ADVANCING THE FIELD

To teach is to learn twice.

–Joseph Joubert

Introducing Standards and Guidelines: A Rationale for Defining the Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions of Intergenerational Practice

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ABSTRACT. This article traces the history of efforts to professionalize the Intergenerational field through the development of competencies and standards for practice in different program settings and roles. The authors propose a new set of Guidelines & Standards that identify a common knowledge base to begin unifying this specialized field and to ensure effective professional practices. The new Guidelines & Standards were widely
INTRODUCTION

Recent developments in intergenerational work indicate that there is good reason to establish some defining parameters for this broad, multidisciplinary, and dynamic field. The expansion of organizations like Generations United and the International Consortium of Intergenerational Programs, as well as the launching of this new journal, suggest that it is time to unify a common vision, one that is grounded in research, for connecting younger and older generations through intergenerational programs and policies, and to determine guidelines for effective professional practice (Larkin & Rosebrook, in press). Over the past twenty years, the intergenerational field has grown to involve thousands who work as practitioners, administrators, scholars, and policy makers (Newman & Olson, 1996), and increasing numbers of colleges and universities are now offering intergenerational courses, certificates, and even degree programs.

In the last decade there have been a number of studies conducted to identify and categorize guidelines, standards or competencies that outline knowledge, skills, and dispositions to prepare individuals for successful intergenerational programming. Various approaches were utilized to collect and compile data in order to isolate the relevant competencies needed by direct service providers and program administrators. These approaches included cross-institutional dialogue and consensus building, data collection by research teams, and a review of related prior work. Each of these earlier efforts was framed for different purposes within different academic domains. They were configured in a variety of formats, and targeted different populations—from high school student volunteers to Intergenerational Specialists with graduate degrees—who would function in a range of different roles and settings.
TERMS/DEFINITIONS

A review of earlier efforts indicates that an inconsistent use of terminology might have led to some confusion within the field. There appears to be a variety of interpretations of three key terms: guidelines, standards, and competencies. Therefore, for the purpose of clarity within the context of this article, these terms are defined as follows:

**Guidelines** are the principles for determining a course of action or a policy. They outline the fundamental mission, or unifying vision, upon which standards and competencies are based.

**Standards** are goals for effective professional practice and they outline the requisite knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed in intergenerational work. Standards provide the basis for evaluating quality.

**Competencies** are the specific skills needed to perform one’s professional responsibilities effectively. They outline the objectives (criteria for measure), or means of indicating proficiency in a particular job.

Agreement on definitions, and consensus about what an Intergenerational Specialist needs to know and be able to do, makes a more compelling case for the continuation and expansion of Intergenerational Studies as an academic discipline with a defined realm of expertise (Larkin & Rosebrook, in press; Larkin & Newman, 1997). Clearly articulated guidelines, standards, and competencies also provide an infrastructure for the emerging intergenerational field that allows practitioners to work from a common philosophical framework, regardless of differences in job responsibilities or program design. The foundation is a knowledge base that grows out of years of programming successes and research on the mutual benefits to older and younger participants (Newman et al., 1997; Kuehne, 1999; Kaplan, Henkin & Kusano, 2002).

PREVIOUS WORK TO DEFINE THE FIELD

In 1992-1993, the Tech Prep Intergenerational Professions Program was developed at the Home Economics Curriculum Center at Texas Tech University in cooperation with the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Texas Department of Commerce. Their main task was to develop a competency-based curriculum that would prepare students for employment in careers involving care and service to children, elders, and dependent adults in separate or shared settings. In order to establish the curriculum, they initially identified and validated the competencies needed
for intergenerational roles which were organized into categories including ethics, policies, health and nutrition, personal care, and program planning. The group then developed an extended competency matrix as well as a career ladder of professional roles for high school and college graduates (Texas Tech, 1994).

At the University of Wisconsin-Stout, a project to identify intergenerational competencies was initiated, and the results were published (Olson, 1994; Newman & Olson, 1996). Survey data indicated that the most important competencies related specifically to intergenerational work were: (1) the ability to plan age-integrated activities that were developmentally and functionally appropriate for the participants; and (2) the ability to coordinate programs with others community agencies. Administrators also needed to communicate an intergenerational philosophy clearly to others.

