to match them up according to interests they have in common. Another approach is to match children and seniors based on complementary needs and skills (e.g., one group wants to learn about words and the other has reading skills and a desire to share what they read).

You might also take an open-ended approach and allow participants to make connections on their own

> "One of the older women came in and she said, 'Okay, I need a baby.' And you can tell that she's been here before, and this is what she wanted. And that's great because there were diapers to change and mouths to feed. And she took one of them. There's a nice relationship there."
> —Parent, Bennett Family Center, State College, Pennsylvania

when you provide the occasion to socialize or materials for a shared activity. If so, be careful to make sure that no one who wants to be included gets left out. You may need to introduce people to one another or suggest a way to break the ice if someone is shy. In some instances, senior adults may prefer just to watch children's activity. This level of engagement may eventually shift when a child makes personal contact on his own initiative. Not every child will take an interest in the senior adults, but some children may seek exclusive one-on-one attention from a willing volunteer.

A child comes up behind G. [senior] and pretends to bite her with a toy shark. They laugh together. "Who will help me save the guy from the shark?! Save him! Save him!" G. has excitement in her voice. She gets a couple of children involved for a few minutes playing this game.
—Observation notes, Child Development Lab, State College, Pennsylvania

Promoting Senior-Parent Relationships

Parents, if involved, could help extend the benefits and reinforce the lessons derived from children's experiences with the senior volunteers.

"Oh you're the one who gave her the stuffed rabbit that she won't go to sleep without . . . . Since she's made friends with you . . . she's now much more interested in finding out about her own grandparents. . . . "
—A parent of a four-year-old speaking to a senior adult whom his four-year-old daughter had befriended, Seagull Schools, Honolulu, Hawaii

"My [two-year-old] son often told me things about his senior volunteer and what they did together. I remember when he learned about her hearing aid. I found him trying to stick big marbles in his ear at home. . . . He told me he thought she wore big marbles in her ears. . . . And, right there, we talked about hearing aids . . . . I made sure he understood about hearing aids and other kinds of aids, and how as we age, sometimes we may need help with certain things. . . . I also wanted to make sure that he had no fear about hearing or walking aids."
—Parent, Child Development Lab, State College, Pennsylvania

Myths, Misconceptions, and Things to Avoid

One of the most exciting things to watch in an intergenerational program is the way participants relate to each other when they have reached the point of trusting and caring about one another. Yet, such relationships do not just happen; they require time to grow, a prolonged period of interaction, an environment conducive to such relationships, and careful planning (at least at first).

A misconception about intergenerational programs is the notion that a senior's age is a good predictor of how well he or she will do in the program. Actually, many variables beyond that of age influence what seniors do and their level of success. Here are a few such factors:

- The roles (titles) provided for the seniors: People behave differently when cast in different roles and with different titles, e.g., a volunteer, aide, grandmother, teacher, arts specialist.
- The orientation and amount of training they receive at the early childhood center.
- The level of clarity and confidence about their roles: When senior volunteers are unclear about if or how they are contributing, this is often a prelude to their quitting the program.
- Expectations that others have of them are realistic.

Myth: Older Adults + Children = Instant Intergenerational Magic

"One false belief is that by merely coming into contact with one another, young and old will immediately connect and understand each other; and that bonding and relationships between the generations will occur magically and automatically, without any need for outside assistance. In reality, it takes planning and concentrated efforts to successfully prepare young and old to be comfortable with one another. . . . Intergenerational connections may be magic, but magic takes work" (Steinig, 2003, p. 17).

Things to avoid:

- Use of terms such as "old lady," "rug rats," "brats," "curtain climbers," "geezers," and other such negative monikers.
- The association of the entire program with one individual; occasionally, a staff person, parent, or volunteer becomes known as the prime supporter and champion of the intergenerational program. This is fine, but if there are tenuous lines of administrative and staff support, sustaining the program will be difficult, particularly during times of staffing changes, budget cuts, and curriculum revision. Make sure the program belongs to everyone.

Evaluating Your Program

Evaluation is ongoing and should not be seen as an after-thought. Evaluation objectives, strategies, responsibilities, and tools should be worked out prior to program startup.

