DESIGNING AND DELIVERING ARTS PROGRAMS FOR OLDER ADULT LEARNERS

Manual for Artist Training in Arts and Aging

Manual adapted from the National Center for Creative Aging’s NCCA Online Artist Training in Arts and Aging for Classroom Education of Professional Artists
This manual contains a print version of the contents of the Online Artist Training in the Arts and Aging, available for free through the National Center for Creative Aging's website: www.creativeaging.org. In the process of its adaptation by Lisa Yanofsky, EdM, some sections have been rearranged and parts excluded, while the section on intergenerational arts programs was expanded. It is intended for supplemental use by participants in the classroom training program.

The online training was developed with support from:

- National Endowment for the Arts
- The Michelson Foundation
- MetLife Foundation

The classroom version was supported by grants to Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging from:

- The Cleveland Foundation
- Ohio Arts Council
INTRODUCTION 7

LESSON 1: Introduction to Aging and Creativity
The New Global Demographics 9
The Aging Process 10
The Creative Age 12
LESSON 1 Summary 13

LESSON 2: Benefits of Arts in Aging
Evidence of Benefits of Arts Participation for Older Adults 15
Art or Art Therapy? 16
LESSON 2 Summary 18
LESSON 2 Handouts 19

LESSON 3: Principles of Lifelong Learning
Lifelong Learning and Creativity 21
The Case for Arts Engagement with Older Adults 22
Mastery and Social Engagement 24
LESSON 3 Summary 26

LESSON 4: Effective Arts in Aging Programs and the Role of the Teaching Artist
Characteristics of Effective Arts and Aging Programs 27
Outcomes for Arts and Aging Programming 28
The Teaching Artist as a Facilitator 29
Case Study: Thirty Seconds to a New Life 33
LESSON 4 Summary 35
LESSON 4 Handouts 37

LESSON 5: Considering Accessibility and Cognitive Disabilities in Arts in Aging
Accessibility 39
Facilitating Sessions for People with Cognitive Disabilities 42
LESSON 5 Summary 44

LESSON 6: Intergenerational Learning and Programming
What is Intergenerational Learning? 45
Why Intergenerational Learning? 46
Addressing Challenges 48
Intergenerational Arts Program Objectives 49
Process vs. Product 51
Evaluation, Documentation and Assessment from the Outset 51
Structure of Intergenerational Programming 51
Best Practice Programs 63
Case Study: EngAGE Intergenerational Claymation Project 64
Best Practices Program: Intergenerational Learning as Teacher Training 68
Intergenerational Warm-up and Introductory Activities 71
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Intergenerational Projects: Resources | 72 |
| LESSON 6 Summary | 74 |
| LESSON 6 Handouts | 77 |

**LESSON 7: Working with Reminiscence and Imagination Part 1**
- Reminiscence | 85 |
- Case Study: Sachi Ann Welsh | 86 |
- Sense Memory and Sense Imagination | 89 |
- Recalling Memories through Visualization | 90 |
| LESSON 7 Summary | 94 |
| LESSON 7 Handouts | 95 |

**LESSON 8: Working with Reminiscence and Imagination Part 2**
- Cultural Sensitivity | 101 |
- Using Themes | 104 |
- Arts Engagement Exercise: Interviewing | 107 |
- Handling Difficult Memories | 108 |
- Arts Engagement Exercise: Sharing Memories | 109 |
- Arts Engagement Exercise: Group Poems | 111 |
- Case Study: From Word Collage to Poetry | 111 |
| LESSON 8 Summary | 113 |
| LESSON 8 Handouts | 115 |

**LESSON 9: Planning Your Workshop**
- Creating a Session Plan | 121 |
- Sequencing Activities and Managing Time | 126 |
- Case Study: There Is No Wrong in This Room | 128 |
| LESSON 9 Summary | 131 |
| LESSON 9 Handouts | 133 |

**LESSON 10: Planning a Workshop for Adults with Cognitive Disabilities**
- Making Your Session Plan Work for Your Participants | 143 |
- Planning Sessions for Older Adults with Alzheimer's and Related Neurocognitive Disorders | 144 |
- Process and Product | 146 |
| LESSON 10 Summary | 149 |
| LESSON 10 Handouts | 151 |

**LESSON 11: Creating a Space for Creativity**
- Creating a Space for Creativity | 155 |
- Arts Engagement Exercise: Opening and Closing Rituals | 156 |
- Arts Engagement Exercise: Getting Oriented to an Instrument | 157 |
- Case Study: Beginner’s Mind | 159 |
| LESSON 11 Summary | 163 |
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LESSON 12: Exercises, Activities and Case Studies
Warm-ups 165
Alzheimer’s Poetry Project Call and Response Technique 167
Engagement 169
Group Learning 170
Listening and Communication Skills 172
Importance of Movement 175
The Body Percussion Exercise 176
Importance of Feedback 184
Closing Exercises 186
Additional Case Studies and Best Practices Programs 188
LESSON 12 Summary 194
LESSON 12 Handouts 197

LESSON 13: Program Planning
Program Planning for Teaching Artists 203
Program Evaluation 205
Widening the Circle: Partnering with Other Teaching Artists 207
LESSON 13 Summary 214

LESSON 14: Partnerships
Working with Senior Centers 215
Working with Retirement Communities and Long-Term Care Residences 216
Person-Centered Care 218
LESSON 14 Summary 224

Reflection 225
Resources 233
Bibliography 239
WHAT WILL I LEARN FROM THIS TRAINING?

This Encore Artist Training manual offers an introduction to philosophy, key concepts, methods, and current research from the field of arts in aging. It provides an overview of the aging process and examines older adults as lifelong learners who have tremendous creative potential.

It explores the teaching artist’s role as a facilitator and presents guidelines for creating effective activities, workshops, programs, and partnerships for engaging older adults in the arts. It introduces readers to the life story-based methods developed by Susan Perlstein and Elders Share the Arts, as well as other approaches and techniques, offering an array of exercises and case studies that exemplify the work that is happening in the field today.

The training has been designed to give learners an overview of working with the wide range of older adults that teaching artists may encounter. Strategies and techniques for working with older adults with physical or cognitive disabilities (including Alzheimer’s disease and related disorders that cause memory loss) are threaded throughout, but the scope of this training allows only an introductory look at this subject. Learners who want more in-depth information are encouraged to consult the Resources section and pursue additional training and field experience.

LEARNING GOALS

You will find that each chapter has several goals to ensure that you are making proper progress. Use these goals to assess and monitor your own learning. By the end of the manual you will be able to:

1. Describe and understand the implications of demographic changes relating to older adults
2. Identify characteristics of the normal aging process, including cognitive, social, emotional, and physical characteristics
3. Recognize how developmental changes in later life contribute to an individual’s creative potential
4. Find connections between theories about human development in later life and creativity and expression in older artists
5. Make the case for the benefit of arts in aging populations
6. Understand the purpose of warm-up exercises in arts engagement with older adults
7. Feel confident leading appropriate warm-up exercises in several artistic disciplines
8. Have an understanding of how working intergenerationally can enrich teaching and learning
9. Have internalized best practices in working with intergenerational and aging populations
LESSON GOALS

1. Describe and understand the implications of demographic changes relating to older adults
2. Identify characteristics of the normal aging process
3. Recognize how developmental changes in later life contribute to creative potential
4. See the connection between theories about human development in later life and creative expression

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE: CREATIVITY IN LATER LIFE

Do you think creativity is important as people age? Why?
How has your personal creativity changed as you’ve aged?
What is your definition of creativity?

THE NEW GLOBAL DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic landscape of the United States—and the world—is shifting dramatically. In 2011, the oldest of the baby boomers turned 65. By 2060, the number of people 65 and older in the U.S. will have more than doubled, from 43.1 million to 92 million. With average life expectancy for a 65-year-old today at nearly 20 additional years, our country will see more and more people living into their 80s and beyond, many of whom will remain active and healthy throughout their lives. This “age wave” is the beginning of the new normal: more than a quarter of children born today will reach their 100th birthday.

Currently the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population is people 85 and older. This increase in the “oldest old” (who are the most likely to be living with memory loss and neurocognitive disorders), coupled with the rising number of older adults with chronic disease, has led to the need for expanded health care and aging services. Along with an increasing number of professional health care providers, there are millions of family caregivers, many of whom are older than 55 themselves and balancing their own aging process and caregiving stresses with the needs of their loved ones.

While the aging process itself and the demographic shift underway present undeniable challenges, they also hold tremendous promise. The last decade has seen the emergence in the U.S. and the Western world of a perspective on older adults that highlights their creative and productive potential and the contributions they make to our society. This view lies at the heart of creative aging.

The field of creative aging was pioneered by artists such as Susan Perlstein (founder of Elders Share the Arts and the National Center for Creative Aging) and Liz
LESSON 1: Introduction to Aging and Creativity

Lerman (founder of Dance Exchange), who were energetically breaking ground and dismantling stereotypes by making art with older adults from the late 1970s. The field has come into its own in the new millennium. It is expanding rapidly and will undoubtedly be propelled forward by baby boomers who demand the self-fulfillment of creative expression in their later years and by the need for effective, low-cost approaches that complement health care and community-based care and enhance quality of life for individuals and communities.

THE AGING PROCESS

As human beings, we age from the time of birth. Aging can be defined as the accumulation of changes in a person over time, a multidimensional process of physical, psychological, and social change. Some dimensions grow and expand over time, while others decline. Physical flexibility, for example, tends to diminish with age, while practical knowledge and wisdom are likely to increase. Since we experience tremendous variety in the ways and the rates at which we grow older, it is important to remember that older adults are not a homogenous group, but rather each is an individual with a particular experience of living and aging influenced by many factors, including genetics, lifestyle, temperament, gender, social connections, and economic status.

It is possible to identify common aspects of the aging process, some of which present challenges and bring loss while others enrich life for the individual and those around them. Although many teaching artists work with older adults who live in institutionalized settings and require specialized care, the reality is that most adults in developed countries lead healthy, active lives into their 70s and 80s.

The following information describes some of the changes associated with normal aging.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGES

With advances in medicine and a growing body of knowledge about how to maintain health, Americans are now better able than previous generations to age with vitality. Research has shown that poor health does not have to be an inevitable consequence of aging. Older adults who practice healthy behaviors, take advantage of clinical preventive services, and continue to engage with family and friends are more likely to remain healthy and live independently.

However, even the healthiest individuals normally experience some sensory loss in their later years, with vision and hearing undergoing the greatest changes. Approximately one in 28 persons over 40 has moderate to severe vision loss, and nearly two-thirds of Americans 70 and older are deaf or hard of hearing. If not addressed, hearing and vision loss can lead to diminished functioning, isolation, and depression, and they may be associated with a reduction in overall health. Diminished taste and smell may make eating less enjoyable for older people and contribute to a decline in appetite and weight loss.

Changes in vision, balance, and leg strength place older adults at greater risk for falls, which can result in serious injury or death and may require long hospital stays for
Older adults are also disproportionately affected by chronic diseases, which are associated with disability, diminished quality of life, and increased costs for health care and long-term care. Today about 80 percent of older adults have at least one chronic health condition, and 50 percent have two or more. Major chronic health conditions of older people include heart disease, arthritis, diabetes, cancer, hypertension, and high blood pressure.\(^\text{13}\)

**INTELLECTUAL AND COGNITIVE CHANGES**

Intellectual capacity is determined by the ability to develop new connections between neurons in the brain. These connections (called dendrites) continue to form throughout a person’s lifespan, with their number and length increasing in the early 50s through the late 70s.\(^\text{14}\) This proliferation of dendrites gives older adults an advantage in handling complexity. It also helps explain why “crystallized abilities” that depend on long-term memory, such as knowledge and expertise, increase through our lives, even as “fluid abilities” that rely on short-term memory storage while information is processed (such as speed and problem solving) show declines from early adulthood.\(^\text{15}\)

While some degree of memory loss is common in older adults, and there is a greater risk of Alzheimer’s disease or other neurocognitive disorder (NCD) as age increases, such conditions are not a normal or inevitable part of aging.\(^\text{16}\) Only an estimated 13.9 percent of Americans 71 and older have Alzheimer’s or another NCD that affects their memory. Even among those 85 and older, currently less than half (45 percent) has Alzheimer’s disease.\(^\text{17}\)

**EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Contrary to the stereotype of the irritable, withdrawn old person, older adults as a whole experience greater emotional balance than younger people. Developments in the brain’s limbic system, which produces and regulates emotional responses, lead to calmer emotions, better judgment, and a positive outlook.\(^\text{18}\) However, emotional losses, chronic illness, pain, medications, and changes in income and surroundings may make an older adult at risk for depression. Depression is characterized by persistent sadness, discouragement, loss of self-worth, insomnia, and an increased concern with aches and pains. It is often under-diagnosed and untreated in the older population.\(^\text{19}\)

**INCREASED LIFE EXPERIENCE AND WISDOM**

Researchers have documented that people in their 70s and 80s have an abundance of social and emotional knowledge, qualities that scientists are beginning to define as wisdom. This may be related to neurobiology, emotional maturity, or the insights gained from years of living—or perhaps a combination of all three.\(^\text{20}\) Older adults not only possess an enhanced ability to navigate the important challenges of social life, but they can contribute significantly in the social and cultural realm, not least by playing a role as keepers of culture, passing on values, meaning, and wisdom through their stories.\(^\text{21}\)
Throughout the aging process, the arts can play a vital role. Participation in the arts stimulates the senses, enlivens individuals mentally and emotionally, and promotes physical and cognitive health. The arts provide opportunities for healing, self-expression, and learning amid physiological, cognitive, and social losses, such as illness or the death of close friends and family. They allow older adults to maintain and form social bonds that can bolster health and well-being. And they offer an avenue of exploration and expression for the perspectives, stories, and creative impulses of older adults.

THE CREATIVE AGE

The Longevity Revolution is a great intellectual and social as well as medical achievement and an opportunity that demands changes in outmoded mind-sets, attitudes, and socioeconomic arrangements...The social construct of old age, even the inner life and the activities of older persons, is now subject to a positive revision. —Robert Butler, psychiatrist and author of The Longevity Revolution: The Benefits and Challenges of Living a Long Life

The understanding of the creative potential of older adults that has emerged in this millennium has been one of the major cultural breakthroughs in human history. Researchers such as Norman Doidge, Laura Carstensen, and Roberto Cabeza have retooled long-held views of human capacities by demonstrating the following:

- The brain has plasticity—it develops continually in response to experience and learning.
- New brain cells form throughout life, provided the brain receives the proper stimulation.
- As individuals grow older, they tend to become more emotionally stable and to have a more “even-keeled” perspective.
- The brain’s two hemispheres are more equally used by older adults.

Gene Cohen, an American psychiatrist and gerontologist, theorized that as people age and gain life experience, they also develop an enhanced ability to make sense of life and relate life stories as a result of a re-sculpted brain. This understanding of neurobiology fits with psychoanalyst Erik Erikson’s concept of the last stage of life, which he called "integrity vs. despair." He posited that the key developmental task of this stage was to examine one’s past, come to terms with one’s losses, and celebrate one’s successes, thereby achieving a sense of integrity.

A student of Dr. Erikson’s, Dr. Cohen advanced a nuanced model of psychological development in later life with four phases—midlife reevaluation, liberation, summing up, and encore. According to this model, these phases bring individuals a sense of liberation and freedom of expression, a desire for novelty, a motivation to share wisdom, and a desire to find meaning in their lives. Together, the remodeling of the brain and the development of the psyche lay the foundation for creative potential in later life. This suggests that it makes sense to approach older adults with respect for their capacity as artists, even though they may be picking up a paint brush or stepping on stage for the first time in their lives.
LESSON 1 SUMMARY

“Introduction to Aging and Creativity” discussed the aging process and the creative potential of older adults.

CHECK-IN: LESSON 1 GOALS

- I can describe and understand the implications of demographic changes relating to older adults
- I can identify characteristics of the normal aging process
- I can recognize how developmental changes in later life contribute to creative potential
- I see the connection between theories about human development in later life and creative expression

LESSON 1 NOTES


2. Ibid.


11. National Center for Creative Aging, Creativity Matters, 14.


LESSON 1: Introduction to Aging and Creativity

22. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
29. Gay Hanna and Susan Perlstein, Creativity Matters: Arts and Aging in America (monograph), (September 2008), 5.
LESSON GOALS

1. Describe current evidence-based research about the benefits of arts participation for older adults
2. Distinguish between the roles of the teaching artist and the art therapist

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Based on what you have learned so far, why might participating in the arts be beneficial for older adults?

EVIDENCE OF BENEFITS OF ARTS PARTICIPATION FOR OLDER ADULTS

The knowledge that participation in the arts provides real benefits to older adults, at least some of which are measurable and can be documented with evidence, has now become a cornerstone in the field of arts and aging. In the last decade, research has begun to accumulate that presents evidence supporting the benefits of arts participation and arts education for older adults. The following studies are a sampling of those presented in the 2011 white paper, The Arts and Human Development: Framing a National Research Agenda for the Arts, Lifelong Learning, and Individual Well-Being, created in partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.¹

OPTIMIZING HEALTH OUTCOMES

- Better overall physical health, fewer doctor visits, less medication, fewer falls for choral singers - Cohen et al. (2006). A study co-funded by the NEA, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), and other sponsors measured the impact of a professionally conducted choral program on the physical health, mental health, and social functioning of older adults. The intervention group reported better overall physical health, fewer doctor visits, less medication use, fewer instances of falls, and fewer health problems in relation to the comparison group. Similarly, the comparison group had a significant decline in total number of activities, whereas the intervention group reported a trend toward increased activity.

- Improvements in balance, gait, and falls for people with Parkinson’s disease dancing tango - Hackney, Kantorovich, and Earhart (2007). Madeleine Hackney and colleagues evaluated whether functional mobility benefits of a tango-dancing program might extend to adults with Parkinson’s disease (PD). Thirty-eight subjects were assigned to either a control group or a tango group; the control group completed 10 one-hour exercise classes in 13 weeks, and the tango group completed the same number of tango classes during that time. Only the PD tango group improved on all measures of balance, falls, and gait.
CREATIVITY, COGNITION, AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

- **Improved cognitive functioning and psychological well-being as a result of theatrical training** - Noice, Noice, and Staines (2004). Helga and Tony Noice investigated the effects of theatrical training on cognitive function and quality of life. Cognitive function and mental health were assessed by tests of word recall, listening tasks, problem-solving, and measures of self-esteem and psychological well-being. Results revealed that the theater intervention group scored significantly higher than both control groups on recall, problem-solving, and psychological well-being. Follow-up testing four months after the intervention—to determine if the results were sustained in the theater group—revealed significant increases in word recall scores and no significant decline in mental health measures.

- **People with memory impairment more engaged and alert and seen more positively by staff in facilities with TimeSlips storytelling program** - Fritsch et al. (2009). Thomas Fritsch and colleagues investigated the impact of a 10-week TimeSlips storytelling intervention on quality of care for persons with Alzheimer’s disease and related neurocognitive disorders residing in long-term care facilities. Results indicated that those in the facilities served by TimeSlips were more engaged and more alert than those in control facilities. There were more frequent staff-resident interactions, social interactions, and more social engagement in TimeSlips facilities. Staff in TimeSlips communities developed more positive views of people with neurocognitive disorders and devalued residents less than in the control group.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE: ADVOCACY

Imagine you are talking to someone about your work, perhaps an administrator of an assisted living facility or a funder that supports health-related projects. How could you make a case, using research-based evidence, for the benefits of arts participation for older adults? What might you say to help them understand how your work can help them achieve health and well-being outcomes for the older adults they serve?

ART OR ART THERAPY?

If participation in the arts is known to have positive health outcomes and therapeutic benefits for older adults, is it art therapy by definition?

According to the American Art Therapy Association, “Art therapy is the therapeutic use of art making, within a professional relationship, by people who experience illness, trauma, or challenges in living, and by people who seek personal development. Through creating art and reflecting on the art products and processes, people can increase awareness of self and others; cope with symptoms, stress, and traumatic experiences; enhance cognitive abilities; and enjoy the life-affirming pleasures of making art.”

The definition of art therapy could apply to any of the creative arts therapies, which include art, dance and movement, music, and drama and psychodrama. A key characteristic of creative arts therapy is that it is led by professionals trained in both art and therapy. Another is that its intention is therapeutic; it is primarily a medical intervention in the model of assessment,
diagnosis, and treatment. This differs from arts and aging programming, which is primarily about enhancing quality of life.³

Artists who work in community settings, including those who work with older adults, inevitably find that art-making offers therapeutic benefits to those who engage in it. In describing this, choreographer and MacArthur Fellow Liz Lerman said:

> Sometimes art achieves what therapy, medicine, or the best care of health professionals cannot. Sometimes art even achieves something that’s beyond the best intentions of the artist. These moments can feel like little miracles when they happen, but they are usually instances of art functioning as it normally does: inspiring motivation, engaging parts of people’s bodies or brains that they haven’t been using, or allowing them to transcend their environments for a little while.⁴

Artists like Liz Lerman believe that art can have its most beneficial effect when its intention is good art-making. They employ a rigorous artistic process, trust that individuals can produce meaningful work, and use that confidence as a lever to lift people above their circumstances or self-imposed limitations.

There is room in the field of arts and aging for the perspectives of both the therapist and the community artist. Teaching artists and art therapists can draw on their complementary approaches to collaborate effectively, especially in settings where participants have a great need for psychological support, such as mental health treatment centers or palliative care settings.

In cultivating a successful teaching artist practice, artists need not—and in fact, should not—identify their work as art therapy in describing it to host facilities, funders, or community collaborators unless the artist is also an art therapist. But teaching artists who gather evaluation data about the effects of their work and learn to speak about its benefits in the health-based language of community partners are likely to have the best chance for funding and opportunities.

**REFLECTIVE PRACTICE: ARTIST IDENTITY**

Imagine that you are talking with a professional acquaintance in health care or aging services about your work. If that person asked you to talk about the “art therapy you’re doing with older adults,” what would you say?
LESSON 2 SUMMARY

“Foundations of Arts in Aging, Part 2: Research and Best Practice,” presented research evidence of the benefits of arts participation for older adults and clarified the distinction between teaching artists and art therapists.

CHECK-IN: LESSON 2 GOALS

- Describe current evidence-based research about the benefits of arts participation for older adults
- Distinguish between the roles of the teaching artist and the art therapist

LESSON 2 NOTES

EVIDENCE OF BENEFITS OF ARTS PARTICIPATION FOR OLDER ADULTS

CASE 1

Study: A study co-funded by the NEA, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), and other sponsors measured the impact of a professionally conducted choral program on the physical health, mental health, and social functioning of older adults. The intervention group reported better overall physical health, fewer doctor visits, less medication use, fewer instances of falls, and fewer health problems in relation to the comparison group. Similarly, the comparison group had a significant decline in total number of activities, whereas the intervention group reported a trend toward increased activity.

Outcome: Better overall physical health, fewer doctor visits, less medication, fewer falls for choral singers - Cohen et al. (2006).

CASE 2

Study: Madeleine Hackney and colleagues evaluated whether functional mobility benefits of a tango-dancing program might extend to adults with Parkinson’s disease (PD). Thirty-eight subjects were assigned to either a control group or a tango group; the control group completed 10 one-hour exercise classes in 13 weeks, and the tango group completed the same number of tango classes during that time. Only the PD tango group improved on all measures of balance, falls, and gait.


CASE 3

Study: Helga and Tony Noice investigated the effects of theatrical training on cognitive function and quality of life. Cognitive function and mental health were assessed by tests of word recall, listening tasks, problem-solving, and measures of self-esteem and psychological well-being. Results revealed that the theater intervention group scored significantly higher than both control groups on recall, problem-solving, and psychological well-being. Follow-up testing four months after the intervention—to determine if the results were sustained in the theater group—revealed significant increases in word recall scores and no significant decline in mental health measures.


CASE 4

Study: Thomas Fritsch and colleagues investigated the impact of a 10-week TimeSlips storytelling intervention on quality of care for persons with Alzheimer’s disease and related neurocognitive disorders residing in long-term care facilities. Results indicated that those in the facilities served by TimeSlips were more engaged and more alert than those in control facilities. There were more frequent staff-resident interactions, social interactions, and more social engagement in TimeSlips facilities. Staff in TimeSlips communities developed more positive views of people with neurocognitive disorders and devalued residents less than in the control group.

Outcomes: People with memory impairment more engaged and alert and seen more positively by staff in facilities with TimeSlips storytelling program - Fritsch et al. (2009).
LESSON GOALS

1. Understand how lifelong learning and creativity are related
2. Apply adult learning principles in your work with older adults
3. Understand how the concepts of mastery and social engagement apply to the field of arts and aging

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What does lifelong learning mean to you?

Examine your biases: do you think there are times in our lives when we cannot be lifelong learners? Do you think there are people or populations that cannot be lifelong learners?

Do you consider yourself a lifelong learner? Why or why not?

LIFELONG LEARNING AND CREATIVITY

As described in the introduction to this training, the belief that individuals can learn and grow throughout their lives is the educational philosophy at the heart of creative aging. In the last 20 years, this view has become supported by groundbreaking research into the nature of brain function. The brain has been shown to retain its “plasticity”—its ability to change both structure and function in response to environmental stimuli—as long as we are alive.

BRAIN PLASTICITY CAN BE POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE

An important point about plasticity is that the changes can be both positive and negative. If we do nothing, or worse, expose ourselves to known risk factors, the brain will change in negative ways, leading toward loss of function. But, happily, we can also support the ongoing development and strength of our brain by making choices that stimulate positive plasticity.

While the plastic flexibility of the brain is most dramatic in our earliest years, recent research has clearly established that brains can retain their flexibility throughout life. A 2009 monograph authored by four prominent neuroscientists set out to answer the question, “Can the functional capacity of older adults be preserved and enhanced?” Their answer was a resounding “Yes!” They note that a variety of behaviors (physical and mental exercise in particular) not only prevent or slow cognitive decline, but even act to enhance physical and cognitive performance in older adults.

The critical question, of course, is how? What types of activities promote positive plastic growth and development of our brains? How do we push our brains “to expand and make new connections” rather than weaken, atrophy, and deteriorate?
As we will see, the evidence clearly suggests that physical movement and exercise, mental stimulation, and social interaction combine to promote positive plasticity. And there is good reason to believe that the creative stimulation provided by arts activities promotes positive brain plasticity by encouraging older adults to engage willingly in health-promoting activities in a sustained manner.

CREATIVITY AND POSITIVE BRAIN PLASTICITY

Creative engagement promotes positive plasticity in a number of ways. To begin with, creative and artistic activities get people up and out of their chairs and involved in challenging projects that require both physical and mental stretching. Recent neuroscience research has confirmed the folk wisdom of “use it or lose it.” If you work the body and brain, they get stronger. If you ignore them, they get weaker.6

The creative process is a complex and multi-faceted endeavor. Creative challenges force the brain to venture into new territory and to undertake new challenges that have the effect of exercising and stretching both physical and mental capacities. Our plastic brain will continue to grow, in other words, if we continue to present it with fresh challenges. By their very nature, creativity and the arts encourage people to break away from habit and routine and to explore new areas of experience.

In an essay on creative aging, Michael C. Patterson, brain health expert and founding principal of MINDRAMP CONSULTING, associates creative engagement with the idea of the hero’s journey made famous by mythologist Joseph Campbell. "Creativity forces a departure from safe, secure tradition and standard ways of doing things and requires a venture into the unknown. It is this journey into novelty and challenge that stimulates positive plastic change . . . . Creativity involves challenge and effort that, like the hero’s journey, results in a transformation and reinvention of self.”7 It is this kind of cognitive stimulation that keeps brains sharp and active at any age.

THE CASE FOR ARTS ENGAGEMENT WITH OLDER ADULTS

Teaching artists know the transformational power that is inherent in the arts. Many artists who work with older adults can tell stories of a participant who has experienced profound change as a result of being involved in an arts project or program. New research is beginning to reveal the neurological mechanisms that drive these transformations. It also reveals that being creative actually changes the structure of the brain in a way that strengthens an older adult’s creative ability. Creativity leads to learning, which in turn strengthens the mind and enables further creativity and learning. Creativity becomes a self-reinforcing process.8

In addition, there are specific factors associated with participation in the arts that may support brain plasticity and cognitive health. For instance, arts activities are complex and multi-modal, stimulating multiple cognitive functions and engaging the whole person in diverse ways.9

In research by Tony and Helga Noice, Christopher Herzog, and others, a number of mechanisms that might contribute to the healthful impact of arts participation have been identified.10 They included the following factors:
The repetition and rigor of rehearsal and performance lead to increased levels of physical activity, mental stimulation, and social interaction, all of which have been shown in numerous studies to enhance cognitive function.\(^{11}\)

The heightened emotions associated with public performance, coupled with the physical and mental exertion associated with rehearsal and performance, may stimulate the production of hormones that repair and regenerate brain cells.\(^{12}\)

Serious creative work, particularly work in the creative arts, requires the active integration of cognitive, physical, and affective skills, and research suggests that this “combinatorial” approach amplifies the benefit of each factor.\(^{13}\)

Participants willingly engage in health-promoting activities because they are embedded in arts activities that are fun and pleasurable.\(^{14}\)

Research also suggests that an increase in plasticity happens in a complex web of interactions that simultaneously result in improvements in cognitive health and in overall quality of life.\(^{15}\) All of these findings have tremendous implications for older adults and make a strong case for their engagement in the arts.

Learning and growth through creativity can take place across settings where older adults live and gather, including senior centers, retirement communities, day programs, community arts programs, and long-term care facilities. Understanding and respecting older people as lifelong learners is an important step in creating effective arts in aging programming.

**ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES**

Malcolm Knowles, who pioneered the concept of adult learning, or andragogy, identified certain characteristics of adult learners, which apply to adults of all ages and translate into actionable behaviors that educators and facilitators can apply. Teaching artists can adapt these general principles to their work with older adults in arts programming. They are as follows:

- **Adults are autonomous and self-directed.** Teaching artists are facilitators who actively involve adult participants in the learning process and guide them to their own knowledge rather than supply them with facts. They solicit participants’ perspectives about what topics to cover, let them work on projects that reflect their interests, and allow them to assume responsibility for presentations and group leadership.

- **Adults have accumulated a foundation of life experiences and knowledge that include work-related activities, family responsibilities, and education.** Teaching artists draw out participants’ experience and knowledge connected to the topic, relate theories and concepts to them, and acknowledge the value of their experiences to the learning process.

- **Adults are goal-oriented.** When joining a session or enrolling in a class, they usually have a goal in mind. They appreciate an educational program that is organized and has clearly defined elements. Early in the session the teaching artist should show participants how the class helps them attain their goals.
LESSON 3: Principles of Lifelong Learning

- Adults are relevancy-oriented and practical. They need to see a reason for learning something; learning has value if it applies to their lives. Teaching artists identify objectives for adult participants before the class begins and relate theories and concepts to something familiar by letting participants choose projects that reflect their interests.

- As do all learners, adults need to be shown respect. Teaching artists acknowledge the wealth of experiences that adult participants bring to the classroom, treat them as equals in experience and knowledge, and allow them to voice their opinions freely in class.\(^{16}\)

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What is one way in which adult learners differ from the young learners that you may have worked with or known?

If you are not familiar with young learners, which one of the characteristics of adult learners most sparks your interest right now?

What is one specific way you could honor this characteristic as you work with older adults?

MASTERY AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

In the arts and aging field, the core concept of lifelong learning is complemented by an understanding of the importance of mastery and social engagement as two key elements in programming for older adults. Based on gerontological research, Gene Cohen identified these program components as contributing to positive health outcomes for older adults. They are now widely acknowledged as integral to best practices in arts and aging programming.

Cohen used these concepts as the theoretical basis for his landmark 2006 research, “The Creativity and Aging Study,” which documented the positive impacts on older adults of participation in professionally conducted cultural programs.\(^{17}\) In the opening of the final report of this study, he explained mastery and social engagement in this way:

Studies on aging show that when older persons experience a sense of control—e.g., a sense of mastery in what they are doing—positive health outcomes are observed. Similarly, when older individuals are in situations with meaningful social engagement with others, positive health outcomes are also observed . . . In this study, both of these dimensions—individual sense of control and social engagement—are combined. Each time one attends an art class, he or she experiences a renewed sense of control—ongoing individual mastery. Since all of the art programs involve participation and interpersonal interaction with others, social engagement is high.\(^{18}\)

Another way of understanding mastery is to think about it in terms of skill development. As we have seen earlier in this lesson, people retain the ability to grow and change during the course of their lives. One does not need to be an artistic prodigy from a young age to develop skills and even become highly proficient in an art form. As older adults overcome challenges
successfully and learn new skills in the arts or develop latent ones, they gain an increasing sense of competence and control. Lesson 4 discusses in more detail the importance of setting challenges and ensuring success for older adult participants.

Social engagement emphasizes active involvement, “not for the sake of being involved, but to accomplish something that is valued by the community and meaningful to the older adults.” In art classes and workshops, older adults can forge bonds with other participants as they work side by side or together to produce artistic work. Their shared experiences may lead to affiliations that develop into friendships and highly supportive social networks, which can be especially important as they navigate new life stages, sometimes coping with the loss of important social connections or roles.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Effective arts and aging programs intentionally foster social engagement by creating opportunities for meaningful interaction. Thinking of a group that you work with (or would like to work with), what is one way that you can build meaningful interaction into the group’s activities?

Would you include it during the creative process or set aside time separately? What kind of structure would you provide to encourage interaction?
LESSON 3: Principles of Lifelong Learning

LESSON 3 SUMMARY

“Lesson 3: Lifelong Learning Principles” examined older adults as learners with life experience who can continue to grow and change throughout their lives. This lesson also introduced the concepts of mastery and social engagement and presented research evidence of the benefits of arts participation for older adults.

CHECK-IN: LESSON 3 GOALS

- Understand how lifelong learning and creativity are related
- Apply adult learning principles in your work with older adults
- Understand how the concepts of mastery and social engagement apply to the field of arts and aging

LESSON 2 NOTES

1. The “Lifelong Learning and Creativity” section was coauthored with Michael C. Patterson (Principal, mindRAMP Consulting).
3. Ibid.
7. Patterson, “Nimble Bodies.”
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 28.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 31.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. ??????????
LESSON 4: Effective Arts in Aging Programs and the Role of the Teaching Artist

LESSON GOALS

1. Describe the characteristics and outcome goals of effective arts and aging programs
2. Understand the role of the teaching artist as a facilitator
3. Know strategies for setting up workshops to help older adults succeed

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What is one thing you do as a facilitator in your arts workshops to create a positive learning environment?

How do you know if learning is happening? How do you know if you are effectively facilitating?

Are you more comfortable sitting back and letting learning happen or actively leading the learning?

What makes for effective arts programming?

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE ARTS AND AGING PROGRAMS

- **Participation.** Older adults are involved as creators, not just viewers or audience members. The strongest programming includes a culminating event for sharing or displaying participant work in a way that is representative of the discipline—such as a reading, performance, or exhibition.

- **Sequential development.** The learning or instructional design takes into consideration the older adults’ physical and mental abilities. Instruction is sequential, with each activity building on the one before it—much like learning the alphabet, then words, then sentences. Each step is challenging yet achievable.

- **Match between programming and needs.** Programming meets the self-identified needs of the participants, as revealed through needs assessment. Ideally, needs assessment is carried out as a formal part of the planning process, but teaching artists may also conduct an informal needs assessment through discussion with participants at the start of a session.

- **Intentionality about outcomes.** The program is designed to accomplish one or more specific goals to enhance older adults’ quality of life. The benefit to participants is not a byproduct or an afterthought.

- **Qualified leaders.** Artistic activities are led by professional teaching artists or well-trained staff and volunteers under the guidance of a professional artist. The teaching artist should bring a strong knowledge of their art form; of the classroom environment, andragogy, and human development; and of the collaborative process of working in facilities and with community partners.
LESSON 4: Effective Arts in Aging Programs and the Role of the Teaching Artist

- **Excellence in programming.** Older adults are offered high-caliber instruction with real challenges and opportunities for accomplishment that honor each individual’s capacity to produce meaningful work.

- **Nurturance of a learning community.** A learning community is the intersection of trust, challenges, success, diversity, and participation with the purpose of continuous learning. The mutual support and mental stimulation that result from interacting with and learning from others contribute to older adults’ desire to stick with arts programs.

- **Assessment.** Teaching artists have a way to measure whether or not their goals are being achieved and whether what they are doing is making a difference to participants. Assessment and evaluation are explored in more depth later in the training.\(^1\)

- **Documentation.** Documentation is crucial for making learning visible. Drafts, sketches, rehearsals and other process materials should be documented as should final projects and performances. Documentation provides both the teaching artist and participants with materials they can use to unpack their learning and teaching through reflection, critique and conversation.

These guidelines hold true across settings, including community arts programs, senior centers and libraries, retirement communities, day programs, and long-term care facilities. In each encounter, a commitment to respecting participants and treating them like capable adults should underlie the teaching artist’s approach and be demonstrated through the use of professional-quality materials and techniques. This is likely to yield stronger work from participants, leave them with a lingering sense of satisfaction, and have the most beneficial overall effect.

**OUTCOMES FOR ARTS AND AGING PROGRAMMING**

The intent of arts and aging programs is to accomplish one or more of the following outcome goals—all aimed at enhancing quality of life—while engaging older adults in arts-based programming:

- Older adults have a sense of control and feel empowered (i.e., mastery).
- Older adults are socially engaged.
- Older adults exercise their bodies and brains to ensure high physical and mental function.
- Older adults are healthy, with reduced risk factors for disease and disability.
- Older adults have a positive attitude and zest for life.
- Older adults express themselves creatively.

Research shows that these outcome goals are interrelated. Combined, they contribute to a positive quality of life for older adults.\(^2\)
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What learning goals do you have for the arts and aging work that you do?

How can you measure if these goals were met?

How can you assess the quality of the learning and the work involved?

THE TEACHING ARTIST AS A FACILITATOR

The teaching artist’s expertise is the capacity to engage almost anyone in arts experiences… Their gift is to draw people into arts experientially, and not through the traditional routes of giving information first or direct instruction. They create a safe and exciting atmosphere that leads people into authentic work in the art form before they get insecure, judgmental, or doubtful that they are skilled enough to be engaging artistically. TAs are masters at tapping people’s artistic competence. — Eric Booth, teaching artist and founding editor of Teaching Artists Journal.

In working with older adults, the teaching artist must play a dual role—as both an artist and a facilitator. Developing facilitation skills requires practice, an openness to adapting to what is required in the moment, and a willingness to learn by trial and error.

Attributes of an effective facilitator include being open, fair, consistent, focused, an active listener, accessible, flexible, assertive, and enthusiastic. The teaching artist as facilitator must have a commitment to creating conditions that maximize learning and creative expression and set older adult participants up for success.

GROUND RULES

This environment can be nurtured right from the start by creating common expectations about how everyone is to interact during a workshop session. Ground rules might include: listen to and show respect for others, maintain confidentiality, speak one at a time, avoid verbal or physical disruption, and offer physical and emotional safety to one another. These kinds of guidelines give participants a sense of safety and reduce the stress that may be associated with joining a new group and that can inhibit learning.

Ground rules may also be specific to the artistic medium. For instance, participants in a writing workshop might agree that writing critiques will focus on the effectiveness of members’ writing and will not be a forum for political, religious, or social debates about the content.

Workshops led by the teaching artists of Dance Exchange, a multi-generational dance company based in the Washington, D.C. metro area, often begin with a variation on this opening: “You are in charge of your own body. Please adapt what we’re doing so it’s comfortable for you. If you choose not to participate, we ask that you keep a pleasant expression on your face so that others may enjoy the workshop. Whatever you choose, don’t forget to breathe.”
Workshops might also have ground rules about what constitutes participation. Visual artist Jeff Nachtigall challenges older adults in the studio to just do something—to at least make a mark. Their mark does not have to look like anyone else’s work; it just has to be created. He tells them that when they are in the studio—the creative environment—the only thing they need to do is to participate. There is no way for them to fail in his workshops as long they make an attempt.

### SETTING CHALLENGES

As these examples illustrate, it is possible to help older adults find the right level of challenge in an arts-based experience right from the beginning. This is one of the primary responsibilities of the teaching artist and a key to promoting mastery.

Creativity Matters: The Arts and Aging Toolkit offers this advice to teaching artists: “To create achievable challenges, you need to understand what participants can do. Keep in mind that, in large measure, “challenge” is an individual concept; what is easy for one participant may be hard for another . . . Challenge participants, but push them only as far as they want to go. Remember: it is always about older adults’ abilities as opposed to their age or your perception of their abilities. Remain attentive during your session. Watch for signs of frustration or boredom and adjust accordingly.”

This guidance is also valid when working with people with cognitive disabilities. One of the greatest obstacles to engaging these individuals is underestimating what they can accomplish. Another is the perception of family members and professional caregivers that the person cannot participate in a meaningful way or benefit from the experience. While the appropriate level of challenge may take some work to discover, the effort is often rewarded with delight from the older adult and pleasant surprise from caregivers who realize there are new possibilities for the person in their care.

### ENSURING SUCCESS

Effectively setting challenges and ensuring success are closely related. Teaching artists should develop techniques for their participants that are authentic to their artistic discipline and present them in manageable steps. The most successful teaching artists are willing to be innovative in trying unusual methods if that is what is necessary to win participation. It is best to avoid making inexperience or failure obvious in participant efforts; instead, the teaching artist should provide specific feedback that gives participants constructive suggestions on how to improve. The job of the facilitator is not only to ensure that older adults succeed, but also to make sure they know that they are succeeding. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways: by offering positive reinforcement, by inviting participants to share work and comment supportively on each other’s efforts, and by celebrating completion.

“NOW YOU’RE GETTING IT…”

It is vital to understand the importance of encouraging older adults rather than providing direct assistance. The outcome goals of mastery and social engagement are largely unattainable unless older adults make their own choices, explore their own creativity, and successfully overcome challenges by themselves (with the support of others).
LESSON 4: Effective Arts in Aging Programs and the Role of the Teaching Artist

An experiment in a long-term care facility compared mental performance under three conditions in which the kind of social support varied. Facility residents were assigned randomly to three groups, each of which had the same task—completion of a simple jigsaw puzzle. All three groups had four 20-minute practice sessions, followed by a timed test session.

People in the first group were given verbal engagement by the experimenter during practice—“Now you’re getting it . . . That’s right . . . Well done.” People in the second group were given direct assistance—“Are you having a little trouble with the piece? Let me show you where it goes.” People in the third group were given neither assistance nor encouragement during practice. In subsequent tests, people who had been encouraged improved in speed and proficiency. People who had been directly assisted did less well than in practice. And people who had been left alone neither improved nor deteriorated.7

The teaching artist plays a critical role in providing the appropriate level of support for older adults throughout their participation in the arts experience so that it becomes a source of learning and personal growth.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Imagine two older adults with differing physical or mental abilities who might participate in an arts engagement workshop with you. How might you scale the same technique or task to help each one feel challenged and yet achieve success?

SETTING PARTICIPANTS UP FOR SUCCESS

We have a choice to make when working with older adults . . . We can bring the artist “to” the person or we can bring the artist “out” of the person. Art has been taken out of the hearts and hands of the individual for centuries . . . It’s my job as an artist to make it accessible to everyone. —Jeff Nachtigall8

Setting up arts workshops where older adults of all abilities and backgrounds can succeed is one of the biggest challenges facing teaching artists who work with this population. While there are many factors that contribute to creating a no-fail arts experience for older adults, one of the most important is the mindset of the teaching artist.

This understanding is at the heart of the Open Studio and Open Spaces models created by Jeff Nachtigall, Canadian painter and teaching artist. Jeff developed the Open Studio as a resident artist at Sherbrooke Community Centre, a long-term care facility in Saskatchewan, where he successfully involved residents of all abilities in creating visual art over six years. The model focuses on establishing a peer group environment that fosters personal growth in a safe and supportive framework. It is now being replicated at assisted living facilities throughout Canada and is being integrated into the curriculum for art students at colleges and universities in several Canadian provinces.
IT’S ABOUT POSSIBILITY

The Open Studio model is based on the philosophy that creativity is a birthright. We are born artists and each have a unique mark to make. Yet we are often separated from our creativity and its expression during the course of our lives. The Open Studio is a place where older adults rediscover their birthright and find their mark. The emphasis right from the start is on possibility rather than limitation.

This approach requires that the teaching artist enter the experience without preconceptions about what an individual’s mark is going to be. Instead, teaching artists must bring a high level of mastery as artists and a comfort level with their own mark in order to help participants awaken their latent creativity.

It is natural that many older adults feel hesitant about embarking on this process. The art studio may feel like alien territory to them or remind them of times when they failed at art. Some individuals may even prefer to fail now, because that means they will be able to quit and retreat to their comfort zone. The teaching artist must anticipate this and meet it with strategies that are gentle and forceful at the same time.

