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Summer 2004

A Model Integrational Program for Improving the Quality of Life for Aging Chinese

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A MODEL INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAM FOR IMPROVING

THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR AGING CHINESE

BY

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July 2004

Fundamental problems faced by China's aging population were discussed. The information and suggestions in helping the elderly from Selected Programs in different cultural settings were obtained and analyzed. A model program to maximize the connection between youth and seniors by building a strong community and school network resulting in support for seniors in China was developed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My earnest thankfulness goes to my supportive and loving husband, Michael Zhang, and my dear son, LinXuan Zhang. Without their understanding and forgiveness, I would not gain enough courage and persistence to pursue my graduate study.

I owe gratitude to my beloved and respected Professors: Dr. James Pappas, Dr. Jack L. McPherson, and Dr. Steve Schmitz. Thank you for your perseverance to help me accomplish my project. Your encouragement and guidance have moved me deeply.

A special note of thanks goes to my beloved past grandfather. You are the one who always reminded me to reach and conquer my personal limits and become a better human being. You are the one who first taught me to respect the elderly and finally you are the senior I respect the most.

Thanks to those who have given me ideas and thoughts. The people around me encouraged and trained me to become a stronger and better human being.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

Falling fertility and rising longevity are ushering in a dramatic demographic transformation in China. Thirty-five yeas ago, Children in China outnumbered the elderly six to one. Thirty-five years from now, the ratio will be two to one – the other way around. China may face a crisis later in the century unless it takes adequate steps to prepare (Hamre & Lawson, 2004).

In the above statement, quoted from the report entitled "The Graying of the Middle Kingdom," Hamre & Lawson, explained that China's public pension system was mostly limited to urban employees at state-owned enterprises. This pension system was collapsing under the financial weight of un-funded benefit promises. Consequently as it was in the past, the great majority of Chinese still count on their children to support them in old age. However, due to China's one-child policies, which were introduced in 1980, family networks would be unable to fulfill their traditional role to support the old.

Meanwhile, there is no social or community network available to provide needed support for the seniors. The private home care system is a newcomer, like the Chinese treasured panda, scattered around the country: The number of private home care centers are far from enough for the Chinese seniors and the price is out of reach for most common households.

A growing number of Chinese are destined to reach old age with no means of support if China fails to confront its aging challenge. This situation can hardly be overstated. How China deals with its stunning demographic transformation will determine the future of the elderly Chinese population.

According to China Online (2004), one of the strategies employed by the Chinese government has been to seek the help of foreign investors to build more home care facilities. However, this strategy was like building a long tube to borrow water from a foreign country. Rather, it may have been more realistic to conduct research on how other countries are facing the aging problem and learn from their ideas to experiment with pro-active solutions instead of waiting for benevolence.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project was to design and develop a model program to maximize the connection between youth and seniors by building a strong community and school network resulting in support for seniors in China. An expected outcome is that Chinese youth would develop an in-depth understanding and appreciation of aging by building a communal and mutually beneficial social network.

Limitations of the Project

For purposes of this project, it was necessary to set the following limitations:

1. Research: The preponderance of research and literature reviewed for purposes of this project was current within the past five years.

2. Scope: The model program would be implemented in selected elementary and middle schools in Beijing, China.

3. Target population: The model program has been designed for the students aged 6-18 and the senior citizens aged sixty and over.

4. Project implementation: Related educational authority in Beijing has not yet administered the project. The project will be implemented sometime in the near future, prim to 2005.

Definition of Terms

Significant terms used in the context of this project have been defined as follows:

1. Aging: The aging people are adults age 60 and over.

2. Carer: A care-worker or care staff of any kind who is paid to provide care as part of a contract of employment.

3. Elderly: Elderly are adults age 60 and over (Jackson & Neil Howe, 2004).

4. <u>4-2-1 problem</u>: In China, demographers call it the "4-2-1 problem," a reference to the fact that in many families one child will be expected to support two aged parents and four grandparents (Jackson & Howe, 2004).

5. <u>Intergenerational</u>: Intergenerational programs are programs that involve two or more generations of people. In this study intergenerational will refer to the elderly in our community and the students in our elementary and middle schools (Gundling, 1986).

6. <u>Senior</u>: Seniors are adults age 60 and over.

7. <u>Volunteers</u>: Any person who is willing to give service to others. In this project they will be referred to as helpers to both seniors and youth. (Fredricks & Rasinski, 1990).

8. <u>Xiao</u>: Confucian concept of Xiao means absolute obedience to one's father (Pochagina, 2003).

9. <u>Youth</u>: Those persons in our community who are 18 and younger. In this project they are the students in our classrooms (Reece, 1988).

10. <u>Ageism</u>: Regards to the behavior or attitude of a person who treats people unfairly because of their age (Cambridge online Dictionary, 2004).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of research and literature summarized in Chapter 2 has been organized to address:

1. Dimensions of the Chinese aging challenge – An Overview

2. Approaches from varied cultural settings aimed at enriching the lives of the seniors.

3. A summary of information obtained from selected intergenerational programs

4. Summary

The research reviewed was primarily current within the past five years, and was identified through a computer search from the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC). Additionally, World-Wide Websites were assessed to obtain related information including the following source document: Meeting the Challenge of Global Aging, Published by The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Press (2002).

Dimensions of the Chinese Aging Challenge – An Overview

China's population is growing old. Thirty-five years ago, there were eight working-age adults between the ages of 15 to 59 in China for every senior, and China is still a young society today compared to that of the United States (See Figure 1). The elderly in China made up just 11 percent of the population in 2004. However, by the year 2040, the share will climb to 28 percent (Jackson & Howe). The Beijing Center of Gerontology indicated that China was growing old faster than any society in history. In China, there will be more than 400 million seniors by 2050, almost one retired person for every two workers (Bezlova, 1997).

Within a generation, China will have an older population than the United States.

Elderly (Aged 60 & Over), as a Percent of the Population in China and the United States, History and UN Constant Fertility Scenario, 1970-2050

Elderly (Aged 60 & Over) as a Percent of the Population		
	China	US
1970	7%	14%
2000	10%	16%
2015	15%	20%
2040	28%	25%
2050	31%	25%

Source: UN (2003)

