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The Intergenerational Initiative is a P-16 coalition of individuals and organizations committed to:

- Publicizing the good news about intergenerational activities
- Serving as proponents for collaborative efforts between generations
- Fostering alliances that enhance education at all levels
- Involving young and old in solving public problems through service learning

The Initiative is a Higher Education Cooperation Act partnership funded by the Illinois Board of Higher Education. The following education and aging organizations are partners:

- American Association of Retired Persons • Chicago State University • Council of IL Community College Presidents • Eastern Illinois University • Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities • Governors State University • Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents • Illinois Association of School Boards • Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents • Illinois Association of Senior Centers • Illinois Coalition on Aging • Illinois Community College Board • Illinois Community College Trustees Assoc. • Illinois Community College Council of Presidents • Illinois Corporation for National & Community Service • Illinois Department on Aging • Illinois Department of Children and Family Services • Illinois Department of Corrections • Illinois Department of Human Services • Illinois Department of Public Health • Illinois Education Assoc. • Illinois Learning Partnership • Illinois Principals Assoc. • Illinois PTA • Illinois Retired Teachers Association • IL Assoc. of Rural and Small Schools • Illinois State Board of Education • Illinois State Library • Illinois State University • Northeastern Illinois University • Northern Illinois University • Service Corps of Retired Executives • Southern Illinois University System • University of Illinois System • Western Illinois University

Continuance is a quarterly publication providing information about intergenerational activities and programs thus promoting a continuance of history, knowledge, understanding, and humor between generations. The newsletter is a collaborative effort of the thirty-three partners listed above.

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Cover Story

The Merging Paths of Education and Older People



The story of the century is the graying population

The story of the century is the growth of the world's older population. At the turn of the 20th century, approximately 4 percent of the United States population was over age sixty-five. Today, that percentage has climbed to 13 percent and by 2030 is projected to be 20%. In 1900, the average life expectancy was 47. Today it is 76. The number of centenarians has increased from about 3,500 in 1900 to 66,000 today. We are learning new words about aging, such as decacentenarians (age 110-119), and dodecacentanarians (age 120-129).

The story of the century is good news for education because the combination of education and older people brings the abundant resources of both to meet the needs of both. Many school districts, community colleges, and universities have already involved senior citizens as tutors, mentors, and as students. Common sense tells us that older people are an important part of education in the 21st century and that educators who tap this resource will find themselves closer to meeting standards and preparing their students for college and the world of work.

Youngsters Teaching Older People

A New Way of Thinking About Education

Technology has been a powerful force for linking education and older adults, in fact, computer instruction has become one of the most common intergenerational programs and the most sought community college



"That's right!" says an Evergreen Park student to his senior citizen student.

course for older adults. It is a prime example of the best of what happens when education and older people join forces. For example, students at Evergreen Park were preparing for their first class teaching computers to older people. They were nervous and weren't sure they could talk to an older person one-on-one for a whole hour. When the class began, the students discovered that their preparations paid off and they actually enjoyed teaching and talking to senior citizens. After the class the students were dynamic in their discussions, a striking example of students engaged in learning. Computer courses for older adults are appearing in elementary, middle, and high school class-



A younger teacher encouraging her older student.

rooms, everywhere. It is a positive development in education because students are assuming a teaching and leadership capacity on a regular basis. The community (senior citizens) is coming into the schools and finding that they like what they experience.

Nursing homes can be centers for learning

The teaching and mentoring capabilities of young people don't end in the classroom but grow prolifically when allowed to blossom in the community. Teacher Barbara Kurth talks about the



Students at Gilson Brown Elementary School and Fountain Blue nursing home residents celebrate the year of the dragon.

nursing home as a learning setting for students. "Students are surrounded by human drama. On every side are loneliness, love, humor, struggle, talents, death, and dignity. There are people with wisdom the students can draw on and pains they can ease. There are more than a dozen careers to observe and experience." In nursing homes or assisted living facilities, young people have a great opportunity to empower older people and at the same time learn from them. Oral histories, reminiscing, reading, and discussions about events 20 or more years ago, provide rich experiences for both youngsters and older adults.



A service-learning program involving the Chicago Department on Aging and Chicago Public Schools featured a field trip with blind elders. The botanical garden offered an opportunity for both to enjoy plants and flowers. The elders described the smell and the students helped them feel the leaves and blossoms. The students practiced describing details and the seniors helped them understand a sightless world.

Older Adults as Traditional and Non-Traditional Teachers

It is easy to picture older adults as teachers or mentors because our country was built on intergenerational learning. Unfortunately it doesn't happen as frequently as it should or could. In schools and community settings where older people and education are connected, teachers say they are empowered, students



Quilters in McLeansboro become traditional teachers sharing their history and skills with the younger generations.



Using the hammer is the first step to becoming a successful carpenter

A retired faculty mentor works with a basic skills student to discuss time-management skills

become engaged, and senior citizens brag about "their" extraordinary students. Look at the photographs on this page. Students of all ages benefit from the encouragement and attention from an older person or a group of older people who are there just for the students.

When educators express concerns about meeting



Reading programs are common in the schedules of East St. Louis senior citizens.



Small groups of students are ideal for discussions with older adults.

standards, promoting remediation, or preparing young people for the workforce, a question must be asked. Are you reaching out to older adults to help your students and faculty? If the answer is no, the educators are not serious about solving their problems.