

UNESCO Institute for Education

**SCHOOL-BASED
INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS**

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School-based Intergenerational Programs¹

Abstract:

In recent years, we have seen a groundswell of intergenerational program activity occurring on an international scale. At an unprecedented level, new initiatives are emerging which aim to bring young people and older adults together in various settings – to interact, stimulate, educate, support, and provide care for one another.

The focus of this paper is on intergenerational programs implemented in schools. Discussion centers primarily on how such initiatives enhance and reinforce the educational curriculum, contribute to student learning and personal growth, enrich the lives of senior adult participants, and have a positive impact on the surrounding communities.

It is noted that although there has been explosive growth in the prevalence of intergenerational programs implemented in schools, there is uncertainty regarding their potential to transform the educational enterprise. This is primarily because of the scarcity of controlled evaluation research; systematic research has not kept pace with program expansion.

To set the stage for addressing questions about program impact, an effort is first made to identify key parameters of program variation. Accordingly, school-based intergenerational programs are categorized according to three distinct classification schemas: (1) connections to academic curricular areas, (2) direction of service provision, and (3) depth of intergenerational engagement. The location of individual intergenerational programs within these program classification parameters will be useful for clarifying program objectives and expectations and designing appropriate tools for evaluation.

This paper concludes with a review of some key issues that need to be taken into account when developing and evaluating intergenerational programs. This includes considerations of culture (including cultural perspectives about aging and intergenerational discourse), institutional structures, and educational philosophy and vision.

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I - Introduction:

As defined by the International Consortium for Intergenerational Programs, “intergenerational programs” are “social vehicles that create purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and learning among older and younger generations.”² In a nutshell, it is about “intergenerational engagement” – the full range of ways in which young people and older adults interact, support, and provide care for one another. The focus is usually on establishing connections between people who are 21 and under and people who are 60 and over, with the intention of benefiting one or both age groups.

The intergenerational (re-)connection theme is big and ever-present: It includes “programs” of intervention developed in a wide variety of settings (including schools, community organizations, hospitals, and places of worship). Yet, it goes beyond “programs;” it is also a perspective for examining social policy and re-thinking how we construct our basic institutions and choose to spend our time. Quite often, the domain of “intergenerational programming” is even referred to as a field in and of itself. This makes sense insofar as the phrase references a finite domain of inquiry and action, bounded by a clear set of approaches, questions, and skills that practitioners need to function effectively.

The call for increased intergenerational engagement is coming from many directions. We see it in newspaper editorials providing commentary on the increased sense of social isolation experienced by many young people and older adults. The theme is also finding its way into the publications and meetings conducted by professional societies in a broad range of fields, including education, volunteerism, child development, service learning, and gerontology. Hundreds of intergenerational program guidebooks and manuals have been published over the past 15 years and, in the past few years in particular, authors in the intergenerational field are finding mainstream venues for their publications (e.g., Brabazon & Disch, 1997; Hawkins et al. 1998; Henkin and Kingson (1998/99); Kaplan et al., 1998; Kuehne (1999), Newman et al., 1997; and Winston, 2001). In all of these venues, there is a growing recognition that these efforts to facilitate meaningful intergenerational engagement will enhance the quality of people’s lives, strengthen communities, and contribute to needed societal-level change.

Intergenerational approaches in schools, the focus of this paper, typically call for using the strengths of one generation to meet the needs of another. Civic-minded senior adults contribute to the educational process and make important contributions to children’s lives. Conversely, children bring much energy, enthusiasm, and support into the lives of seniors. These new relationships can take place in any number of ways; the continuum of intergenerational activity seems endless.

Since the 1970’s and 1980’s, there has been an influx of reports about intergenerational programs found in school settings. However, for the most part, the early reports describe

² The International Consortium for Intergenerational Programs is a newly formed organization (1999) based in The Netherlands which aims to bring together policy makers, academics and practitioners to promote intergenerational practice.

isolated, small-scale initiatives. Increasingly, intergenerational programs are being integrated into educational services delivered on a larger scale, with entire school districts, and citywide school systems embracing intergenerational engagement as an important pedagogical tool. Occasionally, there is national and even international level dialogue about how intergenerational approaches can be woven into the educational enterprise. It is significant, for example, that the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI), a 100+ year old organization devoted to contributing to the professional growth of educators in the global community, has included as one of their hallmark recommendations for promoting optimal education and development of children the incorporation of intergenerational approaches “whenever feasible” (ACEI, 2000).

The growing interest in finding ways to integrate intergenerational activities into mainstream education systems is heartening, though we should proceed with caution. On the positive side, there are high expectations that intergenerational programs will have a dramatic, positive impact upon the lives of participating children, youth and senior adults. The intergenerational literature is abundant with rich narratives about how program participants learn, find greater motivation to learn, and derive richer life perspectives from their experiences. However, with the intergenerational studies field still in its infancy, it is unclear whether there is enough information available to guide program development efforts. Whereas there is an abundant amount of information on how to create intergenerational programs, there have been few extensive efforts to assess program impact.

The underlying intent of this paper is to provide an overview of some of the major points of understanding about how school-based intergenerational programs function and the impact they have on participants, participating schools, and surrounding communities.

To set the stage for addressing questions about program impact, an effort is first made to identify key parameters of program variation. Accordingly, school-based intergenerational programs are categorized according to three distinct classification schemas: (1) connections to academic curricular areas, (2) direction of service provision, and (3) depth of intergenerational engagement. The location of individual intergenerational programs within these program classification parameters will be useful for clarifying program objectives and expectations and designing appropriate tools for evaluation.

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II - Systems for Classifying Intergenerational Programs:

(A) Connections to the school curriculum

Senior volunteers are being utilized in all areas of educational experience – They contribute as tutors, library assistants, cafeteria helpers, clerical assistants, career advisors, oral historians, pen pals, math/science volunteers, friendly listeners/mentors, computer helpers, special ed class assistants, guest lecturers, exercise leaders, lunch buddies, and cultural heritage transmitters. They are often sought out to assist with recreational programs (sports, hobbies), art classes, music classes, foreign languages classes (with bilingual volunteers), and drug prevention/education programs. Senior adults also help students meet academic standards including those that are interdisciplinary such as writing.

Intergenerational activities can be developed to support virtually any curriculum subject and academic skill. There are examples of projects designed to enhance student learning in the areas of history, civics, art and architecture, urban studies, sociology, geology, and economics, to name a few subject areas. Friedman (1999) notes how aging education can readily be incorporated into math, English language arts, fine arts, science, physical education, health, and social studies curricula. Several examples are provided below of intergenerational program components being used to expand and/or reinforce lessons taught in different subject areas.

(1) History:

One of the most common premises for bringing senior adults into classrooms is in the context of contributions they might make in the teaching of history. Accordingly, there are innumerable examples of senior adults enhancing classroom history lessons by sharing their personal experiences and opinions.

Often such activities are highlighted by local newspapers. For example, in San Rafael, California, the Marin Independent Journal carried a story about an 88-year-old woman who was recruited to participate in an elementary school class history lesson on World War II. She told an 11-year-old boy about San Francisco during the war. She described “the victory garden she planted, and the rabbits she raised for food, and how women were trained to pack hospital stretchers onto the backs of horses” (Le Draoulec, 1995, Dec. 17, D-1).

From a teacher’s perspective, it helps to have access to resources that help them structure “oral history” sessions and integrate this material into their lesson plans. In this regard, Bi-Folkal Productions, a non-profit organization founded in 1976 by former teachers and librarians in Madison, Wisconsin, provides sets of slides, pictures, books, video, and interview questions to help stimulate meaningful dialogue and reflection as part of the oral history project. Several other resource books are available to provide guidance in structuring oral histories (e.g., Charnow, Nash, & Perlstein (1988) and Schweitzer (1993).

(2) The performing arts

In a project initiated in Sendai City (Miyagi Prefecture, Japan) in 1975, community residents (mostly senior adults) who are specialists in “shishi odori” and “kenbai” (two forms of traditional dances involving drums and swords) teach these dance forms to sixth grade students of Fukuoka Elementary School. The students then conduct performances, in full traditional costume, at school and community festivals, senior adult day care facilities, subway stations, and other community settings. Before they graduate, the students teach the dances to the fifth graders, a school tradition which symbolizes the “passing down of culture.”³ When interviewed, the senior adult kenbai instructor stated how the students are learning more than just the physical forms of kenbai dancing; they also learn about the historical and cultural significance of kenbai, the benefits of “doing something seriously,” and the importance of politeness and respect (Kaplan et al., 1998).

