



Best Practices in Intergenerational Programming: Practice 7

Activities support interaction among intergenerational partners.

Practice 7 • Interaction

Intergenerational programs are most effective when activities support interaction among intergenerational partners.

The partners in intergenerational programs are the adults and the children. Individually, children may not have developed particular skills in their thinking or motor functioning. Adults possess skills that children have not developed, but they may also have diminishing abilities in sight, hearing, memory, or hand functioning. Partners may need skills that the other has to engage fully in an activity.

Prior to and during the activity, the skilled facilitator should note which skills are emerging in children or diminishing in adults. Activities can be created that encourage partners to work together to be successful.

Consider these phrases:

"Jeremy, can you reach the scissors for Miss Lucy?"

"Miss Lucy can hold the paper while you trace your hand."

"Mr. Ralph, can you show DeShawn which one is the zebra in the picture?"

"Teacher hands two paint brushes to Joey to share."

Application of the Practice

- Facilitators can encourage interactions with cues or verbal instructions that are important in engaging partners with one another.
- Instead of pairs, consider small groups of four for some activities (such as nature walks or dancing).
- Gardening, cooking, woodworking, and making models are all concrete learning tasks that use adult skills and teach pre-math and science skills to children.
- Plan activities and materials so partners or groups need each other to successfully complete them (e.g., children collect materials from adults who are holding them for a storytelling activity).
- While children's skills are growing, adult skills may diminish but can be exercised.

Project TRIP

Transforming Relationships Through Intergenerational Programming

A Children's, Youth, and Families at Risk project of Virginia Tech with the Jefferson Area Board for Aging and the YMCAs of Charlottesville and Louisa County, Va.

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This is one of 11 fact sheets on the emerging best practices associated with intergenerational programs.

Intergenerational programs are those that connect younger and older generations to foster positive experiences. Research continues to grow, noting that, when successfully delivered, intergenerational programs result in positive health effects, child learning, and appropriate socialization for both young and old (Jarrott 2011).

The seventh practice relates to **interaction among intergenerational partners.**



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Building children's skills	Exercising adult skills	Examples for programming
Coordination Hand-eye coordination developing. Limited depth perception.	Reaction time slows; motor skills may diminish with arthritis or Parkinson's disease.	Folding, holding, cutting, rolling, measuring.
Cognition Concrete learner (must see it), sometimes hard to imagine. Difficulty thinking of ideas.	Abstract learner (can picture it in their minds). Can conjure up ideas.	Telling stories, using props with stories, costuming, drawing, easel painting, putting things in order.
Attention Natural curiosity but limited attention span.	Most pay close attention; dementia may reduce attention span.	Cloud watching, outdoor listening, texture exploration, music.
Stamina Difficulty sitting still for long.	Some may find it hard to stand for long periods.	Movement, exercise, walking, focus.
Literacy Ability to read, order story, tell story, recognize words.	Patience with reading; can listen, can point to words.	Reading together, sight words, nursery rhymes, letter recognition, printing words together.
Technology Interest in technology, willing to push buttons.	Apprehension with new technology.	Pair together to learn a simple and fun task. Self-photos are often a fun way to learn together, then move into the use of simple applications for adult topics like gardening or music.



Providing specific materials to share and uniquely pairing adults and children can cause great things to happen!

Additional Resource

For more ideas, see: <http://intergenerational.cas.psu.edu/Docs/Sourcebook.pdf>.

Reference

Jarrott, S. E. 2011. "Where Have We Been and Where Are We Going? Content Analysis of Evaluation Research of Intergenerational Programs." *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships* 9:37-52. doi:10.1080/15350770.2011.544594.

Best Practices for Intergenerational Programming

1. Staff members of the adult and child programs *collaborate* to plan activities.
2. Participants are *involved* in *decision-making* about the activity and during activities.
3. Participation is *voluntary*.
4. Participants are *prepared* ahead of time and reflect on the activity afterward.
5. *Activities reflect interests*, backgrounds, and social histories of program participants.
6. Activities are *age- and role-appropriate*.
7. **Activities support interaction among intergenerational partners.**
8. Facilitators skillfully *stage the environment* to promote interaction.
9. Facilitators *consider the social environment and the role of staff members*.
10. *Adaptive equipment* is used as appropriate.
11. Facilitators *document and communicate* experiences to build on in future activities.