Evaluation objectives should mirror program objectives. In other words, the focus of the evaluation effort should be on comparing outcomes with objectives and assessing the degree to which objectives have been met. If, for example, the primary program objective is to add additional recreational activities to the center's overall program, then the evaluation component should be centered on charting changes in the recreational activities available at the center. Or, if the objective is to promote intergenerational relationships, decide what would be the indicators of these relationships having been established (e.g., hugs and smiles, comments about missing absent participants, requests for opportunities to be together).

Other basic points about evaluation:

- Try to use many methods. There are various methods for collecting information on program impact, including anecdotal or case history information, questionnaires and interviews (conducted with program participants, staff, and parents), observations, and notes from planning and debriefing meetings.
- Try to assess program impact on the participants. For most purposes, it is sufficient to ask participants a few basic questions focused on how they experience and perceive the intergenerational endeavor. The more elaborate evaluation will look to explore whether program experiences contribute to a host of potential affective, cognitive, and behavioral changes in the participants. For instance, it is possible that the program experience affects participants' attitudes toward people of other generations. The intergenerational component might also lead to cognitive development in both the children and the older adults. Documenting such changes, however, requires a large commitment to the evaluation process, with a fair amount of preliminary effort aimed at finding the right evaluation instruments, and ongoing effort focused on collecting data systematically and over a long enough period of time to enable pre- and post-program comparisons.
- Try to assess program impact on the participating organizations: Short interviews conducted with center administrators, staff, and parents will likely provide useful information about how (if at all) the intergenerational program contributes to broader changes in the center's service delivery strategies, hiring policies, philosophy, financial and human resources, and relations with the surrounding community.
- For the more elaborate program evaluation efforts, it makes sense to build partnerships with universities, research groups, and community organizations with a research capacity. A college-level student working on the program as part of an internship or service learning course can provide invaluable assistance in conducting interviews with program participants and stakeholders, conducting observations of program activities, analyzing results, and helping to prepare reports and presentations.
- Collect data on an ongoing basis. Appendix K provides a questionnaire format for obtaining periodic input from teachers.
- There are numerous uses of evaluation data. Results can be used to strengthen various aspects of the program and, by sharing results (including success stories) with various program stakeholders (i.e., fundraisers, parents, and community organization partners), as a tool for strengthening outside support for the program.

Concluding Thoughts

In laying out various steps and considerations for developing intergenerational programs in early childhood education settings, we have tried to emphasize several points.

First, there is no one way to establish an intergenerational program. Our view of intergenerational programming in early childhood settings is that it is not a singular experience or a finite entity. It is about relationships between older adults and children, staff, and parents. It is also about connections between organizations at the community level. And what is termed "program development" is more about creating a process that grows along with the participants and the relationships between them. The planning that takes place is best seen in the context of creating a foundation upon which such relationships can thrive.

Second, we suggest looking at the intergenerational initiative as an integrated part of the center rather than as a separate add-on component. This means that administrators, staff, and seniors alike, work hand-in-hand to blend the seniors into all aspects of life at the center, including curriculum development, staff training, special events, classroom arrangement and decoration, fundraising, and public relations efforts.

If taken to the extreme, this integration will mean that over time, there is no longer an intergenerational "program" but, rather, an early childhood setting that is age-integrated—a setting that is for people of all ages. In such a place, children and seniors have unlimited access to each other's company. It is a place where they laugh together, learn together, and appreciate each other.

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Appendices

Resources and Materials for Conducting Intergenerational Programs in Early Childhood Settings

Appendix A: **Preliminary Survey to Obtain Staff Members' Ideas about Intergenerational Connections**

Name of Intergenerational Program _____

Teacher's Name: _____

Age of Students: _____

Program Partners: _____

Program Description: _____

The "_____ Intergenerational Program" is a new initiative that aims to expose children from infancy through preschool age and senior adult volunteers to mutually beneficial intergenerational experiences. Senior adults in the _____ area are being recruited to participate in this program. We envision a multifaceted program, with senior adults recruited to fill a wide range of roles in your facility. We would appreciate your thoughts in regard to some of the specific connections that can be made between your children and local senior adults.

Senior Adult Roles

Within the classroom curriculum/activities: _____

_____

Outside the classroom activities: _____

_____

Support for children's parents and other family members: _____

_____

Facility development (e.g., gardening and mural-painting): _____

_____

Administrative support (e.g., library support): _____

_____

Other:

Which activities do you think your class would benefit from/enjoy the most?

_____

_____

What special needs or talents do the children in your class have which you feel should be taken into consideration when planning intergenerational activities?