Elders Share the Arts (ESTA), a nationally-recognized, New York-based, community arts organization founded in 1979, developed an intergenerational theater arts approach called “Living History.” This innovative format uses the traditional arts of theater, dance, storytelling, writing, and visual arts to bring young people (ranging in age from pre-school to high school) and senior adults together on a weekly basis to share and find meaning in their life stories. The community-building element of this approach is the public presentation of the group’s work; this usually takes the form of a performance or a festival. The ESTA publication, “Generating Community: Intergenerational Partnerships through the Expressive Arts,” describes in detail this approach for synthesizing oral history and the creative arts. It takes two years to implement fully and works best when launched as part of a partnership between senior centers, schools, and arts groups in the same neighborhood (Perlstein and Bliss, 1994).

Davis and Ferdman (1993) published a resource book describing other intergenerational approaches for facilitating the transmission of folklore.

(3) Language arts:

Within the Native American context, there are some important initiatives focused on language preservation. Generations United (1994), for example, highlights a program in which elders of the Seneca Indian Nation of New York were enlisted to work on a one-to-one basis with young participants to teach them the Seneca language, thereby reversing the trend in which an estimated 80% of the language was lost in the previous generation. Similarly, William Carse, who has worked extensively with native Hawaiian and Native American groups, describes an intergenerational vocabulary restoration program developed in Montana by Arapaho Indians (W. Carse, personal communication, September, 1999).

³ Shishi Odori and Kenbai were originated at the beginning of the Edo period (1603-1867) and reached Sendai 330 years ago. Historically, and in the present, they are performed together; the Shishi Odori symbolizes hopes for plentiful harvests and peaceful growing conditions, and Kenbai symbolizes the warding off of evil spirits from the harvests.

(4) Technological skills development:

There are various intergenerational program models which center around computers. In some cases, the students are placed in the role of “trainer/technical assistant.” For example, Intergenerational Innovations, a non-profit organization in Seattle, Washington, has established a “Computer Training Corps” model in which middle and high school students volunteer to tutor elders on how to use the computer. Similarly, Veelken (2000) reports that there are programs in Germany in which students conduct computer courses for senior adults.

Another way in which intergenerational computer-related programs are conducted involves recruiting senior adults who have received specialized training in computers and are willing to share their knowledge with school children. In other cases yet still, students and senior adults sit down together as equal partners in computer learning. One such example is found in the “Generations and Innovations” project, implemented in four elementary schools in Memphis, Tennessee. Sixth-grade students who have been deemed to be “academically talented” sit side-by-side with senior adult volunteers to create web pages and conduct other computer-based activities (Generations and Innovations, February 28, 2001).⁴

(5) Environmental education:

The Hiratsuka Junior Leaders Club, located in Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan, is a group of eight high school and junior high school students interested in puppetry and concerned about environmental preservation. With advisorial assistance from staff of the Hiratsuka City Children’s Club Association, the students develop and conduct five performances in different community institutions each year (Matsui, 1994).

In many cases, senior adults enter schools as a function of their interests and efforts in the realm of environmental activism. For example, members of a senior center in Philadelphia established “Center in the Park,” a program that offers a variety of environmental education activities for school children, including exploratory canoe trips on the Schuylkill River, sailing on Delaware Bay to monitor water quality, and periodic visits to Philadelphia to discuss how urbanization and industrialization are affecting water quality (Ingman, Benjamin, & Lusky, 1998/99).

Another intergenerational environmental education-type program is “Wildfriends,” an organization named for wild animals, wild teenagers, and wild older people. This program, sponsored by the Center for Wildlife Law, University of New Mexico, brings middle school students together with older mentors who love wildlife. Together, they write and support legislation to protect endangered species (Ingman, Benjamin, & Lusky, 1998/99).

⁴ The Illinois Intergenerational Initiative website incorporates a series of articles describing different frameworks in which students and senior adults can work together to build their computer skills (Illinois Intergenerational Initiative, February 28, 2001).

(6) Other:

There are numerous school-based models that do not connect to the academic curriculum, but still contribute to school atmosphere and operations. For example, the Lunch Buddies program in Upper Arlington, Ohio matches older adults and elementary school students so they can eat lunch in the school cafeteria together and talk informally (AARP, 1993).

There are also initiatives in which senior adult volunteers provide career assistance for students. For example, in several secondary school programs in Scotland, senior adult volunteers are enlisted to engage youth in mock interviews and to share accounts of their own employment (Age Concern Scotland, 1997).

(B) Who is the service provider and whom is the service recipient?

Intergenerational programs are often categorized in terms of who are the intended service providers and service recipients. Accordingly, distinctions are drawn between programs in which senior adults are brought in to contribute to the personal development (educational, psychosocial, career development, etc.) of the young participants or otherwise provide a service for them, those in which the young participants provide a service to senior adults, and those in which young and elderly participants work jointly to accomplish an external goal.

Increasingly, however, intergenerational specialists are emphasizing the reciprocity of intergenerational exchange programs (e.g., Hatton-Yeo and Ohsako, 2000), and more attention is drawn to the fact that even when one group is labeled as “service provider” they still receive great benefit from their exchanges with members of other age groups. Hence, the distinction between programs based on who is providing the services is an artificial one, drawn primarily for categorization purposes.

(1) Seniors provide a service for the students:

In almost all of the initiatives noted in the previous section, senior adults are brought in to provide a service for the students. The most common roles taken by the seniors are those of tutor and mentor. Intergenerational tutoring sessions occur either on a one-to-one basis, in small groups, or as part of an entire class.

Several models target immigrant children and youth. In the Netherlands, older adults participating in the “Samenjspraak Amsterdam” intergenerational literacy program assist immigrant youth with Dutch as a second language (Klerq, 2000).

Mentoring programs establish relationships of mutual caring, commitment, and trust between young people and people with more experience (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1988). Mentoring programs have international appeal; prevalent in the U.S., they are also found in countries such as the U.K. (Hatton-Yeo, 2000). Such initiatives

often target youth who are considered “at-risk” for truancy, criminal activity, drug abuse, and premature sexual experimentation that can lead to pregnancy and STD’s.

Mentoring relationships can be forged at school, in other community settings, or at home. As an example of a program designed to help children when they are at home, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program of Dane County (Madison, Wisconsin) runs the “Friendly Listener Intergenerational Program which is an after school telephone “check-in” service for 3-5th graders who desire an intergenerational friendship. Volunteers are matched to call 1-5 time/week. “Grandma, Please,” another telephone reassurance program, based in Chicago, Illinois, targets children home alone after school who need help with their homework or just want to talk. An operator connects callers to “grandmas” or “grandpas” who have been screened and trained by a gerontological social worker.

(2) The students provide a service to the seniors:

Children and youth in service-learning or community service programs engage senior adults in a variety of services and in a variety of contexts. The students contribute to senior adults’ health, expand their social support networks, and aim to either help them stay in their homes, or, if in assisted care/long term care institutions, improve the quality of their lives in these facilities. At the same time, the students fulfill the service requirements of their schools.⁵

In 1977, the Ministry of Health and Welfare of Japan funded a “Model Schools” initiative (also known as the “Volunteer Activities By Students Promotion Projects” initiative), in which select schools in each municipality receive subsidies for three year periods, for the dual purpose of engaging students in volunteer activities and providing them with welfare education experiences. As of 1994, 80 schools (including elementary, junior high and high schools) in each prefecture (including public and private schools) functioned as “model (volunteer) schools” (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 1994). In each model school, students visit and participate in planned exchanges at local nursing homes and facilities for handicapped people. To be a “model school” does not mandate a certain type of visit to a nursing home; while visits are required, they vary in frequency, duration, and the nature of the activities. “Model school” students also come into contact with senior adults through their research activities⁶ and at events held on school grounds.

Ikeda Town (Gifu Prefecture, Japan) is an example of a municipality in which all of the city’s public elementary schools send children to communicate with elders living in

⁵ Various resources are available which describe how to design, implement and evaluate intergenerational service learning programs (e.g., Woodward, 1994; Couch, 1993; and McIver & Bourassa, 1996).

⁶ The complexity of their investigations depends in part on whether the school is an elementary, junior or high school. Elementary school students conduct research on traditional games of their region and study aging-related issues. Junior high students check on social conditions for handicapped people and review welfare initiatives and try to determine whether they are suitable for meeting people’s needs. High school students also explore social conditions for handicapped people and, additionally, conduct research projects involving children’s playground equipment, nature protection efforts, international issues and cooperation activities, and people’s awareness and concerns about the social welfare system.

special care nursing homes (Kaplan et al., 1998). Beyond the service provided for the senior adults, the intent is to introduce each young person to the world of volunteerism.