Figure 1
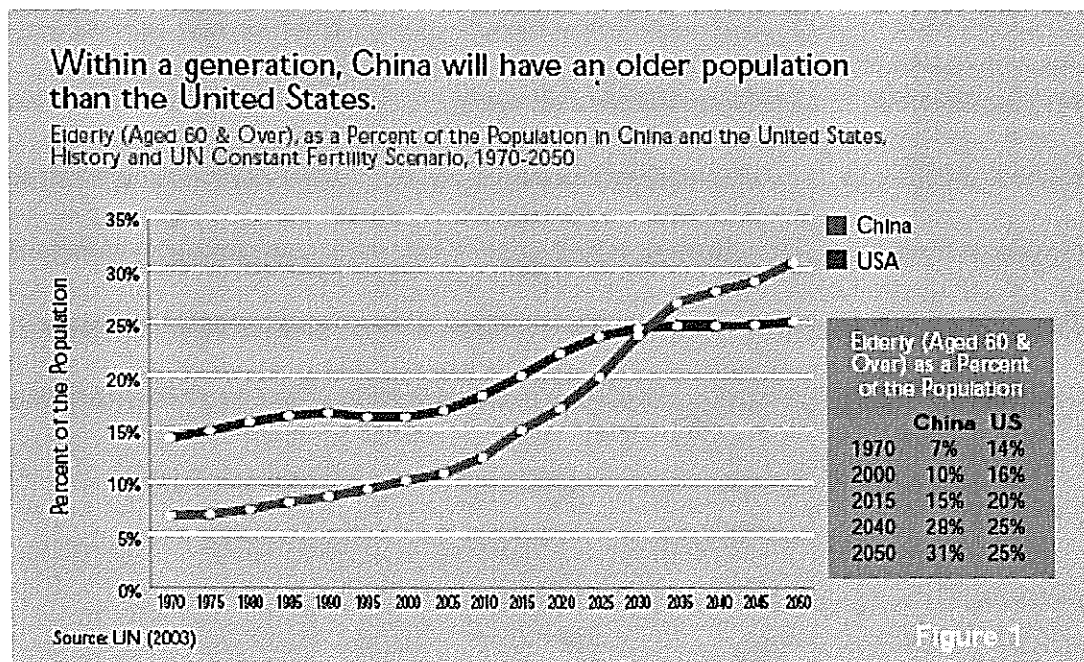
There are two fundamental forces behind China's age wave: falling rates of fertility and rising rates of longevity. Since the Chinese government carried out the tough policy of limiting t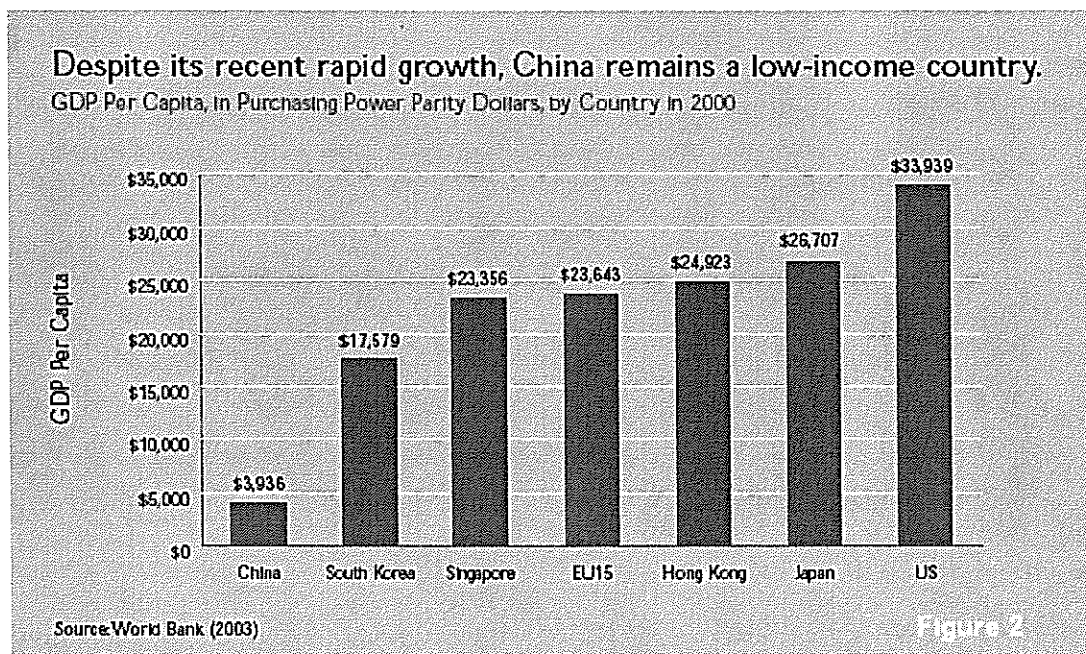he birthrate through its one-child policy, there has been a decrease in the younger population and an increase in the percentage of older Chinese shifting the balance to more elderly people. How to provide support to this growing number of seniors is now the number one challenge for China (Holland, 2002).

First, unlike Sweden and Japan, which were the fastest-aging societies of the world, China did not have effective pension programs and the government lacked funds to invest in social welfare (Bezlova, 1997). Historically, China's state owned enterprises offered workers generous pension and health-care benefits. However, as the state sector slimed down, the system is now moving toward bankruptcy. The result will be that most of today's workers will become tomorrow's retired seniors, with no pension or health-care coverage at all (Jackson &Howe 2004) (See figure 10).

Overall, three out of four
Chinese workers have no pension.
Percent of Total Chinese Workforce
Covered by Public Pension Systems in 2002

75%	No Coverage
15%	Basic System
7%	Rural System
3%	Civil Service System

Source: MOLSS (2003)
and authors' calculations

Figure 10

7
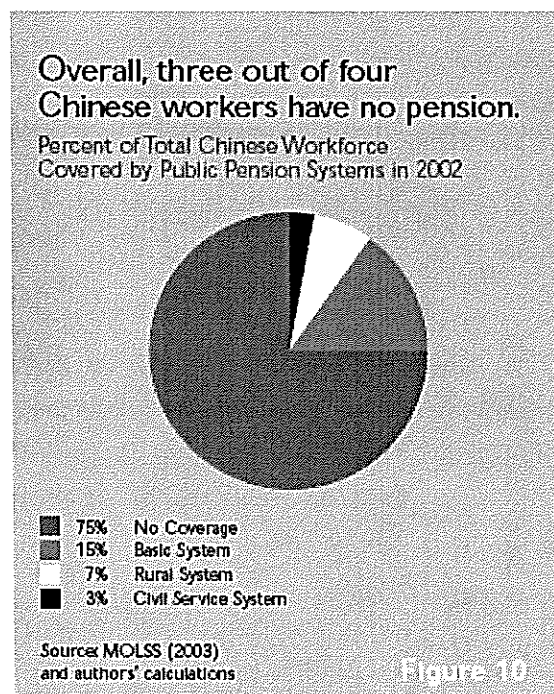
Second, individual seniors have no additional ways to support themselves because

of their limited savings, (See figure 13) as Jackson and Howe (2004) stated:

Despite the impressive growth in the past twenty-five years, China

is still a low-income country. Per capita income may have risen six-fold

since the beginning of the reform era, but even taking into account

differences in purchasing power, it is still just one-fifth the level in South

Korea and one-ninth the level in the United States (See Figure 2). In

exchange rate dollars, China produces 4 percent of global GDP, while the

United States, with less than one-fourth of China's population, produces

32 percent (See Figure 3). As of 2000, according to the World Bank, 204

million Chinese still lived in abject poverty, defined as an income of less

than $1 a day.

Despite its recent rapid growth, China remains a low-income country.
GDP Per Capita, in Purchasing Power Parity Dollars, by Country in 2000

Source: World Bank (2003)

Figure 2

China accounts for a fifth of the world's population, but produces less than 5 percent of the world's GDP.

Population and GDP as a Percent of World Totals, China versus the United States in 2002

Percent of World Population

Percent of World GDP

Percent of World Totals

35%
30%
25% — 21%
20%
15%
10%
5% — 5% — 4%
0% — 32%

China
USA
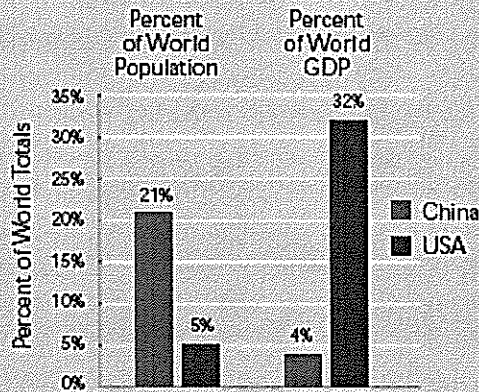
Source: UN (2003)
World Bank (2003)

Figure 3

Only a fraction of Chinese elders can count on personal savings to finance their retirement years.

