

# Intergenerational Writing Project

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*McKinley Elementary School  
Stevens Point, Wisconsin*

Imagine how different life would be without pizza. McKinley Elementary School students got a chance to hear many tales such as this through an intergenerational writing project. McKinley's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) invited their community's Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) to school for a day of sharing life stories. Students interviewed the senior volunteers with questions they prepared ahead of time, and each of the seniors gave detailed, memorable answers. Afterwards, students wrote about the stories they heard and sent thank-you notes to the senior volunteers.

The idea for the Intergenerational Writing Project originated during one of McKinley's ATP meetings. Team members brainstormed different partnership ideas that could support student writing. The Intergenerational Writing Project was the best received, since it would both appeal to students and achieve academic goals. To gain support for the idea, ATP members publicized the project through their school's newsletter.

ATP members determined the number of senior volunteers needed in each classroom and the length of the interviews. Then, the team collaborated with teachers to decide how the interview process would work and what the students would do with the senior's information. The ATP worked with the coordinator of RSVP and the teachers to set up a time for the seniors to visit the classrooms. On the day of the interviews, students escorted the senior volunteers to the different classrooms.

In addition to enjoying an afternoon together, students and seniors gained other

benefits from the Intergenerational Writing Project. Seniors gave intriguing answers to the students' questions about life before they were born. One student was sorry that seniors never had video games, and another couldn't understand how they survived childhood without pizza! Academically, students improved upon their literacy skills by writing stories and thank-you notes.

The RSVP visit was the talk of the school for days to come. McKinley Elementary School encourages other schools to take full advantage of senior volunteer groups in their community, for they are a valuable resource in building partnerships and improving student success.

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