

Legacy

GRANDPARENTS DAY EVENT PLANNING OVERVIEW

A complete planning guide for a Grandparents Day event is available free online at www.legacyproject.org. Here's an overview to get you started. Your event can be simple and informal, or more elaborate. Don't feel obligated to implement all of the suggestions below; choose those that are appropriate for your particular situation. For each item you decide to implement, choose someone who will be responsible for the item, outline what they need to do, and set deadlines. Planning well ahead is important to your event's success. Choose a model and a coordinator before the school year begins. Then include the event in your calendar, newsletters, website, etc. so that everyone knows it's coming. If you're compiling a mailing list, get names by sending a letter to parents a couple of months in advance. Send out the actual invitations to grandparents three to four weeks ahead, and then compile a complete list of attendees.

1. Model: Choose the date for your event, what you're going to call it (e.g. Grandparents Day, Generations Day), the format for the day, who will participate, and how you'll cover your expenses. You can also decide whether this will be an annual event, and promote it as such.

2. Coordinator: Choose a school administrator, teacher, parent, or grandparent.

3. Committee: Assign one person per category: mailing list & invitations; RSVPs; day schedule; assembly; teacher activity ideas; food; decorations & displays; fundraising; volunteer outreach; publicity; registration; follow-up.

4. Mailing List & Invitations: Involve parents in choosing who to invite. Consider also including a local seniors center.

5. RSVPs: Compile a list of attendees; try for one grandparent/grandfriend per child. Let teachers know who's coming.

6. Day Schedule: Develop a program for the day and send a copy to all teachers. You may want to start with an assembly – bringing everyone together helps grandparents feel comfortable – followed by a school tour. Emphasize classroom time, with teachers choosing activities (see activity ideas at www.legacyproject.org). Have a parent or grandparent volunteer serve as official photographer (take photos of people and activities; consider “grandparent/grandchild portraits”). Arrange for grandparent interviewers (e.g. student reporters can collect quotes from grandparents throughout the day).

7. Food: Offering refreshments can add to the event's success. Have snacks (e.g. baking) OR a full meal (usually lunch, sometimes a brunch or breakfast). Don't forget to arrange for coffee, tea, juice, etc. and supplies like cups, plates, and

napkins. Make arrangements for chairs and tables with a set-up crew, food servers, and clean-up crew.

8. Decorations & Displays: Give grandparents something to look at and children a chance to shine. Display schoolwork and art in the halls. Decorate the assembly area with artwork, streamers, and balloons. If you're having a snack or meal, children can make table decorations (e.g. placemats, flowers). Don't forget to assign a set-up crew and clean-up crew.

9. Fundraising: A school full of grandparents is a wonderful opportunity! Use the heartwarming bestseller *A Little Something* as a fundraiser and keepsake (discounts available; call 1-800-772-7765). Arrange a book or craft fair. Run a raffle. Make a video of the event and sell it to grandparents afterward.

10. Volunteer Outreach: Use the event to build long-term involvement. For example, you may want to start a Grandparent/Grandfriend Organization (GO). Identify your school's needs and create volunteer job descriptions; circulate flyers with the descriptions and information about your school. Prominently feature the rewards of volunteer opportunities during the event. Have volunteer sign-up forms available (follow up after the event). To honor volunteers, institute an annual Volunteer Grandparent/Grandfriend of the Year Award.

11. Publicity: Let your community know about your intergenerational initiative – be proud of what you're doing! Include items in your school calendar, newsletter, and website. Create a take-home flyer. Put up posters in local stores. Invite school board officials and politicians. Send a news release to local TV, radio, and newspapers (a great “feel good” story!).

12. Registration: Start the day off smoothly with a clearly marked registration/welcome area; it can include refreshments and displays. Keep a list of everyone who comes. Give grandparents/grandfriends a package they can take home (e.g. name tag, event program, volunteer form, tip sheet, evaluation form, school map, memento). Plan parking and/or transportation. Make sure you have lots of signage (welcome, registration, washrooms, etc.). Remember to arrange for escorts with big, bright name tags (grandparents won't know where to go).

13. Enjoy the Day!

14. After the Event: Build on what you've started. Children can send thank you notes to grandparents/grandfriends. Put photos, a summary, quotes, and stories from the event on your website. Create an event scrapbook (a historical document for your school). Review evaluation forms and make notes for next year's event. Follow up volunteer contacts.