



SAMPLER

Involve Grandparents in Partnership Activities

**Grandparents are wise, caring, and in the know.
Include them as school partners. It's a smart way to go!**

Grandparents are valuable mentors for their adult children and sources of love and guidance for their grandchildren. More broadly, grandparents and other older adults may enrich and enhance children's education when they participate in meaningful activities in schools and classrooms. Grandparents bring experience, wisdom, and patience to school partnership programs. They may be an important resource for encouraging students to do their best in school.

Partnership activities can be designed to reach out to grandparents and senior citizens who may have time to volunteer. This includes activities for grandparents and other volunteers to serve as tutors, mentors, and learning-buddies to help students practice reading, math, or other skills. Also, as invited audiences, grandparents and seniors are among the best "appreciators" of students' art projects, science displays, concerts, presentations, sports, and drama productions. When students know their parents, grandparents, and other visitors are in the audience, they strive to do their best presentations and performances.

Grandparents and other seniors also may enrich units of work and specific lessons. For example, they may be speakers on history, geography, careers, music, art, crafts, and favorite children's books, to name a few topics that tap their expertise.

Some grandparents have the role of primary caregiver of their grandchildren with the same responsibilities as parents. Educators should be prepared to communicate with grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. These "grands" should feel as welcome and respected as other parents at meetings, conferences, workshops, and events.

Some students do not have grandparents, or their grandparents live at a distance, or are unavailable to participate. Some activities may be designed for these students to connect with an "adopted grandparent" or family friend. Some schools use new tools and technologies to share assemblies, concerts, plays, and other events and ceremonies with distant relatives.

Two-way connections with grandparents and seniors in the community also are helpful. In addition to "grands" coming to school, students may conduct projects to connect with and assist grandparents and other senior citizens. Such interactions help students see that they are valuable to their community as they learn to "give back."

Enrich Classroom Teaching

Grandparents and other senior adults who volunteer may help teachers be even more effective. The activities in Charts 1 and 2 on page 3 and the nine activities in this *Sampler* were conducted across grade levels by schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) in the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). The activities may be adopted or adapted schoolwide or by individual teachers for use with their own classes.

For example, a teacher or grade level team may organize a Grandparents Day to have students share reading activities and favorite stories with a grandparent or elder from the community. Or, a teacher or grade level team could arrange collaborative activities with a local senior center to have "grands" volunteer at school or have students conduct activities to benefit the seniors.

See more activities in NNPS books of *Promising Partnership Practices* at www.partnershipschools.org in the section Success Stories.

This *Sampler* was developed by Marsha D. Greenfeld and Joyce L. Epstein.
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NNPS thanks **MetLife Foundation** for its support to improve programs of family and community involvement.





Review of Research: Involving Grandparents in Partnership Activities

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Grandparents are a highly diverse group of family members who play many roles in students' lives. Grandmothers and grandfathers—even “great grands”—range in age from under 40 to over 100 years old. They vary in location, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, physical and cognitive abilities, and interests. Some—as many as 2/3 of the boomer generation—are still in the work force. Their grandchildren may be infants or in preschool, elementary, middle, or high school and beyond. These variations affect options for grandparents' involvement with grandchildren at school and at home.

Grandparents as caregivers. Some grandparents live on their own and others live with their grandchildren. Some are engaged in multigenerational relationships. *Three generation connections* include grandparent(s), parent(s), and grandchildren. *Skipped generation connections* find grandparents raising their grandchildren in the absence of parents due to injury, death, poverty, incarceration, needed assistance for employed parents, or personal preferences. For more than a decade, researchers have reported that an increasing number of grandparents live with and/or raise their grandchildren (Livingston, 2013).

According to the U. S. Census Bureau's 2012 data, about seven million grandparents live with their grandchildren, and about 2.7 million of these (1.7 million grandmothers and 1 million grandfathers) are responsible as parents or *custodial grandparents* for raising their grandchildren. If parents are the primary caregivers, they usually are gatekeepers for messages from schools about the involvement of grandparents. If grandparents are raising grandchildren, they must be granted the same respect and communications with educators as parents (Stelle, Fruhauf, Orel, & Landry-Meyer, 2010).

