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Intergenerational Landed Learning at UBC Farm

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Landed Learning Project @ UBC

Our concern and issues

- ❑ The number of elders and retired citizens in our communities is increasing.
- ❑ Being a senior in the 21st century is not what it used to be.
- ❑ Seniors are an expanding part of our population but society is not well-equipped to provide them opportunities for continued productive engagement.



Additional issues

- ❑ Children who have over-busy and stressed parents spend many hours alone with TV and computers can become disconnected from their communities and neighborhoods.
- ❑ Children today are also disconnected from nature and lack awareness of the impact of their actions on the earth
- ❑ They have limited understanding of the interconnections among food, land, community and personal health.



Background assumptions

We believe intergenerational environmental experience where seniors and children learn and work side-by-side can address these issues

- ❑ Community-based learning allows seniors to **share their knowledge with others** and address the problem of social disengagement
- ❑ Through mentorship by elders, children can be **guided to connect with the earth** and learn about food systems .
- ❑ Teaming generations in a **direct physical experience, nurturing living things**, working in the soil to grow food can promote well-being and healthy lifestyles across the generations



UBC Farm



Intergenerational Landed Learning on the Farm

Currently we are completing Year 6 of our intergenerational environment and farm project.

Participants

- ❑ Years 1 and 2 we worked with 1 teacher and 18 grade seven girls.
- ❑ Years 3-5 the project included 3 classes of children in grades 4-7 and their teachers (approximately 80 - 90 children/year).

Our Model/Approach

- ❖ Groups of 3-5 children team with one or two adult “farm friends” to grow food crops in raised beds.
- ❖ Children and adults work together at the farm 12-13 times, September to June.



Activities at the Farm

Children and adult Farm Friends meet at the farm, explore together and build relationships with few directives.

- ❑ Children talk with and “interview” Farm Friends about their lives and experiences with farming.
- ❑ Planning and decision-making occurs cooperatively in each team.
- ❑ Expertise is shared while planting and caring for food plants.
- ❑ Intergenerational teams conduct experiments and explore growing strategies.
- ❑ Individual or team journals are used to document learning.
- ❑ Children share what they learn through Powerpoint or posters at the end of the project.
- ❑ Harvest celebration concludes project in June.



























PEAS...

Peas are a cool season vegetable that can be grown in containers or in the garden. They are a good source of protein and fiber, and they are also a good source of vitamins A, C, and K. Peas are easy to grow and can be eaten fresh or frozen. They are a great addition to any garden.

1



2



3

4











Studying Intergenerational Learning

We study all aspects of Intergenerational Environmental Learning:

- ❑ the experience of growing food crops and whether this could change *children's* environmental consciousness and ideas about food.
- ❑ the challenges that *teachers* face in attempting to integrate a field experience into their curriculum.
- ❑ how the experience enriches the lives and learning for the adults, particularly the *seniors*.

Our research with seniors examines:

- ❑ Motivation for participation
- ❑ Rewards
- ❑ Learning
- ❑ Ways to enhance these experiences



Motivation for Participating

Seniors' motivation for participating in Intergenerational Environmental Education included:

- ❑ **Community-building**: Some seniors view the project as a social space and wanted to **join a community of people who shared their interests** (in gardening, food growing, land).
- ❑ **Further Education**: Some seniors seek **skills and knowledge** about gardening, food security, and related issues.



... Additional Motivations

- ❑ **Interest in Children and Teaching:** Some seniors enjoyed working with young people and saw the project as an opportunity to connect with and teach children.
- ❑ **Promoting Environmental Values:** Most seniors had some prior views about the importance of caring for the environment and wanted to share that message with others.



Motivation and Seniors' Voices

❑ Interest in Teaching and Children

I just thought it was a brilliant idea to reconnect young people to the soil. That was my motivation for making the time. And then I really like to share my knowledge. After all if you have been doing things for years and years and years you do know a little bit of something.

(PH, 2nd Year Farm Friend, 2007)

❑ Promoting Environmental values

Connecting with nature is important to me and I think it's important for us as a society. The mission statement of this project I totally agree with. That's why I came out to see what it was about and I'm still here.

