Fact Sheet: Intergenerational Shared Sites

WHAT ARE SHARED SITES?

Intergenerational shared sites are a unique type of intergenerational programs that pair younger generations with older adults in the same physical location, with periodic activities or programs that bring them together.

Intergenerational shared sites make sense, in terms of reducing social isolation, creating livable communities and positively impacting participants' lives. People of all ages have built-in opportunities to create meaningful relationships, find motivation, improve skills, and feel the joy of connection. In addition, shared sites create cost-efficiencies of sharing space, resources, personnel, rent and more.

Generations United is committed to nurturing and developing a growing body of knowledge about intergenerational shared site programs. In partnership with The Eisner Foundation, Generations United produced two reports as well as supporting documents to explore why these types of programs are not more prolific.
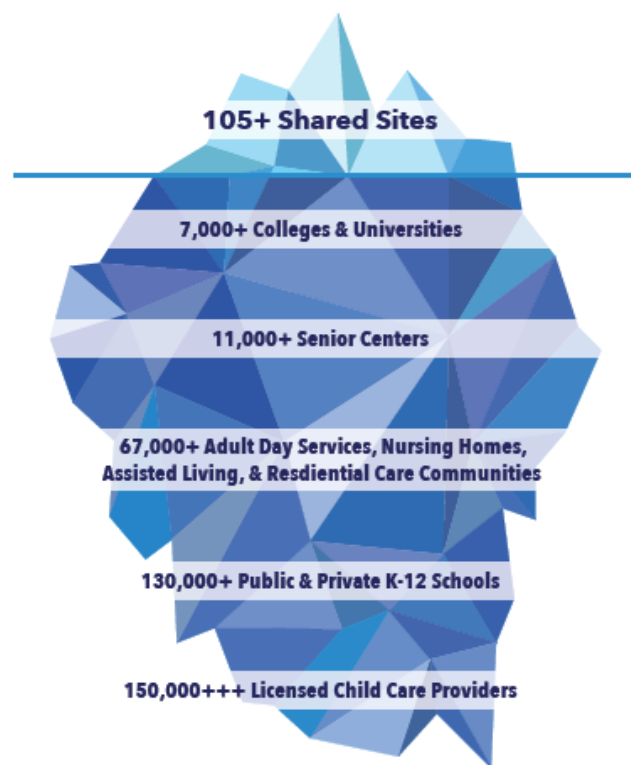
HOW MANY ARE THERE?

Generations United and The Eisner Foundation issued a report in 2018 titled **All In Together: Creating Spaces Where Young and Old Thrive**.[1] This report includes the results of a survey conducted by The Ohio State University that established a new national baseline for intergenerational shared site programs across the United States. Initially 105 programs were identified but this number grew to 110 by the end of the survey. We estimate there are over 200 intergenerational sites in the U.S. alone.

105+ Shared Sites

7,000+ Colleges & Universities

11,000+ Senior Centers

67,000+ Adult Day Services, Nursing Homes, Assisted Living, & Resdiential Care Communities

130,000+ Public & Private K-12 Schools

150,000+++ Licensed Child Care Providers

The survey also revealed a wide range of shared site models with a variety of program components and the most common challenges.

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE?

The Intergenerational Shared Site Program Components chart shows the most common children and/or youth programs and older adult programs. The majority of reported shared sites involved children under the age of 5 in child care or pre-school programs and adult day services and assisted living.[2] But there are many different configurations, including programs serving families, foster youth, veterans and adults with disabilities.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Shared site programs report a host of mutually beneficial results for participants of all ages, as well as for staff.[3] Research suggests that participation in intergenerational programs and meaningful cross-age relationships may decrease social isolation and increase older adults' sense of belonging, self-esteem and well-being,[4] while also improving social and emotional skills of children and youth participants. Financial and operational benefits were highlighted in the 2008 Generations United report, "Intergenerational Shared Sites: Saving Dollars While Making Sense,"[5] in which shared sites reported cost savings around personnel and rent expenses.

