

# FACT SHEET



Because we're stronger together

## SENIORS4KIDS –Older Adult Involvement in High Quality Pre-Kindergarten Programs

\*\*\*\*\*

### INTRODUCTION

Generations rely on each other for support and assistance. When children are in need, older adults can be counted on to help. The power of this connection can be seen and felt in pre-Kindergarten (pre-K) programs. High quality pre-K programs are a necessary part of children's development and future success.



In high quality pre-K programs, children are taught developmentally appropriate skills to ensure kindergarten readiness. Developing basic readiness skills is necessary part of children's development and future success. Programs may differ by location and emphasis, but it is critical for all children

to have the opportunity to attend programs that are high quality in order to prepare them for kindergarten. Children depend on older adults to teach them, share their experiences and learn with them. Engaging seniors in the preschool setting capitalizes on this great bond between the generations.

### WHY QUALITY PRE-K IS IMPORTANT

Two influential studies on the effects of intensive, high-quality early childhood programs have demonstrated that these programs benefit children academically and socially into adulthood. Children who attend high quality programs are less likely to be held back a grade, less likely to need special education, and more likely to graduate from high school. Additionally, children who have been in pre-K programs have higher earnings as adults and are less likely to become dependent on welfare or have altercations with law enforcement.<sup>1</sup>

### WHAT CONSTITUTES A HIGH QUALITY PRE-K PROGRAM

The National Institute of Early Education and Research has established criteria for what constitutes quality in a pre-K program:

- Well educated teachers with a four-year college degree.
- Assessment of school readiness skills in social and emotional development, approaches to learning, communication, cognitive development, physical health and well-being.
- Teachers and staff with opportunities for professional growth who are supervised and evaluated and compensated adequately.
- Positive and frequent interactions between teachers and children.
- Good communication among teachers and children, which includes listening to one another and teachers encouraging children to use reasoning and problem solving.
- Daily opportunities for language and reasoning, science, math, block play, and expressive activities, such as art, drama and music.
- Focus on the whole child and family, which encourages active parent/caregiver involvement.
- Low child-staff ratios and small group sizes.
- Well-equipped facilities suited to the needs of preschool-age children, including sufficient toys, books and materials.

### WHY OLDER ADULTS SUPPORT QUALITY PRE-K

- Volunteering with children is the number one choice for older adults.<sup>2</sup>
- Volunteering engages older adults in opportunities to be productive and to be socially engaged.<sup>3</sup>
- Older adults want successful, healthy families for generations to come.<sup>4</sup>
- Older adults understand the value of intergenerational relationships.<sup>5</sup>

## PROGRAM EXAMPLES

Older adults are a growing resource to help communities with quality pre-K programs. There are currently hundreds of existing intergenerational pre-K programs nationwide. These programs unite and strengthen communities, breakdown stereotypes between the generations, promote the transmission of cultural traditions, encourage tolerance, and save money by sharing resources.

### Intergenerational Community of Mount Kisco-Mount Kisco, NY

- This intergenerational program offers experiences that increase cooperation, interaction, and exchange between adults and children.
- Intergenerational coordinator creates activities and programs to bring children and seniors together and provides cross training for all staff members.
- For more information, contact Dawn Meyerski at 914-241-2135 or visit <http://mkdcc.org>

### OLDER TEACHERS TRAINING EARLY READERS (OTTER) - ORLANDO, FL

- Older Teachers Training Early Readers (OTTER) is an intergenerational pre-K program that pairs older adult volunteers with young children to assist them in learning to read.
- OTTER, a program of the Foster Grandparent Program of Central Florida, is currently in five preschool sites and has a curriculum that matches statewide standards.
- An independent evaluation of OTTER found the program highly beneficial for both the students and the adult volunteers.
- For additional information, contact Foster Grandparent Program at 407-298-4180 or visit [www.fostergrandparentprogram.org](http://www.fostergrandparentprogram.org).

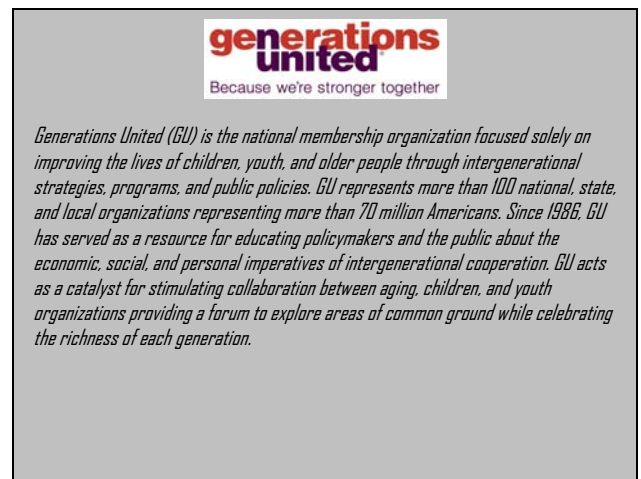
### THE MACKLIN INTERGENERATIONAL INSTITUTE – FINDLAY, OH

- Operates Marilyn's Life Long Educational Center, which offers quality childcare in an intergenerational setting including daily interactions with seniors.
- Makes use of the "Family Room Approach" that creates an interactive, home-like environment.

- For additional information, contact Dr. Vicki Rosebrook at 419-425-3043 or visit [www.macklininstitute.org](http://www.macklininstitute.org).

## INFORMATION ABOUT SENIORS4KIDS

Generations United (GU) is the leading national organization advocating for the mutual well being of children and older adults. Seniors4Kids is a civic engagement initiative that bridges the generations by raising the visibility of older adults in support of Pre-K and encourages the involvement of seniors in creating statewide networks of community leaders and grassroots volunteers with the common goal of helping children. GU has developed talking points, a fact sheet, and suggested ways for seniors to become involved that are available at [www.seniors4kids.org](http://www.seniors4kids.org).



July 2007 © Copyright, 2007, Generations United  
Reprinting permissible provided "Generations United" is credited and no profits are made.  
Generations United (GU)

1331 H Street N.W., Suite 900  
Washington, D.C. 20005-4752  
Phone: (202) 289-3979 – Fax: (202) 289-3952  
Email: [gu@gu.org](mailto:gu@gu.org) – Website: [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org)

Photo Credit: Charlotte Parot – The photograph featured in this fact sheet is from Generations United's Intergenerational Photo Contest sponsored by MetLife Foundation.

1 For a fuller discussion of recent quality studies, see National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network (NICHD). (2002). "Characteristics and Quality of Childcare Toddlers and Preschoolers." *Applied Development Science*, 4 (3):116-135; Peisner-Feinberg, E.S. Burchinal, M.R., Clifford, R.M., Culkin, M.L., Howes, C., Kagan, S. L., Yezjian, N., Byler, P., Rustici, J., & Zelazo, J. (1999). *The Children of the Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study Go to School*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center; Scarr, S., Eisenberg, M. and Deater-Deckard, K. (1994). "Measurement of Quality in Child Care Centers." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, (9) 131-151.  
2 Hart, P. *The New Face of Retirement*. 2002  
3 Carlson M. Seeman T, Fried LP. Importance of Generativity for Healthy Aging in Older Women. *Aging Clin Exp Res*. 2000; 12:132-140.  
4 Freeman, M. *Civic Ventures. America's Untapped Resources*. 2006  
5 Granville, 2001. "An Unlikely Alliance": Young Offenders Supporting Elderly People in Care Settings."