Distribution of Chinese Urban Households Aged 55 & Over, by Wealth-to-Income Ratio* in 1995

Percent of Households

60%
53%
50%
40%
30% — 25%
20% — 17%
10% — 5%
0%

0-50%   50-100%   100-200%   200% & Over

Wealth-to-Income Ratio*
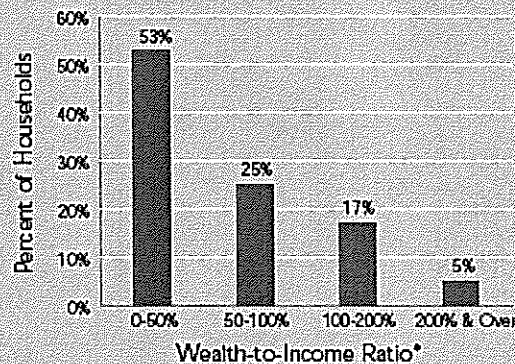
*Financial assets as a percent of annual income.
Source: Takayama (2002)

Figure 10

9

Third, the great majority of Chinese still continued to rely on the traditional form of old-age insurance, which is living with their children and extended family (See figure 15). However, birthrates have declined and increasing urbanization tends to dismantle extended families. Therefore this informal safety net is beginning to loosen (Jackson & Howe, 2004).

Most Chinese elders still live in extended families with their children.

Chinese Elderly (Aged 65 & Over), by Living Arrangement, as a Percent of Total in 2000

64%	Living with Children
24%	Living with Spouse Only
10%	Living Alone
2%	Other Arrangements

Source: Zeng and Wang (2003)

Figure 15
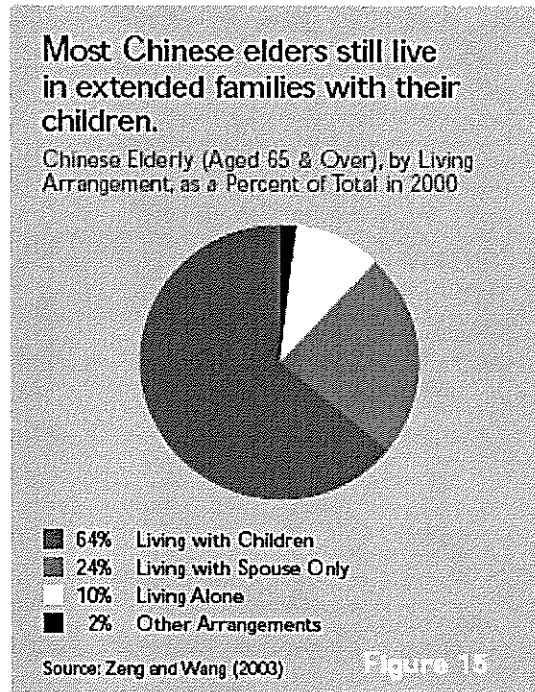
The social and economic processes of the last two decades have had a negative effect on the traditional attitude toward the elderly. Rapid economic growth, intensified rural to city migration trends, and an accelerated life style has a significant influence on intergeneration relations. Young people focus on having a career and a well-paying job, and quickly assimilate Western values toward their parents and their responsibility to them (Pochagina, 2003).

The tradition of respect and caring for the elderly was losing its cultural foundation and devaluation of moral standards was taking place. The Confucian concept of Xiao was gradually being replaced by the concepts of individual development. Democracy and equality were encouraged between the members of different generations in the society and family (Pochagina, 2003).

The nuclear family structure has become a modern trend and is now favored by a majority of the young. More and more young adults have moved out and left their elderly parents alone, causing irreconcilable differences in lifestyle and philosophy. Many young couples now live with their parents only because they cannot afford to buy a house or rent an apartment (Fang, 2000).

Experts say family-based care is no longer practical even if the middle-aged children want to since most of them have little time to take care of their parents. The "4-2-1 problem" will impose an overwhelming burden on the younger generation (Jackson & Howe, 2004). Relying on the family or children as the main way to solve the problems of the elderly in the future will obviously not work any more (Pochagina, 2003).

Forth, The Chinese government would not be able to subsidize the long-term care needs in the majority of cases (Woo, Ho & etc. 2000). Homes the government provided for the elderly were far from enough to meet the needs of the elderly. For example at the end of 1998, Beijing's 289 pension houses could accommodate only 9,924 people or 0.6 percent of the population aged above 60. A nationwide survey in 1998 found that about 23 percent of China's seniors over the age of 65 live by themselves. Another survey

conducted in Beijing showed that less than 50 percent of elderly women lived with their children (China online, 2004).

According to Pochagina (2003), Chinese seniors need help urgently. In the opinion of this authority, the following problems are the most urgent:

1. Because of insufficient contributions from employers toward providing medical care for pensioners, there is no guaranteed medical care for the elderly;

2. Old people are exploited by their own children, who frequently treat them cruelly and even abandon them to the mercy of fate;

3. Many of those seniors live alone and need help in daily life.

4. Many elderly people have no spiritual life.

In recent years, more and more politicians, academics, and the Chinese public have been discussing the problems of the population's aging, and seeking ways to guarantee elderly citizens a decent life.

Approaches from Varied Cultural Settings Aimed at

Enriching the Life of Seniors

"It is not old age that is at fault, but rather our attitudes towards

it."-Cicero

As suggested in the above quotation by Cicero, the topics about aging are nothing new. The researcher discovered that the review of the literature related to aging focused significant attention on the societal need to address stereotypical misconceptions about aging. Several authorities suggested specific solutions for appreciating and helping the seniors, including the views of those detailed below:

Societal Attitude towards Aging:

Numerous analyses over the past twenty years in the United States have documented that older characters were shown on television in smaller numbers than they are in the population as a whole (Bishop, 2000). However, research also revealed that there was no generation gap on the issue of Social Security: Most young people in the United States strongly believed that Social Security should be Congress's number one priority. The majority of the youth were concerned about "making sure people receive a decent, guaranteed monthly retirement benefit" (Young Adults Support Social Security, 1999). Since attitudes about aging had a critical influence on how well people adapted to

their older years, there was a great need to educate every cell of the society to possess positive attitudes towards aging (McGuire, 2003).

Educating the Young:

"It is better to prevent than to cure, easier to learn than to unlearn" (McGuire, 2003).

As suggested in the above statement by McGuire, educating children before they develop a negative concept of aging would be much more effective than attempting to change or educate the adults about the same topic. James & Kormanski (1999) believe that the attitudes people develop early in life will affect behavior throughout life, which was also alluded to by McGuire (1993) who stated:

Children would learn about the life long process of growing up and growing older by osmosis if left to chance. All too often myths and stereotypes were transmitted from one generation to another in language, intellectual pattern, literature, and through all the media by which we perpetuated the knowledge, values and attitudes of our society... Children should begin at the earliest possible age to develop a healthy and realistic view of aging. Understanding aging and appreciating aging people could maximize their own opportunities for quality of life and develop understanding of the complex issues of living in an aging world.

In a subsequent article entitled "Growing up & Growing Older" (2003), McGuire concluded that a high priority for any educational system should involve that of educating and socializing youth children about positive aging.

One way of educating children to reduce ageism was by screening what they read at school, library, and at home. Teachers and parents should welcome books that only promote positive aging. Accordingly, publishers and authors should also be encouraged to publish and write books with more positive attitudes toward aging. As stated in The Education Digest (1993):

> From a positive attitudinal base, children can expand their knowledge about aging, use that knowledge as a basis for making comparisons, and begin to reach informed conclusions about the aging process. By promoting such attitudes, the quality of life can be improved for today's elderly as well as tomorrow's elderly- who are, of course, today's children.

Nationwide Health Education:

Lichtenstein et al (2003) explained how educators in the United States found it was desirable and possible to promote health education at every age level, while developing and permeating gerontology and healthy aging related materials into the school curriculum, to help children at different ages construct healthful habits so as to maintain independence across a life span. Schmall & Pratt (1993) described how community-based educational programs on mental health concerning the elderly were developed and maintained. To minimize health risks and health care costs, the elderly should increase their knowledge of health care and obtain healthful living habits at an earlier stage of life.

Community-Based Network Care for the Elderly:

Economically, culturally and humanly speaking, it is clearly the best solution to keep the majority of the elderly active and healthy in their own community for as long as possible (Camagay, 1997).