“Magic Me,” a notable program in the youth service to elderly category, was first developed in Baltimore, Maryland and subsequently replicated in a number of cities throughout the U.S. and Europe. Students of various age groups are brought into settings that provide long-term care services for older persons and the developmentally and physically disabled, where they are paired up with the clients. Specialized training and support (for a fee) is available for sites interested in establishing Magic Me programs (AARP, 1993).

The Intergenerational Work/Study Program, developed by the New York City Department for the Aging places high school students who are at risk of dropping out of school into local senior centers and nursing homes. The students work up to 15 hours a week and receive academic credit and, in some program conditions, stipends, to conduct a range of activities including meal preparation, art and exercise classes, and group trips at senior facilities.

In the context of helping to enable older men and women to remain as independent and active as long as possible in their own homes, some programs recruit students to assist with various household, personal, and chore services (including meal preparation, gardening, laundry, and light cleaning). Students conduct simple household repairs, check smoke detectors, and assist with meal preparation, gardening, laundry, and light cleaning tasks. Perhaps the most important resource the visiting students offer in such programs is that of companionship.

Friedman (1999) suggests that there are benefits to including in home improvement programs retired older adults who have home construction skills. These individuals can work with students to build ramps and make other home modifications for residents with disabilities. This involvement of very active senior adults also serves to counter stereotypical notions of older adults as being passive and in need of help.

(3) Joint initiatives in which young and old partner to achieve an external goal:

The main emphasis of some intergenerational programs is to accomplish a goal that is not primarily centered on the needs of the young or old participants. Often this goal involves improving the community or providing a service for another group. Intergenerational programs have been developed to preserve local history (e.g., “Hidden Treasure: Our Heritage-New Horizons” programs developed by H.F. Donnelley at the Oklahoma State University in 1981), promote recycling and other environmental conservation activities, conduct neighborhood self-study activities (e.g., Kaplan, 1994), and reduce crime.

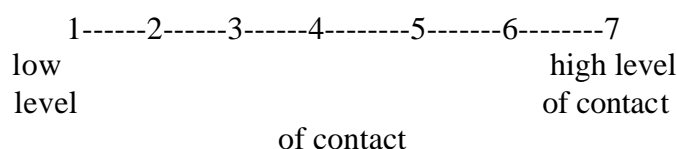
A good example of joint action to reduce crime is found in the Dade County Public Schools in Florida. The program, called “Youth and Elderly Against Crime,” brings senior adults and older school-aged children together to develop antiviolence bills which they present to state legislators and seek political support (Friedman, 1999).

(C) Depth of engagement

Intergenerational events and activities planned on a one-time-only, seasonal, or annual basis are qualitatively different from intergenerational events and activities organized as part of ongoing programs involving frequent, regularly scheduled intergenerational exchange/interaction. Although both types of initiatives provide people with intergenerational exposure that may be otherwise missing in their lives, one-time or occasional events provide little more than a first step toward the formation of intergenerational relationships. A “relationship” cannot flourish without interaction opportunities that enable people to get to know and trust each other. Furthermore, it is questionable to speak of meeting people’s social and emotional needs through providing them with “abbreviated” opportunities for intergenerational interaction.

Intergenerational programs and activities can be placed on a continuum, with points that correspond to different levels of intergenerational engagement, ranging from initiatives that provide no direct contact between age groups (point #1 on the scale above) to those that promote intensive contact and ongoing opportunities for intimacy (point # 7 on the scale). Examples of intergenerational initiatives fitting into each point on the “Scale of Intergenerational Engagement” are described below.

Figure 1: Scale of Intergenerational Engagement



1. Learning About Other Age Group:

Participants learn about the lives of people in other age groups, although there is no actual contact of any kind. Example: “Learning about Aging” curriculum in school districts where children learn about elderly people.

Through a consortium of science museums in the U.S., a three million dollar traveling exhibition called, “The Secrets of Aging,” was launched. First shown at the Museum of Science in Boston (2000-2001), the exhibit will tour five major science museums in five cities over the next four years. While this exhibit provides plentiful information about the science and experience of aging, there is no direct interaction with live elderly people. Instead, there are animated figures standing near tape recorded information about health concerns such as the prevention of osteoporosis.

2. Seeing the Other Age Group but at a Distance:

Initiatives which facilitate an exchange between people of two or more age groups, but they are viewed outside each other's presence and there is no actual contact. Examples: Making videos, writing letters, and sharing artwork with each other.

Hopkins (2000) describes a "pen pal" program organized by the Community Agency for Senior Citizens (CASC) in Staten Island, New York). CASC administrators recruited senior adults to correspond with students in a third grade class who had many questions about senior adults, e.g., "What do they do all day?" "Do they eat spaghetti?"

Activities fitting into these first two categories can serve a preparatory, pre-engagement function.

3. Meeting Each Other:

Initiatives which culminate in a meeting of some sort between a group of young people and a group of older adults. The meeting is planned as a one-time only experience.

Example: A group of students plan and conduct a visit to a local nursing home.

4. Annual or Periodic Activities:

Often tied to established community events or organizational celebrations, these intergenerational activities occur on a regular basis. Although infrequent, these activities can symbolize intergenerational and community unity and influence attitudes and openness toward additional or more ongoing activities.

Examples: Intergenerational activities at a school on Grandparents Day, an annual community dance in which young people and older adults are actively involved, and Christmas caroling at nursing homes.

5. Demonstration Projects:

This includes programs which involve ongoing intergenerational activities over a set period of time. Depending on project goals and objectives, the intergenerational exchange and learning can be quite intensive. These initiatives are often implemented on an experimental or trial basis, and they are frequently dependent on outside funding sources.

Example: A 6-month trial program, sponsored by an agency which provides teen parenthood support services, in which senior adults who have successfully raised children are enlisted to mentor and provide support for pregnant and parenting teens.

6. Ongoing Intergenerational Programs:

These are intergenerational programs from the previous category that have been deemed to be successful/valuable from the perspective of the participating organizations and hence incorporated into their general activities; this includes integration into the school curriculum.

Example: A school-based senior volunteer program in which structures are established to train the volunteers, place them in assignments, and provide them with continuing support and recognition on an ongoing basis.

7. Ongoing, natural intergenerational sharing, support, and communication:

This includes intergenerational engagement that occurs as a function of the way community settings are planned and established. In this context, opportunities for meaningful intergenerational engagement are abundant and embedded in local tradition.

Example: A school that also houses a senior citizen center, with members of the center engaging the students in a wide range of joint (age-integrated) activities.

The “depth of intergenerational engagement” continuum provides a valuable framework by which to conceptualize, categorize, and understand the impact of intergenerational programs. Programs fitting into all categories on this scale, to varying degrees, can provide participants with positive experiences with people in other age groups. However, if we are aiming for outcomes such as changing attitudes about other age groups, building a sense of community, enhancing self esteem, and establishing nurturing intimate relationships between unrelated individuals, it is appropriate to focus on program models fitting into categories 4-7 on the scale.

To further consider the importance of drawing distinctions between programs based on the level of engagement between participants, it is useful to look at the trend in many colleges and universities to establish “lifelong learning” programs for non-traditional students. When the goal is simply to recruit senior adults, this often leads to the development of separate classes or even college units or departments specifically designed for senior adults, presumably to meet their needs, with no provision for establishing mechanisms aimed at promoting interaction and convivial learning between young (traditional) students and older adult students. There are innumerable missed opportunities for building relationships and support systems between people of different generations.

In contrast, there are lifelong learning programs that aim to facilitate a high level of depth of intergenerational engagement and they are qualitatively different from what is described above. One example is found in Japan where there is a movement toward establishing “senior citizen’s (‘silver’) colleges.” The Setagaya College for Senior Citizens (“Setagaya Rojin Daigaku”), administered by the Setagaya Ward Welfare for the

Senior Citizens Department (Tokyo, Japan) enrolls 300 students 60 years of age and older who attend classes once a week at the Setagaya College for Senior Citizens. The curriculum, which includes neighborhood research and community service fieldwork assignments, is designed to introduce the senior citizen students to various aspects of community life, including local politics, urban planning procedures and issues, and public service /volunteer opportunities. The slogan for the College is “Live in the community, live in the group, live with young people, live in good health, live actively, live a cultural life, live with the family” (p. 8, Setagaya Report, 1991).

