



“Intergenerational Connections” Program Evaluation

September 1, 2017—February 28, 2018

The mission of JRC is to enrich lives through educating children, engaging seniors and strengthening community.

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Goals, Objectives, Measurements

- Goals and Objectives led to strategic planning
- Some Process Measures were derived directly from objectives
- Process Measures were important for control of operations
- Process Measures: Number of people involved, demographic characteristics, planning types of activities



Case Example: Determining the value of bringing the generations together

Jackie and Amari



In JRC's first Intergenerational Connections Program activity on September 7, 2017, Jackie, who has been a member of JRC Adult Day Center for four years and had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's, and Amari who attends the JRC Learning Center, were partnered together. Jackie has difficulty speaking full sentences, often only able to say one or two words at a time. She was trying very diligently to ask Amari if she knew the color of the crayon she was holding. Amari kept looking at me, puzzled, because she did not understand what Jackie was trying to ask and Jackie began to become frustrated.

Suddenly after many attempts, Jackie stopped talking for a moment and then slowly, but clearly posed her question to Amari. She asked "What color is that?" I had my phone with me and snapped this picture. Jackie had realized she was able to say what she had been trying so hard to say. As Jackie's eyes widened, Amari looked at the crayon and smiled because she had finally been able to understand Jackie's question. What a moment that was for all of us!

Two generations at opposite ends of the life cycle can inspire each other to be the best they can be. Children experience the unconditional love seniors can give as well as learn valuable life skills. Seniors have a renewed purpose to make a difference in a child's life by sharing their knowledge and life experiences. The benefits of this program are far-reaching for both generations. We have just begun to see the many ways both of these vulnerable populations are benefiting from intergenerational connections!

Karen Shackelford
Director, Intergenerational Connections Program

Process Measures:

- 12 seniors, ages 65-92 and 12 children, ages 3-4 years of age entered the program.
- Each week, seniors and children were paired with the same partner, if possible.
- The program duration was 1 hour twice a week for the first month, then adjusted to 1 hour once a week for the next 5 months due to transportation issues.
- For the first month, the program alternated locations between the Learning Center and the Adult Day Center. Thereafter, the program was exclusively held at the Adult Day Center for the next 5 months due to senior mobility.
- The first 4 months of the program focused on a “Social Model” whereby seniors and children were encouraged to form relationships. Each activity included a song, story and craft. The next 2 months focused on a “Physical Model” incorporating more exercise and activity. Each activity included a craft and a form of physical activity.
- The size of the space in which the activity was held was adjusted from an oversized space to a smaller space. Children focused better in the smaller space.

Types of Evaluation:

- Outcome Evaluation: The program accomplished its objective which is to determine the benefit(s) that can be derived from bringing these two vulnerable populations together.
- Process Evaluation: The program accomplished its objective by planning intentional strategic activities with virtually the same small group of seniors and children on a regular basis.
- Implementation Analysis: The program was implemented as designed, allowing for necessary adjustments in activity location and frequency as well as participant personalities.



Research Methods:

- Observation
- Comment sheets during intergenerational (IG) activities
- Questionnaires

Scales:

- Scales: Likert Scales - Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, Disagree

Attitude Scales:

(Questionnaires were given to participating Seniors, Adult Day Staff & Volunteers, Seniors' Caregivers, Learning Center Teachers/Staff and Children's Parents/Caregivers)

- Scale 1: Attitudes of the seniors
- Scale 2: Attitudes of the seniors' caregivers/Adult Day Center staff/volunteers
- Scale 3: Attitudes of the Learning Center teachers
- Scale 4: Attitudes of the children's parents/caregivers

Scale 1: Attitudes of Seniors

(Results derived from Questionnaires)

1. All feel they are in good health and have a good sense of well-being.
2. All feel, as a member of the Adult Day Center, they have opportunities to engage with the local community.
3. All feel valued as a person.
4. All feel included in a range of worthwhile activities.
5. Most feel they have a good social life.
6. Most enjoy spending time with people their own age and spending time with young people.
7. All agree people can learn a lot from people of their generation and feel they have a wealth of experience to share.
8. Most feel they have opportunities to see friends and family.
9. Most feel they do not have a choice in their day to day routines.
10. All feel the intergenerational program is worthwhile for the seniors and the children.