_____

_____

Appendix B: Agenda for Staff In-Service Training

B

Purpose

To provide training for early childhood education staff already involved in an intergenerational program (emphasis on activities planning and program facilitation strategies).

Objectives

- Promote reflection about how senior adult volunteers currently fit into the center.
- Provide ideas for how to better utilize the skills and interests of senior adult volunteers.
- Consider alternate strategies for facilitating intergenerational activities.

Introduction

9:00–9:10 A.M.: Review of the Existing Intergenerational Program

—What we have accomplished?
—Where do we want to go?

9:10–9:30 A.M.: Spotlight on Senior Adult Roles

—Discussion about how senior adult volunteers are currently contributing to classroom activities.
—Are we making the most of them? Discussion stimulators:

• Compared to younger adults, what do seniors have more of (e.g., time, knowledge of cultural traditions, long-range perspective on life's meaning)?
• Consider how the following activities will look differently when done with a senior adult versus a younger adult: show and tell discussion about a new toy, planning a holiday celebration, a nature appreciation walk around the neighborhood, a cooking (baking) activity, and a presentation on careers for men and women.
• What other activities might be appropriate considering the special assets of senior adults and the needs of children?
• What would you think about inviting your senior volunteers to be a part of some of your activity planning meetings and discussions?

9:30–10:00 A.M.: Tips for Facilitating Intergenerational Activities

—Keep in mind that interaction does not necessarily happen by itself, but that relationships can't be forced either.
—Think in terms of "facilitating" rather than "directing" activities
—Keep a flow to the activities; know when to end an activity, and always have "back-up" activities if you have to stay within a specific timeframe.
—Try to develop long range curriculum plans with follow-up activities or ongoing projects so that participants build a relationship over time.
—Work to further the skills of participants by modeling and problem solving.
—Aim for the "normalization" of intergenerational relations. In other words, participants should come to view multigenerational experiences as commonplace.

10:00–10:15 A.M.: Any Concerns

—Related to supervisory issues
—Uneasiness about the capabilities of the older adult participants
—Logistical problems (transportation, parking, etc.)
—Anxieties that involve the children, the volunteers, and/or parents

10:15–10:30 A.M.: Questions, Discussion, and Wrap-Up

—Focus: Activity ideas and facilitation strategies for making better use of volunteers.

Appendix C: **Example of a Senior Volunteer Recruitment Poster**

You Can Make a Difference in a Child's Life

Volunteer at the Penn State Early Childhood Education Intergenerational Program.

Rock a baby to sleep

Build a tower of blocks

Encourage young artists

Share stories

Discover together

Blow bubbles

Exercise together

Two sites to choose from:

Bennett Family Center
123 Bennett Family Center
University Park, PA 16802
814-865-4057
Contact Wendy Whitesell, wjw6@psu.edu

Child Development Lab
24 Henderson Building South
University Park, PA 16802
814-863-0267

- No experience needed
- Flexible schedule

PENNSTATE

Appendix D: **Senior Volunteer Talent Bank Form**

Name of Program Site: _____

Date: _____

Name (Mr., Miss, Ms., Mrs., Dr.): _____

Mailing Address

Street _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____ E-mail _____

What is your generation? Circle the age category in which you fit:

Under 60 60–69 70–79 80–89 90+

Volunteer/Employment Experience

In order of most recent activity, list those organizations with which you have been active as a volunteer or employee. Note "V" for volunteer position or "E" for employment in the spaces below.

Organization/Volunteer/ Position(s)	Date

Agency Name	Employee	From/To

Education

Please indicate your highest level of education:

1. High School 2. College 3. Advanced Degree Field: _____

4. Other, please specify: _____

Availability:

Starting Date_____

When are you available to volunteer?_____

Please circle the day(s) of the week you are available to volunteer:

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday

At what time(s) of the day can you volunteer?_____

How often would you like to volunteer?

Twice a week or more Once a week Every other week Once a month or less

Any Preferences?

For age-group (babies, toddlers, preschool, school age)?

Ongoing or limited/special assignments?_____

For working with children individually, in small groups, or with entire class?_____

Transportation

Do you:

1. Have a valid driver's license? _____
2. Have use of a car? _____
3. Take the bus? _____
4. Rely on others?_____
5. Need assistance with arrangements?_____

Physical or medical limitations that may affect your volunteer work:

1. None
2. Yes, which will **not** affect most volunteer activity?
3. Yes, which will affect volunteer activity?

If yes, please specify:

_____

_____

Talent List

Below is a list of specific talents or expertise that you might have. Check those that apply to you. Please do not be bound by this list, and feel free to add any of your own at the end.

