



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL

COLOCATING PRE-K & SENIOR CARE

2018

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ABOUT THE FELLOW

Anita Joshi is a Masters in Public Policy Candidate at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy in Chicago, IL. She is a research assistant at both the Center for Human Potential and Public Policy's Behavioral Insights and Parenting Lab, which employs behavioral nudges to assist parents of preschoolers in Chicago Public Schools, as well as the Booth School of Business Center for Decision Research, documenting predictably irrational behavior under diverse decision making conditions.



COLOCATING PRE-K & SENIOR CARE

There is mounting evidence of lasting benefits of high-quality early childhood education. However, financial and logistical obstacles to public expansion in Montgomery County abound, including insufficient licensed educators, funding and physical capacity constraints.

While intergenerational programming is common nationwide, few programs in Maryland have frequent and consistent interactions between youth and the elderly. Over the past 40 years, communities in the US and abroad have experimented with colocating Pre-K and daycare within senior care facilities to increase the frequency of intergenerational programming. This report investigates the potential of senior care facilities as one avenue to address the space shortage for Pre-K expansion, and examines evidence for any additional benefits beyond those documented in traditional, school-based Pre-K programs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the Montgomery County Council Summer Fellows Program for making this research possible, to Marlene Michaelson for her leadership and mentorship, and to Vivian Yao, Craig Howard, Dr. Elaine Bonner-Tompkins and Tori Hall for their expert guidance.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DEFINING INTERGENERATIONAL PRE-K

Uniting the young and old in ongoing, mutually beneficial, planned activities designed to enrich Pre-K curriculum.

BACKGROUND

As Montgomery County strives to expand access to Pre-K, capacity constraints have proven to be a major obstacle; namely, a lack of physical classroom space. Colocation could prove to be one potential avenue to address space constraints in expanding Pre-K. Colocating Pre-K classrooms within senior residential facilities has been successful in other jurisdictions, with many mutual benefits for preschoolers, senior residents, and partner site operators. In addition to overcoming regulation-compliant capacity constraints, colocation produces cost-savings in rent, maintenance, utilities, and staff turnover as well as eliminates the need for transportation. Should transportation be needed, senior residential facilities have ADA-compliant vans to lend preschool classrooms.

3,340

TOTAL FOUR YEAR OLDS
IN MONTGOMERY
COUNTY WITHOUT EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

HIGHEST UNMET NEED
IN MARYLAND

MDSE 2016 Report

FINDINGS

While there is ample research showing the long-term benefits of high-quality Pre-K, the literature reviewed for this preliminary feasibility study found that children in intergenerational Pre-K experience numerous additional benefits as compared to children in conventional high-quality Pre-K. A list of the most cited benefits is noted below. The extra attention within an intergenerational model is especially beneficial to disadvantaged children, including English Language Learners (ELL) and children who lag in academic readiness. However, these benefits were not assured merely by function of being an intergenerational, colocated program, but were subject to a set of specific best practices. For example, Pre-K colocated inside independent living facilities were not nearly as effective as facilities housing individuals needing more intense care; seniors who were more isolated by nature of their ailments were much more eager to engage with the preschoolers.

PRIMARY BENEFITS TO CHILDREN

1

READING SCORES & VOCABULARY:

The increase in attention and exposure to adult conversations improves literacy

2

ATTENTION:

Greater adult presence offers more opportunities for one-on-one tutoring and additional nurturing

3

BEHAVIOR REGULATION:

Children understand how failure to follow instructions could risk the safety of their senior companions

4

SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE:

Repeated positive interactions generates lasting favorable views of disabled and elderly persons

5

PRO-SOCIAL SKILLS:

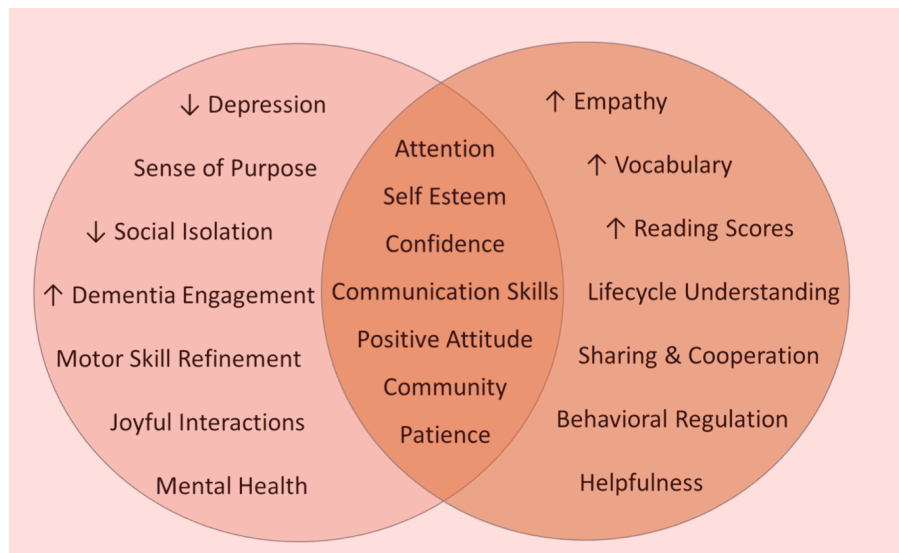
Higher social-development scores, patience, willingness to help, and other pro-social traits.



BENEFITS OF COLOCATION

SENIORS

CHILDREN



"Children who had been in an intergenerational Pre-K showed significantly **higher levels of empathy toward older adults years out of the program**, as compared to [Pre-K] children who were not enrolled in the programs."