Bryant (2002) explained how, by building a fair and responsive community-care system, care-providers, formal and informal community-care volunteers, and volunteer decision makers for community care programs, organizers linked the local services, resources, and the elderly into a supportive coordinated network system. Elderly participants not only benefited by receiving quality care in a family-like atmosphere, they

also had the chance to interact with people of all ages and backgrounds, which helped

them stay active and interested in life. Using a community and home-based approach, the

care was designed to support the elderly with services that promoted independence,

dignity, and health. Many studies have found positive results from community involved

programs that include an active lifestyle and regular exercise.

Woo et al (2000) emphasized the need to assure the psychological health of the

elderly by providing the support network described as follows:

> Maintenance of functional independence, good social support
>
> network, engagement in social activities, and good informal carer support
>
> may reduce demand for institutional care.

Manigbas (2002) described how, with the help of community support groups,

elder abuse intervention became possible. Through improved case management, support

groups outreached and educated seniors, thereby reducing the incidence of senior abuse

and violence.

According to Marek el al (2004), some community and home-based senior care

programs in the United States have developed special programs such as medication

management, personal care packages, and fall-prevention interventions to help the elderly

remain independent in their homes. Both these authorities found that to make use of the

community senior centers and senior homes as service-learning and clinical sites for

students was mutually beneficiary.

Intergenerational Connection:

In the National Strategy for an Aging Australia, the Minister for Aged Care reiterated that families were of central importance to older people. Seniors were concerned about the breakdown of family units and the distances that often separated family members (Bronwyn, 2000).

Long & Martin (2002) articulated the important relationship of the elderly to their children as follows:

> For the elderly parents, an affectionate relationship with children was of prime importance as a buffer to loneliness. This is especially important information when considering the fact that for many elderly both spouse and friends are likely to be deceased. In addition, because the elderly have such a high stake in their children, believing in the affection of their children becomes even more important to their well being.

Halford (1998) explained how physical and social separation gradually has contributed to limited understanding and increased stereotyping between the generations. Both young and old generations need one another to maintain a sense of social contribution and continuity of life. This authority contended it was important to identify ways to help the elderly maintain contact when family members were separated by distance and built up intergeneration links within the community.

a. <u>Technology Built Intergenerational Connection</u>:

The Internet has made possible frequent contact with family and friends separated by distance, although seniors might be afraid of learning skills like e-mailing and searching the web. While new to some seniors, technology is second nature to the younger generation and has become one of the best vehicles for the younger people to make a difference in the lives of seniors (DiGiorgio, 2004). Retired Canadian General Romeo Dallaire (Canadian Press News Wire, 2001) strongly advocated that seniors in the developed world learn to use the Internet to influence younger generations.

b. <u>Retirement Implications For Seniors</u>:

Endeman (1985) explained how, when millions of talented seniors retired from work, they also retired from society. This was unfortunate, because older adults should not only be seen, but also listened to and appreciated as "givers" who can help preserve cultural wisdom and values, by bridging relationships across the living generations. More and more elderly individuals, however, are not willing to sit back and spend their remaining ten to twenty years or more waiting to die. Many view retirement as an extension of their work years and pursue new outlets to utilize the skills they acquired during their careers (DeGirolanmo, 2003). The evidence researchers have collected over the past twenty years suggested that changes in ability with age were much less than people feared; prejudice was possibly the biggest obstacle faced by those engaging in ageism (Mcgwire, 1999).

As more and more colleges and universities develop programs for older Americans, the boundaries separating traditional students from seniors could eventually dissipate until education becomes a process of continuous, lifelong learning rather than one of stop and start. America's institutions of higher learning need this commitment to lifelong learning not only to enhance community relations, but more importantly, to solidify the concept that education doesn't stop at graduation. It is a seamless journey of continual learning opportunities that follow an individual through his or her lifetime (DeGirolamo, 2003).

In some universities, students have tutored seniors on a group or individual basis, where young students receive an opportunity to practice their teaching skills while seniors benefit from private instruction (Degirolamo, 2003). On the other hand, some seniors have functioned as high school student mentors and helped reduce the student dropout rate. Students have begun to recognize seniors as "nonjudgmental sounding boards" (Seniors as mentors, 1999). Seniors have also helped young students with reading, writing, or math while providing a positive and lasting experience of love, sharing and compassion (Conyers, 1996). Finally, making intergenerational programs an integral part of the school curriculum can reshape perceptions and minimize stereotypes the elderly and the young have of one another (Halford, 1998).

The need to connect elders with young people has been poignantly stated by Carter (1992), as follows:

Human treasures may be sitting alone in a room that is within easy reach of a neighborhood school. Society has been blind in its treatment of elders while the educational system has failed in preparing young people to comprehend matters concerning human destiny. The health and cultivation of the human species may well depend on the realization by the majority that all of us are connected to one another.

A Summary of Information Obtained From Selected

Intergenerational Programs

Six selected, intergenerational programs from the United States, Philippines, & China will be discussed in this section. The six model programs included:

1. Senior Care (U.S.A.)

2. The Mental Health and Aging Series (U.S.A.)

3. The Positively Aging Program (U.S.A.)

4. The Coalition of Services of the Elderly (Philippines)

5. The Angelus Plaza Senior Mentor Community Program (U.S.A.)

6. The Nice Nanny Service (China)

An analysis of information obtained from these programs revealed that five characteristics were generally common to all intergenerational programs. They include:

1. Advocate Collaboration/Teamwork

2. Promote independence and good health

3. Reduce health costs

4. Improve interpersonal/communication skills

5. Advocate the value of love and care

Program 1: Senior Care

Senior Care, operated within the University of Missouri Sinclair School of Nursing (MUSSON), is a home care center that specialized in care of seniors in poor health. From nursing school and other studies across the university, approximately 300 students have been using this facility as a clinical or service-learning site. The program provides a home-based, living community center for the elderly. The goal for the program is to provide an innovative, service-oriented and fiscally sound home care model that serves as a clinical, service-learning and research site for the university and community. In this model, care is designed to provide seniors the services that promote independence and health, reduce the need of nursing homes and increase the percentage of seniors remaining at home. The program has provided an alternative to traditional institutional placement for long-term care. This model program has increased life satisfaction for the elderly and minimized health care costs (Marek et al, 2004).

Program 2: The Mental Health and Aging Series

A team of gerontology and instructional design specialists in Oregon developed the Mental Health and Aging Series, which consists of three comprehensive multimedia community education workshop packages. Each program is focused on a specific mental health concern in later life:

a. Loss and grief -- " The Second Story"

b. Depression and suicide --"The Final Course"

c. Alcohol abuse --" Winter Comforts"

The program specialists believed that whether seniors need a nursing home placement or not depended largely on the status of their mental health. If a senior lives in a state of depression, alcohol abuse or prolonged grief, their physical health will be jeopardized significantly. Thus the major goal of each program is to provide education essential for recognizing when a senior may have a mental problem and need for help. Specifically, each program is designed to help a family member, friend, or practitioner to accomplish the following objectives:

    a. Understand the reasons for a specific mental health problem that can develop in later life.

    b. Recognize the symptoms of a specific mental health problem.

    c. Acknowledge and confront personal attitudes, fears, and beliefs.

    d. Take appropriate actions, such as, seeking professional help, focusing on ways to deal with denial, resistance to help as well as providing communication and skill building activities.

    e. Identify and access community resources. Participants learn about the types of resources available and how to access them.

    f. Develop interactive educational training programs that can be used by persons with limited background.

Each of the three programs can be used individually or as a three-part community education-training program. Evaluation data provided by the three community education programs indicated that these programs were highly effective in improving knowledge and advising people to take proper actions when an older person showed signs of grieving, depression or alcohol abuse.