In the Open Studio model, older adults succeed as long as they are participating. For one person, this may mean a headlong dive into painting. For another, it may mean sitting in the studio for 59 minutes of an hour-long workshop before they attempt a brushstroke. Participation may even mean that a person is in the studio for weeks without making anything. With a mindset based on possibility, the teaching artist can recognize and capitalize on each person’s contribution and use it to guide them further into their creativity.

THERE ARE NO MISTAKES

Here are several strategies that Jeff has found effective for helping older adults uncover their creativity:

• Present creativity as a birthright. Introducing older adults right away to the idea that everyone is creative acknowledges them as artists and gives them permission to entertain their creative impulses.

• Demystify art and creativity. Unpacking the word "creativity" by examining the ways people have been creative in their everyday lives, such as baking or gardening, can help older adults make the connection to their creative ability in the studio or classroom.

• Create a failure-free zone. Emphasize that the work of the moment is to experiment and play. The goal is to do something—to enter into a process where mistakes are welcome—not to create a masterpiece on the first day. Encouraging participants to embrace mistakes frees them to create because they are no longer paralyzed by the fear of doing it wrong.

• Get straight to work. Giving people too much time to think can allow them to freeze up and become even more resistant. Structuring the session so that creative expression is immediate can help push participants over the hump of their resistance.
LESSON 4: Effective Arts in Aging Programs and the Role of the Teaching Artist

• Introduce novel techniques for doing familiar processes. If no one knows what a drawing done by someone with an oxygen tank (or with a crutch or a cane) looks like, there is no right or wrong way to do it.

• Simplify instructions and expectations. Breaking down processes into their simplest elements can calm anxiety. Help people explore the foundational steps first rather than emphasizing where the steps should lead. When an older adult insists that making a painting is too hard, Jeff suggests that the participant start by simply making a mark on the paper or canvas. Inevitably, one mark leads to another and a painting is created.

• Work alongside participants. “If someone is truly stymied, I begin to make marks with them,” says Jeff. “I say, ‘I’m here just making marks. It doesn’t have to be anything.’” This strategy is not about the teaching artist demonstrating their mastery of technique. Rather, it is about engaging by example and making the process seem too easy to resist.

While the decision about how to participate in the Open Studio rests always with the older adult and their timing is respected, Jeff continues to seek entrees into the creative process for each participant. As he has observed in working with hundreds of older people, the individual who has offered the most resistance at the beginning of the process often turns out to have the biggest breakthrough in finding their creative voice by the end.

CASE STUDY: THIRTY SECONDS TO A NEW LIFE

While a creative transformation has happened in many older adults who have worked with Jeff, one of the most memorable is Ed (a pseudonym used to protect privacy). Ed was an older man who had a breakthrough in the art studio that changed his life.

After spending most of his life as a farmer and hunter, Ed experienced a decline in health and was abruptly forced to move into a long-term care facility. When Jeff met him, he was depressed about ending up in an institution, drinking heavily, and talking about suicide. A self-described “man’s man,” he had zero interest in art. Ed was cynical about the institutional attempts he saw to create a positive quality of life for residents, as he felt only despair about his life there. Yet he was drawn to the art studio at the facility because of what he witnessed happening to the people who used it.

After poking his head in the door a few times, he pulled Jeff aside and talked to him for over an hour. He wondered what was happening in the studio that made people different when they walked back into their day-to-day lives. He was seeing the effects on them, but he did not trust the source. He wondered if it was a con, if people were being filled with false hope when they were only going to fail. “What are you doing in there?” he asked Jeff. Jeff shared his philosophy with Ed and encouraged him to try the studio.

EVERYONE HAS A MARK TO MAKE

When Ed reluctantly entered it a few days later, Jeff was prepared. He took Ed straight to an easel set at the perfect height for him in his wheelchair. He made sure the easel had a tray so that Ed could work from it or rest his arms if needed. Jeff set a can of blue paint within easy reach, handed him a brush, and gave him 30 seconds to make a mark on the paper in front of him. Ed froze.
Jeff prompted him at 20 seconds, but Ed remained like a statue. When Jeff told him he had only 10 seconds left, Ed reached his brush into the paint, moved it to the paper, and began to make a mark. By then, 30 seconds had elapsed, and to Ed’s consternation, Jeff pulled the paper away. Without giving Ed time to really protest, Jeff put a new blank page in front of him and gave him another 30 seconds.

This time, Ed started painting right away. He started slowly, but as the paper filled with color, his confidence grew. When 30 seconds had passed, he did not want to let the paper go. But Jeff took that page too. He replaced it with a new page, but this time he did not have to say anything. Ed knew what to do. Now his strokes were more deliberate. He had purpose in his mark-making.

When he had worked for 30 seconds, Jeff called time. Ed, who had limited mobility in his arms, was exhausted. He had moved his body in a new way to make his paintings and taken himself into a whole new place.

“I GET IT”

Jeff laid the three paintings on the floor in front of Ed’s wheelchair. Together, they talked about what Ed saw in his work and what had happened between the first and the last painting. Ed admitted that he was trying to figure out what to paint at first, but then he realized he just had to do it. Without knowing it, Ed began to describe his process in a painter’s language. When Jeff pointed out brushstrokes in the third painting and asked Ed, “What is this? Is there something happening here?” Ed somewhat shyly admitted that he had been trying to paint a sailboat. Jeff could see it. He went to the paper and pointed out the boat and water. Ed was excited.

At that moment, an administrator walked by. She looked at Ed’s paintings and said, “Is that a sailboat? I love it!” She and Ed began to talk about boats, and Ed shared his love of the water. When she walked away, Ed turned and looked up at Jeff. “I get it,” he said.

Ed returned to the studio the next day and many days after that. He started a series of meticulous paintings of the solar system and became a leader in the studio. He went out recruiting other residents to come to the studio and mentored them in the painting process, including young people with disabilities who came to live at the care center. He adopted the Open Studio philosophy so completely that he ended up training volunteers and summer interns to help people find their unique mark. An older adult who had almost written the art studio off as a con game became a teaching artist. He found his mark as an artist and made a mark on his community that has had a lasting effect.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

In what ways do you (or will you) help the older adults in your workshops find their unique mark?

How can you support unique mark-making while ensuring rigorous arts-based learning?
LESSON 4: Effective Arts in Aging Programs and the Role of the Teaching Artist

LESSON 4 SUMMARY

“Lesson 4: Effective Arts in Aging Programs and the Role of the Teaching Artist” described characteristics and outcome goals of effective arts programs for older adults. It also talked about the teaching artist as a facilitator and presented methods for setting up participants for success and helping them find their unique creative expression.

CHECK-IN: LESSON 4 GOALS

- Describe the characteristics and outcome goals of effective arts and aging programs
- Understand the role of the teaching artist as a facilitator
- Know strategies for setting up workshops to help older adults succeed

LESSON 4 NOTES

2. Ibid., 8.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 89.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 84.
8. Nachtigall. Content for “Case Study: Everyone Has a Mark to Make” provided courtesy of Jeff Nachtigall and Open Studio and used with permission.
LESSON 4: Effective Arts in Aging Programs and the Role of the Teaching Artist
CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE ARTS AND AGING PROGRAMS

1. PARTICIPATION.
   - Older adults are involved as creators, not just viewers or audience members.
   - The strongest programming includes a culminating event for sharing or displaying participant work in a way that is representative of the discipline—such as a reading, performance, or exhibition.

2. SEQUENTIAL DEVELOPMENT.
   - The learning or instructional design takes into consideration the older adults’ physical and mental abilities.
   - Instruction is sequential, with each activity building on the one before it—much like learning the alphabet, then words, then sentences.
   - Each step is challenging yet achievable.

3. MATCH BETWEEN PROGRAMMING AND NEEDS.
   - Programming meets the self-identified needs of the participants, as revealed through needs assessment.
   - Ideally, needs assessment is carried out as a formal part of the planning process, but teaching artists may also conduct an informal needs assessment through discussion with participants at the start of a session.

4. INTENTIONALITY ABOUT OUTCOMES.
   - The program is designed to accomplish one or more specific goals to enhance older adults’ quality of life.
   - The benefit to participants is not a byproduct or an afterthought.

5. QUALIFIED LEADERS.
   - Artistic activities are led by professional teaching artists or well-trained staff and volunteers under the guidance of a professional artist.
   - The teaching artist should bring a strong knowledge of their art form; of the classroom environment, andragogy, and human development; and of the collaborative process of working in facilities and with community partners.

6. EXCELLENCE IN PROGRAMMING.
   - Older adults are offered high-caliber instruction with real challenges and opportunities for accomplishment that honor each individual’s capacity to produce meaningful work.
7. NURTUREANCE OF A LEARNING COMMUNITY.

- A learning community is the intersection of trust, challenges, success, diversity, and participation with the purpose of continuous learning.

- The mutual support and mental stimulation that result from interacting with and learning from others contribute to older adults’ desire to stick with arts programs.

8. ASSESSMENT.

- Teaching artists have a way to measure whether or not their goals are being achieved and whether what they are doing is making a difference to participants.

- Assessment and evaluation are explored in more depth later in the training.

9. DOCUMENTATION.

- Documentation is crucial for making learning visible.

- Drafts, sketches, rehearsals and other process materials should be documented as should final projects and performances.

- Documentation provides both the teaching artist and participants with materials they can use to unpack their learning and teaching through reflection, critique and conversation.
LESSON 5: Considering Accessibility and Cognitive Disabilities in Arts in Aging

LESSON GOALS

1. Understand how to prepare for your teaching while considering accessibility
2. Know how to create an accessible environment for engaging older adults in the arts
3. Understand basic facilitation principles for engaging older adults with memory impairment

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

How do you as a teaching artist invite individuals into the artistic process?
What challenges have you faced in the past with learning differences and disabilities?
How do you approach individualized instruction in your teaching?

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility in arts and aging programs is the degree to which the space, the instructional design, and the communication about the program are available to as many people as possible. Stated in another way, accessibility is a physical expression of an attitude that says, “You are welcome here, no matter your ability, age, or physical or mental condition. This program is for you.”

At its most basic, this attitude can be conveyed in the language that is used to describe older adults and people with disabilities. People-first language emphasizes the individual, rather than their age or disability. Some examples of people-first language are as follows:

- Elder, older adults (rather than retiree, the elderly)
- Person with a disability (not handicapped)
- Person who uses a wheelchair or wheelchair user (not bound or confined to a wheelchair)
- Person who is deaf or hard of hearing (not suffers from a hearing loss)
- Person who is blind or has low vision (not the blind)

An attitude of accessibility assumes that a diversity of participants and a broad spectrum of abilities are ordinary. It recognizes that the cohort of older adults is quite broad, ranging from individuals age 60 to those older than 100. The cohort also encompasses a tremendous range of physical and mental abilities and functioning. An accessible arts experience begins with the understanding that there is no “average older adult” and that accessibility is an ongoing process of accommodating individuals and situations as they appear. In fact, good arts and aging programming treats diversity as an opportunity.
LESSON 5: Considering Accessibility and Cognitive Disabilities in Arts in Aging

When working with older adults and people who have disabilities, teaching artists can employ a few general strategies:

- Offer assistance, but don’t insist.
- Focus on what the person is able to do, rather than the disability.
- Be aware of needs and adaptations specific to the disability, but don’t be overprotective.³

ACCESSIBILITY IN ACTION: DANCE FOR PD

The Dance for PD® program, developed by the Mark Morris Dance Group, trains dance artists to lead classes for people with Parkinson’s disease, as well as family, friends, and caregivers. The program offers an example of dance as an artistic experience that can benefit older adults who are living with the effects of a chronic disease. Its facilitators are trained not to teach to the symptoms of participants, but rather to share the artistry and technique of dancing with a level of awareness of how to make dancing accessible and enjoyable for people with Parkinson’s.

As described on the organization’s website, “The Dance for PD® class is an aesthetic experience that uses the elements of narrative, imagery, live music and community to develop artistry and grace while addressing such PD-specific concerns as balance, flexibility, coordination, isolation and depression.

The classes engage the participants’ minds and bodies, and create an enjoyable, social environment that emphasizes dancing rather than therapy. Active demonstration by professional dancers inspires participants to recapture grace, while guided improvisation fosters creativity and experimentation with movement.”⁴

ACCESSIBLE SPACE

Teaching artists can also help ensure access by being aware of the accessibility of the program space. The facility used for an arts and aging program must have better-than-average accessibility. An accessible facility or space helps keep older adult participants safe. If there are no physical barriers or significant visual or aural distractions, they are more likely to concentrate and less likely to trip or fall.⁵

Here are some tips to consider for ensuring an accessible space:

**On the Way to Class**

- Look for a building without steps to the entrance and with doors that are easy to open, are automatic, or have a power-assist. Ensure that there are accessible restrooms.
- Look for a room that is designated solely for your use during the session. Other activities in the same space are distracting to your participants, and you may distract others. “Outside” people also disrupt the environment of trust in your learning community.
- Make sure that there is adequate and easily visible signage to direct participants to the workshop space and to restrooms, elevators, and building exits.
LESSON 5: Considering Accessibility and Cognitive Disabilities in Arts in Aging

• Ensure that there are clear, wide paths of travel to and from the program space to allow for people who are unsteady on their feet or who use wheelchairs, canes, or walkers to maneuver easily.

In the Space

• Make sure the designated program space is free of clutter or other hazards.
• Adjust the lighting in the room to reduce glare.
• Minimize distractions, especially if the participants have Alzheimer's disease and related neurocognitive disorders.
• Allow for ample spacing between chairs. Ensure that participants feel connected to the group and not cramped. Make metal folding chairs more comfortable by supplying inexpensive foam cushions.
• Monitor the room temperature, watch for signs of discomfort, and learn how to control the thermostat. If participants are too hot or cold, they won’t focus.
• Monitor the acoustics and minimize unnecessary noise, but don’t limit conversation. Participants, particularly those with hearing aids that often amplify background noise, are distracted by sounds that echo around a space without any fabric, padding, or carpet.
• Position participants who have difficulty hearing and seeing at the front of the group or in a place with a good sight line to the teaching artist, director, or conductor.

COMMUNICATION FOR ACCESSIBILITY

It is advisable to take special care in communicating during arts workshop to make the experiences accessible for older adults with hearing or vision impairments:

• Use a microphone or portable PA system when speaking to the entire group.
• Use as many printed instructions as you can to minimize misunderstanding due to hearing problems. For participants who do not speak English well, instructions may need to be translated into their language or rendered as diagrams.
• Practice your best projection and diction when speaking to a group.
• Repeat directions. Verbal repetition not only helps with memory but also can make the words clearer.
• Enlarge any printed material, such as instructions, music, and scripts.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What can you do to make the creative process in your workshops more accessible?
How can you improve sound, visuals, movement, or materials to make them more accessible to more individuals?
What about the space you are using or intend to use?
What is needed to make it more accessible?
FACILITATING SESSIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

Really important: Being respectful of these people because they are my elders. I don’t come in and treat them as young children. I treat them as adults with valuable experience to share. I can’t tell you how much joy it has brought into my life to be able to do this work and to receive from the participants the look of joy when they get involved. —Anthony Hyatt

Anthony Hyatt has been designing and leading interactive creative engagement programs at care facilities for older adults since 1997. He is a violinist, a teaching artist with Arts for the Aging in Maryland, a master teaching artist with the National Center for Creative Aging, and the founder of the non-profit organization Moving Beauty, through which he offers his services. He is also the co-director of Quicksilver Dance Company, an improvisational dance company for older adults that performs at assisted living facilities and in professional performances in the Mid-Atlantic region. He has worked extensively with frail and vulnerable older adults, including those with age-related cognitive disabilities.

In his violin programs, Anthony draws on a diverse repertoire ranging from the works of the classical composers to fiddle tunes, and including ethnic music to jazz standards. He uses music to engage older adults in song and rhythmic movement, offering wide variety in content and tempo with the intention of evoking maximum involvement and pleasure in participants. His approach to connecting with people of all ages has been profoundly influenced by his training in music and dance improvisation.

PRINCIPLES FOR CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT

Anthony uses these principles as a guide for fully engaging his participants:

- **Involvement.** The aim of the work is always participation, whether the individuals are enhancing their skills as performers or developing their ability to express themselves in new ways. People with cognitive disabilities may redevelop that ability each day. For them, that is mastery. Doing it together provides social engagement.

- **Improvisation.** For someone with a cognitive disability, the most important moment that exists is right now. One of the most useful skills a teaching artist can develop is the ability to respond to the people in the room and to what is happening in the moment. Teaching artists can benefit from learning improvisation skills in their discipline and/or branching into another discipline to stretch themselves and expand their repertoire of tools.

- **Intention.** If the intention is to connect with older adults and create an engaging experience, then that is the teaching artist’s first priority, even if it means going in a different direction than the one that was planned for the day.

- **Improvement.** Collect evaluation data and written observations after delivering programs. Use this information to improve the workshops as well as to make a case for arts engagement work to funders and decision-makers at facilities serving older adults.

Anthony believes that the featured art form is not the sole content of an arts and aging program. For him, the most important focus of the program is the people who are engaged in it. He sees his work as being about relationships that can grow over time as the teaching artist...
LESSON 5: Considering Accessibility and Cognitive Disabilities in Arts in Aging

learns more and more, through artistic expression, about the individuals who participate. Despite the effects of cognitive disabilities on the participants’ ability to recall specific items of information, they are often still able to recognize as something they like the activities they have recently been enjoying and the energy signature of a person who is their trustworthy and friendly guide.⁹

COMMUNICATING WITH OLDER ADULTS WITH COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

In addition to the principles presented above, teaching artists can use the following guidelines to improve interactions with older adults with cognitive disabilities:

- Face the person when you speak.
- Establish eye contact.
- Use hand gestures (point).
- Speak distinctly, calmly, and softly.
- Use simple sentences.
- Allow ample time for answers.
- Minimize background noises.
- Touch only when acceptable.
- Do not overuse the word “no”; look for ways to say “yes” or “maybe.”
- Sudden, quick, unexpected movements can be frightening.
- Let the person know the time of day and where they are, and reiterate what is going on every now and then.¹⁰

Reflective Practice

Thinking about working with older adults with cognitive impairment, what is your approach to facilitating arts workshops?

If you are new to working with adults with cognitive impairment, what stands out to you about Anthony’s approach that you might apply in your own work?
LESSON 5: Considering Accessibility and Cognitive Disabilities in Arts in Aging

LESSON 5 SUMMARY

"Considering Accessibility and Cognitive Disabilities" presented a method for approaching the artistic process in a way that is accessible to older adults and caregivers. The lesson discussed facilitating workshops for adults with cognitive impairment.

CHECK-IN: LESSON 5 GOALS

- Understand how to prepare for your teaching while considering accessibility
- Know how to create an accessible environment for engaging older adults in the arts
- Understand basic facilitation principles for engaging older adults with memory impairment

LESSON 5 NOTES

2. Boyer, Creativity Matters, 89.
5. Boyer, Creativity Matters, 124.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 125.
9. Hyatt.
10. Boyer, Creativity Matters, 126.
LESSON 6: Intergenerational Learning & Programming

GOALS

1. Have a familiarity with a successful intergenerational project and resources for intergenerational work
2. Lead an intergenerational timeline activity
3. Know techniques for working with intergenerational learners
4. Understand best practices in the field of intergenerational learning, including organizations carrying out best practices programs
5. Know the benefits of intergenerational learning
6. Brainstorm program structures and concepts for intergenerational learning

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What about your art form and personal practice as an artist lends itself to intergenerational learning?

What are three challenges you foresee in implementing intergenerational learning programs?

WHAT IS INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING?

Intergenerational learning refers to any program in which multiple generations engage in the same learning experience. Formally, it is defined as activities that increase interaction, cooperation, or exchange between any two generations.¹

The best intergenerational programs intentionally bring people from different age groups and generations together to engage in “ongoing, mutually beneficial, planned activities that are designed to achieve specific program goals.” Aside from learning skills and having new experiences, intergenerational programs should be designed to provide supportive environments for fostering emotional and social growth as well as physical activity.²

Intergenerational learning can take three main forms: youth serving elders, elders serving youth or a joint or shared experience. Like any quality arts learning experience, an intergenerational experience helps participants gain mastery, complete creative work and explore ideas and concepts. However, intergenerational learning has the added goals of creating a space where people from different generations can exchange opinions, explore identity, and find common ground.

Intergenerational programming can foster community connections, promote health and creativity in aging populations and support strong academic, community and artistic engagement among youth. This lesson will outline some of the research that supports the intrinsic value of intergenerational learning, as well as outlining best practices for designing and implementing intergenerational programs.
LESSON 6: Intergenerational Learning & Programming

Remember, intergenerational learning assumes that everyone is a learner, and everyone is capable of both learning and teaching. It is essential that all generations involved in intergenerational learning believe that the other generations have something to learn from them and something to teach them.

WHY INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING?

The following section is adapted from Generations United Fact Sheet on The Benefits of Intergenerational Programs.3

Older People as a Resource: Senior service may be utilized in many non-traditional organizations and raises public awareness of the value of older adult volunteers.

Youth as a Resource: Younger learners “are able to provide companionship to older people and participate in service projects to assist older adults” and other community members.

Change Within Families: “Family members are living further apart from each other and are losing their natural intergenerational composition.”

Age Segregation and Isolation Among Generations: “Society has become more age-segregated, providing very little opportunity for” intergenerational interaction.

Gaps in Services Provided to Children and Youth: “There is a strong need for tutors, role models, and mentors.”

Gaps in Services Provided to Older People: “Increasing numbers of older people with varying supportive service needs will require more innovative adult care programs.” “Successful programs are based on reciprocity, are sustained and intentional, and involve education and preparation for all ages. Young and old are viewed as assets and not problems to be solved.”

BENEFITS OF INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR THE BROADER COMMUNITY

Strengthens Community: “Intergenerational programs bring together diverse groups and networks and help to dispel inaccurate stereotypes. Sharing talents and resources help to create a unified group identity. Children, youth, and older adults are less alienated while the community recognizes that they are contributing members of society.”

Maximizes Human Resources: “Intergenerational community service programs tend to multiply human resources by engaging older adults and youth as volunteers.”

Maximizes Financial Resources: “When groups representing young and old approach local funders,” those funders are more likely to respond positively because they can see broad-based community support. “Intergenerational programs can save money and stretch scarce resources by sharing sites and/or resources.”

Expands Services: “Intergenerational community service programs can expand the level of services to meet more needs and address more issues.”
Encourages Cultural Exchange: “Intergenerational programs promote the transmission of cultural traditions and values from older to younger generations, helping to build a sense of personal and societal identity while encouraging tolerance.”

Inspires Collaboration: “Intergenerational programs can unite community members to take action on” public policy “issues that address human needs across the generations.”

BENEFITS OF INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH

Improve Academic Performance: “Children build their foundation for reading and related activities from kindergarten through third grade, playing an important role in literacy development. In schools where older adults were a regular fixture (volunteers working 15 hours per week) children had more improved reading scores compared to their peers at other schools.”

Enhance Social Skills: “Interacting with older adults enables youth to develop social networks, communication skills, problem-solving abilities, positive attitudes towards aging, a sense of purpose and community service. Volunteering also promotes good self-esteem. Young children who interact with older adults in a co-located facility, or shared site, experienced higher personal and social development by 11 months compared to children in non-intergenerational facilities.”

Decrease Negative Behavior: “Youth involved in intergenerational mentoring programs are 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs, 27% less likely to begin using alcohol, and 52% less likely to skip school.”

Increase Stability: “Children and youth gain positive role models with whom they can interact on a regular basis. They develop many positive relationships to civic attitudes and behaviors including volunteering habits, sense of efficacy and trust.”

More Positive Attitude Toward Aging and the Elderly: “Some kids may have few opportunities to interact with older adults, which is detrimental to both! If kids see the dignity and wisdom associated with having a few years under one’s belt, they’ll have less fear of our seniors and see that every age can bring possibilities for growth and pleasure.”

Increase Empathy For and an Understanding of Physical Disabilities, Cognitive Disabilities and Assisted Living: “Such interactions have been proven to promote feelings of compassion for those struggling with failing bodies and minds. It can also teach respect for diversity of cultures and people.”

BENEFITS OF INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMMING FOR OLDER ADULTS

Enhances Socialization: Older adults remain productive, useful, and contributing members of society. They increase interaction with children and youth and engage more with one another to prevent isolation in later years.

Stimulates Learning: “Older adults learn new innovations and technologies from their younger counterparts.”

Increases Emotional Support: “Intergenerational programs afford older adults
an opportunity to participate in a meaningful activity. This decreases loneliness, boredom, and depression while increasing self-esteem. Older volunteers report more enriched lives, a rejuvenated sense of purpose, and increased coping skills for their personal struggles.”

Improves Health: Helping “contributes to the maintenance of good health, and can diminish the effect of psychological and physical diseases and disorders.”

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

Like any educational program, intergenerational learning presents a myriad of unique challenges. Nevertheless, with proper planning and a skilled facilitator, the results of intergenerational programs can be positive. It is also important to note that encountering challenges is not uncommon, and that intergenerational programming presents a specific set of challenges due to the different populations that are coming together.

BEFORE THE PROGRAM

The most common challenge for a teaching artist is familiarity with one age group more so than another. Many teaching artists work exclusively with children while others work with adult learners. Switching between age groups can be challenging and combining multiple generations is even more challenging. Intergenerational cross-training, such as this manual provides, will introduce teaching artists to the needs of both generations and age groups and can help to mitigate the challenge of working with a less familiar age population.

Additionally, teaching artists who are used to working in schools may not be aware of the environment in a community center, recreation center or nursing home. It is important to talk with the staff at the facility where you will be teaching. A teaching artist must be aware of the elements of the environment in which they will be teaching: What else is happening during the time of your program? What is the noise level? Will you always be in the same room? What is your room like? What sorts of distractions could the environment provide for children? What kind of distractions could the environment provide for older adults?

GENERATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DIFFERENCES

Putting young and old learners into the same environment can heighten the disparities between maturity, development and generations. Differences in development and generation can play a major role in what youth or elders find engaging. Attention span and behavior can also prove to be a challenge with mixed generation groups. While there are many activities that both generations will be interested in, the attention span, ability to self-monitor and perseverance will vary widely across the generations. Understanding the backgrounds and social histories of all participants will help teaching artists choose activities that are engaging and appealing to both generations. Teaching artists should plan for moments of discord in which frustration, learning, problem solving, etc., are experienced differently by the generations.
INTERGENERATIONAL ARTS PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

In addition to teaching arts-based skills and/or mastery of an artistic process, intergenerational arts programs will have other objectives. It is important to consider which learning objectives you will address in your teaching while you are designing and planning the program.

Later in this manual, you will read about a variety of techniques for engaging elders; use these techniques as a starting point for addressing learning objectives in interdisciplinary programs. On the following page is a list of possible learning and growth objectives and examples of implementation. This chart is adapted from “Tried and True: A Guide to Successful Intergenerational Activities at Shared Site Programs” from Generations United.11

Please note that while assessment and evaluation has not been covered in depth thus far, the chart below could serve as the basis for a quality assessment/evaluation tool for an intergenerational arts program.
### Lesson 6: Intergenerational Learning & Programming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interact/Communicate</td>
<td>Participant communicates with another participant (verbal, eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>contact, body language)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work as a team/cooperate</td>
<td>Participant works alongside intergenerational participant to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>engage in a joint task, share materials, give or receive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>assistance, ask for help, offer help, compliment or receive a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>compliment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological/Emotional</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be generative/Nurturing/</td>
<td>Participant demonstrates concern for partner and takes time to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful/Caring</td>
<td>meet other’s needs. Participant cares for feelings and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>well-being of other person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have personal choice/Make</td>
<td>Participant makes a choice about personal involvement in an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions</td>
<td>activity. When asked a question about preference, choice or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>participation, participant exhibits autonomy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminiscence/Reflect</td>
<td>Participant engages in storytelling about personal past, answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>questions, and brings up objects and events. Incorporates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>memories associated with life history/experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take initiative</td>
<td>Participant engages in activity willfully and without</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prompting, demonstrates desire to participate through overt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>action or verbal request.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be creative</td>
<td>Participant is able to individualize intergenerational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>opportunity by making individual or partnered decisions about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>how an opportunity is implemented or completed. Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>takes their own approach to the outcome of a project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance self-esteem</td>
<td>Participant demonstrates pride in work, relationships by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>showing it to others, demonstrating concern about outcomes,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>making a comment about personal contribution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exercise motor skills</td>
<td>Gross motor – use of shoulder, entire arm movements, grip with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>whole hand, use of leg muscles. Fine motor/dexterity – use of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>finger movement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intellectual/Cognitive</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stay on task/Complete</td>
<td>Ability to stay engaged in activity at hand, able to forget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an activity</td>
<td>other concerns to enjoy the moment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn new terms/skills</td>
<td>Ability to learn the name of a participant/material/facilitator,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>learn a new skills, retain information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROCESS VS. PRODUCT

This chapter has already mentioned planning for shared activities and activities that both generations will find appealing. While having objectives in mind and selecting activities is a fundamental element of a successful intergenerational program, the path the participants will take to the completion of the activity may vary. De-emphasizing the product not only switches the emphasis to the process, but it also allows the teaching artist to plan for modification, variation and accessibility. When the path of learning is privileged over the uniformity or even the completion of the final product, there is more room for the emergent ideas of both generations to be realized.

EVALUATION, DOCUMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT FROM THE OUTSET

As you plan your intergenerational program and the program objectives, consider strategies and ideas for tracking and monitoring the success of your learning objectives throughout the program. Furthermore, remember to think about assessing the shared objectives for both generations, as well as the separate objectives for the separate generations. Later in this manual you will find examples of quality assessment and evaluation tools that can serve as a framework for your own assessments and evaluations.

In addition to evaluation and assessment, documentation is very important. Plan ways to collect process materials, quotes, photographs, etc., so that the learning, collaboration, process and products are documented in a meaningful way. Remember, it’s not about the quantity of documentation collected but rather about the quality: a photograph of a youth and an elder working on the same drawing is much better than several pictures of individual youths and elders.

STRUCTURE OF INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Every intergenerational program should operate on a cyclical model, with each iteration of the program including each component of the cycle below:12

**Orientation**—Participants receive an overview of what they will be learning, doing and experiencing. All students meet, instructors introduce themselves and show their own artistic work/perform or demonstrate their art. It is crucial that age and age stereotypes are explored, discussed and examined during this phase of the program. Furthermore, cultural stereotypes, should be discussed. This phase builds trust and community in the group and begins to teach expressive skills of communication.

**Discovery**—Materials, concepts and art forms are introduced. Participants experiment and discover alongside each other. Discovery is instrumental in the learners’ exploration of self, self-discovery and in continuing to build a strong group dynamic. Leadership skills, group norms, and a comfort with differing points of view can all be established during this phase.

**Development**—The structure of the project and collaboration is formalized, participants work together to combine what they learned in discovery to work on their combined projects.
LESSON 6: Intergenerational Learning & Programming

Rehearsal/Draft — The product is refined through rehearsal, drafts, iterations, and/or critique procedures.

Celebration—The program culminates in a performance, exhibition, screening, etc. and celebration and sharing of the learning that has happened.

STEPS IN IMPLEMENTING BEST PRACTICE PROGRAMS

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Virginia Tech & Virginia State University) 13

Intergenerational programs are those that connect younger and older generations to foster positive experiences. Research continues to grow, noting that when successfully delivered, intergenerational programs result in positive health effects, child learning, and appropriate socialization for both young and old.14

PRACTICE 1 – COLLABORATION

Staff members of the adult and child programs collaborate to plan activities.

Practically speaking, collaborating takes a concerted effort. Merely setting aside time to discuss plans is a hurdle. Children and adults of different ages have different interests, strengths, and needs. Staff members can review the developmental strengths and needs of children and adults in the program to inform activities for the two age groups.

Staff members benefit from their partner’s expertise, which makes planning easier. Participants will benefit from plans that best match their interests and abilities.

Application of the Practice

Involve families in the collaboration once or twice a year to elicit their ideas. Family members love to talk about their child or adult family member. They can offer ideas about the child’s interests at home or the adult’s past skills and interests that can lead to enriched program activities.

Example Application

Use of Photography: Some programs find that taking photos of the participants, then sitting together to review the photos and discuss what occurred, helps staff from both programs reflect on the activity — what worked, what didn’t work, and what they might change if a similar activity were planned in the future.

Program Ideas

• Start by setting aside 30 minutes a week for staff members to plan together.
• Rotate leadership in the planning team.
• Brainstorm and record ALL ideas on an easel pad.
• Consider the participants as well as the setting. Does the environment need to be adjusted in any way?
• Take turns documenting the activity in each session to use for later reflection.
• Use reflection time to identify common elements of successful activities and repeat those characteristics.
PRACTICE 2 – DECISION-MAKING

Participants are involved in decision-making about the activities and during activities. When activities are offered, adults and children should have the choice of deciding if and how to be involved. Affecting their decisions may be past experiences, personalities, thoughts, and feelings of commitment or inadequacy; people vary. When individuals are invited to make decisions about programming, they gain power and are motivated in their future involvement. Options for decision-making can be simple or complex — whatever is appropriate for the child or adult. Participation increases when children and adults feel invested because they shaped the program. Evidence shows that when people choose their level of involvement, there is sustained cooperation.\textsuperscript{15,16}

Application of the Practice

Staff members can invite participants into decision-making. Imagine a continuum along which there are opportunities to invite input. How are invitations different at each age and ability level? How do teachers invite a 2-year old to indicate preference or choice? What about an older child? Even adults with cognitive impairment, such as Alzheimer’s disease, can indicate their preference to a staff member.

Example Application

Consider a free-form activity, which gives children and adults the chance to exercise their decision-making skills and gain confidence in their ability to make decisions. The facilitator might talk about an activity in a general way and ask participants what they think about certain aspects of it, but no exact answer or model is provided. With a variety of supplies or interaction choices, children and adults can reason out for themselves what they think will work best.

Program Ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of involvement for child or adult</th>
<th>Ways for staff to encourage involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not interested.</td>
<td>Assure comfort in the space, and that they are feeling well. Do they need special attention or redirection?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not involved but looking on.</td>
<td>Assess interest, ask questions, accompany or gently guide participant to activity, assist in entry to activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting as part of the activity but not engaged.</td>
<td>Ask participant to hand you (or another) an item or some materials; assess level of understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working individually alongside another.</td>
<td>Encourage co-helping, holding, passing materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisting another with the activity.</td>
<td>Ask child for items by name to be handed to an adult (language development). Ask adult to help with fine-motor difficulties the child may be having.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing in the activity with others.</td>
<td>Praise and encourage the “together” behavior more than the resulting product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating fully in the activity, asking questions/commenting.</td>
<td>Listen for ideas for future activities. What are they noting? What excited them?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PRACTICE 3 – VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation is voluntary.

It is important that potential participants of an intergenerational activity are given a choice of participating in the activity or not. In communicating, staff should be encouraging and enthusiastic, but not coercive. Once informed, participants can make a decision concerning their ability and willingness to join. Some participants may need time to ease into the routine of intergenerational contact, and staff can support that. By providing a choice, staff members set the tone of the activity in a positive light, while increasing the comfort of all involved.

Application of the Practice

Think about intergenerational exchanges going both ways. Children can visit adult settings and can also invite older adults to their classroom. A child who declines invitations to join activities outside the classroom may be reluctant to leave the comfort of the classroom rather than being afraid of older people.

Program Ideas

- Be clear with descriptions, instructions, and expectations.
- Model participation.
- Pair compatible participants.
- Be enthusiastic and encouraging without being coercive.
- Arrange the task and seating conveniently and comfortably.
- Assist with the task.
- Allow participants to ease into the task.
- Allow creativity with the task.
- Offer a choice of more than one activity.
- Do not assume that a refusal to participate in one activity means a lack of interest in intergenerational programming.

PRACTICE 4 – PREPARING PARTICIPANTS

Participants are prepared ahead of time and reflect on activities afterward.

It is important for staff members to inform intergenerational participants of the nature of the activity and the expectations concerning their roles and responsibilities. Describing the activity to participants ahead of time allows them to mentally prepare for the experience.

For children, expectations help to guide their behavior and prepare them for learning. For adults, the preparation allows them to feel in control so they are not blindsided by what is to come. After the activity, both groups should reflect either together or separately.

Reflection is simply getting participants to talk about their experience. Reflection is a critical component of learning for adults and children.

Reflecting with children allows them to rename, restate, and revise actions for the next time.
they try similar tasks. Through reflection, adults may transform their assumptions about involvement and feel that their input is valuable.

**Application of the Practice**

When facilitators take the time to reflect with and listen to participants, there is an empowering effect for participants. Listening to reflections is a way to consider valuable input that can be used to redesign activities for the future or to help staff choose how to pair participants.

In addition to reflection through discussion, try to role-play the activity or reflect on it or discuss it in pairs.

**Program Ideas**

- During reflection, asking the right questions is a skill. If participants roll their eyes when asked to reflect or simply do not participate, don’t give up. Perhaps they need additional guidance and more pertinent questions.
- Create a supportive environment for group reflection to occur. Consider using the same type of setting each time (room arrangement, lighting, a centerpiece, etc.) for a cue that it is time for reflection.
- Reinforce reflections. See every idea as a good one. Don’t interrupt reflections, but help discussion stay focused.
- Clarify, restate, paraphrase, and ask for more information.
- Use open-ended questions. For example: What did you notice about the children today? How did the adults like what we did? What else might we do like this the next time? Which part of working together did you like?

**PRACTICE 5 – ACTIVITIES REFLECT INTERESTS**

Activities reflect the interests, backgrounds, and social histories of the program participants. A social history is basically the accounting of an individual’s life — their interests, career, relationships, the ways they have coped, and how they have defined themselves. This primarily speaks to adult programs; however, many child programs are beginning to collect this information from parents regarding the children’s interests and family structures.

A social history, in turn, helps facilitators plan activities that build on interests. Such activities can lead to greater engagement, higher-order learning, and more positive experiences.

Furthermore, the elders are able to share their culture and traditions with the children. Participant diversity can be celebrated to enhance children’s pride in their heritage through incorporation of traditional music, art, dance, dress, food, and photos.

**Application of the Practice**

Consider combining older and younger participants at mealtimes to create a sense of family conversation. Prompt conversations that allow adults to share stories of the community in “olden times.”
When planning, use complementary pairing. For example, pair adults who can help with less-mature children; pair adults with diminished senses with more-alert children who could assist them. Cue each pair appropriately.

Program Ideas

- Make activities relevant. Be sure the activities are intentional and diverse. Remember science, astronomy, reading, safety, music, games, movement and dance, storytelling, cooking, tinkering with tools, and more.
- Collect social history information from the families of adults and then review them for past hobbies — such as cooking, military, airplanes, woodworking, gardening, or office work — and build on those interests to present learning ideas to children. Identifying, naming, grouping, and other developmental concepts can be introduced to children using adult skill areas.
- Make a summary list of interests to post in the learning space for quick reference.
- Present photos of various activities to adults and children to assess their interest.
- Take photographs of participants involved in activities. Reflect with co-teachers on what seems to work best when planning new activities.

PRACTICE 6 – AGE- AND ROLE-APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES

Activities are age- and role-appropriate.

Although all children are different, there is a predictable sequence in their development. Age- and role-appropriate educational opportunities are critical to a quality early childhood education program. Early childhood programs aim to prepare children for school while developing their social skills.

For older adults, appropriateness is a critical concept as well. Active engagement in appropriate roles helps older adults preserve their identities and can support functional abilities.

Planning activities that are manageable without seeming juvenile is key. Providing adults with age-appropriate art materials, such as colored pencils instead of crayons, is one way to support age appropriateness. Asking an adult to help a child build a house of blocks is role appropriate even if the adult needs the fine motor practice just like the child.

Skilled facilitators can support all adults in age-appropriate roles during intergenerational programming.

Application of the Practice

Gardening has broad appeal to all ages. Because of the many tasks involved in planning, starting, maintaining, and harvesting a garden, it is easy to give participants of different abilities a role where they can succeed. Persons in wheelchairs can work at raised beds as small children work at hand height while standing. Adaptive equipment accommodates limited dexterity and strength. Adults who do not like to get messy can help plan the garden, sort seeds, water plants, and prepare harvested vegetables for a snack to share. Participants can plan the garden and enjoy the fruits of their labor together. Gardening
LESSON 6: Intergenerational Learning & Programming

provides a natural opportunity to incorporate STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) principles.

Program Ideas

• Trash to treasure for elders can be combined with Show and Tell for children. Invite antique dealers to be present if appropriate for extended learning. Adults and children both have favorite objects, with stories that reflect their interests and values.

• Weather Exploration is age-appropriate as weather affects everyone! Talk about weather folklore and reports, look at clouds, measure snow, invite a local meteorologist. Adults can help children select weather-appropriate clothes for dolls.

• Storytelling is enjoyed across the ages. Use interesting stories or story cards. Pair adults and children; add costumes and props.

• Sports are a lifelong passion for many; discuss games, rules, favorite teams, and being a good fan. Invite local athletes.

• Everyone needs transportation. Discuss travel including busses, trains, antique cars, and airplanes. Use books and field trips.

• Gift giving takes many shapes and is appropriate at any age – talk with both groups about the joy of giving, and make plans for giving to each other or working together to give to another group (e.g., a shelter). Have children and adults really consider each other’s interests. This project may last over time. Suggestions are a family recipe, a puzzle to work together, seeds for a garden, ingredients for soup, and simple sewing projects.

PRACTICE 7 – INTERACTION

Activities support interaction among intergenerational partners.

The partners in intergenerational programs are the adults and the children. Individually, children may not have developed particular skills in their thinking or motor functioning. Adults possess skills that children have not developed, but they may also have diminishing abilities in sight, hearing, memory, or hand functioning. Partners may need skills that the other has to engage fully in an activity.

Prior to and during the activity, the skilled facilitator should note which skills are emerging in children or diminishing in adults. Activities can be created that encourage partners to work together to be successful.

Application of the Practice

• Facilitators can encourage interactions with cues or verbal instructions that are important in engaging partners with one another.

• Instead of pairs, consider small groups of four for some activities (such as nature walks or dancing).

• Gardening, cooking, woodworking, and making models are all concrete learning tasks that use adult skills and teach pre-math and science skills to children.
LESSON 6: Intergenerational Learning & Programming

- Plan activities and materials so partners or groups need each other to successfully complete them (e.g., children collect materials from adults who are holding them for a storytelling activity).
- While children’s skills are growing, adult skills may diminish but can be exercised.

### Program Ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building children’s skills</th>
<th>Exercising adult skills</th>
<th>Examples for programming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand-eye coordination developing. Limited depth perception.</td>
<td>Reaction time slows; motor skills may diminish with arthritis or Parkinson’s disease.</td>
<td>Folding, holding, cutting, rolling, measuring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognition</td>
<td>Cognition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete learner (must see it), sometimes hard to imagine.</td>
<td>Abstract learner (can picture it in their minds). Can conjure up ideas.</td>
<td>Telling stories, using props with stories, costuming, drawing, easel painting, putting things in order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural curiosity but limited attention span.</td>
<td>Most pay close attention; dementia may reduce attention span.</td>
<td>Cloud watching, outdoor listening, texture exploration, music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stamina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty sitting still for long.</td>
<td>Some may find it hard to stand for long periods.</td>
<td>Movement, exercise, walking, focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to read, order story, tell story, recognize words.</td>
<td>Patience with reading;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can listen, can point to words.</td>
<td>Reading together, sight words, nursery rhymes, letter recognition, printing words together.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in technology, willing to push buttons.</td>
<td>Apprehension with new technology.</td>
<td>Pair together to learn a simple and fun task. Self-photos are often a fun way to learn together, then move into the use of simple applications for adult topics like gardening or music.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PRACTICE 8 – ENVIRONMENT

Facilitators skillfully stage the environment to promote interaction.

Successful programs carefully design the physical space, the program, and related policies to be flexible, collaborative and barrier-free. When the environment has been carefully designed to optimize small-group interaction, it serves to guide children and adults to explore and interact within it, thereby increasing learning and socialization.
LESSON 6: Intergenerational Learning & Programming

Application of the Practice

• Eliminate distractions such as the radio and TV.
• Limit the amount of materials made available; this provides a reason to share.
• Mix or alternate child and adult chairs and provide chairs with arms.
• Allow programming location to vary; for example, use the children’s classroom to offer variety and flexibility.
• Provide adaptive equipment if needed.
• Encourage creativity and feelings of success with open-ended materials that do not prescribe one right way of doing an activity (as opposed to precut shapes or pages from coloring books).
• To be more sensitive, take a self-directed walk around the space. Move on your knees to gain a child’s perspective, then use a walker, cane, or wheelchair for an adult’s perspective.
• Other considerations:
  • Offer accessible materials and choose a large print size for them.
  • Offer outdoor seating areas.
  • Clear walking paths.
  • Ensure wheelchair accessibility to all spaces, inside and out.
  • Use appropriate language for special abilities.
  • Provide good lighting.