ACTIVITIES

COUNTING & NUMERACY
LANGUAGE TUTORING
READING BOOKS
SHARED MEALS & SNACK PREPARATION
DECORATING BAKED GOODS
HEALTH & WELLNESS EXERCISES
SHARING ORAL HISTORY
GARDENING
DRESS UP
FRIENDLY INTERACTIONS
ARTS & CRAFTS
SINGING & MUSIC
HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

+20
Benefits to
Children

+15
Benefits to
Seniors

+10
Benefits to
Providers



TRANSPORT

- No transportation required
- Use of facility van if necessary



COST-SAVINGS

- Rent
- Maintenance
- Utilities
- Staff turnover



REGULATIONS

- ADA compliance
- Outdoor play space
- Meet building and health code requirements

• aims •

COST/BENEFITS

Evaluate literature to determine any potential cost savings and benefits for children, seniors, educators, and facility operators

JURISDICTIONS

Compare colocation models of senior care and early childhood education facilities across the US and internationally

BEST PRACTICES

Document recurring themes that emerge and compile a list of best practices for future implementation.

• methodology •

After conducting a literature review of intergenerational programs and their impact on both children and seniors, local, state and federal regulations were studied to evaluate regulation alignment and obstacles to compliance. Regional experts and County government officials were interviewed to discuss the present landscape of early childhood education, senior care, and intergenerational programming in Montgomery County. Presentations at the 2018 National Research Conference on Early Childhood in Arlington, VA, the Montgomery Moving Forward Perspectives on Pre-K Expansion in Rockville, MD, and the Maryland State Commission on Innovation and Excellence (Kirwan Commission) Working Group I on Early Childhood Education also provided valuable insight. Data from program websites and media sources were used to compare colocation models across jurisdictions domestically and internationally and, in conjunction with academic findings, compile a list of best practices. Recommendations are also made should the Montgomery County Council pursue this model.

• definitions •

INTERGENERATIONAL (IG)

Any activity that is intended to bring together two different generations. Intergenerational programs are typically geared toward uniting generations that would not otherwise normally interact, such as young children and senior citizens.

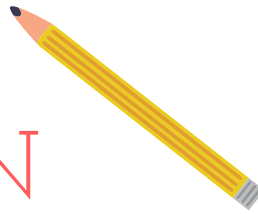
PRE-KINDERGARTEN

An accredited program licensed through the state that provides early childhood curriculum as required by the Maryland State Department of Education. Generally, preschoolers constitute three and four year olds.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Refers to both the senior care facility operator and the educational institution, typically the local public school system or otherwise noted early childhood education provider.

RESEARCH INTRODUCTION



The state of Maryland mandates that all 24 public school districts provide access to free, half-day Pre-K for any four year old whose family income is at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), equivalent to \$44, 955 for a family of four. However, of the 24 districts, Montgomery County has one of the highest costs of living, meaning families at up to 300% FPL—\$73,800 for a family of four—still struggle to make ends meet. Although the state of Maryland defines “low-income” as 185% FPL, Montgomery County classifies families up to 300% FPL as “low-income” and has vocalized its desire for all four year olds from low-income families to have access to a full day, high-quality early education.

FY19 PUBLICLY FUNDED PRE-K SLOTS IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY FOR LOW INCOME FOUR YEAR OLDS

PROGRAM	FULL DAY	HALF DAY	TOTAL
Head Start	539	35	574
Pre-K Plus	160	0	160
MCPS	240	2070	2310
Community Based	110	0	110
Pre-K Expansion	198	0	198
TOTAL	1247	2105	3352

Source: Montgomery County FY19 Budget

Nearly all publically funded Pre-K in Montgomery County is provided by Montgomery County Public Schools at an MCPS district site. Although MCPS has also prioritized Pre-K expansion, it faces three obstacles: insufficient funding, a shortage of licensed Pre-K instructors, and lack of additional classroom space. While multiple stakeholders have been collaborating to address these obstacles, the paucity of classroom space has proved especially difficulty, forcing MCPS to seek options outside district facilities. One potential alternative is colocating Pre-K inside senior care facilities, a unique model that has been operational throughout the United States and abroad for several decades.

This report is a preliminary feasibility study of the potential for implementing a colocation model within Montgomery County; it seeks to evaluate the evidence of potential benefits of Pre-K colocation inside senior care facilities, document factors that affect sustainability in other jurisdictions, and propose a roadmap for future study. It also aims to study if children in colocated Pre-K programs experience additional benefits as compared to children in traditional Pre-K programs.

THE INTERGENERATIONAL MODEL

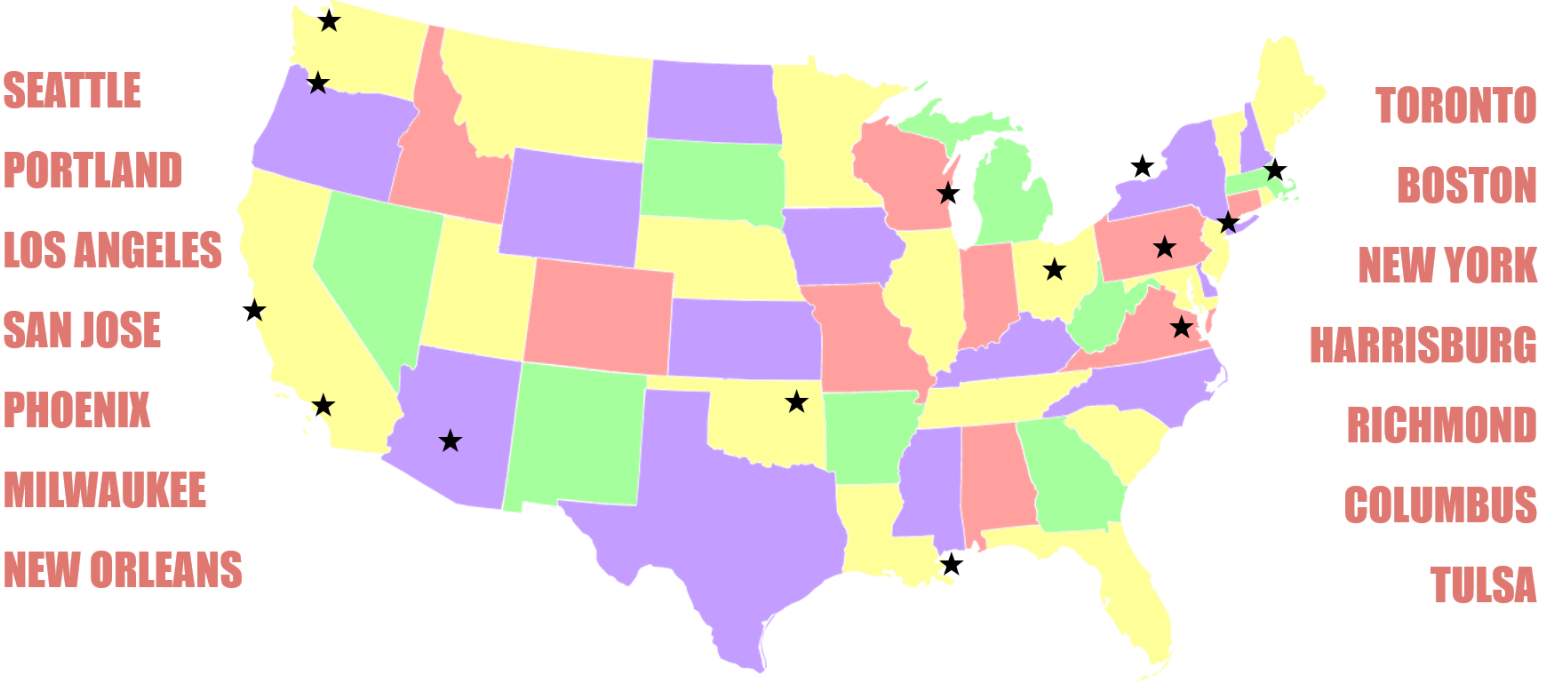
Intergenerational programming is any activity that aims to bring together two or more generations. Typically, such programs are geared to unite age groups that normally would not interact regularly, especially in an increasingly age-segregated society. Intergenerational programming is often targeted at connecting the most isolated generation, senior citizens, with younger generations, ranging from infants and toddlers to recent college graduates.

