



## Intergenerational Life Writing Lesson Plan

### Introduction

Life writing is an opportunity for younger and older people to share life views and experiences through intergenerational writing exercises. Since the lesson is particularly successful in language arts activities, it is detailed in this guide as well.

### Objective

Students will:

- practice interpersonal and writing skills in an intergenerational setting.

### Procedures

1. The teacher discusses the program with a person in charge of activities for a local nursing home, adult day care, senior center or elder housing complex. Arrangements are made for volunteer older adults to work with interested students in a writing project for a designated time, e.g., one hour a week for three consecutive weeks. The first time the program is tried it should be with only a few students and older adults. It should be designed so that it is not a large time commitment for the teacher, elder agency personnel, older volunteers or students.
2. Older adults and students work in pairs on the writing project. The teacher should focus on a life event or theme, such as family relations, childhood or personal values. Both older adults and young students compose a short paper describing something about their own lives. In some circumstances, young people can transcribe oral tapes of older adults who might have physical difficulty with writing. Both the younger and older persons compare their perspectives on the same topic and offer helpful comments or suggestions.
3. Conclude the project with each person presenting to the other the final copy of his or her paper.

### Extension Activities

Have students interview older adults and transcribe notes on word processors. They then can write journal-type articles based on the interviews. Students present essays to the older adults who were interviewed during a special day of celebration.

*This activity was developed by Patricia Jacqueline, language arts teacher  
at Windsor High School*

Offer alternative activities for students and older persons who do not wish to participate in writing projects, but would enjoy participating in discussion groups or games, such as bingo.

Students can be encouraged to continue contact with their older adult partners beyond the project.

This kind of intergenerational program may be of interest to the local newspaper. Press coverage may help create additional interest among other students and older persons.