In 1996-1997, Generations Together staff at the University of Pittsburgh completed a field-based study of the competencies needed by intergenerational professionals. The research team gathered data and reported on the tasks performed by administrators and direct service providers in the field. The University of Pittsburgh faculty, local human service professionals and intergenerational practitioners formulated competencies based upon these reported tasks. The study found many competencies unique to the intergenerational field, and the research team organized them into functional categories common to many human service programs such as training, supervising, evaluating, and planning (Ward & Newman, 1999). As with Olson’s survey data, the competencies focused on knowing how to plan developmentally appropriate activities and develop inter-agency partnerships, and they also identified the importance of skill in facilitating interpersonal relationships between younger and older participants.

Newman and Olson identified an increasing demand for educational programs that would raise the level of accountability for professional practice in intergenerational work. In their article “Competencies Development: Professionalizing the Intergenerational Field” (1996), they stated:

> Establishing competencies for this emerging field is an important educational initiative that can lead to the creation of standards for professionalism and success in the intergenerational field. The challenge is to develop competencies that validate intergenerational skills for professionals in intergenerational settings. (p. 91)

In higher education, other academic programs had already begun offering intergenerational course content, for example at Ryerson University in Toronto, at Oakton Community College in Illinois, and at Wheelock College in Boston. From 1991-1998 the first Intergenerational Specialists were graduated
from a Master’s degree program developed by an interdisciplinary team of faculty at Wheelock, initially designed to serve the Stride Rite Intergenerational Care Center. The 36-credit program was housed in the department of Human Development and Family Studies, and was structured around the principles of life span development, multicultural understanding, and program evaluation research. In addition to the Intergenerational Specialist courses and field experience, students could elect courses that would prepare them for leadership roles in program administration, curriculum development, or policy planning.

At the University of Pittsburgh, an Intergenerational Specialist certificate was developed approximately six years ago through the School of Social Work and Generations Together. Summer training institutes are provided, and students complete an educational component as well as service learning to earn this credential. In addition, Generations Together has funded several service learning projects across the country to increase the available academic courses and professional opportunities in the intergenerational field.

In 1996, Dr. Vicki Rosebrook at The University of Findlay conceptualized and created a course of study for an Associate degree in Early Childhood Education/Intergenerational Studies with funding from the United States Department of Education’s Funds for Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE). The Associate degree prepared individuals to work simultaneously with young people and senior adults. Building on the success of the Associate’s program, Dr. Rosebrook developed a Master’s degree program in 2000. This graduate program was originally offered through the College of Education; however, in January of 2002 it was transferred to the College of Liberal Arts. Because the types of programs and role responsibilities that students might pursue can differ so widely, the Master of Liberal Studies/Intergenerational Studies is designed to include learners from varied undergraduate backgrounds, and to serve a broad range of career options under a framework of clear philosophical tenets, rather than to categorize and teach generic skills or specific activities appropriate to the care and education of children and older adults.

The Guidelines & Standards for Intergenerational Practice were developed by Larkin and Rosebrook (2000) for the Master’s program to guide students as they prepare to work as Intergenerational Specialists in direct service roles, administrative capacities, or the supervision and training of others in the field. The Guidelines & Standards provide a framework of goals and expectations for student learning in the program, while allowing individuals latitude to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and dispositions in their own ways. Students compile professional portfolios to document their understanding of the fundamental principles of intergenerational practice, and to demonstrate how these were applied to specific program models including the on-site facility and other initiatives of their own design.
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

While prior work attempted to define a knowledge base and to identify skills for intergenerational work, a comprehensive conceptual framework—representing the principles (guidelines), goals (standards), and objectives (competencies)—has eluded the emerging field of Intergenerational Studies. Consequently, Rosebrook and Larkin drew upon previous research and standards models from other academic domains, such as education and social work, to identify six standards that apply specifically to intergenerational practice, and then listed several sample key indicators (learning outcomes) within each broad principle (see Figure 1). The Guidelines & Standards for Intergenerational Practice outline the common core of knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by Intergenerational Specialists working in any role or program setting.

The format of sample key indicators under broad standards follows the model used by the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) in their Standards for Teacher Educators (2000). The list of indicators provided here for intergenerational practice is by no means exhaustive of ways to demonstrate proficiency, and they should be revised and updated regularly as they are applied in different contexts. The sources of evidence can range from course assignments to research projects, videotape analyses, grant proposals, conference presentations, reflective writing about practical experiences with applications of theory, and the like. The evidence that is used to demonstrate proficiency must be convincing, so that the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of the Intergenerational Specialist are clearly articulated in each general category.

