



Bridges Together

Music to Our Ears

We have many rich opportunities to unite generations through music, a common language that unifies our spirits. One of the core concepts of intergenerational programming is “meaningful engagement.” In this Recipe for Intergenerational Success, we offer a few ways to *increase* meaningful engagement.

Intergenerational Leadership Team

Before you begin any of these activities, we suggest that you put together an **Intergenerational Leadership Team including** leaders from the children’s and 60+ organization as well as one or two representatives of the musicians and guests. At the very least, meet twice – once in the beginning to figure out what you are going to do and when and then once afterwards, to evaluate what went well, what could be improved and to decide if you will do this again. Select your music pieces. Consider popular songs from different decades or songs about a specific theme from different eras or genres.



“Where Will I Find the Musicians and the Guests?”

Ideas for Recruiting Youth: Reach out to the music teachers and/or band, chorus or orchestra teachers at schools (public, private, charter, technical) from PreK to college. Contact local music schools and check local newspapers or websites for music teachers who provide afterschool lessons.

Ideas for Recruiting Adults 60+: For musicians, check senior centers, adult education programs, 55+ communities and the local paper/website for adult performance groups. For places to perform, contact the activities director/volunteer coordinator at the local senior center, assisted living facility and CCRCs (continuing care retirement centers, campuses that have independent living, assisted living and skilled nursing options), and nursing homes. (But make sure that there is meaningful engagement – some studies have found that children visiting nursing homes actually increases fears of aging!)



Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and charm and gaiety to life and to everything.

~ Plato

7 Points on an Intergenerational Engagement Continuum

Generations United identifies these points of intergenerational engagement in their article [Creating An Age-Advantaged Community](#). This continuum provide a flexible structure for thinking of intergenerational music.

- 1) **Learn about the other age group:** Telling children that older adults live in the apartment building next door to the school.
- 2) **Seeing the other age group at a distance:** At first glance, this includes students coming in and out of the school and noticing residents going in and out next door. But, this also includes musicians who perform for another group but never meet one another.
- 3) **Meeting each other:** It is critical to encourage opportunities for meaningful engagement so that people can get to know one another. If the guests will be seated at tables, mark two places for musicians so that after the concert, they might join their guests for introductions and discussions. If the concert will be in an auditorium, plan to serve refreshments after and perhaps play a game or ice breaker. Check out our [Recipe for Intergenerational Success on Ice Breakers](#). Music-specific discussion questions include:

- Who is your favorite musician and why?
- What genre of music do you like?
- How do you listen to music? Radio, record, CD, 8-track tape (!), streaming, online station?
- What is the most memorable concert you've ever attended?
- If you could go to any concert, which would you attend?
- Do you (or did you) play an instrument or sing? When did you start or stop?
- Did you ever take music lessons? If so, who was your favorite teacher? What about least favorite?



Additionally, sharing refreshments is a great way to help facilitate meaningful engagement. Think about what type of refreshments would work for your event: Baked goods, popcorn, drinks?

- 4) **Annual or infrequent activities:** This would include one-time or twice-a-year concerts. If you are planning such a concert, discuss the following at your Leadership Team's meeting:

- When and where will the concert be held?
- How will you publicize the event?
- How you will encourage meaningful engagement at the concert?



- Will you serve refreshments? If so, when?

1) Before the concert:

- Invite someone from the host organization to visit the musicians and explain about the host organization/setting, who will attend the concert and characteristics of their lives. (Think physical, social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual, if applicable.) For example, the high school a cappella group is performing: *They are 14-18 year olds who choose the a cappella group as an elective fulfilling their art requirement. They must complete 4 art classes in order to graduate and they can take visual, music or performing art classes. Many will stay after school to practice as well. They perform at school concerts but they also like to do one community-based performance each month.*

2) Day of the concert:

- Begin with a welcome. Invite people to introduce themselves to someone sitting near them whom they do not know, sharing their name and why they chose to come today.
- During the concert, invite performers to introduce each song and explain why that song was chosen. This provides connection between people and also increases knowledge and intellectual stimulation.
- After the concert, provide space for musicians and guests to mingle. See above.

5) Demonstration or [pilot] projects: There are many ways to bring musicians together over multiple sessions. One example of this is a two-part program: Have older and younger musicians learn the same songs separately, come together to practice them and then perform them in a joint concert. (Did you know that in Denmark, intergenerational “choir camps” – where participants rehearse and then have a sing-a-long – are common?)

- At your Leadership Team meeting, discuss the following: what songs you will learn/perform, when you will practice together, when and where you will perform. Also, be sure to identify ways that you can encourage meaningful engagement at the practice and concert.
- During your separate practices, explain with whom you’ll be performing, why you decided to do this intergenerational music program and share about the group with whom you’ll be performing. Send a letter home to the parents/caregivers about this project.
- Definitely begin the practice with an ice breaker. At the joint practice, consider having musicians sit alternating young and old.

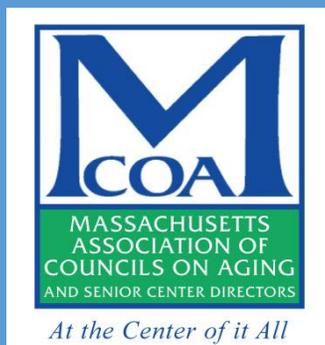


- At the concert, follow the guidelines above.



6) Ongoing Intergenerational Programs: Again, the options are limitless. Two options include 1) offering joint music lessons for old and young and 2) having an intergenerational chorus, band or orchestra that rehearses regularly and then performs together.

7) Creating Intergenerational Settings: At a minimum, do you have space that can be shared with performing groups from the other generation? Think big! Can you create a music center where people of all ages are able to practice and perform, with a spirit of community and getting to know one another?



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