

Community School-Based Intergenerational Meal Program (IGMP) Start-Up Toolkit

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – Our Why: Youth in Vermont are reporting increasing levels of mental health challenges and a lack of a sense of belonging to their community. Seniors or elders over the age of 60 are reporting increased levels of social isolation and loneliness. Planning initiatives support elders, but few intergenerational social interaction options exist. Intergenerational programming can also boost youth feelings of belonging and support social-emotional learning. 7.5% of Older Vermonters are food insecure. Economic well-being also affects health outcomes for older Vermonters. Social isolation and lack of community connection for both age groups can be addressed simultaneously through community school-based intergenerational meal programming. Aging well, eating well, and connecting well are three key ingredients for nourishing flourishing outcomes in communities. Intergenerational programs benefit everyone.

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS INCLUDED:

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INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS BENEFIT EVERYONE

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN[9]



- Enhanced reading and writing
- Improved task orientation, short-term memory, problem solving, and accountability
- Increased patience, sensitivity, compassion, respect, and empathy
- Reduced anxiety, sadness, and stress
- Improved mood management
- Healthier diets and nutrition, increased physical activity, less "screen time"

MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN[10]



- Improved academic performance
- Healthier family dynamics
- Improved peer relationships
- Decreased depressive symptoms
- Reduced substance use
- Reduced disordered eating
- Enhanced reasoning, problem solving, accountability, conflict resolution
- Decreased bullying and victimization
- Clearer educational aspirations, occupational interests and goals

PARENTS & ADULT CHILDREN[13]



- Less worried about aged parents
- Happy about their civic engagement
- Older volunteers brought resources and skills back home to teach grandchildren and children in neighborhood
- Better family communication

OLDER ADULTS[14]



- Decreased social isolation
- Improved quality of life and purpose in life
- Improved self-worth, self-esteem, empowerment
- Cognitive health improvement
- Reduced falls and frailty, increased strength, balance, and walking
- Learned new skills, leadership proficiencies, and knowledge

ALL AGES



- Reduced ageism and age discrimination among young and old alike
- Improved mental, physical, and cognitive health unique to each life stage
- Greater sense of belonging and connection with others of different ages.
- More acceptance of people who are different from themselves.

STAFF, CAREGIVERS, & NEIGHBORHOODS[15]



- Administrators and staff report positive outcomes such as improved mental health, an increased sense of community, and gaining a sense of energy and purpose during long and hard workdays.
- Informal caregivers receive respite when a younger person cares for their loved one and they too report joy from the experience.
- Family caregivers also report decreased social isolation.
- Some studies have identified an increase in neighborhood trust, social cohesion, and a sense of community.
- Shared site intergenerational programs - settings where children, youth, and older adults participate in services and/or programs at the same time and at the same place - have shown many benefits for staff, families, and organizations.
- Generations also come together for physical improvements to the community such as walking trails, benches, urban parks, green spaces, clearer signage, reduced litter, and recycling options.

Graphic from: [Generations United: Because we're stronger together]



IGMP Implementation: Setting the Table

Supplies:

- Kitchen & serving supplies (big pans/trays for large service counts, serving bowls, serving spoons, dishes, silverware, mugs, glasses, pitchers, coffee dispensers, hot water dispensers)**.**
- Banquet supplies & Décor (seasonal table runners, small, low centerpieces, collapsible tables, folding chairs, microphone, name tags)
- Plan and select meals that reflect the community's favorite cultural dishes (Chop suey, shepherd's pie, sandwiches, casserole, etc..)
- Grab & go activity supplies and instructions (BINGO, game playing, learning games, movement activities, arts & crafts).
- Comment box

Marketing & Advertising:

- Identify intergenerational brokers who will help in getting the word out to the community, asking for help from community partners, inviting collaboration with parents, community organizations, and student clubs/service organizations.
- Maximize social media, school website, bulletin boards, backpack express, and enlist community members of the post office, stores, churches, and civic organizations to advertise about the event.
- Send school representatives to local adult day or residential facilities to invite residents to the event in person.