(SJ, 4th Year Farm Friend, 2007)



Rewards of Intergenerational Education

Seniors' rewards encompass a number of dimensions:

- ❑ **Physical health**: Some seniors note the program aided their physical strength and stamina as they dug and worked in the garden with the children.
- ❑ **Psychological and emotional wellbeing**: Seniors speak about the calming benefits of gardening and the hope and inspiration they felt as they worked with the younger generation.
- ❑ **Social contribution and community building**: The building of relationships with children and other adults helps to create a sense of community.
- ❑ **Spiritual and aesthetic engagement**: The aesthetic elements of the natural environment and growing space are viewed as spiritual and soul-enriching.



Rewards and Seniors' Voices:

❑ Social contribution and community building:

One thing I've found I really like is the connection and the relationship that develops over the year with those three kids. I really look forward to seeing them each time and it feels like a nice bond from working together.

(SJ, 4th Year FF, 2007)

❑ Spiritual and aesthetic engagement:

It is interesting because when I work in the garden it is hard to get me to stop and have coffee or even to have lunch. I just love the mindfulness of it. It is a spiritual thing really.

(MS, 1st Year FF, 2007)

... just to see the dart of colour and hear the birds sing. It's beautiful out there.

(SJO, 4th Year FF, 2007)



Senior Learning

When seniors speak about their learning from participating in the project they report:

- ❑ Learning about pedagogy and children
- ❑ Recognizing their own knowledge
- ❑ New knowledge on farming and food systems
- ❑ Deeper connection with environmental concerns



On Learning - Seniors' Voices:

❑ New knowledge on farming and food systems

I always find I am learning new things. By going into the theory part of the soil and fertilizer and the inter-planting - a lot of that was new to me.

(RC, 4th Year FF, 2007)

❑ Deeper connection with environmental concerns:

I really get excited about finding things, observing things, and learning that way...I'm learning all the time. I make different choices now than I did ten years, five years, two years ago. I'm sure being here is helping, reinforcing it.

(SJ, 4th Year FF, 2007)



Effective Practices for Intergenerational Learning-Guidelines

1. Start small. Have clear goals. Grow your program gradually.
2. Establish close coupling of project and participant's values and philosophies.
3. Create opportunities for participants to meet and talk about expectations and needs.
4. Include structure and direction in program design but include opportunity for autonomy and leadership.
5. Establish diversity as a principle when setting up intergenerational teams and groupings.
6. Encourage and celebrate contributions by seniors.
7. Provide a sense of progress - communicate this to all participants.
8. Change procedures and activities to renew and refresh (in moderation)
9. Provide resources and support as needed.





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Contacts

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Project website:

<http://www.cust.educ.ubc.ca/landedlearningproject/index.htm>

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"I learned that when plants die we put them in the compost so then we could make new soil."

Jayde

"I learned how to collect seeds and how to dry them. I also harvested food from our garden." John

"I learned that when you pick lettuce you have to pick it from the outer side. If you pick it from the inner side the other lettuce won't grow anymore." Neil

"I learned that the yellow stuff you eat from the corn is the seed that use to grow it." Ravi

"At the farm I learned that fennel tastes just like licorice." Tiana

"I learned that my farm friend's name is Cheryl and that she likes to work with kids." Kylie

"I learned how to collect sunflower and broccoli seeds." Evander

"I learned how to plant garlic and how to collect and dry seeds to make other food." Rodah

"At the farm I learned how to compost to make soil for the garden." Minsong

"I learned that you can eat nasturtium leaves and flowers." Manisha

"I learned to harvest vegetables like, carrots, fennel, tomatoes, beets and squash from our gardens to make our own salad." Emily

"At UBC farm I learned that organic farming is when you don't use chemicals to grow food so instead they use compost and other natural fertilizers." Amy L

"Did you know that a bean seed is a dicot? A dicot is a seed that you can split in two while a monocot (corn seed) doesn't split in half." Teneille

"I learned that wire worms are garden pests that can destroy your garden." Chris B.

"I learned that there are some flowers that are edible." Chris

"I learned that when plants die that they go to the compost to start rotting so that all their nutrients can go back into the soil." William

"I learned that corn has lots of seeds in it." Jacky