The Mental Health and Aging Series program had received three following awards: Award for Exemplary Contribution to Healthy Aging from the U.S. Public Service Office of Disease and Health Promotion and the American Association of Retired Persons; Impact 2000 Award for Exemplary Programs in Family and Economic Well-Being by the U.S. Department of Agriculture; and Honorable Mention for Winter Comforts by the American Journal of Nursing (Schmall & Pratt, 1993).

Program 3: The Positively Aging Program

The Positively Aging Program, operated from the Aging Research and Education Center at the University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio, Texas, publishes classroom-ready instructional teaching materials created by middle school educators, to teach sixth through eighth grade students about geriatrics and gerontology. The purpose of this program was to determine whether use of the Positively Aging teaching materials by regular classroom teachers could positively change middle school students' images of seniors. The long-term goals were first, to help students learn to make critical, life-determining decisions for extending and enhancing their own lives; second, to help students understand and appreciate the needs and concerns of the aging population (Lichtenstein et al, 2001).

Program 4: The Coalition of Services of the Elderly

The Coalition of Services of the Elderly has established 35 community–based programs for the elderly in Manila, and other major areas of the Philippines – mainly in urban, poor areas. Under the auspices of this organization, physically healthier elders in

the community who might have little formal education were trained by the younger generation as community gerontologists. The goal was to educate the elderly and make possible to "care for the elderly – by the elderly" (Camagay, 1997).

Program 5: The Angelus Plaza Senior Mentor Community Program -- seniors as mentors

Angelus Plaza, a Retirement Housing Foundation in Los Angeles, California, provides services for 1,262 low-income seniors and people with disabilities. The Angelus Plaza Senior Mentor and Community Program was one of more than 200 programs hosted by Angelus Plaza's Senior Activity Center, which serves the Angelus Plaza community. The program, the result of a collaborative effort with the Los Angeles Unified School District, paired seniors with at-risk youth, helping the students to complete their high school education in a safe, secure, nurturing environment (Nursing Homes, 1999).

Program 6: The Nice Nanny Service

The Nice Nanny Service in Dalian, China filled a growing generation gap with trained professionals. The Nice Nanny service allows retired teachers, laid-off workers and college students to make home-visits to elderly family members for an hourly fee paid by their children (Fang, 2000).

Summary

The literature summarized in Chapter 2 supported the following research themes:

1. Fundamental problems faced by China's aging population include: Lack of effective pension programs; limited ability of seniors to support themselves; absence of old age insurance to offset traditional support received from children; and inability of government to subsidize long-term social welfare needs of senior citizens.

2. Educating the young, nationwide health program, community-based network and improved intergenerational connections can help to overcome stereotypes and negative attitudes about aging.

3. Research and literature reviewed related to seniors in various cultural settings revealed a globally increased attention on aging; and the information obtained from selected programs proved that various ways and ideas were available and effective in helping the elderly. The most important aspects were as follows: First, attitude was the base for understanding and appreciating aging. The attitude of appreciating seniors should become an important social virtue and standard. Second, education must help build build the road toward the construction of the attitude. Third, school and community hand-in-hand created a supportive social network environment. Finally, the construction of different kinds of volunteer services and intergenerational programs in the community actualized the goal.

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURES OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of the project was to design and develop a model program to maximize the connection between youth and seniors by building a strong community and school network resulting in support for seniors in China. An expected outcome is that Chinese youth would develop an in-depth understanding and appreciation of aging by building a communal and mutually beneficial social network.

Chapter 3 contains background information describing:

1. Need for the project

2. Development of support for the project

3. Procedures

4. Planned implementation and assessment of the project

Need for the Project

The need for the project was influenced by the following considerations:

1. The writer (Ying Lin) has observed that more and more Chinese seniors live alone and struggle to survive old age by themselves. They are in need of both psychological and physical help during the later years of their life.

28

2. The writer, as a granddaughter of an eighty-eight-year old man who had lived by himself in the small mountain temple for twenty years, personally observed the challenge faced by the elderly and believed strongly in the need to improve the quality of living for Chinese elderly. For example, the grandfather was seriously ill for one year before he died. He had more than twenty relatives throughout China and the world, however, the writer was the only one who had found time and stayed with him for ten days two weeks before he left the world in 1994. The writer's two other grandparents lived alone with no children around when they passed away. The research shows that this is not an isolated case but can be generalized throughout China and the conditions of the elderly in China are not getting better.

3. The writer was provided an opportunity to conduct an intergenerational cross-cultural project at the Ellensburg Senior Center required by the Academic Service Learning class. By talking to the seniors and doing workshops for the seniors there, the writer feels even more strongly the need to help seniors (See Appendix for detail of the project). Also, from visiting and conducting service at the senior center, the writer has learned additional information on how to help seniors.

4. The writer believes strategies are needed to educate society as a whole especially the younger Chinese generation to build a supportive social network to care and express love to the elderly. This means creating a morally supportive atmosphere where people care and love the elderly in need, so that becoming healthier at old age might be an attainable goal. Therefore, long-term intergenerational programs

are needed not only for the purpose of respecting the elderly but will also let the virtue of valuing senior citizens become a need of life for the younger generation.

5. Undertaking this project also coincided with the writer's graduate studies at Central Washington University.

Development of Support for the Project

The writer has for years observed how many lonely Chinese elderly have struggled out the later years of their lives. The writer still remembers the year 1994, when she went back to Lin-Yang temple on the BeiFeng Mountain to take care of her grandfather who was dying. On the way to the temple, she watched the Chinese senior peasants standing in the cold watery field planting winter-rice. None of them were young. Later the writer was told that all the younger ones went to the cities to find better jobs and left their older parents at home. These seniors had to make a living by themselves. As the granddaughter of three elder grandparents, the writer felt deep regret and pain that more help was not available to them. When the writer became mature and ready to do something, the grandparents had all left the world. The younger generation can do a lot more to make their older loved ones live a better life. They should look upon them as their young children. Why not?   The present generation is the child of his/her now elderly parents. The writer wants to do something for the elderly Chinese in the memorial of the love received from the deceased grandparents, also for a better future of the later generation. From the research and personal experience the writer has learned that important changes in human behavior are not produced overnight. There will be many projects like this needed to have a profound influence upon the younger generation.

Changes in ways of thinking and attitudes must develop over time. This single project will act like "water dripping upon a stone" wearing away in time. In a minute or a day or a year there is no considerable change in the stone, however, over a period of years, water will finally go through the stone (Tyler, 1949). Many cultural changes occur slowly and the project can be looked upon as a first step in China.

The above thoughts combined to motivate the writer to compile in one comprehensive model, a program of selected strategies that could be implemented by teachers to provide a support system for seniors in China.

Procedures

To obtain background information essential for designing and developing a model program to maximize the influence of the project, an Educational Resources Information Center search was conducted. Information related to enhancing the life of seniors was obtained via worldwide web access to public libraries' database. Current information from journals, magazines, and books were obtained through library and Internet. Additionally, the Ellensburg Senior Center provided essential information regarding effective programs for seniors.

Planned Implementation and Assessment of the Project

Implementation of the model intergenerational program in selected school districts in Beijing has been tentatively scheduled for summer, 2005. Following implementation of the model program, the primary mission of the school-community would focus mainly on educating and training teachers and community members to realize the needs and the goals of the program. Annual assessment of the project will be governed by clearly outlined checklists, which will include surveys of student attitudes the attitudes before and after the program, and interviewing seniors or their family members to obtain feedback. Assessment data obtained will be used to subsequently modify and improve the program.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROJECT

The model intergenerational program for improving the quality of life for aging Chinese, which was the subject of this project, has been presented on the following pages in seven parts, including:

Part 1 --- Mission and goals

Part 2 --- Program organizational structure

Part 3 --- Program education and training

Part 4 --- Need matching

Part 5 --- Recruitment

Part 6 --- Intergenerational activities

Part 7 --- Program assessment

PART 1

MISSION AND GOALS

Mission and Goals for Students:

To increase the understanding about aging, and the appreciation of aging people. To nurture the attitude that it is honorable to help people in need, especially the elderly by increasing individual responsibility to both family and society.