These proposed Guidelines & Standards are framed as desired learning outcomes rather than suggested course content and practical experiences so that they can be useful in a variety of contexts. Focusing on the outcomes of preparation recognizes and values that there are multiple routes to achieving the overall goals (NAEYC, 1996). The Guidelines & Standards for Intergenerational Practice do not promote any single route to acquiring the knowledge, skills, and dispositions specific to this specialization, nor to obtaining a particular job or credential that leads down a single career path. A professional preparation program that includes the Guidelines & Standards will provide the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by students to work simultaneously with individuals at many points along the age spectrum, and opens the doors for a variety of professional opportunities. The Guidelines & Standards could also be used as a framework for organizing professional development opportunities to increase staff expertise in working with intergenerational groups.
Standard I:
The Intergenerational Specialist draws upon knowledge of human development across the life span to plan and implement effective programs that bring young people and older adults together for mutual benefit.

Sample key indicators:
1.1 Identifies the ways in which young people and older adults have similar developmental needs, and plans programming to serve both populations simultaneously for their mutual benefit.
1.2 Uses an understanding of how people learn at different developmental stages to plan intergenerational activities using a multi-sensory and interactive approach that can accommodate different styles.
1.3 Plans intergenerational programming that stimulates the brain through appropriate physical exercise, social interaction, and cognitive challenges.
1.4 Recognizes the need for all age groups to feel included, cared about, and safe.
1.5 Understands the significance of such domains as friendship, play, self-esteem, autonomy, loss, and grief at various stages across the life course.
1.6 Recognizes signs of typical medical problems that might occur with younger and older populations, and can make appropriate referrals.
1.7 Designs appropriate environments that accommodate different physical needs and activity interests for participants of all ages and abilities.

Standard II:
The Intergenerational Specialist recognizes the need for and employs effective communication to support the development of intergenerational relationships.

Sample key indicators:
2.1 Understands the developmental differences and capabilities of young people and older adults in terms of their social, linguistic, cultural, emotional, spiritual, and physical expressions.
2.2 Creates an environment that promotes intergenerational interaction and minimizes barriers caused by physical disabilities, or differences in cultural background and life experience.
2.3 Uses appropriate language to encourage informal and planned interactions among participants of different ages.
2.4 Communicates positive interest in every program participant regardless of age or level of engagement.
2.5 Acts in a compassionate, sensitive manner in response to the unique perspectives of all individuals including participants, colleagues and participants’ families.
Standard III:
The Intergenerational Specialist understands and demonstrates a commitment to collaboration and partnership.

Sample key indicators:

3.1 Recognizes the benefits of sharing expertise across institutional boundaries and professional training.
3.2 Advocates the benefits of intergenerational programs and educates others about their value.
3.3 Develops joint missions, schedules, and budgets that support the respective organizational goals, and that also reflect an equitable use of resources for all the partners working in collaboration.
3.4 Organizes cross-training opportunities for staff to learn from each other a range of effective strategies for managing troubling behaviors among older and younger participants.
3.5 Embraces technological innovation to facilitate and manage inter-agency communication and collaboration.
3.6 Maintains high ethical standards and respectful, collegial relationships with other professionals.

Standard IV:
The Intergenerational Specialist integrates knowledge from a variety of relevant fields including psychology, sociology, history, literature, and the arts to develop programs.

Sample key indicators:

4.1 Demonstrates knowledge of the historical, cultural, and social foundations of intergenerational programming and policies.
4.2 Recognizes how the historical, cultural, and social context of each generation shapes the values and perspectives of younger and older participants in the program differently, allowing for an exchange of viewpoints.
4.3 Applies relevant subject area knowledge from various academic disciplines in developing effective intergenerational activities.
4.4 Explores traditional and newly developed methods to address intergenerational problems at the community, national, and international levels.
4.5 Crafts goals for intergenerational programs that reflect an interdisciplinary perspective on what each generation has to contribute to others.
4.6 Uses developmentally appropriate materials and technologies to provide activities that promote beneficial intergenerational interactions.
4.7 Is familiar with government policies and regulations pertaining to the health and safety of younger and older participants.
FIGURE 1 (continued)

Standard V:
The Intergenerational Specialist employs appropriate evaluation techniques adapted from the fields of education and social sciences to inform program development for diverse age groups and settings.

Sample key indicators:
5.1 Is familiar with and applies multiple strategies for assessing program outcomes.
5.2 Is aware of the community context in which programs function so that intergenerational goals and outcomes are aligned with the broad social policies and available resources.
5.3 Coordinates an exchange of information about data collection and analysis across partnering agencies that will contribute to mutual improvements.
5.4 Includes participants, their families, and staff in the planning and evaluation process.
5.5 Uses an interdisciplinary approach to interpreting current research and theory to inform intergenerational practice.
5.6 Conducts action research and disseminates key findings that will inform the intergenerational field.