Anthropology
Antiques
Architecture
Arts and Crafts
Baking
Biology
Business Administration
Canning
Caregiving
Carpentry
Chemistry
Chess/Board Games
Civic Revitalization
Commercial Art
Computers/Computer Sciences
Consumer Rights
Cooking
Coordination
Counseling
Creative Writing
Dentistry
Engineering
Fine Arts
Flower Arrangement
Folk Art
Folklore
Geology/Earth Sciences
Grandchildren Sitting
Grant-Writing
Graphics
Health Care Planning
History
Horticulture
Interior Design/Decoration
Law
Library Science
Marketing/Advertising
Mathematics/Statistics
Medicine
Music
Nursing
Performing Arts/Entertainment
Physical Education
Physics
Program Administration
Psychology
Religion
Secretarial
Sewing/Knitting/Crocheting
Social Work
Sociology
Sports
Stamp/Coin/Card Collecting
Tea Ceremony
Teaching
Travel
Zoology
Other Areas _____

_____

_____

As a final note, please recommend people who might be potential volunteers in this intergenerational program.

Name	Phone Number

Appendix E: Senior Volunteer Information: Short Form

Senior Volunteer Information Form

Please take a moment to complete the following questions so that we can schedule the most appropriate assignment match for you.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Please circle the day(s) of the week you are available to volunteer:

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday

At what time(s) can you volunteer? For example, 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

_____

_____

How often would you like to volunteer?

Twice a week or more Once a week Every other week Once a month or less

What age-group would you prefer to work with?

Babies Toddlers Preschool School Age

What activities are you interested in doing with the children?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Are there any activities in which you are unable to participate? If so, please describe.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix F: **Framework for Conducting Seniors-Only Group Meetings**

Objectives

- Establish a sense of "purposeful camaraderie" among senior volunteers.
- Facilitate a process whereby senior volunteers are learning from one another.
- Provide senior volunteers with additional guidance in terms of their interactions with children, teachers, and parents.
- Foster leadership within the ranks of the senior volunteer group.

Tentative Agenda

Breakfast or Lunch

Sharing Experiences (continue with the meal)

The following list includes some examples of topics for conversation:
(1) What impact do you feel you are having on the children?
(2) What are you doing that that seems to work best (in terms of impact on the children)?
(3) How are you fitting into the classrooms and working with teachers?
(4) How are you relating to parents?/How would you like to relate to them?

Activity idea: In small groups, draft a letter to introduce yourselves to the parents of the children in your classroom.

Problem-Solving Role Plays

- Figure out a role play for dealing with a problem of concern to senior participants. For example, role play how a retired CEO can handle a situation in which a disgruntled parent is complaining about an activity.

What's Next?

- Is there anything center administrators can do to enhance the effectiveness of senior volunteers (organize seminars, gather resource materials, etc.)?

Appendix G: **Forms of Age-Related Bias in Children's Literature**

Stereotyping

Attributing traditional characteristics to elders in such a way that all older adults appear to have similar personalities, attitudes, and skills is a form of stereotyping. Some stereotypical images of elders are: cranky and demanding; inactive and dependent; in poor health and slow-moving; frequently forgetful or, conversely, all-knowing and infinitely wise. Some traditional roles include: sitting in a rocking chair; women baking cookies or knitting; dozing; walking with a cane; and wagging fingers at younger generations.

Children may not realize that the older we get, the more distinctive our personal histories become, making elders an extremely diverse group of people. While older generations share common knowledge of social norms and important world events which occurred during their lives, and they can probably speak from personal experience about loss (both in terms of physical decline and in terms of relationships ending), still they maintain their unique identities as they continue through the life course.

Reality

While aging is not necessarily negative, and only about 6 percent of the elderly population resides in a nursing home, there are diminishing capacities, chronic illnesses, losses, and other difficulties associated with growing old that, if completely ignored, may perpetuate unrealistic ideas or expectations. Hiding unpleasant aspects of aging, or treating these issues only as painful problems to be overcome by brave role models, does not introduce children to a variety of experiences with growing older, nor does it give them ways to accept that the life cycle includes death as well as birth and renewal. Often, in an attempt to compensate for overly negative images of aging, elders are portrayed as having extraordinary skills. Older adults need not be endowed with superhuman powers to be successful. They can be portrayed more convincingly as continuing to grow and learn from experience throughout life. This is not to say that authors can't be playful with ideas about aging, or ever write about unusual older adults, but these characterizations must be sufficiently developed to make them unique and believable individuals. A book's tone is very important here.