Individuals at opposing ends of the life cycle are often seen as burdens requiring constant care and supervision. However, intergenerational advocates attest that young children and seniors can also be assets, as their interactions provide mutual benefits. Nearly all intergenerational programs connect children young children with elderly citizens, although with varying frequency and activities. These include mentoring, arts and crafts, and holiday celebrations. These interactions often take place in a senior care facility, a school setting, or a local community center. A large proportion of senior care facilities sponsor programs that regularly engage younger generations with seniors, such as field trips to senior care facilities and seniors volunteering within schools. While many programs strive to create regular interactions, few have done so with long-term success, citing issues of transportation, scheduling, collaboration, and funding as the greatest impediments.

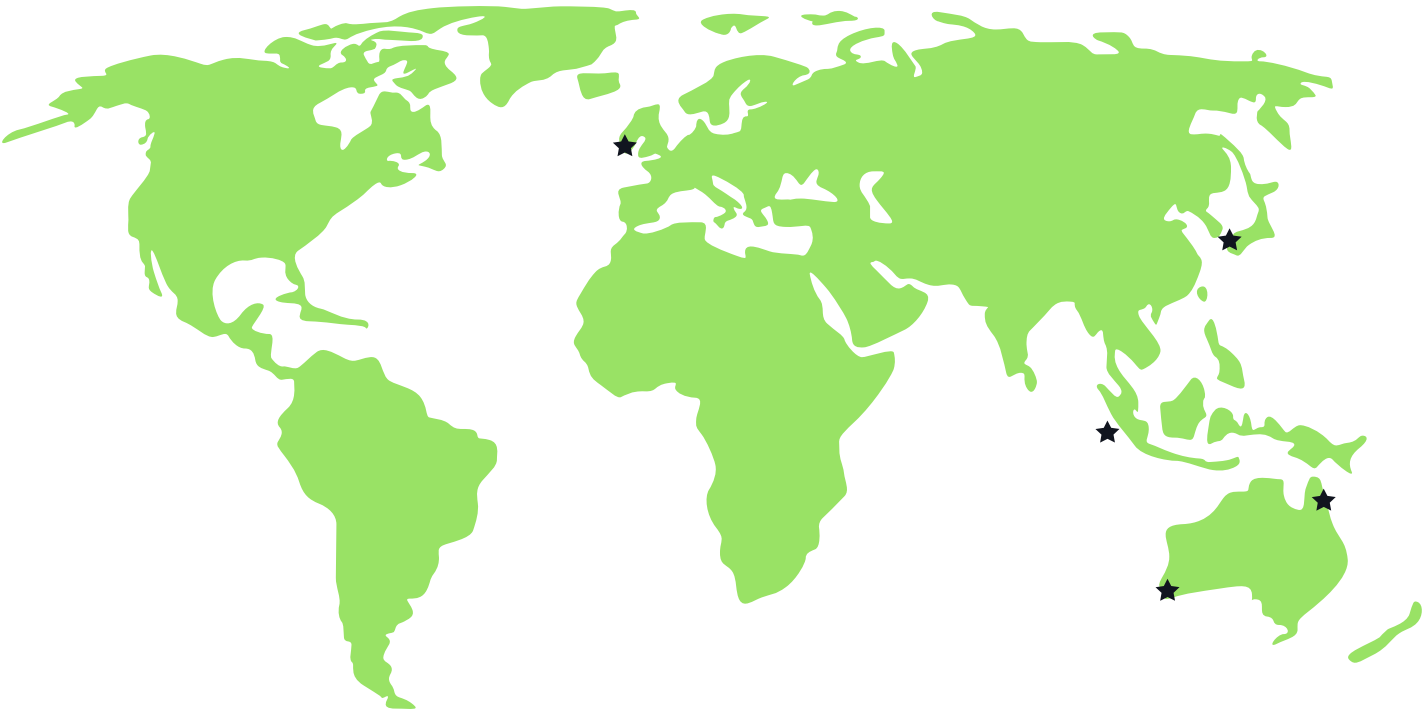
COLOCATION IN PRACTICE

In an effort to address those hurdles, some programs have colocated early childcare within senior care facilities, many with long-term success. The model originated abroad more than forty years ago and has since spread to Japan, United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, Singapore, Canada, and the United States. As an increasing share of citizens age out of the workforce, some governments have created financial incentives and initiatives dedicated to expanding the colocation model. In the United States, at least 150 Pre-K and childhood care sites are colocated within or adjacent to a senior care facility. Interestingly, most of the US colocated sites are in suburbs of metropolitan areas, though one study found those in rural areas tended to have stronger collaborations, possibly due to limited resources (Henkin 2017). Multiple case studies have found the demand to fill early childhood slots is high, noting colocated sites have lengthy waiting lists, and some utilize a lottery system (George 2018). The approach to programming also varies. In some colocated sites, activities are intentionally appealing to both children and seniors; in others, seniors are treated as curriculum facilitators, and therefore do not feel patronized when included in activities intended for children (George 2018).