Mission and Goals for the Elderly:

To increase the satisfaction and enjoyment of life by providing help to the students while receiving love, care and respect in return.
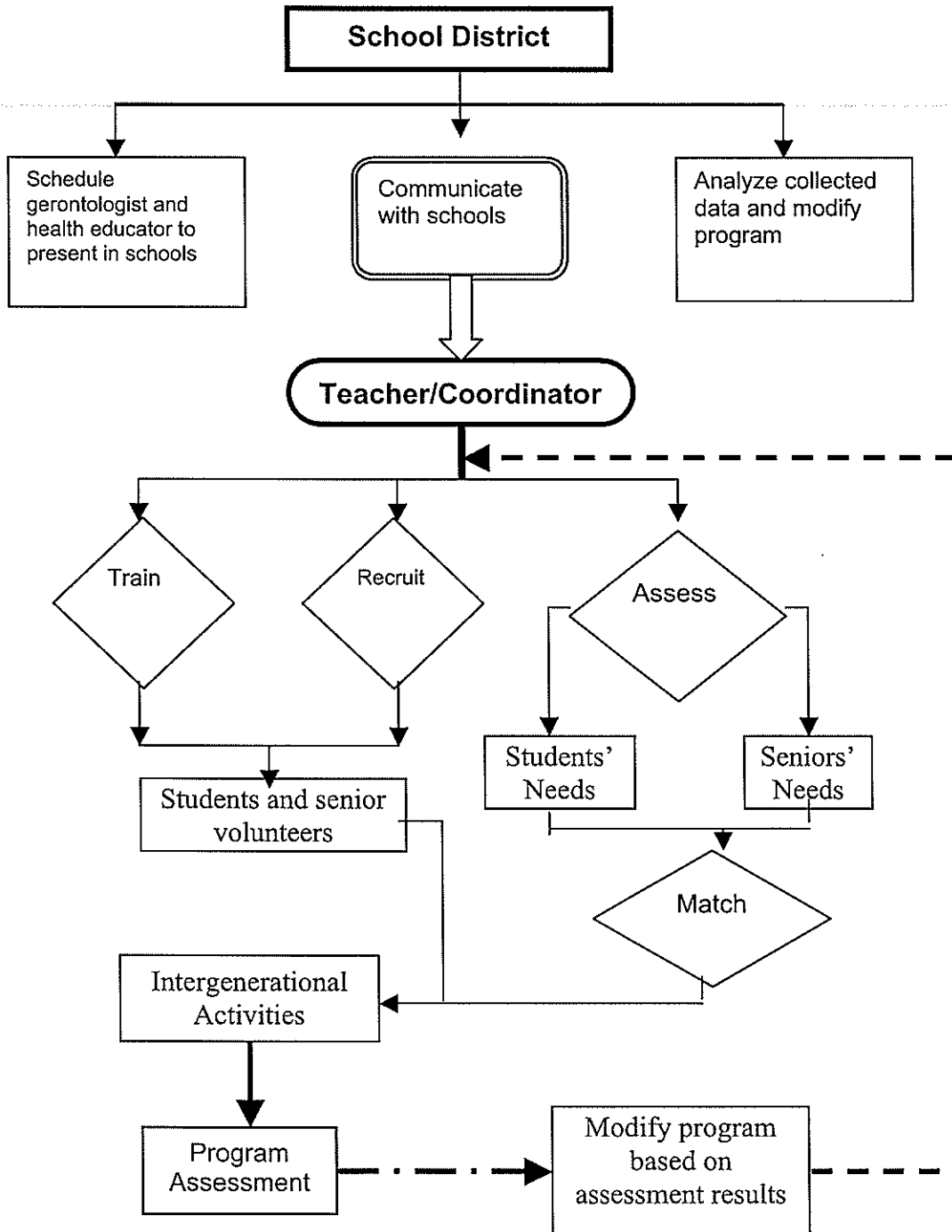
Mission and Goals for Schools and Society:

Create a community and school social network for the youth and the elderly, minimize stereotypes and create mutual understanding. Cultivate today's students, who will be tomorrow's citizens, to respect, help and care for the elderly. Motivate and educate the whole society to help and care for the elderly and assist the family and society with a support system.

Generally, the most important element for students and the seniors is to interact with each other in a positive manner. In the process of helping each other, each party learns to respect and appreciate the other. The changing of values and thinking patterns in the participant's mind is the most rewarding part of this program. All other benefits and outcomes are secondary.

PART 2

PROGRAM ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

School District

Schedule gerontologist and health educator to present in schools

Communicate with schools

Analyze collected data and modify program

Teacher/Coordinator

Train

Recruit

Assess

Students and senior volunteers

Students' Needs

Seniors' Needs

Match

Intergenerational Activities

Program Assessment

Modify program based on assessment results

PART 3

PROGRAM EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Table of Contents

Overview

It is essential to train both students and elderly volunteers to create and implement a successful intergenerational program. On one hand, the elderly will need to know the parameters of their role, the procedures and school policies regarding the program. On the other, the students need to understand not only the role of the seniors but also their own roles and responsibilities in the program. Such as, they need to know if they are allowed to accept gifts or treats from seniors at their houses. Both the students and the elderly need to be trained on conflict resolution skills. Orientation and training may include sensitizing youth, seniors, and staff to age-related issues, to effectively help staff and participants work together. The object is to prepare all participants for intergenerational network.

General Training and Orientation

Orientation and training workshops enhance the participants' effectiveness for the intergenerational program. This should include both formal and informal meetings and workshops that help the participants to:

- Understand the goals and objectives of the program,

- Become confident of their roles and responsibilities,

- Gain an increased awareness of the value of helping each other by linking the generations,

- Develop interpersonal skills necessary to work effectively in an intergenerational program

- Understand the systems with which the program is being developed,

- Establish and strengthen positive and healthy relationships.

Students Training and Orientation

The program will be discussed with the students before the elderly volunteers come to the school. The purpose of the program should be clearly explained and accepted by each participating student; then, a positive and lively program atmosphere should be inspired and cultivated for the students in the school. Students will be encouraged to express their concerns and discuss questions and topics related to the elderly, in the school and reward them for providing new ideas for the program.

The following is a list of pre-training activities for all students to help promote aging awareness before the intergenerational interactions begin. Modifications may be necessary to make the activities relevant to a particular age group.

- Have the students discuss their own past and present experiences with their grandparents and with other elderly neighbors or friends. What do they like to do together? What have they learned from them?

- Have students draw themselves as an "old" person. Have them estimate the age of their drawing. Let students write a story of what it would be like to be old: What will they be doing, with whom, where and how does it feel? Share their stories in the class and discuss commonalities, and differences in their stories.

- As an entire class, fill in the responses for the following phrases: "I will be old when...." Also, brainstorm words for "Young means...." And "Old means...", and compare the similarities and differences of the two lists.

- Have students bring in several photographs of themselves from infancy to their present age. Discuss the physical changes they observe. Also, have the teacher share his or her own picture history and examine the continual natural physical aging process.

- Have students brainstorm the interview questions they would like to ask a senior about his or her life both past and present.

- Have students experience a sensory loss (sight, taste, smell, hearing, touch). This activity can help the participants understand more about what some seniors experience daily.

- Have students watch some documentary sample programs from other countries. The viewers will have a chance to see what it will be like when elderly volunteers come to their classrooms.

- Discuss with students how they see seniors portrayed and stereotyped on television. They can make a collection of magazine advertisements, which show older persons in their true and false images.

- Have students participate using a wheelchair, cane, and crutches.