IGMP Implementation: Setting the Table

Community school facilitator roles & responsibilities:

- Classroom teacher ~ Prepare students prior and after event regarding orientation to the activity, social emotional issues, conversation starters, family style dining, manners, and managing expectations. Issue name tags prior to entrance to the event.
- Door Greeter & Escort ~ Welcome community guests, issue a name tag, and escort guests to banquet area.
- Intergenerational brokers ~ Local elder and student ambassador mingle and welcome guests and answer questions.
- Student ambassadors ~ Older students typically help with conversation facilitation or drink service or food service
- Chef and food assistants ~ Food menu planning, preparation, and delegation of food service preparation for family style eating (bowl service).
- Banquet Greeters ~ Greet in the banquet space and take drink orders and visit with guests.
- Servers ~ Serve meals, clean plates, and identify any concerns or issues and provide support.
- Announcer & Activity Facilitator ~ Provide overall directions about family style meal service, bowl passing, and activity facilitation.
- Set up/Clean-up crew ~ Table set up, decorators, and tear down banquet space.
- Record keeper & Photographer ~ Take census, document menu, and take pictures or video of event and update social media outlets and prepare several lines for parent update.
- Intergenerational Best Practices Liaison ~ Monitor risk, reduce fall hazards, and monitor checklist.



IGMP Implementation: Setting the Table

INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVITY OPTIONS:

- BINGO or Music BINGO (customized listing of an intergenerational play list) with small give away items
- Guided painting activity where the activity is facilitator led and all guests leave with art piece.
- Game luncheon ~ where guests learn card games, board games, or collaborate on coloring projects.
- Season arts and crafts project where guests complete a craft and all guests leave with an art piece or creation such as a suncatcher, key chain, or centerpiece arrangement.
- Little sprouts planting activity or re-potting activity for vegetable starts or in-home herb garden.
- Pair and share learning activities for math, reading, or interactive learning games where elder guests support learning of students or provide modeling.
- Seasonal choral performances or instrumental demonstrations or interactive drum circles have been appreciated by all guests.
- "Getting to know you" card game where guest pairs take turns asking questions of one another and learning about one another.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

- Student Dining Satisfaction Survey
- Student Survey
- Elder satisfaction survey



IGMP Implementation: Setting the Table

INTERGENERATIONAL BEST PRACTICES CHECKLIST:

- Did facilitators present an activity that was relevant to guests interests/experiences and encouraged social interaction?
- Was the activity age- and role-appropriate for child guests?
- Was the activity age- and role-appropriate for elder guests?
- Was the ratio of elders to child guests near equal or supported a flow of intergenerational exchange?
- Did seating arrangements accommodate to intergenerational pairs or small groupings?
- Were materials introduced and paired equally?
- Did facilitators use microphones to give directions and then provide one to one support of guests regarding activity objectives?
- Were adaptations to equipment or activities made accessible for all guests?
- Were adaptations made to physical space to increase safety and accessibility for all guests?
- Were audio or visual distractions minimized in the banquet space?
- Was staff mindful to not over-facilitate and allow guests to interact?
- Was staff responsive to both generations of guests?
- Did staff move around the banquet space to support the flow of food service, activity facilitation, and reduce intrusion?
- Was the event documented with adequate releases via photos taken, census taken, and observations forms completed?



IGMP Project Management: To Do List

Before the Meal:

- Create flyers and distribute
- Create a document tool (excel) for meals and supplies
- Plan and prep activity with consideration of age and interests of students.
- Purchase or create décor, name tags, etc..
- Assign roles to all helpers and facilitators
- Cook food and dessert
- Ensure coffee, tea, water, & cold drink (lemonade/punch) are prepped
- Set up for meal

During the Meal:

- Ensure the children and adults are engaging with family style passing, conversation, and trying new food items.
- Bring extra food when serving bowls are empty
- Refill drinks (only one time for students)
- Serve tables and clear serving bowls first then plates and utensils
- Offer dessert and casually prime guests for the upcoming activity

After the Meal:

- Clear tables of food service items, wipe down, and prep for activity
- Explain activity and model expectations for guests
- Engage in activity
- Kitchen staff clean up and put away food
- Students say goodbye to elders
- Guests are invited to complete surveys
- Staff break down tables and return space to normal.

Long term sustainability of meal planning:

- Plan for variations in attendance and associated food preparation.
- Assign grades to be student participants (classroom rotation)
- Ongoing recruitment of elders
- Survey elders for interests and talents to share
- Consider seasonal décor
- Promote program on social media, community bulletin boards, etc…
- Determine best day of the week and time of day
- Plan and prep an activity tote with staples for quick activity ideas



IGMP Media Links:

Intergenerational Video - Local short form

Intergenerational Meal Video

Community Schools: Blueprint for Success Article

In collaboration
with
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