INTERGENERATIONAL SHARED SITE PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Most Common Children/Youth Programs

- Pre-school 44%
- Child Care 38%
- Youth Summer Programs 37%
- Before/After School Care 27%
- Primary/Secondary School 15%

Most Common Older Adult Programs

- Adult Day Services 42%
- Assisted Living 41%
- Nursing Homes 39%
- Independent Older Adult Housing 36%
- Senior Centers 21%

Source: Generations United/The Ohio State University 2018 Survey of Shared Site Intergenerational Programs sponsored by The Eisner Foundation and included in "All In Together: Creating Spaces Where Young and Old Thrive."
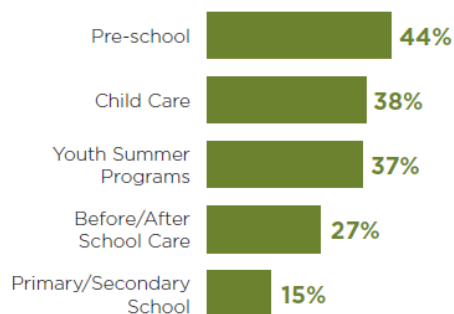
WHAT DO PEOPLE THINK OF INTERGENERATIONAL INITIATIVES?

"All In Together" also includes the results from a public opinion poll that found Americans had very positive views on intergenerational activities and relationships. Among Americans:
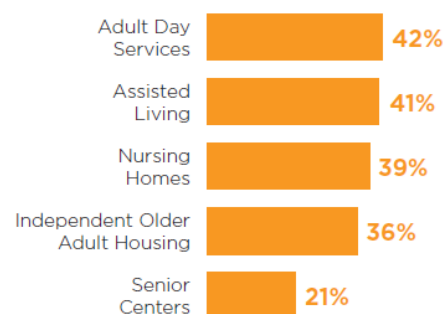
- **92%** believe intergenerational activities can help reduce loneliness across all ages,

- **94%** agree that older people have skills and talents that can help address a child's/youth's needs, and **89%** believe children and youth have talents and skills that can help address the needs of our nation's elders, and

- More than **4 in 5 Americans** say if they (**85%**) or a loved one (**86%**) needed care services, they would prefer an intergenerational setting.[6]

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

We also know that, as with any social service or community-based program, shared sites do not come without challenges. In fact, "All In Together" identifies common challenges shared sites face, including the need for evaluation tools to help to demonstrate the impact of programs, and funding and financing the development of a new shared sites or trying to sustain an existing program. Additionally, connecting with other similar programs to share intergenerational strategies and ideas, dealing with

Photo courtesy of Seagull Schools

safety concerns, managing space and building concerns, difficulty staffing programs and locating resources for training staff, and intergenerational programming ideas were also listed as common challenges.[7]

Generations United and The Eisner Foundation created a number of resources to help address these challenges including **The Intergenerational Evaluation Toolkit** and **Piecing It Together: What We Know About the Funding Puzzle for Spaces that Connect Young and Old**. A new toolkit on intergenerational shared sites will be released in early 2021.

HOW TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF SHARED SITES?

To shed more light on the factors that may be inhibiting or not encouraging the creation of more shared sites in the United States, we wanted to dig deeper into the challenges. In 2019, Generations United and The Eisner Foundation released **The Best of Both Worlds: A Closer Look At Creating Spaces that Connect Young and Old**.[8] In this report, we identify four key phases in the development and operation of shared sites where pivotal factors, challenges and strategies can be critical. This report explores these pivotal phases and shares lessons learned from intergenerational shared sites around the country and strategies to address them.

FOUR PHASES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SHARED SITES:

1 Creating the Vision
2 Making it Work
3 Building Intergenerational Relationships
4 Maintaining Momentum

SOURCE MATERIAL
The information presented in this fact sheet comes directly from the two reports develop by Generations United and The Eisner Foundation:

- **All In Together: Creating Places Where Young and Old Thrive** (2018).
- **The Best of Both Worlds: A Closer Look At Creating Spaces that Connect Young and Old** (2019)

