

LA Intergenerational "Generation Xchange" Program: Generation Xchange

South Los Angeles, United States South Los Angeles, United States
Teresa Seeman



Year Founded:

2013

Organization type:

nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector

Project Stage:

Growth

Budget:

\$50,000 - \$100,000

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- [Aging](#)
- [Education](#)
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Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

Through a partnership between UCLA, LA Urban League and principals from LAUSD elementary schools, Generation Xchange trains older adults to work with children in grades K-3 to improve academic and behavioral outcomes for the children and enhance health and well-being for the older adults.

WHAT IF - Inspiration: Write one sentence that describes a way that your project dares to ask, "WHAT IF?"

What if an intergenerational program could simultaneously improve educational outcomes for grade school children and the health of older adults?

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

Generation Xchange seeks to improve academic and behavioral outcomes for children in K-3 in South LA (where educational achievement is notoriously poor) while simultaneously offering 'health promotion' for the growing population of older adults in the local community (an area of high risk for chronic disease and disability) by engaging them in a program with social, cognitive and physical activity (all known predictors of health and well-being).

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

The GenX program provides teams of older adults trained to work with children in grades K-3 on academic and behavioral issues. Adults are assigned to a classroom and work under the teacher's direction with children who need extra assistance and attention. Prior evidence suggests that this assistance can improve behavior (fewer referrals to the principal, better attendance) and academic outcomes (reading and math test scores). At the same time, the program seeks to address the need for health promotion in the growing population of adults aged 65+ by offering such adults a chance to engage in a meaningful and important role that also provides them with "health promoting" social, psychological, cognitive, and physical engagement.

Impact: How does it Work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

The Gen X program builds on a similar program originally developed and implemented in Baltimore (Experience Corps). Dr. Seeman participated in the latter activities, including participating in a recent randomized trial in the Baltimore schools that is showing evidence for cognitive, psychological and social benefits to the older adult participants along with academic and behavioral benefits for the children. Generation Xchange is designed to bring this promising inter-generational program to Los Angeles to benefit "at risk" children and older adults by providing children with additional

academic and behavioral support while simultaneously engaging older adults in a program with "health promoting" activities.

Impact: What is the impact of the work to date? Also describe the projected future impact for the coming years.

We completed an initial 8 week pilot in June 2014. For the pilot, we trained 5 older adult volunteers and placed them in 5 classrooms in one school for 8 weeks. Older adults, teachers, and the principal all reported seeing evidence of benefits for children even in this short time in terms of both behavior (fewer reported referrals to principal) and achievement (improvements in reading and/or math). Older adults also reported psychological benefits from feeling they were contributing to children's success in school and from being "needed". All participants in the GenX pilot were highly enthusiastic about trying to secure funding to allow for (a) coverage of more classrooms and (b) having volunteers in classrooms for the full academic year.

Spread Strategies: Moving forward, what are the main strategies for scaling impact?

The Baltimore experience is illustrative of what we expect can happen in LA. In Baltimore, we started with only 3 schools in 2000 and now have some 25 schools that offer (and partially fund) the program. The enthusiastic response from 2 LA principals, multiple teachers and many older adults clearly indicates likely success of expansions within LAUSD and other private or public schools to improve outcomes for at risk children AND benefit older adult participants through the increased social, cognitive and physical activity that is required of them as part of program participation.

Sustainability

Financial Sustainability Plan: What is this solution's plan to ensure financial sustainability?

To date, the majority of funding for the GenX program has come from a generous donor. To fund expansion, we envision that (like the program in Baltimore) funding may come from a range of potential sources including the school system (Baltimore schools now fund about 50% of the costs), foundations, businesses and other agencies interested in educational outcomes for children and/or enhancing outcomes for the growing population of older adults.

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

There are other programs directed at improving educational outcomes for children and programs directed at older adults. Our intergenerational program is unique in its focus on simultaneously addressing improved outcomes for both groups and by its specific components, including the required commitment of older adults to participate at least 10hrs/week so that they are in the schools and develop strong relationships with the children and teachers, thereby providing sufficient support and assistance to move outcomes for children and for the adults themselves.