Program Ideas

• Set up the activity for interactions. Consider the space and how the materials are arranged. Think about how to engage partners prior to the activity.
• Invite conversations by using interesting pictures and objects in the setting.
• Reflect the interests of children and adults with materials, pictures, decorations, or objects.
• Even in adult environments, consider dividing the space by learning centers so it is easy to access activity areas spaced throughout the room(s).
• Display the work of children and adults so they may revisit it and discuss it.
• Include a photo of pairs working together on the displayed item.
• Include comfy areas where snuggled reading or relaxing can occur.
• Have a backup plan when using technology or in case an activity ends early (such as a beanbag toss or storytelling).
• Make materials appropriately accessible to participants; encourage choice from activity centers and materials.
• Provide adult-size chairs in children’s spaces and children’s chairs that are tall enough to reach the table where adults and children work together.
• Check that the floors in children’s spaces are clear of items before elders visit.

PRACTICE 9 – SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Facilitators consider the social environment and the role of staff members.

In addition to the physical environment of a space or program, the social environment can influence participants’ experiences with intergenerational programming. Examples of the social environment include how safe participants feel sharing ideas with the group and how staff members pair children and adults based on common interests or friendships.

Staff members are critical elements of the social environment. Their comfort with the participants’ ages and abilities influences how the children and adults feel about each other. How staff members move around the space and offer help and encouragement is central to an activity’s success. Facilitators do not have to be at the center of things to be effective; being able to step back when participants are interacting well is a good sign of the activity’s success.

Social-emotional development is fostered through relationships. When children and elders see each other often, it helps build relationships, as do chances to share stories and preferences. Staff can encourage these exchanges. For example:

“Sam, please tell Miss Jo about your trip to New York. She used to live there.”
“Mr. Jorge used to build boats. He will help us with our ‘What floats?’ experiment.”
“Decide with your partner which type of seeds you will plant for our garden.”

Application of the Practice

Offer settings between children and seniors that allow them to build their relationships. Suggestions include mealtimes, dramatic play (with costumes and props), and reading.

Program Ideas

Staff members who intentionally connect with participants while guiding their engagement support positive interactions.

• Learn about participants, including normative and non-normative aspects of their development to build understanding and comfort with the population.
• Encourage participants to ask questions (formal and informal) among themselves.
• Pair participants based on common interests, backgrounds or complementary abilities.
• Give participants time to respond to questions.
• Allow participants time to get to know one another through frequent interactions that allow them to share stories and preferences.
• Introduce the activity and then step back to allow for child and older adult interactions.
• Help participants interpret discoveries through sharing.
LESSON 6: Intergenerational Learning & Programming

- Ask questions and model curiosity: “I wonder what would happen if ...?” “How could we ...?”
- Show confidence in connections within relationships. Note ways that participants are working well together, sharing, and helping each other.

PRACTICE 10 – ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT

Adaptive equipment is used as appropriate.

There is a chance that clients in an intergenerational program will need adaptive equipment. The primary reason to consider adaptive equipment is to remove barriers to participation. Examples of adaptive equipment include pencil holders for slip resistance, magnifying glasses or digital projectors for better viewing, and chair supports or lifts for improved positioning. This equipment is often essential to engagement in the activity and with an intergenerational partner.

Application of the Practice

As a facilitator, question what may help remove a barrier or enhance a learning situation. Sometimes creative solutions for adaptations involve Velcro, pillows, longer handles, or pulleys.

Program Ideas

The lack of fit between a person and his or her environment is a primary reason people do not choose to participate in activities. Adaptive equipment is not always needed for activities involving children and elders, but it can ensure that all who want to join can be active and successful.

The right tools can help.

- Look at a need for adaptations any place there is a barrier, including height, size, and location of furniture and materials.
- Equipment can be purchased or adapted in a DIY fashion.
- Tools may be simple (such as large-handled spoons) or sophisticated (such as digital communicators for a child who lacks speech).
- Spring-action scissors, wide paintbrushes, and anchors for papers can make a world of difference during art and writing activities.
- A wide array of cooking tools can be provided for programming that appeals to all age groups.
- Ergonomic gardening tools and modified containers, such as raised beds or wheeled containers, can accommodate gardeners of all abilities.
- Communication tools can help enhance relationships. Devices and apps are becoming more common for adults who are losing their speaking ability due to debilitating conditions. For example, Boardmaker Software (www.mayer-johnson.com/boardmaker-software/) is a communications tool with more than 3,000 pictures.
PRACTICE 11 – DOCUMENTING AND COMMUNICATING

Facilitators document and communicate experiences to build on in future activities.

Documentation starts with careful observation, then evolves into a display of learning processes. When the concept of documentation is applied to intergenerational programs, artifacts and evidence are collected to demonstrate the relationship-building process of old and young together. Facilitators may post a photograph sequence, create a bulletin board story, or share a notebook about projects with families and community members.

Documentation is not performed independently. Many perspectives are involved to analyze and interpret the success and progress of your program.

Application of the Practice

Documentation makes learning visible.

- What evidence will you collect to show that young and old are building relationships?
- How will you and your colleagues discuss the documentation and use it for future planning?

Program Ideas

The way observations are documented varies. Consider using sticky notes, a clipboard and chart of items to observe, a blank calendar, or small labels (like mailing labels) in addition to photographs, videos, sketches, and tallies.

Examples of documentation include recording conversations or storytelling between children and elders, displaying co-created artwork, and photographing the progress of planning and creating a garden together.

Don’t be overwhelmed. Start with a learning moment and write about it to share with others. Later, emphasize the process of learning and interacting rather than the product. Observe over time as a relationship blooms and matures.

Guiding questions to consider when reviewing what you have documented are:

- What else can I do to provoke their engagement?
- What else will capture their interests?
- What additional resources do I need?

Families like to learn about what their child or older relative did during intergenerational programming. Sharing information can lead to strengthened resources and greater support for the intergenerational program. Daily updates or periodic newsletters can share the latest information and build support for your program.
OFFERING PRAISE THAT WORKS FOR ALL GENERATIONS

As previous chapters have discussed, praise and encouragement are a crucial part of successful arts in aging. Working with interdisciplinary classrooms is not different. The best practice is to set up a framework within which you can praise students, young and old, without approaching their accomplishments differently based on age.

Avoid words like “cute” and “adorable” and other words that carry connotations of age or ability. Praise should rely on specifics and should focus on aspects of a student’s work or performance that can be replicated and refined.

Examples:

I liked how you showed me…
I like that you remembered…
I hear you doing _____ well
I see you are _____ it is improving/you are working hard/you are being generous/ etc.
I’m glad that…

BEST PRACTICE PROGRAMS

IN THE LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY:
OPENING MINDS THROUGH ART (OMA)
(Miami University, Oxford, Ohio)

When I see what I do and what comes out of me, I’m beside myself!
—Molly, OMA artist17

Opening Minds through Art (OMA) is an intergenerational visual art program for people with Alzheimer’s disease (AD) and related neurocognitive disorders (NCDs), developed at Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami University of Ohio.17 It is grounded in the belief that people with Alzheimer’s disease are capable of expressing themselves creatively. Its approach is to capitalize on what people with AD and related NCDs can still do. OMA currently offers its program at nine sites that serve people with AD, including long-term care facilities and day centers, and it serves 200 pairs of older adults and volunteers annually.

The program is implemented in 10-12 week sessions for an hour each week. Groups consist of up to 12 people with AD matched with 12 trained volunteers working on a one-to-one basis with the same older artist for the entire session. The OMA art-making process involves carefully staged steps aimed at maximizing the possibility of creative expression. Participants are provided with manageable choices and failure-free activities that allow them to become active agents in their own creative process. The one-to-one ratio in the creative process builds their confidence and allows for close relationships between people with AD and trained volunteers and staff.

Elizabeth Lokon, PhD, founder and director of OMA, designed the program to promote autonomy and dignity for the participants. “Every project has the element of choice, and
the reason is they are normally not given any choice because it takes too long. But when you ask them their opinion, you’re saying, ‘Your opinion matters, it’s valuable, and I’m waiting here for you to make a decision.’ This type of self-esteem building is missing in everyday life for people with dementia. All of this is to give them the sense they can do things and it builds confidence.”

With OMA’s person-centered approach, the participants experience meaningful social engagement and have a sense of mastery during the process. They also produce beautiful art, influenced by viewing, at the beginning of each session, works of art that act as inspiration for the day’s project. The art-making sessions culminate in a gallery exhibition celebrating the artists’ accomplishments while educating the public about the creative capacities of people with AD and related NCDs.

Participating in the program has observable benefits for the older artists. As one volunteer reports, “You can see the difference from when you start to when you finish. Sometimes Helen doesn’t want to do it at the beginning, but once we get to the end, she always talks about how much fun she’s had.”

A team of researchers at Miami University under the direction of Dr. John Bailer analyzed video data of 38 people with AD and related NCDs in the OMA program. In this study, participants showed greater engagement, social interest, and pleasure during OMA when compared with traditional arts and crafts activities such as cut and paste and coloring books. They also showed less disengagement, negative affect, sadness, and confusion in OMA than in traditional activities.

OMA also has benefits for its volunteers, most of whom are students at Miami University, as demonstrated by a research team led by Dr. Lokon that analyzed 300 journal entries by 59 student volunteers. Dr. Lokon concluded, “Students felt rewarded for making a difference in the lives of others, even if it was only for a brief moment. Their attitudes toward elders in general and elders with dementia in particular became more positive, and they developed both insights and skills to interact with people with dementia in ways that promote dignity and autonomy. They were able to build genuine reciprocity with their elder partners through these relationships and learn more about themselves and about life.”

CASE STUDY: EngAGE INTERGENERATIONAL CLAYMATION PROJECT

“The Claymation project pulled a lot of art out of kids who really never had a lot of art in their lives. The seniors reached deep down and found the students’ creative sides. The students find a value in the seniors. In trusting the seniors and confiding in them, the students get an extra chance to find out if something is the right thing to do.”

—Christine Krohn, Principal, Burbank Community Day School

One of EngAGE’s signature programs for older adults living in the Burbank Senior Artists Colony is an arts-based mentoring program with at-risk teens at the Burbank Community Day School. The program pairs the older adults with students who are in danger of dropping out of school and are placed in the Day School as their last chance to re-enter the school system and go on to graduate.
LESSON 6: Intergenerational Learning & Programming

As for the older people, they are believers in the power of art. Although only a couple of them are professional artists, all of them participate regularly in the arts in various forms, including poetry, writing, painting, and acting. Living at the Artists Colony in the last few years, they have become aware of the value of the arts and its potential in all kinds of learning. And they have all come to trust the creative process.

The Claymation collaboration is one in a long line of mentoring projects with the Day School. Others have included collaborative painting, interviewing, writing and performing, filmmaking (all aspects except camera and directing), video game design, and making graphic novels on bullying for distribution to younger students.

Each of the projects is designed to show the teens different kinds of creative occupations, especially in filmmaking, a major local industry. They are additionally designed to help the youth recognize their creativity, give them an opportunity to lose the “problem” label, satisfy standard testing requirements, and encourage them to reflect on life decisions they make. The projects allow the older adults to contribute meaningfully to a young person’s life by forming a supportive relationship with them at a crucial time.

“I’VE NEVER LEARNED SO MUCH”

The artistic collaborations between youth on the margins and their elder mentors have had positive effects on everyone involved. The students who participate have a 98 percent return rate into the school system. One parent expressed amazement that her son was coming home and doing research on European history. The youth form supportive, and sometimes lasting, relationships with their mentors. According to Maureen Kellen-Taylor, Chief Operating Officer of EngAGE and teaching artist, the teens tell their mentors things they will not tell anyone else. Some of them call or return to visit with their mentors after their project has ended.

For their part, the older adults often go from apprehension to eagerness as the project progresses. They talk of falling in love with the teens, and start describing them as “my kid” during the project. Older participants report to Maureen that they have never learned so much, and she sees in them a growing openness to the state of not knowing and to learning new things. The mentoring program has become so popular at the Artists Colony that it can even be hard to make room for new mentors.

The effects of the program have rippled out into the neighborhood. The Artists Colony residents used to talk about the students as gangbangers; now they wave at them in the schoolyard and ask how they are doing. And the teens make room on the sidewalk when they see Maureen and the older people approaching. There is a friendlier relationship between the two communities in general thanks to the mentoring program.

PREPARING FOR MENTORING PROJECTS

Every semester, the school principal Christine Krohn (who is also an arts specialist) and Maureen Kellen-Taylor work closely together to choose a project and decide on its duration, number of sessions, and the workshop times. The workshops are typically held at the Artists Colony to minimize distractions students might have in the school environment.
Christine recruits the teens, who complete an application, and prepares them to participate. Maureen selects Artists Colony mentors and orients them to working with the students and to the artistic project. Mentors are guided in practicing effective and non-judgmental listening, being supportive and respectful of the students and their work, and being careful not to probe into the students’ pasts, as well as cultivating a non-judgmental attitude towards their own creative attempts and being open to new artistic projects and methods.

THE CLAYMATION PROJECT

In 2012, Maureen and Christine decided to make claymation the focus of a project between the older adults and the teens. Claymation is “an animation process in which clay figurines are manipulated and filmed to produce an image of lifelike movement.” It is called a stop-camera process because even the slightest movement involves stopping and starting the filming to create an animation, and it requires a great deal of patience.

Maureen and Christine chose the project to enhance the students’ skills in writing, building, painting, music, dialogue, interpersonal and intercultural communication, filming, reading, and collaboration. Maureen, a visual artist, assembled the materials and selected guest artists appropriate to the project, a writer and a maker of movies for children.

Project Objectives and Structure

Maureen worked with Christine to design objectives to help the students meet state education testing standards. Designing a project to support the curriculum (arts integration) makes it appealing and manageable for school staff, who are typically pressed for instructional time and under a mandate to prepare students for testing. The following represent a broad range of educational objectives for the students and include objectives appropriate for the older adults as well:

- Include a wide range of learning styles, including interpersonal and intercultural communication and visual and tactile styles
- Provide experience in different creative mediums
- Develop competencies and creative skills in problem solving, communication, and time management
- Practice time management, prioritizing responsibilities, and meeting completion deadlines for a production as specified by artists, school principal, and project leaders
- Learn the terms specific to the art disciplines of the project
- Demonstrate an increased knowledge of technical skills in using more complex two- and three-dimensional art media and processes
- Collaboratively design a unique art piece
- Communicate creative, design, and directorial choices to collaborators and project leaders, using leadership skills, aesthetic judgment, or problem-solving skills
Pre-Project Orientation for Mentors
Maureen invited the writer and the filmmaker to give the mentors an overview of the artistic aspects of the project. First, the writer showed a couple of short claymation videos so that the mentors understood what could be done with claymation. He then described the process of how to work with students to write a brief two-person story, including describing the characters and the story arc.

The filmmaker explained stop-motion filmmaking and how the mentors would be working with students on constructing both the armatures (skeletons) for clay figures and the figures of the two characters. The mentors learned that they and their student collaborator would also make the sets, do the stop-motion filming, and write dialogue for the characters.

The Project Unfolds
Below is a week-by-week description of the claymation project that culminated in videos co-created by the teens and older adults and shared with family members, residents of the Artists Colony and community members.

Week 1—Introductions
The students were introduced to the Senior Artists Colony as a residence for independent people over 62 and to the working studios and other communal spaces. Then the students and mentors came together for the first time. The students approached the mentors one by one, and they briefly introduced themselves to each other. After meeting all the mentors, the students had a few minutes to consider and select their mentor. The new pairs then continued with more in-depth introductions. Following introductions, the group watched short claymation videos to learn about the range of subjects and styles of expression available to them.

Week 2—Planning Stories
The project began. Mentor-student pairs discussed subjects, planned stories, and storyboarded them. Students were encouraged to take the lead in choosing a story, while the mentors provided encouragement and suggestions. While the mentors were not necessarily well-versed in claymation, they brought a great deal of knowledge about life and how its stories unfold. There was also a discussion of the effects of media on each age group.

Week 3—Beginning of Stop-Motion Filming Learning and Construction of Figures
The pairs met professional filmmakers and began to learn about stop-motion filming. They were also introduced to the materials (clay and armatures). Pairs also discussed props needed and where to get them. They began construction of figures.

Week 4—Construction of Figures and Sets
The pairs continued construction of figures and sets. They brought in props and other resources.
LESSON 6: Intergenerational Learning & Programming

Week 5—Filming Begins
The pairs were introduced to video cameras and filming considerations. Each pair set up their stage and learned to stop-motion film. They continued ongoing discussion on camera angles and action. The students were encouraged to direct the action.

Week 6—Filming Continues
Stop-motion filming continued.

Week 7—Write Dialogue
Pairs wrote and timed dialogue for voice-over for films. The collaborating artistic professionals took footage to their studio for editing.

Week 8—Editing
Maureen and collaborating artistic professionals edited projects.

Week 9—Showing
A film showing was held for families, teachers, mentors, and students, as well as other invited residents and community members. Each participant in the project received a copy of all the finished videos on a DVD.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

How is the intergenerational EngAGE claymation project a good example of social engagement, mastery, and lifelong learning for the older adults who participate as mentors?

BEST PRACTICES PROGRAM: INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING AS TEACHER TRAINING

Faculty at James Madison University have implemented an intergenerational arts program to give student teachers a deeper understanding of life-long learning. The program is centered around portrait photography as a means of connecting across generations.

The program takes place in a large residential retirement community where a variety of care options are available to 800 residents. Class sizes fluctuate weekly so the group dynamic is a challenge since it is always changing. The younger students in the class, the undergraduate pre-service teachers, are asked to examine their assumptions, experiences and biases before beginning the course:

- Describe what you imagine the residents will be like?
- How do you think they will respond to your artwork?
- What stereotypes of the elderly do you have?
LESSON 6: Intergenerational Learning & Programming

- What experiences have you had with the elderly?
- Have you spent time in a retirement community or nursing home? What was it like?

Their reflections are collected and saved.

Each session follows a predictable structure of demonstration, sharing of art, making of art, and reflection. In addition to the reflection in class, the undergraduate students keep an ongoing journal of reflections during the program using the DEAL format: Describe, Examine, Articulate Learning.

This program is an excellent example of the multi-level learning that intergenerational learning stimulates; both generations learn from each other, but they also learn about themselves through reflection and conversation.

INTERGENERATIONAL TIMELINES

One of the benefits of an intergenerational arts project is that it breaks down walls between young people and their elders by allowing them to get to know one another. This simple exercise lays the foundation for conversations that can lead to art-making about personal stories and provide an opportunity to explore commonalities and differences.

Directions

- The youth and the older adult decide on a common scale for their personal timelines—for example, half an inch equals one year.
- On a large piece of paper, each person draws their lifeline with a ruler or yardstick, leaving enough room between the two lifelines at top and bottom to write. This step can also be done on two pieces of same-size paper, which are taped together at the discussion phase.
- Then, starting with birth, each person marks significant events in their life at the age they occurred.
- When finished, they compare and contrast their timelines to discover the similarities and differences in their lives.
- The teaching artist can then help the pairs identify themes that unite their stories or the stories of the group as a whole. (See Lesson 8 for more about using themes.) Working from these themes, the stories can be expressed in any art form.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

How might you use a timeline exercise such as this when working with an intergenerational group in your art form?
INTERGENERATIONAL THEATER PROGRAM OUTLINE

(ProvidedCourtesy of Ebenezer Ridges Campus)

Ebenezer Ridges Intergenerational Campus is an intergenerational shared site, where services are provided to children from the childcare center and to older adults in skilled nursing, assisted living, adult day center, and independent senior housing.

Community Partner: In the Company of Kids

Name of Program: “Generations of Acting”

Teaching Artists: Bonnie Kay and Julie Nelson

Staff Facilitators: Andrea Lewandoski, adult day center staff (1), child care teacher (1)

Older Adult Participants: Care Center, Assisted Living, and Adult Day participants combined (refer to roster of up to 20 total participants)

Child Participants: Selected children from younger and older preschool classrooms (up to six children per session)

Timeframe: Once a month for 12 months

Description of Program: One Friday per month we will bring our program to Ebenezer residents and children, allowing them to participate in an intergenerational theater program. Participants will engage in many activities, including acting, singing, and creative movement. The first half-hour will be older adults only, and the second half-hour will include the children. When the children enter, they will enter as various characters, such as animals or people.

Goal: Use performing arts to enrich the lives of older adults and children at Ebenezer Ridges, giving them purpose, while providing stimulation, socialization, and fun.

Objectives:

1. The fundamentals of theater will be covered.

2. Character development will begin, along with expression, delivery, and monologue.

3. Short skits based on fairy tales will be learned and performed. The fairy tale will be adapted to allow for all to participate.

4. In the future, this fairy tale will be performed for staff, family, and parents.

Benefits of the Program:

1. Develop interaction and communication between generations

2. Provide a fun, stimulating, creative activity

3. Foster creativity and imagination

4. Form special friendships between children and older adults

5. Provide a sense of purpose and well-being for the older adults
6. Help children to develop an awareness, understanding, and respect for older adults

7. Enrich the lives of all involved

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE
How appealing would you find it to work as a teaching artist at a site like Ebenezer Ridges?

What do you like about their model for working with teaching artists?

If you could, who would you invite to be on your Lifelong Learning team?

INTERGENERATIONAL WARM-UP AND INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

The following original activities are specially selected as warm-ups and introductory activities. All of these are collaborative activities and work to spark conversation and creativity while slowly easing into the full-fledged arts experience.

BODY PUZZLES

Purpose and Goals: This exercise is meant to spark conversation, support collaboration, warm-up participants to work creatively, and refresh fine motor skills through the use of visual arts supplies.

Activity: In this exercise, intergenerational pairs work together to make a body puzzle collage from found images. The facilitator should provide a variety of magazine images, photographs, etc., from which the pairs can choose their image. Each pair assembles a collage with a head, torso, legs, arms, and other features all taken from various people and animals.

The pair will glue their image to construction paper and then talk about it. Possible conversation prompts include: if this person/animal were real, what would its habitat be? How would this person/animal get around? What would this person’s/animal’s personality be like?

Why it works: This activity has an accessible entry point since the process is simple, the activity is short and the materials are familiar. Despite the simplicity of the task, it provides a great opportunity to prime participants for collaboration by sparking conversation and requiring them to work together.

ACTIVE STORYBOOKS

Purpose and Goals: This activity builds reading skills such as fluency, word recognition, vocabulary and comprehension. The activity also gets both generations up and moving.

Activity: In intergenerational pairs or small groups, one person selects a picture book for the group to work on. Members of the group or pair take turns reading the book. Every time there is an action verb (jump, spring, stomp, twirl, leap, etc.) members of the group do
what the action verb says. The activity can be deepened by having participants do the actions with
the quality and personality of the characters in the book.

Make sure to encourage participants to modify the motions so that people of all abilities can
participate. For example: How can you leap with only your hand? How can your head twirl?

**Why it works:** Participants may choose their level of physicality and participation without opting out
of the activity entirely.

**THE SEASONS**

**Purpose and Goals:** This exercise will enhance interaction and communication between participants.
The exercise also helps participants to think abstractly.

**Activity:** This activity can be performed in any art form or medium. The facilitator should ask
intergenerational pairs or small groups to brainstorm the characteristics of the different seasons,
paying special attention to the senses: What does the season look like? Smell like? Taste like? Sound
like? Feel like? How do you feel in that season? What can you do in that season? What can you not
do in that season?

Then, in the chosen art form, the pairs or small groups will depict the seasons. The final products will
then be displayed/performed/shared with the whole group and discussed.

**Why it works:** Knowledge and observation skills are needed, as is the ability to compare and contrast.
The activity also pushes participants to think more abstractly about the seasons as they turn their
brainstorm sheets into art.

**MEMORY CHARADES**

**Purpose and Goals:** Participants will learn more about each other and each other’s generations.

**Activity:** Participants will be led in a group discussion by the facilitator. The discussion should center
around memories associated with a particular object, event feeling, etc. The memories will be written
down by the facilitator as the discussion unfolds. After the discussion, the group will break into two
intergenerational teams.

The teams will then take turns acting out the feelings and memories like in a game of charades. The
opposing team will try to guess the feeling or memory and then try to remember who expressed that
feeling or memory earlier.

**Why it works:** Listening skills and memory become very important in this game. Remember, this should
not be about mocking the others, but personifying and empathizing with their experiences and
feelings and memories.

**INTERGENERATIONAL PROJECTS: RESOURCES**

Intergenerational projects are a highly effective means of engaging older adults in the arts and
building community, but they require a skilled approach for successful implementation. The EngAGE
arts mentoring program exemplifies many practices of a successful intergenerational arts program or
project, such as orienting the youth and the older people separately before the project and working
closely with the youth services partner to develop objectives and design programming.
Below are some resources for developing intergenerational arts projects. For in-depth training, teaching artists are encouraged to partner with peers or organizations in their locale that have experience in leading intergenerational projects and can provide guidance. Arts organizations that have long histories of carrying out successful intergenerational projects include Elders Share the Arts, EngAGE, Stagebridge, Dance Exchange, and the Chicago Public Art Group, as well as many others in communities throughout the United States and Canada.

RESOURCES

- **Generations United**
  Trainings, publications, conferences, and a bank of intergenerational learning activities

- **Elders Share the Arts**
  Trainings in intergenerational arts

- **National Center for Creative Aging**
  Guidebook and webinar on intergenerational arts programs based on the Elders Share the Arts model

- **Institute of Museum and Library Services**
  Programs, research, resources and case studies

- **Harvard Educational Review**
  Assortment of articles and research on intergenerational learning

- **The Intergenerational Center at Temple University**
  Trainings, publications, and tools for intergenerational program development

- **New York State Intergenerational Network**
  Good practices publication and program list
LESSON 6: Intergenerational Learning & Programming

LESSON 6 SUMMARY

"Intergenerational Learning and Programming" covered best practices in intergenerational program design, planning, and implementation. The chapter also surveyed several excellent programs and included sample activities, program structures and timelines. Finally, resources for further study were provided.

CHECK-IN: LESSON 6 GOALS

- Have a familiarity with a successful intergenerational project and resources for intergenerational work
- Lead an intergenerational timeline activity
- Know techniques for working with intergenerational learners
- Understand best practices in the field of intergenerational learning, including organizations carrying out best practices programs
- Know the benefits of intergenerational learning
- Brainstorm program structures and concepts for intergenerational learning

LESSON 6 NOTES

1. National Council on Aging
LESSON 6: Intergenerational Learning & Programming


17. Content for “In the Long-Term Care Facility: Opening Minds through Art (OMA)” provided courtesy of Opening Minds through Art (OMA) and used with permission.


20. E. Lokon, email to author, January 15, 2013 (based on research in progress).


23. Content for “Case Study: EngAGE Intergenerational Claymation Project” provided by Maureen Kellen-Taylor (Chief Operating Officer, EngAGE), memo and interview by author, March 1, 2013. Courtesy of EngAGE and used with permission.


27. Andrea Lewandoski, interview with author, February 14, 2013. Content provided courtesy of Ebenezer Ridges Campus and used with permission.
LESSON 6: Intergenerational Learning & Programming
INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAM PLANNING TOOL

PROGRAM INFORMATION
Discipline: ________________________________________________________________
Number of Sessions: _______________ Hours Per Session: _______________
Program Title: ____________________________________________________________
Expected Number of Participants: _______________

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Arts Objectives – What will the students learn? What skills will they master? What will they make/do along the way? Limit yourself to three objectives; aim to keep them focused and relevant to the core of your program.

1. 
2. 
3. 

Additional Objectives – Intergenerational arts programs often have other goals outside of the arts learning. Using the list on the back of this page as a guide, choose three specific growth objectives for your program.

1. 
2. 
3. 

FINAL EVENT/PERFORMANCE/PRODUCT

What is the final event/performance/product? Describe.

How will each student’s growth and learning be included?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Social</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interact/Communicate</strong></td>
<td>Participant communicates with another participant (verbal, eye contact, body language)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work as a team/cooperate</strong></td>
<td>Participant works alongside intergenerational participant to engage in a joint task, share materials, give or receive assistance, ask for help, offer help, compliment or receive a compliment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychological/Emotional</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Be generative/Nurturing/Helpful/Caring</strong></td>
<td>Participant demonstrates concern for partner and takes time to meet other’s needs. Participant cares for feelings and well-being of other person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have personal choice/Make Decisions</strong></td>
<td>Participant makes a choice about personal involvement in an activity. When asked a question about preference, choice or participation, participant exhibits autonomy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reminiscence/Reflect</strong></td>
<td>Participant engages in storytelling about personal past, answers questions, and brings up objects and events. Incorporates memories associated with life history/experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Take initiative</strong></td>
<td>Participant engages in activity willfully and without prompting, demonstrates desire to participate through overt action or verbal request.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Be creative</strong></td>
<td>Participant is able to individualize intergenerational opportunity by making individual or partnered decisions about how an opportunity is implemented or completed. Participant takes their own approach to the outcome of a project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enhance self-esteem</strong></td>
<td>Participant demonstrates pride in work, relationships by showing it to others, demonstrating concern about outcomes, making a comment about personal contribution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exercise motor skills</strong></td>
<td>Gross motor – use of shoulder, entire arm movements, grip with whole hand, use of leg muscles. Fine motor/dexterity – use of finger movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intellectual/Cognitive</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stay on task/Complete an activity</strong></td>
<td>Ability to stay engaged in activity at hand, able to forget other concerns to enjoy the moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learn new terms/skills</strong></td>
<td>Ability to learn the name of a participant/material/facilitator, learn a new skills, retain information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROGRAM SCOPE
Using your objectives as a guide, list the activities and smaller learning goals that will help your students achieve the learning objectives you have laid out.

MATERIALS
What materials will you need? Can students share materials?

What kinds of space will you need?

ACCESSIBILITY
How have you considered accessibility needs and issues?

What challenges do you foresee?

What questions remain?
DOCUMENTATION

How will you document the learning process and products?

How can you engage the students in documentation?

ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

How will you assess student learning?

How will you evaluate student work?

How will you assess and evaluate your program?

NOTES
INTERGENERATIONAL WARM-UPS

BODY PUZZLES
Activity: In this exercise, intergenerational pairs work together to make a body puzzle collage from found images. The facilitator should provide a variety of magazine images, photographs, etc., from which the pairs can choose their image. Each pair assembles a collage with a head, torso, legs, arms, and other features all taken from various people and animals.

The pair will glue their image to construction paper and then talk about it. Possible conversation prompts include: if this person/animal were real, what would its habitat be? How would this person/animal get around? What would this person’s/animal’s personality be like?

ACTIVE STORYBOOKS
Activity: In intergenerational pairs or small groups, one person selects a picture book for the group to work on. Members of the group or pair take turns reading the book. Every time there is an action verb (jump, spring, stomp, twirl, leap, etc.) members of the group do what the action verb says. The activity can be deepened by having participants do the actions with the quality and personality of the characters in the book.

Make sure to encourage participants to modify the motions so that people of all abilities can participate. For example: How can you leap with only your hand? How can your head twirl?

THE SEASONS
Activity: This activity can be performed in any art form or medium. The facilitator should ask intergenerational pairs or small groups to brainstorm the characteristics of the different seasons, paying special attention to the senses: What does the season look like? Smell like? Taste like? Sound like? Feel like? How do you feel in that season? What can you do in that season? What can you not do in that season?

Then, in the chosen art form, the pairs or small groups will depict the seasons. The final products will then be displayed/played/shared with the whole group and discussed.

MEMORY CHARADES
Activity: Participants will be led in a group discussion by the facilitator. The discussion should center on memories associated with a particular object, event feeling, etc. The memories will be written down by the facilitator as the discussion unfolds. After the discussion, the group will break into two intergenerational teams.

The teams will then take turns acting out the feelings and memories like in a game of charades. The opposing team will try to guess the feeling or memory and then try to remember who expressed that feeling or memory earlier.
INTERGENERATIONAL WARM-UP DOCUMENTATION

Warm-Up Name: __________________________

Number of Participants: __________

What were the characteristics that made this activity a good warm-up?

What were the characteristics that made this activity well-suited for intergenerational groups?

How could this warm-up be strengthened?

How could this warm-up be deepened?

How could this warm-up be connected to further learning?

How could this warm-up be adjusted for another artistic discipline?
GOALS

1. Understand the use and benefits of reminiscence in working with older adults
2. Stimulate the senses to help older adults access memory and imagination
3. Know how to lead a visualization to help older adults recall memories
4. Know how to lead a pair-work exercise to help older adults recall memories

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What techniques have you used to help people access personal memories or imagination for art-making?

REMINISCENCE

In any particular society, we may or may not be given natural occasions to present our stories to others, but we are, I think, on the alert for every chance we get to do so. — Barbara Myerhoff

Most of us enjoy sharing our stories. Older people, however, have added incentive to share stories from their lives. First, because older people have accumulated decades of knowledge and experience, they can provide younger generations with first-hand accounts of history and with the unique insights that can only come to those who have weathered time. Second, many older people know that their future may hold serious challenges: illness, loss of mobility, loss of loved ones, loss of social roles—and ultimately, loss of life itself. When older people share stories from their past—a past that is free of the uncertainties of the future—they may therefore be seeking a particular form of comfort and reassurance. Some theorists also believe that questions like “Who have I been?” or “What did I accomplish?” or “What has it meant?” permeate the lives of older people. These theorists believe that reflecting on the past is one way that older people seek answers to these questions.

Recalling past incidents and events and sharing them with others is defined as “reminiscence.” Reminiscence can serve many adaptive functions for older adults, such as:

- maintaining self-esteem
- reinforcing a sense of personal and collective identity
- resolving grief
- helping to assuage the anxiety of physical and mental decline

Reminiscence also stimulates memory function and socialization. But it can also just be pleasant—plain and simple! Many people enjoy reminiscing about especially joyful or
treasured experiences because it allows them to rekindle these feelings and share them with others. Some people may also choose to reminisce about painful experiences in order to lessen the emotional weight of the past, seeking comfort and understanding from listeners.\footnote{4}

According to the theories of Gene Cohen, the desire to explore and express one’s personal story is driven in part by neurological changes. He suggested that as we mature, we tend to become better at using our right and left brain hemispheres simultaneously (bilateral activation). While our language abilities reside mostly in the left hemisphere, our sense of self is mainly located on the right. The growth in brain structures connecting the two sides allows us to become more fluent at expressing feelings and experiences.\footnote{5}

As poet and cultural critic Catherine Wallace observes, “Over time, then, and with increased bilateral activation, consciousness becomes more articulate. We find it dramatically easier to recognize and to explain—even to ourselves—what we see, what we need, and what we should do as a result of this insight . . . No wonder, then, that as people age they become increasingly interested in writing their memoirs or the stories of their families: life simply makes more sense to them, and they are driven to articulate the meaning that life now has. Such autobiographical writing is known to have a remarkably favorable impact both on immune system functioning and on mood. It is also a means whereby culture is transmitted not only broadly but also at the most fundamental levels of local memory: family identity and community identity . . .”\footnote{6}

The urge to make meaning of our lives goes hand in hand with a greater sense of freedom that characterizes life after the age of 40. A growing ease with self-expression means elders are ideal candidates to share their stories. In doing so, they benefit themselves, their audiences, and the community.

**CASE STUDY: SACHI ANN WELSH**

As people age, the arts can be a vehicle for processing and coming to terms with life experiences and events. Many people try their hand at the arts for the first time in their later years, motivated by an increasing desire for creative expression, a sense of personal liberation, and freedom from constraints of work and family that limited them in earlier periods of life.

*I'M OFTEN INTRIGUED BY WHAT I PUT ON PAPER*

In the following autobiographical tale, "Over the Far Treetops," Sachi Ann Welsh, a retired public school teacher living in Florida, relates a haunting wartime memory from her teens. Born in Japan, Sachi was an adolescent during World War II and later emigrated to the United States, where she pursued a teaching career and raised three daughters. Since attending a class on writing life stories 16 years ago, Sachi has written more than 110 stories about her life. A dozen stories about her childhood, including “Over the Far Treetops”, have been published in a book, Shadow of a Monster Plane: Recollection of a Childhood in Tokyo Before and During World War II.\footnote{7}

About her writing, Sachi states, “I say that I’ve scraped the bottom of the barrel and that there’s nothing more left in me, but somehow I keep on finding a minute daily happening that latches onto my remembrance of yesteryear. Moreover, I’m often intrigued by what I
put on paper. Eventually my memory will fade, but the fact that I’ve indeed recalled, contemplated, and written down my thoughts about these tidbits of my life shall satisfy and comfort me immeasurably and forever.”

“Over the Far Treetops” is a moving illustration of how Sachi uses her writer’s voice to explore and come to terms with her past. As Sachi has aged, she has found a particular facility—and pleasure—in expressing her memories creatively, as do many older adults. In Erik Erikson’s schema, she is finding her way toward integrity. She is also embodying Gene Cohen’s theories about how our maturing brains and psyches give birth to a creative expansion and the ability to tell our stories.

In reading Sachi’s story, we glimpse a slice of human experience through the window she has opened into the innocence of her girlhood as it was darkened by the reality of war. As Sachi’s writing brings her happiness, it also enriches our understanding of what it means to be part of the human family.

OVER THE FAR TREETOPS

By Sachi Ann Welsh

The jacuzzi bubbled at a comfortable temperature. I sank down slowly with a happy sigh, found my favorite spot and stretched out. I took in the deep clear sky above, the gentle breeze across my face, and the pink clusters of jacobinia showing off their beauty to the yellow day lilies. At that moment my world was so peaceful and relaxed. I closed my eyes and soaked. For a while, my mind simply became numb, void of any thoughts or feelings.

Soon, a sharp chirping drew my attention to the woods behind the back fence. I opened my eyes just in time to watch a bird corkscrewing down towards a tree. What a fast, smooth, and dangerous-looking dive! To a bird, of course, it comes naturally. In awe, I stared at the empty spot in the sky, tracing once more the path of the bird. Then the image of this diving creature merged into a black silhouette of another creature I had witnessed falling from the sky when I was a teenager in Japan.

On that day in 1944, the sky was also clear and pristine blue, with a pleasant breeze that stirred the air. Though it was early November, the weather was rather balmy, and it was enough to cheer us preteen girls since we didn’t have to wear an extra undershirt. The military authority, which controlled most parts of school life, made the khaki-colored wartime uniform required outerwear for all students. When the weather got colder, we had to wear more layers underneath instead of putting a jacket on over it. By the time we put on three layers of shirts or sweaters, covered by the cheap and drab looking uniform, we looked like cranky bears in our bulky clothes.

It had been eight months since the student mobilization reached the girls in seventh grade. Not being allowed to attend classes, we went to the airplane factory every day and helped assemble machinery. As though on a daily schedule, another air raid siren sounded, and we evacuated from each assigned workplace in the factory to our air raid shelters in the woods.
The leaves on the trees were already beginning to turn to many hues of green, yellow and brick red in our location beyond the western edge of Tokyo in the Kanto Plain. A soft wind stirred the treetops now and then, making light, dry rustling sounds. All looked serene and orderly. Except for the many mounds of dirt on top of the bunkers, the forest was as it should be, even though nearly one hundred schoolgirls crouched and hid underground. Thanks to the breeze, the air inside the bunker was not stuffy today, and enough sunlight reached us to read a book or work on small needlecraft.

Hours passed it seemed, and we were no longer a group of quiet, well-behaved thirteen-year-olds. Jokes, gossip and stupid songs filled the bunker, and often we erupted into loud laughter. We could hear happy giggles from bunkers nearby, and some girls were audacious enough to hop down to visit a friend’s bunker. Everyone waited for the sound of the siren telling us the air raid was finally over, and we could get out and head home.

All of a sudden, the roar of aircraft engines and the whistle of falling bombs exploded above our heads, putting an end to this peace in the countryside. We cowered deep inside the bunker, unable to believe the sudden change of scene. The bombing and distant clatter ceased within a few minutes just as quickly as it had begun. Since I and another girl were sitting at the end of a bench closest to the entrance, we were the first who crept up the few steps of the bunker to check the sky. And that was when we saw it.

The parachute was less than half-open, and the flyer’s body dangled completely horizontal. He seemed to have moved an arm a little and again lifted his head slightly, but it was terribly obvious to me that his body was hopelessly tangled in the parachute. I called to the other girls to come quickly and watch this poor soul caught in a falling web of fate. Then he disappeared beyond the treetops.

We stood there wordless and dry-eyed, not comprehending right away what we had witnessed during those long several seconds. A girl, whose father was a Baptist preacher, began almost inaudibly humming a hymn “Nearer, nearer, my God to thee.” Some girls speculated in whispers about the airman and his chance of survival. A few others put their palms together, chanted the Buddhist’s prayer namuami dabutsu three times, and bowed their heads towards the trees that had swallowed the parachute.

We never learned the flyer’s fate. Since there was no report on the radio, it might have been a Japanese airman. Or, it might have been an American who couldn’t have survived this terrible fall and whose ultimate sacrifice became a mere casualty number. We used to hear only about the live enemies who landed in our area and were captured. Who this airman was, or which side of the conflict he fought for, did not matter to us when we saw a human life bound by parachute strings and fallen from the grace of God.

The woods returned to the quiet autumn afternoon by the time we heard the siren ending this particular air raid. The sentimentality of thirteen-year-old girls led us to find a piece of thread and two small straight twigs to make a crude cross. We stuck it in the dirt near our bunker as we left to go home.

Another bird flew up out of the woods and took off into the expanse of blue. There was no more chirping, nor any other sound. A couple of squirrels dashed around on the oak tree as
LESSON 7: Working with Reminiscence and Imagination Part 1

though they were on the mission of a lifetime. With all the tiny bubbles swirling around me, I closed my eyes and relaxed my muscles. The image of the half-opened parachute, just one more fragment of my musty memories.9

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Can you think of a personal story from an older adult that has impacted you? Maybe it was a relative, a neighbor, a teacher, or a friend who shared a piece of their life with you.

How did the story affect you?

Did it change the way you thought about yourself or the world?

SENSE MEMORY AND SENSE IMAGINATION

Because older adults have accumulated a lifetime of experiences, memories, and knowledge, reminiscence is both content and a door through which you can lead participants to activities at which they can succeed. Roy Ernst, founder of New Horizons Music, started music education programs for older adults in the 1980s, and he soon learned that reminiscence supported the participants in their learning. “They have a lifetime of music in their heads,” he said. “If you use that, the progress is so fast.”10

Older adults have a store of memories, that if accessed, may serve as inspiration and content for works of art. In many cases, participants’ memories have slipped into obscurity in their minds, pushed aside by the years, the daily tasks of living, or even an avoidance of painful associations. In working with reminiscence, the teaching artist acts as a guide, leading older adults on an exploration that culminates in creative expression.

Unearthing memories—and the sensory detail in them that makes good art—is most easily done through the senses. The senses are the vehicle through which information makes its way into memory11, and they are therefore the most effective mechanism for retrieving memories. All of the senses—sight, touch, hearing, taste, and smell—may be used to give rise to memory; the sense of smell is particularly effective because of its direct connection to the emotional and memory centers of the brain.12 Memories can be evoked through the use of props such as fabrics, herbs, photographs, natural objects, or music. Almost any object that activates the senses can be a source for accessing “our past in the present through sense association.”13

Regardless of age or ability, people have some senses that are more acute than others, so appealing to a variety of senses may allow participants to tap into a fuller range of memories. It can be helpful to use items such as rose petals or freshly baked bread that appeal to multiple senses simultaneously. When one sense is less acute, others often become stronger to compensate; for participants who have visual or hearing impairments, their sense of touch or smell may be especially sensitive and can be a potent path to memory.
LESSON 7: Working with Reminiscence and Imagination Part 1

For people with Alzheimer’s disease and related neurocognitive disorders, reminiscence may be relevant in the early stages, while those in the later stages will likely work better with imagination than memory. Their senses can be stimulated to spark an imaginative response rather than a factual one. Indeed, people of all cognitive abilities may enjoy an opportunity to play in the realm of the imagination. Some programs that effectively use imagination for art-making with adults with cognitive disabilities include TimeSlips, The Alzheimer’s Poetry Project, and Opening Minds through Art (OMA).

Whether accessing imagination or memory, the senses are a bridge that connects older adults to their stories and their feelings. Learning to work skillfully with the senses is an essential competency for teaching artists in the field of arts and aging.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What kinds of items do you currently have or use to stimulate the senses of your participants?

If you were to build a kit of sensory items for sparking memory or imagination, what might you include? Think about appealing to a variety of senses.