Scale 1: Comments of Seniors



“I wish we had more time with the children.” **Peggy**

“My “kids” love to come. Being around the kids makes me happy.” **Janet**

“People feel better with their day.” **Judy**

“The kids make me look forward to coming. I wish we could increase the number of children I am involved with.” **Hattie**

When asked any benefits that might be gained from involvement with the children, **Penny** said *“Getting love from the children.”*

“I look forward to every Thursday.” **Beth**

“I feel happier after activities with the kids.” **John**

Scale 2: Attitudes of Adult Day Center Staff, Volunteers & Seniors' Caregivers

(results derived from Questionnaires)

1. All thought the IG program was worthwhile for the seniors and the children.
2. All thought the members of the Adult Day Center have opportunities to engage with the local community.
3. All thought they have the skills to facilitate social inclusion and that the Adult Day has a culture of social inclusion.
4. All feel they are trained adequately to effectively work with the members involved in the program.
5. All feel the members feel valued for who they are.
6. All feel the members feel included in worthwhile activities and have a good social life.



Scale 2: Comments of Adult Day Center Staff, Volunteers & Seniors' Caregivers

(results derived from Questionnaires)

"We see our members in a new light with their loving & compassionate nature toward the children." Staff

"Both children and seniors were apprehensive when we began the program. Now, both groups look forward to getting together, which is evident when they see each other because there are lots of hugs and immediate affection." Staff

"Seniors are happier and have a heightened sense of value." Caregiver

"Including an activity that allows the children to be physical is a plus." Staff

Scale 2: Comments of Adult Day Center Staff, Volunteers & Seniors' Caregivers

(results derived from Questionnaires)

“Showing the seniors who do not participate what we are doing, may help them want to join the program.” **Staff**

“I feel a sense of accomplishment knowing we are in intentional programming where we have a vision, goal and outcome.” **Staff**

“It helped having the Adult Day make the craft ahead of time and having an example placed on each table.” **Volunteer**

“I love the enthusiasm of the staff on all levels.” **Volunteer**

“We need ideas about how members with sight loss & sensory impairment can participate.” **Caregiver**

Scale 3: Attitudes of Learning Center Teachers

(Results derived from Questionnaires)

1. All thought the IG program was worthwhile for the seniors and the children.
2. Most agree they have the training they need to work with the seniors and the children.
3. All agree children feel a connection to their senior partner.
4. All agree the participating children look forward to the IG activity with the seniors.
5. Most agree the IG program has made a difference to how the staff work with the participating children.
6. All feel the participating children feel valued for who they are.
7. All agree the children love doing crafts with their senior partner and look forward to showing their parents what they made.



Scale 3: Comments of Learning Center Teachers

“Children who attend seem happier that day.”

“The kids love the program and get so excited when told it’s “grandmas & grandpas” day.

“Children like playing the games in the IG activity and excited to bring back the projects they made.”

“I wish the teachers could go and experience everything they do in the IG activity.”

“Maybe we could rotate children every few months to allow more children to participate.”

“The children love doing activities with their senior partner.”

Scale 4: Comments of Children's Parents/ Caregivers

All strongly agree the IG program is worthwhile for the seniors and the children.

“My daughter is working better with others, now.”

“The children learn more than they would ever learn from a book and really enjoyed the 1:1 time.”

“My daughter is more vocal about her school day. She's able to share what she has done with the “grandmas & grandpa's” and likes singing the songs, she learns in the IG program, at home.”

“I would love to see a calendar of the planned visits and a monthly newsletter sharing pictures, activities, etc.”

“The children and the seniors are learning together.”

Scale 4: Comments of Children's Parents/ Caregivers

“My son has learned to be more compassionate, especially with the “grandmas & grandpas.”

“This program needs to continue!! My son is excited every Thursday to visit the “grandmas & grandpas.”

“Kids develop positive attitudes about older adults and differences.”



Findings & Analysis: Descriptive (Program Director)

Findings:

- Seniors feel positively about the program and enjoy their time with the children.
- Children look forward to their days with their “grandmas & grandpas” and enjoy doing an art project with the seniors.
- The Intergenerational Program is having a positive influence on both generations by the relationships being formed.
- Teachers of the Learning Center and the staff of the Adult Day Center and all caregivers/parents feel positively about the program and believe it is beneficial to both generations.

