



AGES Model Lesson Plan

Advancing Generations' Education through Schools (AGES) is an organizational planning model for developing school programs related to aging. The model provides an administrative structure that strengthens a school's connections with older residents. The goal of AGES is to promote education about, for and with older adults.

Background and Need

Older adults comprise the fastest-growing segment of society. Along with health, social and financial needs, there is increased recognition that older adults need to remain intellectually stimulated and socially connected. Older people are affected by how younger generations perceive their needs, just as young people are affected by how older adults view them.

Educators increasingly realize the interdependence of generations and the need to promote understanding among all age groups. For example, many communities grapple with the proportional shrinking of the school-age population, while the school budget remains a large item in municipal expenditures. In some communities, individuals may view other age groups as competitors for resources. In addition to dealing with this perceived competition, most schools try to respond to societal changes such as substance abuse, latchkey children, and the unavailability of adults to participate in voluntary school-related programs. Many older community residents simply do not understand the educational needs of students today and the increased expectations of society on schools.

One positive response to these trends is the development of school programs involving older adults. Such programs include school volunteers, oral history projects and intergenerational instruction. Most programs, however, focus on one topic or age group in a school. They generally come and go depending on the interest and time a teacher has available to devote to programs that extend to older residents. Few schools have a systematic process to maximize involvement of older adults in a variety of roles, subjects and grade levels.

The AGES model provides a planning process and structure for developing intergenerational and aging-related school activities. The AGES model benefits both young people in schools and older people in the community. The model, which is spelled out in the chart "Benefits of an AGES Pro-gram" (below), can be used either on a system-wide or individual school basis. This guide explains how schools can develop AGES programs which best fit a unique set of needs, interests and resources.

AGES Project Ideas

The AGES model includes ongoing activities such as tutoring and mentoring projects, and time-bound activities such as special curricular and extracurricular events. Examples of project ideas are presented in the following six categories.

Staff development

- Attitudes about aging
- Facts on aging: What teachers should know

- Planning intergenerational activities
- Caring for aging relatives
- Awareness of age-related issues (biological, economic, political)

Intergenerational exchange

- Pen pals
- Community forums
- Oral history projects
- Family history

Curricular activities

- Reading poetry
- Tutors
- Mentors for youths at risk
- Reading to younger students

Curriculum on aging

- Aging in literature and art
- Historical and cultural views of older adults
- Normal aging processes
- Political, economic and social issues of aging

Classroom activities

- Room grandparents
- Discussion groups
- Guest presenters

Extracurricular activities

- Community service
- Special persons' day
- Luncheon for seniors
- Chore services
- Intergenerational environmental trips or projects
- Audiences for performances
- Eagle Scout projects

The AGES planning model allows schools to develop multiple projects. The philosophical guidelines (below) and eight-step model on page 4 will allow schools to create one umbrella organizational structure from which school and community projects can be developed.

Philosophical Guidelines

The AGES model is based on the following philosophical guidelines:

- Individuals are invited, rather than mandated, to participate.
- Projects are related to existing school and curricular goals.
- Project implementation puts quality ahead of quantity.
- Projects are designed to be ongoing, without requiring extensive administrative resources.
- Projects are designed to maximize benefits for both young students and older adults.

These guidelines encourage teachers and community members to take ownership of AGES projects by inviting, rather than mandating participation. They can promote a psychological sense of community - a sense of cooperation and interdependence among community groups. They assure teachers, administrators and parents that the intent of AGES projects is to serve existing educational goals - not to add curriculum. The model provides a structure for developing creative ideas into successful learning activities.