Armed with newly developed interpersonal communication skills and an enhanced awareness of community needs, many of the graduates of the college get involved in senior citizen volunteer activities, some of which involve working with children in local elementary schools. Professor Yoshie Kato, a Social Welfare Lecturer at the Setagaya College for Senior Citizens, describes a thriving senior citizen volunteer program in which a group of senior adults who graduated from the College introduced school children to traditional games such as “otedama” (juggling), “ohajiki” (playing with marbles) and “ayatori” (a string game also known in the West as “cat’s cradle”), ate lunch with them, and wrote and received letters about topics of mutual interest (Y. Kato, personal communication, 1995). The Setagaya College for Senior Citizens example demonstrates how, a “lifelong learning” program, with the right vision and institutional structures, can serve to further integrate senior adults in community life.

III - Program Mechanics

In conducting this review of school-based intergenerational programs, a significant amount of variation was found in the frequency, regularity, and formality of intergenerational activities; the administrative structures developed to support programs; the level of commitment and leadership displayed by school and school district administrators; and in the skills and perspectives of program developers.

For intergenerational programs to achieve their objectives, certain elements should be incorporated into the program development plans. They include the following: acquisition of full commitment on the part of the organizational partners, provisions made for staff orientation and ongoing involvement in decision-making, a substantial orientation/training component for both the young and senior adult participants before they meet each other, and the selection of program activities designed to facilitate two-way, and mutually beneficial exchanges between the young and elderly participants.

Drawing from a fact-sheet developed by Penn State Cooperative Extension, entitled, “The Building Blocks of Intergenerational Programs” (Kaplan, 2001), here is an overview of key questions to ask and principles to keep in mind when developing, implementing, and evaluating intergenerational programs.

[Planning/Getting Started:]

Project situations vary. Sometimes everything starts with a concept or an idea, other times with organizational partners who are committed to the idea of intergenerational collaboration or a specific intergenerational model.

Clarify Goals & Objectives: *What are program organizers trying to accomplish? What needs are they trying to address? What quality of life enhancements are they seeking to achieve? What is the level of “depth” in intergenerational interaction that is sought?* (See discussion above.) In establishing objectives, try to define what will be meant by “success.” Be prepared to revise goals and objectives to accommodate the additional input of project participants and additional institutional partners.

Line up Institutional Partners: *Who are the likely allies of the initiative?* Clarify the partnership; a “memorandum of understanding” is a powerful document. Sometimes it helps to establish an advisory group which taps into a broader group of organizations -- each with an interest in some facet of the program (e.g., a local history organization, a senior center, a community board, a fifth grade class, a local television station, etc.).

Clarify roles and responsibilities of each participant and participating organization: This will help spread out the work, ensure that each task is done, and build a broader and deeper sense of local ownership.

Write funding proposals (if outside resources are needed).

Recruit Participants: Cast a “wide net;” i.e., use many recruitment methods including flyers, presentations at senior centers, open houses, press releases, etc. Try to get people involved in steps, starting with small commitments and experiences. Once people meet each other and get the chance to “break bread,” the notion of deeper levels of involvement in the project will seem more natural to the participants. For example, before attempting to sign people to a one-year curriculum, start with a special event.

Planning activities:

- focus on addressing real needs, interests, or issues in people’s lives. In other words, activities need not be contrived or irrelevant to people’s day-to-day concerns.
- Where possible, work to integrate intergenerational activities into existing activities and curricula. For example, in a school setting, an intergenerational oral history interview exercise can be used to reinforce lesson plans about history.
- Involvement of program participants in the planning process will help ensure that the participants find the program to be interesting and of relevance to their lives.⁷

⁷ Altus and Hayes (2000) emphasize that one of the most important “tips for success” in planning intergenerational activities is to involve participants in the planning process. By enlisting the participants early in the planning phase, they are more likely to be committed to the intergenerational program or event.

- Make sure to design developmentally appropriate activities: This includes taking into account competencies (e.g., readiness to create and explore) as well as limitations (such as in terms of mobility and cognitive functioning).
- Make sure to design activities in a culturally appropriate manner. For example, do not assume that participants will interact in a manner which reflects “equal status.” In some cultures, youth are expected to do more listening than speaking when communicating with their elders. Also, make sure not to violate cultural norms in terms of things like touch, humor, and dealing with illness and loss (including death).
- Draw from the intergenerational studies literature (make sure to give credit) and mix and match models; try not to be constrained by working within the confines of existing program models.

Train staff: Participating staff members need to understand the goals of the program and be sensitive to the needs and expectations of the participants (young and old, professional and volunteer).

[Program Implementation:]

Train Participants: Work to help participants become more aware of how people in the other age group experience the world. Ideally, sessions should be conducted separately for both the young and senior adult participants before they meet each other. Such meetings will help to identify preconceived notions about age and minimize their potential for negative impact on the program. These meetings can also be used to help clarify program objectives, activities, and expectations.

Build in ongoing planning and reflection components where possible: Regular pre-activity (planning/clarification) and post-activity (debriefing/activity evaluation) sessions with the participants and staff members can yield many benefits.

Closure/Recognition: Programs should have a sense of closure. Also, it is important to recognize the efforts of participants (e.g., via awards and certificates).

[Program Evaluation:]

Plan ahead: Evaluation must not be an afterthought. At the point of establishing program objectives, spend some time and energy figuring out how to assess whether (and how) these objectives will be attained.

Use Multiple Methods: The following are some examples: have participants keep personal journals to record their project-related experiences and perceptions, distribute pre- and post-project questionnaires designed to detect affective, cognitive, and behavioral changes in the participants, and obtain feedback from family members as another way to gauge project impact on the participants. For community service-type projects, take ongoing measurements of those aspects of community life for which the project is intended to influence, such as the amount of litter on the streets, amount of community participation in local planning meetings, etc.

Be Creative in what is called “data:” E.g., have participants draw “mental maps,” before and after their involvement in the program, as one “measurement” of program impact on their level of neighborhood awareness. A number of studies ask youths to examine or draw pictures of older adults.

Evaluation should be ongoing: Start documenting conversations and collecting information from the program conception stage through the post-intervention stage.

[Follow-Up:]

Provide Feedback (from evaluation results) to partners, participants, and other interested parties.

Provide more recognition for volunteers and professional partners. Recognize the role of project partners in all publicity.

Write (additional) funding proposals (if project is proven to be successful/valuable).

IV - Research Strategies:

As intergenerational programs extend beyond the isolated, small-scale initiatives of the 1970’s and 1980’s, so too must there be growth in program evaluation efforts. Research is needed to answer key questions that have important educational policy implications. Some such questions are as follows: Are youth participants of intergenerational programs more likely to perform well at school? Do the experiences of student participants carry over into their relationships with other students, school personnel, and family members? Do intergenerational programs influence the career and recreational direction decisions made by project participants?

Yet, there is a dearth of controlled research in the intergenerational studies field. Much of the intergenerational literature would be described less as research than as “reports” of program activity. As such, there is an abundance of anecdotal information gathered from some participants using informal methods. Much of the material available on intergenerational initiatives does not even specify how participants are different than non-participants (besides in their program involvement). Perhaps they are self-selected and possess certain characteristics (such as a more hopeful life perspective) that are not possessed by non-participants. It is therefore hard to determine whether to attribute changes in program participants to the program intervention or to some other variable(s). Yet, times are changing. No longer will it be considered adequate to provide descriptive statements about what happened and “who did what with whom.”

As Kuehne (1999) points out, there is an increased emphasis on research and evaluation and this will likely help the intergenerational field reach its potential for contributing to the transformation of societal institutions. Sawano (2000) notes that in Japan, there is a similar emphasis. For intergenerational programs funded under the “National Children’s Plan” (allocations from fiscal year 1999 to 2001), she states, “it is now necessary to

conduct scientific research on the effect of intergenerational programs and to develop measures to evaluate the outcome of such policy and program” (p. 34).

Most studies are qualitative in nature and include a range of methods--from ethnography to narrative analysis, and from participatory action research to textual/ archival studies. They provide rich, descriptive information about program activities, individual intergenerational encounters, and the context in which the exchanges occur (Ward, 1999). A case study approach is useful for obtaining various types of information on an intergenerational program as it evolves over a long period of time. Yet, there are limitations to the generalizability of results obtained from case studies, particularly those that are designed to generate program “profiles” rather than in-depth pieces of ethnographic research.

