



# Expanded Learning Opportunities: **Engaging Intergenerational Volunteers**

EC490

LEADER  
GUIDE

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## Lesson Goal

Children and youth in out-of-school settings reach their full potential as a result of positive youth and adult interactions, purposeful learning experiences, and safe environments.

## Nebraska School-Age and Youth Development Core Competencies

Core Knowledge Area: Relationships

- **1.10** Affirms and respects the differences and diversity between youth (culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and socioeconomic) and promotes the feeling of acceptance.
- **1.13** Looks for ways youth can feel a part of the larger community.
- **2.15** Places a high value on inclusion and representation from the community and sees the program benefiting when multiple and diverse voices participate in program development.

## Learner Objectives

After completing this lesson, you will:

- identify the benefits of intergenerational programming.
- identify the best practices for intergenerational volunteers.

- create ways to expand and use intergenerational programming in out-of-school time programs.

### > > Before the Meeting

Read the leader and participant guides and create the wall signs for the Engagement Scale.

### > > Supplies

Engagement Scale wall signs

### > > Introduction

Intergenerational programming really took hold in 1963 when the Foster Grandparent Program was created as a component of the War on Poverty (Generations United: *The Benefits of Intergenerational Programs Fact Sheet*). The program was developed to provide opportunities for older persons to have positive relationships with children who have special needs and to reduce the isolation of elders. To this day, intergenerational programming continues to provide many benefits.

The National 4-H program lists the four main essential elements for positive youth development programs as belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. Adults have similar needs and look for opportunities to volunteer within an organization that fits their beliefs (*The New Breed: Understanding & Equipping the 21st Century Volunteer*). As a program manager, director, or facilitator, it is important to understand and effectively use your volunteers to keep them returning for future programs.

**> > Estimated Lesson Time**

60 minutes

**> > At the Meeting or Training**

1. Introduce yourself and the lesson topic. Ask participants what intergenerational programming means to them. Participants may discuss this in small groups at their tables before sharing with the large group. (Intergenerational programming is when youth and adults are both participants in the same program. The Foster Grandparent Program, which was developed in 1963, was the first nationally recognized intergenerational program. Since then, intergenerational programs have spread and continue to develop with the emphasis of multiple generations benefiting and learning from each other.)
2. Review generation names and age ranges. Have participants in your program stand when you mention their generation:
  - Silent or Traditional Generation (Born 1922-1945)
  - Baby Boomer Generation (Born 1946-1964)
  - Generation X (Born 1965-1980)
  - Generation Y or Millennial Generation (Born 1981-2000)
  - Generation Z (Born 2000-Present)
  - a. Help participants recognize generational differences such as life experiences and technology by having them answer the following questions:
    1. What major world event happened during your childhood? (Examples: World War II, 9/11)
    2. What was the price of gas when you were growing up?
    3. How did you communicate with your family?
    4. How many of you attended some form of secondary education?
    5. How many had mothers who worked outside the home?
    6. How was life different before computers/email/cell phones/cable TV?
  - b. Emphasize that generational differences do not make one group better than the other. Different life challenges and experiences help form the generations and their opinions. It is important to recognize the differences and appreciate them. Understanding each generation can help make a program stronger.
3. Engagement Scale: Have participants think of current intergenerational programs that they are a part of or that they are in charge of themselves.
  - a. Post Engagement Scale signs before the program begins. Discuss the Engagement Scale (The Engagement Scale is a tool that Matthew Kaplan developed to evaluate the depth of engagement of intergenerational programs in schools. This scale can be used to evaluate any intergenerational program. The ranking goes from 1 to 7 with 1 signifying very little engagement, and 7, the best possible engagement between generations).
  - b. Go over each of the levels of the scale with the group:
    1. *Learning about the other age group:* Participants learn about the lives of people of the other age group but have no direct or indirect contact of any kind.
    2. *Seeing the other age group but at a distance:* An indirect exchange happens between participants but never face-to-face. Examples are videos, letters, etc.
    3. *Meeting each other:* A one-time, face-to-face experience.
    4. *Annual or periodic activities:* Community or organization events that occur on an annual basis such as Grandparents Day at school or Christmas caroling at nursing homes.
    5. *Demonstration projects:* Ongoing intergenerational activities over a set period of time. Usually an experiment or a trial program. One example is mentoring.
    6. *Ongoing Intergenerational Programs:* Programs from demonstration projects that were successful and continue as a part of the organization's curriculum or planning with an ending date.
    7. *Ongoing, natural intergenerational sharing, support, and communication:* Intergenerational engagement that occurs as a function of the program or community — intergenerational programming is intentional and abundant.

- c. Based on the intergenerational program that participants have been thinking about, have them stand near the Engagement Scale ranking that fits their program.
  - i. Ask participants:
    - a. What is the program you were concentrating on or thinking about?
    - b. How many generations are involved in the program?
    - c. Why did you select the ranking that you did?
    - d. How can you increase your level of engagement?
  - ii. Ask participants:
    - a. How did the Engagement Scale change your way of thinking about your intergenerational program? (Does the program serve or fit the purpose or level of intergenerational programming that you are trying to achieve? Did you think you were doing a higher level of intergenerational programming than you really are?)
4. Examine the benefits of having an intergenerational program.
  - a. Distribute the Participant Guide and go over the benefits of intergenerational programming for older adults, youth, and the community.
5. Divide the participants into several groups. Assign each small group one or two best practices. Have the groups discuss the best practice(s) and how they could be used in their current program. After a few minutes, bring the groups back together to report what the assigned best practices are about and how they would implement or use them.
6. Close the session by asking each participant to share one way they are going to improve their intergenerational program based on what was discussed today.

## Resources

- National 4-H Program, Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development Programs: Key Ingredients for Program Success  
<http://www.4-h.org/resource-library/professional-development-learning/4-h-youth-development/youth-development/essential-elements/#Expand1>
- Jopling, J., West Virginia Extension: Understanding Generations  
<http://www.wvu.edu/~exten/infores/pubs/fypubs/245.wlg.pdf>
- Andrews, K. and L. Lockett (April 2013). *Improving Generation Y Volunteerism in Extension Programs*. Journal of Extension. Volume 51. Number 2. Article # 2IAW5
- Generations United (2007). *The Benefits of Intergenerational Programs Fact Sheet*. Available at: [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org)
- Kaplan, M. (2002). *Intergenerational Programs in Schools: Considerations of Form and Function*. International Review of Education. 48(5): 305-334
- McKee, Jonathan and Thomas McKee (2008). *The New Breed: Understanding & Equipping the 21st Century Volunteer*. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing Inc.