ENDNOTES

1. The Generations United and Eisner Foundation report, "All In Together: Creating Places Where Young and Old Thrive" (2018).
2. Ibid.
3. Femia, E. E., Zarit, S. H., Blair, C., Jarrott, S. E., & Bruno, K. (2007). Impact of intergenerational programming on child outcomes. Early Childhood Research Quarterly 23, 272-287; Rosebrook, V. (2006). Research Indicates: Intergenerational Interactions Enhance Young Children's Personal/Social Skills. Generations United Together 11(2): 5; Camp, C. J., & Lee, M. M. (2011). Montessori-based activities as a transgenerational interface for persons with dementia and preschool children. Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 9, 366-373; Foster, K. (1997). Creating a child care center in a nursing home and implementing an intergenerational program. ERIC Document Reproduction Service: ED 411 053; Rosenberg, M. (1993). The design and implementation of an intergenerational program at a private long-term healthcare facility with on-site childcare. ERIC Document Reproduction Service: ED 364 351; Heyman, J. C., Gutheil, I. A., White-Ryan, L. (2011). Preschool children's attitudes toward older adults: Comparison of intergenerational and traditional day care. Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 9, 435-444; Galbraith, B., Larkin, H., Moorhouse, A., & Oomen, T. (2015). Intergenerational programs for persons with dementia: A scoping review. Journal of Gerontological Social Work, 58, 357-378; Holmes, C. L. (2009). An intergenerational program with benefits. Early Childhood Education Journal, 37, 113-119; George, D., Whitehouse, C., & Whitehouse, P. (2011). A model of generativity: How the Intergenerational School is bringing the generations together to foster collective wisdom and community health. 9, 389-404; Jarrott, S. & Bruno, K. (2007). Shared site intergenerational programs: A case study. Journal of Applied Gerontology, Vol 26, Issue 3, pp. 239 – 257; Power, M. B., Eheart, B. K., Racine, D., & Karnik, N. S. (2007). Aging well in an intentional intergenerational community. Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 5(2), 7-25; Corporation for National and Community Service. "Senior Corps & Health Benefits." https://www.nationals-ervice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/SCLongStudy.pdf; Fried, L. et al. "Experience Corps: A Dual Trial to Promote the Health of Older Adults and Children's Academic Success." Contemporary clinical trials 36.1 (2013): 1–13. PMC. Web. 9 May 2018; Doll, G., & Bolender, B. (2010). Age to age: Resident outcomes from a kindergarten classroom in the nursing home. Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 8, 327-337; Jarrott, S. & Bruno, K. (2003). Intergenerational activities involving person with dementia: An observational assessment. American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias, Vol 18, No. 1, p. 31-37; and Lewis, J. (2008). Intergenerational programs in skilled nursing facilities. Activities Directors' Quarterly for Alzheimer's & Other Dementia Patients, 7(4), 9-18.
4. Barnes, L.L., Mendes De Leon, CF, Wilson, R.S., Bienias, J., and Evans, D. (2004). "Social resources and cognitive decline in a population of older African Americans and whites." Neurology, 63, 2322-2326 and Seeman, T.E., Lusignolo, T. M., Berkman Albert, M. and Berkman, L. (2001). "Social relationships, social support, and patterns of cognitive aging in healthy, high-functioning older adults: MacArthur studies of successful aging." Health psychology, 20(4), 243.
5. Jarrott, S., Shroeder, A., and Perkins, O. with Generations United, "Intergenerational Shared Sites: Saving Dollars While Making Sense" (2008).
6. "All In Together" (2018).
7. Ibid.
8. The Generations United and Eisner Foundation report, "The Best of Both Worlds: A Closer Look At Creating Spaces that Connect Young and Old." (2019).

About Generations United: The mission of Generations United is to improve the lives of children, youth and older adults through intergenerational collaboration, public policies and programs for the enduring benefit of all. For over three decades, Generations United has catalyzed cooperation and collaboration among generations, evoking the vibrancy, energy and sheer productivity that result when people of all ages come together. We believe that we can only be successful in the face of our complex future if age diversity is regarded as a national asset and fully leveraged. To learn more about Generations United, please visit **www.gu.org.**

About The Eisner Foundation: The Eisner Foundation identifies, advocates for and invests in high-quality and innovative programs that unite multiple generations for the enrichment of our communities. The Eisner Foundation was started in 1996 by Michael D. Eisner, then Chairman and CEO of The Walt Disney Company and his wife, Jane, to focus their family's philanthropic activities. The Eisner Foundation gives an estimated $7 million per year to nonprofit organizations based in Los Angeles County. In 2015, The Eisner Foundation became the only U.S. funder investing exclusively in intergenerational solutions. To learn more about The Eisner Foundation, please visit **www.eisnerfoundation.org.**