Analysis:

- Need to find more ways to enable seniors with physical disabilities to participate.
- Determine how to allow more children to participate.
- Keep parents informed about the weekly visits through a newsletter.
- The Adult Day Center will plan all activities with each center sharing the cost of art supplies.
- The Adult Day Center is the preferred location for all intergenerational activities due to seniors’ mobility challenges.

Findings & Analysis: Descriptive (Program Director)

Analysis:

- Collaborations with outside organizations would be beneficial in providing additional volunteers and new activity experiences.
- More comments during activities are needed to document the types of interactions between children and seniors.



Discussion of Results: (Intergenerational Team Discussion)

The Intergenerational Connections Program at JRC has had a positive effect on all participants and for JRC as a whole. Most of the responses given in the surveys are a delight to read and show the joy such a program can bring.

Social inclusion impacts for the elderly

Factors that may increase the risk of social inclusion for the aged are ageist attitudes, functional decline and loss of former social networks. The results of the evaluation indicate that the seniors feel they have opportunities to engage with the local community, are included in a range of worthwhile activities and in general, have a good social life.

The effect of the program on the health/well-being of adults

Enjoying meaningful activities may assist in improving quality of life. Comments by the seniors and teachers/staff/caregivers indicate that enjoyment appears to be a main benefit of involvement.

No participant made a comment about feeling the activities were inappropriate. Infantilization of seniors appeared to be minimal as seniors helped the children as much as children helped the seniors in all activities.

IG Communication and Interactions

Intergenerational relationships have developed. All the seniors felt they have a wealth of experiences they enjoy sharing and that they enjoy spending time with young people. They also feel as if people can learn a lot from their generation. The staff noted a change in interactions over the initial 6 months of the program. Participants who were reserved initially, became more active in their participation as the weeks passed.

Discussion of Results: (Intergenerational Team Discussion)

The effect of the program on the children

Most of the children refer to the program activity day as “Grandmas & Grandpas Day.” Teachers’ comments, “the children seem happier that day” and “they are excited when they know it is “Grandmas & Grandpas Day,” indicate the children love the program as much as the seniors.

The children look forward to their weekly outings to the Adult Day Center.

Parents of children say that their children are “working better with others” and “learned to be more compassionate, especially with the “grandmas & grandpas.”

While very reserved in the first days of the program, as the weeks progressed, the children became more and more excited to see their “grandma” or “grandpa.”

When conducting the activity in a large open room, the children became very distracted. When utilizing a smaller space for the activity, the children were more focused and happily interacted with the seniors for the full hour.

The children take the seniors’ hands when the activity is over and walk them to the outer room to help them to their chairs. If the senior uses a walker, the child will help them move their walker.



Discussion of Results: (Intergenerational Team Discussion)

Practicalities and Implementation Issues

An issue to consider was ensuring there is an appropriately sized area for the IG activity and that the program does not adversely impact those seniors who do not want to participate. Also, is there adequate storage for activity supplies close to the activity location? Would seniors with dementia benefit from the program? Based on the case example of Jackie and Amari, it appears the answer is a resounding “YES”.

Planning should occur at all phases: (i) prior to implementation, (ii) weekly planning, (iii) formal review.

Timing, location and frequency was discussed. Several weeks into the program, it was determined that holding a one hour program twice a week was too frequent given the transportation issues. It was also determined that seniors visiting the children at the Learning Center was prohibitive to some seniors due to mobility challenges. It was decided the activities would be exclusively at the Adult Day Center once a week. Mid-morning seemed to be the best time for both the children and the seniors due to pre-existing schedules in the respective centers.

The IG program model chosen supported a facilitator-led activity. A facilitator from the Learning Center and one from the Adult Day Center, each familiar with the participants personalities and restrictions of their respective group members, would lead the weekly activities. The Program Coordinator would oversee the implementation of the activities and send reporting to and meet with the Program Director for future evaluation.

The activities of the IG Program Activities for the first 4 months focused on a social model to develop relationships. Activities included a song, reading a book and a craft. The last 2 months focused on a more physical model with a craft and physical activity. This was enjoyable to both generations.

Conclusion

The pictures shown here demonstrate the love the seniors and the children have for each other. These intergenerational connections are making a difference to so many families.

Ultimately, our community is stronger when seniors live with dignity and purpose, and when children gain understanding about the “grand” generation and why their actions today will have an impact on their tomorrow.

JRC’s “Intergenerational Connections” Program has an exciting future!