Even when they live separately, many grandparents provide day care for infants, toddlers, and preschool children. Others provide after-school care for students of all ages while parents work (Sparks, 2011). They are intimately involved with children's learning and development. In all roles, grandparents may affect children's social, emotional, and intellectual development. They have unique interests in the next generation of the family.

Grandparents in Partnership Schools. There are few empirical studies of the results of grandparents' engagement on student success in school. Studies show that, overall, excellent partnership programs implement activities to engage all stakeholders—moms, dads, grandparents, community partners, and others—who are interested in high-quality schools and successful students. The theory of *overlapping spheres of influence* (Epstein, 2011) asserts that students do better in school when they have multiple sources of support for education. Students who hear similar messages about the importance of school from teachers, parents, community members, and grandparents are more likely than other students to complete high school on time with plans for postsecondary education or training.

Related studies report that well-organized reading volunteers who work one-on-one with students through grade 5 positively affect reading proficiencies compared to control groups (Jacob, Armstrong, & Willard, 2015). Reading volunteers may include grandparents who conduct activities with students, as directed by teachers. More studies are needed on the design and effects of specific grandparent engagement activities (e.g., as volunteers, presenters, family historians, audience members) to document effects on students, teachers, and the grandparents, themselves.

Schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) cannot involve all grandparents in all involvement activities, but can select goal-linked activities that include them in ways that support student learning and development. For example, popular breakfasts that welcome parents to school have evolved from Muffins for Moms, Doughnuts for Dads, or Granola for Grands, to breakfasts where children read with a family partner, share poetry they wrote, or demonstrate math skills. Some schools conduct *Grandparents Day* in September or combine invitations for parents and grandparents to visit children's classrooms during *American Education Week* in November.

Many grandparents actively communicate with and support their grandchildren. The number of grandparents using e-mail, texting, Facebook, Facetime, Instagram, and other social media with their grandchildren is growing every year. In parallel form, the number of schools is growing that use their websites and other social media to post photos and videos of children's activities to connect with families and the community.

Schools use the information on the importance of grandparents in children's lives to implement exemplary practices, such as those in this *Sampler* and in books of *Promising Partnership Practices* at www.partnershipschoools.org in the section Success Stories.

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Grandparents play many roles in their grandchildren’s lives.¹ Chart 1 lists how different roles are activated by schools in NNPS.

Chart 1: Grandparents’ Roles and Sample Activities	
Roles Grandparents Play	Examples of Grandparent Engagement Activities
Safety Rep	<i>Pops on Patrol, Grandparent Greeters, Watch Dogs, Safe Homes,</i> and other activities organize safety volunteers in hallways, on playgrounds, and on routes that children walk or bike to school.
Stress Reducer, Mediator	<i>Reading Buddies</i> help children practice and enjoy reading in comfortable reading spots at school to reduce students’ stress about reading skills. Other “learning buddies” may help students practice and enjoy learning skills in other subjects.
Roots, Resource, Valued Elder, Conveyer of Family Culture	Students may conduct oral histories, collect family stories, document the history of family artifacts, record grandparents’ memories of when they or the children’s parents were in school, and other intergenerational projects. These assignments may spark students’ interests and skills in reading, writing, social studies, and science. Children without grandparents nearby may “adopt a grandparent” and work with senior citizens on activities. Grandparents also may serve as classroom speakers to share experiences that support lessons at various grade levels.
Audience	Audience volunteers enjoy student presentations, sports, projects, and other activities at school and from home. Grandparents—along with all family members—are appreciated for their attention and good spirits about students’ talents and skills.
Mentor	Grandparents and community elders may serve as mentors to their own grandchildren or to other children in the community.
Primary Caregiver, Custodial Grandparent	All information, communications, and invitations for parents must be provided so that custodial grandparents are equally engaged in their grandchildren’s education.

¹See a discussion of grandparents’ roles in families in Stelle, Fruhauf, Orel, & Landry-Meyer, 2010.

² See activities that reflect these roles in this *Sampler* and in books of *Promising Partnership Practices*.

