ESKATON®

Transforming the Aging Experience

Eskaton Kids Connection
GUIDEBOOK

[AN ESKATON INTERGENERATIONAL INITIATIVE]

"ONE NATION, UNDER AGE"

Index

Program Synopsis

Eskaton Kids Connection partners our residents living in all levels of care (IL, AL, MC, SNF, & ADHC) with local school aged children to promote positive relationships between generations. With the theme "One Nation, Under Age," the program features a wide array of mutually beneficial learning opportunities, as well as social, cultural, technological, and entertainment components. Documented benefits of this program, as all pieces of the Eskaton Intergenerational Initiative, include healthier older adults; mutual respect, sensitivity, socialization and sense of purpose; shared knowledge and learning; and, of course, happiness.

Successful beyond everyone's initial expectation, our intergenerational program began in 2009 and continues to grow in participants and scope. The structured activities range from arts and crafts, reading and interviews, to singing and meal time. Chatting, snacking and the occasional hair braiding fill the less formal time. From personal, social and anthropological perspectives, the friendly interaction is extraordinary.

Our relationship with the local Twin Rivers School District connects over 500 elementary and secondary schoolchildren from 18 classrooms with "buddies" who reside in 18 Eskaton communities. With expansion plans scheduled, the program will continue to grow beyond our current 1,500 children making friends with 1,500 older adults in all 30 Eskaton communities. Dramatically positive results are recorded in three areas: healthier residents advanced learning skills for students, and public awareness through media exposure.

The Kids Connection program is the brainchild of Betsy Donovan, Eskaton's Chief Operating Officer, and her sister Bobbi Donovan, a veteran school teacher at Kohler Elementary School in the Sacramento area's Twin Rivers Unified School District.

Program Objectives

Eskaton has a goal of encouraging mutual respect and understanding (*generativity*) between younger children and older adults. We strive to achieve this with the following objectives in mind:

- Create intergenerational learning opportunities.
- Increase [Eskaton's] resident socialization and satisfaction, and ultimately impact healthier living and longevity.
- Introduce children to new educational stimuli and social experiences.
- Build Eskaton's identity as a vibrant organization involved in creative, multi-age endeavors; and further distinguish the organization's social accountability.
- Augment schools' community service and civic engagement.

Implementing your Intergenerational Program

1. Identify a classroom/ school district nearby to collaborate with. [School/ Classroom] It is very important to make sure that this teacher is committed to the extent of the school year.

2. Your representative [Activity Staff] should schedule a visit with the participating classroom to answer any questions the students may have about a senior community like yours.

3. Your representative and the teacher should begin scheduling dates for the class to visit your community. Typically every other month [October, December, January,] with a few dates in between [November, February] where some residents from your community visit the classroom. The teacher should schedule all bus transportation soon after the dates are established.

4. Your representative shall begin informing all residents AND staff of the program. It is very important to establish complete participation with all of your staff members. Utilize all outlets of communication [Daily Newsletter, Daily Agenda, Calendars, TV] to share the exciting collaboration.

5. The programs that have thoroughly prepared prior to the classroom visits have shown the most success. This includes a few behind the scenes items like:

- Designate an area that is large enough, fun and inviting for all the visits [Common Area]
- Determine the crafts/ activity that will take place during visits and order ahead [Seasonal Craft]
- Obtain all photo/video releases for all participating program members [Release Form]
- Order any T-Shirt or Lanyards that will be distributed to participating members [Typically Class and 1 staff]
- Establish an area and a meal for the program participants to dine together [Dining room/ Courtyard]

On the day of the visit make sure all Residents/ Staff are prepared prior to the bus arriving. Each visit lasts approximately 2 hours. Make sure to have a camera ready to capture all of the wonderful moments being created between the two generations.

Community Responsibilities

- Pair the students with a buddy – coordinate with teacher for like personalities

- Determine a location within your community large enough for whole group

- Coordinate the agenda for the visit with the teacher prior to the visit.
  Prepare, Prepare.

- Distribute a daily agenda or newsletter reminding residents of class visit

- All staff members invite residents to the designated area and spread out as much as you can

- Reassure residents that they can be passive observers or engaged. Residents don't have to participate in the days activities to still have an impact on the students and vice versa.

- Complete any necessary resident photo release forms

Teacher Responsibilities

- Schedule the bus for transportation for each visit to community

- Begin to educate students about aging process in seniors
  i.e. Assistive devices, ability to see and hear clearly

- Order crafts and supplies for each visit ensuring each resident and student have something to take home at the end of the visit.