Language and Illustrations

Children's literature should represent the dialogue of younger and older characters in age-appropriate language that accurately portrays their speech without being demeaning. For example, children seen as constantly asking impossible questions might be an accurate portrayal of a particular developmental stage (around three years old), but it might also be presented as an exaggerated image of childhood in general. Elders who speak to young children in overly patronizing tones or who converse about complex, abstract ideas with children who are at an age where they would not able to understand such concepts are examples of the misrepresentation of dialogue. Accompanying pictures should also reinforce positive notions about diversity and individuality across ages.

Sentimentality

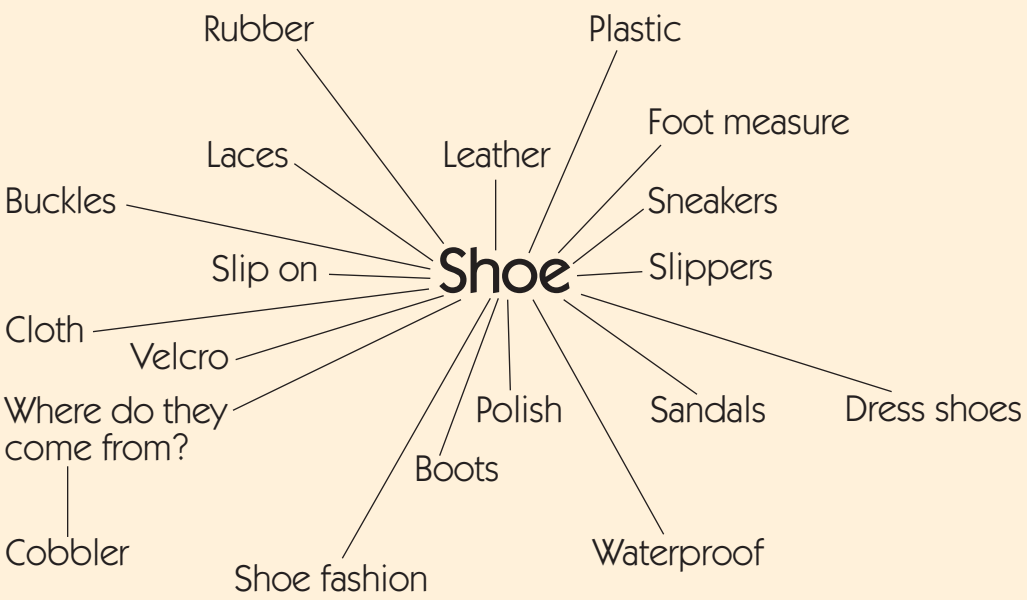
There is a fine line between a truly touching story about the relationship between a child and a grandparent, and an attempt to manipulate emotions through overly sentimental stories about the young and the old. We are all vulnerable to some degree when it comes to warm, loving memories of childhood and families. But these tender, human moments must be treated with respect and not be simplistic or glib. Judgments about what constitutes improper sentimentality must be left to individual readers, but this dimension has been abused frequently in children's stories about grandparents or elder family members, neighbors, and friends.