Chart 2 summarizes a few activities for the six types of involvement that engage grandparents in programs of school, family, and community partnerships

Chart 2. Activities with Grandparents on the Six Types of Involvement	
Six Types of Involvement³	Sample Activities to Engage Grandparents
Type 1 - Parenting	Information on child and adolescent development at workshops for parents and grandparents. Information from grandparents on their roles in grandchildren’s lives and dreams for their grandchildren. Parent-grandparent forums on topics of children’s health and development.
Type 2 - Communicating	Invitations to grandparents to attend open house nights with students’ parents to learn about school programs. Welcome grandparents who, by culture and family custom, attend parent-teacher conferences with parents. Use social media to link grandparents with grandchildren’s activities.
Type 3 - Volunteering	<i>Experience Corps</i> or locally developed volunteers such as reading buddies; grandparents as audience-volunteers at students’ performances/ games/ presentations. <i>Grandparents’ Tea</i> to welcome and recruit volunteers.
Type 4 - Learning at Home	Interactive homework for students to interview grandparents on their histories, experiences, memories of when they were in school and when students’ parents were the age of the grandchild. Assignments for students to show parents and grandparents uses of new technologies linked to school.
Type 5 - Decision Making	Grandparents in Parent Teacher Student Association, on Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs), and related groups. Fundraising for school programs.
Type 6 – Collaborating with the Community	Student activities with and for senior citizens (e.g., school gardens, high school students’ book club discussion with senior citizens; other service learning projects). Monthly activities by grade level with different groups of seniors in the community.

³Epstein, J. L., et al. (2009). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action. Third edition.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

GRANDPARENTS AND THE BINGO CONNECTION!

CENTRAL MIDDLE SCHOOL
EUNICE, LOUISIANA

TYPE 3

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

It was a “grand” sunny Saturday at Central Middle School where students’ parents, grandmothers, grandfathers, and even some great-grandparents gathered for an afternoon of good old-fashioned BINGO. The activity served a few purposes. It provided an opportunity for grandparents to have fun with their grandkids and network with one another and with teachers. It also helped the school raise funds to update the school library/media center. Central Middle School serves students in grades 5 and 6, with over 85% eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Everyone wore big smiles throughout the afternoon in the school’s cafeteria. Popcorn was the snack of the day. Each student who brought a grandparent was awarded a casual dress coupon and SONIC gift certificate. Grandparents participated in a short survey that asked three questions about what they love about their grandchild, things that make you proud of him/her, and their hopes for their grandchild’s future.

Students were given their grandparents’ questionnaires as a “homework assignment.” They addressed three questions about the best quality of their grandparent, things they will do to make their grandparent proud of them, and an activity they enjoy doing with their grandparent. This meaningful writing assignment was returned to their teacher. It was another part of a day that strengthened students’ connections with their families.

For the games, some students worked side by side with their grandparents on BINGO cards. Some shared a card with a grandparent. The principal observed, “How wonderful it is to see that kid smiling so big and enjoying some quality time with his grandpa.”

Over 200 people participated, including students, parents, and grands. Central Middle School considered the turnout a great success.

The leaders publicized the activity on flyers, which found their way all around town. They also invited parents and grandparents on the school website, in the local newspaper, and in news briefs that were sent home with each student.

The school’s Action Team for Partnership (ATP), principal, teachers and others brainstormed about how they might conduct an activity to include all generations of their students’ families. BINGO came to mind as one way that people of all ages felt comfortable participating. The principal reflected on the central place grandparents have in the family. She saw the students’ forbears as “the ultimate family foundation” for influencing student success in school.

In sum, the activity was a positive experience for all attendees. Even later in the year, teachers noticed an increased presence of parents and caregivers on campus. At the end of the year, a survey of parents found that they felt very welcome at Central Middle School. This should be unremarkable, but is not the case a many middle schools.

Local organizations donated their BINGO equipment for the school to use for the day. Faculty and staff donated baked goods, which also served as prizes. Volunteers from the school and community took charge of the sign-in process, tickets, door prizes, concession stand, set-up, and clean-up. The school’s Title I paraprofessional was the “resident BINGO guru.” She noted that many of the grandparents came dressed up for a special event—which it was for everyone involved.

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Grandparents Day #1

*Highlands Elementary School
Naperville, Illinois*

A genealogical research project united students and grandparents during the annual Grandparents Day celebration at Highland Elementary School. More than 425 students and adults participated.

As in past years, the School Family Community Partnership (SFCP) team undertook this year's event to bring generations together to share stories and to research family histories. In addition to providing a good time for children and adults, the program helped improve students' self-directed learning and critical thinking skills. The school had hosted grandparent events in the past during the school day, but as participation increased, space decreased. The partnership team decided that an after-school event would allow staff to pool resources, people, and spaces—allowing for more hands-on learning experiences for students and families.