RECALLING MEMORIES THROUGH VISUALIZATION

Visualization is an especially effective tool for reminiscence. It is an easy way to relax and focus the mind on memories and aspects of life that can be used in the creative process. In a memory-based visualization, participants close their eyes and are verbally guided to recall people, places, and events from their pasts. Because participants have their eyes closed, distractions are blocked out and they can focus more deeply. In particular, visualization helps participants picture their memory in more detail. Visualization is also a good technique to use when working with groups because it allows participants to be expansive and detailed in their private recollections but to select what they present to the group.14

The guidelines below for leading a group visualization and the detailed visualization script that follows were developed by Elders Share the Arts.15

GUIDELINES FOR LEADING A GROUP VISUALIZATION

• Choose a topic for the visualization and prepare your script. The emphasis is on evoking memories by starting from sensory details rather than emotion—“What is one thing your hands have done to bring you joy?” rather than “Think of a time you felt good about what your hands were doing.” This will yield the best material for artistic work, and it will inevitably be accompanied by feelings—if someone recalls the color of the carpet in their childhood home, emotion will naturally follow.

• Find the right phrasing for your directions. Avoid statements or questions that are likely to bring up negative experiences, such as saying, “Think of a time you were touched as a child. . . It could be a good or bad touch.” A better choice might be: “Think of something that your hands touched when you were a child.”
LESSON 7: Working with Reminiscence and Imagination Part 1

- Set the right environment. When you are ready to lead the visualization, ask group members to prepare for it: put down papers, plant both feet on the floor, free laps of any objects, etc.

- Ask participants to close their eyes and breathe together in silence. Allow a few moments of silence to pass so that people can become aware of themselves both as individuals and as members of the group. You may want to suggest that people notice the sounds they hear around them and the sounds of other people breathing.

- Verbally guide the group members to explore the topic you have chosen for the visualization. Don’t be too specific in your directions at first; rather, give each person some freedom in finding a memory that is interesting or important to them.

- Help participants recall the specifics. Once you have given the group time to pick a memory, ask them specific questions about it. When was it? Who was there? What was happening? How did it feel? Be sure to pause between each question to give participants time to explore their memory.

- Ask your participants to focus on the sensory details of their memory. What did it smell like? What was the temperature? Was the air unusually dry or damp? What sounds were around them? What visual details can they remember about the space?

- Bring people back gently. Once you have completed the visualization, ask participants to open their eyes. Give them a moment to switch from an internal to an external focus.

ARTS ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE: “THESE HANDS” VISUALIZATION SCRIPT

Here is an example of a script that a teaching artist might use for leading a visualization to help elders find memories connected to their hands.16 Pay attention to all the sensory information and concrete experience that the directions ask participants to notice or remember.

Pauses should be long enough to allow participants to focus on what you are saying, but not so long that people’s minds start to wander. Some pauses have been suggested, but each teaching artist will find their own rhythm. You may want to lead a practice visualization with a friend or colleague to help you find the right timing.

I’m going to lead everyone through a visualization now, and to do this I am going to ask that everyone close their eyes. Okay, now that you have all closed your eyes, let’s all take a deep breath in through your nose . . . and now let it out through your mouth. Let’s do that again: breathe in as deeply as you can through your nose . . . hold it in . . . and now let it out through your mouth. One more time: breathe in through your nose . . . hold it in . . . and now let it out through your mouth. Okay, take a moment now to let yourself relax and become aware of the sounds around you. (Pause to let people focus on sounds.) With your eyes closed like this, sitting quietly, what sounds do you hear outside the room? Try to focus all of your attention on these sounds and on the rhythm of your own breathing.
Okay, now keep your eyes closed and focus all of your attention on your hands. (Pause to let people focus on their hands.) How do your hands feel right now? What sensations do you feel on your hands? Are they cold or warm? Do the muscles of your hands feel relaxed or tense? What are your hands touching right now: the fabric of your clothing, the chair you are sitting on? Now allow your hands to touch each other. (Pause again.) How does your skin feel? Notice how your hands feel different on the palms, the fingers, the back of the hand, the nails. Where are your hands rough? Where are they smooth? Are they moist or dry? Where are they soft? Where can you feel muscle or bone?

Now I am going to ask you to visualize your hands in your mind. See if you can imagine them in as much detail as possible. (Pause to let people visualize their hands.) What is the exact shape of your fingers? What are the different colors you can see? Where are their wrinkles, or birthmarks, or scars? If you want, you are welcome to open your eyes and look closely at your hands.

Now I would like everyone to close your eyes again and think about your hands. I would like you to think about all the things that your hands have done in your life that have brought you joy. (Pause to let people recollect.) What did your hands do to bring you joy when you were very little? What did your hands do to bring you joy recently? What is one thing your hands have done throughout your whole life that has brought you joy? Now think for a moment about all the things your hands have done to help you through challenging times. How have your hands helped you to survive?

Okay, now I would like you to choose one of the things your hands have done for you in your life. You may have recalled many memories: pick only one. See if you can remember this one specific memory, one specific occasion, when your hands did this thing for you. How old are you in this memory? Where are you? Who is there? What else can you picture in the memory? Try to recall it in as much detail as possible. How did it feel? What was its texture, temperature, weight? What sounds are around you in this memory? What can you hear? Are there any smells in the air? In a moment I am going to ask you to leave this memory and open your eyes. Before we do that, take a moment to finish experiencing your memory. (Pause to let people finish their memory.)

Let’s all take a deep breath in through our nose together . . . and let it out through our mouths. It’s time to open your eyes, so I invite you to do so whenever you feel ready.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

How might you use visualization with older adults as a pathway into art-making in your art form?
ARTS ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE:
RECALLING MEMORIES THROUGH PAIR-WORK

In addition to visualization, another way to evoke memories is through interaction. This reminiscence exercise for partners was developed by Elders Share the Arts to deepen conversation about participants’ hands and the stories connected to them.\(^{17}\)

As you introduce this exercise, be aware that some people are more comfortable with touch than others. Some people may be sensitive about the appearance of their hands, be affected by pain, or have limited use of their hands. There may be cultural mores for individuals or the group about touch between strangers or between members of the same or different sexes. As in any exercise, encourage participants to proceed with respect for one another, and let participants know that they have a choice about whether to participate.

Directions

- Introduce the topic of hands. Ask participants to notice their own hands. Ask them to think about the role of hands in our lives and what our hands reveal about us.

- Ask each participant to shake hands with a partner. Perhaps participants can work with someone they don’t know well, if that seems suitable for the group. Instruct them to take the time to notice each other’s hand: Are there any rings? Is the hand smooth or rough?

- Guide them to ask questions about their partner’s hand. What kind of work have these hands done? Where did that ring come from?

- When you bring the group back together, allow people to share their experiences in different ways. For example, you might ask each person to describe how their hand feels and any difference in sensation before and after the exercise.

- Open the floor for each person to share one story learned about their partner. If you plan to do this, alert participants at the beginning of the exercise so that they can make choices about what they tell their partner.\(^{18}\)

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

How could you design a pair-work exercise to stimulate imagination rather than memory?

What would you ask the partners to use as a focus?

What questions might they ask one another?
LESSON 7: Working with Reminiscence and Imagination Part 1

LESSON 7 SUMMARY

"Working with Reminiscence and Imagination, Part 1" explained the importance of reminiscence for older adults. It also delved into sense memory and sense imagination, and discussed using visualization and pair work to help elders recall memories and stories from imagination.

CHECK-IN: LESSON 7 GOALS

- Understand the use and benefits of reminiscence in working with older adults
- Stimulate the senses to help older adults access memory and imagination
- Know how to lead a visualization to help older adults recall memories
- Know how to lead a pair-work exercise to help older adults recall memories

LESSON 7 NOTES

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Boyer, Creativity Matters, 94.
18. Ibid.
GUIDELINES FOR LEADING A GROUP VISUALIZATION

- Choose a topic for the visualization and prepare your script. The emphasis is on evoking memories by starting from sensory details rather than emotion—“What is one thing your hands have done to bring you joy?” rather than “Think of a time you felt good about what your hands were doing.” This will yield the best material for artistic work, and it will inevitably be accompanied by feelings—if someone calls to mind the color of the carpet in their childhood home, emotion will naturally follow.

- Find the right phrasing for your directions. Avoid statements or questions that are likely to bring up negative experiences, such as saying, “Think of a time you were touched as a child. . . It could be a good or bad touch.” A better choice might be: “Think of something that your hands touched when you were a child.”

- Set the right environment. When you are ready to lead the visualization, ask group members to prepare for it: put down papers, plant both feet on the floor, free laps of any objects, etc.

- Ask participants to close their eyes and breathe together in silence. Allow a few moments of silence to pass so that people can become aware of themselves both as individuals and as members of the group. You may want to suggest that people notice the sounds they hear around them and the sounds of other people breathing.

- Verbally guide the group members to explore the topic you have chosen for the visualization. Don’t be too specific in your directions at first; rather, give each person some freedom in finding a memory that is interesting or important to them.

- Help participants recall the specifics. Once you have given the group time to pick a memory, ask them specific questions about it. When was it? Who was there? What was happening? How did it feel? Be sure to pause between each question to give participants time to explore their memory.

- Ask your participants to focus on the sensory details of their memory. What did it smell like? What was the temperature? Was the air unusually dry or damp? What sounds were around them? What visual details can they remember about the space?

- Bring people back gently. Once you have completed the visualization, ask participants to open their eyes. Give them a moment to switch from an internal to an external focus.
SAMPLE VISUALIZATION SCRIPT

“THESE HANDS” VISUALIZATION SCRIPT

Here is an example of a script that a teaching artist might use for leading a visualization to help elders find memories connected to their hands. Pay attention to all the sensory information and concrete experience that the directions ask participants to notice or remember.

Pauses should be long enough to allow participants to focus on what you are saying, but not so long that people’s minds start to wander. Some pauses have been suggested, but each teaching artist will find their own rhythm.

I’m going to lead everyone through a visualization now, and to do this I am going to ask that everyone close his or her eyes. Okay, now that you have all closed your eyes, let’s all take a deep breath in through your nose . . . and now let it out through your mouth. Let’s do that again: breathe in as deeply as you can through your nose . . . hold it in . . . and now let it out through your mouth. One more time: breathe in through your nose . . . hold it in . . . and now let it out through your mouth. Okay, take a moment now to let yourself relax and become aware of the sounds around you. (Pause to let people focus on sounds.) With your eyes closed like this, sitting quietly, what sounds do you hear outside the room? Try to focus all of your attention on these sounds and on the rhythm of your own breathing.

Okay, now keep your eyes closed and focus all of your attention on your hands. (Pause to let people focus on their hands.) How do your hands feel right now? What sensations do you feel on your hands? Are they cold or warm? Do the muscles of your hands feel relaxed or tense? What are your hands touching right now: the fabric of your clothing, the chair you are sitting on? Now allow your hands to touch each other. (Pause again.) How does your skin feel? Notice how your hands feel different on the palms, the fingers, the back of the hand, the nails. Where are your hands rough? Where are they smooth? Are they moist or dry? Where are they soft? Where can you feel muscle or bone?

Now I am going to ask you to visualize your hands in your mind. See if you can imagine them in as much detail as possible. (Pause to let people visualize their hands.) What is the exact shape of your fingers? What are the different colors you can see? Where are their wrinkles, or birthmarks, or scars? If you want, you are welcome to open your eyes and look closely at your hands.

Now I would like everyone to close your eyes again and think about your hands. I would like you to think about all the things that your hands have done in your life that have brought you joy. (Pause to let people recollect.) What did your hands do to bring you joy when you were very little? What did your hands do to bring you joy recently? What is one thing your hands have done throughout your whole life that has brought you joy? Now think for a moment about all the things your hands have done to help you through challenging times. How have your hands helped you to survive?

Okay, now I would like you to choose one of the things your hands have done for you in your life. You may have recalled many memories: pick only one. See if you can remember this one specific memory, one specific occasion, when your hands did this thing for you.
How old are you in this memory? Where are you? Who is there? What else can you picture in the memory? Try to recall it in as much detail as possible. How did it feel? What were its texture, temperature, and weight? What sounds are around you in this memory? What can you hear? Are there any smells in the air? In a moment I am going to ask you to leave this memory and open your eyes. Before we do that, take a moment to finish experiencing your memory. (Pause to let people finish their memory.)

Let’s all take a deep breath in through our nose together . . . and let it out through our mouths. It’s time to open your eyes, so I invite you to do so whenever you feel ready.
ARTS ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE:
RECALLING MEMORIES THROUGH PAIR-WORK

As you introduce this exercise, be aware that some people are more comfortable with touch than others. Some people may be sensitive about the appearance of their hands, be affected by pain, or have limited use of their hands. There may be cultural mores for individuals or the group about touch between strangers or between members of the same or different sexes. As in any exercise, encourage participants to proceed with respect for one another, and let participants know that they have a choice about whether to participate.

Directions

Introduce the topic of hands. Ask participants to notice their own hands. Ask them to think about the role of hands in our lives and what our hands reveal about us.

Ask each participant to shake hands with a partner. Perhaps participants can work with someone they don’t know well, if that seems suitable for the group. Instruct them to take the time to notice each other’s hand: Are there any rings? Is the hand smooth or rough?

Guide them to ask questions about their partner’s hand. What kind of work have these hands done? Where did that ring come from?

When you bring the group back together, allow people to share their experiences in different ways. For example, you might ask each person to describe how their hand feels and any difference in sensation before and after the exercise.

Open the floor for each person to share one story learned about their partner. If you plan to do this, alert participants at the beginning of the exercise so that they can make choices about what they tell their partner.
LESSON 8: Working with Reminiscence and Imagination Part 2

GOALS

1. Design reminiscence activities that are culturally sensitive
2. Guide older adults in interviewing one another about personal stories
3. Use themes to help older adults explore memories
4. Have a strategy for handling painful memories that arise in workshops
5. Lead exercises for sharing personal memories in preparation for art-making
6. Create a group poem with participants

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Based on what you already know, how would you (or do you) create a safe environment for participants to share their life stories in your workshops?

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

When you design reminiscence activities with older people (or people of other ages), it is important to learn as much as you can about the cultural norms of your participants. Cultural groups may have specific calendars, rituals, and practices for reminiscence. For example, in Mexico loved ones who have passed away are remembered on el Día de los Muertos (the Day of the Dead). On this day, families gather in cemeteries to bring their loved ones gifts and to tell stories about their lives.

Although reminiscence offers many benefits, not everyone wants to reminisce about all subjects at all times. There are many reasons why an individual or group may prefer not to reminisce about a particular subject, in a particular setting, or at a particular time. First, variance in personalities or dispositions means that individuals differ in the amount of interest they have in reminiscence and the ways they benefit from it. Second, individuals of different ages, genders, socioeconomic backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and nationalities have different cultural norms about reminiscence.

For example, many American men believe it is a sign of weakness to share their personal memories—especially memories that reveal feelings of sadness or vulnerability—in groups of people they do not know well.¹

Individuals from certain cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds may also have been taught not to “brag” about themselves, or they may believe that their lives will not be interesting to other people. Drawing out elders’ stories may require cultural sensitivity, patience, and an approach that unfolds in phases, as illustrated in the following example from Stagebridge Senior Theatre in Oakland, California.
LESSON 8: Working with Reminiscence and Imagination Part 2

CASE STUDY: MAKING A STORYTELLING CIRCLE SUCCEED WITH LATINO ELDERS

When storyteller and Stagebridge teaching artist Nina Serrano, an elder and a Latina, began storytelling classes for Latino elders in a low-income apartment building in the Fruitvale District of Oakland, she quickly found that it was difficult getting residents to leave their apartments to join a storytelling circle downstairs. So she began to incorporate food into the sessions. That encouraged more elders to attend, but the men were particularly shy about telling a story. So she asked them how else they might share their story. One man brought his guitar and sang his story. Another wrote a poem.

After several months of weekly classes, Nina encouraged the group members to share their stories with other residents in a Cinco de Mayo celebration. No one was forced to participate, but most did and were buoyed by the enthusiastic response from their audience. Their stories were videotaped, and each participant received the DVD so that they could see themselves performing. This proved encouraging to them. Eventually, Nina developed a small group of elders who were willing to share their stories with a local bilingual elementary school.²

As this story illustrates, it is important to make sure that your participants feel free to participate or not in reminiscence activities, and that they have a choice in the ways and times they participate. It is also essential to allow your participants themselves to help choose the topics and formats of your reminiscence activities. Following these guidelines will go a long way toward ensuring that your participants can draw meaning and pleasure out of reminiscence activities.³

CASE STUDY: WITH YOU I LEARNED

Besides awareness of cultural norms, cultural sensitivity can also involve helping elders in multicultural groups find common ground as they engage in the arts. This was a challenge faced by teaching artist Silvia Pontaza when she planned a two-day workshop for older adults at Centro el Zócalo, an agency serving the Latino community in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota.

Originally from Guatemala, Silvia is an actress and resident artist with Teatro del Pueblo, a Latino theater in St. Paul that is interested in engaging Spanish-speaking elders in the theater arts. As part of her workshop planning, Silvia met with Sandra Reyes, adult education center director for Centro to learn about the older adults who come to the center to participate in its Seniors Program. She learned that they are mostly immigrants from Ecuador, Mexico, Cuba, Honduras, and Nicaragua, and that they typically attend the Seniors Program on either Tuesday or Wednesday. She and Sandra agreed that Silvia’s workshop would run on both days and Centro would invite the elders to attend twice that week.⁴

Then Silvia set about trying to find a common thread that would spark the interest of all her participants. She and Sandra had talked about how music was a part of the current programming for older adults at Centro, and Sandra gave Silvia some names of artists that were familiar to the elders. Although Silvia is a Latina herself, she had never heard of any of them. She knew that, contrary to a perception in the United States of a homogenous “Hispanic” culture, each of the countries in Latin America has a unique culture, many with
their own music and dance forms. She was not sure how to appeal to the cultural mix of participants she expected at her workshop.

However, she hit on the idea of using a bolero, a form of romantic ballad that is popular across Latin America. She chose one called “Contigo Aprendí” (“With You I Learned”) by Armando Manzanero, and she began designing a workshop inspired by the lyrics in anticipation of Día del Cariño (Valentine’s Day).

The plan for the first day was that the elders would choose a line from the song that matched their own experience in a relationship and then create text to describe themselves before and after the relationship. For example, “Antes yo era una persona que se quejaba por todo, no le encontraba sentido a la vida” (“Before I was a person who complained about everything, finding no meaning in life”) . . . “Contigo aprendí que existen nuevas y mejores emociones” (“With you I learned about new and better feelings”). Then on the second day, they would work in small groups to create movements to go with their text and perform them in moving tableaus.5

A WRENCH IN THE PLANS

On the first day of the workshop, things looked promising. The older adults showed up in a happy, curious state of mind. They responded well to the Día del Cariño theme. The moment Silvia introduced “Contigo Aprendí,” they immediately started to reminisce about their younger years and the memories that the song brought back. The elders then practiced movement using the ideas and feelings that love inspires, and the group expressed those emotions using gestures. Silvia knew that the workshop was successful when a few shy participants, who had stayed in their chairs to observe at the beginning of the class, got up and started contributing their ideas to the group. With a few minutes left at the end of class, Silvia led the group in an additional mime practice that the elders enjoyed.

The next day, Silvia came to the class with a few extra activities, in case she needed to supplement the lesson plan. She also brought more songs to share, including one suggested by a staff member from Centro. This proved to be a good decision, as transportation and scheduling difficulties were posing a challenge to her well-laid plans. Only about half the participants were back from the day before, while half of them were new.

She had to think on her feet. She led the group in a debrief about the previous day’s activities and then decided to repeat the same sequence with one of the new songs. This worked well because the return participants felt comfortable with the structure of the workshop but had fresh experiences to share. Silvia also incorporated more mime-type activities, since the participants received them well the first day.
“THE SECOND SESSION WAS A TEN!”

Silvia said, “If I had to rate both sessions on the level of participation and engagement in the group from one to ten, I would say that the first class was an eight and the second session was a ten! On the first day it was all new, and they were happy to participate with a little caution; on second day they felt more at ease. I would say they participated with abandonment.”

Silvia reports that the participants were enthusiastic about what they created in class. One of them even suggested that they call themselves el Grupo de Pantomima del Centro (the Pantomime Group of Centro). One of the participants said that he was happy to be doing something different from what he normally does, and another said that it was nice to do “all this funny stuff.”

The success of the workshop also has implications for the organizations and the communities in the Twin Cities area. The staff at Centro were receptive and hospitable throughout the planning and execution of the workshop, and the two organizations see this project as the beginning of a collaborative effort that serves a need for arts programming at Centro and will help Teatro del Pueblo expand its programming too. Teatro del Pueblo hopes to carry out more programming with Spanish-speaking older adults at Centro and other locations in the Twin Cities, as well as training more local teaching artists to work with this population.

USING THEMES

Themes like “these hands” or “el Día del Cariño” can present a starting point to help people focus their memories during visualizations or interactions. A theme can produce memories from a group that may serve for weeks or months of artistic work, especially as the memories are explored for sensory detail.

The teaching artist may also help the group identify themes based on memories the group has revealed. Identifying a theme can bring to life what is meaningful and purposeful for group members about their stories and act as the connecting glue for individual stories that form a group piece or show.

Be mindful that a seemingly innocuous subject may trigger a very profound memory or realization. For example, while “holidays” evokes nostalgic family memories for many older people, sometimes elders recall a holiday when their family fought, or the first celebration of a holiday after someone had passed away. Elders may also share their sadness that the people they used to share their holidays with are now gone. In general, facilitators are encouraged to allow their group members to respond genuinely to the subjects that are introduced in whatever way they wish. Handling painful memories is covered in more depth later in this lesson.

Listed below are themes that may stimulate participants’ memories. Some of these themes may also be used to spur imagination for people with memory impairment:

- Work we have loved
- Places these feet have walked
- These hands
THEMES FOR BEGINNING GROUPS

If using a theme to stimulate memories, the teaching artist should consider the group dynamics. When groups are newly formed, the teaching artist should choose subjects that help group members discover what they have in common. At this stage, each member of the group will want to establish a sense of belonging, and identifying commonalities is an excellent way to facilitate this process. It is important to remember that at this stage, participants have not yet established trust in each other and therefore may not want to disclose memories that are too personal.

The topics listed below do not require the disclosure of deeply personal facts or emotions. Some participants may choose to explore these subjects in superficial or whimsical ways.

- Hands. What have your hands done? What is one thing they loved doing when you were young? What is one thing they have done to help someone else? What have they done to help you? What is one thing they have done to bring you joy? What is one thing they have done to help you in times of challenge?
- Holidays. How did you spend a particular holiday as a child? What foods/rituals/traditions did you enjoy? What is the meaning of this particular holiday to you?
- Love stories. Describe your first love, a lost love, or your marriage(s) or other romantic relationships.
- Proud moments. Describe a moment in your life when you felt proud—a triumphant moment.
- Superstitions. What superstitions were observed in your home, community, or culture when you were growing up? What was your relationship to these traditions? What superstitions were you taught? What folklore and myths were passed on to you?
LESSON 8: Working with Reminiscence and Imagination Part 2

- Children’s games. What games did you play as a child? What were the rules? Where did you play and with whom?

- Favorite place. Describe a place where you have felt happy and safe in the past. Where is it? When were you there? What did you do there?

- Seasons. What is your favorite season? Why? What do you like to do in this season? If you were a season, which season would you be? What does this season symbolize to you?

- Food. What was your favorite food as a child? Where and when did you eat it? Who made it/bought it for you? Whom did you eat it with? How was it prepared?

- On a train. Imagine yourself on a train. You are looking out the window. Where are you? What do you see?

- Role models/heroes. Who is a famous person or a person from your own life who is a role model or hero?

- First job. What was your first job? Where was it? How did you get it? How much did you make? What were your tasks? How did you feel about this job?

- Favorite object. What is one object that you have owned in your life that had particular significance for you? When did you own it? Where did it come from? How did you use it? If you no longer have it, what happened to it?

- Different ages and eras. Name a year or an age in your past. Recall where you were at that time. What were you doing?¹²

THEMES FOR ESTABLISHED GROUPS

Elders in established groups have had time to develop a sense of belonging and some degree of trust. As a result, members of established groups are often willing to risk sharing memories that are more personal and more emotionally charged. The profound sharing that can occur in established groups provides group members with the opportunity to build deep and lasting bonds with each other, to talk about aspects of their lives that are deeply meaningful to them, and to discover new aspects of themselves. For these reasons, teaching artists working with established groups are encouraged to consider offering subjects that invite deeper sharing. Many of the subjects listed for newly formed groups may also work well with established groups; established groups will simply explore these subjects from a more profound perspective.¹³

- **Historical events.** Where were you during the Depression? The World Wars? Where were you the day John F. Kennedy died? On 9/11? (You can also choose a local historical event or a figure who is well-known to the group.)

- **Philosophy of life.** How did you come to learn your philosophy of life? What does your world view consist of? At what moment do you recall realizing that you had certain beliefs or a way of looking at the world? How do/did you express these beliefs?

- **Dreams and fantasies.** Share a dream that you remember or a fantasy that you have. What is the first dream you remember having? Is there a dream that stands out more than others? What is it?
• **Meetings.** Of all the people you have known in your life, who would you most like to meet again? Where would you want to meet? What would you want to say or ask?

• **Photographs.** Bring a favorite photograph of your family, yourself, your pet, or your home. Why is this photograph significant to you?

• **Turning point.** Describe a moment in your life that was a turning point. When was it? What happened? How did this turning point change your life? How did it change you?

• **Immigration stories.** When, how, and why did you come to America?

• **First memories.** What is your earliest memory? Tell me as many details as possible. What is your earliest memory of your mother, your father?

• **Family role.** What was your role in your family? Can you think of one memory that illustrates that role? What is your role now?

• **Travel.** Where have you been? Where have you felt uncomfortable? Where have you felt “at home”? ¹⁴

**REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

Which three of the themes listed for beginning or established groups do you think would be most suitable or appealing to use in a visualization or pair-work for a group you currently work with (or would like to work with)?

**ARTS ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE: INTERVIEWING**

Interviewing helps older adults deepen their stories by exploring details with a partner. It can be used to delve into stories that participants have brought to the surface or to help them retrieve memories on a theme. Susan Perlstein advises that it is easy to teach participants basic interviewing skills using the journalistic toolbox of the four W’s: “Who? When? Where? What’s happening?” The first three questions serve as the structure—like a clothes hanger—on which the story unfolds.¹⁵ Gathering answers to “Who? When? Where?” provides the character and setting for the action that follows. These questions also allow older adults to focus on specifics, moving beyond statements such as “there was a warm feeling in my family” to concrete details.

Encourage participants to avoid asking “Why?” It can set up an atmosphere of judgment that may cause the speaker to clam up. It can also stop the story before it begins if the teller starts reflecting on things they have not even said yet.¹⁶ Sometimes a teller may want to talk about why someone acted as they did or why a situation turned out the way it did. In that case, the interviewer can suggest they finish the story first and save the explanation for later.
Directions

• Decide the purpose of the activity. Decide if participants will use interviewing to deepen a memory that they have already tapped or explore a new theme.

• Give the interviewing guidelines to participants. Use the four W’s but avoid asking “Why?”

• Ask participants to pair up and share stories. Each person has two to five minutes to be interviewed.

• Share with the group. When interviews are complete, participants can share what they learned using “Headlines” (see “Arts Engagement Exercise: Exercises for Sharing Memories” later in this lesson) or a short summary. Participants may also use the details of their own story or their partner’s story to create art work.¹⁷

HANDLING DIFFICULT MEMORIES

Working with personal stories is a rich and rewarding experience for older adults and teaching artists. It is also unpredictable. Exploring memories can bring up tears or anger. It can open up emotions or sensations in elders that may be painful or make them feel vulnerable. For this reason, it is important that there is a “container” for the strong emotions that stories can stir up.¹⁸

The following strategies can help teaching artists create that container:

• Ground rules. Make an agreement that stories will stay in the room unless participants give permission for their stories to be shared with others. This helps elders trust that fellow group members will treasure and value their stories and keep them private.¹⁹

• Acceptance. Let stories have breathing space and permission to stand just as they are. Stuart Kandell, founder of Stagebridge Senior Theatre, has taken this approach to emotional memories that arise: “We are just going to allow it. We’re not going to judge it, we’re not going to psychoanalyze it, we’re not going to tear it apart. We’re just going to allow it to exist here with us today.”²⁰

• Personal choice. Make sure that participants know they have a choice about whether to share stories. They may feel comfortable telling a difficult memory to a partner but not to the whole group. Participants should also be given the option of not sharing a story at all; in this case, they can remain part of the group by listening to the stories of others.

• Structure. A structured artistic process and clear intentions can provide a strong container for emotions. The teaching artist can help elders stay focused on the work they have come together to do. Teaching artists who have worked with choreographer Liz Lerman remember her saying, “Cry and keep dancing.”²¹

While it is important that teaching artists respond with sensitivity and genuine interest to the stories of the elders in arts workshops, the role of the teaching artist is not that of a therapist. Teaching artists working in settings with health care or program staff should learn up front who can assist if a need for medical or psychological support arises during a workshop. In an assisted living facility or a day program, the teaching artist should alert staff or the participant’s family members about the situation and ask for their assistance. If the participant is more
independent, the teaching artist can encourage them to talk with a partner, friend, family member, clergyperson, or mental health professional. Neither the teaching artist nor the participant should feel alone in responding to larger life issues that affect the older adult’s well-being.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE: CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULT MEMORIES

A participant in your class remembers a painful childhood memory during a sense memory visualization. She is visibly upset and crying as she tells her story to her partner, who is listening silently. The next activity will be for partners to share their stories with the larger group. How could you handle this situation?

ARTS ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE: SHARING MEMORIES

One of the key activities in an arts program based on the stories of older adults is helping participants move from remembering to turning remembrances into art. The step of sharing memories with the group acts as a bridge between generating content and creation, and it serves multiple purposes.

Sharing memories gives participants a satisfying sense of closure and validation at the completion of a visualization or other reminiscence exercise. Sharing also helps participants find what is meaningful in their stories and begin refining them so that they can be developed over time into a piece of visual art, a memoir, a song, or a theater performance. In addition, sharing memories brings group members closer, building connection and trust among them. Memories also offer material that can be turned immediately into an artistic product, such as a group poem.

It is important that the teaching artist creates an environment that feels safe and supportive for sharing by setting expectations that memories will not be shared outside of the session without the participants’ permission and by letting people know they can choose not to share their stories if they are uncomfortable revealing their memories to the group.

Here are several ways used by Elders Share the Arts to allow older adults to share short reminiscence while incorporating an element of creative expression and skill building.

WORKING IN PAIRS

This format allows elders in the group to share their memory with one other person. It encourages personal contact between members of the group. Some elders in a group are more comfortable sharing with one person than with the group as a whole. This format may also be ideal when the group is large and there is not time for each elder to share their story with the whole group.

- Ask each elder to share their story with the person next to them. If there is an odd number of people in the group, either create one group of three or join in the activity yourself.
LESSON 8: Working with Reminiscence and Imagination Part 2

- Give each elder a few minutes to share a memory; be sure to allow both partners the same amount of time to share. If time allows, you can ask if anyone would like to share a memory with the group as a whole.

- One variation on this format is to have each set of partners share their partner’s memory with the group as a whole. If you choose to do this, we recommend that you let group members know this before they begin sharing with their partners.22

HEADLINES

This exercise is a wonderful means of sharing each elder’s memory with the group in a time-efficient, theatrical, fun way. This activity is also excellent for making sure that everyone has the opportunity to share the “central message” of their memory with the whole group.

- Ask each elder to create a “headline” for their memory as if it were a front page story in a newspaper. Then ask each elder to share their headline.

- One variation on “Headlines” is to share memories in pairs first, and then have each elder create a headline for their partner.23

PHYSICAL GESTURES

This format enables elders to share their memories in an abstract way with the group. It can be useful when some members of the group are reluctant to share a memory because it feels too personal. It can also help open the group up to how they can share feelings and ideas with their bodies in addition to their words. Finally, it can develop a group’s comfort with physical expression, one of the central building blocks of theater and dance.

- Ask each elder to create a gesture that is the essence of their memory. If you prefer, you can ask people to say a few words with their gesture.

- After each elder shares their gesture (and words, if you use them), ask the group to repeat it in unison. After everyone has shared, you can ask if the group would like to hear the whole story behind one of the gestures.

- For a variation, you can ask each set of partners to create two gestures (one for each of their stories). They can present them to the group as a very short gesture “phrase.”

- Another variation is to ask the group to add a gesture to the headline format.24

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Describe an activity that a group might use to share short reminiscences using your art form. You can adapt one of the exercises already mentioned or create your own.
ARTS ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE: GROUP POEMS

A group poem is an elegant combination of process and product. It is a composite of each member’s response to a subject, summarized in a few words or phrases. The content may be based on reminiscence, imagination, or another inspiration.

Group poems, almost without fail, give a group a sense of togetherness and creative satisfaction. Participants are often amazed by the beauty of the poems they create. The teaching artist can collaborate with participants by arranging their words for artistic effect. In this case, the teaching artist is not only a recorder during the group process, but has a curatorial role in helping participants create their poem.

Directions

• Choose the subject to which the group will respond.
• Invite group members to share their responses; you can collect responses from whoever chooses to participate or ask each person to share.
• Write down each response using pen and paper, computer, or flipchart.
• When everyone has spoken, read it back as an entire poem.

CASE STUDY: FROM WORD COLLAGE TO POETRY

A group poem, “That, and the Birds,” was created by participants at the Camden County Senior Citizen Day Center in Blackwood, New Jersey in 2012 with guidance from poet and teaching artist Anndee Hochman. The elders who attend programming at the center are a culturally and economically diverse group of active adults, ages 60 and over, who take part in a variety of social and creative activities there on a weekly basis.

Anndee was inspired to create a group poem with the participants after attending an NCCA artist training offered by the Arts Council of Princeton. She had visited the center before to conduct sessions of People & Stories/Gente y Cuentos, a literature-to-life discussion group, so participants were initially perplexed by the different approach Anndee tried during this session. However, she found that they were quickly engaged by the topic of sound and by the model poems she read aloud at the beginning of the session, both of which were related to sound and full of playful, delicious language.

SOUNDS WE LOVE, SOUNDS OF HOME AND CHILDHOOD

The group began by discussing the poems “Sit a While” by Siv Sederling and “Woman at the Piano” by William Jay Smith. Each person then wrote down three words the sound of which they loved. Next, the group took turns reading their words, producing a surprisingly beautiful and spontaneous word collage. Everyone was engaged during this process; writing just three words was something that each person in the group could manage. Poor writing skill was no barrier, as long as the participant could read back their own printing.

Participants followed that with a visualization about sounds of home and childhood. With some modeling from Anndee, the elders were able to condense their memories into short phrases, which Anndee transcribed. A memorable moment happened when participants
were listening closely to one another and modeling the use of specific, detailed language. When one woman remembered straddling “clothes-props” as pretend horses, others laughed in delight, and that spurred her to add more details to her line of poetry.

Participants were eager to hear the poem they had created, and Anndee read it aloud. According to her, they “were pleased and surprised by the results: ‘It sounds like a poem!’ was a frequent comment.” At their request, Anndee typed up the poem after the workshop and gave them copies.

The following is the word collage and poem that the group created.

**THAT, AND THE BIRDS**

*By Morris Archie, Alice Ball, Olga Bennett, Darcy Cummings, Anndee Hochman, Beatrice Holland, Barbara Johnson, Lucille Thompson, and Merle Ways*

I remember my brother calling, “Alice, it’s time to come home!”
from the other end of the street.
Now I hear the heater going on and off.

I remember how every house had the baseball game on;
you could hear the announcer reporting the game on the radio—
before TV. I had an older brother; we used to straddle clothes-props for horses
and trot along the street, the hum of that wood
dragging along the cement;
we used to go from Camden to Merchantville.

We used to jump out the window, hit the ground and keep going:
the sounds of a daredevil

Roller skating—metal wheels against the concrete.
That, and the birds.

Trying to catch myself from falling.
When the wind rushes against the trees,
up on the hill, in Jamaica. Donkeys with a cart, selling ice. The donkey
breathing with a rope in its mouth.
You hear all these different sounds. Sometimes you’re scared.

The squeak in the attic.
The bell ringing after school.
The freighters—whoo—toward morning, big trucks coming
with crates of chicken.
The bar downstairs.
The men singing.
LESSON 8 SUMMARY

“Working with Reminiscence and Imagination, Part 2” continued to examine the exploration and sharing of life stories in workshops with older adults, including interviewing techniques, sharing activities, and the creation of group poems.

CHECK-IN: LESSON 8 GOALS

- Design reminiscence activities that are culturally sensitive
- Guide older adults in interviewing one another about personal stories
- Use themes to help older adults explore memories
- Have a strategy for handling painful memories that arise in workshops
- Lead exercises for sharing personal memories in preparation for art-making
- Create a group poem with participants

LESSON 8 NOTES

1. Larson, Stage for Memory, 9.
2. Stuart Kandell (founder, Stagebridge Senior Theatre), email to author, April 4, 2013. Content provided courtesy of Stagebridge Senior Theatre and used with permission.
3. Larson, Stage for Memory, 9.
4. Silvia Pontaza (resident artist, Teatro del Pueblo), practicum report for ARTSAGE Arts and Aging Minnesota Professional Development Initiative, February 12, 2013.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Boyer, Creativity Matters, 86.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Perlstein, NCCA Artist Training.
17. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
LESSON 8: Working with Reminiscence and Imagination Part 2

24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., 27.
26. Anndee Hochman, email to author, July 17, 2012. Contents for this section provided courtesy of Anndee
CASE STUDY IN CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

When you design reminiscence activities with older people (or people of other ages), it is important to learn as much as you can about the cultural norms of your participants. Cultural groups may have specific calendars, rituals, and practices for reminiscence.

Although reminiscence offers many benefits, not everyone wants to reminisce about all subjects at all times. There are many reasons why an individual or group may prefer not to reminisce about a particular subject, in a particular setting, or at a particular time. First, variance in personalities or dispositions means that individuals differ in the amount of interest they have in reminiscence and the ways they benefit from it. Second, individuals of different ages, genders, socioeconomic backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and nationalities have different cultural norms about reminiscence.

CASE STUDY: WITH YOU I LEARNED

Besides awareness of cultural norms, cultural sensitivity can also involve helping elders in multicultural groups find common ground as they engage in the arts. This was a challenge faced by teaching artist Silvia Pontaza when she planned a two-day workshop for older adults at Centro el Zócalo, an agency serving the Latino community in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota.

Originally from Guatemala, Silvia is an actress and resident artist with Teatro del Pueblo, a Latino theater in St. Paul that is interested in engaging Spanish-speaking elders in the theater arts. As part of her workshop planning, Silvia met with Sandra Reyes, adult education center director for Centro to learn about the older adults who come to the center to participate in its Seniors Program. She learned that they are mostly immigrants from Ecuador, Mexico, Cuba, Honduras, and Nicaragua, and that they typically attend the Seniors Program on either Tuesday or Wednesday. She and Sandra agreed that Silvia’s workshop would run on both days and Centro would invite the elders to attend twice that week.

Then Silvia set about trying to find a common thread that would spark the interest of all her participants. She and Sandra had talked about how music was a part of the current programming for older adults at Centro, and Sandra gave Silvia some names of artists that were familiar to the elders. Although Silvia is a Latina herself, she had never heard of any of them. She knew that, contrary to a perception in the United States of a homogenous “Hispanic” culture, each of the countries in Latin America has a unique culture, many with their own music and dance forms. She was not sure how to appeal to the cultural mix of participants she expected at her workshop.

However, she hit on the idea of using a bolero, a form of romantic ballad that is popular across Latin America. She chose one called “Contigo Aprendí” ("With You I Learned") by Armando Manzanero, and she began designing a workshop inspired by the lyrics in anticipation of Día del Cariño (Valentine’s Day).
The plan for the first day was that the elders would choose a line from the song that matched their own experience in a relationship and then create text to describe themselves before and after the relationship. For example, “Antes yo era una persona que se quejaba por todo, no le encontraba sentido a la vida” (“Before I was a person who complained about everything, finding no meaning in life”) . . . “Contigo aprendí que existen nuevas y mejores emociones” (“With you I learned about new and better feelings”). Then on the second day, they would work in small groups to create movements to go with their text and perform them in moving tableaus.

On the first day of the workshop, things looked promising. The older adults showed up in a happy, curious state of mind. They responded well to the Día del Cariño theme. The moment Silvia introduced “Contigo Aprendí,” they immediately started to reminisce about their younger years and the memories that the song brought back. The elders then practiced movement using the ideas and feelings that love inspires, and the group expressed those emotions using gestures. Silvia knew that the workshop was successful when a few shy participants, who had stayed in their chairs to observe at the beginning of the class, got up and started contributing their ideas to the group. With a few minutes left at the end of class, Silvia led the group in an additional mime practice that the elders enjoyed.

The next day, Silvia came to the class with a few extra activities, in case she needed to supplement the lesson plan. She also brought more songs to share, including one suggested by a staff member from Centro. This proved to be a good decision, as transportation and scheduling difficulties were posing a challenge to her well-laid plans. Only about half the participants were back from the day before, while half of them were new. She had to think on her feet. She led the group in a debrief about the previous day’s activities and then decided to repeat the same sequence with one of the new songs. This worked well because the return participants felt comfortable with the structure of the workshop but had fresh experiences to share. Silvia also incorporated more mime-type activities, since the participants received them well the first day.

Silvia said, “If I had to rate both sessions on the level of participation and engagement in the group from one to ten, I would say that the first class was an eight and the second session was a ten! On the first day it was all new, and they were happy to participate with a little caution; on second day they felt more at ease. I would say they participated with abandonment.”

Silvia reports that the participants were enthusiastic about what they created in class. One of them even suggested that they call themselves el Grupo de Pantomima del Centro (the Pantomime Group of Centro). One of the participants said that he was happy to be doing something different from what he normally does, and another said that it was nice to do “all this funny stuff.”
REMINISCENCE ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

ACTIVITY GUIDELINES 1

INTERVIEWING

Interviewing helps older adults deepen their stories by exploring details with a partner. It can be used to delve into stories that participants have brought to the surface or to help them retrieve memories on a theme. Susan Perlstein advises that it is easy to teach participants basic interviewing skills using the journalistic toolbox of the four W’s: “Who? When? Where? What’s happening?” The first three questions serve as the structure—like a clothes hanger—on which the story unfolds. Gathering answers to “Who? When? Where?” provides the character and setting for the action that follows. These questions also allow older adults to focus on specifics, moving beyond statements such as “there was a warm feeling in my family” to concrete details.

Encourage participants to avoid asking “Why?” It can set up an atmosphere of judgment that may cause the speaker to clam up. It can also stop the story before it begins if the teller starts reflecting on things they have not even said yet. Sometimes a teller may want to talk about why someone acted as they did or why a situation turned out the way it did. In that case, the interviewer can suggest they finish the story first and save the explanation for later.

Directions

* Decide the purpose of the activity. Decide if participants will use interviewing to deepen a memory that they have already tapped or explore a new theme.

* Give the interviewing guidelines to participants. Use the four W’s but avoid asking “Why?”

* Ask participants to pair up and share stories. Each person has two to five minutes to be interviewed.

* Share with the group. When interviews are complete, participants can share what they learned using “Headlines” or a short summary. Participants may also use the details of their own story or their partner’s story to create art work.

ACTIVITY GUIDELINES 2

SHARING MEMORIES

One of the key activities in an arts program based on the stories of older adults is helping participants move from remembering to turning remembrances into art. The step of sharing memories with the group acts as a bridge between generating content and creation, and it serves multiple purposes.

Sharing memories gives participants a satisfying sense of closure and validation at the completion of visualization or other reminiscence exercise. Sharing also helps participants find what is meaningful in their stories and begin refining them so that they can be developed over time into a piece of visual art, a memoir, a song, or a theater
performance. In addition, sharing memories brings group members closer, building connection and trust among them. Memories also offer material that can be turned immediately into an artistic product, such as a group poem.

Here are several ways used by Elders Share the Arts to allow older adults to share short reminiscence while incorporating an element of creative expression and skill building:

**Working in Pairs**

This format allows elders in the group to share their memory with one other person. It encourages personal contact between members of the group. Some elders in a group are more comfortable sharing with one person than with the group as a whole. This format may also be ideal when the group is large and there is not time for each elder to share their story with the whole group.

- **Ask each elder to share their story with the person next to them.** If there are an odd number of people in the group, either create one group of three or join in the activity yourself.

- **Give each elder a few minutes to share a memory; be sure to allow both partners the same amount of time to share.** If time allows, you can ask if anyone would like to share a memory with the group as a whole.

- **One variation on this format is to have each set of partners share their partner’s memory with the group as a whole.** If you choose to do this, we recommend that you let group members know this before they begin sharing with their partners.

**Headlines**

This exercise is a wonderful means of sharing each elder’s memory with the group in a time-efficient, theatrical, fun way. This activity is also excellent for making sure that everyone has the opportunity to share the “central message” of their memory with the whole group.

