

Big Picture:

Managing Expectations is a big part of the program's success:

- For both youth and adults, a classroom can set an expectation that the “teacher” will provide information and everyone else will respond to them. This is probably not how you run your sessions, regardless of the setting. However, the idea of a truly interactive space may be new to many people. Adults can be used to either structure or interaction but not both.
- The focus should be on building relationships, not on teaching specific content. Content is a starting point for meaningful connections between participants, and learning happens naturally when the focus is on building that connection. It should be an experience not a class! Help them learn from each other.
- We are trying to draw out personal reflections and stories and point them towards dialogue; not debate. For the youth, being on the same footing as adults when sharing stories and perspectives can change their behavior and attitude towards the material significantly.
- A successful workshop is one in which participants felt heard and felt that others were comfortable enough to speak openly with them.

Partners in Our Mission

- Providing context before an event or a series and giving your volunteers of all ages roles and responsibilities can make for the best of interactions. We are all volunteers in an intergen space.
- Use the experience of the adults to your advantage and share their joint responsibility in helping the youth open up and participate.
- The success of a session can be contingent on participants feeling comfortable enough to open up and share personal stories. Older adults are often naturally inclined to do this and youth will often step up based on who else is in the room.

Do Less

- We want to speak as little as possible when giving instructions so that our participants don't get lost in the weeds. Questions will come up and it is important to leave space for questions, but it sometimes is actually better not to. “Why don't you try it out and, if it still doesn't make sense, I can help you out.”
- It is also important that we allow participants to lean on each other. Rather than maintaining a hierarchical relationship with the teacher/facilitator in which all instructions come from one person, participants can help each other out as activities progress.

Framing is Everything

- There are a million ways to do the exercise. Why this now in this way? Framing can change the meaning we make of an activity significantly. So be intentional about how you start and end and highlight things throughout! Knowing your intentions and using specific framing can make the experience uniquely different so give it some thought. You are world builders!



Tricks for Intergen Engagement

- “Energy” or mood is absolutely infectious – staff mustering a genuine loving attention towards participants models to them how to do the “heart-part” of the work.
- Adults need boundaries too and youth need to see you model how to set boundaries for adults as they will often be afraid to.
- Ask the group and individuals for what you really want from them. They are accomplices and the adults want to be your co-facilitators often so naming the kind of engagement you are looking for and what your goal for something is can help.
- Be mindful of how adults take up space in the large group. Make sure speaking time is equal between all participants.
- Adults need a variety of activities, just like the youth. Discussion and text is OK, but try to include different modalities like drawing, object sharing, writing, playing and more.
- You can share instructions ahead of time and use your adults as a ‘generous audience’. This will help you stick to one instruction at a time and chunk your stage time to a minimum.
- Visual aids and reminders are worth their weight in gold. Even if you are just giving simple instructions or asking a question, a handout, a slide or something to hang up on the wall that folks can access while they are doing it is very important.

Tips for Program Planning

- Make sure to have very clear instructions, especially in the beginning.
- Returning to the same ‘home group’ can be useful over time, but make sure you create opportunities for everyone to get to know each other.
- Start from experiential outcomes instead of lofty learning goals or fancy activities. What do you want people to experience when they are with you?
- If you are leaning on technology, take the time to ensure that everyone has the capability to engage. You can elevate the more tech savvy group members. You should also have a low-tech option as backup.
- Having an intergenerational orientation is sometimes better than youth or adults receiving it alone; this is especially true with older youth.
- Ratios of youth to adults can impact a program greatly and depends on the type of program and activity. Plan a program that fits the number of people you have! If you’d like to pair people, we recommend 2 youths to each adult; if the program is more project based, 1 to 1 can work. In any case we **do not** recommend having more adults than youth if the goal is to form strong connections.
- Adults will tell you what they want and what they think, it can feel personal at times. How you react models for the youth at times how they should feel.
- When people talk in “facts” it can shut down conversations, encourage people to talk in feelings, observations and experiences.