Team

Founding Story

Generation Xchange is a collaborative partnership between faculty at UCLA (Dr. Teresa Seeman and Dr. Arleen Brown, Dept. of Medicine) along with the Los Angeles Urban League (D'Ann Morris, Health Program) and the Los Angeles Unified School district (Mr. Haywood Thompson, principal, 54th St. Elementary School; Ms. Emily Williams, principal, Angeles Mesa Elementary School). The program builds on Dr. Seeman's (UCLA) experience implementing the Experience Corps program in Baltimore. Through our partnership, we were able to implement an 8-week pilot. The success of that effort enabled us to secure (a) enthusiastic interest from second principal and (b) funding for 10 adults (5/school) for the 2014/15 academic year.

Team

Dr. Arleen Brown (UCLA, GIM)

About You

About You

First Name

Teresa

Last Name

Seeman

Email

tseeman@mednet.ucla.edu

Twitter URL

Facebook URL

About Your Project

Organization Name

How long has your organization been operating?

Project

Organization Country

, CA, South Los Angeles

Country where this project is creating social impact

, CA, South Los Angeles

**What awards or honors has the project received?
Funding: How is your project financial supported?**

Individuals, Foundations, Businesses, Regional government, National government.

Supplemental

Describe your partnership.

Community Partners: Los Angeles Urban League, principals at 2 LA Unified School District elementary schools
Academic Partners: UCLA Department of Medicine, Divisions of Geriatrics and General Internal Medicine

This is a partnership between the UCLA Department of Medicine, Divisions of Geriatrics and General Internal Medicine; the Los Angeles Urban League and principals from several LA Unified School District elementary schools. Our partnership is focused on implementation of our Generation Xchange (Gen X) Program in LAUSD elementary schools with the goal of improving academic and behavioral outcomes for children in grades K-3 and improving health and well-being for the older adults who work with the children through participation in the GenX Program. GenX represents a partnership between the UCLA Department of Medicine, Divisions of Geriatrics and General Internal Medicine; the Los Angeles Urban League and principals from several LA Unified School District elementary schools. Through this partnership, we are focused on implementation of the inter-generational GenX program in LAUSD elementary schools. The GenX program is designed to enhance the academic and behavioral outcomes for elementary school children at risk for poor academic achievement while simultaneously enhancing the health and well-being of older adult volunteers who work with them.

Gen X builds on earlier work by Dr. Teresa Seeman (Professor of Geriatrics at UCLA and co-Director of Generation Xchange along with the Los Angeles Urban League and LAUSD partners) developing and testing a similar program (Experience Corps) in collaboration with Dr. Linda Fried and colleagues at John's Hopkins. Like Experience Corps, our LA-based Gen X program follows a model wherein older adults who join the program are trained to work in teams in elementary school grades K-3rd. Older adults are assigned to specific classrooms and, under teacher direction, provide individual or small group assistance in reading and math for children who need additional help to improve their reading or math skills. Older adults are asked to commit to at least 10 hours per week. Program features are explicitly designed to maximize benefits to the children by having the volunteers regularly spend sufficient time in an assigned classroom to develop relationships with the children that allow them to most effectively work with the children to improve reading and math skills. Notably, evidence from the longer-running Baltimore program as well as our initial pilot effort in LA have each indicated that an added benefits of the program is reductions in behavior problems among the children – a fact noted by teachers and the principal in our LA demonstration project (see below) within a 6-week period. The program is also designed to benefit the older adult volunteers by ensuring that through the 10+ hours/week that they spend at the school, they engage in regular physical activity, along with cognitive stimulation and social interaction – all known to contribute to better health and well-being at older ages as well as to greater longevity.