- **Ask each elder to create a “headline” for his or her memory** as if it were a front page story in a newspaper. Then ask each elder to share his or her headline.

- **One variation on “Headlines” is to share memories in pairs first, and then have each elder create a headline for their partner.**

**Physical Gestures**

This format enables elders to share their memories in an abstract way with the group. It can be useful when some members of the group are reluctant to share a memory because it feels too personal. It can also help open the group up to how they can share feelings and ideas with their bodies in addition to their words. Finally, it can develop a group’s comfort with physical expression, one of the central building blocks of theater and dance.

- **Ask each elder to create a gesture that is the essence of his or her memory.** If you prefer, you can ask people to say a few words with their gesture.

- **After each elder shares their gesture (and words, if you use them), ask the group to repeat it in unison.** After everyone has shared, you can ask if the group would like to hear the whole story behind one of the gestures.
For a variation, you can ask each set of partners to create two gestures (one for each of their stories). They can present them to the group as a very short gesture “phrase.”

Another variation is to ask the group to add a gesture to the headline format.

ACTIVITY GUIDELINES 3

GROUP POEMS

A group poem is an elegant combination of process and product. It is a composite of each member’s response to a subject, summarized in a few words or phrases. The content may be based on reminiscence, imagination, or another inspiration.

Group poems, almost without fail, give a group a sense of togetherness and creative satisfaction. Participants are often amazed by the beauty of the poems they create. The teaching artist can collaborate with participants by arranging their words for artistic effect. In this case, the teaching artist is not only a recorder during the group process, but has a curatorial role in helping participants create their poem.

Directions

- **Choose the subject** that the group to which the group will respond.
- **Invite group members to share their responses; you** can collect responses from whoever chooses to participate or ask each person to share.
- **Write down each response** using pen and paper, computer, or flipchart.
- **When everyone has spoken**, read it back as an entire poem.
GOALS

1. Develop a session plan for an arts workshop with older adults
2. Know how to sequence activities and manage time in an arts workshop

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What is one idea you have right now for an arts workshop with older adults? What would you like participants to learn or be able to do by the end of the session?

CREATING A SESSION PLAN

Session plans are an important component of a teaching artist’s work with older adults. In simple terms, a session plan is the teaching artist’s guide for running a class or workshop.¹ The session plan helps the teaching artist in both planning and executing the session. And it helps the participants, unbeknownst to them, by ensuring that they receive a class or workshop with a beginning, a middle, and an end that aims to help them achieve something specific or make progress toward a goal in a specific area.²

A session plan includes the objective(s) (what the participants are supposed to do or learn), how the objective(s) will be reached (the activities), and a measure for knowing whether the objective(s) were accomplished (for example, demonstration of a skill, performance of material, creation of something original, etc.).³ The measurement of participant knowledge or skills is called assessment.⁴

Although the term “assessment” has a technical ring to it, making it part of a workshop need not be intimidating or unnatural. Assessment methods can be simple and should help the teaching artist collect information they can use to improve their work and plan future sessions. Assessment data can be gathered through means such as performance of a task or skill by participants, portfolio review, participant self-report (such as verbal comments or responses on a form), and reports from others (such as feedback from staff or a family member). Assessment can be done naturally during a session and may also take place pre- and post-workshop. A combination of these may be the most useful. A sample assessment form is presented in the following section.

In addition to objectives, activities, and assessment methods, the session plan can also include any details that are helpful for the teaching artist, such as the amount of time allotted for activities, which group structures are being used, and notes about props, materials, and media. Unlike an agenda or a syllabus, a session plan is not distributed to the participants, but it may be shared with (or even required by) the host site or aging services organization that has hired the teaching artist.
SESSION PLAN EXAMPLE

Session plans come in many different forms. Below is a session plan developed by Jeanie Brindley-Barnett of MacPhail Center for Music. This plan was the blueprint for the MacPhail Music for Life™ session described later in this lesson in the case study “There Is No Wrong in This Room.”

MacPhail Center for Music
Music for Life™ Session Plan
© 2013 MacPhail Center for Music

Session date: 2-15-13
Partnership: Lyngblomsten
Teaching artists: Jeanie Brindley-Barnett, Jeanne Bayer

Supplies needed:
• Candy hearts
• Rhythm sticks
• Guiro

Theme: Valentine’s Day – Love

Objectives:
• Participants will demonstrate relaxed, low breathing for vocal and wellness benefits during warm-ups and while singing.
• Participants will gain confidence in improvisation by creating a short spoken or sung Valentine message and by improvising rhythm pattern within two measure phrases using rhythm sticks.

Activities:
Warm-ups
Yoo-Hoo call and response; B-R-E-A-T-H, Hiss and Shh exhales; Butterfly Wings - Jeanne works with participants on breathing; Jeanie works on sensory pattern on piano.

Opening
Name Song call and response
LESSON 9: Planning Your Workshop

Singing
“Love Me Tender,” origin of Aura Lee, overview of folk songs “recycled” in pop music, Name That Tune (after playing)

Moving
“Tea for Two”—chair dances with cha-cha; two-step with “Red Roses for a Blue Lady”

Playing, improvising
“Tea for Two”—rhythm sticks played as guiro, demonstration of guiro; review riff/fill; each improvise two-measure fill.

Closing
Goodbye, everybody with names; “Sentimental Journey”?  

Reflective bridging (between activities)
Share Valentine’s candy heart messages. Valentine’s Day at school? Dances? Valentine’s Day special traditions with family? Share songs with “love” in the title, and we’ll sing them.

Assessment:
Document progress toward objectives
• Relaxed, low breathing  
• Improvising Valentine message  
• Improvising rhythm pattern

Additional observations

Notes for next session

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE
Thinking about the workshop idea you had at the beginning of the lesson, what objectives might you develop? How could you assess participants’ progress toward them?
LESSON 9: Planning Your Workshop

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT FORM

A sample pre- and post- assessment used by The Hoffman Performing Arts Institute at Ruth Eckerd Hall in Clearwater, Florida is included in this section. The assessment is administered at the beginning and end of a series of choral education classes.

Ruth Eckerd Hall

Clearwater Chorus Enhancement Class Assessment (Pre- and Post-test)

1. The alto notes have stems on the:
   - [ ] Left
   - [ ] Right

2. Which staff is this?
   - [ ] Treble
   - [ ] Bass
   - [ ] Tenor

3. Write the name of the note on the space provided.

4. Please fill in the missing words in the solfege scale:
   do, re, __, fa, sol __, ti, do

5. What solfege syllable resembles this hand sign?
   - [ ] Do
   - [ ] La
   - [ ] Mi
   - [ ] Fa
6. What note is this called?
   - Whole Note
   - Half Note
   - Eighth Note
   - Quarter Note

7. What is the last note in the musical alphabet sequence?
   - H
   - F
   - E
   - G

8. When breathing correctly, you should feel your _______ expand.
   - Chest
   - Lower Abdomen
   - Legs

9. How many beats do you rest for this symbol?
   - 4
   - 5
   - 2
   - 1

10. What does this time signature mean?
    - The song is 4 measures long
    - There are 4 beats in each measure and a quarter note receives one beat
    - There are 4 beats in each measure and a whole note receives one beat
SEQUENCING ACTIVITIES AND MANAGING TIME

Arts engagement experiences for older adults need a logical sequence. This supports learning and makes success more likely. A familiar sequence or structure will also build trust, and only in an environment of trust can older adults test their limits without fear of failure. While the elements of a session may vary, its basic arc—beginning, middle, and end—offers a universal sense of comfort, mirroring not only our earliest memories of stories, but also the life cycle.

Activities in the sequence should serve the objectives of the session, building on one another to help participants learn and do successfully. A good rule of thumb is to start with the familiar and move into the unknown. An example of this is found in the sequence of activities that led to the group poem “That, and the Birds” featured at the end of Lesson 8. The workshop began by reading a poem and making a list of words the participants loved and then moved into a sense memory visualization from which the group poem was developed. Reading a poem and talking about favorite words provided the elders in this group an easy and familiar doorway into creating poetry.

The sequence of a workshop should also “scaffold,” leading participants step by step through exercises in which they increasingly meet challenges or reveal more of themselves to the group. For example, a theater session might start with a group voice and movement warm-up, then move to partners telling each other stories based on a theme, then have the partners working together to create a skit based on their stories, and finally have the partners performing the skit in front of the group.

WORKSHOP SEQUENCE FOR EDUCATION AND SKILL-BUILDING

The following outline provides a basic structure for an arts engagement workshop that focuses primarily on exposure and skill-building, such as a music education class or dance technique class:

- **Warm-up exercise(s)**—Getting participants centered and prepared for learning and practicing skills
- **Learning skills**—Breaking down the elements of an art form into manageable chunks
- **Practice**—Honing skills through repetition
- **Performance/production**—Applying the new skill (may also be a form of assessment)
- **Closing**—Finding a sense of closure and transitioning the body and mind

In this structure, the learn-practice-perform sequence may be repeated multiple times during the class, and warm-up exercises may be woven throughout to introduce new parts of the class. An example of a skill-building class offered through the MacPhail Music for Life™ program is featured in this lesson in the case study “There Is No Wrong in This Room.”

WORKSHOP SEQUENCE FOR CREATING

A basic arts workshop sequence that focuses on older adults as creators is as follows. The steps that involve generation, creation or performance can also be used as an assessment of whether the objectives for the session have been met.
• Warm-up exercise—Getting participants centered, present, and open to the creative process

• Skill-building—Learning and practicing building block skills that lay the foundation for creating later in the session

• Generating—Surfacing content from memory, imagination, or another source of inspiration

• Creating—Transforming content or inspiration into a product or performance

• Artful apex—Performing together or sharing the product with the group and receiving feedback

• Reflection—Finding meaning in the work of the session

• Closing—Giving participants a sense of completion and helping them transition back into everyday life

In this sequence, the activities that involve generating content, creating, and performing can also be used as forms of assessment. An example of a class that builds to an artful apex is featured later in this lesson in the case study “In the Moment.”

CLASS LENGTH AND TIME MANAGEMENT

Arts classes involving healthy elders typically last from 60 to 90 minutes, while more frail groups of elders usually do better with a shorter timeframe of 45 to 60 minutes. Teaching artists should arrive at least 20 to 30 minutes before a class or workshop to allow time to set up, relax, and be ready to welcome participants.

The flow of the session should allow activities to unfold at a pace that is suitable for the participants in the group. Group members with physical or cognitive disabilities may need additional time to complete exercises. The length of time required for each step in the sequence will also vary according to the size of the group. Activities may require more time to carry out with larger groups, especially if the teaching artist is giving personal guidance to individuals or small groups during the process.

The teaching artist should keep the schedule on track by setting time limits for activities and giving participants strategies for completing the process on time, such as limiting choices of materials or simplifying tasks. It is better to accomplish fewer activities in a session, and to complete them safely and effectively, than to rush participants through a long or complicated agenda. When doing arts in aging work, less can truly be more.

POST-CLASS DEBRIEFING

After participants have departed, the teaching artist should set aside time to review evaluations, if applicable, and make notes about the session. Things to document include who attended the session, what happened, notes about participants or the process, and areas for improvement. Adding comments, changes, or ideas to the lesson plan right away ensures that they are not lost. If there are multiple teaching artists working together, there is an opportunity for a shared debrief that can inform future collaborations and help the parties involved grow professionally.
LESSON 9: Planning Your Workshop

Post-session notes provide valuable documentation about workshops. They can be shared with the host facility for planning purposes or for charting, if participants receive medical care from the host facility. They can be used by the teaching artists as a starting point for planning future workshops. They also offer the advantage of seeing the workshop from a distance that is hard to achieve while the teaching artist is immersed in the thick of it. Good notes can provide a valuable lens through which to view the progress of participants and the development of the teaching artist’s work.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Think of a workshop idea: what sequence of activities would you follow?

How much time would you allot for each step in the sequence?

CASE STUDY: THERE IS NO WRONG IN THIS ROOM

MacPhail Music for Life™ is a participatory, lifelong learning program that engages adults 55 and older through music at adult day programs, senior residences, and respite care programs in the Greater Twin Cities area of Minnesota. Its classes offer a variety of participatory musical activities—such as singing, playing percussion instruments, storytelling, improvisation, and movement—that create an environment that promotes wellness, community building, and artistic and personal growth. The MacPhail Music for Life™ program was co-founded in 2008 by MacPhail Center for Music and Jeanie Brindley-Barnett, a musician, vocalist, composer, and teaching artist with MacPhail. The program now has seven teaching artists, several of whom are also music therapists, and serves 18 community partnership sites, with elders of all abilities participating in weekly sessions.

One of these partnership sites is Lyngblomsten, a continuing care retirement community in St. Paul. Its MacPhail Music for Life™ class is typically attended by about 18 older adults who reside in assisted living and skilled nursing settings and have a variety of mobility and cognitive disabilities. Each class is carefully sequenced and scaffolded to allow participants to move from easier activities to more challenging ones. The following class description illustrates this.

MACPHAIL MUSIC FOR LIFE™ CLASS AT LYNGBLOMSTEN, FEBRUARY 15, 2013 (60 MINUTES)

Teaching artists: MacPhail teaching artist Jeanie Brindley-Barnett and MacPhail teaching assistant Jeanne Bayer. Two Lyngblomsten staff people were also present to participate and assist students during the class.

The creative environment: The class was held in the chapel, a well-lighted and spacious room, with people in chairs and wheelchairs arranged in two rows in a semi-circle facing the piano. The chapel provided a quiet, focused space, especially since participants and instructors gathered at the end that was farthest from the hallway. The teaching artists greeted participants by name before the session started. Both teaching artists used handheld
microphones throughout the session to ensure that participants could hear them during the class.

1. Warm-ups
   a. Warm-up A: “Yoo-Hoo.” Following Jeanie, the group did a “Yoo-Hoo” greeting several times together, then each participant had a chance to do their own version. They were encouraged to wave as they vocalized, and many did so. Movement like this helps increase the heart rate and warms up muscles. As a rule, Jeanie reminds participants to do movements if they can; if not, she suggests that they imagine doing the movement so that the nervous system still gets the benefit.

   From the beginning, participants were learning musical concepts. During the warm-up, one participant drew her “Yoo-Hoo” out into a melody, and Jeanie went to the piano and turned the notes into a song. She pointed out the A and F sharp chords in it. She also introduced the term “resonance” in complimenting the beauty of another participant’s voice.

   b. Warm-up B: “B-R-E-A-T-H.” The teaching artists demonstrated correct abdominal breathing technique (“get fat, get flat”), and participants adjusted their posture and breathing while they chanted the letters “B-R-E-A-T-H.” They added a movement component by raising and lowering their arms in time with their breathing.

   c. Warm-up C: Greeting. Each participant sang their name, for example, “My name’s Carol,” and the others responded by singing, “Hello, Carol.” People were encouraged to wave as they were greeting one another.

2. Guest introductions. Jeanie introduced two guests to the participants, including a music therapist from MacPhail Center for Music. When the music therapist mentioned that she had started singing as a child at barn dances, Jeanie asked participants about whether they had attended barn dances, and they responded with raised arms and comments about their experiences.

3. Singing. In keeping with a theme about love, the teaching artists passed out large-print lyric sheets for Elvis Presley’s “Love Me Tender.” Jeanie explained the folk origins of the melody that Elvis used, and they sang together. At intervals, Jeanie reminded participants which verse they were singing, while Jeanne roamed the space with a microphone, letting various participants sing into it.

4. Playing/moving. Participants received two rhythm sticks, one ribbed and one smooth. Jeanie led them in examining the sticks and talked about how the ribbing came from a Latin American instrument known as a guiro. She used metaphors of grating carrots and sharpening a knife to help participants understand how to rub the sticks together to make sounds. The participants did a down-up-up rhythm, accompanied by the piano, then played a cha-cha-cha rhythm and added foot movements. After this, participants were given a chance to improvise and contribute a “fill,” a rhythmic solo phrase played during pauses in the piano accompaniment. Jeanie explained that they had total creative freedom in that moment; she led them in repeating, “There is no wrong in this room.”
LESSON 9: Planning Your Workshop

5. **Singing/moving.** Participants received a large-print lyric sheet for “Red Roses for a Blue Lady” by Wayne Newton. Since the lyrics of the verses were not familiar to people, Jeanne read them to the group, then participants read them aloud together. Following that, participants sang the chorus, and Jeanie talked about the two-step rhythm of the song. Participants added a swaying two-step motion as they sang the chorus two more times.

6. **Singing.** Participants played “Name That Tune” as Jeanie played melodies on the piano. When someone guessed a song correctly, Jeanie performed a short version of it. She used the songs to draw participants into a discussion about how many of them had owned LP albums. Then participants provided the hints for “Name That Tune” by thinking of a song with the word “love” in the title and singing the melody without words. Finally, they played “Name That Tune” by suggesting hymns that had “love” in their titles and humming them. Participants thought of “Jesus Loves Me” and “I Love to Tell the Story.”

7. **Singing.** Participants received candy hearts with romantic phrases on them (such as “good for me” or “hug me”) and vocalized their phrases as “licks” or “riffs” accompanied by jazz music.

8. **Closing.** The group sang the last verse of “Love Me Tender” again. Then they sang “Good-bye, Everybody” to each person by name. As participants were leaving, Jeanie and Jeanne said good-bye to them and then spent time talking with a new participant and learning that he was a former minister and music education major.

Throughout the class, both Jeanie and Jeanne balanced the roles of artist/performer and educator, bringing a lively energy and high level of artistry to the session while helping participants gain musical knowledge and skills in a supportive environment.

**REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

In what ways did the teaching artists take participants from familiar to more challenging activities in this Music for Life session? How does this resemble the way that you have structured the sequence of activities for your arts workshop idea?
LESSON 9 SUMMARY

“Planning Your Workshop” included information on preparing a space for arts engagement and developing a lesson plan with effective sequencing and timing. The lesson presented an example of a lesson plan and an assessment form.

CHECK-IN: LESSON 9 GOALS

- Develop a session plan for an arts workshop with older adults
- Know how to sequence activities and manage time in an arts workshop

LESSON 9 NOTES

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
5. Jeanie Brindley-Barnett (co-founder and Coordinator, MacPhail Music for LifeTM), email to author, May 18, 2013. Content of the session plan example provided courtesy of MacPhail Center for Music and used with permission.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., 86.
9. Ibid.
11. Jeanie Brindley-Barnett, interview with and firsthand observation by author, February 15, 2013. Content for the “Case Study: There Is No Wrong in This Room” provided courtesy of MacPhail Center for Music and used with permission.
12. Ibid.
LESSON 9: Planning Your Workshop
PROGRAM INFORMATION
Discipline: ____________________________________________________________
Number of Sessions: ___________________ Hours Per Session: _______________
Program Title: _________________________________________________________
Expected Number of Participants: _____________

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Arts Objectives – What will the students learn? What skills will they master? What will they make/do along the way? Limit yourself to three objectives; aim to keep them focused and relevant to the core of your program.

1. 

2. 

3. 

Additional Objectives – Choose three specific growth objectives for your program. Consider including social/emotional or health objectives or outcomes.

1. 

2. 

3. 

FINAL EVENT/PERFORMANCE/PRODUCT

What is the final event/performance/product? Describe.

How will each student’s growth and learning be included?
PROGRAM SCOPE
Using your objectives as a guide, list the activities and smaller learning goals that will help your students achieve the learning objectives you have laid out.

MATERIALS
What materials will you need? Can students share materials?

What kinds of space will you need?

ACCESSIBILITY
How have you considered accessibility needs and issues?

What challenges do you foresee?

What questions remain?
DOCUMENTATION
How will you document the learning process and products?

How can you engage the students in documentation?

ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION
How will you assess student learning?

How will you evaluate student work?

How will you assess and evaluate your program?

NOTES
BASIC INFORMATION

Session Title: _________________________________________________________________

Session Type:  □ Stand Alone Workshop   □ Residency

(optional) Residency Session Number: ______ of ______

Desired Number of Participants: _________________________

Maximum Number of Participants: _______________________

PLANNING

Time Allotted: ________________________________

Desired Classroom Space: ______________________________

Materials Needed: _____________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________
OBJECTIVES & ACTIVITIES

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

What will the participants do/learn?

1.

2.

3.

ACTIVITIES

How will the objectives above be reached?

1.

2.

3.
ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

ASSESSMENTS/MEASURES OF SUCCESS

How will you measure if the objectives were reached? What will be completed, demonstrated, performed, etc.? How will you collect information you need to track learning and improve your teaching?

1.

2.

3.

EVALUATION

How will you evaluate the quality of the learning that has happened? What are the qualities of quality?

1.

2.

3.
SAMPLE SESSION PLAN

Session plans come in many different forms. Below is a session plan developed by Jeanie Brindley-Barnett of MacPhail Center for Music. This plan was the blueprint for the MacPhail Music for Life™.

MacPhail Center for Music

Music for Life™ Session Plan

© 2013 MacPhail Center for Music

Session date: 2-15-13

Partnership: Lyngblomsten

Teaching artists: Jeanie Brindley-Barnett, Jeanne Bayer

Supplies needed:
- Candy hearts
- Rhythm sticks
- Guiro
- Music and lyrics for: “Love Me Tender,” “Tea for Two,” and “Red Roses for a Blue Lady.”

Theme: Valentine’s Day – Love

Objectives:
- Participants will demonstrate relaxed, low breathing for vocal and wellness benefits during warm-ups and while singing.
- Participants will gain confidence in improvisation by creating a short spoken or sung Valentine message and by improvising rhythm pattern within two measure phrases using rhythm sticks.
ACTIVITIES

WARM-UPS
Yoo-Hoo call and response; B-R-E-A-T-H, Hiss and Shh exhales; Butterfly Wings - Jeanne works with participants on breathing; Jeanie works on sensory pattern on piano.

OPENING
Name Song call and response

SINGING
“Love Me Tender,” origin of Aura Lee, overview of folk songs “recycled” in pop music, Name That Tune (after playing)

MOVING
“Tea for Two” — Chair dances with cha-cha; two-step with “Red Roses for a Blue Lady”

PLAYING, IMPROVISING
“Tea for Two” — Rhythm sticks played as guiro, demonstration of guiro; review riff/fill; each improvise two-measure fill.

CLOSING
Goodbye, everybody with names; “Sentimental Journey”? 

REFLECTIVE BRIDGING (BETWEEN ACTIVITIES)
Share Valentine’s candy heart messages. Valentine’s at school? Dances? Valentine’s special traditions with family? Share songs with “love” in the title, and we’ll sing them.

ASSESSMENT
Document progress toward objectives
• Relaxed, low breathing
• Improvising Valentine message
• Improvising rhythm pattern

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

NOTES FOR NEXT SESSION
LESSON 10: Planning a Workshop for Adults with Cognitive Disabilities

GOALS

1. Understand how to adapt your work for a variety of participants
2. Plan and sequence a workshop for older adults with cognitive disabilities
3. Have a familiarity with using improvisational methods for making art with older adults
4. Use a variety of feedback processes in arts workshops

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What is most challenging for you about adapting your work for a variety of participants?

MAKING YOUR SESSION PLAN WORK FOR YOUR PARTICIPANTS

Many teaching artists work with older adults in a variety of settings, ranging from senior centers and independent living apartment complexes to day programs and long-term care residences. As they move from setting to setting, teaching artists must develop their session plans to meet the needs of participants with an array of personal and artistic goals, physical and cognitive abilities, and backgrounds. This involves considerations about content, pace, environment, amount of support needed, and collaboration with staff and caregivers.

AT A DAY PROGRAM

MacPhail Music for Life™ sessions are offered by MacPhail Center for Music to older adults of all abilities. While the basic purpose and structure of the classes in each setting is to enhance the well-being of participants through music, adjustments are made for participants at each site, as well as for environmental factors. For example, in day program settings, which are often set up to feel like a home environment, there is typically less space for arts activities. Noise from buzzers on security doors can be distracting. Participants may be reclining rather than sitting up, and this can make it harder for them to vocalize. In response to these challenges and the needs of participants with physical and cognitive disabilities, Jeanie Brindley-Barnett slows down the pace of the class. Participants follow along more. Repetition becomes crucial. Staff involvement is essential, so Jeanie works with day program sites to make sure staff are engaged during classes rather than watching from another room or taking a break.¹

WITH INDEPENDENT OLDER ADULTS

In contrast, independent older adults, whether in retirement communities or senior centers, typically attend sessions by themselves rather than with a staff member, and they require little, if any, assistance from staff during classes. It is possible to lengthen class time as well as the time spent on each portion of class because participants have more energy and
endurance. The pace and difficulty of some activities can increase, with students covering more ground in a given activity. For example, Music for Life participants who are more active may be able to handle more vigorous movement or greater movement variety, offer up additional songs during a “Guess That Tune” activity, or get more engaged in sharing personal stories.\(^2\)

While original songs can be created with participants in any setting, the length and pace of classes with independent elders allows more time for composition. This works best with smaller groups. When creating a song with a group, Jeanie expands the class plan to add a composition section, while keeping class time balanced between that and other activities. Participants build the song little by little in multiple sessions as they generate lyrics, rhythm, and melody, which Jeanie notates and arranges.\(^3\)

In each environment and each class, Jeanie—and any teaching artist—has to be prepared to respond to what is happening in the moment. Lesson plans provide an important structure for classes and facilitate communication between the teaching artist and the host organization, but experienced teaching artists know that the best-laid plans sometimes need to be modified. A good relationship with staff, a strong grasp of the art form and its elements, an ability to improvise, and a repertoire of back-up activities will serve teaching artists well as they navigate the realities of working with older adults.

**REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

How would you adapt your workshop ideas from previous lessons for a setting where participants’ needs and abilities differ from those in your original description?

Choose a setting or group of participants that interest you. If the previous lesson is not fresh in your mind now, think about how you might adapt a workshop that you have developed (or are developing).

**PLANNING SESSIONS FOR OLDER ADULTS WITH ALZHEIMER’S AND RELATED NEUROCOGNITIVE DISORDERS**

Designing arts workshops to successfully engage people with cognitive disabilities requires careful thought about each portion of the experience. Simple routines that orient participants to what is happening and help them connect to the others in the room are essential. Structures that allow participants to feel a sense of control and autonomy make a positive experience more likely.

The methodology of Opening Minds through Art (OMA) was developed with these factors in mind.\(^4\) Each step in an OMA visual arts workshop is intentionally designed to nurture the creativity and confidence of the older artists and foster quality one-on-one interaction between them and the volunteers who assist them.
LESSON 10: Planning a Workshop for Adults with Cognitive Disabilities

Each week older adults participating in an OMA program in a long-term care or adult day facility experience this same sequence of events:

GETTING ORIENTED

- A volunteer partner escorts the older artist to the art room. The artist works with the same volunteer throughout the program. They socialize along the way.

- The artist and volunteer make nametags together and put on aprons. The apron functions not only as a clothing protector, but also as a symbol that the pair is about to engage in a creative process. Aprons are worn by chefs, artists, bakers, and others who make things with their hands. This symbol is not lost on people with cognitive disabilities. The apron also marks the boundary of creative time as participants put it on and take it off.

WARMING UP

After everyone is settled and wearing their nametags and aprons, the group sings a song led by the lead teaching artist. They use the same song every week to help establish the structure of the routine. Although most of the pairs do not need it, each has printed lyrics of old and familiar songs to help them follow along. The opening song serves several purposes: It establishes a routine that will lead to a sense of familiarity, it gets people’s energy flowing, it gives the artists and volunteers something fun to do together, and it collects everyone’s attention in preparation for opening remarks by the leader.

ART MAKING

After completing this weekly ritual, the older artists and volunteers begin examining together pieces of art that will provide inspiration for the day’s work. They then began their art-making process, following instructions on a large-print handout. The purpose of the handout is to shift the knowledge (and power) of the art-making process away from the volunteer. So when the artist asks, “What do I do now?”, the volunteer does not simply give the answer, thereby playing the “teacher” role. Instead, the volunteer directs the artist to the handout and guides the artist to figure out what action they need to take next. This shift is subtle, but it sends a powerful message to the artist that they are in charge. Since reading ability is usually retained quite late into the development of neurocognitive disorders (NCD) such as Alzheimer’s, most artists can still read aloud the instructions, even if comprehension may be impaired. The volunteer can then assist in interpreting the instruction into action.

APPRECIATION

On completion of the art-making process, the group shifts into the art appreciation phase. Completed art pieces are temporarily matted on the spot and shared all around for comments. In addition to building the artists’ self-esteem, this art sharing process also facilitates interactions among the artists in the room. Initiating social exchanges can be difficult when one has a neurocognitive disorder, but with facilitation by the volunteers and the leaders, people with NCDs are very capable of expressing their opinions about each other’s artwork.
LESSON 10: Planning a Workshop for Adults with Cognitive Disabilities

EVALUATION

After art sharing, the volunteers assist the artists in completing an evaluation of the day’s project. Research shows that people with neurocognitive disorders are able to express their views consistently in response to survey questions. A large-print handout with no more than five questions such as “Did you enjoy today’s art project?” and “Did you like your finished artwork?” not only serves to obtain feedback, but also conveys the fact that the artists’ opinions are valued. In addition, the collected data can be used to improve future activities.

CLOSING

• Finally, the group sings a closing song. It is a different song than the one at the beginning of the session, but it is the same one every week.

• After the closing song, the older artists are escorted to their next activity by the volunteer. This is another opportunity to socialize so that the volunteer’s departure does not seem too abrupt.

Creating a structure by establishing routines and rituals helps minimize confusion for the older artists and increases their comfort with the art-making process. This in turn increases the likelihood that they will engage in taking the risk to express themselves creatively.

Reflective Practice

Thinking about your art form and perhaps about the workshop you used in the previous section, how would you design a session to meet the needs of older adults with cognitive disabilities?

What elements of routine would you include to help participants feel oriented and comfortable?

PROCESS AND PRODUCT

Art making is a form of human development, at any age, and it works its agency through the shifting of what an individual perceives as possible. As long as there is possibility, there is hope; in its absence, there is only despair. The sense of the possibility, complexity, and essential mystery of the world is what keeps the soul engaged with reality. Art is a quickening of the soul.
—Jaime Permuth, photographer, faculty member at the School for Visual Arts in New York City, and teaching artist

Teaching artists sometimes struggle with the question of how to balance concerns for process and for product in working with elders, especially those with physical or cognitive disabilities. The issue becomes especially relevant when arts engagement with elders is described as being “about the process,” a phrase that can be interpreted to mean that older adults should not be burdened with unrealistic expectations that they will produce work that has artistic merit.
THE POWER OF CREATING

While older adults benefit from engaging in expressive activities without undue pressure to produce an “ideal” product, what must not be forgotten is the power of creating.

As human beings, we are born with the desire to create. Fulfilling this natural impulse gives elders a sense of being whole. This by itself contributes to their well-being. Taking part in the creation of artistic work can have a profound effect on the person who has made it, especially if they are an “unlikely” artist. The act of making an authentic “mark” that is embraced for its inherent beauty can free an individual’s creativity in a way that changes their life.7

Producing even one piece of work that has authenticity and artistry can change the way elders see themselves as they rewrite their mental story about what they can accomplish in the world. The creation of work like this can also change the way others view the older artist, and, as a result, help reshape the elder’s life and even the community. Every older adult should have an opportunity to experience these things.

PROCESS AND PRODUCT

Rather than asking whether arts engagement with older adults should focus on the process or the product, we can acknowledge that in the arts, process and product are inseparable. Furthermore, when a teaching artist brings artistic and teaching skills, courage, and openness about the process to the table, it is not necessary to choose between the quality of the product and the quality of engagement.8 Instead, we can ask a different set of questions:

- **How can we define (or redefine) artistic success so that elders can achieve it and recognize it when they do?** If the only beautiful product in a visual arts class looks like a realistic painting of a landscape, it limits the creative and technical possibilities for participants. Does the product that you envision for older adults have one right look or sound, or does it allow people to find an expression for their “mark”9 and their community aesthetic10 through the medium of your art form?

- **How can we design and implement processes that allow elders to produce solid work and have opportunities for self-discovery and growth?** Approaching the artistic process so that older adults of all abilities can create meaningful work and—just as importantly—can open themselves up to possibilities beyond their perceived limitations takes thought, experimentation, and a willingness in the teaching artist to step out of their own artistic comfort zone.11 Breaking down the elements of the artistic process so that a range of participants can access it takes imagination and a deep understanding of one’s craft. In the best case, participants are freed from copying the teaching artist’s style, making room for their unique expression.12

- **How can we present what older artists have produced so that its beauty and integrity is apparent to them and to others?** The use of professional materials, techniques, and standards should extend to the presentation of artistic work by older artists. This has an especially strong impact in settings where it is unexpected, such as long-term care facilities. In approaching presentation, ask
LESSON 10: Planning a Workshop for Adults with Cognitive Disabilities

...yourself: Would I like my own work to be presented in this way? If not, what needs to change to make the presentation stronger aesthetically, more appealing, or more professional?

Moving toward the answers to these questions is essential to the work of the teaching artist who works with older adults. It is joyful yet demanding. Drawing on artistic mastery, teaching skills, and an intention to cultivate the unique artistic voice of each person, teaching artists continue to discover what is possible. Those who succeed in uncovering a way forward typically learn much about it from their participants. Elders offer information about how they can be engaged as creators if one is tuned into their cues and willing to listen. Finding a way to hear them and respond is a process to which teaching artists must be dedicated. In this way, working with older adults is indeed about the process. Giving older adults the opportunity to make something that truly reflects their capacity as artists and human beings is a creative—and ongoing—collaboration with substantial rewards.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

How do you want to approach process and product in working with older adults? Have you found this section provocative, inspiring, or affirming? Why? How might it relate to the workshop you have been thinking about in this lesson or one you would like to develop?
LESSON 10 SUMMARY

“Planning a Workshop for Adults with Cognitive Disabilities” discussed adapting your work for a variety of groups and shared an improvisational method of working that is responsive to participants in the moment. In addition, this lesson explored the balance of process and product in working with older adults and presented two new feedback processes.

CHECK-IN: LESSON 10 GOALS

- Understand how to adapt your work for a variety of participants
- Plan and sequence a workshop for older adults with cognitive disabilities
- Have a familiarity with using improvisational methods for making art with older adults
- Use a variety of feedback processes in arts workshops

LESSON 10 NOTES

1. Shiraishi, practicum report.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Opening Minds through Art (OMA). Content for “Planning Lessons for Older Adults with Cognitive Disabilities” provided courtesy of OMA and used with permission.
5. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
LESSON 10: Planning a Workshop for Adults with Cognitive Disabilities
MacPhail Music for Life™ is a participatory, lifelong learning program that engages adults 55 and older through music at adult day programs, senior residences, and respite care programs in the Greater Twin Cities area of Minnesota. Its classes offer a variety of participatory musical activities—such as singing, playing percussion instruments, storytelling, improvisation, and movement—that create an environment that promotes wellness, community building, and artistic and personal growth.

The MacPhail Music for Life™ program was co-founded in 2008 by MacPhail Center for Music and Jeanie Brindley-Barnett, a musician, vocalist, composer, and teaching artist with MacPhail. The program now has seven teaching artists, several of whom are also music therapists, and serves 18 community partnership sites, with elders of all abilities participating in weekly sessions.

One of these partnership sites is Lyngblomsten, a continuing care retirement community in St. Paul. Its MacPhail Music for Life™ class is typically attended by about 18 older adults who reside in assisted living and skilled nursing settings and have a variety of mobility and cognitive disabilities. Each class is carefully sequenced and scaffolded to allow participants to move from easier activities to more challenging ones. The following class description illustrates this.

MACPHAIL MUSIC FOR LIFE™ CLASS AT LYNGBLOMSTEN, FEBRUARY 15, 2013 (60 MINUTES)

**Teaching artists:** MacPhail teaching artist Jeanie Brindley-Barnett and MacPhail teaching assistant Jeanne Bayer. Two Lyngblomsten staff people were also present to participate and assist students during the class.

The creative environment: The class was held in the chapel, a well-lighted and spacious room, with people in chairs and wheelchairs arranged in two rows in a semi-circle facing the piano. The chapel provided a quiet, focused space, especially since participants and instructors gathered at the end that was farthest from the hallway. The teaching artists greeted participants by name before the session started. Both teaching artists used handheld microphones throughout the session to ensure that participants could hear them during the class.
MACPHAIL MUSIC FOR LIFE™ CLASS

1. Warm-ups

   a. Warm-up A: “Yoo-Hoo.” Following Jeanie, the group did a “Yoo-Hoo” greeting several times together, then each participant had a chance to do their own version. They were encouraged to wave as they vocalized, and many did so. Movement like this helps increase the heart rate and warms up muscles. As a rule, Jeanie reminds participants to do movements if they can; if not, she suggests that they imagine doing the movement so that the nervous system still gets the benefit.

   From the beginning, participants were learning musical concepts. During the warm-up, one participant drew her “Yoo-Hoo” out into a melody, and Jeanie went to the piano and turned the notes into a song. She pointed out the A and F sharp chords in it. She also introduced the term “resonance” in complimenting the beauty of another participant’s voice.

   b. Warm-up B: “B-R-E-A-T-H.” The teaching artists demonstrated correct abdominal breathing technique (“get fat, get flat”), and participants adjusted their posture and breathing while they chanted the letters “B-R-E-A-T-H.” They added a movement component by raising and lowering their arms in time with their breathing.

   c. Warm-up C: Greeting. Each participant sang their name, for example, “My name’s Carol,” and the others responded by singing, “Hello, Carol.” People were encouraged to wave as they were greeting one another.

2. Guest introductions. Jeanie introduced two guests to the participants, including a music therapist from MacPhail Center for Music. When the music therapist mentioned that she had started singing as a child at barn dances, Jeanie asked participants about whether they had attended barn dances, and they responded with raised arms and comments about their experiences.

3. Singing. In keeping with a theme about love, the teaching artists passed out large-print lyric sheets for Elvis Presley’s “Love Me Tender.” Jeanie explained the folk origins of the melody that Elvis used, and they sang together. At intervals, Jeanie reminded participants which verse they were singing, while Jeanne roamed the space with a microphone, letting various participants sing into it.

4. Playing/moving. Participants received two rhythm sticks, one ribbed and one smooth. Jeanie led them in examining the sticks and talked about how the ribbing came from a Latin American instrument known as a guiro. She used metaphors of grating carrots and sharpening a knife to help participants understand how to rub the sticks together to make sounds. The participants did a down-up-up rhythm, accompanied by the piano, then played a cha-cha-cha rhythm and added foot movements. After this, participants were given a chance to improvise and contribute a “fill,” a rhythmic solo phrase played during pauses in the piano.
accompaniment. Jeanie explained that they had total creative freedom in that moment; she led them in repeating, “There is no wrong in this room.”

5. **Singing/moving.** Participants received a large-print lyric sheet for “Red Roses for a Blue Lady” by Wayne Newton. Since the lyrics of the verses were not familiar to people, Jeanne read them to the group, then participants read them aloud together. Following that, participants sang the chorus, and Jeanie talked about the two-step rhythm of the song. Participants added a swaying two-step motion as they sang the chorus two more times.

6. **Singing.** Participants played “Name That Tune” as Jeanie played melodies on the piano. When someone guessed a song correctly, Jeanie performed a short version of it. She used the songs to draw participants into a discussion about how many of them had owned LP albums. Then participants provided the hints for “Name That Tune” by thinking of a song with the word “love” in the title and singing the melody without words. Finally, they played “Name That Tune” by suggesting hymns that had “love” in their titles and humming them. Participants thought of “Jesus Loves Me” and “I Love to Tell the Story.”

7. **Singing.** Participants received candy hearts with romantic phrases on them (such as “good for me” or “hug me”) and vocalized their phrases as “licks” or “riffs” accompanied by jazz music.

8. **Closing.** The group sang the last verse of “Love Me Tender” again. Then they sang “Good-bye, Everybody” to each person by name. As participants were leaving, Jeanie and Jeanne said good-bye to them and then spent time talking with a new participant and learning that he was a former minister and music education major.

Throughout the class, both Jeanie and Jeanne balanced the roles of artist/performer and educator, bringing a lively energy and high level of artistry to the session while helping participants gain musical knowledge and skills in a supportive environment.

**MAKING YOUR SESSION PLAN WORK FOR YOUR PARTICIPANTS**

Many teaching artists work with older adults in a variety of settings, ranging from senior centers and independent living apartment complexes to day programs and long-term care residences. As they move from setting to setting, teaching artists must develop their session plans to meet the needs of participants with an array of personal and artistic goals, physical and cognitive abilities, and backgrounds. This involves considerations about content, pace, environment, amount of support needed, and collaboration with staff and caregivers.

**AT A DAY PROGRAM**

MacPhail Music for Life™ sessions are offered by MacPhail Center for Music to older adults of all abilities. While the basic purpose and structure of the classes in each setting is to enhance the well-being of participants through music, adjustments are made for participants at each site, as well as for environmental factors. For example, in day program
settings, which are often set up to feel like a home environment, there is typically less space for arts activities. Noise from buzzers on security doors can be distracting. Participants may be reclining rather than sitting up, and this can make it harder for them to vocalize. In response to these challenges and the needs of participants with physical and cognitive disabilities, Jeanie Brindley-Barnett slows down the pace of the class. Participants follow along more. Repetition becomes crucial. Staff involvement is essential, so Jeanie works with day program sites to make sure staff are engaged during classes rather than watching from another room or taking a break.

WITH INDEPENDENT OLDER ADULTS

In contrast, independent older adults, whether in retirement communities or senior centers, typically attend sessions by themselves rather than with a staff member, and they require little, if any, assistance from staff during classes. It is possible to lengthen class time as well as the time spent on each portion of class because participants have more energy and endurance. The pace and difficulty of some activities can increase, with students covering more ground in a given activity. For example, Music for Life participants who are more active may be able to handle more vigorous movement or greater movement variety, offer up additional songs during a “Guess That Tune” activity, or get more engaged in sharing personal stories.

While original songs can be created with participants in any setting, the length and pace of classes with independent elders allows more time for composition. This works best with smaller groups. When creating a song with a group, Jeanie expands the class plan to add a composition section, while keeping class time balanced between that and other activities. Participants build the song little by little in multiple sessions as they generate lyrics, rhythm, and melody, which Jeanie notates and arranges.

In each environment and each class, Jeanie—and any teaching artist—has to be prepared to respond to what is happening in the moment. Lesson plans provide an important structure for classes and facilitate communication between the teaching artist and the host organization, but experienced teaching artists know that the best-laid plans sometimes need to be modified. A good relationship with staff, a strong grasp of the art form and its elements, an ability to improvise, and a repertoire of back-up activities will serve teaching artists well as they navigate the realities of working with older adults.
LESSON 11: Creating a Space for Creativity

GOALS

1. Understand the importance of rituals in the classroom
2. Learn exercises for increasing comfort, creativity and expression

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What rituals do you already maintain in your personal practice?
How did these rituals come about?
Why do you have them?

MAKING A SPACE FOR CREATIVITY

An effective arts workshop for older adults begins before participants pick up a brush or sing a note. The art space—and how participants enter and leave it—is an important element in the arts engagement experience. If a workshop is taking place in an art studio, a dance studio, a theater, or any designated art space, the space itself and its materials will communicate that it is a space set apart for artistic work and creativity. While this is ideal, it is not always available when working in community or institutional settings, where arts programs may take place in dining rooms, lobbies, or multi-use spaces.

In those situations, the way the space is arranged and the materials and equipment brought into the space by the teaching artist do a great deal to help set the atmosphere. Arranging chairs in a circle or a “U” shape, displaying art work or tools for art-making, and playing music as participants enter are techniques that teaching artists use to prepare the ground for interaction and creativity. Care should also be taken to ensure that the space is physically welcoming and accessible, with sufficient seating and space for wheelchairs and walkers.

Entrance into the creative space can be symbolic. For instance, it may be marked by clothing changes for participants, such as putting on an apron for painting or removing shoes in a dance studio. It can also be signified with simple routines, such as signing in on a whiteboard or forming a circle at the beginning of each session.

Even the language used to describe participants and their activities matters. If elders are called “artists,” “dancers,” or “singers” once they enter the space, they are more likely to see themselves as creative and feel that the workshop space is a welcoming environment for their creativity. Preserving this sense of a special creative space happens as the participants depart as well as when they enter. Putting away supplies, taking off an apron, or giving a final round of applause can all be routines that signal a transition back into everyday life from the creative realm.
LESSON 11: Creating a Space for Creativity

Whether it is physical or symbolic, an environment that has a special feeling of creativity will encourage participation and enhance the arts participation experience for the older adults involved.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

How would you (or do you) create a space that invites participation and creativity in older adults? What would you (or do you) do to make it feel special?

ARTS ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE: OPENING AND CLOSING RITUALS

Opening and closing rituals are a standard part of Taiko drumming classes. Taiko, meaning “big drum” in Japanese, is a Japanese style of ensemble drumming featuring large drums, expansive movements, and vigorous vocal sounds.

