



Recommendations for the Obama Bidden Early Childhood Transition Team
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Generations United (GU) strongly encourages the team to incorporate an intergenerational approach when making your policy recommendations and include older adults as resources for children and families. This would include expanding the term “parents” to include grandparents and other relatives to encourage the vital role they can provide supporting children and working parents; providing incentives and encouragements for older adults to work and volunteer with children; encourage intergenerational shared sites; and provide supports to grandfamilies, families in which grandparents and other relatives have primary responsibility for children living in their homes.

Infrastructure, Charter Schools & Intergenerational Shared Sites

- A stimulus plan that includes funding for school and child care infrastructure should give communities that commit to build facilities that serve both young and old under one roof priority.
 - Research has shown shared sites have real, substantial benefits for children. Preschool children involved in intergenerational programs had higher personal/social developmental scores (by 11 months) than preschool children involved in non-intergenerational programs. Additionally in schools where older adults were a regular fixture (volunteers working 15 hours per week) children had improved reading scores and fewer behavioral problems than their peers at other schools.
 - More socially adept children create greater social capital and will reduce costs on the country’s education and criminal justice system while also producing future gains in the nation’s economy.
 - Intergenerational shared sites are also a cost effective way of using limited resources needed to serve children, youth and seniors, as well as enhance the services to both young and old. A recent survey by the University of Virginia Tech, funded by GU, found intergenerational shared sites had significant personnel costs savings compared to similar facilities that only served one age group.
 - Consider the case of the new Swampscott High School and Senior Center in Swampscott, Massachusetts. Instead of having to decide between building a new senior center or high school, the community decided to build one facility and place the two together. The results according to Principal Larry Murphy, “have been a blessing.” The students volunteer at the senior center by performing at senior functions and helping seniors learn to use their cell phones and iPods. When Swampscott, like many communities across the country, was faced with budget cuts last year it was the older adults at the senior center that volunteered to be trained and keep the library open during its regular hours.
- The Intergenerational School in Cleveland, Ohio is an excellent example of a high performing charter school that could be replicated.



- The Intergenerational School integrates older adults into its curriculum and requires its students to mentor one-on-one with an older adult for two hours to twelve hours a week working on reading skills.
- Every classroom partners with a senior care facility and visits monthly to create life-long learning teams.
- The Intergenerational School was one of only seven K-8 charters in the entire country to be featured in the U.S. Department of Education's *K-8 Charter Schools Guide: Closing the Achievement Gap*.

Grandfamilies

- Pre Kindergarten and other early childhood policy should be sensitive to special challenges that face children being raised by grandparents and other relatives.
 - Policy language related to parental role and involvement should include grandparents and other relatives raising children in addition to other guardians. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act defines parent to include “a legal guardian or other person standing in loco parentis (such as a grandparent or stepparent with whom the child lives, or a person who is legally responsible for the child’s welfare).” In addition to including grandparents and other relative caregivers in the definition of the law, when possible throughout relevant legislation, policy language should specifically include grandparents and other relative caregivers as eligible for similar supports and activities as parents.
 - Many grandparents and other relatives raising children do not have legal custody of the children in their care, but are providing full time support for the children. Early childhood programs should create systems which allow non-parent caregivers to enroll the children in their care without requiring documentation of legal guardianship.
 - Early childhood programs should explore models that include components specifically designed to address the unique challenges facing children being raised by grandparents or other relatives. A childcare in Cookeville, TN, which was hit particularly hard by the Meth epidemic, opened a day care which specifically caters to children being raised by grandparents or other relatives.

Seniors4Kids & PreK

- Older adults can play a valuable role in support of early childhood education and care.
 - Generations United's Seniors4Kids initiative engages adults age 50+as “Captains4Kids” to create statewide networks of community leaders and volunteers that work to increase access to, and improve the quality of, pre-kindergarten programs. Seniors4Kids energizes a new and diverse voting constituency as active community leaders for high-quality early education. Captains reports that in addition to advocacy on behalf of children, they would also like opportunities to volunteer in early child care and education programs.



- This is further demonstration through national polls in which older adults identify working with children as their top volunteer interest.
- Older adults support strong early childhood investments such as pre-K because of the numerous benefits to all members of society including the reduced need for remedial special education, welfare, and criminal justice services, and the creation of a more capable workforce that contributes taxes to the solvency of social security.
- The Seniors4Kids model could be expanded to address any number of issues and opportunities in support of children and youth.

Civic Engagement & Incentives

- Provide strong incentives to attract and retain the participation of older adults.
 - Older adults who volunteer for a particular amount of time for different categories of services could receive a transferable education award which could be used by their children, grandchildren or the child they are tutoring or mentoring. This idea should build on the Silver Scholarship concept and provide increased funding for the award.
 - Older adults who mentor young children in disadvantaged schools could receive a stipend for a determined number of volunteer hours. This represents the Experience Corps model of civic engagement and incentives.
 - Incentivize enrollment in intergenerational activities with young children at shared sites by providing credits toward preferred recreational activities for older adults, such as dance and exercise classes, that might otherwise be unaffordable for the older adult.
 - Create innovative options for older adults transitioning from the workforce that facilitate increased involvement in intergenerational civic engagement programs that benefit young children.

Mentoring Teachers

- Mentoring programs designed to recruit, prepare, and retain quality teachers should also include retired teachers as part of this effort.
 - For many older adults, traditional retirement is an outdated concept. While they may be retiring from full time employment, research demonstrates that people are looking for volunteer or part-time employment opportunities that will allow them to use their skills and contribute meaningfully to their communities.
 - Having survived the rough early years to enjoy rewarding and often lengthy careers, retired teachers can help nurture and support new teachers.
 - The National Education Association-Retired's Intergenerational Teacher Mentor Project mobilizes retired teachers as mentors for student or first year teachers to help ensure their professional success and increase the number of qualified and dedicated teachers in public schools.

**Older Adults as Assets**

- Most discussions about early learning do not include aging groups or point to intergenerational strategies to expand the ring of support for children.
 - Parents are called on to guide their children's success. Grandparents, aunts, uncles and other adults also need to see themselves in the equation and be called on to step up on behalf of children.
 - Expand the terms "parent" and "family" to include other caring adults whether related by blood or compassion.
- Older adults can be deployed in teams to address critical issues and support children and families.
 - In the UK older adults have been recruited to provide critical support to children transitioning from elementary to middle school. They have successfully mentored and encouraged children during a difficult adjustment period.
 - Many older adults have never been asked to be involved in early learning or support of early learning.

Social Services Block Grant

For over 30 years, the Social Services Block Grant, Title XX of the Social Security Act, has enabled states to provide vital services such as child care. The program has been dramatically cut over the years and full funding should be restored.

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