Of course, quantitative comparative studies have limitations as well. Although they have more scientific rigor than qualitative studies, in reducing the number of variables for analysis, much information about organizational, community, and cultural context is filtered out. Thus, it can be argued, that we need all types of studies -- qualitative and quantitative -- in order to build a firm knowledge base about intergenerational program phenomena.

V - Program Impact:

(A) Impact on the Participants:

(1) Benefits for Children and Youth:

[Academic skills and performance:]

Various intergenerational program models have been found to contribute significantly to the development of youth participants’ academic skills. This includes: learning how to articulate personal experience and social observation in verbal and written forms, learning to work as part of a group, learning about history as a living, ongoing process, and learning how to develop, execute, and document results obtained from structured interviews.

In the Book Buddies program⁸ implemented in an elementary school in the South Bronx, NY, first grade children (5-6 year olds) who had been identified by their teachers as “at-risk for reading difficulties” (after they were tested with the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening –PALS-- assessment tool) participated in 45-minute structured tutoring sessions with senior adult volunteers, where they practiced reading and work on phonics word study. These children displayed significant improvements in their reading skills. This includes enhancements in their knowledge of alphabet letters and sounds, ability to associate letters with sounds in a spelling talks, and ability to identify words in isolation (Community Service Society, 2000).

⁸ This innovative one-on-one tutoring approach was created by Professor Marcia Invernizzi at the University of Virginia.

Brabazon (1998) describes impressive results in his evaluation study of the Intergenerational Work/Study Program, a dropout prevention program for at-risk high school students, conducted by the New York City's Department for the Aging and the City's Board of Education. The program began in 16 high schools in New York City and then expanded to several other cities. In this model, students work 10-12 hours a week in internship sites where at least 50% of their time is spent interacting with older adults. The intergenerational work is done in groups (such as social and recreational activities at senior centers) or on an individual basis (such as escort work, home-delivered meals, or case assistance work with case managers). Whereas the Board of Education generally considers drop-out prevention programs to be successful if at least 50% of participating students show an increase in their attendance and/or continue to accumulate credits, for this program, 80-90% of the students displayed such improvement. The intergenerational work assignments were found to produce better student attendance than non-intergenerational assignments. Of the intergenerational assignments, the group assignments had the strongest desired impact on attendance. Accordingly, researchers recommend combining one-on-one assignments with group intergenerational activities in similar work/study type programs.

In many cases, mentoring programs, though focused on contributing to the overall personal development of participating youth, have a dramatic impact on academic involvement. Varley (1998) notes how programs that bring together minority youth and successful achievers/mentors from similar ethnic backgrounds can be a particularly powerful motivational experience. One such example is the Black Achievers Program in Toronto, Ontario (Canada). Though based at a YMCA, this program was found to strengthen "the partnership triangle of home/school/community" (Varley, 1998, p. 6). In 1995/96, of the 365 youth who were matched with the 72 mentors, 96% completed the program and returned to school.

Even when the focus is on community service, there are impacts on student academic performance. Friedman (1999) notes that student participants in the Florida Learn and Serve K-12 intergenerational community service project (1994-95) displayed an improvement in grade point average (GPA), an improvement in school attendance, and a decrease in discipline referrals. Also, in cases where students and senior adults study the local community and work to develop action plans for improving the community, students learn about local government structures and gain an appreciation for the democratic process and the reality of local politics (e.g., Kaplan, 1997).

[Attitudes toward aging:]

Various studies have been conducted which demonstrate the efficacy of intergenerational program experiences to promote more positive attitudes toward older persons and the aging process. Several of these studies incorporate pre- and post-testing of the participants, include control group comparisons, and demonstrate a statistically significant impact on student attitudes toward older adults:

- Davis and Westbrook (1981) demonstrated how 10-11-year-old students who participated in a series of structured intergenerational dialogues facilitated by visiting older volunteers displayed an increased level of awareness of aging issues and of older adults. Interestingly, participating children were also more likely to interact with older adults outside the classroom.
- Corbin, Kagan, & Metal-Corbin (1987) demonstrate how even a short program (seven days of discussion, dance and song, in their case) can change sixth-grade students' perception of older adults – from passive to active terms.
- Ward and Balavage (1996) found that after junior and senior high school students participated in intergenerational programs piloted in school districts in western Pennsylvania, they rated older adults as more active, stronger, friendlier, and less boring than in their pre-project ratings.

Additional studies, conducted by Aday et al. (1996), Kassab and Vance (1999), and Meshel (1997) provide further indication of how young participants of intergenerational programs emerge with a better understanding of aging and more positive views about older adults.

There are also several studies which indicate mixed results in terms of program impact on young participants' attitudes toward the elderly (e.g., Barton, 1999; Couper, Sheehan, and Thomas, 1991; Newman et al., 1997; and Richardson, 1998). In these studies, although the student participants were uniformly positive in their assessments about their interactions with the senior adults, they did not consistently show a change in understanding of issues relating to aging.

These mixed results can be read in several ways. One important consideration is that there are major differences between studies in the intervention conditions that were established. For instance, in the study reported by Couper, Sheehan, & Thomas (1991), they assess the impact of a 1-day, 5-hour intergenerational workshop. Even the staunchest advocate for intergenerational programs would express no surprise in their finding that the experience did not affect students' generalized stereotypical notions of old people.

It is also reasonable to consider differences in students' other classroom experiences. In classes which do not vary from regular, unidimensional classroom-based lectures, intergenerational program experiences may be viewed as a reprieve and as an opportunity to avoid other activities they might have perceived as work. Another possibility is that the teachers vary in the extent to which they reinforce and facilitate reflection on program experiences. Without structured reflection and connections to the curriculum, many students would not automatically gain knowledge about aging or increase their compassion for that matter. Teachers are also needed to help them translate their initial reactions into understanding and acceptance. In either case, mixed results in some of the studies can perhaps be explained by variation in how the programs were designed, how they were presented in the classroom, and how well they were integrated into the core

curriculum of the class. These potential explanations of the mixed findings bear the need for further research.

Outside of the arena of structured studies, some reports of intergenerational service learning programs note that students develop a heightened sensitivity to the difficulties experienced by senior adults who are physically challenged or are otherwise experiencing health problems. It is suggested that students learn to see past negative stereotypes that attribute mental limitations to people who have physical limitations. Through direct contact with senior adults, the young volunteers learn that despite physical limitations, many senior adults have extensive knowledge, motivation, abilities, and engaging personalities.

[Emotional development:]

Older adults have special gifts that make them particularly well-suited for connecting with young people. They consistently show up, put in time, and display that they care. In drawing from several studies about mentoring programs, some principles are presented below about ways to maximize the effectiveness of the adult mentor in providing emotional support for their student counterparts. Consistent with findings from studies of programs that enlist young and middle-aged adults as mentors (e.g., Tierney & Grossman's 1996 study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters), Freedman (1999) notes that for mentoring initiatives with senior adult mentors, the best mentors turn out to be the ones who are the most patient listeners and who are relationship-oriented in their dealings with youth. The worst are those who have ready-made prescriptions in their mind about how they are going to influence their young mentees.

A similar theme was articulated by Taylor et al. (1998), who in their randomized, pretest-post-test control group study of the Across Ages intergenerational mentoring program also demonstrated impressive impacts on student school performance, and attitudes towards school, elders, and their own future. They provided process data which suggests that the most unsuccessful mentors were those who failed to incorporate youth perspectives in their approach to their relationships. They stated, "Mentors who restricted the ways in which they worked with the children ... or who tended to lecture and to insist on their way of doing things were unsuccessful in maintaining a meaningful relationship with their mentee" (p. 93). In contrast, mentors who were characterized by students and staff as "exceptional" were those who spent more than 8 hours a week with their mentee, were involved in a wide variety of mutually planned activities, and were often available to the youth even under unusual circumstances such as finding help for a drug-addicted parent (Taylor et al., 1998).

Similarly, Styles and Morrow (1992), in their evaluation of Linking Lifetimes, predecessor to the Across Ages model, found that success in mentor-mentee relationships was more a function of the participants' styles of interaction than the type of activities in which they engaged. The best matches were underscored by patterns of communication that can be characterized as "youth-driven" (p. 29), where it was the youth who determined the pace for information disclosure.