COLOCATION IN MAJOR US METROPOLITAN AREAS



COLOCATION GLOBALLY



FINDINGS IN BRIEF

I: BENEFITS TO CHILDREN

- Academic
- Socioemotional

II: BENEFITS TO SENIORS

- Physical Health
- Mental Health

III: BENEFITS TO SITE OPERATORS

- Staff turnover
- Marketing
- Potential Cost Savings

IV: BENEFITS TO EDUCATION PROVIDERS

- Transportation
- Teaching Assistance
- Funding

V: BEST PRACTICES OF COLOCATION

- Facility
- Personnel
- Training

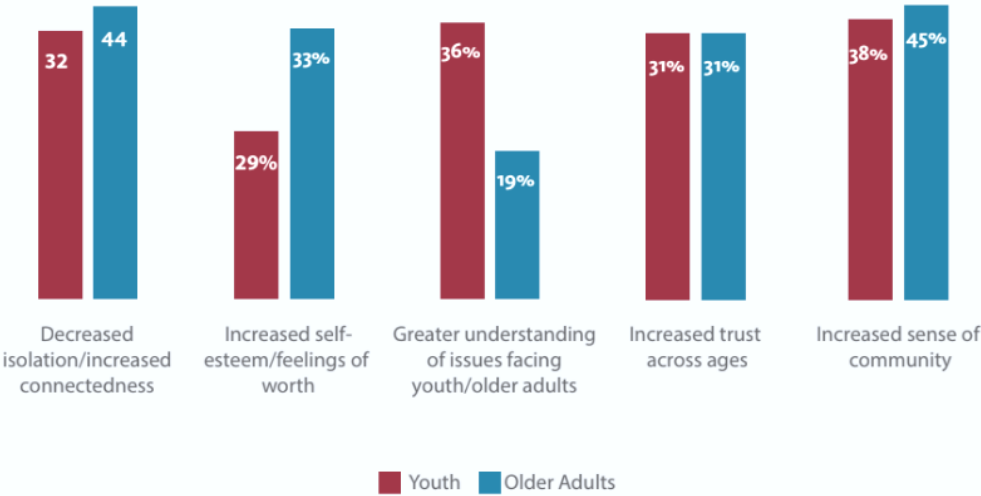
V: CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTATION

- Regulations
- Liability
- Background Checks

EVIDENCE

This report aims to document any potential benefits of colocation and evaluate if children in colocated Pre-K experience additional benefits as compared to children in a traditional Pre-K setting. There is an abundance of qualitative evidence from staff, administrators, parents, residents, families of residents, and former students detailing a multitude of perceived benefits from their experiences with the colocation model.

Comparison of the top 5 perceived benefits for older adults and youth (N = 109)



Source: Survey of 109 senior care facility operators with intergenerational programming, Henkin 2017

Multiple case studies, news articles and academic reports have found that those engaging in the colocation model, both directly and indirectly, express similar sentiments. From this body of qualitative evidence, it was evident that children experience academic and socioemotional benefits, and seniors experience physiological and mental health benefits. Relative to qualitative evidence, the quantitative evidence documenting the benefits of intergenerational programming is limited and primarily survey-based, with benefits often described in terms of potential links.

The existing quantitative evidence primarily evaluates the benefits to seniors, especially those with dementia, Alzheimers, and other cognitive impairments. The quantitative evidence of benefits for young children is even more limited, however some quasi-experimental studies exist, some school districts record data of academic outcomes, and two longitudinal studies are currently underway at Ohio State University and Washington State University. Many of the resources utilized for this report detailed overviews of the existing academic literature.

EVIDENCE

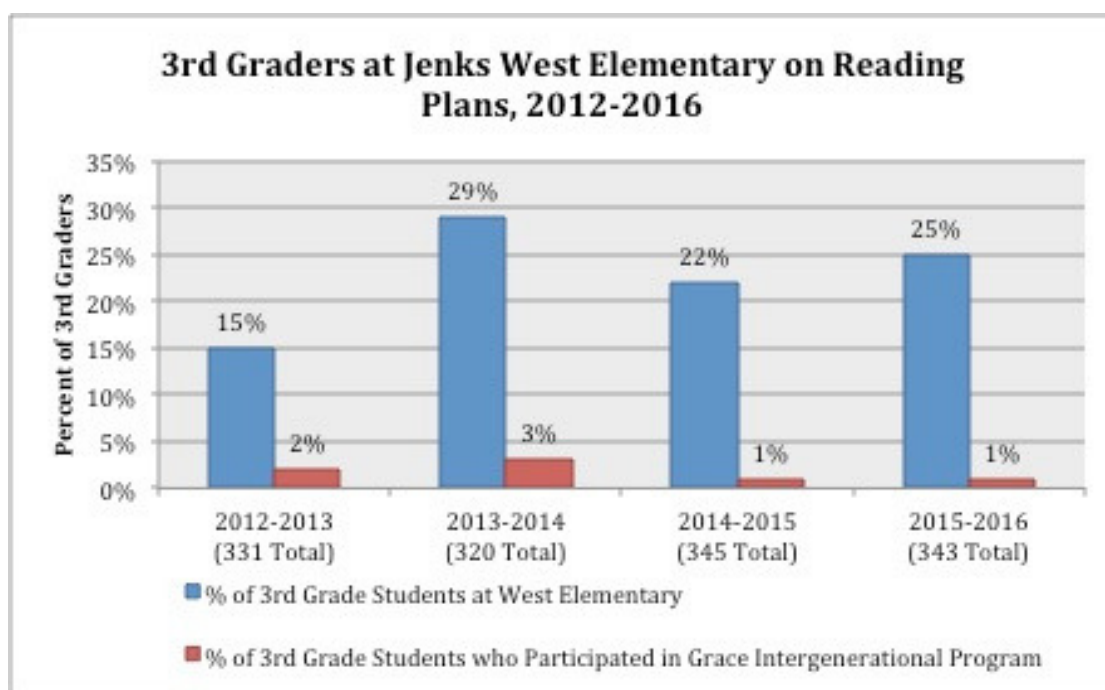
The Following Findings Are Primarily Drawn From:

- **“Starting Young: Lifelong Lessons from Intergenerational Care and Learning,”** British childcare professional Lorraine George, a 2017 recipient of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Travel Fellowship, reports on her visits to 7 colocated facilities across 3 US states, interviewing teachers, site operators, parents, staff, current participants, and former intergenerational participants.
- **“Intergenerational Programming for Young Children and Older Adults: An Overview of Needs, Approaches, and Outcomes in the United States,”** Devore et al report on the existing academic literature documenting benefits to children and seniors as well as literature supporting best intergenerational practices.
- **“Intergenerational Preschool Experiences and the Young Child: Potential Benefits to Development,”** Femia et al review existing studies of benefits to children from intergenerational programming and conduct a quasi-experimental point in time analysis of children who participated in colocated classrooms 1-3 years prior. Femia utilizes multiple statistical techniques to buttress validity of analysis.
- **“The Impact of Intergenerational Programs on Children and Older Adults: A Review,”** Gualano et al chart all existing quantitative studies of intergenerational colocated studies, including study attributes and findings. These include 15 studies of benefits to seniors, 10 studies of benefits to children, 2 studies from staffers, and 3 studies of program organizations.
- **“Intergenerational Shared Sites: Saving Dollars While Making Sense, An Analysis Comparing Operational Costs of Intergenerational Shared Site Facilities,”** a report by gerontologist and leading intergenerational academic Dr. Shannon Jarott evaluating cost savings of intergenerational colocated sites.
- **“Mixing Matters: How Shared Sites Can Bring Older and Younger People Together and Unite Brexit Britain,”** report by United for All Ages, the leading intergenerational advocacy organization in the United Kingdom, summarizing best practices worldwide.
- **“Promoting Sustainable Communities through Intergenerational Practice,”** Buffel et al evaluate academic evidence for community benefits from intergenerational programs and policy obstacles.
- **“Intergenerational Programming in Senior Housing: From Promise to Practice,”** Dr. Henkin et al report from a yearlong study documenting the extent and characteristics of intergenerational housing across the US by surveying 109 sites with intergenerational programming and interviewing 30 site providers.

Finding I: Benefits to Children

ACADEMIC

A hallmark feature of intergenerational programs is the increased attention and nurture the children receive from elders, many who perceive themselves as surrogate grandparents to the children. The seniors that partake in classroom activities also serve as live-in tutors. Many colocated programs have established reading programs, where students and elders read together daily and converse. The one-on-one tutoring has made a difference in students' confidence, literacy, and language skills as they engage in adult discussions with advanced vocabulary on a regular basis. The Jenks Public Schools district, in the suburbs of Tulsa, Oklahoma, has data demonstrating that third graders in the district who attend Pre-K or Kindergarten at the colocated senior care facility require substantially less reading intervention as compared to similar students who attend the neighborhood district school. Both groups of students reside in the same neighborhoods and have similar baseline characteristics.



Source: Jenks Public Schools, George 2018

SOCIOEMOTIONAL

Nearly every qualitative source in this report references an evident increase in empathy development as the most noticeable socio-emotional benefit to children. Parents and staff members have commented on how comfortably colocated children interact with individuals exhibiting cognitive and physical disabilities; a sense of normalcy had been created, they claimed, potentially precluding negative stereotype formation. Teachers and staffers have reported that they can easily identify which older children had previously been in a colocated program based on their comfort in interacting with disabled persons. Multiple site operators and staff note that the young children actually appear to be attracted to individuals who are quieter, nonverbal, have limited mobility, or are less engaged (George 2018). This phenomenon suggests children may also be learning advanced communication skills and emotional intelligence.

While much of this evidence stems from qualitative interviews, there is some quasi-experimental research to support these assertions. Employing the Children's Perception of Aging & Elderly (CPAE) inventory to assess empathy development, researchers found that the intergenerational children scored higher than the control group (Aday 1996). Nine studies have found that children in intergenerational programs exhibit more positive associations of seniors than their peers. Three studies showed no change in attitude; however, one of the three coded any reference to an assistance device as negative, while another studied an infrequent program with minimum interaction (Femia 2008, Jarrot 2008, DeVore 2016, Gualano 2018). The documented increase in empathy and positive attitudes appear to endure long after participation concludes; two quasi-experimental studies found above average levels of empathy and positive attitudes toward the elderly years after children had left an intergenerational program and had integrated into a more traditional school environment (Femia 2008, Gualano 2018). This result supports the qualitative reports from parents, teachers, and older students asserting that their children are more empathetic as a result of being exposed to intergenerational programming at such a young age. Taken together, there is increasing evidence that intergenerational Pre-K may play a lasting role in stereotype formation.



“I tell little girls they can go into science because I did. They sit in my lap, ask questions, and talk about school and their families.”

-----Susan Gock, resident at
St. Ann Center for
Intergenerational Care

Qualitative studies have found exceptional benefits for shy children, attributed to the increased attention and encouragement from residents; many parents remark that their children seem more confident and have higher self-esteem after participating in an intergenerational program. Another often cited benefit is behavioral regulation and pro-social behavior, such as following instructions, impulse control and putting others' needs before their own (Femia 2008). Interviews with children currently enrolled in colocated programs report that they feel good when they make the residents feel happy, and older children recall how gratifying it felt to be wanted and needed (George 2018).