—From Larkin, 2001

Appendix H: **Selected Intergenerational Books for Young Children**

Ackerman, K. (1988). *Song and Dance Man*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
Bunting, E. (1989). *The Wednesday Surprise*. New York: Doubleday.
Cannon, J. (1997). *Verdi*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
Dengler, M. (1996). *The Worry Stone*. Arizona: Northland Publishing.
DePaola, T. (1973). *Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs*. New York: G. P. Putnam.
DePaola, T. (1981). *Now One Foot, Now the Other*. New York: G. P. Putnam.
DePaola, T. (1993). *Tom*. New York: G. P. Putnam.
Greenfield, E. (1988). *Grandpa's Face*. New York: Putnam & Grosset.
Henkes, K. (1995). *Good-Bye, Curtis*. New York: Greenwillow Books.
Hoffman, M. (1991). *Amazing Grace*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers.
McKissack, P. (1988). *Mirandy and Brother Wind*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
Miles, M. (1971). *Annie and the Old One*. Boston: Atlantic-Little, Brown Books.
Mora, P. (1994). *Pablo's Tree*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
Polacco, P. (1988). *The Keeping Quilt*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
Polacco, P. (1992). *Chicken Sunday*. New York: Philomel Books.
Polacco, P. (1994). *Pink and Say*. New York: Philomel Books.
Say, A. (1993). *Grandfather's Journey*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
Stanley, D. (1997). *Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter*. New York: Morrow Junior Books.
Tunnel, M. O. (1997). *Mailing May*. New York: Greenwillow Books.
Williams, V. B. (1997). *Lucky Song*. New York: Greenwillow Books.
Wood, A. (1984). *The Napping House*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
Zolotow, C. (1992). *This Quiet Lady*. New York: Greenwillow Books.

Appendix I: **An Example of a Webbing Process**



Art
- shoe prints
- paint with laces
- fabric paint canvas shoes

Drama play
- shoe store
- cobbler shop
- dance shoes

Building
- stack shoes
- build shoe store

Manipulatives
- lacing
- buckles
- matching shoes

Library
- shoe scramble
- "Dog" game

Science
- leather
- plastic
- Velcro
- rubber
- different polishes

Field trips
- Stride Rite

Wood

Sensory

Outdoor

Appendix J: **Emergent Curriculum Plan Form**

Date of Beginning Curriculum _____

Classroom _____

Children's Current Interest Guiding Curriculum: _____

Developmental skill being addressed (target child?)	Activities	Materials needed	Who can provide the material?	How did it work out?	What could be changed?

Names of curriculum designers:

_____

_____

_____

Appendix K: **Questionnaire for Teaching Staff Involved in Intergenerational Program Activities**

Today's Date:_____ Teacher's Name:_____

Name of Center:_____ Classroom:_____

Date of first involvement in the program (approx.):_____

The "_____ Intergenerational Program" is an initiative that aims to expose children and senior volunteers to beneficial intergenerational experiences. Your feedback will help us determine the value of the program and guide future program improvement efforts. We appreciate your responses to the following questions. Please circle and/or write down your answers.

1. How frequently does your volunteer visit your class?

1. Once a month
2. Every other week
3. Once a week
4. Twice a week

2. How do you feel about the frequency of these visits?

1 2 3 4 5

Too little Too much

3. For the average visit, how much time does your volunteer spend with your class?

1. Less than 1 hour
2. 1–2 hours
3. 2–3 hours
4. More than 3 hours

4. How do you feel about the duration of these visits?

1 2 3 4 5

Too short Too long

5. List some of the roles your volunteer has taken on:

(a) within the classroom
(b) outside the classroom
(c) involving interaction with the children's parents and other family members
(d) other roles

6. To the best of your knowledge, to what extent has your volunteer contributed to the following:

(a) enrichment of the children's experiences at the center

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all Enrich a lot

(b) enhancement of your job performance. (For example, are you able to spend more time on other things such as planning, charting, focusing on other problems or issues?)

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all Enhance a lot

(c) In what ways have they contributed to the enrichment of children's experiences?

_____

_____

_____

_____

(d) In what ways have they had an impact on your job?

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. (a) Do you think the program has had an impact on the senior volunteers?

Yes No

(b) Please explain your answer and provide relevant examples if possible:

8. (a) Would you like additional volunteers in your class?

Yes No

(b) If yes, how many? _____

(c) How often and for what length of time would you like the additional volunteer(s) to come?

(d) Would you have any preferences regarding additional volunteers' skills, interests, etc.?

9. Please share your recommendations for program improvement by answering the following questions:

(a) Is there anything that can be done to better support you, the teacher (e.g., conduct special topic staff training sessions, provide ideas for intergenerational activities, assist in facilitating intergenerational activities)?

(b) Is there anything that can be done to better support the senior volunteers (e.g., provide additional training, acknowledgment)?

(c) Is there anything that can be done to better support the children who participate in the intergenerational program (e.g., conduct orientation sessions on topics such as "What Is Aging?")?

(d) Any other recommendations for how we might improve the program?

Developed by:

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For other resources available from the Penn State Intergenerational Program, visit the Web site: intergenerational.cas.psu.edu.

Visit Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences on the Web: www.cas.psu.edu

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