6th graders, Senior Citizens, Poetry, and the Spoken Word: Can we build cross-generational relationships that lead to understanding and tolerance?

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Abstract:

In our world of technology, research questions can be answered in a heartbeat. Information on any subject can be obtained in mere seconds. Because of this, the art of sharing personal experiences, stories, and life lessons has become undervalued. As I spoke with students about their relationships with grandparents and elders, I began to wonder if I could enhance the appreciation sixth grade students had for their elders. Through personal interviews, poetry writing, and conversation, could my students see value in communicating with senior citizens? Would senior citizens learn something from the current generation? Come and listen to what I discovered!
Background Information

Description of the Teaching Context

For the 2010-2011 school year, I have had the incredible opportunity of being a Professional Development Schools Intern at Mount Nittany Middle School, which is located in the rural area of State College Pennsylvania. This school is comprised of grades six through eight. The school offers numerous extra-curricular activities and offers a wide variety of student resources and technologies. The school’s population is primarily Caucasian, and has some variation in socio-economic status.

In my inclusive sixth grade classroom, there are eleven female students and twelve male students. The cultural background of the class is one student is African American and the other twenty-two are Caucasian. The majority of the class is on a sixth grade academic level with the exception of five being in the learning enrichment program, and three being in learning support. The students who are in the learning enrichment generally grasp concepts quickly, produce high quality work, and submit assignments on time across the academic subject areas. These students participate regularly in class, go above and beyond in their schoolwork, and strive to be leaders. The students who are in learning support have trouble with their reading and writing skills. These students leave the regular classroom during writing to get one-on-one help with the assignments. Two of these students are also in Title One for reading. One student has Asperger’s syndrome and needs a lot of attention while completing written work in class. Another student has ADD, but is very well maintained with medication. This class also has one student who takes part in multiple grade level classes. She takes high school algebra, eighth grade science and reading, and sixth grade writing. In this classroom, there is an emphasis on reading and
writing. The class is now participating in a poetry unit. The class has been writing poetry about memories in their lives. The students have opened up in this unit and have been using a lot of feeling and emotion in their writing.

When preparing the classroom set up, students' academic levels were kept in mind. The classroom is set up in groups of 4-6 students. The five students who participate in the enrichment program are dispersed among the five groups, so there is a leader in each group. I placed the students who are in learning support and Title One evenly among the groups. The rest of the class is distributed by gender with two boys and two girls sitting in most groups. The regular grade level and learning enrichment students will be good support for the learning support students.

The class as a whole is very social with one another and active in after school activities. The students have not formed any clichés and all get along with one another. Since all the students are coming from different elementary schools, it is always a concern of how they are going to adjust to the new environment. This class has not shown any problems with the switching of classes, or forming friendships. The students are respectful of their classmates and teachers. There has not been any need for discussions concerning disciplinary measures for our class.
Rationale: Why this Inquiry?

Do we really know who our grandparents are? Family is one of the most important parts of my life. I grew up in a family where my grandfather was part of our immediate family. Over the years I watched my grandfather struggle with the symptoms of Parkinson’s disease, which eventually caused him to enter a nursing home for his last years of life. It wasn’t until this time in his life that I realized I never talked about his life successes, struggles, or passions. Feeling robbed of such valuable information, I wondered if I could enhance the appreciation sixth grade students had about their elders.

I decided to explore the topic of cross-generational relationships because of the personal connection I have with the topic. I would like to expose my students to different generations’ stories and interests, in hope for them to understand the rich opportunities that comes from a generation that they may not know anything about. Students and senior citizens will communicate through interviews, poetry writing and conversation. Even if a student does not see the value in learning about life in past generations, everyone will walk away with a conversation about something that has happened in someone’s life. They will learn aspects of someone’s personal story that could relate to them on some level. On the other side of the spectrum, I hope that the residents of the retirement home enjoy speaking with my sixth grade students. Conversation and spending time together is one of the most rewarding experiences that a person can have. The residents will learn about the current generations trends and see how they compare to the way they grew up. Overall, I hope to find that having conversations between people of two generations will create an understanding of one another, and interest my students to explore this relationship within their families.
Wonderings and Questions:

Main Question:

• How do cross-generational relationships between 6th graders and senior citizens impact their understanding of one another?