Intergenerational initiatives in which senior adults teach a skill to the young participants can potentially have a very large impact on the young participants' sense of confidence and self esteem. The young learners' level of self esteem is enhanced when they become aware that they are indeed able to learn a valued skill. This dynamic was particularly evident in the Konodai Elementary School Intergenerational Otedama (bean bag juggling) project described by Kaplan et al. (1998). In the words of an 11 year old girl otedama student, "It's difficult to learn... Maybe since it's difficult, I feel good when I get better" (p. 81). Conveying the same basic theme, the school principal stated, "They (the students) can learn there are many talents which they can be proud of other than academic scores" (p. 81). This theme can be described as "confidence through competence;" enhanced self esteem is associated with the recognition of one's own skills development.

[Social Skills:]

Rosberg-Gempton, von Dickinson, & Poole (1999) examined the social skills development for participants of an intergenerational creative dance program which brought young children (7-8 year olds) and frail older adults together for a 12 week program (two meetings, each for 30-minutes, per week). The social skills of these children were compared to those of a group of children participating in a mono-generational dance program (same duration, same dances). Whereas all children displayed increased cooperation, communication, tolerance, concern, and respect for the limitations of others, those participating in the intergenerational dance class displayed the most improvement in these areas.

[Other:]

There are other types of valuable knowledge and skills that young participants gain from their intergenerational experiences. This includes learning things as varied as handicrafts, performing arts skills, horticultural skills, traditional games, and cultural history.

(2) Benefits for Older Adults:

[Health and activity level:]

Various "catch words" and phrases have been used to invoke positive visions and actions for aging societies. One such phrase, "productive aging," first coined by the American Pulitzer Prize winner Robert Butler, M.D., refers to:

... the capacity of an individual or a population to serve in the paid work force, to serve in volunteer activities, to assist in the family, and to maintain himself or herself as independently as possible (Productive Aging News, 1994, February).

The "productive aging" concept underscores the importance of active roles for seniors which are deemed meaningful in the context of everyday life. Such meaningful life activity, which includes involvement in intergenerational programs and activities, is understood as having psychological benefits for the senior adults. In various cultures, from various fronts, emphasis is placed on the value of living one's entire life fully.

Within modern gerontology, the health (physical and mental) of the senior adult is viewed in relational terms; social connectedness and active community engagement are of paramount importance. And this is consistent with how most adults define successful aging, i.e., mostly in terms of relationships, specifically caring about and getting along with others (Ryff, 1989).

Here are some findings from specific studies of how intergenerational programs influence senior adult participants' health and activity level:

- As a function of their involvement in a school volunteer program in Pennsylvania, senior adult mentors reported improved self-esteem, better health and the satisfaction of feeling productive (Newman and Larimer, 1995).
- Older adults in an adult day care program who participated in an intergenerational program displayed higher levels of prosocial behavior and less solitary behavior (Short-DeGraff & Diamond, 1996).
- There is some evidence of increased memory function for those who participated in a school-based intergenerational program (Newman, Karip, & Faux, 1995).
- Perhaps the most heavily studied school-based intergenerational program is Experience Corps, initiated in the South Bronx, New York. This program, which has been replicated across the country, connects neighborhood retirees with children in elementary schools. Programs vary, but basically, the senior adults volunteer for a minimum of 15 hours each week in diverse activities with the children, including chess, tap dancing, conflict resolution, computer lab support, and math support activities. In one series of studies of the program, after a four month period of intensive participation, senior adults displayed a slight reduction of depressive symptoms, watched less television, displayed enhanced problem solving skills,⁹ and enhanced physical mobility (as measured by speed to stand from chair). No changes were found in reported overall life happiness (Fried et al., 2000).

To provide a sense of how rewarding many senior volunteers find the Experience Corps experience, Freedman (1999) quotes Laurie Chilcote, a disabled individual who attributes his experience with Lent Experience Corps (Portland, Oregon) as turning his life around: "It's the opposite of a thread you pull and the sweater comes unraveled. You pull on this thread, and you find yourself connected" (p. 211).

[Attitudes toward young people:]

There is some research support for the notion that attitudes that adults hold about young people are most readily influenced through direct intergenerational interaction. In a study on youth involvement in social or community change endeavors conducted by University of Wisconsin researchers (Zeldin et al., 2000), those older adults who had the opportunity

⁹ This finding can be understood in the context of other research which suggests that regular exposure to complex environments is associated with enhanced cognition.

to work closely with youth who were in leadership positions were found to display the greatest changes in their views toward young people. Some adults even reported a stronger sense of community as a function of their exposure to civic-minded youth. Those who had simple interactions with the youth, however, did not change their views about young people. Furthermore, the researchers found that adults only changed their attitudes about youth when the interaction was goal-oriented and purposeful, contact was prolonged, and there were meaningful consequences to the interaction. Beyond “seeing” youth behaving in competent ways, attitudinal change on the part of the adults is most likely to occur when there are opportunities for discussion and reflection with the youth (Zeldin et al., 2000).

[Self discovery:]

Interestingly, intergenerational program models in which senior adults see themselves as providing a service for young people seem to have a particularly strong impact on how they view themselves and their lives. It is useful to draw from the work of gerontologists and psychologists who have developed reminiscence interviewing/life review methodologies to stimulate senior adults’ reflection about their lives -- accomplishments and aspirations. For example, James E. Birren, associate director of the Center on Aging at the University of California, Los Angeles, describes a “guided autobiography” approach, where senior adults are asked key questions that stimulate such reflection: If your life were a book, what would its title be? What would the title and the theme of your current chapter be? (Kleyman, 2000). This same approach can be incorporated into various intergenerational models.

[Improved life circumstances:]

Not all the benefits to senior adult participants of intergenerational programs are psychological in nature. In many cases, particularly initiatives in which the students are engaged in service learning-type activities, outcomes include real improvements in the lives of senior adults. As one example, Cuevas (2000) describes how a partnership between Coral Park Senior High School and the Miami-Dade Fire Department yielded the I CAN HELP program (the acronym stands for “Intergenerational Corps And Neighbors Helping Elderly With Life Safety Procedures”) which resulted in the installation of smoke detectors in the seniors’ homes.

Similarly, the “Seniors’ Integrated Home-Assessment and Home-Maintenance Program” in Toronto, Ontario (Canada), which teaches high-risk, unemployed youth how to assess seniors’ homes, make repairs, and do cleaning and painting, results in household improvements that enhance security, safety, energy conservation and overall quality of life for the senior adults (Varley, 1998).

(B) Impact on the surrounding community

The community benefits associated with intergenerational programs are not always evident. Take, for example, a service learning initiative in which participating high school students are visiting the homes of frail elders, helping them with light home maintenance tasks, and socializing with them. Beyond the tangible benefits for the senior adults, there is a broader

impact associated with enabling local senior adults to stay at home and forego entering long-term care institutions. This has an economic impact on the local community; by keeping these older adults in the community, they continue to support local businesses. In connection with improvements in the senior adults' health and independence, they possess more "social capital;" they become better able to assist other community residents who may be in need. Furthermore, beyond the economic and social impacts on the community, these older adults having themselves benefited from school programs are more likely to become advocates for schools and this might take the form of becoming school volunteers or voting to devote greater financial resources to schools.¹⁰

Some school-based intergenerational program models explicitly aim to have an impact on the surrounding community. One such initiative is Neighborhoods-2000, a program established in 1987 by the Center for Human Environments, an environmental research and development center based at the City University of New York Graduate Center. On a weekly basis for a 6-month period, 11-13 year old students and senior adult volunteers come together for activities that help them share their concerns about community issues, learn more about their community, and advocate for desired changes in their communities. The program incorporates civics lessons that are woven into the social studies curriculum. (Kaplan, 1994).

In projects implemented in over 10 neighborhoods on the East Coast (including Mount Vernon, NY, East Harlem, NY, and Long Island City, NY) and in Hawaii (including the Oahu-based neighborhoods of Waikiki, Downtown Honolulu, Ewa, and Kaneohe), the intergenerational component -- characterized by intensive dialogue and a series of shared neighborhood exploration experiences -- has promoted enriched conceptions of community life and ideas for improvement. Participants typically learn that the generations are interdependent and that young and old have many shared concerns about the quality of life in their communities. Participants also gain more of an awareness of the temporal dimension of community life. For example, the young participants of the Ewa (Hawaii) project learned that the current lack of recreational facilities was not always the case; the decline of resources occurred in conjunction with the closing of the sugar plantations (Kaplan, 1997).

The intergenerational collaboration component, woven into this community participation endeavor, contributes to the development of integrated perspectives and proposals for community change, where the needs, perceptions, and concerns, of the young and the elderly generations, as well as those in between, are taken into account (Kaplan, 1997; Winston et al., 2001).