The SFCP started planning the event in the spring of the previous school year. Team members recruited two local authors to give a talk on historical research. One parent, who is a professional photographer, volunteered his services. The SFCP team also worked with the building's maintenance team to coordinate services.

The October event featured two sessions. The crowd was quickly divided into two groups. The first group heard two local authors speak about the process of researching their latest book, *Postmark Naperville: An A to Z History*. They discussed how their historical research might be applied to students' own family trees. After the presentation, they handed each student-and-grandparent pair a guidebook to research their own families. Using questions in the book, students quizzed their relatives about great-grandparents, uncles and aunts, to fill in their own family trees. Other activities in the book, which the students took home, showed the youngsters how to create acrostic poems about their grandparents.

While the first half of the crowd listened to the authors, the others toured the school, led by their own grandchild. Students and seniors visited classrooms, computer centers, and the library. On the tour, students stopped at a display of United States and world maps so grandparents could show students where they were born. They also stopped to have their photos taken.

The groups then switched activities so everyone participated in both.

All in all, students and seniors were pleased by the opportunity to spend time together. "The mapping was really fun. Our grandchildren learned something new about us!" one grandparent said. A student added, "We liked getting our picture taken!"

The planning team publicized the event through fliers sent home, including a postcard invitation that students could send to their grandparents or other senior family members or friends.

Grandparents Day is already on the Highland calendar for the next school year. Next year's activities may include a craft table, where grandparents and students could work together. Whatever the activity, it's sure to be a happy, productive afternoon.

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GRANDPARENTS DAY #2

ROBERTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WAYNE, PA

When it comes to history, grandparents have a lot to teach the younger generations. They got the chance to do just that at Roberts Elementary School's Grandparents Day. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATPs) and teachers and principal invited grandparents and senior citizens to school to learn with their grandchildren, enjoy an historical reenactment, sing together, share knowledge, and further solidify the bonds across generations.

Grandparents Day began with a grand welcoming assembly. Parents donated food for a welcome breakfast, and the music teacher worked with all classes to perform songs from the grandparents' childhoods.

After the performance, students met their grandparents in their classrooms. Teachers had prepared lessons that took advantage of the grandparents' expertise in the content areas of social studies, history, and language arts. Grandparents shared knowledge on topics such as immigration, heroes, historical figures, government, geography, and character education. Some classrooms also completed art projects and shared literature. One grandparent said, "Our favorite part was when our grandchild read her poem to us." Another commented, "I enjoyed talking with the children about how things were when I was their age."

Next, students and their guests enjoyed a unique historical reenactment of life in the one-room schoolhouse that is located on the Roberts Elementary School property. With help from the Upper Merion Park and Historic Foundation, children researched what school was like in 1850 at the old schoolhouse. Selected students in costume gave grandparents a tour of the schoolhouse, and reenacted a sample Friday afternoon lesson from 1850.

To make sure that all students had a grand-friend in attendance, Roberts partnered with the Upper Merion Senior Service Center.

About 25 to 40 senior citizens volunteered as surrogate grandparents for students whose grandparents could not come to school. This was particularly important to students in the school's growing immigrant population whose older family members are not in the United States.

Throughout the day, trained Student Ambassadors welcomed the senior guests, and Roberts service groups (such as the Alpha Club and Safety Patrol) acted as tour guides. The students modeled volunteerism and service. Teachers also helped take photographs, so everyone could remember the exceptional day.

Roberts Elementary implemented Grandparents Day because in today's fast-paced life, students were at risk of losing ties with the older generation, weakening their cultural identity, and, for some, missing support from elders who lived far away. To maximize participation, the ATP communicated with seniors by the phone, rather than using electronic modes of communication. The team enlisted the help of homeroom parents to conduct personal phone calls to grandparents in or near the area, and administrators met with people at the senior center to continue their strong connections with Roberts Elementary. Over 300 parents, grandparents, and other senior citizens participated.

Grandparents Day celebrated and recognized grandparents and senior citizens, and helped students develop an appreciation for the older generation's contributions. There is little that could solidify the value of caring and inter-generational respect more strongly than learning together on this unforgettable day.