- Study and compare the changes of the attitudes of seniors in the past and present, within China and abroad.

- Appreciate the value that respecting and helping seniors is needed to fulfill their own lives.

Training the Elderly Volunteers

Plan and develop workshop sessions for the seniors at the schools where the elderly will be working to help the seniors become familiar with and actively involved in their new social positions. These training sessions will provide an introduction to and knowledge about school policies, teaching materials, and the background of the students and staff. The initial training session should include:

- A tour of the school and the areas where the seniors will be working.

- Introductions of staff and administrators.

- Opportunities to look at the various materials being used.

- Becoming familiar with school policy and procedures.

- Asking questions and receiving answers.

The training session should be informal enough so that the seniors are comfortable and feel good about his or her role in the intergeneration program. Ask some students to join the workshops sharing common feelings and concerns with the seniors. Allow plenty of time for questions and provide an informal gathering for seniors to have the opportunity to get to know each other and students. Above all, both the students and the schools should show gratitude for the seniors' participation and contribution to the younger generation at school.

PART 4

NEED MATCHING

Table of Contents

Needs Assessment

The first step in the consideration of implementing an intergenerational program is to assess the needs of both the students and the seniors in the community that are not being fulfilled. The needs of the students could range from one-on-one time to help with bulletin boards, implementing a computer center, or reading with a small group of students. Seniors needs might include help with gardening, shopping, housework, and other errands that are difficult to do by themselves. To help gain a better understanding both of the needs for students and the elderly the following Needs Assessment Forms should be filled out to clarify the purpose for beginning an intergenerational program.

Needs assessment form for students

1. Describe the needs for considering a volunteer intergenerational program.

2. List three needs that could be fulfilled through bringing seniors into your classroom or school.

3. What is the overall goal? What will the program accomplish once it has been implemented?

4. What are the major outcomes you expect?

5. Who will benefit from the implementation of an intergenerational program?

6. How will each group/individual benefit?

7. What roles and responsibilities of the students will be? When? List below.

Person				
Roles				
Program				
Start &End date				
Available time				

8. Number of Volunteer seniors_____

   Number of students_____, Grade level_____

   Activities involved_____

   _____

   _____

Needs assessment form for the seniors in the community

1. Describe the needs for considering a volunteer intergenerational program.

2. List three needs that could be fulfilled by bringing students to the home of seniors.

3. What will the program accomplish once it has been implemented?

4. What are the major outcomes you expect?

5. Who will benefit from the implementation of an intergenerational program?

6. How will each group/individual benefit?

7. What roles and responsibilities for seniors in the school and community will be?
   When? List below.

Person				
Roles				
Program				
Start &End date				
Available time				

8. Number of Volunteer students_____ Grade level_____

   Number of seniors_____

   Activities involved_____

   _____

   _____

Job Description and Requirement

In order for an intergenerational program to be successful, each person involved needs to have a clear picture and description of what his or her role is and the skills needed to fulfill that role.

List the jobs of the volunteers and the skills/interests they will need to accomplish the job successfully.

Role/Job	Skill/Interest
Description of the program requirement	Responsibilities of the volunteer
Time commitment or schedule	Contact person and phone number

The Use of Information Technology

The input of the needs assessment data from both the seniors and the students can be used to create a detailed database system. It might be tedious to input all the information into the database system; however it would be very rewarding if the program lasts. By using appropriate software, data can be compared, evaluated, and easily modified in the future.

Need matching

By making effective use of the computer software teachers can easily perform need matching and other calculations regarding the information about seniors and students in the database.

PART 5

RECRUITMENT

Table of Contents

Contents   Page

Overview

To ensure success in an intergenerational program one needs to recruit volunteers that enjoy working with seniors and youth, and enjoy sharing and helping others. The recruitment methods include radio, television, posting advertisements on local bulletin boards, and etc. Surveying the community and through word of mouth for inspirational volunteers are sometimes better recruitment methods especially in a small community. It is easy and effective to recruit older volunteers through word of mouth. The following is a list of places to contact senior volunteers.

- Relatives of school and staff

- Civic clubs, for example, Adult Reading and Painting club, TaiQi Club, Adult Tea club, and etc.

- Senior centers

- Senior house (apartment)

- Chinese Association of Retired Persons

- Community centers

- Retired Senior Volunteer Programs

- Senior organizations

- Libraries

The key for finding good volunteers is to continually ask people in the community. Once the word is spread, recruitment will come easy.

Senior Volunteer Personal Profile and Availability

Personal information:

Name_____ Sex_____ Date of Birth_____ Phone _____

Address _____

City_____ State _____ Zip_____ Education: _____

Employment: _____

Occupation held and number of years:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Skills you would like to share with a youth(s):

_____

_____

Interests

What are your interests and hobbies? How do you enjoy spending your time?

_____

Areas of Interest (Please check)

_____ Arts/music/theatre

_____ Computers

_____ Counseling

_____ Mathematics

_____ Manual skills (Car repair, carpentry, crafts)

_____ Teaching---What would you like to teach_____

_____ Business

_____ Cooking

_____ English language

_____ Science

_____ Sports

_____ Travel

_____ Other special training or skills you could share ---please

list_____

Availability

(Please check possible times you are able to volunteer. The volunteer time would be one to two hour blocks of time in the morning or the afternoon).

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

Which level of students would you prefer to work with? (Please check)

_____ Primary grades 1-2-3, _____ Intermediate grades 4-5-6

Student Volunteer interest profile and availability

Personal information:

Name_____ Sex_____ Date of Birth_____ Phone_____

Address_____ School_____ Grade_____ Class_____

Skills you would like to use to help with a senior(s):

_____

_____

Interests

What are your interests and hobbies? How do you enjoy spending your time?

_____

_____

Areas of Interest (Please check)

_____   Arts/music/theatre

_____   Computers

_____   Gardening

_____   Nursing

_____   Manual skills (Car repair, carpentry, crafts)

_____   Tutoring --- What would you like to tutor? _____

_____   Housework

_____ Cooking

_____ Shopping

_____ Sports

_____ Travel

_____ Conversation

_____ Other special skills you could use to help the seniors ---please list

_____

Availability

(Please check possible times you are able to volunteer. The volunteer time would

be one to two hour blocks of time in the morning or the afternoon).

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

Screening

It is very convenient to utilize the computer to build a database system. When recruitment happens, teachers only need to update the database system based on what they got from the recruitment profiles, and make the screening and matching based on the changes they made. However, it is rarely safe if one only relies on the computer to do the job. Every individual is different; thus it is important to interview both sides of the party to gather additional information to make a good match. Also, assessments should be made during the process of each activity, along with modifications to adjust any mismatches.

PART 6

INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Table of Contents

<u>Contents</u>   <u>Page</u>

Overview

Intergenerational activities can be developed around a wide range of topics and subject areas. It is strongly recommended that any activity should strive for a long-term commitment so as to really make a difference for both the seniors and the students in need. The following are a group of sampling activities, some might fit in any grade, however, the other might be only suitable for a specific grade; a teacher needs to choose a proper activity based on their students' actual capability and maturity. Each activity can be adapted and changed to meet the needs of a special group.

ACTIVITIES AIMED AT HELPING STUDENTS

1. <u>Guest Speakers</u>: Older adults have a wealth of information about life experiences and the world, which could be valuable lessons for students to learn.

2. <u>Tutors</u>: Older adults who can give a few hours each week to assist with math, reading, counseling and etc.

3. <u>Arts</u>: Once a month have a retired artist come in to help a few students prepare the monthly bulletin boards, and teach talented music students.

4. <u>Special workshops</u>: Invite retired specialists to make special lectures regularly, such as, current science, math and health related topics.

ACTIVITIES AIMED AT HELPING SENIORS

1. Tutors: Students can offer the seniors individual or group assistance on how to use the computer, send email, search on the web to obtain new technology on health care and etc.