Sub-Questions:

• How does hearing people’s personal stories impact students’ writing?
• How does visiting the retirement home change the mindset of either/both generational groups?
Data Collection:

I collected many different forms of data before, during, and after I implemented my inquiry research in order for me to observe if and when a change occurred in the students’ attitude and feelings towards senior citizens. In the “before” stage of my research, I conducted observations and interviews to fully understand students’ feelings as well as why they felt a particular way about an older generation.

Before:

To show students the power that conversation could have on a relationship, I gave them a list of interview questions to ask a friend in the class. I told the students to find someone who they think they know fairly well. The class dispersed around the room in pairs to ask each other the interview questions. The students spent half of the period sharing memories from their past, and discussing similarities and differences that they discovered about one another. The class came back together at the end of the period to share some new information that they learned about one another. At the end of this period, I informed the class that we would be visiting a retirement home to interview and learn about the residents. As a class, we discussed how they felt about going, what they could learn from a person of a different generation, and if they had any questions about the visit. I took observations about how the class initially responded, what we discussed, quotes from students, and the overall mood of the students (See appendix H for Reflection Journals).

I wanted to speak one-on-one with students before we visited the retirement home. From the personal interviews I was able to collect data about students’ feelings of visiting with the senior citizens, going to a retirement home, justification of why they felt the way they did,
changes in their feelings or attitude since we began to discuss the power of conversation, and the type of relationship they held with their grandparents or elders. (See appendix C for Interview Questions and Summary of Interview Findings.)

During:

Throughout the inquiry process I used observations, video recording, and reflective journals to examine if any changes occur in student behavior or attitude. I monitored students’ behavior before our initial visit to Brookline Retirement Home, and the time period in between our first and second visit. I also documented what point in time changes occur in attitude to better understand what events in the inquiry process lend itself to a change in students.

During our advisory session before visiting Brookline Retirement Home, I projected the website StoryCorps.org. Story Corps is designed to provide Americans of all backgrounds and beliefs with the opportunity to record, share, and preserve the stories of their lives. I chose a few of the recordings to share with my students. The objective of presenting these recordings to the class was for them to understand the value in documenting stories of ordinary people. I observed how they reacted during, and at the end of the interviews we listened to (See appendix H for Reflection Journals).

During our first visit to Brookline, I took a video recording while students were interacting with the residents. I observed the students’ body language towards the residents, if they made any conversation, and how they presented their “Where I’m From” poems. I compared this footage to the interviews that I conducted before we went to the retirement home to see if the students’ responses to my interview questions reflected how they acted at the retirement home.
After:

After our second visit to Brookline Retirement Home, I used observations, video recordings, surveys, and interviews to collect data to establish outcomes of implementations that were made during the inquiry process.

I gave my students’ a survey after our visit to Brookline. The questions on the survey are about how the students perceive senior citizens before and after this visit, and their feelings about mini-lessons that we learned in class. Many of the questions were opened ended and allowed me to understand the thoughts and feelings the students had about the experience as a whole. I was able to document any common trends that I saw in the students’ answers (See Appendix G for Survey Given to Students After Retirement Home Visit).