The following opening and closing rituals and adaptations for older adults have been provided by Iris Shiraishi, teaching artist and artistic director for Mu Daiko, a Taiko drumming ensemble of Mu Performing Arts in Minneapolis.¹ Her classes include a significant and growing number of students over the age of 50, many of whom have been studying Taiko for five to ten years. As these students age, Iris has made modifications to increase their successful participation while still maintaining high performance standards and expectations.

TAIKO OPENING RITUAL

For a typical Taiko class, participants are expected to warm up and stretch on their own before the start of class. All students bow at the threshold of the studio in formal greeting and know to leave outside whatever distractions they may bring with them that day. When participants are on the floor and ready to begin, the students and teacher bow to each other, saying the Japanese aisatsu (“greeting”): Yoroshiku onegai shimasu (“Please help/teach me today”).

Modifications for older adults:

- Iris leads participants through one or two exercises based on the Alexander Technique, which is “a way of learning to move mindfully through life.”² These simple exercises are as much about developing awareness of muscle tension and alignment as they are about warming up the body.
- Students are asked, if they feel comfortable and safe, to close their eyes and allow themselves to be fully present in their bodies and in the studio for anywhere from two to three minutes. This may be done in a semi-supine position or simply standing with their peers in a circle. They are asked to be aware of their breathing and to observe (and not judge) any unnecessary tension they may be holding in any part of their bodies.³
TAIKO CLOSING RITUAL

At the end of class, the drums are placed to the sides of the studio, and participants gather in a circle. They bow to each other and the teacher and say, *Domo arigato gozaimashita* (“Thank you very much”).

**Modifications for older adults:**

- Iris reviews orally everything done in class that day, with special emphasis on particularly challenging parts of an exercise or a new piece. There is always a homework practice assignment, for example, “Please use a metronome and practice shifting easily from eighth notes to triplets.”
- Even as the next class is entering, participants are encouraged to take a few moments to stretch and hydrate before leaving the studio.⁴

Opening and closing rituals are also employed by two of the programs featured in previous lessons. Teaching artist Jeanie Brindley-Barnett of MacPhail Center for Music opens and closes her MacPhail Music for Life™ classes with songs that use participants’ names. And participants in visual arts workshops led by Opening Minds through Art (OMA) sing a familiar song together at the beginning and end of each workshop.

Simple routines, such as bowing to one another or singing together, can be integrated into workshops in any art form and adapted for older adults of varying abilities. To be effective, rituals like these should be simple and easy to do, inclusive, and done consistently. In this way, the teaching artist can create a sense of structure, bonding, and trust in participants that helps them succeed and enriches their experience.

---

**REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

What ritual or routine might you use to open the workshop you have been developing in this lesson?

How might you carry this ritual through at the end of the session?

**ARTS ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE: GETTING ORIENTED TO AN INSTRUMENT**

A tried and true method of easing participants into arts activities is to spend time familiarizing them with instruments, tools, or materials they will be using during their workshops. This works well with older adults, especially those who may be coming to an art form for the first time in their lives.

Becoming familiar with the design of a digital camera, the feel of a charcoal stick, or the look of notes on a page provides a sense of comfort and control that translates into greater confidence and willingness to experiment. An orientation exercise like this gives participants an opportunity to ask questions, begin making discoveries that feed their creativity, and develop a connection to their instruments, tools, or materials. It also helps break down barriers between the participants and the teaching artist—easing the
paralyzing belief that the teaching artist is the expert and the student has nothing to offer—as they come to share a common knowledge about their craft.

LOOK, SEE, AND FEEL

In the example of the MacPhail Music for Life™ class, participants were led through such an exercise when they received rhythm sticks. They held the sticks to feel their weight. They noticed that the sticks were made of wood, with one ribbed and one smooth. They tested the feeling of hitting them against each other and learned what sounds were created by striking or rubbing them together. Jeanie Brindley-Barnett used everyday images—grating carrots, sharpening knives—to explain how to use the sticks. Only after everyone was oriented to the instruments did they move on to making music together with the sticks.

A look, see, and feel exercise can be carried out in any art form or medium. For example, a ceramic artist might give elders a small ball of clay and ask them to start by noticing its color and texture. The teaching artist might share the origin of the clay or point out the moisture in the clay and talk about why it is important. They might then ask participants to notice the sensation of the clay against their skin and have them roll it between their hands to find out how the clay responds. Participants might be reminded of bread dough, which, like clay, has a distinctive scent and responds similarly to touch.

The same approach can be taken when the instruments are the body and the voice. Dancers can start a session by having elders tune into their bodies and their breath, noticing where tension is held and feeling the sensation of the body making contact with the floor or the chair. Participants might be invited to imagine the spine lengthening and extending, like a tree with branches reaching into the sky and roots growing downward. Elders in a theater workshop might experiment with the voice and how it can be “thrown” into space like a ball.

If carried out in a spirit of playfulness, an orientation exercise helps set a tone of experimentation and non-judgment. Adding imagery activates the imagination. It also allows older adults to make associations by drawing on their life experience and finding familiar ground in what may seem at first to be strange territory. With a little thought and preparation, this exercise is almost guaranteed to produce positive results. It is a dependable tool that can be incorporated into every teaching artist’s repertoire.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Thinking of an instrument or tool that participants would use in the workshop you have been developing in this lesson, how would you familiarize them with it? How might you use imagery or metaphor to enliven this orientation? If this does not apply to the session you have been developing, think of an instrument or tool that participants might regularly use.
CASE STUDY: BEGINNER’S MIND

An important skill in facilitating arts workshops is finding a way to invite everyone in the room into the process. This can be challenging when working with older adults and their caregivers, but it can offer deeply positive benefits.

Eva Mantell, a multi-media artist and lead instructor at the Arts Council of Princeton in Princeton, New Jersey, has designed Art for Caregivers, a program that trains family and professional caregivers to bring creativity, spontaneity, and new forms of expression into the care relationship. Eva’s work in this realm springs from a motivation to create something positive and healing from her own experiences with the loss of her two older brothers to cancer as young men. For her, creativity and optimism go hand in hand. She has found in art a way to move forward and hopes to share that with others.5

Her approach is simple and profoundly inviting. When someone—anyone—enters the room, they will be doing art. Art is not limited to “artists” or even to those designated as “participants.” Instead, art is open to everyone and each person’s perspective is valuable. Everyone is welcome at the table.

Eva’s methods for making art invite older adults and caregivers to explore the possibilities of what materials can do and to court surprise. Eva engages in the projects along with participants, adopting a “beginner’s mind.” This allows her to tap into curiosity to push the process along. What will happen if one color mixes with another? What will it look like if I rub color from this sheet onto that piece of paper? As older people and caregivers experiment, the materials can begin to welcome them. The process is not about representation and making literal forms or about drawing skills. It is not personal. Rather, it is about the materials on the table and the way that individuals interact with them.

This approach works well with the techniques that Eva uses, such as printmaking, collage, drawing, and sculpture. These techniques allow for an open-ended process with structured steps. As a workshop unfolds, participants are given permission to take the steps slowly. There is no expectation that anyone will get past step one and no need to do so. Because the focus is on exploring the materials, each step holds its own discoveries that are meaningful.

LEARNING TO SEE DIFFERENTLY

However, older adults and caregivers alike often become absorbed in the process, and one step leads to another. Classes begin by looking at art history books or exhibition catalogs and having a conversation about what individuals notice. Then older adults and caregivers work on their own, in pairs, or in small groups on a project that is inspired by the art from the books.

A print-making process may begin with simply applying color to an acetate sheet. Then the sheet is rubbed on paper to make a print. Now there is a mark to see, and people can start to talk about it. Everyone is welcome to talk, to tell about what they see, to describe. Someone might say, “I see a green square.”
LESSON 11: Creating a Space for Creativity

To encourage storytelling and personal connections to the work, Eva may ask a follow-up question that allows for reflection without being prying. In response to the mention of the green square, she might say, "It makes me think of the sun on the grass when I was a child. Once we were letting balloons go in a contest to see whose would go the farthest. I was looking at a Polaroid photo of that just the other day. Maybe you can connect to a time when you remember the grass and the sunshine..." Letting that statement hang in the air may inspire a few reminiscences. She endeavors to keep these conversations open-ended and natural, with the art as a jumping-off point.

With Eva’s method, everyone can make a mark that someone at the table will see, acknowledge, and affirm. As this happens, participants have a shared experience of surprise and reflection. Many caregivers, both family and professional, are not in the habit of thinking of their own needs, so the experience of having their thoughts and responses solicited and taken seriously is somewhat new. Telling the stories that emerge and listening to them becomes a big part of the class. The stories do the work of gradually helping older adults and caregivers see differently. They have come to the table as artistic “outsiders,” and instead of failing at art, they have offered one another a new way to see.

Caregivers often express surprise about their work in class, making remarks such as “I didn’t know I could do this,” or “I wasn’t expecting to participate, but I’m going to frame this!” Occasionally someone will admit, “You know, I’m not really in this class to care for someone else. I’m here to care for myself.”

Eva’s favorite comment came during a printmaking class, when she revealed the result of a print. A man who had had a stroke said simply, “WOW.” His daughter, who cares for him and had told Eva how frustrated her father is throughout the day, just smiled at this. The two took this print, and many more, home to share with their family. In the spirit of this class, they shared many more smiles and even a few more “wows.”

KEEPING CAREGIVERS INVOLVED

Despite the welcoming atmosphere of Eva’s classes, a caregiver will occasionally express reluctance about sitting down at the table to make art. When this happens, Eva tries to persuade the caregiver that their companion will feel more comfortable if the caregiver does the project along with them. This often has the desired effect, as the caregiver begins to see immediately that the class is not about judging their ability as an artist.

If the caregiver continues to hesitate, Eva may offer art history books for them to peruse and let them talk about what they are noticing. As she welcomes their comments, they are sometimes drawn to experimenting based on what they have seen in the books. For example, they might decide to see what happens with watercolors when two colors they have noticed are put next to each other.

The most essential thing for Eva is that each person makes their own journey with the materials and the process. She never does projects—or pieces of projects—for older adults or caregivers. By allowing them to find their way, the art is better. Their work is more subtle and more diverse than it would be if she took over.
After each series of workshops, older adults and caregivers have the opportunity to display their work in the classroom, which is used by many classes at the Arts Council of Princeton. They also have the option to present their work in the Arts Council gallery in an annual public exhibition that has received attention from the media. Participants who have displayed their work at the exhibition have found themselves pleased to be part of a much larger conversation than they ever imagined. For them, the presentation of their work has continued the process of surprise and discovery that began in the studio.

The effects of the workshop ripple into the home lives of older adults and their caregivers as well. Eva’s lessons are very practical and designed to be put to use right away. Caregivers tell Eva that they have used the lessons and have begun to see that there is a lot that can happen in the long hours between meals that has nothing to do with doctor’s appointments or medications. When she hears that care partners have gotten a set of watercolors and some paper and that both of them have enjoyed experimenting, she feels that her class has been successful.

**ARTS ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE: BEGINNER’S MIND**

Teaching artists have an unparalleled opportunity—and, some might say, responsibility—to help older adults learn to trust their innate capacity to see and talk about art. As that happens, older people begin to feel like “insiders,” and their confidence in their ability to make meaningful works of art grows.

Eva’s sharing and discussion process for her arts workshops, which reflects the “beginner’s mind” openness of her approach to materials, offers a blueprint for developing this confidence in older adults:

- **Start** by creating the understanding that there are no wrong answers. The teaching artist can state this explicitly or communicate it by modeling.

- **Make** it clear that everyone in the room has a contribution to make. Clear a space for sharing and discussion that will allow everyone to participate in the conversation. If necessary, ask individuals to stop working for a moment to view others’ art and comment.

- **Ask** participants to say what they notice about the art work being shared. This is different from asking what they like or what they think about the work; it keeps judgment out of the conversation. It also lowers the intimidation factor in talking about art. While not everyone feels comfortable making statements about a work of art, everyone can notice something.

- **Allow** participants to make associations with what they have noticed. A color or a shape may prompt a recollection, an observation about the world, or a personal revelation. This is part of the process of discovery and making meaning that the group engages in together.

- **Notice** commonalities. The teaching artist may notice commonalities in the stories that emerge in the sharing process and wish to check in with the group to see if they have resonance for the group members.
LESSON 11: Creating a Space for Creativity

• The process is finished when everyone has had a chance to contribute to the conversation. The teaching artist can mention things they have seen in a new way and point out connections between pieces. Close by thanking everyone for joining in and contributing and by affirming their contributions.

This process can happen spontaneously during workshops or during a structured time at the end that is set aside for sharing. It fosters a sense of openness and non-judgment in participants and gives them permission to find value in even their first attempts at art. It is a tool that can be a useful part of any teaching artist’s repertoire.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

How is this process of seeing art similar to or different from the way you normally talk about art with your workshop participants?

What about it, if anything, might you try with your participants?
LESSON 11 SUMMARY

“Creating a Space for Creativity” discussed methods for making the classroom environment ritualistic, reverent and creative. You learned several opening and closing rituals and thought about approaches to rituals in your own practice.

CHECK-IN: LEARNING GOALS

- Understand the importance of rituals in the classroom
- Learn exercises for increasing comfort, creativity and expression

LESSON 11 NOTES

1. Iris Shiraishi (Artistic Director, Mu Daiko), practicum report for ARTSAGE Arts and Aging Minnesota Professional Development Initiative, February 13, 2013. Contents of the Taiko opening and closing rituals provided courtesy of Iris Shiraishi and used with permission.
4. Ibid.
5. Eva Mantell, interview with author, February 28, 2013. Content for “Case Study: Beginner’s Mind” provided courtesy of Eva Mantell and used with permission.
6. Mantell. Content for “Arts Engagement Exercise: Beginner’s Mind” provided courtesy of Eva Mantell and used with permission.
LESSON 11: Creating a Space for Creativity
LESSON 12: Exercises, Activities and Case Studies

GOALS

1. Learn arts exercises to use in a variety of workshop settings
2. Understand the importance of movement in workshops for older adults
3. Lead several closing exercises for workshops or programs
4. Recognize best practices in action based on case studies

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

How do you design a workshop so that there is room for improvisation, going with the flow, etc.?

As a teaching artist, how comfortable are you without using formal structure in your teaching?

How comfortable are with leading formally structured exercises?

WARM-UPS

Many older adults find their way to the arts for the first time in later life or decide to try a new art form. Individuals attempting a new form of expression may feel vulnerable and sometimes reluctant to take risks or reveal themselves, especially if surrounded by unfamiliar faces. They are often unsure about what to expect from a class, its leader, the group, and the process.

Warm-up exercises, also known as "icebreakers," are valuable when facilitating arts experiences with groups of older adults. In addition to helping people get acquainted and feel comfortable with one another and the teaching artist, these exercises serve several other important purposes:

- helping participants become present and focused on the activities at hand
- orienting participants to the theme or activities of the day
- helping participants shift into a more relaxed, creative mindset
- serving as building blocks in skill development
- allowing the teaching artist to "take the temperature" of the room and gauge the skills and abilities of the participants

Susan Perlstein explains it this way: "Individuals arrive preoccupied with different thoughts and feelings. We need to channel these disparate energies into a unified group. This process of 'centering'—moving from the world of daily activities into a creative world—enables people to experience heightened states of receptivity, spontaneity, and
imagination. Warm-ups awaken the senses and unlock memories, preparing the group to become involved in creative expression.¹

Warm-up exercises can range from simple conversation and gentle movement to more vigorous or creative activities, depending on the nature and needs of the group. They can be carried out in various group structures, including pairs, small groups, and as a whole group. Before starting a warm-up, especially with new groups, it is recommended to encourage older adults to participate safely and at their personal comfort level.

SOUND AND MOVEMENT WARM-UPS

Sound and movement exercises are theater staples. They are wonderful for simultaneously warming up the voice and the body, as well as for expressing moods. They are also a terrific way to mobilize energy and imagination.²

The Name Game

A common warm-up exercise for new groups is to gather in a circle and ask each person to say their name with a gesture or movement. The rest of the group then repeats the name and gesture.

The following are several ways used by Elders Share the Arts in Brooklyn, New York, to structure a sound and movement exercise such as this.

Working in Unison

The simplest form of this exercise is to ask the group to repeat each gesture and sound in unison. Starting with this simple structure is recommended for two reasons. First, especially in new groups, some participants are most comfortable doing voice and body work in unison. Second, this basic exercise builds a solid foundation for exploring other sound and movement structures in subsequent workshops.

Passing Around

A slightly more advanced structure is to pass one sound and movement around the circle so that everyone does it individually. Repeat this until every participant has offered a sound and movement that has been passed around the circle. This is a good variation for honing the group’s observational skills and for building the group’s ability to work together.

A more advanced variation is to allow participants to pass their sound and movement to anyone in the circle. This is a good option for groups that are already comfortable with the basic sound and movement structure and are ready for a challenge.

Making a Chain

Sounds and movements can be passed in a “chain,” such that the first participant makes their own sound and movement, the second makes the first and then their own, the third makes the first, the second, and then their own, etc.

Experimentation

An advanced variation is to encourage participants to experiment with the sound and gesture that is passed to them, to find a way to change it, and then to pass the new sound and movement on.
This option works best with those who have developed some confidence with sound and movement in their own bodies and in groups that have developed a supportive, trusting environment that encourages experimentation.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

How might you adapt or extend the Name Game using your art form?

Is there a “passing” exercise that you could use in your workshops to allow participants to build on the work that another participant starts?

ALZHEIMER’S POETRY PROJECT CALL AND RESPONSE TECHNIQUE

This section describes a call and response technique using poetry that is an easy, yet powerful way to draw older adults in and give them space to participate at the beginning of a workshop. This technique was developed by Gary Glazner, founder of the award-winning Alzheimer’s Poetry Project (APP), and the content in this section is provided by APP.

The call and response pattern feels familiar and culturally comfortable to people, as it is found in religious ceremonies throughout the world and embedded in many American music forms, especially gospel, blues, and jazz. Because participants are following along in unison, it is inherently low-risk. Relying on echoic memory—just the amount it takes to repeat a short phrase—it offers adults with a wide range of abilities, including those with cognitive disabilities, an opportunity to participate and succeed.

While call and response is a core technique for APP workshops, it can be used effectively as a warm-up exercise by teaching artists in any art form to set the stage for creative engagement. With a lively delivery, a session leader can easily raise the energy level of the group while involving participants in poetry as a participatory art in a way that has been proven to slow the heart rate and therefore relax the body.

THE APP CALL AND RESPONSE TECHNIQUE

• The session leader chooses several lines of poetry, either a short poem or an excerpt that can stand alone. Lines should be about four to eight seconds long. Rhyming couplets work well, such as the ending of Sonnet 18 by William Shakespeare:

  So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
  So long lives this and this gives life to thee.

• The session leader recites the lines one at a time, inviting participants to repeat each line in turn.

People respond eagerly to poems that are familiar or humorous, especially when the leader selects the most memorable lines. Some of the poems that receive the strongest response during APP sessions are “Tyger” (William Blake), “Rattlesnake Meat” (Ogden Nash), and “Daffodil” (William Wordsworth). A list of recommended poems is available at www.alzpoetry.com/book.
Recitation Tips

These tips can help the call and response session flow smoothly:

- **Recite in a circle.** A circle allows the session leader to get close to individuals, and it can enhance the energy in the room as participants see one another smiling and laughing. If the space does not allow participants to form a circle, try to find a shape, like a crescent, that will still allow you physical proximity to individuals and give them the ability to watch their peers.

- **Give the group instructions before starting, but keep them simple.** “I’m going to say a line of poetry. You repeat after me.” Cue the group with gestures: point to yourself and then to the group. Typically participants catch on right away.

- **Stay quiet as the group responds.** Avoid the temptation to repeat the line you have just uttered. Make space for participants to find their voices. If participants need encouragement, recruit staff or a passing administrator to recite with them.

- **Repetition, repetition, repetition.** There is no need to hurry from one line of the poem to the next. Allow the group to savor the poem by reciting each line two or three times as the poem builds. Use your judgment—you can vary your delivery, emphasizing some lines through repetition and not others. If it is appropriate for the group, end with a final recitation without repetition.

- **Memorize if you can.** It will be easiest to engage participants if you can recite lines from memory while maintaining eye contact. If you need to read, look up after each line, and see if you can have the lines memorized by the second or third repetition.

Delivery Skills

While a familiarity with poetry can be an asset in leading this technique, teaching artists need not be poets to do it. Many of the people who learn it are not poets or performers, but health care workers and caregivers.

A key to being a successful session leader is the delivery of the lines. The leader needs to recite them loudly enough to be heard by everyone in the room. They should be spoken at a speed that is not too fast to follow but that maintains the poem’s rhythm. It is important to articulate words well—this will be especially helpful for older adults who are hard of hearing. A smile and lively energy will be likely to enliven participants as well. Teaching artists should practice to develop fluidity; reciting poetry to music is an easy way to build this skill.

Adapting the Technique for Your Group

The APP call and response technique can be effective with older adults with all levels of physical and cognitive abilities. Even those with significant cognitive disabilities can be successful. For those who are losing language and are comfortable with touch, the session leader can go to them, kneel down, and recite while moving their hand to the rhythm. It is best to orient them to what is happening by saying a phrase like, “I’m going to recite the poem and move your hand to the rhythm.” Often engaging a person this way elicits a positive response—they may start to move their lips, smile, or brighten in the eyes. However, if the participant exhibits any signs of discomfort, the leader should stop the touch and move on without embarrassing them.
Teaching artists can adapt a poetry call and response to their purposes with a little imagination. Opening a session with a poem can be an inspiration for the day’s work in any art form. Poems can be selected that reflect the day’s theme or offer content to which older adults can respond in their art work.

The technique can also be used to perform original content that is created during a session. For example, it can be used to perform a story the group creates or to make a poem from comments about artwork observed during the session. Call and response can also be used with movement or music as the focus rather than poetry.

Once participants are familiar with the technique, and if it is appropriate for the group, the teaching artist can invite individuals in the group to lead. With experimentation, this technique can add an element of fun to sessions while encouraging participation from even the shyest individuals.

**REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

How might you use call and response in your workshops with older adults?

**ENGAGEMENT**

**READY, SET, GO!**

One approach to drawing older adults into the creative process is to engage them in making art in a way that hooks them right away and keeps resistance out of the driver’s seat. A timed structure such as the one that Jeff Nachtigall used with Ed can be effective for this purpose because it takes away the space for thinking about what is happening and forces individuals to act. They do the thing they fear the most—and find out that it is doable. In fact, they often find it pleasurable.

Many writers are familiar with timed free writes, an exercise made popular by Natalie Goldberg in Writing Down the Bones. In this activity, individuals have a set time—perhaps two minutes—to write without stopping or pausing. This can push the writer past inner censors and free up the voice. It undams the creative energy, especially when it is repeated.

As Jeff has demonstrated, timed structures can be used in other art forms as well, with sometimes stunning results. Here are several pointers for leading such an exercise with older adults:

- **Set your objectives.** Know what you want your participants to accomplish during the timed activity and communicate that clearly to them. Keep your expectations simple: “You have 30 seconds to make a mark on that paper.” “Write without stopping. If you do not know what to write, keep moving your pencil anyway.”
• Prepare the space and the materials. Jeff chose Ed’s materials carefully. He wanted Ed to make a mark that had impact, and he knew he had limited mobility. He also knew that Ed thought art was for sissies. Jeff chose a large paintbrush for Ed rather than a small pencil that would be hard to hold or a pastel that Ed might have associated with children’s crayons. Knowing that too many choices can overwhelm a new artist, Jeff presented Ed with a can of blue paint. The point of the exercise was mark-making, not color selection.

• Pick a time limit and stick to it. Jeff set a 30-second time limit for Ed and showed him it was real. This forced Ed to adapt and start painting. If Jeff had waffled, Ed would have too. Know your group members and set a time limit that serves the intention of the activity and works with their energy level.

• Do it more than once. Most people, like Ed, need a little time to warm up. Use repetition to build creative energy and freedom. Shorter time limits lend themselves to more repetitions.

• Decide how to respond to what is produced. What is your intention for the timed activity? In Ed’s case, Jeff saw the change in his work and seized the opportunity to have a dialogue that framed his effort as a success. Sometimes it may work best for participants to create without the pressure of sharing, or to open up the floor for optional sharing. You may invite positive responses to what has been shared or ask that the group take in the work silently. Whatever the approach, it is important that the moment feel safe and celebrate the creative impulse.

Timed activities can be an excellent way to give older adults an arena where they are free to make mistakes and to find the deliciousness of their own voice. These exercises are useful tools for the teaching artist who is guiding older people to the beauty of their unique mark.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

How might you use a timed activity to help older adults in your workshops free up their creative energy?

GROUP LEARNING

An important skill in working with older adults is the use of group structures to accomplish objectives. The effective use of these structures enhances learning and participation and allows group members to form new bonds or strengthen existing ones. It also helps keep things interesting for participants by varying the feel of activities and the people with whom they interact.

GROUP STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES

Participants can learn from each other in the whole group, small groups, or pair/triad groupings. Each of these structures and processes serves a specific purpose:

• Group as a whole. Participants bond as a whole group and with facilitator.
LESSON 12: Exercises, Activities and Case Studies

- **Small group exercises.** Participants can practice in a less intimidating environment than the whole group.
- **Pairs and triads.** Participants can deepen understanding and trust.
- **Coaching.** The teaching artist provides one-on-one instruction and encouragement.
- **Demonstration or modeling.** The teaching artist or a participant leads the group in a learning activity.
- **Report-back process.** A representative of a small group reports back to the group as a whole.
- **Feedback process.** Group members give observations to each other about artistic work.\(^8\)

**WHICH ONE IS BEST?**

Teaching artists may find that their artistic medium and engagement process lend themselves better to some structures than others. It is not necessary to use all of the possible structures in a single workshop or at all.

The size and make-up of the group help determine which of the structures should be utilized at a given time. A larger group offers more possibilities than very small groups. A group of three older adults will likely stay working together as a whole, while a group of 10 might split into small groups or pairs to do exercises or offer one another feedback. Older adults with Alzheimer's disease and related neurocognitive disorders are almost always able to participate more fully with one-on-one support but may also be engaged effectively in a whole group or small group structure with carefully designed and executed activities (such as TimeSlips storytelling sessions).\(^9\)

Knowing when to utilize each structure requires clarity about goals, experience with group facilitation, and a feel for the energy and rhythm of the group and the process. For most teaching artists, it is a learning process that requires training and trial and error. It can be helpful to draw on one’s experience as a student and group member and to observe experienced teaching artists at work to understand more about effective choices in the use of group structures.

For an example of the use of group structures in workshops with older adults, consider Eva Mantell’s approach, described previously. It is fluid in its use of group structures, ranging from whole group discussion to individual or pair work, and even including one-on-one coaching. She encourages participants to maintain that fluidity outside of class, as they put to use what they have learned in her workshops, working individually or with one another as appropriate.
LISTENING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

One of the key qualities of an effective facilitator is being a good listener. This can be especially important when working with older adults, who have an urge to share personal stories and a need for social engagement, but who may feel timid about revealing themselves in the setting of a creative workshop.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is an important tool for creating a safe environment for participation. It is also a way to help older people maintain and develop a sense of themselves as artists and contributing members of the community. What characterizes active listening is that the speaker makes “a conscious effort to hear not only the words that another person is saying but, more importantly, tries to understand the complete message being sent.”

This requires that the listener give their full attention to what the speaker is saying (rather than simply waiting to speak) and then provide feedback to the speaker to help clarify the listener’s understanding.

When teaching artists listen actively, they listen less for their own benefit and more to help the speaker discover and honor the meaning of what they are saying. There are several concrete things a teaching artist can do to let older adults in arts workshops know that they are genuinely listening: They can attend completely to what the person is saying. They can show in their eyes and posture that they hear and accept what participants have chosen to share. When participants speak, teaching artists can show a grasp of the central meaning of what they have said by repeating it back to them. The goal here is not to “parrot” back their exact words, but to paraphrase based on the artist’s understanding. This helps participants know that the teaching artist has understood; it also gives participants an opportunity to clarify what the artist has not understood.

LISTENING FOR THE WHOLE STORY

When actively listening, it is important to hear and accept not only participants’ words but their emotions. Emotions are an integral part of personal stories. Listening for the emotional impact of a story helps the teaching artist discover clues about the issues and events that are most significant to the older adult. Sensitivity to the emotional subtext of a story will guide the artist in asking questions which probe beneath the surface of the narrative and help the teller find language and expression for unnamed feelings or experiences.

By developing a capacity for active listening, the teaching artist will help the older adults they work with feel that their stories and feelings have been witnessed and accepted. This will contribute immeasurably to them feeling that they are cared about and valued. The teaching artist will also notice that they benefit from the stories heard, which can be received as gifts, “as a sharing of some precious and vital aspect of the person’s life, as an act of openness and intimacy.”
DEEP LISTENING EXERCISE

Helping participants learn to listen to one another is a good strategy for building group trust. It helps people get to know one another, fosters a feeling of safety, encourages open communication, and helps stories unfold in the art-making process. The teaching artist who is a good listener will serve as a model for participants. The following exercise will also help older adults understand the experience of listening deeply and being deeply listened to.  

This pair-work exercise used by Stuart Kandell, founder of Stagebridge Senior Theatre, works well when participants have a story to tell, such as a personal story that arises in response to a work of art or from a reminiscence exercise (see lessons 7 and 8 for more on reminiscence exercises).

The structure of this exercise is for participants to take turns simply listening to one another, which can be harder than it sounds. Most of us are used to responding verbally as others speak.

This exercise is effective because it allows the speaker to control the flow and direction of their own story. It also offers the speaker a tremendous gift of really being heard, since the listener has no need to think about their next utterance and can give their full attention to the speaker. For their part, listeners often report a profound shift in their understanding of what it means to truly be a listener.

Directions

• Ask participants to find a partner and decide who will speak first.
• Participants take turns sharing their story while their partner listens silently for two minutes. The listener does not make any comments or ask questions. When the speaker pauses, the listener simply waits for the speaker to go on until time is called by the teaching artist.
• If this is the first time participants have done this exercise, the teaching artist may wish to ask them to share comments about their experience as a listener or a speaker.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

How have you encouraged listening in the groups you work with?
How might you use the deep listening exercise with one of your groups (or a group you would like to work with)?

MIRRORING EXERCISE

There are many ways to communicate and to listen. One of these is through non-verbal communication.

Mirroring is a theater game that requires individuals to "listen" to each other and respond non-verbally. It teaches people concentration and observation skills, which help them to develop accurate and believable characterizations. It asks participants to both lead and
follow and requires them to be in the moment with others without knowing what is going to happen. In this way, it helps participants connect and learn trust in one another.

Mirroring exercises can be very effective with intergenerational groups, as older and younger participants take turns being “in charge.” Mirroring can be readily adapted by allowing individuals to vary the level of physical movement involved. It can also be performed by participants who are non-verbal.\(^1\)

The following two versions of a mirroring exercise are used by Stuart Kandell of Stagebridge Senior Theatre.\(^2\)

**Mirroring—Partners**
- Ask participants to stand or sit at arm’s length from a partner without touching.
- One of the partners start as the leader, as decided by the pair. The rest of the exercise is done in silence.
- While maintaining eye contact, the partners move together, with one being the other’s “mirror.” The leader should move slowly enough so that their partner can follow the movements—this is not a game of tricking the partner, but a way to connect.
- After a minute or two, without talking and while continuing to move, the partners should switch roles so that the other person is leading the movement.
- After the exercise, lead participants in reflecting together on what happened and what they noticed in doing the exercise.

**Mirroring—Whole Group**
This exercise is unifying and provides a visceral sense of the group moving together. It can be used with people who do not know each other as a way to “meet” one another in silence before introductions take place.
- Ask participants to observe silence while doing this exercise.
- Choose a leader or ask for a volunteer from the group.
- Standing or sitting in a circle, the entire group follows the leader’s movements in unison. The challenging part of the exercise is that each person keeps their eyes straight ahead. Only the people who are facing the leader will be looking directly at them. Other members should follow the movements by using their peripheral vision.

**REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**
How might you incorporate mirroring exercises into workshops for older adults based on your art form?
Could they be integrated with other elements of your art form?
Could they be used as a way to inspire art making?
IMPORTANCE OF MOVEMENT

Movement is essential for older adults as a part of vital aging. Creative arts activities that engage older people in regular movement help protect and enhance their physical and cognitive well-being and support them as learners.

Regular movement and exercise of both fine motor and gross motor skills enhance the health of the central nervous system, executive function (necessary for initiating action and handling novel tasks and situations), and cognition. They also stimulate the production of growth factors that increase the brain’s ability to resist injury and contribute to improved mental performance. Fortunately, creative activities encourage "chronic" engagement in healthful movement because they are fun, involve social interaction, and produce a fulfilling sense of self-mastery.

Movement plays an important role in stimulating positive brain changes connected to learning. New "baby" brain cells, which are generated through activity and exercise, must be put to work in order to survive. If the brain is challenged by a new activity, it will use the new brain cells to make new connections. Neurogenesis—the birth and survival of new brain cells—requires both physical and cognitive activity.

Creative endeavors, when they involve a component of physical activity, provide a perfect mix of physical and cognitive stimulation that can trigger the two essential components of neurogenesis. The movement brings to life the baby brain cells, while the cognitive stimulation (learning to hold a guitar correctly, coordinating movement with music, rehearsing lines with a partner) promotes utilization and survival of the new brain cells.

This is a good reason to incorporate regular movement into arts workshops with older adults. Adding movement can be as easy as taking a few minutes at the beginning of a workshop to wake up the body by stretching, wiggling, or shaking out the tensions of the day. A simple movement routine can serve as an opening ritual or as a break between activities. Movements should always be geared for the group’s abilities and performed safely and comfortably.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

How is movement—involving either fine motor or gross motor skills—a part of your workshops with older adults?

How is it accompanied by creative activities that provide mental stimulation?
THE BODY PERCUSSION EXERCISE

Body percussion is an easy way to involve older adults in a participatory art form that uses both gross motor and fine motor skills. As older people practice and create rhythms, they move arms, fingers, and toes, enhancing awareness and eye-hand coordination. They increase their proficiency at rhythm-making and improve their observation skills. Doing body percussion is also fun—the playfulness of it is likely to be infectious.

The following exercise, The Body Percussion, was adapted from the game Body Beats by UpBeat Drum Circles. It is provided here by The Beat Goes On, a drumming organization co-led by percussionist and founder Alan Yellowitz and his co-facilitator and business partner Adam Mason. As facilitators trained in the research-based HealthRHYTHMS group drumming protocol, Alan and Adam’s primary focus is on working with older adults. The Beat Goes On currently provides 20 rhythm enrichment and rhythm therapy programs monthly at adult day programs and independent, assisted living, and memory care communities in the Washington, D.C. metro area.

According to Alan, older adults who participate in their drumming programs report feeling energized, empowered, rejuvenated, and enlivened after drumming. Research has suggested that drumming improves concentration, reduces stress, alleviates pain, and boosts the immune system. The brain is "designed to identify music and rhythm patterns readily," and rhythmic activities may help older adults access short- and long-term memory when they cannot do it any other way.

THE BODY PERCUSSION

This exercise is a rhythm game based on six body movements. (Movements can be added or adapted based on the abilities of the participants.)

Snap—snap your fingers.
Whap—smack your belly.
Clap—clap your hands.
Slap—slap your lap.
Tap—tap your toes/foot.
Yap—use your hands as a megaphone and "Yap!"

Begin by having participants place their feet flat on the ground and a hand on their heart. Invite them to feel their heartbeat and connect with their body’s rhythm. Use breathing and stretching to deepen that connection.

- Demonstrate each of the body movements with the group and ask participants to do the movements several times until they become familiar with them.
- Practice as a group by calling out a body movement and having the group say it and play it three times. When “Yap!” is called, have participants take turns saying their name.
LISTEN AND OBSERVE. ASK QUESTIONS: WHAT ARE YOU NOTICING? WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MOVEMENT? WHY?

ASK PARTICIPANTS WHAT THEIR OWN RHYTHM WOULD SOUND LIKE. GIVE THEM TIME TO CREATE A PERSONAL RHYTHM. EXERCISING THEIR CREATIVITY IN THIS WAY PROVIDES MENTAL STIMULATION AS AN ACCOMPANIMENT TO THE MOVEMENT, WHICH, AS DISCUSSED PREVIOUSLY, CAN HELP SUPPORT COGNITIVE WELL-BEING.

HAVE PARTICIPANTS SHARE THEIR RHYTHM WITH A NEIGHBOR AND WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE A DUET.

INVITE INDIVIDUALS OR PAIRS TO SHARE THEIR RHYTHMS WITH THE GROUP.

This exercise can be used to enliven a group at the beginning of a session or as a movement and rhythm break between other activities. Rhythms can be used as an inspiration for the creation of art work in any art form or developed in response to work the group has been doing or observing.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What ideas does this body percussion exercise inspire in you as you think about working with older adults?

How might you use a similar exercise in your art form or play with rhythm in your workshops?

CASE STUDY: IN THE MOMENT MOVEMENT

Margot Greenlee, dancer/choreographer, teaching artist, and founder of Bodywise Dance in Washington, D.C., has been dancing with older adults since 1999. As a company member of the multi-generational Dance Exchange, she shared the studio, stage, and leadership in many community residencies with older adults in the company. Trained in the inclusive yet rigorous methods of Liz Lerman, Margot eschews the typical follow-the-leader style of many dance teachers. Instead, she has developed an approach to working with older adults that is deeply improvisational—it is responsive at its core and welcomes the contributions of each person in a creative exchange.

Margot’s Move Learn Create classes are 90-minute movement experiences that promote “conscious moving and critical thinking” for adults 55 and older. Her current students are active, ambulatory individuals who are still working part-time or newly retired and love to dance or want to try moving in a new way. They are enthusiastic about Move Learn Create. One participant, self-described as having ADHD, said she loves the class because it forces her to be in the moment. She has been inspired to start taking dance breaks when she is working at home.

Choice-making is a thread throughout each class, which contains a blend of technique, improvisation, and composition. Margot wants each participant to make the class fit them. She also wants them to be the “most themselves” possible, which is something that is hard
to achieve in a follow-the-leader class. She sees her classes as a template that individuals paint in for themselves. This requires them to be fully present, invested, and aware of their personal reactions. As the leader, Margot dances along with participants so that she can assess in her body how the class is feeling and can also model her own movement choices for participants.\textsuperscript{32}

From the beginning to the end of class, Margot’s focus is on providing a clear structure while also encouraging each participant to tune into their own body’s signals and desires.\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{IN THE MOMENT}

\textit{Warm-up: Following the Breath}

Each class starts with participants seated in a circle. While all the participants are ambulatory, a seated warm-up eases the demands on the body that people might feel if they spent an entire 90-minute class on their feet. The chair serves in turn as a home base, a support, and a prop during class. Participants use chairs in place of a barre, improvise on and around them, and know that they can always take a seat if needed.

The warm-up begins with a simple breathing exercise adapted from yoga to open the sternum and the back. Margot encourages participants to let the size of the breath influence the size of the movement. This has gradually led group members to expand their warm-up into any idea of forward and any idea of backward, moving from their chairs into the space. As they move, Margot gives them permission to explore beyond the back-and-forth. She tells them that if any other movement suggests itself, they should feel free to follow that impulse. This has proven appealing; even participants who had no previous experience with improvisation have taken to it and find themselves inventing movement during the warm-up.

While participants are improvising, Margot is observing as she dances. She may call out comments—“I love the spirals I’m seeing”—or simply remember interesting movements for use later in the technique or composition phases of class.

At the end of the warm-up, participants make a “wish list” for the class. Someone might say, “My shoulders are killing me.” Another person might ask to revisit the waltz phrase from the last class. Margot has a plan for the session but stays open to these requests. She comes into classes with a rich variety of music choices and a broad range of dance and movement knowledge, which help her create a dynamic experience shaped by individual needs and preferences.

\textbf{Technique and Skill-Building}

After the breathing warm-up, the group begins a larger movement phase in their chairs, taking a movement idea, such as circling, into arms, legs, torso, and head. Margot may add a few things from her observations in the warm-up to help build the movement vocabulary of the group. She uses compositional language—for example, talking about how variation draws an audience’s eye—to frame what is happening. Then participants change their relationship to their chairs for legwork and stretching before engaging in several improvisational exercises to build skills for composition, such as Dance Exchange’s One to Ten or the Chair Dance exercise that follows this section.
Composition

The group then starts the composition phase by moving across the floor doing simple movement phrases that incorporate actions such as lunges, slides, skips, leg extensions, and balances. Sometimes Margot uses material generated during improvisations. Then she builds the simple movements into a more complex phrase. Because individuals in the group are physically active, they are able to handle fairly challenging material—even a half cartwheel has been incorporated. Margot meets them at their level and continues to push them. When she hears them joking that she has gone too far, she knows it may be a cue to ease up a little, and she adjusts so that participants can continue to work within their range.

Once the group has a phrase, they break up into pairs or trios to add a “signature movement” to complete the phrase. Their inspiration might be thematic or related to what has been talked about in class, but they have artistic freedom to personalize their dance.

Sharing

While participants in Move Learn Create are generally comfortable with showing their work to one another, there has been occasional discomfort with the process. As a result, Margot tends to approach showings with a light touch. She may wait for the impetus to bubble up from the group, or say something encouraging, such as, “The view from where I am is really wonderful. Would anyone else like to see it?” Another technique she uses that reduces pressure on individuals is to acknowledge a participant’s movement and demonstrate it for the group. After they have seen each other’s work, the group may spend some time in appreciation, perhaps talking about where they might go next with their work if they had a full day to rehearse, or about how the music has sparked their imaginations. If scenarios come to mind, the group may try their dances again with the new inspiration (such as, “How would we do it on a beach?”).

Cool Down and Closing

Participants finish class with a stretch on the floor or in a chair. They may sit back to back for a gentle weight-sharing exercise adapted from contact improvisation. Another favorite is to lie down and do easy leg lifts, stretches, and arm circles. In that moment, Margot shows the movement sequence, tells the group how many times she will be doing it, and welcomes them to follow along with her the entire time or stop along the way for stretches of their own choosing.

Chair Dance Exercise

The Chair Dance is an exercise developed by Margot Greenlee that starts as an improvisation and develops into set choreography. It uses four simple actions and limited instructions so that participants have plenty of structure, but it also allows them the freedom to make choices based on their degree of mobility and strength. It gives participants a chance to interact, experiment, and make decisions.

The action happens in and around chairs. While the chairs can be a support, using them also requires a good amount of focus to negotiate both other participants and furniture.
To avoid stubbed toes, the teaching artist should advise participants to notice the size, shape, placement, and sturdiness of chairs before launching into the activity.

Margot’s stance is that copying other people’s movement is always okay. In her view, it is not necessary to be 100 percent creative with this or any other improvisation. She sees copying as a great choice in its own right. She models several options for all of the actions so that participants have a few ideas right off the bat. Additionally, she tells participants that they do not need to make every cycle of the improvisation unique. Copying ourselves is a good choice too.

This exercise can be repeated several classes in a row. Each time participants return to the improvisation, it will have a new flavor. They will give it a new personality. Once it becomes comfortable, participants may start to suggest new variations, trying out the director’s role. This sense of ownership is a reflection of their artistic development.

**Part 1: Improvisation**

Start by placing chairs in a big circle, with plenty of room around each one. Each participant should have a chair. You may decide to add a few extra chairs so that participants do not have to scramble to find one.

Participants start in front of their chairs with music playing. Each action will fill a given amount of time, for example, eight counts. Give participants the following instructions one action at a time. They will typically learn the sequence as they repeat it.

1. **Go to a new chair in the circle.** You can walk, skip, jog, samba, cha-cha, etc.
2. **Sit and stand.** Take your time doing one careful sit, or do a lot of sitting and standing. Keep it simple or make it fanciful.
3. **Do a stretch of your choice.** You may want to stretch in the chair or next to it, or use it for support. You can stretch big muscles like the quadriceps or little muscles around the eyes.
4. **Circle your chair.** Revolve around it in some way. You may want to walk, march, tip-toe, etc.

Now it is time to change chairs again! Repeat the improvisation several times.

**Adaptations**

- Use a different duration for each of the actions (16 counts, a melodic line, a visual cue).
- Decide on different actions (carry the chairs, balance on one leg while holding the chair for support, pose next to the chair).
- Place the chairs in different formations (long line, random scattering, diagonal).
- Change the music (from a tango to a march).
- Add a scenario (“This time we are in a big city at rush hour.”).
- Ask the participants to suggest new approaches.
Part 2: Composition

Once the participants have warmed up with the improvisation, you can ask them to decide on a set series of actions that they will repeat over and over. For example, “Make the phrase that you really want to do today. What do you want to repeat? Enjoy? Get better at today?”