Finding II: Benefits to Seniors

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Social isolation, depression, feelings of loneliness, helplessness and boredom plague nearly every residential senior care facility. Chronic social isolation has been a rising concern among senior care providers, as research has documented strong links to deteriorating health outcomes, increased physician visits, and increasing healthcare costs.

The health benefits of intergenerational Pre-K for seniors ranges from lower blood pressure, improved self-reported mental health, more positive attitudes, reduced attitudes, a more upbeat outlook toward the future, and a greater willingness to engage (Devore 2016). Arts and crafts activities help retain fine motor skills in arthritics hands, while daily wheelchair stretching with the children helps promote health and wellness.

Another benefit of colocation is the flexibility in engagement. As mental and physical states often vary from moment to moment, residents are able to actively participate on “good days” and passively enjoy the presence of children laughing and playing on more challenging days. Although not all residents actively participate in planned activities, many express joy at the presence of children within the facility. Senior care staff have also utilized the children as a method of increasing engagement from residents who normally do not leave their private rooms, such as informing reluctant residents that the children need their help (George 2018).

MENTAL HEALTH

Multiple case studies and academic journals cite that colocated intergenerational programs energized senior residents with a new sense of purpose, self-worth, confidence, and improved attitudes as many residents embraced the role of surrogate grandparents (Devore 2016, George 2018). Interactions with young children also seems to activate long term memories in residents with Alzheimer’s and dementia, which four stuies found allowed for moments of clarity and lucidity (Femia 2008, Gualano 2018). While all seniors seem to benefit from intergenerational interaction, seniors with more advanced care—including cognitive memory impairment, assisted living residents, and those in nursing homes—reap the largest benefits. As health deteriorates, autonomy and mobility are drastically reduced, leaving many of those needing advanced care feeling forgotten and useless. Therefore, the opportunity to nurture and educate young children helps reinvigorate a gratifying sense of self-worth and usefulness. Although many senior residents claim the children’s presence has improved their quality of life and mental health, the reverse is also true; residents report feeling more depressed during holidays and weekends when children were not present.

PATIENTS WITH
DEMENTIA,
ALZHEIMER'S, &
OTHER COGNITIVE
MEMORY
IMPAIRMENTS
ESPECIALLY BENEFIT
FROM ENGAGING
WITH YOUNG
CHILDREN

FOUR
INDEPENDENT
STUDIES ALL
DOCUMENTED AN
ABSENCE OF
CONFUSION &
AGGRESSION
DURING
INTERGENERATIONAL
ACTIVITIES

STAFFERS
REPORT THESE
INTERACTIONS
INDUCE
DEMENTIA
PATIENTS INTO A
RARE STATE OF
NORMALCY AND
LUCIDITY

RESEARCHERS
SUSPECT THAT
SINGING NURSERY
SONGS LIKE ABCS
TRIGGERS A
NEUROLOGICAL
PATHWAY TO LONG-
TERM MEMORY,
ESPECIALLY FOR
THOSE THAT RAISED
CHILDREN

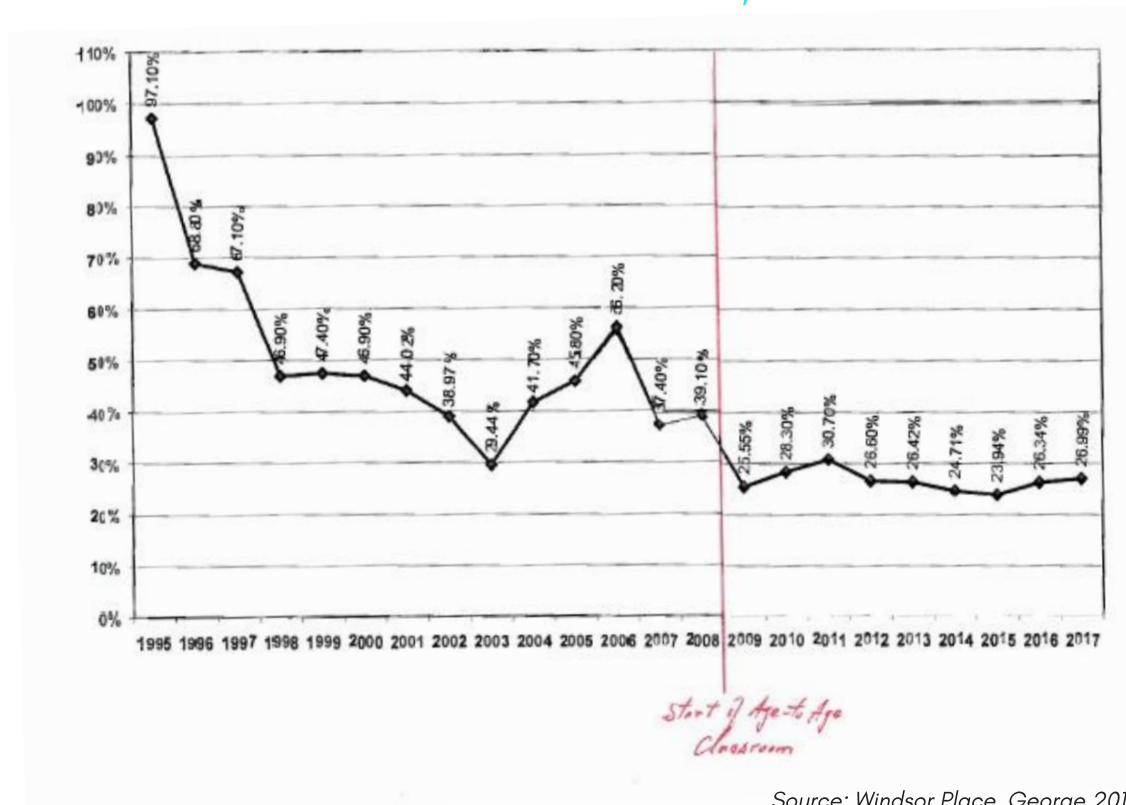
ADDITIONAL
RESEARCH IS
PRESENTLY
UNDERWAY TO
MORE
RIGOROUSLY
DOCUMENT
THESE EFFECTS

Finding III: Benefits to Senior Care Facilities Operators

TURNOVER

Multiple studies found that colocated senior care facilities experience below average staff turnover rates. This finding is notable because many facilities struggle to compete with hospital systems that offer staff higher wages. Interviews with site directors document that administrators believe their colocated intergenerational program has been influential in attracting and retaining staff, especially when children of staff are eligible to partake (Henkin 2017). Even when children of staff are not eligible to partake, the presence of children energizes the site and residents exhibit significantly more positive spirits, which creates a happier patient and a more pleasant work environment. Some administrators attribute the change in residents' affect to their reduced staff turnover, while other operators believe the work environment created by having children onsite as the driving factor for staff retention. Regardless, nearly all observe happier residents and happier staffers.