I will interview the residents of Brookline Retirement Home the day after our class visits them for the second time. These interviews will be about how the residents feel about visiting with my sixth grade students. The questions I will ask will be based around their feelings toward this age group, if they learned anything about their generation, and what they think the students can take away from the interactions with an older generation.
Data Analysis

Steps Taken To Analysis Data:

Interviews:

I learned quite a bit from the observations that I made as I talked with students about our upcoming lesson about going to Brookline Retirement home. I thought it was important to fully understand how the students felt before going to the retirement home to visit with the residents. My goal was to acquire what impression my students had of senior citizens before our visit, and their thoughts of an older generation. As I analyzed my interview footage, I learned that almost all of the students had grandparents that they had very good relationships with. There were only two students that I interviewed that said their grandparents passed away before they were born. I proceeded to ask the students, “Do you talk to your grandparents about their life growing up?” About half of the students said yes, but could not tell me any stories about their grandparents. I explained to them about my relationship with my grandfather, and how I was very close with him, but never asked him about his life. I explained that we talked about what was going in the present rather than his life growing up. Many of the students agreed that they did the same with their grandparents. I learned that about half of the students were excited to talk to senior citizens and learn stories from their lives. The other half of students was nervous about talking to people. I found it very interesting that many of the students who had close relationships with their grandparents, still saw senior citizens through the stereotypical perspective. Almost all of the students in my class said that characteristics to describe “old people” include, slow, boring, mean, tough, hates kids, and smelly. Talking with the students was the most beneficial source of data collection that I used in my inquiry research.
Observations:

Taking observations of my students during the work periods in between our visits, during discussions, and informal conversations I gained insight on their feelings and thoughts about senior citizens. I wrote down certain quotes from students that expressed how they viewed senior citizens and how they felt about going to the retirement home. I learned that students had the stereotypical view of senior citizens in the beginning of my inquiry. Some quotes I collected from students include, "I don't really want to talk to old people," "The place we are going is probably going to smell bad,” "What if the person I'm with is mean?" “Every old person I meet is boring and hates kids.” Many of the students were nervous about meeting these people and were not excited about going.

I gave students interview questions to ask one of their good friends in the classroom. I realize that sixth grade students talk to one another about day-to-day activities. I anticipated the students learning new information about their friend after asking one another personal questions about their feelings and memories they have. The students learned about one another’s lives during this interview session. The class did not realize how much they did not know about one of their good friends. During our discussion afterwards, I heard students saying, “I didn’t know that!” or “Why didn’t you tell me that before!?" The students realized that taking this time to ask their friend questions about themselves taught them information they never knew before. From our discussions, the students realized that they could learn a lot through conversation with people since they learned new information from a friend that they thought they knew everything about. We discussed that everyone has a story and it is interesting to learn about events that people have experienced. Even if there is not personal connection to a person’s story, it is still interesting to hear what they went through in their life. After these activities, the students seemed more
interested to talk with the retirement home residents about their lives.

After we returned from the retirement home, students were very excited to return and talk to the residents again and share the poetry they created for them. Some of the feedback from students was, “Can we go back there once a week?” “When are we going to get to go back to talk with them again?” “That was really fun!” I realized the students developed an appreciation for the senior citizens. They realized that they could learn a great deal from community members. I also believe that after talking to this group of senior citizens they realize that they are interesting and not the stereotypical “old person.”

To distinguish if there were any changes in students’ poetry writing, I looked at samples of students’ “Where I’m From” poems to see if there were any trends among the poetry written about themselves. I found that most of the students wrote about tangible objects that represent them. Each line was a different object that was a part of their life. The students did not elaborate on what any of the objects meant or descriptive language to illustrate the objects. The students did not write about memories or events in their lives to describe what makes them unique.

After the students were finished writing about the resident with whom they visited, I analyzed the poems that were written based on the stories they heard. I noticed that these poems were much longer than the poems written about themselves. I found that the students used more adjectives and descriptive language to describe objects, memories, and stories, which they learned about the resident. I noticed the poems about the resident were in the form of a story rather than each line being a separate subject. From this analysis, I concluded that hearing stories helped student writing become more descriptive. The students took their perceptions of the stories they learned, and turned them into a free verse story.