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GRANDPARENTS DAY PROMOTES READING

**GILLIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LAKE CHARLES, LA**

Grandparents are important figures in many children’s lives, but the resources and support they may offer often go untapped. To show appreciation for grandparents and to encourage their involvement in students’ education, Gillis Elementary School invited more than 1,000 of these seniors to the school to eat lunch and browse a book fair with their grandchildren.

Grandparents Day Promotes Reading took place over several days so that students in each grade could plan separate celebrations with their grandparents. Some students invited grandparents to their classrooms to see their academic projects and artwork. Others planned presentations for the grandparents and served them dessert in class. All of them escorted their visitors to the book fair to explore the shelves together.

Because the grandparents paid for their own lunches and made many purchases at the book fair, the literacy event also helped Gillis Elementary School raise \$4,000. The school used the money to purchase new library books.

Grandparents were delighted to be included in this way. They clearly enjoyed spending time with their grandchildren and to support the school’s literacy efforts.

“My grandchildren are my life,” said one.

“I love coming to spend this special time with my grandchild,” added another.

The students also enjoyed the experience, and were on their best behavior. Those who had grandparents present and those who “borrowed” grandparents for the day learned more about the importance of honoring their elders and showing appreciation for the important people in their lives.

Even students who didn’t have grandparents at school had a good time. Teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators sat with these students at lunch so that they also received quality attention.

Gillis Elementary School recommends that other schools plan Grandparents Day activities well in advance to accommodate grandparents’ busy schedules. It also was important to ask families to RSVP to know how many people to expect.

Welcoming grandparents to the school created a warm, happy atmosphere at Gillis. The excellent turnout demonstrated just how eager these family members were to be a part of their grandchildren’s lives and to support their education. Connecting Grandparents Day Promotes Reading with a book fair made this event a best-seller.

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Type 3

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

Grandparents' Tea

*Southwood Elementary School
Windsor, Ontario Canada*

Tea, cookies, and a couple of hundred bright and giggly elementary school students made grandparents feel welcome and willing to volunteer at Southwood Elementary School. The second annual Grandparents' Tea in April drew more than 200 people and increased the school's volunteer ranks.

The school's Action Team for Partnership (ATP) came up with the idea two years ago after noticing that many grandparents were at school daily, dropping off and picking up students. They realized that the grandparents represented a volunteer army, whose potential had not been tapped. The ATP decided that a formal tea was just the event to rally the troops, and help the school meet its goal of involving more family members.

Staff began advertising the event in the school's newsletter and on its web site. The organizers also sent home invitations with a tear-off RSVP to get an idea of how many refreshments to prepare.

On the day of the event, 200 grandparents and 300 grandchildren gathered in the school's gymnasium. Teachers greeted grandparents at the door. Parents served homemade baked goods and administrators helped serve coffee and tea donated by Starbucks. An older student volunteered to play the piano.

ATP members compiled a list of volunteer activities that would help the school, teachers, and students, and invited the grandparents to sign up. They also held a raffle for a school spirit necklace—a silver charm with the motto "Spirit, Strength, Success." The students and their grandparents huddled at tables and on the school stage to play board games and to read and share stories. Many of the youngsters either read to, or demonstrated activities for, their grandparents.

"What better way to energize young minds than to give grandparents the opportunity to share with their grandchildren their own

life and school experiences?" commented the principal.

The large crowd drew the attention of the local newspaper, which published pictures of the tea.

Most grandparents raved about the event, not just for the opportunity to spend time with their grandchildren, but also for the chance to reconnect with old friends, many of whom they may not have seen since their own children attended the elementary school.

"Fabulous!" one grandparent exclaimed.

"I am amazed at how well my granddaughter can read," another said.

The event cost only \$100, thanks to the donations of food, beverages, and flowers from parents and community partners. The school held a fundraiser to cover its expenses.

Southwood plans to continue its Grandparents' Tea for many more years. The organizers hope to find a larger venue next year to accommodate the crowd. If the spring weather cooperates, they may hold it on the school's front lawn.

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HERO BREAKFAST

**SOUTH FLORENCE HIGH SCHOOL
FLORENCE, SC**

Type 6

At South Florence High School, heroes do not come with capes. Parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, friends, and community members were all among the many heroes welcomed to school for a Hero Breakfast one Friday last May. To support the school’s Habits of Mind program, writing across the curriculum, and expressing gratitude for family and community, students wrote essays about a real-life hero. Each student’s hero was, then, invited to school for recognition and thanks.