¹⁰ There are cases where we can observe a dynamic whereby senior adults do not feel invested or connected to the educational institutions of their communities. For example, Freedman (1999) describes how the residents of retirement community Sun City West in Arizona organized quite effectively to remove themselves from their school district, thus threatening a one-third reduction in the tax base. Thurow (1996), in trying to make a broader argument about conflicting generational needs, notes how in retirement haven towns like Kalkaska, Michigan, elderly voters do not support school budgets. Without buying into the generational conflict argument, such cases do serve as a reminder of the need for mechanisms to promote intergenerational cooperation.

For additional examples of efforts aimed at infusing an intergenerational element into community improvement projects, see Generations United (1994), Generations United (In Press), and Close Up Foundation (1989).

VI – Considerations

(A) Taking Culture into Account:

Any school-based intergenerational program exists in a larger national context -- there are educational policies and philosophies, demographic and social trends, and a host of cultural variables which influence prevailing attitudes about aging and intergenerational relations.

Certain cultural concepts are conducive to intergenerational engagement ideology. For instance, in China, experienced professionals are considered to be part of an “intelligence bank” (Maintao, 2000, p. 20). This bodes well for public acceptance of initiatives aimed at involving older adults in the education of school children. However, social values are mediated by public policy. Due to the absence of educational policies and institutional mechanisms that promote and support large scale involvement of senior adults in schools, school-based intergenerational programs are uncommon in China.

As the intergenerational field increasingly takes on international parameters, it becomes all the more important to consider cultural differences in views about aging and intergenerational relationships. Perceptions about aging clearly vary across cultures. In many indigenous cultures, for example, the role change that occurs as one ages is distinctly different than for Western societies. Higgins (1998) describes the Maori (New Zealand) concept of aging:

As one ages, cultural responsibilities increase and the experience and wisdom of the older people are acknowledged and treasured. They are often in so much demand there is no thought of retirement (Higgins, 1998, p. 135).

There is also much cross-cultural variation in relational status ascribed to individuals involved in intergenerational exchange. In the U.S., for the most part, there is an emphasis on relaxed, equal status communication; much attention is paid to the goal of ensuring that younger generations are heard, better understood, and respected. The idea of youth influence over the subject matter and venue of intergenerational discourse finds support from the literature which emphasizes the developmental need of adolescents to exercise initiative and independence (Lipsitz, 1980; and National Commission on Resources for Youth, 1981).

However, in a country like Japan, where expectations exist for didactic intergenerational communication patterns, with the senior adults in a position of higher status than the young participants, there is a different dynamic. In a reminiscence interviewing project in Tokyo, for example, observers noted how the participating Japanese youth, at the urging of their teachers and school administrators, were as quiet as possible, sat still, and

were careful not to raise questions that might be considered as disrespectful, rude, or too intrusive into the lives of the senior adult respondents. This resulted in an intergenerational communication dynamic that would be regarded as too one-sided from an American perspective (Kaplan et al., 1998). In Japan, communication norms dictate how verbal and non-verbal interaction should reflect the respective status level of the communicators. Insofar as age is a major determinant of status, there is a built-in notion of inequality between the generations.

Yet, culture is not a static variable. There is a movement in Japan aimed at changing the intergenerational communication dynamic whereby there is less age-related status differential and more of a natural feel to the interaction. For example, a Management and Coordination Agency report on intergenerational communication (1992), states:

Intimate relationships, ... (in which senior adults) can feel peace, security, closeness and positive group consciousness, ... (emerge from communication in which there is) no authority or intensive atmosphere. In other words, it is communication of persons with the same eye level, not one side looking down on the other side (p. 12).

One comparative research framework that has not yet attracted much interest is research designed to permit cross-cultural comparison. A cross-cultural research paradigm may provide us with needed information about program replication on an international level and teach us how distinct patterns of social and demographic change, different educational philosophies and policies, different norms of public involvement in educational and social programs, and different levels of availability of public resources yield, and are best addressed by, different forms of intergenerational initiatives.

(B) Elements of Success:

Intergenerational programs can be wonderful resources for nurturing the social and emotional growth of the students. However, program success is not guaranteed. Much attention needs to be paid to how programs are set up, activity selection, facilitation strategies, and a host of other factors that affect chances for program success. This section extends the discussion of program development considerations began in Section III (Program Mechanics).

(1) The importance of providing choice – for schools and for senior volunteers:

One of the strengths of the Experience Corps model is that it incorporates a thorough planning process which enables participating schools to prioritize their needs and interests. School administrators fill out a “project menu” through which they assign priority assessments for each of 10 program options: adult literacy/ESL (English as a Second Language), parent education/ involvement, community service/service learning, fine arts/enrichment, mentoring/tutoring, social/life skills development, socialized

play/recreation, after-school/homework clubs, entrepreneurship/school store, and telephone reassurance (Winston et al., 2001).

This intentional accommodation to a wide range of institutional needs also leads to the provision of plentiful options for volunteer involvement. Since senior adults have differing interests, skills, and prior work experience, it makes sense to provide them with a wide range of service opportunities. The element of choice of assignment is seen as a positive feature of programs such as Experience Corps and helps in the recruitment of senior volunteers. This relates closely to another factor, one that is highlighted by the Archstone Foundation in their recognition of Experience Corps as an exemplary intergenerational model; i. e., the fact that senior adults have access to roles that they find meaningful (Archstone Foundation, 2000).

To help teachers and volunteer coordinators make effective, individualized matches between children and senior adult volunteers, they need information on the volunteers' interests (hobbies, talents), skills (including occupational experience), and preferences. The "Senior Talent Bank Volunteer Form" (see Appendix A for a copy of this form) was used by the FELLOWS program in Hawaii to help coordinate senior volunteers' assignments (e.g., tutoring, oral history, story telling, arts and crafts, mentoring, and special events).

(2) Tending to communication dynamics:

In terms of whether program activities contribute to the formation of relationships that are deemed meaningful by the participants, it is useful to view communication dynamics as a complex, sequential process. Angelis (1996), in drawing from communications theory, notes that such a process most naturally begins with the type of superficial contact that is generated by "ice breakers," where interaction occurs in a scripted manner. In aiming to move up the "continuum of intimacy" (Angelis, p. 44), it is important to include activities that promote dialogue directed toward finding similarities and achieving rapport, where, through active engagement, participants get to know each other and explore common topics of interest.

It is also important to clarify the role of "facilitator." Even when intergenerational specialist colleagues read the same materials, collaborate on proposals and lesson plans, and work side by side on projects, they often have very different ideas about program facilitation. Whereas some facilitators see their role as that of "manager" of the intergenerational interaction, there are others who operate in a relatively non-directional manner.

One principle about facilitation which cuts across both perspectives is to view the facilitator as an "amplifier" of participants' skills. This would entail learning about participant's skills and interests, and working to create opportunities for them to take on meaningful leadership roles in introducing or demonstrating activities. Kaplan, Wagner, and Larson (2001) describe an application of this facilitation concept in the context of a joint preschool-adult care facility program in Hawaii. In this case, student interns were able to work closely with a senior adult to organize a lei-making activity with the

children. Although the senior adult had extensive lei-making experience, she needed help gathering the right materials, clarifying instructions for the activity, and in gaining the children's attention during the first few minutes of the activity. With the facilitators working mostly behind-the-scenes, the activity was a success and everybody attributed this success to the senior, thus affording her with a positive sense of being a service provider rather than recipient, and providing the children with an example of a senior adult as a competent, knowledgeable individual.

This is not an automatic process, however, insofar as many seniors do have physical limitations (e.g., a weak arm, poor eyesight, slurred speech) and have lost confidence in their skills and talents or simply need some help to organize their presentations. Similarly, for the children, many have special abilities (e.g., art, music, etc.) that they would be willing to share but lack the presentation skills and confidence to take a leadership role. In working in whatever way necessary to activate dormant or hidden skills and abilities, the facilitator can operate as a skills "amplifier."

It is also important to pay attention to communication dynamics throughout the course of any intergenerational program. Chen (1997), for example, in her assessment of the multifaceted Building Bridges program in Jasper County in southwest Missouri, emphasizes the need for continuing support for volunteers and participants in order to maintain enthusiasm and make everyone feel valued.

(3) Working for sustainability:

In countries in which there is no large-scale movement to push for the incorporation of intergenerational components into educational programs and service delivery systems, intergenerational proponents are more on their own and find it harder to sustain intergenerational initiatives.

