

Best Practices in Intergenerational Programming: Practice 10

Adaptive Equipment Is Used as Appropriate.

Practice 10 • Adaptive Equipment

Intergenerational programs are most effective when adaptive equipment is used as appropriate.

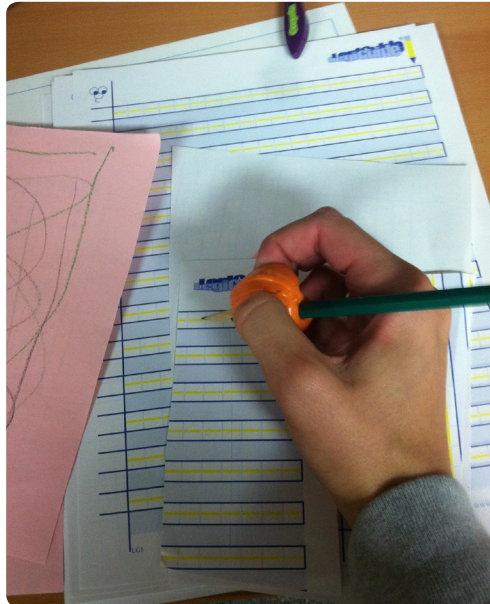
There is a chance that clients in an intergenerational program will need adaptive equipment. The primary reason to consider adaptive equipment is to remove barriers to participation. Examples of adaptive equipment include pencil holders for slip resistance, magnifying glasses or digital projectors for better viewing, and chair supports or lifts for improved positioning. This equipment is often essential to engagement in the activity and with an intergenerational partner.

Application of the Practice

As a teacher or care provider, question what may help remove a barrier or enhance a learning situation. Sometimes creative solutions for adaptations involve Velcro, pillows, longer handles, or pulleys. Organizations are available to consult on particular needs, such as the Training and Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC; www.ttac.vt.edu) for students in Virginia; and online retailers and DIY sites, such as www.enablemart.com, www.seniorssuperstores.com, and www.pinterest.com/otconsulting/diy-adapt/, offer resources.

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Project TRIP

Transforming Relationships Through Intergenerational Programming

A Children's, Youth, and Families at Risk project of Virginia Tech with the Jefferson Area Board for Aging and the YMCAs of Charlottesville and Louisa County, Va.

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This is one of 11 fact sheets on the emerging best practices associated with intergenerational programs.

Intergenerational programs are those that connect younger and older generations to foster positive experiences. Research continues to grow, noting that when successfully delivered, intergenerational programs result in positive health effects, child learning, and appropriate socialization for both young and old (Jarrott 2011).

The 10th practice relates to **adaptive equipment**.

Program Ideas

The lack of fit between a person and his or her environment is a primary reason people do not choose to participate in activities. Adaptive equipment is not always needed for activities involving children and elders, but it can ensure that all who want to join can be active and successful.

The right tools can help.

- Look at a need for adaptations any place there is a barrier, including height, size, and location of furniture and materials.
- Equipment can be purchased or adapted in a DIY fashion.
- Tools may be simple (such as large-handled spoons) or sophisticated (such as digital communicators for a child who lacks speech).
- Spring-action scissors, wide paintbrushes, and anchors for papers can make a world of difference during art and writing activities.
- A wide array of cooking tools can be provided for programming that appeals to all age groups.
- Ergonomic gardening tools and modified containers, such as raised beds or wheeled containers, can accommodate gardeners of all abilities.
- Communication tools can help enhance relationships. Devices and apps are becoming more common for adults who are losing their speaking ability due to debilitating conditions. For example, Boardmaker Software (www.mayer-johnson.com/boardmaker-software/) is a communications tool with more than 3,000 pictures.



Additional Resources

Rosenberg, L., A. Kottorp, and L. Nygard. 2011. "Readiness for Technology Use With People With Dementia: The Perspectives of Significant Others." *Journal of Applied Gerontology* 31 (4): 510-530. <http://jag.sagepub.com/content/31/4/510>.

Wistrom, E. 2012. "Information About Adaptive Equipment." Bright Hub Education website. www.brighthubeducation.com/special-ed-physical-disabilities/61925-examples-of-adaptive-equipment-for-students/.

References

Jarrott, S. E. 2011. "Where Have We Been and Where Are We Going? Content Analysis of Evaluation Research of Intergenerational Programs." *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships* 9:37-52. doi: 10.1080/15350770.2011.544594.

Best Practices for Intergenerational Programming

1. Staff members of the adult and child programs *collaborate* to plan activities.
2. Participants are *involved* in *decision-making* about the activity and during activities.
3. Participation is *voluntary*.
4. Participants are *prepared* ahead of time and reflect on the activity afterward.
5. *Activities reflect interests*, backgrounds, and social histories of program participants.
6. Activities are *age- and role-appropriate*.
7. Activities support *interaction* among intergenerational participants.
8. Facilitators skillfully *stage the environment* to promote interaction.
9. Facilitators *consider the social environment and the role of staff members*.
- 10. Adaptive equipment is used as appropriate.**
11. Facilitators *document and communicate* experiences to build on in future activities.