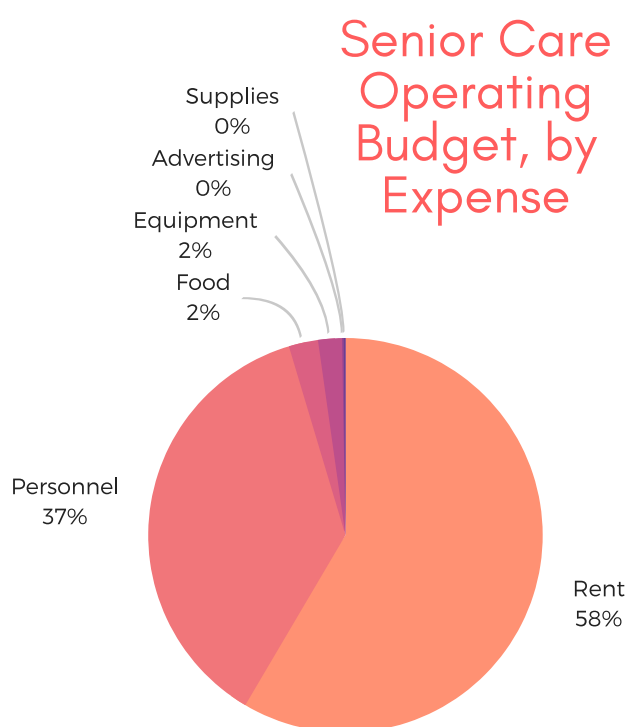
WINDSOR PLACE IN COFFEYVILLE, KS: STAFF TURNOVER RATES, 1998-2017



Source: Windsor Place, George 2018

MARKETING

Senior care facilities also find that an onsite preschool creates a significant value-add over competitors, as 95% of Americans surveyed in one study reported that they would prefer their elderly loved ones to be cared for in a non-age segregated site (Jayson 2018). Marketers harness this sentiment in advertising.



POTENTIAL COST SAVINGS

In an effort to understand what, if any benefit colocated senior care operators enjoy, a study by intergenerational academic and gerontologist, Dr. Shannon Jarrot, evaluated the seven largest expenses in operating budgets of senior care facilities and compared average costs of programs based on operational integration (OI) and frequency of programming (+5 hours/week considered as high frequency). The study found that while high-OI-high-frequency sites experienced a small increase in cost of supplies, food, and advertising per resident per month (\$18.70, \$40.00, \$1.70, respectively), there were cost savings in terms of rent, personnel, and equipment. The study estimated that a high-OI-high-frequency program can expect to pay \$1,290 less per month, per resident, on personnel costs, \$17.00 less on equipment, and require 54 square feet less per resident. On average, rent and personnel comprise 95% of operating expenses for senior care facilities, suggesting the potential cost-savings from high-OI-high-frequency programs could be substantial (Jarrot 2008).

Finding IV: Benefits to Educators

TRANSPORTATION

The most cited benefit to education providers is that colocation eliminates the need for transportation. An added benefit of collocating within senior care facilities is that all sites have ADA-compliant vans, which may be utilized to transport children to and from the facility (Gualano 2018).

TEACHING ASSISTANCE

In many classrooms, 1-2 educators are present; in a colocated site, the residents help teachers prepare materials for a joint activity, tutor children in math, reading and language, engage in deep thinking, offer praise and encouragement, serve as role models, and monitor behavior. Senior residents who are retired teachers can provide more specialized teaching support. .

FUNDING

A report of 109 intergenerational programs found that most colocated programs are supported through the site's general operating budget (Henkin 2017). If the center is willing to fund the cost of materials necessary for joint activities, such as books or art supplies, there is a potential cost savings.

CAVEAT

Case studies and the academic literature emphasizes how crucial it is that a colocated Pre-K not be viewed as merely an "add-on" or "cost savings" mechanism, but rather and integral part of the culture and mission of the senior care facility. This includes support and commitment from staffers and leadership of both partner organizations, as well as consistent and adequate funding streams.

Finding V: Best Practices

FACILITY

Colocation has been most success in residential senior care facilities where residents require some level of care, such as assisted living and nursing homes (Henkin 2017). This is likely due to the loss of autonomy generating a greater sense of “uselessness” and “being forgotten.” Therefore, these residents are much more eager to engage with children; in day centers and independent living, seniors exhibit less interest in intergenerational activities. The most sustainable models are almost always implemented in either a privately owned and operated facility or a religious non-profit. For child care centers that are privately run, sustainability is more challenging as volatility in enrollment and tuition revenue affect operations and long-term planning. A private residential care facility with a Pre-K through the public school system appears to be the most sustainable model (Henkin 2017).

PERSONNEL

While some of the most established colocated sites have a fulltime staff member exclusively dedicated toward intergenerational programming, the vast majority of colocated sites do not. Multiple testimonies stress the importance of having staff in each partner organizations—i.e. a teaching paraprofessional and senior care staffer—jointly responsible for intergenerational programming and planning as an explicit component of their professional responsibilities. These staffers must collaborate on a regular basis to plan activities of interest to their respective populations. A study found that some intergenerational sites folded when intergenerational duties were assigned to individuals who did not have the time or capacity to engage in cooperative, purposeful planning that met curriculum requirements. Others struggled to continue when a staffer that served as the primary “intergenerational champion” left, emphasizing the need for full commitment from all stakeholders; leveraging staffers from both partner organizations can help serve as a buffer in the event of turnover. For the success of an intergenerational Pre-K, it is vital that both partner organizations are committed to intergenerational programming, including administration, residents, families of children, and site staffers.