To support classroom discussions of Habits of Mind, students were tasked with writing an essay describing someone in their lives who exemplified one or more of the featured traits. The 16 Habits of Mind include problem solving, persisting, finding humor, managing impulsivity, creating and innovating, questioning, applying past knowledge to new situations, listening with empathy and understanding, thinking flexibly, striving for accuracy, and other good qualities for success in life.

Teachers helped students revise their essays. Many illustrated their writing with PhotoShop. In advance of breakfast, essays were printed.

At the breakfast, students brought their heroes to the library, retrieved their essays, and presented the printed copies to the happy honorees. One student wrote of his dad, “He taught me to persist. I wanted to quit my soccer team because we were losing a lot of games, but he convinced me to keep trying and our season turned around and we won the state.” Of her grandma, another student wrote, “She remains open to continuous learning. She always wants me to further my education. I would be the first person to graduate [from high school] in my family and that would make my family so proud of me.”

Students and guests were deeply moved by this activity. One dad said, “It’s very special—

heartwarming. It just makes you feel like you are a hero.” The principal agreed, adding, “When the honorees read their essays, there were teary eyes and affectionate hugs, smiles, and looks of appreciation. It was very touching!”

This activity grew from teachers’ questions of how to help students internalize the lessons of Habits of Mind. All freshman take an Academic Enrichment class on health, finance, career exploration, sex education, technology, and 16 Habits of Mind. The school emphasizes writing across the curriculum. Knowing that students would write more careful essays if they knew their work would be printed and shared, teachers created a publishable moment by linking writing to the Hero Breakfast.

In preparation, the Action Team for Partnerships and other faculty and staff worked with the food service manager to order and prepare the food, and to serve the breakfast. Over 400 heroes and 400 students attended. A school grant covered the \$475 cost of breakfast for all of the heroes.

Hero Breakfast enabled high school freshmen to practice writing for a specific audience and purpose, reflect on Habits of Mind, publish text for an audience, and give back to family and community members who helped them along the way. At this emotional and communal school breakfast, the heroes might not have superpowers, but they had superior powers to influence South Florence High School students.

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READING

HOW TO BE AN INVOLVED GRANDPARENT (District Activity)

CALCASIEU PARISH SCHOOL DISTRICT LAKE CHARLES, LA

According to the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury Human Services department, 11% of children in Louisiana live with their grandparents. To help support grandparents who serve as the primary caregivers for their grandchildren, the department partnered with six other community organizations to host a free conference called Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. Knowing that you are never too old to learn new tricks, the co-leaders designed the conference to discuss topics of parenting skills at different age levels, how children cope with abandonment, custody issues, and grandparents' rights. Nearly 70 grandparents attended.

Calcasieu Parish School District's Leader for Family Involvement was asked to speak at the conference's opening session. She used the opportunity to create awareness about the 43 Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) in her district and to share some of the best practices for engaging grandparents in children's education. Her presentation was called "How to be an Involved Grandparent in Calcasieu Parish Public Schools." She also distributed a helpful handbook for grandparents and encouraged attendees to get involved in the ATPs at their children's schools.

The grandparents in the audience asked questions and sought more information about ATPs and other resources. "This has been very informative and supportive for grandparents," one thanked.

The district leader's presentation included a number of tips and strategies from her district's ATPs. She gave grandparents a list of ten questions to ask their grandchildren about school, and explained that the key to a good conversation was asking specific open-ended

questions such as "Who did you sit with at lunch?" and "What was the hardest thing you had to do today?" There are known to be better questions than "How was school today?"

She also advised participants on the best ways to praise their grandchildren by being specific, and by praising effort rather than only results. Topics also included step-by-step instructions on how to read and write with their grandchildren, etiquette education, and information about planning for and financing college.

Throughout, the district leader for partnerships included personal touches by sharing stories about how her own grandparents had influenced her life and the joys of being a grandparent herself.

The conference was an excellent forum to share best practices gathered from Calcasieu Parish schools' ATPs with a large, interested audience. Grandparents came away feeling appreciated and empowered by the knowledge and strategies they had gained.

