Intergenerational Programming

Simply stated, Intergenerational Programming (I.P.) is programming that includes more than one generation in a "mutually beneficial, mutually enjoyable activity" (Rubin, 1983). It first appeared in 1965 (Bullock and Osborne, 1999), and has only become more popular with increased library budget woes.

"Golden Rules" for planning I.P. include: stressing interactive programming, involving participants in planning, educating participants about each other, guarantying mutual benefits, encouraging one-to-one relationships, starting small (but thinking large), cooperating with other agencies. (Rubin, 1983)

Advantages of working with other agencies include: multiple sources of expertise, personnel, and cost splitting.

Benefits youth receive from I.P. include: increases understanding of the physical aging process, learning life experiences and skills, having mentor and role models, and obtaining acceptance they do not receive from authority figures.

Benefits older adults receive from I.P.: reduces isolation, increases socialization, and allows sharing of life experiences and skills.

Benefits the library receives from I.P.: stretches resources, increases departmental sharing and cooperation, adds additional source of volunteers, library patrons and inter-agency collaboration.

Benefits the community received from I.P.: increases communication and collaboration between agencies, segments of the population.

Additionally, youth and older adults establish personal relationships and enjoy each other's company and sharing their cultures.

Examples of one-time I.P. programs include: "Climb Your Family Tree" from the Oak Lawn (IL) Public Library, "GRAND Time at the Library" from the Bloomington (IL) Public Library, and "Toddler Time Grandparent's Day" at the Bloomington Public Library.

Examples of ongoing I.P. programs include: "Grandparents and Books" from the Los Angeles Public Library, "Grandparents in the Classroom" from the Glendale (CA) Public Library, "Stories that Span the Ages" from the Normal (IL) Public Library, and "Through the Eyes of..." from the Topeka and Shawnee (KS) Public Library.
Obstacles to I.P. include: funding issues, accusations of child abuse (never has occurred according to Rubin, 1983), program selection that appeals to different generations, staffing, transportation and scheduling. Potential funding sources include Library Sources and Construction Act (L.S.C.A.) funds, National Community Service Act (N.C.S.A.) funds, Domestic Volunteer Service Act funds, funds raised by the Junior League, alumni organizations, services organizations and the Friends of the Library.

Questions to be considered when evaluating an Intergenerational Program are: Is the activity meaningful, mutually beneficial, promote understanding across generations, have a strong community base, and have the potential to become a tradition?

In conclusion, Intergeneration Programming is a win-win situation: participants benefit and the library benefits. What's not to love!

Works Cited

American Library Association, Office for Literacy and Outreach Services. *Library outreach to underserved populations: Services to the elderly, list of one-time intergenerational programs.* Available through [http://www.ala.org/olos/services/one-time.htm](http://www.ala.org/olos/services/one-time.htm). Accessed 7 April 03.


Contact Information

Questions? Comments? Please call, fax or write me at the following:

**Telephone**
(956) 795-2400 ext. 2235 (work)
(956) 206-9294 (cell)

**FAX**
(956) 795-2403 (work)

**Postal address**
Anne Seddelmeyer
Adult Services Librarian
Laredo Public Library
1120 E. Calton Rd.
Laredo, TX  78041

**Electronic mail**

anne@laredolibrary.org

Send mail to aseddell@yahoo.com with questions or comments about this web site.
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