Evidence from the longer-running Baltimore Experience Corps program provides initial evidence that the program is succeeding with respect to both primary program goals – improving academic outcomes for the children and health outcomes for the older adult program participants. Findings from the initial Baltimore pilot study and the subsequent randomized-controlled trial both point to better reading and math scores on standardized tests for classrooms with the program; there are also reduced reports of bullying and fewer behavioral problems in schools with the program (e.g., fewer referrals to principal's office, better attendance). Indeed, the program is seen as sufficiently valuable by Baltimore principals that they now routinely commit some of their own budgets to co-fund implementation of the program in their schools. From the perspective of the older adults who participate in the program, we find that they report better mental health and well-being, greater social engagement and exhibit better cognitive function as well as greater physical activity (walking).

Based on these findings, we believe that this program could importantly benefit both elementary school children and older adults in Los Angeles. To that end, over the past year, we have developed a collaboration between UCLA and the Los Angeles Urban League and through their auspices identified an initial demonstration school within the Los Angeles Unified School District - Angeles Mesa Elementary School. With a small initial donor gift, we completed a very successful 6-week pilot effort in 5 classrooms at Angeles Mesa from April through June of 2014. Teachers and the principal all reported that even in the short 6-week period there was evidence that children benefited both academically and behaviorally from the GenX volunteers' presence in the classrooms. Multiple teachers who did not have a volunteer in their classroom have indicated a strong interest in having one assigned next year.

Based on the positive findings from our initial pilot, for the coming year, we are seeking funding to support expansion of the program to cover all 14 classrooms pre-K through 3rd grade at Angeles Mesa and to initiate program expansion to 54th Street Elementary School (grades K-3). We also hope to implement collection of data on both academic and behavioral milestones for classrooms with and without the program as well as implementing surveys of teachers and principals in order to allow more formal evaluation of program benefits and weaknesses. Based on consultations with our LAUSD partners, planned evaluations will examine program impacts on children's attendance, behavior and academic scores as well as teacher attendance along with surveys of GenX participants and teachers regarding perceived benefits (and problems/weaknesses) of the program. Our long-term goal is to improve the program. We also plan to develop additional training modules to provide GenX adults for grades 4-6 (something principals and teachers have been asking for already) and, most importantly, to expand into as many of the LAUSD schools with high populations of at risk children (e.g., high percent foster children, high percent Title 1).

These efforts would be pursued in partnership with our collaborators at the Los Angeles Urban League and in the LAUSD. There is considerable enthusiasm at the Los Angeles Urban League regarding the proposed collaboration as it offers exciting opportunities to foster greater inter-generational ties between children and older adults in their community around major important domains (education and health) and, more broadly, to build community social capital. The LAUL will serve as our community partner, spearheading the actual recruitment of older adult volunteers and oversight of the program's operation in the school. Our UCLA team (Drs. Seeman & Arleen Brown) is also enthusiastic about the proposed collaboration with the Los Angeles Urban League and LAUSD to implement this program. Collaborations such as these offer UCLA an opportunity to engage with local communities around joint interests in improving educational and health outcomes for communities in the Los Angeles area. UCLA's contribution to this partnership would draw on Dr. Seeman's experience with the Baltimore Experience Corps Program along with the community relationships that Dr. Arleen Brown (a second UCLA collaborator) brings to this endeavor. Drs. Seeman and Brown also bring years of experience in community-based research and evaluation.

Successful implementation of this inter-generational program in LA would open important new opportunities to enhance critically important early educational outcomes for children in grades K-3 while simultaneously working to enhance health and well-being for older adults.

How does your project enhance community engagement for UCLA Health and/or the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA?

Faculty from Department of Medicine Divisions of Geriatrics and General Internal Medicine work closely with LA Urban League and LAUSD principals to recruit older adult volunteers, train them and supervise their participation as mentors for children grades K-3 in select elementary schools. We are working together to secure needed funding to allow for expansion to more classrooms and more schools. UCLA faculty are also working with community partners to develop research initiatives to (a) develop program training for Spanish-speaking mentors, (b) expand mentoring beyond grades K-3 and (c) evaluate outcomes for children (behavioral and academic) and older adult volunteers (health and well-being).

Over the longer-term, we envision that a wider range of the UCLA community might become involved, including training undergraduate and graduate

students to serve as mentors and assistants in the schools in addition to the current older adults.

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