2. Senior Training: Organize workshops and invite specialists to make brief presentations with the help of teachers to provide health promotion, and adult daycare skills for the healthy seniors and have them ready to provide help and care for the other more fragile seniors at home.

3. Regular Home Visiting: Students can work individually or in a group; visit seniors weekly at their home and help with

   a. Housecleaning

   b. Yard work,

   c. Running errands

   d. Reading

   e. Conversation/Consolation

   More information about the needs of the seniors might be gathered and some other helping services and activities might be created as a result of home visiting.

4. Special-Day Home Visiting: Some of the seniors might live alone; students can host a birthday party for a senior, visit them at Christmas time, or celebrate Spring Festival with them.

5. <u>Shopping</u>: Help the seniors who have difficulty to do the shopping daily or weekly.

6. <u>Invite seniors to special class gathering</u>: Post a notification in the community library or public bulletin board about school's big events and when visiting the seniors at home invite them to join the meetings.

7. <u>Adopting a Grandparent</u>: After the regular home visiting, the students and the seniors involved will build strong intergenerational connections. For example the student adoption of grandparents is a long-term program and needs a long-term commitment and responsibility.

PART 7

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Table of Contents

Overview

In order to make improvements and check for the success of an intergenerational program, all the participants involved must assess the program regularly. Evaluation of the program not only provides teachers, coordinators, seniors, students, and parents a chance to express their feelings and suggestions, more importantly, it provides a chance for everyone involved to see the changes and achievements they have made, and the future direction of the program would be more clearly targeted.

Seniors Evaluation Form

1. Do you believe this program is important?   Yes___ No___ Why?

    _____

2. What do you like best about the program?

    _____

    _____

3. What improvements could be made?

    _____

    _____

4. Do you look forward to participating in this program each week? Yes__ No___

    Why?

    _____

    _____

5. What contributions have you made to the students? /What help have you

    received from the students?

    _____

    _____

6. Has the experience been beneficial to you? Yes__ No__ why?

    _____

    _____

Student Evaluation Form

(Use this survey for older students, or read to younger students and record responses).

1. What have you learned from your senior volunteer/senior at home?

   _____

   _____

2. Do you look forward to spending time with your seniors? Yes ___ No ___ why?

   _____

   _____

3. What do you like best about the program?

   _____

   _____

4. Do you have special activities you like to do with your senior partners?

   _____

   _____

5. Are there any changes you would like to see made for your intergenerational time?

   _____

   _____

6. Anything you would like to share about the program?

   _____

   _____

Teacher Evaluation Form

This checklist will allow the teacher to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and to pinpoint its strengths and weaknesses to make improvements.

Related to the Program:

1. Are you accomplishing your goals? How?

2. Do you create a receptive, supportive atmosphere?

3. Do you encourage creativity?

4. Do volunteers review their progress with you?

Communication:

1. Do you listen to suggestions and ideas?

2. Do you show confidence in your volunteers?

3. Do you encourage your volunteers to participate in discussions and decision-making?

4. Do your volunteers know why their job is important?

5. Do you display a sense of humor?

6. Do you convey an attitude of respect to seniors by action instead of words?

Skills

1. Are your volunteer-seniors and volunteer-students well trained?

2. Do you take record of the new things volunteers learned and are responsible for?

3. Do volunteers find a sense of satisfaction in their work?

4. Do volunteers have the opportunity to set their own goals under your guidance?

Recognition

1. Do you give recognition for a job well done?

2. Do you show personal interest in your volunteers?

3. Do you recognize individual strengths and encourage them to make good use of it?

4. Do you bring out the best in others?

Parent Evaluation Form

1. Does your child share with you his or her intergenerational experiences?

   Yes___ No ___ What?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. What are your feelings about the intergenerational program?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. What benefits do you feel your child is receiving from the intergenerational

   program?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. Have you seen any changes in your child's attitude towards seniors?

   Yes___ No ___ What?

   _____

   _____

_____

_____

5.   Any additional suggestions or comments you would like to share?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Program Evaluation Form

With the above information, how can you improve your intergenerational program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Have you accomplished your goals? (Look back at your needs assessment and job description work sheets).

Yes ___ No ___

If not, have you shared your problems with other teachers or coordinators from other communities and schools?

Yes ___ No ___

Should anything be changed?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Have you shared your accomplishments and successes with your principal, school district colleagues? Have you begun making plans to expand your program to reach out to more seniors and students?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of the project was to design and develop a model program to maximize the connection between youth and seniors by building a strong community and school network resulting in support for seniors in China. An expected outcome is that Chinese youth would develop an in-depth understanding and appreciation of aging by building a communal and mutually beneficial social network. To accomplish this purpose, the researcher focused upon:

1. The overwhelming needs that exist among the elderly in China.

2. Ways of involving youth to assist the elderly.

The review of related literature and current research conducted for purposes of present study confirmed the writer's beliefs that:

1. The needs of the elderly can be fulfilled with the help of students. However, students needed to build a greater awareness of the aging process so as to really reach the point to appreciate and help the elderly.

2. Understanding and appreciation of aging should be regarded as an important social virtue and standard.

3. Daily interaction of students with seniors in the intergenerational activities could minimize stereotypes and generate positive attitudes towards seniors.

4. School and community should work together to create a supportive social network. A more focused and clear direction would be built by the constructive combination of the school and community.

After completing a review of the literature, this writer realized that there are many intergenerational research and projects in the United States, Philippines and some other countries. However, few of these results have been introduced to China, where the needs of the elderly are so urgent.

At this point in the study, the determination was made to develop a model intergenerational program for improving the quality of life for aging Chinese. Steps undertaken in this process included:

1. An informal needs assessment of seniors at the Ellensburg Senior Center was conducted.

2. A review of current literature was conducted to identify ideas needed for development of an intergenerational program.

3. A plan for adapting the model into the Chinese educational system was formulated.

Additionally, the researcher sought to address the following related aspects of program development:

1. Strategies for motivating students' interest in communicating with seniors by blending activities into the process.

2. Making use of the computer database system that would be created from the beginning of the project in order to secure project efficiency and accuracy in documentation, as well as searching and matching process.

3. The individual and summative assessment of each participant would be considered as a main resource for future project modification.

Conclusions

This study resulted in the completion of a model program to be implemented in almost any school district in Beijing, China. Although the model provides limited sample activities, the nature of the activities enable it to be modified and alternated by the users according to the abilities and interests of participants. In addition, because this is a prototype and flexible model, it is not necessary for all objectives and activities to be utilized. Rather, this project was developed to open a door for possibilities aimed at helping students learn to aid and appreciate the elderly by providing a structure for program planning, and developing of an intergenerational program.

Recommendations

The researcher realized that the project is focused upon a very specific population group in Chinese society. In 2002, only 30 percent of the elderly lived in the city and less than two percent of the elderly lived in Beijing (Haupt & Kane, 2002). Therefore, students who will be trained and living in the urban area will only be exposed to a small group of elderly people. This might not accurately represent the entire population of people over sixty, which was indicated at Chapter 1, under limitations of the study. One danger in concentrating upon this particular group of elderly people is that it may distort student perceptions about the elderly and their needs throughout China. Therefore when using the model program, teachers need to collect additional information to account for the above limitation. Furthermore, the scope of the students in this study are aged from 6 to 18 years old; however, some of the sample activities mentioned in the project are only suitable for more mature students. Thus, when implementing the project, teachers need to consider the maturity level of their students to adjust and create age appropriate activities for the younger ones. Finally, teachers or coordinators who are in charge of implementing the program have to keep in mind that the students will observe the attitude of the teachers towards seniors. And the attitudes of teachers become very influential to the success of the program.

This project needs to be considered as an evolving process that will take about a decade to implement. One needs ten years to grow a tree, and one hundred years to cultivate a human generation.

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