In the U.S., some inroads have been made with regard to promoting intergenerational initiatives through influencing the national political agenda. For example, partly as a result of the passage of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (which occurred with President Clinton's strong support), and the subsequent establishment of the Corporation for National and Community Service in 1993, there has been dramatic growth in the number of intergenerational community service projects, i.e., those intergenerational initiatives that are geared toward producing tangible quality of life improvements for communities as well as for project participants (Generations United, 1994).

However, the issue of sustainability is perhaps the toughest one of all to address. Henkin and Butts (2001) note that there are many barriers to the systematic growth and development of intergenerational programs, including age-segregated public and private funding streams, lack of systematic collaboration among funding sources at the local, state, and national levels, lack of integration of programs into existing service systems or large scale initiatives, and limited mechanisms for identifying and sharing best practices.

Even for successful program models, supported by evidence of effectiveness in contributing to individual and community development, there is often a major gap between promise and practice.

VII - Conclusion

In reviewing the literature on intergenerational programs, one is struck by the enthusiasm expressed by the authors. For example, one specialist states, “A certain ‘magic’ happens when these generations interact that always makes me both humble and grateful” (Friedman, 1999, p. xiv).¹¹ To an extent, the search for “empirical evidence” to support such assertions is a frustrating endeavor; there are few cases of controlled research which allow for definitive statements to be made about program impact. However, it is also the case that the sheer weight of the narratives describing the program impact on participants is impressive.

There clearly remains much work to be done in terms of documenting the impact of various school-based intergenerational program approaches and charting the factors that determine their success or failure. With more forethought and careful planning, some of the many benefits of intergenerational initiatives noted by program participants, staff, and administrators can be more effectively substantiated.

At some point, it is important to step away from a molecular-level review of program models and evaluation studies and ask a bigger question: What would a school that fully incorporates the intergenerational perspective look like?

- It would be a place where intergenerational interdependence takes form – Local senior adults would generously provide their time, energy and even money to support school activities and students would warmly welcome their involvement and contributions.
- It would be a “school without walls” – Senior adults would help classes flow in and out of community settings. Teachers would integrate field experiences into the academic curriculum. In their interactions with senior adults, students would find out about the real world relevance of what they are learning in the classroom.
- It would be a place where character is forged and active citizenship promoted – As a function of an array of service learning opportunities, students and senior adult volunteers would experience firsthand the joys of caring for others.

Considering all these elements, it can readily be argued that, at its best, the intergenerational perspective represents an integral paradigm shift in the educational enterprise.

¹¹ To support her contention that “magic” does indeed happen, Friedman describes an intergenerational pen-pal program where the link established between a nine-year-old immigrant Jewish girl and an Arabic senior adult was so profound that the girl’s family decided to move near the senior adult to provide care for her (she had health problems).

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Appendix A: Senior Talent Bank Volunteer Form: (rev. 10/1/98) Date: _____

FELLOWS Center

[Fellowship and Lifelong Learning Opportunities at Waialae School, Honolulu, Hawaii]

Name (Mr., Miss, Ms., Mrs., Dr. (Ph.D.)) _____

Mailing Address: _____

Street

City

State

Zip

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ E-Mail: _____

How old are you? 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.

<u>Organization/ Agency Name</u>	<u>Volunteer (V)/ Employee (E)</u>	<u>Position(s)</u>	<u>Date From/To</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Education:

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

4. Other, please specify: _____

Availability: Starting Date _____.

When are you available to volunteer? Weekday Morning _____ Afternoon _____

Any Preferences? For grade level? _____ Ongoing or limited/special assignments? _____

For working with students 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. Other _____

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

EXPERIENCE LIST:

During the course of the school year, teachers might be interested in contacting elders like yourselves to supplement classroom lessons. For example, a class studying the Depression, Immigration, World War II, and so on, could benefit enormously from learning from someone who has had first-hand experience.

Please indicate the areas with which you are familiar, and for which you would be interested in sharing your knowledge and experience with students. Please DO NOT be bound by this list of suggestions in defining your experiences, and feel free to add, in the space at the end, your own areas of expertise.

- The turn of the century
- Early automobiles and early travel
- Locomotive travel
- Telephones (start of their use)
- Electricity (before and after its availability)
- First experience with airplanes (seeing them, flying in them)
- First president remembered
- First election voted in
- Vaudeville
- The Titanic
- World War I
- The sinking of the Lusitania
- Social changes during World War I
- The Russian Revolution
- Armistice Day
- The Flu epidemic of 1918
- Women's voting rights
- The income tax
- Radio
- The "Twenties"
- Dances -- the '20's
- Music -- the '20's
- Hair bobbing/ Women smoking
- Movies and movie stars; the first Talkies
- Lindbergh's flight across the Atlantic
- Prohibition
- Sports figures -- the '20's and '30's
- The stock market crash of 1929
- The Depression and its effects on people's values and personalities
- Contact with hard times, foreclosures, poor people, bread lines
- Bank panics
- Effect of the Depression on ordinary people
- Were people happy, and did they still believe in the system?
- Why the U.S. didn't have a revolution

- ___ FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt -- their impact on you and your lives
- ___ The labor movement: unions, strikes, agitation
- ___ The “Radical Thirties”
- ___ The “Wobblies”
- ___ Advice about living through hard times
- ___ The rise of Fascism in Europe; Hitler and Mussolini
- ___ Thoughts about why people follow such leaders
- ___ What did you feel when World War II broke out?
- ___ The day Japan attacked Pearl Harbor
- ___ What was America fighting for in World War II
- ___ Your war experiences as a civilian or in the armed forces
- ___ Changes in your life as a result of WW II
- ___ Social changes during the War
- ___ Holocaust experience/memories
- ___ Importance of WW II to the way your generation views the world
- ___ The atomic bomb; nuclear weapons, and the threat of nuclear war
- ___ Wonder drugs and modern medicine’s effect
- ___ Polio and the vaccine
- ___ Modern appliances in the home and how they changed your life -- pro and con
- ___ Living in the suburbs
- ___ Traditions and crafts maintained from the “old country”
- ___ Games, songs, sayings, proverbs you recall from the “old country”
- ___ Television -- first experiences and its impact on society
- ___ Korean war
- ___ McCarthy and McCarthyism
- ___ Stalin
- ___ The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s
- ___ Dr. King’s philosophy: What it has meant to you
- ___ Changes you’ve experienced as a result of the Civil Rights Movement
- ___ President Kennedy as a “new era” for America; his assassination
- ___ The Vietnam War
- ___ Dr. King’s assassination
- ___ Nixon; Watergate and the crisis of ethics
- ___ Women’s liberation and what it has (or has not) meant for you
- ___ The energy problem and nuclear power
- ___ Influence of mass media on society (what we do, how we think)
- ___ Thoughts about exploring outer space
- ___ Opinions about the high tech world that surrounds us
- ___ Differences between life today and life when you were young
- ___ For immigrants: the decision to come to America, the trip itself (by sea, by air), the experience of first entry into America, changes in family life as a result of Americanization
- ___ Pacific Island cultures
- ___ History of Hawaii
- ___ Experiences as a Hawaii 442nd war veteran
- ___ Relocation of family during WW II

- ___ Internment in a relocation camp
- ___ Traditional Chinese values/culture in Hawaii
- ___ Ancestor worship and Chinese temples
- ___ Early history of Honolulu Chinatown and its people
- ___ Chinatown’s bubonic plague of 1900
- ___ Japanese culture: Perpetuation of Japanese traditional festivals (Girl’s Day, Boy’s Day, “O-bon” festival) in Hawaii
- ___ Westernization of Japan: Social changes in Japanese way of life/ culture
- ___ Economic and social development of the Pacific Island Nations
- ___ Influences of Westernization on Pacific Nation societies
- ___ Queen Liliokalani, the composer
- ___ Hawaiian historical places (Iolani Palace, Royal Mausoleum, Bishop Museum, Honolulu Art Academy)
- ___ Ghost stories and legends of Hawaii
- ___ Walking tours -- Honolulu, Kaimuki, Waikiki

Please write additional comments about this “Living History” section concerning what YOU might like to relate to students:

As a final note, would you be so kind as to recommend people who might be potential volunteers in this intergenerational program?

<u>Name</u>	<u>Phone Number</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

[Note: The FELLOWS Center is a joint program of Waiialae Elementary School, Hawaii Intergenerational Network, and Seniors Actively Volunteering in Education (SAVE) -- a project of Helping Hands Hawaii. This form is adapted from a form developed by the New Rochelle (Westchester, NY) RSVP Program. (Hawaii Intergenerational Network, 1300 Kailua Rd., Kailua, HI 96734).]