Standard VI:
The Intergenerational Specialist is a reflective, caring professional whose purpose is to bring young people and older adults together for their mutual benefit.

Sample key indicators:
6.1 Facilitates matching young people and older adults who can be compatible and can enjoy building a relationship based on shared interests, needs, or goals.
6.2 Models an effective interactive style with all age groups.
6.3 Engages regularly in self-reflection to continue growing as an intergenerational professional.
6.4 Invites external feedback from colleagues in the intergenerational field to promote critical thinking and problem solving.
6.5 Mentors new professionals entering the field of Intergenerational Studies.
6.6 Promotes productive communication among diverse groups, and helps to interpret this field’s importance for the general public.
6.7 Contributes to the profession by participating in conferences, conducting research, writing for publication, or networking with others locally, nationally and internationally.
RESPONSE FROM THE FIELD

The proposed *Guidelines & Standards* have been disseminated among key researchers, policy makers, and practitioners through Generations United (GU), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the International Consortium for Intergenerational Programmes (ICIP), and the Fund for Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) for comments and revisions. The University of Findlay graduate students are now piloting their use as well. This process of review and application has led to some significant changes in the document over time. Although the overall consensus has been positive, it has been important to hear suggestions coming from a range of different perspectives because this field is so diverse and broad.

First, there were comments about wording and terminology, such as how to refer to the age group populations we are targeting. Wanting to remain as inclusive as possible and yet maintain the notion of skipped generations, we decided on “young people and older adults.” We also attempted to eliminate academic jargon and discipline-specific terms whenever possible; however, some language may still sound overly formal. One reason for this is that at the ICIP conference it became clear that the demand for “measurable outcomes” was coming from funders, policy makers and academia alike, not only in the United States, but also in other international communities.

Next, we added some key indicators based on feedback from intergenerational experts, practitioners, and students. Data from one graduate student’s project at Findlay were helpful in thinking about the importance of the environment:

> I also think that not only the education and commitment must be there, but that the setting, or environment, is established and that the professionals who work with both young and old people be held accountable. (Haley, 2001)

We decided to leave in some indicators that might not apply to all settings, because the indicators are to be used flexibly as guidelines rather than a prescriptive list of required documentation. We took to heart the caution stated by another participant in Haley’s study: “. . . be careful not to get too complex and create gray areas . . .” as well as the comment, “When I first read the Standards of Intergenerational Practice, I was overwhelmed by the perfectionism manifested . . .”, and thus have sought to keep the *Guidelines & Standards* and sample indicators as straightforward as possible.
Finally, we numbered the key indicators under each Standard so that course syllabi in the Master’s program at The University of Findlay could show how assignments correspond to developing a professional portfolio. Numbering makes it easier for students to refer to different indicators in the documentation process.

CONCLUSIONS

Growing demands for qualified intergenerational practitioners, trainers, and researchers suggest, even mandate, a method to provide consistent, high quality professional preparation. Appropriate, systematic preparation for all service providers and administrators increases the probability of achieving quality programs (Newman, 1985). The Guidelines & Standards for Intergenerational Practice make it clear that the Intergenerational Specialist must do more than simply provide age-appropriate activities. Intergenerational Specialists must be advocates for their clientele both within programs and in the larger society, and also they must demonstrate a full-range of professional understanding and managerial skill in working with different age groups. Effective job performance, program design, and leadership capabilities in the intergenerational field require specific knowledge of the unique elements that contribute to successfully connecting diverse age groups for mutual benefits. Intergenerational programs have the potential for producing positive effects on children and older adults, but this potential cannot be achieved unless careful attention is paid to insuring the highest quality of professional interactions, interpersonal relationships, and community support. The field demands well-prepared professionals, and this can only result from widespread acceptance of consistent philosophical principles, standards of quality, and measurable competencies for which they are held accountable.

Agreement about what constitutes good intergenerational programming and qualified Intergenerational Specialists must be reached before these proposed Guidelines & Standards can be widely adopted across the varied pathways that now exist for entering this field. Consensus about clearly defined principles would provide an excellent framework for moving Intergenerational Studies into the 21st century. There must be a continuing, coordinated effort to include intergenerational content knowledge in professional preparation. In addition, a concerted effort is needed to invite practitioners, administrators, and the general public who are already working in intergenerational environments to adapt the Guidelines & Standards for use in improving program quality.
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