TRAINING

The importance of proper training to the success of a shared site cannot be overstated; the loss of skilled personnel has been one of the leading causes of intergenerational programs folding. Most sites create their own training procedures ad hoc, although organizations dedicated to intergenerational programming, such as Generations United, have published their own training materials for public use. Educators and children typically undergo dementia and elderly care sensitivity training, usually administered by a staffer at the facility, while senior care staffers and residents receive training on appropriate interaction and communication with young children.

BEST PRACTICES IN BRIEF

- The Pre-K is colocated or adjacent to the senior care facility
- The Pre-K is operated through the local public school system
- The senior care facility is residential, privately owned and operated
- The facility is not solely independent living; assisted living or continuum is best
- Leadership and staff in both partner organizations are committed to intergenerational programming
- Interactions are regular, purposeful, planned, and appealing to the interest and abilities of both the residents and children
- Programs are structured to allow for both planned and spontaneous interactions
- Activities occur both inside and outside the designated youth space to increase resident engagement
- Residents are not asked to provide an upfront, long-term commitment to any activity
- Staff in both partner organizations have intergenerational programming embedded in their professional duties
- Staff, children, and residents receive adequate training on interacting with the partner organization's population

Finding VI: Challenges to Implementation

Despite the potential benefits of colocated intergenerational programs, few sites have replicated the colocation model, citing regulations, liability and financing. Although these challenges require serious consideration, the existing +150 colocated sites across the US suggest these challenges are not insurmountable, and these sites can likely serve as a valuable resource on how best to address these concerns.

REGULATIONS

The most frequently cited obstacle to implementing the colocation model is regulations. Some sites report conflicting regulations, while other interested sites find the task of aligning and complying with regulations too overwhelming. In Montgomery County, a review of COMAR and interviews with local regulators suggest that local and state regulations for partner organizations are well aligned. However, ensuring regulation alignment is tedious, complex and potentially costly. Therefore, the Montgomery County Council should create a licensing manual, as it has done for other COMAR regulations, explaining colocation requirements in layman terms and outlining steps for compliance. Simplifying this task may encourage senior care operators to consider colocation. In cases where regulations do not align, the Montgomery County may consider amending legislation to ensure better alignment.

LIABILITY

Insurance and liability issues are also causes for concern. While senior, child care and educational facilities are responsible for the care of their prospective clients, they may not be willing to bear the liability should a participant be left unattended or leave a secured premises during intergenerational activities. AON, an insurer of several senior care facilities nationwide, offers a plan tailored to colocated sites. Other colocated sites should be interviewed to learn how they addressed liability concerns.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Another deterrent is the expense of background checks, which sites in other jurisdictions cannot necessarily afford. In Montgomery County, all senior care facilities run background checks on residents, although under current regulations, sites are unable to share that information. A change to regulations allowing for an information sharing agreement could potentially be one avenue to address this challenge, although senior care staff may still bear the responsibility to ensure residents that may pose a risk to children do not participate in joint activities. In most colocated sites, staffers from both partner organizations jointly supervise all interactions between children and senior residents.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

Ask local regulators of childcare and senior care sites to jointly review local and state regulations in search of discrepancies. Consult intergenerational experts and other colocated sites for guidance on how to resolve issues.

Contact colocated sites in other jurisdictions that have partnered with a public school district to inquire about process and contractual elements to address challenges to implementation.

Survey early childhood education providers, parents, and senior care providers to gauge interest in a local colocation model.

Conduct a capacity study of assisted living facilities to evaluate potential pilot sites. Considerations should include outdoor play space, excess indoor recreation space, transportation capacity, distance to public transport, and staffing ratios.

Create policies that incentivize the creation of shared sites through retrofitting an existing space, building an addition, or incorporating a classroom into the plans for a proposed new facility. Potential options to explore include property tax breaks, grants, and “double counting” a percentage of square footage in a colocated site if the site is being used to deliver early childhood education.

Explore variations of the colocation model, including the potential for half-day Pre-K with family-based childcare or before and after school childcare.

Contact Maryland Retired School Personnel Association (formerly Maryland Retired Teachers Association) for guidance on recruiting retired teachers in senior care facilities as potential volunteers.

Consult with local non-profits that specialize in intergenerational programming for innovative activities that can further support curriculum goals. For example, one local non-profit supports an award-winning program that matches seniors with English Language Learners in local schools to assist in reading and language fluency.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Colocating Pre-K within senior care facilities shows promise as one potential avenue to address the physical capacity crisis that has hindered Pre-K expansion in Montgomery County. The model appears to be feasible, and there is both ample qualitative evidence as well as growing quantitative evidence that colocated Pre-K generates many benefits to all relevant stakeholders. Most importantly, there is evidence to suggest that preschoolers in an intergenerational setting experience additional academic and socioemotional benefits as compared to preschoolers in traditional high-quality Pre-K.

As the elderly continue to comprise an ever-increasing share of Montgomery County's population, the issues of social isolation, depression, and boredom afflicting residents of senior care facilities will also continue to rise. Policies designed to encourage the expansion of the colocation model in Montgomery County may be one method to address the needs of this population.

The benefits of an intergenerational colocated Pre-K also have larger societal implications. As families have become more spread out over time, our society has increasingly become age segregated; it is rare for a child to interact with the elderly outside of their own family. This lack of interaction can sow mistrust and misunderstanding of core issues affecting each population. As Montgomery County continues to encourage initiatives that promote diversity and tolerance, intergenerational colocation is yet another avenue for the Montgomery County Council to increase understanding across generations and normalize attitudes toward individuals with disabilities or other impairments at an early age.

After reviewing the academic literature, case studies, reports, and government regulations, I hope the Montgomery County Council will consider further researching the potential for implementing the colocation model in Montgomery County.

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