Often at this point, participants will ask a clarifying question or a “Can we . . .?” question. Margot’s answer is almost always, “Yes.” If someone wants to stand on their chair, and they have the strength and agility to pull it off, that is great. If someone wants to stay in the same chair the whole time, that is great too. Variation is aesthetically interesting and can give participants and the teaching artist new choreographic ideas.

During the rehearsal phase, turn the music back on to let everyone work for a couple of minutes. Then see if participants are ready to perform their composition. Emphasize that it does not have to be perfect yet, as each repetition is going to make it clearer. Then focus on clarifying the movement and cleaning up transitions. Remind participants about thinking ahead into the sequence so that they are not taken by surprise. Give them any other performance notes to work on as well.

Parts 3 and 4: Evaluation and Craft

If participants are comfortable being watched and giving feedback, you can split the group in half (or even smaller subsets) and have one group show while the others serve as an audience. The group can then talk about what is interesting about the movement, any surprising relationships between the movements, themes that come to mind while watching the interactions, and where they might take the dance next. In this way, a spontaneous grouping of the dancers can start to suggest reasons to edit further, and they can work in these small groups to choreograph with a particular intent.

Adaptations

- Instead of creating solo phrases, have participants partner up to create duets or trios.
- Assign a particular choice for one of the movements so that at some point in the phrase everyone is doing exactly the same thing. (For example, everyone will sit down slowly during counts one through six, and then we will all stand up by count eight.)

Some individuals prefer improvising to planning their phrase. Others would rather have a set plan and tend to get distracted by the apparent chaos of improvisation. It can be interesting to talk as a group about which part feels more satisfying or comfortable. It is also important to note that a person’s opinion may change from class to class.

CASE STUDY: DANCING STORIES

When Caren Grantz Keljik attended an artist training offered by ARTSAGE, an arts and aging organization in Minnesota, and heard about the benefits of engaging older adults in arts workshops by relating the art to their lives, she felt intrigued, yet cautious. Caren is a folk dancer and teaching artist based in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. She leads classes in international folk dance for older adults, conducting about 12 workshops a
month at day centers, memory care units, and independent living apartment complexes. She has been working regularly at most of these sites for two to three years.

Many of her host sites have said that they value her work because it is difficult to find a movement class that succeeds on an ongoing basis for older adults with a range of abilities. She knows that for the activity directors and program managers who pay her fees, the emphasis is on keeping the participants moving. At the same time, she wondered how she might bring a new dimension to her dance classes for her participants.

**Combining Storytelling with Dance**

Caren’s typical folk dance class is 60 minutes long and features six to ten dances from various cultures. Gathered in a circle, participants learn and perform (standing or seated) dances modified for their abilities while capturing the spirit of the dance. Caren was already incorporating social engagement into her classes with dances done in pairs or small groups using sticks, scarves, or clasped hands. But after attending the artist training, she began experimenting with methods for combining storytelling with dance. Using themes, question prompts, and poetry, Caren asked participants for their stories during class. Then she led them in creating original dances and songs or weaving their memories into familiar movement patterns. (For more on her methods, see the Dancing Stories Exercise.)

The response of Caren’s participants has been positive. They are learning about each other in a new way. She reports that the participants whose stories formed the lyrics for a song and dance combination were beaming as the group performed their creation. Participants have opened up. They want to share more, from their happiness about a new pair of jeans to their knowledge about folk dances from their native country. From Caren’s perspective, her classes have gained more depth; as people reveal their stories, it gives them an additional way to participate in the session and a chance to be known. And Caren is able to connect to the older adults on a more personal basis.

**ARE THE ACTIVITY DIRECTORS SMILING?**

Are they as pleased as Caren and her dancing participants with the new techniques? To find out, Caren discussed the storytelling aspect of her classes with each of them at the regular meetings she has arranged. Most of them were pleased, saying the stories added a client-centered perspective and more depth to the classes. A few commented about keeping the focus on movement and not spending too much time talking.

Caren plans to keep engaging her participants by making their memories part of her classes. She also plans to keep communication open with the activity directors. She understands that she has to find a balance that meets the needs of all involved, and she believes that it is worth the effort.

**Dancing Stories Exercise**

Caren Grantz Keljik has developed three theme-based techniques for incorporating older adults’ stories into her dance classes. Each one starts with a simple structure for gathering memories that are then expressed through dance or music.39
LESSON 12: Exercises, Activities and Case Studies

Teaching artists in any art form can collect life stories from older adults using the methods described here and find modes of expression through their art form. Caren has experimented with her techniques to create variations and encourages other teaching artists to also take an attitude of experimentation. Working with older people’s memories is explored in greater depth in lessons 7 and 8.

**Memory Dances**

- From a basic theme (such as winter), choose a subject (favorite winter activity) and then ask participants about it. Keep questions broad to encourage participation from as many people as possible: “What is or has been your favorite winter activity? What is your favorite memory?”
- As participants respond, ask them to show a movement for their memory.
- After several people have shared their memories and movements, the gestures can be combined into a dance. The simplest version is to have the group follow along as each person in turn does their movement. After a practice round, the dance can be performed to music.
- For variety, turn a few of the participants’ movements into a dance to which you add a “chorus” of your own making. Then the group performs several repetitions of the main dance with the chorus in between.
- With more active groups, it is possible to do a walking line dance, letting participants take turns leading the entire group in a movement while they snake around the space.

**Tell Me a Story**

- Select a topic related to a theme and invite stories from the group (for instance, “Tell me a story about walking on ice”).
- After the group hears several stories, select three and retell them to the group while having the participants do a simple dance to a jig or reel: for instance, circle left (Alan walked on the frozen lake), circle right (he thought he might fall in).

**Poem and Song**

- Choose a poem based on your theme (such as travel or taking a long road trip) and open this exercise by having a participant read it aloud.
- Invite participants to share stories, either a short one from each person or longer ones from a couple of people.
- Play instrumental music that evokes the feeling of the theme. Sing a question based on the stories that have been shared (“Where does Gloria want to go?”) and direct the participants to respond or lead them in a response using the information they have from the stories (“To the moon, she wants to go to the moon”).
- Create and add movements that fit the mood of the stories.
IMPORTANCE OF FEEDBACK

An important element of arts learning for older adults is receiving feedback about their work. Unlike some art school critiques that teaching artists may have personally endured, these sessions are constructive, not destructive. Older adults benefit from receiving feedback not only from the teaching artist but from their peers as well. This builds communication in the group, helps group members improve their observation skills and confidence, and gives individuals a variety of perspectives on their art work. The role of the teaching artist is to facilitate feedback sessions so that they encourage participants in their creative endeavors, help participants develop mastery, and provide opportunities for meaningful interaction among group members.

There are numerous ways to structure a feedback process. Several have already been described in this training; others are widely known, such as Liz Lerman’s Critical Response Process.

FEEDBACK SESSIONS

Feedback sessions normally begin by inviting participants to thoughtfully view one or more works by group members. It is essential that the audience can see and hear, so the participants who are sharing should arrange their showing to ensure this. This may mean changing the facing of the work, making adjustments to the space, or asking the audience to move.

Next, participants can be guided in offering questions or comments, based on one (or more) of the following approaches:

- **Meet the work with a “beginner’s mind.”** What do you see when you look at this work?
- **Offer appreciation.** What did you like about this work?
- **Choose a few lenses through which to talk about the work.** What is interesting about this work? Are there any surprising relationships between elements in the work? What themes does it bring to mind? Where might it go next? (Note that suggestions should only be offered after permission has been asked of the artist and granted.)
- **Look at the progression of an artist across two or more works.** What happened between the first work and the last work?

Here are two additional feedback processes used for many years by Susan Perlstein in her work with Elders Share the Arts:

- **Explore curiosity.** This process works well when there are multiple works to present, such as a collage with panels made by several elders.

**REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

What is one idea you have now about how the stories of your older adult participants can be woven into your workshops in your art form?

If you are a non-movement artist, what ideas do you have for incorporating movement into your programs?
The artists open by talking about the process of making the work. Then other group members are invited to notice one work that they want to know more about. One of them goes up and points to the work that has sparked their curiosity, explaining what drew them to it.

The artist who created the work then joins that group member at the work and talks about what inspired it. The conversation becomes a dialogue between the artist and the viewer. Elements of art get discussed. For example, if a group member commented on the contrast in a work, the artist might explain that the contrast represents two different states of mind at a turning point in her life. In this way, participants are learning from each other about their craft.

The process can be repeated a few times. Then the artists who have presented their work are asked if they have any other comments about their process and are given a round of applause.

- **Combine appreciation with suggestions.** This process can work well when there is a single piece being presented or a work in development. It opens in the same way as the previous feedback process, with the artist(s) talking about their art-making process and showing the work. Then other group members reflect on the work, starting with its strengths. Group members talk about what they liked, what reached them, and what feelings came to them while viewing the work. Naming the experience helps the artists know what they gave their viewers.

Then, with the permission of the artists, group members can be invited to offer suggestions. They may wish to talk about how they see work evolving, what they would like to see more of in the work, or what they would like to see developed. They could also talk about how they would like to see the piece unfold if the artist had another month to work on it. Talking about where the work could go becomes an additional way of deepening the learning. The decision about what to do with the recommendations rests with the artists.

Like the previous process, this process closes with final comments from the artists about the process of making the work and applause from the viewers.

A feedback process should leave artists feeling good about their work and motivated to keep working. In the best case, it will also provide inspiration or ideas for further development of the work and enhance the learning of the group.

**REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

How do the feedback processes described in this section resemble the feedback process you use (or would like to use)?

How are you planning to incorporate feedback into workshops that you lead? You may think about it in a general sense or in relation to a particular workshop you are developing.
CLOSING EXERCISES

In the sequence of activities in a workshop or a program, closing exercises hold an important place. They signal a clear end to the trajectory of a group’s work together and provide a satisfying sense of completion to participants. Closing exercises are a time of acknowledgment of the shared experiences and accomplishments. They make the successes of the group even more tangible and reinforce the positive changes that may have occurred for individuals or the group as a whole.

Margo Walbolt, a multi-disciplinary artist and teaching artist living in Clearwater, Florida, has found several closing exercises to be particularly effective in the more than 35 years she has been conducting arts programs for adults and children in school and recreational settings. Margo is the former manager of the Clearwater Division of Cultural Affairs, has served as the project manager for Partners for Creative Aging in Pinellas County since its inception in 2009, and currently conducts creative programs for older adults with Adult Lutherans Organized for Action (ALOA).

In working with older adults, Margo has facilitated programs in a variety of expressive arts, such as painting and drawing, pottery, movement, and creative writing. She typically begins sessions with a circle time when she and the participants get to know each other and share their expectations for learning and the day’s activity. She has found that including a circle time at the end of classes is equally effective. She has seen that gathering everyone in a circle at the end of a class can provide participants with a feeling of accomplishment and connectivity to the other participants. This is particularly useful in classes where people have been focused on individual work, as is often the case with visual art classes. The group uses this opportunity to come together, reflect, and appreciate the day’s success. The shared reflections are often inspirational. Below are several closing activities provided by Margo that have been well-received by participants in her classes.

MOMENT OF SUCCESS

This exercise takes place with participants in a circle.

- Begin by asking participants to close their eyes and take several deep breaths, concentrating on the sound of their breathing.
- Then ask them to visualize their work in class that day and to think about a time when they felt particularly energized and excited. What particular task or activity gave them a feeling of pride?
- After a short time, ask participants to open their eyes. Invite them to exchange their moment of success with the person next to them.
- If time permits, you can ask if someone is willing to share their success story with the entire group.
- Follow this with another period of quiet reflection. Ask participants to close their eyes again and take several deep breaths. Invite them to savor that feeling of energy and pride and what went well.
• Then ask them to give some thought to how they could make that feeling happen more often.

• When the group opens their eyes, the class can be encouraged to create a closing “cheer” to do as they leave. Some groups have clapped or high-fived one another or exited class singing. One of Margo’s favorite celebration cheers was “Na na na na! Na na na na! Hey, hey, hey! Good job!”

TYING IT ALL UP

Margo has used this closing exercise for groups that have worked together for several sessions. It also takes place with participants in a circle.

• The teaching artist starts with a ball of yarn, then hands it to someone in the circle and has them hold one end of the yarn.

• That person then chooses someone else in the circle and says something positive about that person, either acknowledging a skill or characteristic that they have or something that they did during the day. They can also say something they learned from the person.

• The speaker then tosses the ball of yarn to that person while still holding the one end. Now the person who is holding the ball of yarn speaks about someone else in the circle, then tosses the ball to them while still holding onto the yarn.

• The process continues until everyone has spoken and is holding a piece of yarn. At that point, the teaching artist can remark about how connectivity inspires creativity and builds community.

THE PASSING OF WISDOM

• Supply participants with a votive candle and small candleholder. (Note: The use of open flame may be prohibited at a facility or require special permission, so be sure to check on this in advance.)

• Ask them to think about someone who made a difference in their lives during the session or the project or more generally by taking a special interest in them as creative individuals.

• Then ask them to think about another person to whom they would like to pass on the wisdom of their own experience.

• The teaching artist lights their candle and passes the flame on to the person next to them.

• As that person receives the light, they say who made a difference in their life. Then as they pass the flame to the next person, they say whom they hope to inspire.

• Continue around the circle until everyone has spoken and is holding a lighted candle. Tell participants that they will take the candle home with them as reminder of what they have received and what they will pass on, then blow out the candles in unison.
GROUP ART

Occasionally, participants in Margo’s classes have created a banner together at the end of a session or project that celebrates what they learned about creative expression and working in community with others. A long roll of paper tacked to the wall, art supplies, and a variety of craft materials have sparked their creativity.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What from these exercises, if anything, would you like to try? Do they inspire any ideas in you for closing exercises?

ADDITIONAL CASE STUDIES AND BEST PRACTICES PROGRAMS

CASE STUDY: FLO OY WONG

"The indefatigable late bloomer and quintessential role model, Flo is an inspiration to us all that we should not permit ourselves to be limited to any single endeavor and that creativity flourishes at every stage in life!" —Koan-Jeff Baysa, writer, curator, and physician

Mixed-media installation artist and poet Flo Oy Wong is a storyteller, historian, and anthropologist who began her artistic career at 40. Now, heading into the latter half of her seventh decade, she is an internationally recognized artist with numerous commissions and awards who continues to make an impact on the world around her.

Flo began truly discovering her artistic path when she realized she would have little to do when her children left the house for good and her husband continued working. Knowing that there had to be something for her to be passionate about, she began drawing and painting. Later, she began to embroider cloth rice bags. Although she did not know it then, Flo’s rice bags were the beginning of her search into her cultural heritage as an American of Chinese descent. They were also the foundation of a career that would span the globe from Hong Kong to Copenhagen with art that "gives voice to those who could not speak."

A Chronicler of Hidden Stories

The intention of Flo’s art is not only to nurture her own spirit, but to unleash the spirit of others. In her 2003 exhibition, "1942: Luggage From Home to Camp," commissioned by the Japanese American Museum in San Jose, California, she created a replica of a barracks where Japanese-Americans were interned during World War II, which evoked memories that moved many attendees to tears. Using items arranged in suitcases salvaged from the internment, she told the stories of six individuals who had lived in the camps. While being interviewed, one of the individuals admitted, "I never intended to revisit these memories, and here you are asking these questions!" The relief that this man and others like him achieved by unburdening himself of his long-held story made the laborious exhibition all the more special to Flo.

In addition to delving into this chapter of Japanese-American history, Flo has explored Chinese-American and African-American contributions to American society. Through the span...
of her 35-year career, Flo has used cloth rice sacks, sequins, beads, old suitcases, scanned photographs, magazine text, Chinese funeral paper, flags of the United States, and needle and thread to chronicle hidden histories. She is truly a cultural historian, and her works are known for capturing the insider’s perspective of a group at a given time.

Living—and Celebrating—Artfully at 75

In celebration of her 75th birthday, in 2013 Flo was involved in several major events in San Francisco that showcased her special gift for bringing to life stories from the past. One was a collaboration with Marcus Shelby, an African American musician. Marcus composed original music to accompany an art installation of Flo’s that addresses segregation in the South. Another was a birthday exhibit at the Luggage Store Gallery, for which Flo received her third National Endowment for the Arts grant in conjunction with the Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center. For this exhibition, Flo created a new work about 527 French children hidden during World War II. In addition, she invited 75 local and national artists to contribute art pieces that break down stereotypes or tell the story of someone who has helped to build the United States.

Flo herself was also celebrated in 2013, through a partnership with Rooftop School in San Francisco, as Rooftop students mounted an exhibition in a San Francisco gallery in recognition of her seven and a half decades of life.

Flo’s zeal for life shows itself in every domain. She actively works to maintain her health with a regimen of yoga, meditation, and exercise, including a program of weightlifting at her local YMCA where she lifts over 2,500 pounds a month. She stays closely connected to family, friends, and a web of social, cultural, and artistic communities that stretches from her home around the globe. And although growing older has caused Flo to move away from larger exhibitions that require a lot of physical energy, she puts an equal amount of mental energy into smaller, more detailed projects. She also continues to write poetry, an art form she has been interested in since the age of nine.

In all that she does, Flo continues to relish the challenge of living. In fact, to her, the daily struggle of life is what makes it so beautiful. After she learned from a friend some years ago the Chinese phrase, "shin floo how hem" ("first bitter, then sweet"). Flo became struck by the universal truth behind it. To say there were bitter times in the pasts she has explored would be an understatement, but there is no denying the joy and meaning that Wong brings to her artistic exploration of those lives and to the rich creation she has made of her own.
Flo wrote the following poem in honor of the late Bernice Bing, a close friend of hers. Bernice was a seminal Chinese-American artist of the Beat Era. Flo was inspired to pen the poem when she found out that the San Francisco-based Asian American Women Artists Association (AAWAA) was producing a film about Bernice in 2013.\textsuperscript{50}

**A SLIVER OF THOUGHT**

*By Flo Oy Wong*

I find myself thinking of you,

Thickening a sliver of thought

Into a wide expanse of memories

Collected from times together

The way perhaps a person collects

Rocks and seaweed on the sandy beach

Wondering if these objects, forlorn but magnetic

Pulling us deeper into the foaminess

Of joy, terror, belonging, safety, abandonment

A swirling vortex of fear layered on the moisture of confusion

Strands of loneliness mingling in a 7 year old heart

Not knowing if we belong

Or if we are safe inside of our own skin

Because the grandmother who tossed us out

Perhaps hoping that we might wash away detritus of her daughter's marital follies

As if we were wet garbage that cloyed at tightness of family

Which had its start in an arid village of Guangzhou

Where fields yielded despair only to be harvested with desolation

That could only be healed with the salve of coming to a country that didn’t want us

How many times can someone throw us away?

Erasing us as if we were a mis-stroke

Of the brush that dragged life

Onto a canvas of migration and resettlement

Where was the refuge promised?

You set on a journey to find answers.

Did you?

What did you learn?

Mysteries knotted?

Or unraveled?

Sandy beach?

Seaweed of Confucian tangled?\textsuperscript{51}
BEST PRACTICE PROGRAMS

The profiles of top-notch programs included here offer examples of how a dedication to lifelong learning and a commitment to fostering mastery and social engagement nourish creative potential and well-being in an urban ceramics studio, and in assisted living facilities and day programs serving people with memory impairment.

IN THE STUDIO: BALTIMORE CLAYWORKS’ CREATIVE AGING PROGRAM (BALTIMORE, MARYLAND)

It’s about art, but more than art it’s about camaraderie . . . We want to stay together. We’re going to stick together. We are a family. We know each other, and our kids and grandkids. We know when each other is sick or not here. We come for each other.

—Vera, participant at Baltimore Clayworks’ Creative Aging Program

Since 2004, Baltimore Clayworks has been opening up the world of ceramics to older adults in some of Baltimore’s most socially and economically marginalized neighborhoods. Clayworks offers 12 classes for older adults throughout the calendar year. Each runs for eight to twelve weeks and meets weekly for two to three hours. Tuition is a nominal fee of $10 per class. The participants are 95 percent older adult women, all of whom are employed full-time or part-time and are the main caretakers for their grandchildren. Clayworks’ programs give them an opportunity to advance their ceramic skills and express their creativity, while cultivating community, celebrating their stories, and spending time in a safe and supportive environment. Many of the advanced-level students have been enrolled in classes there since 2004.

Curriculum is created in collaboration among the Co-Directors of Community Arts at Baltimore Clayworks, lead teachers, guest artists, and the older adults themselves. Beginner clay classes review basic and intermediate hand-building and surface treatment techniques (pinch, coil, slab, mold, scoring) and thematically focus on storytelling, giving participants the opportunity to share their life experiences through working with clay. The advanced classes learn sophisticated ceramic techniques taught by guest artists. The visiting artists are professional, contemporary ceramic artists, who bring specialized and advanced clay techniques to participants. These artists encourage the participants to bring their practice to the next level to create innovative ceramic art work.

Artworks created by individuals in this program are exhibited annually in Baltimore Clayworks’ Community Arts Gallery, which is visited by 4,800 visitors a year, thus providing a public audience for the work the participants have created.

The Clayworks Creative Aging program is built on a sustainable satellite model in which it is invited by a community to offer programming to its residents in a community-run space. Baltimore Clayworks partners with grassroots organizations, churches, recreation centers, and city or governmental organizations. Baltimore Clayworks provides the expertise, instruction, and material in exchange for a physical space in the community it is serving.
LESSON 12: Exercises, Activities and Case Studies

IN THE RETIREMENT COMMUNITY: ENGAGE/BURBANK ARTIST COLONY (BURBANK, CALIFORNIA)

I couldn’t believe that there would be a community for me at this time in my life. I didn’t think I’d be able to find something new inside of me. You know that same feeling when you got out of school and the whole world was open to you? Now, all over again, the whole world is open to me. —Suzanne Knole, EngAGE artist

EngAGE/Burbank Artist Colony is a nonprofit that takes a whole-person approach to creative and healthy aging by providing arts, wellness, lifelong learning, community building, and intergenerational programs to thousands of older adults living in affordable senior apartment communities in Southern California. Its vision is to make aging a beginning by providing life-enhancing programs to low-income older people to give them the opportunity to continue to grow intellectually, creatively, and emotionally. Programming focuses on the combination of mind, body, and spirit to promote active engagement and independent living, and to provide older people with a purpose in life.

EngAGE also reaches other apartment communities for older adults with EngAGE in Creativity, a community-based, multi-disciplinary arts program taught by professional artists, providing college-level arts and creativity classes, programs, and events to older adults, delivered onsite at the senior apartment communities where they live, at no cost to them. It has been in existence for seven years and currently serves 3,000 low- and moderate-income older adults. Each year, EngAGE hosts EngAGE in Creativity, a multicultural, multigenerational art, performance and music festival at the Burbank Senior Artists Colony, along with numerous smaller, local events.

Suzanne Knole, resident of Burbank Senior Artists Colony and retiree turned artist, exemplifies the way a life can be transformed in the EngAGE milieu. She spent most of her life working to raise her children as a single mother. After retirement, she moved to the Burbank Senior Artists...
Colony. She thought she would like to try her hand at writing, so she attended an EngAGE writing class at the Artists Colony. She wrote a screenplay as a class assignment, and her project, Bandida, was made into a short film by EngAGE.

The making of her film and her story of reinvention were profiled on national television on “This American Life” on Showtime. She watched the premiere of her film along with an audience of hundreds on the big screen at the El Portal Theater in the NoHo Arts District of Los Angeles as part of the Valley Film Festival. She is now working on several new film and stage projects and has taken up painting and mentoring at-risk teens.

Research about the benefits of living in the EngAGE community published in the New York Times in 2012 stated, “A study done at the University of Southern California found that more respondents in EngAGE programs reported that their health had improved in the past year, while in a control group, more people reported that their health had worsened. A study carried out by Century Housing, one of the top lenders to EngAGE’s communities, put a dollar figure on the gains. In the program, it found, 25 percent fewer people than in comparable groups needed expensive interventions such as nursing care. The savings came to about $9,000 per year per resident.”57
LESSON 12: Exercises, Activities and Case Studies

LESSON 12 SUMMARY

“Exercises, Activities and Case Studies” covered a myriad of techniques and strategies for addressing various elements of the artistic teaching process. The lesson discussed the importance of movement, as well as closing exercises, and offered examples of best practices programs and some additional case studies.

CHECK-IN: LEARNING GOALS

- Learn arts exercises to use in a variety of workshop settings
- Understand the importance of movement in workshops for older adults
- Lead several closing exercises for workshops or programs
- Recognize best practices in action based on case studies

LESSON 12 NOTES

7. Nachtigall. Content for “Case Study: Everyone Has a Mark to Make” provided courtesy of Jeff Nachtigall and Open Studio and used with permission.
8. National Center for Creative Aging, Creativity Matters, 33.
9. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
17. Kandell.
18. Kandell. Content of mirroring exercises provided courtesy of Stuart Kandell and used with permission.
19. The “Movement and Lifelong Learning” section was coauthored with Michael C. Patterson (Principal, mindRAMP Consulting). Content provided courtesy of mindRAMP and used with permission.
LESSON 12: Exercises, Activities and Case Studies

24. Patterson, “Nimble Bodies.”
28. Ibid.
30. Margot Greenlee (founder, BodyWise Dance), email to author, March 1, 2013, and interview with author, April 2, 2013. Content for “Case Study: In the Moment” and “Arts Engagement Exercise: Chair Dance” provided courtesy of Margot Greenlee.
32. Greenlee, email and interview.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Content for “Case Study: Dancing Stories” provided by Caren Grantz Keljik, interview with author, March 11, 2013. Courtesy of Caren Grantz Keljik and used with permission.
40. Susan Perlstein (founder, National Center for Creative Aging and Elders Share the Arts), NCCA Artist Training, Clearwater FL, January 21, 2012. Content for the following two feedback processes provided courtesy of Susan Perlstein and used with permission.
45. National Center for Creative Aging, “Flo Oy Wong.”
46. Flo Oy Wong, interview by author, March 7, 2013. Content provided courtesy of Flo Oy Wong and used with permission.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. National Center for Creative Aging, “Flo Oy Wong.”
50. Flo Oy Wong, interview by author, March 12, 2013. Content provided courtesy of Flo Oy Wong and used with permission.
51. Flo Oy Wong, “A Sliver of Thought,” provided courtesy of Flo Oy Wong and used with permission.
53. Content for “In the Studio: Baltimore Clayworks’ Creative Aging Program” provided courtesy of Baltimore Clayworks and used with permission.

Manual for Artist Training in Arts and Aging
LESSON 12: Exercises, Activities and Case Studies

56. Content for “In the Retirement Community: EngAGE/Burbank Artist Colony” adapted from www.engagedaging.org. Provided courtesy of EngAGE and used with permission.
NAME GAME MODIFICATIONS AND VERSIONS

A common warm-up exercise for new groups is to gather in a circle and ask each person to say their name with a gesture or movement. The rest of the group then repeats the name and gesture. The following are several ways used by Elders Share the Arts in Brooklyn, New York, to structure a sound and movement exercise such as this.

WORKING IN UNISON
The simplest form of this exercise is to ask the group to repeat each gesture and sound in unison. Starting with this simple structure is recommended for two reasons. First, especially in new groups, some participants are most comfortable doing voice and body work in unison. Second, this basic exercise builds a solid foundation for exploring other sound and movement structures in subsequent workshops.

PASSING AROUND
A slightly more advanced structure is to pass one sound and movement around the circle so that everyone does it individually. Repeat this until every participant has offered a sound and movement that has been passed around the circle. This is a good variation for honing the group's observational skills and for building the group's ability to work together.

A more advanced variation is to allow participants to pass their sound and movement to anyone in the circle. This is a good option for groups that are already comfortable with the basic sound and movement structure and are ready for a challenge.

MAKING A CHAIN
Sounds and movements can be passed in a "chain," such that the first participant makes their own sound and movement, the second makes the first and then their own, the third makes the first, the second, and then their own, etc.

EXPERIMENTATION
An advanced variation is to encourage participants to experiment with the sound and gesture that is passed to them, to find a way to change it, and then to pass the new sound and movement on. This option works best with those who have developed some confidence with sound and movement in their own bodies and in groups that have developed a supportive, trusting environment that encourages experimentation.
CALL AND RESPONSE

ALZHEIMER’S POETRY PROJECT CALL AND RESPONSE TECHNIQUE

This section describes a call and response technique using poetry that is an easy, yet powerful way to draw older adults in and give them space to participate at the beginning of a workshop. This technique was developed by Gary Glazner, founder of the award-winning Alzheimer’s Poetry Project (APP), and the content in this section is provided by APP.

The call and response pattern feels familiar and culturally comfortable to people, as it is found in religious ceremonies throughout the world and embedded in many American music forms, especially gospel, blues, and jazz. Because participants are following along in unison, it is inherently low-risk. Relying on echoic memory - just the amount it takes to repeat a short phrase - it offers adults with a wide range of abilities, including those with cognitive disabilities, an opportunity to participate and succeed.

While call and response is a core technique for APP workshops, it can be used effectively as a warm-up exercise by teaching artists in any art form to set the stage for creative engagement. With a lively delivery, a session leader can easily raise the energy level of the group while involving participants in poetry as a participatory art in a way that has been proven to slow the heart rate and therefore relax the body.

THE APP CALL AND RESPONSE TECHNIQUE

- The session leader chooses several lines of poetry, either a short poem or an excerpt that can stand alone. Lines should be about four to eight seconds long. Rhyming couplets work well, such as the ending of Sonnet 18 by William Shakespeare:

  So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
  So long lives this and this gives life to thee.

- The session leader recites the lines one at a time, inviting participants to repeat each line in turn.

People respond eagerly to poems that are familiar or humorous, especially when the leader selects the most memorable lines. Some of the poems that receive the strongest response during APP sessions are “Tyger” (William Blake), “Rattlesnake Meat” (Ogden Nash), and “Daffodil” (William Wordsworth). A list of recommended poems is available at www.alzpoetry.com/book.

RECITATION TIPS

These tips can help the call and response session flow smoothly:

- Recite in a circle. A circle allows the session leader to get close to individuals, and it can enhance the energy in the room as participants see one another smiling and laughing. If the space does not allow participants to form a circle, try to find a shape, like a
crescent, that will still allow you physical proximity to individuals and give them the ability to watch their peers.

- Give the group instructions before starting, but keep them simple. “I’m going to say a line of poetry. You repeat after me.” Cue the group with gestures: point to yourself and then to the group. Typically participants catch on right away.

- Stay quiet as the group responds. Avoid the temptation to repeat the line you have just uttered. Make space for participants to find their voices. If participants need encouragement, recruit staff or a passing administrator to recite with them.

- Repetition, repetition, repetition. There is no need to hurry from one line of the poem to the next. Allow the group to savor the poem by reciting each line two or three times as the poem builds. Use your judgment—you can vary your delivery, emphasizing some lines through repetition and not others. If it is appropriate for the group, end with a final recitation without repetition.

- Memorize if you can. It will be easiest to engage participants if you can recite lines from memory while maintaining eye contact. If you need to read, look up after each line, and see if you can have the lines memorized by the second or third repetition.

### DELIVERY SKILLS

While a familiarity with poetry can be an asset in leading this technique, teaching artists need not be poets to do it. Many of the people who learn it are not poets or performers, but health care workers and caregivers.

A key to being a successful session leader is the delivery of the lines. The leader needs to recite them loudly enough to be heard by everyone in the room. They should be spoken at a speed that is not too fast to follow but that maintains the poem’s rhythm. It is important to articulate words well—this will be especially helpful for older adults who are hard of hearing. A smile and lively energy will be likely to enliven participants as well. Teaching artists should practice to develop fluidity; reciting poetry to music is an easy way to build this skill.
ADAPTING THE TECHNIQUE FOR YOUR GROUP

The APP call and response technique can be effective with older adults with all levels of physical and cognitive abilities. Even those with significant cognitive disabilities can be successful. For those who are losing language and are comfortable with touch, the session leader can go to them, kneel down, and recite while moving their hand to the rhythm. It is best to orient them to what is happening by saying a phrase like, “I’m going to recite the poem and move your hand to the rhythm.” Often engaging a person this way elicits a positive response—they may start to move their lips, smile, or brighten in the eyes. However, if the participant exhibits any signs of discomfort, the leader should stop the touch and move on without embarrassing them.

Teaching artists can adapt a poetry call and response to their purposes with a little imagination. Opening a session with a poem can be an inspiration for the day’s work in any art form. Poems can be selected that reflect the day’s theme or offer content to which older adults can respond in their art work.

The technique can also be used to perform original content that is created during a session. For example, it can be used to perform a story the group creates or to make a poem from comments about artwork observed during the session. Call and response can also be used with movement or music as the focus rather than poetry.

Once participants are familiar with the technique, and if it is appropriate for the group, the teaching artist can invite individuals in the group to lead. With experimentation, this technique can add an element of fun to sessions while encouraging participation from even the shyest individuals.
LESSON GOALS

1. Understand the basics of program planning for arts engagement with older adults
2. Understand how to construct a multi-disciplinary project and partner with other teaching artists
3. Be able to lead a writing/storytelling activity that can serve as the basis for a multi-disciplinary project

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

From your perspective, who should be involved in planning arts programming for older adults?

PROGRAM PLANNING FOR TEACHING ARTISTS

Planning is the process of setting parameters for an arts project or program. There is a wealth of information on the topic of program planning and evaluation in Creativity Matters: The Arts and Aging Toolkit, a guide designed for organizations that wish to engage older adults in arts programs. While it is beyond the scope of this training to reproduce this information in its breadth and depth, this lesson offers a primer on basic project or program planning that is geared to the individual teaching artist.

While you can just jump in and start working with older adults, a better idea is to begin with a roadmap—figuring out where you are, where you want to go, and how you’re going to get there. Creating that roadmap and making it a reality rarely happen in isolation; they are often accomplished by working with one or more organizations that are interested in engaging teaching artists to offer arts programming to elders. Cultivating such partnerships is a key to success as a teaching artist working with older adults.

FIRST, KNOW THYSELF

Begin by assessing yourself and your aims:

• Who do you want to work with? The label “older adults” covers a broad range of individuals in various life stages, states of health, and settings. Ask yourself if you would prefer to work with adults who are more independent or those who may be receiving care from family members or an institution. Are you interested in working with people who have Alzheimer’s disease and related neurocognitive disorders? Perhaps you would like to work with a variety of participants, including intergenerational groups. Why are you interested in working with older adults? The answers to these questions will help you identify the right partners for you.
LESSON 13: Program Planning

• Where do you want to work? This question is related to the last one, but it helps refine your preferences and build your list of potential sites. Older adults can be found in settings such as retirement communities, low-income apartment complexes, community arts organizations, senior centers, libraries, assisted living facilities, and day programs. Any of these can be fertile ground for arts programming.

• What is your skill level as a teaching artist working with older adults? Are you already an experienced teaching artist but new to working with older adults? Is this your first foray into working as a teaching artist? Organizations that offer high-quality programming typically prefer teaching artists with some experience working with older adults. Completing this training is a good step toward preparing yourself, but there is no substitute for firsthand experience. If you are new to working with older adults, you may wish to immerse yourself in a setting where you would like to work to learn about it before taking the lead on a project or program. Arranging observations or mentoring with a teaching artist who does high-quality work with older adults can be an effective means of preparation. This is strongly recommended if you are taking on the teaching artist role for the first time.

• How far do you want to travel? As a teaching artist working with older adults, you may end up working in several different locations. Be realistic about how much time you are able—and willing—to spend in traveling from to and from program sites.

ONCE YOU ARE IN THE DOOR

Ideally, your initial contact will lead to a meeting with an organization that directly serves older adults. At the meeting, both parties will be trying to assess whether the partnership is a good fit based on the needs of the organization and its constituents, the qualifications of the teaching artist, and the goals of the teaching artist and the organization.

Send your résumé ahead of time, if appropriate, then take a copy with you and be prepared to talk about your experience as a teaching artist. An initial meeting is also the time to discuss vision and philosophy, and to ask questions about the organization and the people it serves in order to learn whether the situation suits you and how you can help the organization meet its goals. Even if the organization has a program vision, it will ideally involve you in program development and planning.

Depending on how the initial meeting goes, it can be a good time to begin discussing program goals, timeline, number of participants, and responsibilities, and to confirm who the members of the program team will be.

DEVELOPING A PROPOSAL

Use the information you gather in the initial meeting to develop a proposal to present to the organization. If it is possible to consult one or more of the older adults who will attend the program being planned, it can help you create a plan that truly meets the needs of the potential participants. Your proposal should include project structure, objectives, evaluation plan, timetable, and break-out of responsibilities. It should provide enough information for the organization to have a general understanding of the project, but it need not include so much detail that the organization could implement it without you. You can share more detailed lesson plans later.
Follow this up with a call or second meeting to finalize arrangements, including logistics (day and time, dedicated space, etc.), recruiting and marketing tasks, and any other administrative requirements. If at all possible, see the space you will be working in and address any issues related to it before your program or project begins.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What were the results of your self-assessment in this section?

What do you know about the kind of organizations or settings you would prefer?

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Teaching artists are likely to have a role in the evaluation of programming they are leading. Therefore, it is helpful to have a basic understanding of program evaluation. While assessment is the measurement of specific outcomes, such as whether participants are meeting objectives in a workshop, evaluation is the systematic collection and analysis of information for use in improving programs. The assessment of participant learning or success may be one component of a program evaluation, but evaluation includes other information, such as assessments of participant satisfaction, program design and implementation, and partnership outcomes.

One of the most common methods of gathering evaluation data is a written evaluation form. A written evaluation form used by The Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute at Ruth Eckerd Hall for its choral enhancement program is included in this section as an example. The form is a blend of assessment-type items (questions 5,6,8,9), along with questions that are designed to collect data about participant satisfaction (questions 1-4, 7, 10-14). Note also that the Hoffman Institute is attempting to gather data about how its class might have impacted the participant’s activity level outside of class. This is consistent with findings that show that arts engagement may correlate with an increased level of physical activity and social engagement for older adults, and it allows the Hoffman Institute to learn about the impact of its classes on the general well-being of participants, which may be useful for marketing and fundraising purposes.

A form like this can be useful for gathering responses from participants, host sites, and community partners, but there are also other methods that may provide valuable information and should not be overlooked. For example, pre- and post-program conversations may yield rich data from participants or host sites. During discussion, participants or site representatives may offer information that is not captured by a form. In addition, participants will usually communicate their satisfaction with a program by “voting with their feet.” Their presence and participation in a program—or their lack of interest in it—is a strong indicator of their satisfaction level and of the effectiveness of the program in meeting their needs.
LESSON 13: Program Planning

Teaching artists interested in learning more are encouraged to access the wealth of
information available on assessment and evaluation for teaching artists who work in arts
education; much of it can be adapted for lifelong learning.

THE HOFFMAN PERFORMING ARTS INSTITUTE AT RUTH ECKERD HALL

CLEARWATER CHORUS ENHANCEMENT CLASS PARTICIPANT SURVEY

1. I enjoyed the social aspects of the enhancement classes.
   □ True □ False

2. I looked forward to the class every week.
   □ True □ False

3. I became friends with other participants in the enhancement class.
   □ True □ False

4. The enhancement class was fun.
   □ True □ False

5. I learned new skills from the enhancement class in: (Please check all that apply)
   □ Music Reading
   □ Music Interpretation
   □ Vocal Technique
   □ Other: ___________________

6. I feel more confident in my singing because of what I learned.
   □ True □ False

7. I want to continue with another similar class.
   □ True □ False

8. I feel like I could talk to my class peers.
   □ True □ False

9. Between classes I found myself doing these tasks more: (Please check all that apply)
   □ Thinking about or practicing what I learned
   □ Going out with friends or family
   □ Reading and/or listening to music
   □ Exercising

10. What would you like to learn from future classes?

11. Please list anyone you know who you think would join you for a new session.
12. Please rank the teachers on a scale from 1 to 4. Please note a 1 for exceptional and 4 for “would not like to attend with that instructor teaching the class.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ron Emery</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine Holland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy Bawel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Haralambou</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosalia Maresca</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rena Massey</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosemary and Stan Collins</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Drick</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Do you have a teacher that you would like to recommend outside of the group listed above?

14. Please tell us a story from the class or feel free to leave any comments, suggestions, favorite moments, or even your favorite recipe!

WIDENING THE CIRCLE: PARTNERING WITH OTHER TEACHING ARTISTS

Teaching artists who work with older adults do not have to work alone. There are numerous advantages to involving other teaching artists in the process. Case studies featured in this training provide examples of typical forms these collaborations take. In the Quilting Memories project, Irania Patterson and Edwin Gil co-led an entire project together.

These kinds of collaborations can enrich the arts engagement experience for both the participants and teaching artists in several ways. Here are some of the benefits:

- An ability to do multi-disciplinary projects
- More personal attention for participants
- Help with juggling logistical and technology tasks at all phases of the project
- Different teaching and interaction styles that can reach different people
- Fresh ideas and the power of “two heads”
- Increased fun and enjoyment from working as part of a team

When bringing other teaching artists into a project, the project leader should be aware that it takes planning, effort, and communication to make a collaboration successful. A good starting point is a familiarity with the work of all teaching artists who are going to participate in a project. The project leader must also decide whether the project will be co-led and whether the additional teaching artists will participate for the entirety of the project or as guests during some portion of it. This will help shape the planning process and the level of involvement that each party has in it. At a minimum, the project leader should
clearly communicate to other teaching artists the overall project structure and how they fit into it, their responsibilities, and the practical and logistical details they need to know to fulfill them. Beyond that, guest teaching artists should be involved in project planning to the extent that will best serve the project and create a positive experience for the whole team and the participants.

**CASE STUDY: QUILTING MEMORIES**

Connecting people across cultural barriers is crucial for building a healthy, vibrant society. Yet it can be challenging to find the points of connection that bring people together. Quilting Memories, an arts engagement project for Latino immigrant elders at Shamrock Senior Center in Charlotte, North Carolina in 2012, was designed to do just that through storytelling, writing, and painting.  

Conceived by Irania Patterson, a multidisciplinary artist and teaching artist from Venezuela who works as a bilingual specialist for the Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Library, and Edwin Gil, a Colombian painter and teaching artist living in Charlotte, the project was a collaborative extension of each person’s work to bridge cultures through the arts. In her role with the library, Irania uses the arts to promote literacy among underserved populations, and she saw Edwin as a natural partner. Since 2005, he has been leading a series of community art projects with titles such as “Faces of Diversity” and “Quilting Differences.” The projects gather stories from individuals of all backgrounds and bring them to life in the form of group paintings or murals that have been viewed all over the state of North Carolina.

**The Seasons of Our Lives**

For the Quilting Memories project, Irania and Edwin adapted his typical project structure to deepen the storytelling and writing aspect of the experience. Using a storytelling exercise described in detail in the next section (The Seasons of Our Lives exercise), Irania and Edwin asked the elders to identify the “seasons” of their lives, using phrases such as “a time of innocence,” “a time of betrayal,” and “a time for love.” These seasons became the points of connection for the participants, who ended up sharing deeply personal stories with each other. This exercise took people into emotional territory, but the group was able to handle it. They have been meeting weekly for at least six years, so they are an established group. Yet during the exercise, they learned things about each another that they had never shared before and gained a new perspective on the connections between them.
This exercise required tremendous trust, and it was successful in part because Edwin opened up about his own life at the beginning of the workshop series. He spoke about his difficult youth and about the alcoholism in his family and how it led to him becoming homeless, and then he talked about how he had overcome his challenges. Using Edwin’s story, he and Irania modeled how the elders could find the essence of their life stories and name the seasons of their lives. Then the elders talked with different partners about a season they had in common. For one person, a time of discovery might have been finding a new love, while for another it might have been learning a painful family secret; participants found that the same word could evoke a different experience, but that they could still relate to each story they heard.

Creating the Quilt

In the third workshop, it was time to transform the stories into a quilt. Each participant chose two meaningful seasons from their conversations and wrote them in permanent marker on a 5”x5” square of matte board. Then they chose one color of acrylic paint to apply to their square. Edwin had them use their fingers instead of a brush because he knew that would help the participants bypass nervousness they might feel about “painting.” While the paint was still wet, participants went back to two of their conversation partners and pressed and twisted their squares together. This created a unique color palette on each square. Each one was different, and at the same time they symbolized the commonalities and connections that the participants had discovered.

Then all the colorful squares were placed together in the form of a quilt, and participants stood back to absorb their work, take photos, and celebrate their accomplishment. Irania and Edwin closed the project by having each participant say one word about their experience. It was an emotional moment; people offered words like “powerful,” “together,” “past,” and “alive.” The quilt was then displayed at the Senior Center for a month, after which participants took their individual squares home with them.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What do you think worked well about this project?

In what ways did Irania and Edwin collaborate successfully?