- Coordinate communication activities in-between visits
  i.e. Letters, craft, Skype, and class visit

- Work with staff member on each aspect listed in Community Responsibilities above

- Complete any necessary student photo release forms

Strategies & Activities

For staff and school teachers: Along with your own original educational and entertaining activities, and practical and logistical plans, also consider these approaches to achieve desired goals:

1. **Introduce new EDUCATION experiences and opportunities.**
   - For students: Teach about the aging process, how everyone is aging – and that some of us just have more experience (such as our Eskaton buddies); improve reading and writing skills.
   - For residents: Provide instruction on basic computer skills for entertaining, non-threatening purpose, to communicate with students.
   - For both: Use email and Skype to communicate between in-person gatherings.

2. **Promote SOCIALIZATION and social skills.**
   - For students: Create safe and welcoming environment to nurture intergenerational relations; present fun opportunities for students to enjoy "show and tell" experiences; expose students to "formal" dining etiquette and other social skills and behavior.
   - For residents: Provide opportunities for residents to help students prepare and present stories to group; empower residents to advise students on social skills.
   - For everyone: Share personal stories and experience; celebrate big holidays (including Valentine's Day and Veterans Day); create colorful name badges with photos to simplify identification.

3. **Encourage intergenerational, MUTUAL RESPECT and understanding … or *generativity*.**
   - For students: Remind students that sharing experiences and knowledge works both ways -- they can learn plenty from the older adults, and their buddies can learn from them as well. Encourage students to write notes or emails to share happenings with their older adult buddies between gatherings; schedule Skype sessions in class.
   - For residents: Feature activities for older adults to impart their knowledge and experience to educate (and impress students), such as geography, history, cultural diversity, grammar, numbers, puzzles and so forth.
   - For everyone: Introduce projects that encourage collaboration and teamwork -- such as arts and crafts, gingerbread houses, interviewing one another – to build respect, understanding and empathy … and break down barriers and generational stereotypes. Recycling projects are an excellent opportunity to encourage resource conservation – the essence of *generativity* (generations working together to help one another).

4. **Create opportunities to strengthen FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS.**
   - For students: Encourage students to bring writing and art projects home; create assignments that invite participation of parents, such as helping with interview questions; ask students with grandparents to conduct similar interviews.
   - For residents: Invite family members to watch activities and to ask residents to share details about their buddies and each gathering.
   - For everyone: Take group and 'buddy" photos for residents and students with family members.

5. **Generate PUBLIC AWARENESS through positive media coverage.**
   - For staff and teachers: Identify local media (neighborhood newspapers) to include in outreach; work with Public Relations Department or school district media relations office, respectively, to advise regional broadcast and print media of select events, such as introductory gatherings, Skype sessions, holiday festivities and other visual opportunities.
   - For staff and teachers: Take plenty of photographs to display as posters and to feature online and in publications.

6. **Inspire REPLICATION by chronicling and documenting; and measuring and evaluating.**

   For staff and teachers: With the launch of any new program such as Kids Connection, support and/or opportunities for replication improve immensely when benefits and results are well-documented. This includes recording details of successful activities, including challenges that were overcome; chronicling "testimonials" and anecdotes from participants; photographing key events; and maintaining a file of news coverage.

Program Monitoring Tool

Date: Click here to enter a date.   **Community**: Choose an item.

Executive Director/ Designee Signature:

Program Components	Yes	No	Expected POC Completion Date	Additional Comments
1. Was consistent communication established with school teacher?	☐	☐		
2. Was a previously established agenda made for day of the intergenerational visit?	☐	☐		
3. Were the appropriate steps taken to inform the residents/ community of youths/ young adults visit?	☐	☐		
4. Was a designated area available, clean and had sufficient seating available for residents/ youth & parents?	☐	☐		
5. Were the activities both engaging and enriching for the residents and youth?	☐	☐		
6. Do the activities encourage both resident and youth interaction?	☐	☐		
7. Was the agenda appropriately followed in conjunction with arranged tasks and allotted time?	☐	☐		
8. Was an activity completed that allowed the resident and youth to take something home as a keepsake?	☐	☐		
9. Was an area designated for both the residents and youth to enjoy a meal together?	☐	☐		
10. Was the area clean with a sufficient amount of seating encouraging both resident and youth interaction?	☐	☐		
11. Did the community and teacher set up a time to either Skype, exchange letters, or arrange another visit for the near future?	☐	☐		

Program Recognition

- Inspire Award
- Eisner finalist
- Twin Rivers Unified School District
- Multi media outlet

Resources

- Eskaton website – see Innovation, Eskaton Initiatives: eskaton.org/kids-connection.html

- Twin Rivers Unified School District: twinriversusd.org

- The Intergenerational School in Cleveland, Ohio: tisonline.org

- Generations United: gu.org

- The Intergenerational Center at Temple University: templeigc.org

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