"This was a wonderful opportunity to network and build relationships with community members and organizations," the district leader observed. "Most importantly it was a time to celebrate and honor the grandparents who are raising their grandchildren—and, in some cases, great-grandchildren!"

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OLIVER WOLCOTT TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL GENERATIONS PROJECT

OLIVER WOLCOTT TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL TORRINGTON, CT

Type 6

It's no secret that Oliver Wolcott Technical High School (OWTS) is proud of its history and its community. As the only technical high school in Litchfield County, OWTS frequently taps the community for student internships, job placements, and other services and opportunities to increase student learning.

To honor and celebrate its graduates in the community, OWTS implemented a Generations Project. The goal was to collect artifacts, photographs, uniforms, and memories from the school's alumni for display throughout the school.

OWTS also created a Family Engagement Center (FEC) and a Work-Based Learning program, both of which emphasized the value of family and community involvement at the school.

One member created business card-sized handouts and another made a poster asking, "How many generations of your family have gone to OWTS? Send us a picture and let us know." The committee hung copies of the poster in the school gymnasium and in various community locations, and included it in the monthly mailing to all students and families.

To collect alumni artifacts technologically and in person, the Generations Project committee established a receiving website and a drop-off location at the school. They continued to promote the project by taking a booth at a local expo. Also, students, teachers, and administrators spoke about the project at open houses, sports and community events, and community service programs.

The Generations Project is a big project with several components. The next steps will be to gather and arrange the many artifacts and pictures into an attractive and permanent display at the school. The project will continue so that more graduates hear about the project and submit

something about their high school lives and post-high school accomplishments.

Even Phase I of the Generations Project has produced positive results. The project heightened awareness of OWTS in the community at large. This has spurred more businesses than in the past to visit the school and offer internships and jobs to the students.

The Generations Project will help students, teachers, and community appreciate Oliver Wolcott Technical School by learning more about its history. The committee's energy and enthusiasm has rubbed off on others. One teacher said, "I never knew [before] how rich our school's history was!" The OWTS assistant principal agreed, adding, "We are very proud of our school program and excited to learn the stories of our alumni."

As the Generations Project continues at OWTS, it will add to the long and proud story of this 97-year-old school. It is an important community institution.

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CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

Project SMILES

*Ladysmith Elementary School
Ladysmith, Wisconsin*

Students at Ladysmith Elementary School teamed up with elders in their community for Project SMILES (Service Matters: Intergenerational Learning between Elders & Students). The program aimed to link children, their parents, and elders in a dynamic exchange of values, resources, traditions, encouragement, and caring. Each grade level, pre-kindergarten through fourth grade, participated in this service learning program.

Teachers helped children develop projects and decide which community organization or group of elders to work with. Pre-kindergarteners sang, shared arts and crafts, and visited with residents at two area nursing homes throughout the school year. Students in kindergarten chose to host intergenerational holiday activities, inviting parents and grandparents to come to school and share holiday traditions from their youth. First- and second-grade students partnered with the Retired Teachers' Association and other elders in the community for reading exchanges. At Heritage Day, third graders welcomed parents and grandparents to teach mini-classes about hobbies, foods, and traditions from their cultures. Fourth graders worked with senior partners to improve their writing skills and made gifts for parents and grandparents.

Ladysmith Elementary received a 2004-2005 Learn and Serve America Grant to implement Project SMILES. In preparation for the program, teachers received training in service-learning methodology, and an advisory committee formed to oversee planning. The committee

worked with assisted-living and nursing-home activity directors to match students' projects with groups of elders.

The school reached the three goals it set for Project SMILES: Ladysmith's students scored higher than the state average on the Grade 4 Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination in the areas of reading, writing, and social studies; each grade level established a reciprocal and sustainable relationship with at least one community partner or group of elders that strengthened civic participation and intergenerational relationships; and the school provided multiple activities to enhance the lives of elders in the community. In reaching these goals, the program benefited approximately 150 community members. Students' writings about Project SMILES appeared in *The Source*, a Rusk County newspaper for the elderly, as well as *The WIN Quarterly Newsletter*, a state-level publication.

A first grade student wrote in his journal, "It makes me feel good to read to others." The principal said, "Project SMILES increases cooperation, interaction, and exchange between people of different generations. This promising partnership practice contributes to civic responsibility." He announced that Ladysmith Elementary will continue Project SMILES even after the Learn and Serve America grant period ends.

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