THE SEASONS OF OUR LIVES EXERCISE

This storytelling and writing exercise, developed by Irania Patterson, helps participants practice telling personal stories in terms of themes. As discussed in Lesson 5, this is useful because themes can bring to life what is meaningful and purposeful for individuals about their stories. As Irania and Edwin demonstrated in the Quilting Memories project, themes can also illuminate commonalities among group members and their stories in a way that can serve as the basis for a group work of art.
LESSON 13: Program Planning

Supply List
- 3”x5” file cards (four)
- Tape or straight pins (for fastening cards to clothing)
- Strips of paper containing “seasons” or proverbs to describe periods of life
  (for example, a time to have a voice, a time to go through the motions, a time to believe anything was possible—see below for a full list of suggestions)
- Blank strips of paper

Directions
1. **Demonstration**
   a. The teaching artist or someone who is acting as a model tells their own life story. This is an important step, because it demonstrates the exercise and also sets up an atmosphere of intimacy and trust. The teaching artist (or the designated model storyteller) has to be comfortable revealing their story with honesty.
   b. The group reviews the story together to identify chronological periods. This is an opportunity for the teaching artist or storyteller to model finding the essence of personal stories, as they choose how much to retell and which details to emphasize.
   c. Group members come up with “seasons” or proverbs for each of the chronological periods. The teaching artist can suggest some from the strips of paper or elicit ideas from participants. Using proverbs allows participants to contribute sayings from their native country, culture, or region of the country.
   d. The storyteller chooses four of the seasons that really impacted their life—one each for mind, body, heart, and soul—and writes each one on an index card.
   e. Then the index cards are fastened to the storyteller’s body at an appropriate place. For example, if a time of innocence affected the storyteller’s soul, they would stick it to the place on their body they associated with their soul.

2. **Life story/seasons**
   a. Now participants think about their own lives and identify four seasons that impacted them, one each for mind, body, heart, and soul. They can choose from the strips of paper or create their own. They attach the seasons to their bodies.
   b. Participants tell a brief version of their life story to the group and say their four seasons. If the group is large, individuals might have one minute to share their story; if it is larger, the teaching artist can adjust the time limit to allow more time.

3. **Pair work**
   a. The teaching artist plays music while the participants move around the room and find someone else who has the same (or a similar) season. The pairs take turns sharing stories, with each person having about two minutes to share the story of their season. Playing music provides a feeling of privacy for the personal stories that are being shared. The teaching artist stops the music to signal that it is time to change partners.
   b. Repeat the story sharing with two more partners.
LESSON 13: Program Planning

4. **Writing**

Participants write down the three seasons that connected them to other group members. If this exercise is combined with a visual arts component, the writing is the beginning of that phase. Otherwise, the seasons can serve as a springboard for working with the material in forms such as memoir, poetry, dialogue, movement, or song lyrics.

**Seasons**

A. A time to:
- Love with no fear
- Be submissive
- Give without expecting anything back
- Learn and grow
- Discover love
- Discover betrayal
- Say goodbye to my _____________ (roots, parents, values, country, friends, pet)
- Create a home
- Face dysfunctional ________________ (patterns, parents, children . . .)
- Face my fears
- Wait in despair
- Go through the motions
- Travel
- Believe in anything
- Believe that anything was possible
- Become a mother, a father, a . . .

B. A time to be:
- Innocent
- Vulnerable
- Loved
- Betrayed
- Surprised by . . .
- Resentful
- Forgiven
- Confused

C. A time to have:
- A voice
- No voice
- Protection
- No protection
- A sense of satisfaction
- A sense of loss
LESSON 13: Program Planning

D. A time to feel:
   Sick
   Weak in spirit or body
   I could do anything I put my mind to
   I am the most beautiful thing . . .
   I don’t know what to do next
   I am getting old
   I am getting wise

Proverbs
Better late than never.
Nothing dries sooner than tears.
Fashion is more powerful than any tyrant.
Glory is the shadow of virtue.
If the wind will not serve, take to the oars.
Laugh at life; don't cry over it.
Fear, not kindness, restrains the wicked.
Don't whistle and drink at the same time.
When healthy, we all have wonderful advice for the sick.
What you didn't hope for happens more often than what you hoped for.
It's too late to ask advice when danger comes.
Nobody underestimates his own troubles.
When you have just climbed out of a deep well and are perched on top,
you are in the greatest danger of falling in again.
A man needs a good mirror to scrutinize his heart as well as his face.
It is stupid to complain about misfortune that is your own fault.
It is better to profit by a horrible example than to be one.
Life is short, but troubles make it longer.
The man you want to keep bound to you should be chained by food and drink.
Everybody lives; not everybody deserves to.
If fortune wants to do you in, she makes you stupid.
The man who inspects the saddle blanket instead of the horse is stupid;
most stupid is the man who judges another man by his clothes or his circumstances.
Fortune is glass; just when it gleams brightest, it shatters.
There is no point in seeking a remedy for a thunderbolt.
Nothing moves faster than gossip.
A fellow who gets more than he deserves wants more than he gets.
LESSON 13: Program Planning

The great thing is to know when to speak and when to keep quiet.
A fire can't throw a great light without burning something.
No man loses honor who had any in the first place.
Speech is given to many; intelligence to few.
The silence of a stupid man looks like wisdom.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What methods can you use to help older adults find the essence of a story?
Does this exercise inspire any ideas to use in your art form?
LESSON 13: Program Planning

LESSON 13 SUMMARY

"Program Planning " covered the basics of program planning and successful relationship building. It discussed advantages and how-to’s for partnering with other teaching artists and gave an example of a multi-disciplinary collaboration between teaching artists.

CHECK-IN: LEARNING GOALS

- Understand the basics of program planning for arts engagement with older adults
- Understand how to construct a multi-disciplinary project and partner with other teaching artists
- Be able to lead a writing/storytelling activity that can serve as the basis for a multi-disciplinary project

LESSON 13 NOTES

2. Ibid.
5. Katrina Watters (Education Associate, the Hoffman Performing Arts Institute at Ruth Eckerd Hall), email to author, May 28, 2013. Program evaluation form provided courtesy of the Hoffman Performing Arts Institute at Ruth Eckerd Hall and used with permission.
6. Robin Glazer (Director, the Creative Center at University Settlement), email to author, May 17, 2013.
8. Irania Patterson (Bilingual Specialist, Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Library) and Edwin Gil, interviews with author, March 18 and March 21, 2013. Content for the “Case Study: Quilting Memories” provided courtesy of Irania Patterson and Edwin Gil and used with permission.
GOALS

1. Know considerations for working with senior centers
2. Know considerations for working with retirement communities and long-term care facilities
3. Understand the concept of person-centered care and how it relates to the arts in aging field
4. Understand how to construct a project in partnership with a host facility
5. Have strategies for involving staff and professional caregivers in arts engagement activities

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What comes to mind for you when you think about working with senior centers?
With retirement communities?

WORKING WITH SENIOR CENTERS

Many teaching artists who work with older adults will work at one time or another in a senior center. There are 11,000 senior centers in the United States, serving approximately one million older adults each day. Senior centers are hubs for social, cultural, recreational, and wellness offerings and support a diverse population of elders in the communities where they are located. Older adults who use senior centers have a range of physical and cognitive abilities, but they are typically living in the community and are often able to transport themselves to activities. For many, participating in arts activities is new; as working adults, they may not have had the time or resources to take part in arts classes, and they may not see themselves as creative.

Senior centers are usually busy places with relatively few staff. The program director may wear many hats, so getting in contact can require persistence and flexibility. Laura Campbell, Day Elders Manager for the Volunteers of America Minnesota Southwest Center and a teaching artist, manages a program that integrates independent elders and those with higher needs for care from a day program. She offers the following pointers to teaching artists hoping to work with a senior center:

- **Do your research.** Have an initial meeting with staff to learn about the elders with whom you will be working and ask questions about how the partnership will work.
- **Check out the space.** Find out where your class will be held and make your needs known regarding the space and supplies.
- **Always have a meet-and-greet.** Build trust in potential participants by holding an introductory session before classes begin. Bring in some of your work to show...
LESSON 14: Partnerships

that you are a professional artist, let people ask questions, and lead a small sample project as a teaser and advertisement for classes.

• **Be prepared for new faces.** Attendance and participation tend to vary at senior centers, so you are unlikely to see the same group each time class meets. Develop lesson plans that can handle the variety.

• **Be encouraging and patient.** Realize that some participants may have an initial reluctance about doing art. If you hear "I can’t do this," do not give up. Encourage them to give it a try. If reluctance persists, start again in a different way.

• **Look for ways that people can participate.** One of the women who has attended workshops at the VOA MN Southwest Center is blind, but she has still been able to participate in visual arts projects. For a mask-making workshop, she and Laura made a mask together as she described her ideas. And in the mosaic project, she sorted tiles by feel for the group and set them up for people to use.

• **Know when to ask for help.** It is OK to ask for staff help, especially if you are working one-on-one with elders who might need more guidance or support. Senior center staff want the arts engagement experience to be a positive and memorable one for everyone involved, including the teaching artist.²

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What is a small sample project that you could lead at a meet-and-greet to spark interest in a class you would like to offer?

WORKING WITH RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES AND LONG-TERM CARE RESIDENCES

Ebenezer Ridges Intergenerational Campus in Burnsville, Minnesota is an intergenerational shared site, where children from the childcare center on campus and older adults from four entities (skilled nursing, assisted living, adult day center, and independent senior housing) receive services at the same location.³

When Andrea Lewandoski, Lifelong Learning/Intergenerational Coordinator at Ebenezer Ridges, set out to create programming for the site, she asked herself some important questions. “If I go out in the community and take art classes, I expect that I’m going to be taught by an expert,” she thought. “So, why are older adults isolated from that? How do we bring those experts to the people who live at Ebenezer Ridges?” Her desire to find the best answer to that question has shaped the Ebenezer Ridges Lifelong Learning Program, which is based on creating a community culture centered around intergenerational, creative arts, and faith-based initiatives. The lifelong learning community is now rich in music and arts workshops (clay, painting, dance, theater, and poetry) offered to the residents and day care participants through partnerships with local arts organizations and teaching artists.
Every resident of Ebenezer Ridges has the opportunity to participate in arts programming of some kind. When an individual enters the community, they complete an assessment to determine if they need the one-on-one attention of an art therapist or will benefit more from group art classes with a community artist. Residents who participate in art classes can then choose from more than a dozen weekly or monthly offerings led by top arts education organizations and teaching artists in the region.

**TEACHING ARTISTS AT EBENEZER RIDGES**

Ebenezer Ridges is selective about the teaching artists it engages. The artists must be aligned with the organization’s goal to empower older adults and children to discover new talents and explore creative outlets in a safe, supportive environment. Andrea looks for artists who have a background in working with older adults and doing intergenerational programming and who have experience working in a health care facility. Teaching artists who work at Ebenezer Ridges have to understand that they are working in a shared space; arts workshops are held in the multi-purpose room, which also serves as the chapel. If the chapel has to be used for a funeral and the arts workshop has to be moved, the teaching artist needs to be able to adapt. The teaching artist has to be good with people, since the residents want to know their providers as individuals. Andrea also wants to see that the artist has developed lesson plans in their art form with goals, objectives, and an outline of activities.

Interviews for new teaching artists typically last about two hours. Andrea talks with the artist about their background and experience and about Ebenezer Ridges. Then she gives them a tour of the space and an overview of what to expect if they work at the site. Some of the topics she touches on include space usage, timing during workshops, modifications for accessibility, and the importance of relationship-building.

Andrea emphasizes that it is important for teaching artists who begin working at Ebenezer Ridges to develop a rapport with staff. The staff know the residents and can assist the teaching artist when needed. However, activities or event staff may not have a background in the arts or creative aging, so that is something teaching artists can share with them.

**A TEAM EFFORT**

Andrea and the Lifelong Learning team are actively involved in their arts programs from development to evaluation. They work collaboratively with teaching artists to develop an outline for each program for the year. Then the teaching artist creates lesson plans based on the outline and presents them to the team. As the year rolls out, the team monitors whether the artist is staying on track to meet the program goals. The team also carries out evaluation with participants, staff, and volunteers, typically using standardized evaluations that they adapt for each group. Andrea also coaches teaching artists on how to make classes accessible and successful by doing such things as reminding residents to adapt activities for their bodies, stating ground rules at each class meeting, and pacing the class appropriately for the participants.
LESSON 14: Partnerships

Teaching artists at Ebenezer Ridges also receive professional development in the form of training on grief and loss and on working with people who have a cognitive disability. The Lifelong Learning team works with teaching artists to help them incorporate rituals to acknowledge and honor residents who pass away. They also help teaching artists understand what participants might be going through as they deal with the losses and frustrations of aging, as well as medical conditions. However, Andrea stresses that teaching artists should not spend too much time focusing on what residents cannot do, but should instead work with what they can do.

**REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

How appealing would you find it to work as a teaching artist at a site like Ebenezer Ridges?

What do you like about their model for working with teaching artists?

If you could, who would you invite to be on your Lifelong Learning team?

**PERSON-CENTERED CARE**

As the demand for quality arts programming grows in health care and long-term care facilities, there will be more opportunities for artists to work in these environments. The concept of person-centered care is the cornerstone of a movement to transform these settings. This movement, known in the aging services field as “culture change,” emphasizes the creation of environments “where both older adults and their caregivers are able to express choice and practice self-determination in meaningful ways at every level of daily life.” Service providers are seeking ways to promote choice, dignity, respect, self-determination, and purposeful living.

At its most basic, person-centered care is about listening to older adults and their family members and respecting their wishes. As teaching artists elicit and honor the stories and art work of their older participants, especially if they engage staff and family caregivers in the process as well, they invite all the parties involved to see the older adult in a new light and to value them as self-directed persons with a meaningful past and voice in the present.

The principles that form the basis of learner-centered programming are also at the heart of culture change. As a result, teaching artists can both support their host facilities in achieving a person-centered culture and act as agents of culture change and transformation. Retirement communities and assisted living facilities that operate with a person-centered or resident-centered philosophy are often good partners for teaching artists because they tend to be forward-thinking and value the opportunity for self-expression and the increased quality of life that the art programming brings to their constituents. The following section describes such a community and its approach to working with teaching artists.
WIDENING THE CIRCLE: INVOLVING STAFF AND PROFESSIONAL CAREGIVERS

A crucial part of cultivating robust programming in retirement communities, health care facilities, and day programs is finding ways to involve as many of the members of the community in arts programming as possible. This relationship-building is central to the work of KAIROS ALIVE!, an intergenerational modern dance company in Minneapolis, which has an extensive and award-winning history of working with older adults at residential and day settings in the greater Twin Cities area.

Founder and director Maria Genné notes that there are several reasons to engage staff, professional caregivers, and volunteers. First, they can provide invaluable support during art classes and workshops, especially when one is working with older adults who may need assistance to fully participate in activities. Taking part in arts classes also allows staff members and caregivers to see artists working collaboratively with participants and to pick up ideas they can use during the week. The classes provide opportunities for caregivers and participants to find mutual creative moments; this can level the playing field between them and make the relationship more satisfying for both parties. In addition, staff and caregivers may like participating—it can be a fun change from their routine, offer them the chance to try something new, and possibly make their work more enjoyable.

START AT THE TOP

Maria recommends that teaching artists build a strong foundation for their partnership by engaging top decision-makers at the beginning. Make a case for arts programming by presenting research that shows how the arts contribute to the health and well-being of older adults. If it is possible to meet with administrators in person, offer a short, interactive presentation that explains the benefits of arts programming, describes how you propose to work with participants, and demonstrates the work through a short, accessible activity. A successful meeting like this can win buy-in and result in organizational support that can make it easier for the teaching artist to get staff on board and access space and materials.

Use the buy-in from the initial meeting to get agreement from the administration that at least one to two staff people or volunteers will be present at arts classes. Then keep administrators in the loop by inviting them to observe or participate. This helps them understand that the impact of the programming is more profound because you are working with staff and volunteers. This can raise the value of your arts programming in their eyes, and they will be more likely to see it as bringing added value to their overall programming.

KEEP COMMUNICATION FLOWING

Consistent communication is a key to nurturing the relationship. This applies to staff at all positions in the organization, including frontline caregivers and facilities staff, who play an important role in helping teaching artists access and set up spaces. However, it is especially important for the main program contact, whether it be an activities director, a program manager, or a clinician. If the teaching artist is leading an ongoing program, it is helpful to meet monthly to review program goals and assess progress against the goals.
LESSON 14: Partnerships

The teaching artist can offer their observations about participation in the program and its effects and can ask what their contact has observed or heard as well.

This is especially valuable because the staff and caregivers may notice changes in the participants or the facility that happen after the teaching artist is gone. For example, Maria found out in one of these discussions that in the long-term care facility where she and her teaching artists were leading a program, the residents’ call lights for nursing attention decreased by 90 percent during and after her dance workshops.

CREATE AN INVITING ATMOSPHERE

Even though teaching artists are supporting the work of the staff and caregivers at the program sites, it can be challenging at times to gain their participation. Often they are dealing with heavy workloads and constant demands for attention from those in their care. The appearance of a teaching artist may be taken as a signal that caregivers can turn their attention to other pressing tasks or take a breather. In addition, like the elders they serve, they may have some anxiety or discomfort about participating in arts activities if they are entering unfamiliar territory. Therefore, it is vital to keep inviting staff and caregivers into the circle of participation in a way that makes them feel truly welcome.

Teaching artists can feed a positive relationship with staff and caregivers by greeting them in a friendly way and learning their names. They can let nursing staff know about the arts programming that is happening and help them understand that the programs are in place to support their work. The clinical staff, caregivers, and volunteers can also be tapped as a resource about participants. For example, asking them to make a list of the favorite things of the individuals who participate in programming can help deepen the work.

MANY WAYS TO PARTICIPATE

When staff, caregivers, or volunteers attend programs, the teaching artist can find many ways for them to participate. This can mean asking them to help with name tags or encouraging them to notice things from conversations during the week with the individuals in their care that might be pertinent in the arts class. Shared experiences, such as the sighting of a favorite bird or the enjoyment of a cherished song, can provide material for the teaching artist to use to make classes more meaningful for participants. When themes are explored, staff and caregivers can also be invited to share their stories as part of the process. Above all, teaching artists need to be careful not to make staff and caregivers feel uncomfortable with the creative process and the teaching artist’s way of approaching it. The teaching artist can model and give direction during workshops but should avoid correcting staff in public. If staff or caregivers need more guidance, the teaching artist can coach them in private, always treating them with respect as colleagues.

As Maria and the teaching artists of KAIROS ALIVE! demonstrate on a regular basis, building community is essential to the work of the teaching artist. The inclusivity that is a cornerstone of arts engagement with older adults must extend to staff, caregivers, and volunteers if it is to have a truly significant impact on the elders’ lives and communities. Teaching artists have many tools and can find many opportunities for including people in the circle of participation. This effort, in turn, pays off for everyone involved.
CASE STUDY: EMPTY BOWLS, FULL OF MEANING

Opportunities for teaching artists to help build community among older adults and those in their lives come in many forms. As we have seen in this training, connections may be cultivated among elders during arts workshops, strengthened between residents and caregivers as they as continue arts activities during the week, or nurtured between elders and youth in their neighborhood through a shared creative passion. The teaching artist is central to bringing these possibilities to life. Doing so requires that they seek them with intention and leverage their knowledge, skills, and partnerships to turn them into reality. The results can be extremely rewarding.

This has proven true for Angie Renee, ceramics artist and teaching artist with Northern Clay Center, a ceramic arts organization in Minneapolis. Angie has been working with Northern Clay Center for about four and a half years, leading several ceramics classes weekly with older adults in assisted living and long-term care residences and at day programs. For most of that time, she led classes with a similar approach: she would select a project, demonstrate it for participants, and assist them as they worked on it. There would be a little social chit-chat before classes, but not much other interaction. After a while, she started wishing the classes had more meaning and connection, but was not sure how to make it happen.

A turning point came in November 2012 when she attended an arts and aging training offered by Minneapolis-based ARTSAGE with support from the Minnesota State Arts Board. There she heard about the importance of mastery and social engagement when working with older adults and learned methods for incorporating elders’ stories into arts experiences. She was inspired to make changes in her classes right away.

A New Way of Working

Her first step was to set up a meeting with Andrea Lewandoski at Ebenezer Ridges Campus, where Angie teaches three classes each week. They talked about how Angie could make her classes and projects more meaningful. Together they came up with several ideas that Angie began implementing right away.

Now Angie opens her classes with a poem or quote related to the theme, which sometimes leads to discussion. She also works questions in during class that relate personally to participants. That has led people to start sharing stories with one another and interacting on a whole new level. In one class, a question about favorite birds led to talk of hunting escapades. In another class, it turned out that everyone had a story about farming. Pretty soon, there were small groups talking about their farm days. Now those elders are making friends with people they did not connect with before.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What is one easy way that you could include staff, caregivers, or volunteers in a workshop in your art form?
Angie has also changed the way that participants show their work to one another. Since participants complete their projects at different speeds, some finish class and leave before others. So Angie shows each participant’s work around before they leave for the day. Then the group has another showing at the beginning of each class, when they unwrap the pieces that have been fired from the last session. This way, elders see one another’s work twice. This approach has prompted conversation about techniques and how various results were achieved, which not only increases the level of social engagement but promotes mastery as well.

Another change Angie has made is to begin collaborating with poets to create multi-disciplinary projects. Her participants are now able to stamp their original poetry onto their ceramic pieces; for one project, they are creating poetry tiles that will hang on a fence in their complex and create a walking poem for visitors to enjoy. This will be one way that they have impacted their community with their art work since Angie has changed her teaching approach, but it will not be the only one. They can already boast about being part of the Empty Bowls project that will be feeding staff at Ebenezer Ridges for months.

The Empty Bowls Project

The Empty Bowls project was inspired by some disturbing news about Ebenezer Ridges Campus staff members that Angie received from Andrea Lewandoski. Andrea had learned via the chaplain that immigrant staff members were going hungry at lunchtime because they were sending money to relatives in their native countries. This was not good for the staff members or the residents. How could staff be expected to take care of other people when their own stomachs were empty?

Andrea and Angie talked together about what they might do, and the Empty Bowls project was born. Dozens of clay bowls would be created for a soup luncheon that would raise money for lunches for the staff. All three ceramics classes at Ebenezer Ridges were recruited to participate, and they began making bowls. Each week, Angie would show them another aspect of the craft of bowl-making, and they would add to their collection of bowls. Participants were really excited; they liked the idea of helping others, and they expressed a lot of joy about it. During the creation process, they talked with one another about soup, about service to others, and about what it means to be hungry. As they worked, they put a lot of thought into making their bowls as beautiful as possible.

When the soup luncheon neared, nurses, staff, and residents from each floor prepared soup, which was served in the bowls the elders had made; these bowls were sent home with attendees as an expression of gratitude for their generosity. In a big ceramic bowl at the door were collected voluntary offerings from about 300 staff, family, and community members who attended. At the end of the luncheon, the bowl was full. The luncheon raised more than $1,000 for lunch supplies for staff members. Everyone who was involved with the endeavor was thrilled.

Angie has been thrilled too with what has happened since she followed her desire to make her sessions with older adults more meaningful. She has found it easy to implement the ideas she learned in her training and is much more satisfied with her work. Her intention has always
been to help participants understand that everyone has creativity in them, and this is still at the heart of what she does. But now there is an added depth and richness that is reverberating for her participants and all the people who are fed, in one way or another, by the art they make.

LESSON 14: Partnerships

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What is one thing that you find especially meaningful about your work (or the idea of working) with older adults?

Is there anything that would enhance this aspect of your work?
LESSON 14: Partnerships

LESSON 14 SUMMARY

"Partnerships" discussed considerations for working in common settings such as senior centers and residential communities. It also presented an approach for involving staff, professional caregivers, and volunteers in the artistic process. The lesson closed with a look at a project that was developed in collaboration between a teaching artist and a retirement community.

CHECK-IN: LEARNING GOALS

- Know considerations for working with senior centers
- Know considerations for working with retirement communities and long-term care facilities
- Understand the concept of person-centered care and how it relates to the arts in aging field
- Understand how to construct a project in partnership with a host facility
- Have strategies for involving staff and professional caregivers in arts engagement activities

LESSON 14 NOTES

2. Laura Campbell (Day Elders Manager, Volunteers of America Minnesota Southwest Senior Center), interview with author, February 27, 2013. Content provided courtesy of Laura Campbell and VOA Minnesota and used with permission.
3. Andrea Lewandoski, interview with author, February 14, 2013. Content for the "Working with Retirement Communities and Long-Term Care Residences" section provided courtesy of Ebenezer Ridges Campus and used with permission.
6. Angie Renee (teaching artist, Northern Clay Center), interview with author, March 15, 2013. Contents for the "Case Study: Empty Bowls, Full of Meaning" provided courtesy of Angie Renee and used with permission.
REFLECTION

This training has presented an introduction to the field of arts and aging, with concepts, research, and methods that can help you pursue arts engagement work with older adults.

REFLECTION

Take a few moments now to reflect on your learning in this training. What have you gained? What is the most important thing you are taking away?

Think about how you have changed since you began this training. What is different about you now that you have completed it? What do you think will be different about your work with older adults as a teaching artist?

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE PROMPTS

LESSON 1

Do you think creativity is important as people age? Why?

How has your personal creativity changed as you’ve aged?

What is your definition of creativity?

LESSON 2

Based on what you have learned so far, why might participating in the arts be beneficial for older adults?

Imagine you are talking to someone about your work, perhaps an administrator of an assisted living facility or a funder that supports health-related projects. How could you make a case, using research-based evidence, for the benefits of arts participation for older adults? What might you say to help them understand how your work can help them achieve health and well-being outcomes for the older adults they serve?

Imagine that you are talking with a professional acquaintance in health care or aging services about your work. If that person asked you to talk about the “art therapy you’re doing with older adults,” what would you say?

LESSON 3

What does lifelong learning mean to you?

Examine your biases: do you think there are times in our lives when we cannot be lifelong learners? Do you think there are people or populations that cannot be lifelong learners?

Do you consider yourself a lifelong learner? Why or why not?

What is one way in which adult learners differ from the young learners that you may have worked with or known?

If you are not familiar with young learners, which one of the characteristics of adult learners most sparks your interest right now?

What is one specific way you could honor this characteristic as you work with older adults?
Effective arts and aging programs intentionally foster social engagement by creating opportunities for meaningful interaction. Thinking of a group that you work with (or would like to work with), what is one way that you can build meaningful interaction into the group’s activities?

Would you include it during the creative process or set aside time separately? What kind of structure would you provide to encourage interaction?

LESSON 4
What is one thing you do as a facilitator in your arts workshops to create a positive learning environment?

How do you know if learning is happening? How do you know if you are effectively facilitating?

Are you more comfortable sitting back and letting learning happen or actively leading the learning?

What makes for effective arts programming?

What learning goals do you have for the arts and aging work that you do?

How can you measure if these goals were met?

How can you assess the quality of the learning and the work involved?

Imagine two older adults with differing physical or mental abilities who might participate in an arts engagement workshop with you. How might you scale the same technique or task to help each one feel challenged and yet achieve success?

In what ways do you (or will you) help the older adults in your workshops find their unique mark?

How can you support unique mark-making while ensuring rigorous arts-based learning?

LESSON 5
How do you as a teaching artist invite individuals into the artistic process?

What challenges have you faced in the past with learning differences and disabilities?

How do you approach individualized instruction in your teaching?

What can you do to make the creative process in your workshops more accessible?

How can you improve sound, visuals, movement, or materials to make them more accessible to more individuals?

What about the space you are using or intend to use?

What is needed to make it more accessible?
Thinking about working with older adults with cognitive impairment, what is your approach to facilitating arts workshops?

If you are new to working with adults with cognitive impairment, what stands out to you about Anthony’s approach that you might apply in your own work?

LESSON 6

What about your art form and personal practice as an artist lends itself to intergenerational learning?

What are three challenges you foresee in implementing intergenerational learning programs?

How is the intergenerational EngAGE claymation project a good example of social engagement, mastery, and lifelong learning for the older adults who participate as mentors?

How might you use a timeline exercise such as this when working with an intergenerational group in your art form?

How appealing would you find it to work as a teaching artist at a site like Ebenezer Ridges?

What do you like about their model for working with teaching artists?

If you could, who would you invite to be on your Lifelong Learning team?

LESSON 7

What techniques have you used to help people access personal memories or imagination for art-making?

Can you think of a personal story from an older adult that has impacted you? Maybe it was a relative, a neighbor, a teacher, or a friend who shared a piece of their life with you.

How did the story affect you?

Did it change the way you thought about yourself or the world?

What kinds of items do you currently have or use to stimulate the senses of your participants?

If you were to build a kit of sensory items for sparking memory or imagination, what might you include? Think about appealing to a variety of senses.

How might you use visualization with older adults as a pathway into art-making in your art form?

How could you design a pair-work exercise to stimulate imagination rather than memory?

What would you ask the partners to use as a focus?

What questions might they ask one another?
LESSON 8

Based on what you already know, how would you (or do you) create a safe environment for participants to share their life stories in your workshops?

Which three of the themes listed for beginning or established groups do you think would be most suitable or appealing to use in a visualization or pair-work for a group you currently work with (or would like to work with)?

A participant in your class remembers a painful childhood memory during a sense memory visualization. She is visibly upset and crying as she tells her story to her partner, who is listening silently. The next activity will be for partners to share their stories with the larger group. How could you handle this situation?

Describe an activity that a group might use to share short reminiscences using your art form. You can adapt one of the exercises already mentioned or create your own.

LESSON 9

What is one idea you have right now for an arts workshop with older adults? What would you like participants to learn or be able to do by the end of the session?

Thinking about the workshop idea you had at the beginning of the lesson, what objectives might you develop? How could you assess participants’ progress toward them?

Think of a workshop idea: what sequence of activities would you follow?

How much time would you allot for each step in the sequence?

In what ways did the teaching artists take participants from familiar to more challenging activities in this Music for Life session? How does this resemble the way that you have structured the sequence of activities for your arts workshop idea?

LESSON 10

What is most challenging for you about adapting your work for a variety of participants?

How would you adapt your workshop ideas from previous lessons for a setting where participants’ needs and abilities differ from those in your original description?

Choose a setting or group of participants that interest you. If the previous lesson is not fresh in your mind now, think about how you might adapt a workshop that you have developed (or are developing).

Thinking about your art form and perhaps about the workshop you used in the previous section, how would you design a session to meet the needs of older adults with cognitive disabilities?

What elements of routine would you include to help participants feel oriented and comfortable?
How do you want to approach process and product in working with older adults? Have you found this section provocative, inspiring, or affirming? Why? How might it relate to the workshop you have been thinking about in this lesson or one you would like to develop?

**LESSON 11**

What rituals do you already maintain in your personal practice?

How did these rituals come about?

Why do you have them?

How would you (or do you) create a space that invites participation and creativity in older adults? What would you (or do you) do to make it feel special?

What ritual or routine might you use to open the workshop you have been developing in this lesson?

How might you carry this ritual through at the end of the session?

Thinking of an instrument or tool that participants would use in the workshop you have been developing in this lesson, how would you familiarize them with it? How might you use imagery or metaphor to enliven this orientation? If this does not apply to the session you have been developing, think of an instrument or tool that participants might regularly use.

How is this process of seeing art similar to or different from the way you normally talk about art with your workshop participants?

What about it, if anything, might you try with your participants?

**LESSON 12**

How do you design a workshop so that there is room for improvisation, going with the flow, etc.?

As a teaching artist, how comfortable are you without using formal structure in your teaching?

How comfortable are with leading formally structured exercises?

How might you adapt or extend the Name Game using your art form?

Is there a “passing” exercise that you could use in your workshops to allow participants to build on the work that another participant starts?

How might you use call and response in your workshops with older adults?

How might you use a timed activity to help older adults in your workshops free up their creative energy?

How have you encouraged listening in the groups you work with?

How might you use the deep listening exercise with one of your groups (or a group you would like to work with)?
REFLECTION

How might you incorporate mirroring exercises into workshops for older adults based on your art form?
Could they be integrated with other elements of your art form?
Could they be used as a way to inspire art making?
How is movement—involving either fine motor or gross motor skills—a part of your workshops with older adults?
How is it accompanied by creative activities that provide mental stimulation?
What ideas does this body percussion exercise inspire in you as you think about working with older adults?
How might you use a similar exercise in your art form or play with rhythm in your workshops?
What is one idea you have now about how the stories of your older adult participants can be woven into your workshops in your art form?
If you are a non-movement artist, what ideas do you have for incorporating movement into your programs?
How do the feedback processes described in this section resemble the feedback process you use (or would like to use)?
How are you planning to incorporate feedback into workshops that you lead? You may think about it in a general sense or in relation to a particular workshop you are developing.
What from these exercises, if anything, would you like to try? Do they inspire any ideas in you for closing exercises?

LESSON 13
From your perspective, who should be involved in planning arts programming for older adults?
What were the results of your self-assessment in this section?
What do you know about the kind of organizations or settings you would prefer?
If you could collaborate with another teaching artist, which discipline would you choose?
Would you partner with someone who shares your art form or develop a multi-disciplinary project?
How have you collaborated/how do you collaborate in your personal practice?
What do you think worked well about this project?
In what ways did Irania and Edwin collaborate successfully?
What methods can you use to help older adults find the essence of a story?
Does this exercise inspire any ideas to use in your art form?
LESSON 14
What comes to mind for you when you think about working with senior centers?
With retirement communities?
What is a small sample project that you could lead at a meet-and-greet to spark interest in a class you would like to offer?
How appealing would you find it to work as a teaching artist at a site like Ebenezer Ridges?
What do you like about their model for working with teaching artists?
If you could, who would you invite to be on your Lifelong Learning team?
What is one easy way that you could include staff, caregivers, or volunteers in a workshop in your art form?
What is one thing that you find especially meaningful about your work (or the idea of working) with older adults?
Is there anything that would enhance this aspect of your work?

WHAT’S NEXT?
We hope that you are now feeling inspired and empowered to pursue arts engagement work with older adults or to deepen your existing work. If you are ready to apply what you have learned from this training, your next steps will probably depend on whether you already have experience doing arts engagement work with older adults.

If you are new to being a teaching artist: You will benefit greatly from firsthand experience and additional training. It is strongly recommended that you seek out a skilled teaching artist who can mentor you in the ins and outs of being a community artist and working with older adults. Teaching artists who work with older adults may be found through creative aging networks and organizations and through state, county, and local arts agencies that have rosters of teaching artists. Find a partner site with whom you can begin your work with older adults.

If you already have experience as a teaching artist but are new to working with older adults: You may wish to begin seeking out partners with whom you would like to work. If these partners already engage teaching artists, consider arranging observations or approaching one of their teaching artists about assisting with or collaborating on a project or program at the partner site. You will learn a great deal by being in the environment and seeing how arts workshops and programs with older adults differ from those with younger learners.

If you already have experience as a teaching artist working with older adults: Perhaps you will simply experience a sense of validation about the work that you have been doing and feel part of a community of like-minded souls in a new way. You may also think about

Manual for Artist Training in Arts and Aging
REFLECTION

how you will use what you have learned to deepen and enrich your work. Perhaps you will experiment with one or two new ideas or techniques. You may also find that you would like to shift your approach to be more improvisational, or to have more social engagement, or to incorporate other artists and art forms into your classes. Perhaps you would like to cultivate additional partnerships or strengthen the ones you have to promote program sustainability. All of these possibilities, and more, are yours to explore.

No matter how you choose to use what you have gained from this training, we hope that you will go forward with a belief in yourself as a teaching artist and a confidence in the older adults with whom you work as creative beings. Together you can bring much to the world.
RESOURCES

AGING

CREATIVE AGING AND LIFELONG LEARNING

ARTS ENGAGEMENT
RESOURCES


REMINISCENCE AND LIFE STORY


WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE AND RELATED NEUROCOGNITIVE DISORDERS


ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS

Alzheimer’s Poetry Project (APP) (Brooklyn, New York)
http://www.alzpoetry.com/
APP offers online training and certification as well as two publications (one in English, one in English and Spanish) that contain poems and tips for using poetry to connect to people living with Alzheimer’s disease and related neurocognitive disorders.

ARTSAGE (Minneapolis, Minnesota)
http://www.artsagemn.org/
ARTSAGE is a creative aging organization that develops, implements, and supports creative arts opportunities for older adults throughout Minnesota. It offers training to teaching artists and organizations, and it partners with teaching artists to deliver programming to older adults.

Center on Age & Community (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)
The Center on Age & Community, founded in 2001 through the work of a team of aging services providers, funders, and University of Wisconsin Milwaukee faculty, is transforming into the UWM Center on Aging and Translational Research. The current Center on Age & Community website will gradually become home for the Creative Trust, an alliance dedicated to fostering lifelong learning through the arts. The Creative Trust aims to share programming information, ideas, and opportunities, and to create and collaborate on innovative, intergenerational programming.

Center for Arts in Medicine at the University of Florida (Gainesville, Florida)
http://www.arts.ufl.edu/cam/
The Center for Arts in Medicine at the University of Florida offers undergraduate and graduate courses and certificate programs related to the use of the arts to enhance individual and community health and to impact health care environments. A Master of Arts in Arts in Medicine is under development and planned to launch in 2014.

Creative Aging Network-NC (Greensboro, North Carolina)
http://www.can-nc.org/
CAN-NC complements, enhances, and initiates creative programming in existing aging service organizations in North Carolina by providing education and training to staff as well as artists.

Creative Aging Pinellas (Clearwater, Florida)
http://www.creativeagingpinellas.org/main/Home.php
Creative Aging Pinellas is a collaboration of arts, aging services, government, education, and community members that share an interest in raising public awareness about the benefits of creative aging programs. It is coordinated by the Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute at Ruth Eckerd Hall and maintains a database of visual, performing, media, and literary arts resources, including teaching artists, in Pinellas County.

The Creative Center at University Settlement (New York, New York)
http://www.universitysettlement.org/us/programs/the_creative_center/
The Creative Center is a program dedicated to bringing the creative arts to people with cancer and chronic illnesses and through all stages of life. It offers training and publications related to arts in health care and creative aging for artists and administrators.
The Creative Trust Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)
http://creativetrustmke.squarespace.com/?r=57122199

The Creative Trust is an alliance of programming and administrative staff of long term care communities in the Milwaukee area; faculty, students and staff at UWM’s Peck School of the Arts; and educational staff of area arts/culture institutions whose shared goal is to foster life-long learning through the arts.

Dance Exchange (Takoma Park, Maryland)
http://danceexchange.org/

Dance Exchange is an intergenerational company of artists that creates dance and engages people in making art. It offers an annual summer institute to train dancers, choreographers, and artists in community engagement methods for people of all ages and abilities. It also provides an online toolbox of theory and methods and a published guide to Liz Lerman’s Critical Response Process, a facilitated feedback process for works in progress.

Dance for PD (Brooklyn, New York)
http://danceforparkinsons.org/

Dance for PD® offers training programs for dancers, dance instructors, and other professionals who want to introduce people with Parkinson’s Disease to the joys and benefits of a customized dance experience.

Elders Share the Arts (ESTA) (Brooklyn, New York)
http://www.estanyc.org/

Founded by Susan Perlstein, ESTA is the creator of the Living History Arts methodology and a trailblazer in intergenerational arts programming. It offers trainings and publications related to arts and aging programming.

Generations United (Washington, D.C.)
http://www.gu.org/

Generations United improves the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational collaboration, public policies, and programs for the enduring benefit for all. It offers webinars, trainings, and publications related to intergenerational programming and also operates the National Center on Intergenerational Shared Sites.

Global Alliance for Arts & Health (Washington, D.C.)

The Global Alliance for Arts & Health is dedicated to advancing the arts as integral to health care around the world. It offers online resources and educational opportunities related to arts in health care.

Intergenerational Center at Temple University (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)
http://templeigc.org/

The Intergenerational Center, created in 1979, strengthens communities by bringing generations together to address critical concerns and creating opportunities for lifelong civic engagement. The knowledge and experience the center has accumulated enables it to develop, evaluate, and replicate innovative programs, offer high-quality training and consultation; and conduct research that examines the impact of its work and identifies promising practices.
RESOURCES

International Council on Active Aging (ICAA) (Vancouver, British Columbia)
http://www.icaa.cc/

ICAA connects a community of like-minded organizations and professionals that share the goals of changing society's perceptions of aging and improving the quality of life for aging Baby Boomers and older adults within the seven dimensions of wellness (emotional, vocational, physical, spiritual, intellectual, social, and environmental). The council supports these professionals with education, information, resources, and tools so that they can achieve optimal success.

LeadingAge (Washington, DC)
http://www.leadingage.org/

LeadingAge is an association of 6,000 not-for-profit organizations dedicated to making America a better place to grow old. It advances policies, conducts research, and promotes practices that support, enable and empower people to live fully as they age.

Lifetime Arts (New Rochelle, New York)
http://www.lifetimearts.org/

Lifetime Arts operates the Lifetime Arts Libraries Project, which partners with teaching artists to deliver arts programming to older adults through library systems. Lifetime Arts also maintains a national online directory of teaching artists and organizations that provide arts programming to older adults and offers training in creative aging to teaching artists.

MoMA Alzheimer's Project (New York, New York)
http://www.moma.org/meetme/

The MoMA Alzheimer's Project is the nationwide expansion of the art and dementia programs of the Museum of Modern Art, including Meet Me at MoMA, the museum's outreach program for individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers. The project broadens the reach of these programs through the development of resources that can be used by museums, assisted living facilities, and community organizations serving people with dementia and their caregivers. Its website contains all of the content from Meet Me: Making Art Accessible to People with Dementia, a comprehensive resource for creating art programs for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers.

Music for People (MFP) (Goshen, Connecticut)
http://musicforpeople.org/my/

Music for People is an international network that promotes an improvisational approach to the expressive arts—especially music—with the goal of empowering people to take part in, rather than just being passive observers of, the arts. Music for People offers trainings, workshops, and other participatory programs for people of all experience levels. Ongoing programs are currently offered in the United States and Switzerland. Members receive the Connections newsletter, published three times a year by MFP, as well as an annually published Directory of Improvisers and Resource Catalog and Teacher Referral Listing.

National Center for Creative Aging (NCCA) (Washington, D.C.)
http://www.creativeaging.org/

Dedicated to fostering an understanding of the vital relationship between creative expression and quality of life for older adults, the National Center for Creative Aging is the national clearinghouse at the nexus of creativity and aging. The NCCA provides technical assistance, education, research, and advocacy through a variety of programs, with the overarching goal of ensuring that all people have an opportunity to participate in high-quality arts engagement programs. The NCCA offers online resources related to creative aging, including archived webinars, research studies, and publications. It also operates the Directory of Creative Aging Programs in America.
RESOURCES

National Institute on Aging (NIA) (Bethesda, Maryland)
http://www.nia.nih.gov/

The NIA seeks to discover what may contribute to a healthy old age as well as to understand and address the disease and disability sometimes associated with growing older. Its research program covers a broad range of areas, from the study of basic cellular changes that occur with age to the examination of the biomedical, social, and behavioral aspects of age-related conditions, including Alzheimer’s disease. It offers online consumer-oriented information on a wide range of topics important to older people and their families.

Project Zero (Cambridge, Massachusetts)
http://www.pzweb.harvard.edu

Project Zero is an educational research group at the Harvard Graduate School of Education composed of multiple, independently-sponsored research projects. Since 1967, Project Zero has examined the development of learning processes in children, adults, and organizations. Today, Project Zero’s work includes investigations into the nature of intelligence, understanding, thinking, creativity, ethics, and other essential aspects of human learning.

Songwriting Works (Port Townsend, Washington)
http://www.songwritingworks.org/

With a mission to restore music-making into everyday life, Songwriting WorksTM offers services and opportunities for musicians of all ages, backgrounds, and musical genres. Hands-on and long-distance learning workshops, trainings, and individual coaching provide musicians with new and innovative approaches to being of service to their muse and their community through music.

Stagebridge Senior Theatre (Oakland, California)
http://stagebridge.org/

Stagebridge Senior Theatre Stagebridge is America’s most acclaimed and innovative senior theatre company. It is the leading creator of senior storytelling and theatre programs, which reach multigenerational audiences through instruction and performance. Managed by a small professional staff, the company is composed of nearly 200 teaching artists and elder students, who average 70 years of age. It offers technical assistance to organizations in developing performing arts programs for well elders and training materials to support replication of its acclaimed Storybridge program, which teaches older adults to mentor students through storytelling.

TimeSlips (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)
http://www.timeslips.org/

TimeSlips is an improvisational storytelling method that replaces the pressure to remember with the freedom to imagine. It offers online and in-person trainings for teaching artists and other professionals interested in facilitating storytelling sessions with older adults with memory loss.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


BIBLIOGRAPHY


Manzanero, Armando. “Contigo Aprendí.”


Patterson, Michael C. and Susan Perlstein. “Good for the Heart, Good for the Soul: The Creative Arts and Brain Health in Later Life.” Generations, 2011.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