Survey
I gave 25 students a survey after our visit to Brookline Retirement Home. I asked the students their initial feelings about going to the retirement home and after our visit, their relationships with grandparents, words to describe senior citizens, and if they would talk to a person from an older generation about their life story after our visit to Brookline. I took each of the surveys and looked for trends in the way that the students answered the questions. For each number, I tallied how many students answered the question in a certain way. I found that 23 students, or 92%, were not excited to go to Brookline when I initially told them about our visit. These students described senior citizens as mean, boring, scary, old, slow, and tough. The same 23 students then said that their perceptions of senior citizens changed after the visit. I found that 22 students, or 88%, said they had a good relationship with their grandparents. When I asked the question, “Do you talk to your grandparents about their lives growing up?” all 22 students said that they never talked to their grandparents about stories of their lives. Some of their responses were, “We never had time to talk about that,” or “No, I never thought about asking.”

Students’ feelings after our visit to Brookline were general sayings such as, “Senior citizens were interesting, and it was fun to hear their stories.” “Can we do that once a week?” 96% or 24 students I surveyed said that they would talk to someone of an older generation about what life was like growing up. They found our visit to Brookline very interesting and they learned much from the residents.

Explanation of Findings
Claim #1: It is possible for sixth grade students to overcome a stereotypical view of a group of people.

In the beginning of my inquiry, almost all of my students looked at the elderly through the stereotypical view of being old, mean, cranky, and tough. Many of the students had a negative connotation with senior citizens. I found out that most students never had a ‘bad’ experience with senior citizens, and could not place why they felt a negative association with them. Students in my class did not realize that people born in a different generation could teach them about the past through their own personal stories. Our trip to Brookline showed the class that their own community is rich with learning opportunities that are interesting and fun.

Once my students were exposed to Storycorps.com, and discussions about the value in conversation, they realized they could learn from a person’s story. Our trip to the retirement home allowed students to interview a resident and talk with them about their life experiences. Once we returned to the classroom, the students were excited to listen to their video recordings to hear the stories of the resident again. Many of the students felt that we should visit Brookline once a week. They had a great time talking with the residents of the retirement home. Our discussions afterwards were comprised of the students telling me that they, “never realized how cool old people are” until this experience. The class is very excited to revisit the retirement home to share the poems they wrote for the residents. A short implementation such as our Brookline visit can change the perceptions that a person may have about a group of people. The stereotypes of the elderly are no longer in these students’ minds because of the wonderful encounter they all have experienced.
Claim #2: Sixth grade students have an interest in learning about life growing up for a person from a different generation.

From interviews, conversations, and surveys that I gave the students, I found that all the students were interested in learning about people’s lives that grew up in a different generation. Initially when I told the students we would be visiting Brookline, they were not interested in speaking with an older person. Keeping their attitudes in mind, I knew I had to prepare powerful mini-lessons to help them see the power in conversation. After the students listened to interviews from the website, StoryCorps.org, they were speechless. The class realized how powerful and heartfelt a person’s story could be to listen to. Even if the students could not relate to a story the resident was speaking about, they learned something about someone else’s life. After this lesson, the students were excited to see what other stories they were going to hear first hand from the residents of Brookline.

The individual interviews that I held with students helped me to understand the feelings that my students had about visiting Brookline. There were still students that were hesitant about visiting Brookline, but many of the students were excited to learn stories and talk to someone from a different generation. Some of the students responses were, “I can’t wait to go!” “I am excited to learn stories.”

The surveys given to the students after our visit to Brookline confirmed that all students learned something from the resident that they interviewed. When I asked the question, “After realizing the importance of hearing stories from people from a different generation, will you talk to your grandparents about their lives growing up?” Some of the student’s responses were, “Definitely!” “Yes, I already did.” “Yeah, next time I see my grandparents.”
Claim #3: Hearing stories helped students generate more descriptive poetry writing.

Students wrote much more descriptive poetry after hearing the resident’s stories. Before our visit, each student wrote a poem about himself or herself called, “Where I’m From.” The students read a few examples of “Where I’m From” poems, and also were given questions to answer that would help them generate ideas about what to write.

After our visit to Brookline, the students took the information they learned and wrote, “Where I’m From” poems about the resident they interviewed. When comparing the poetry written about themselves, and the poems about the residents, I noticed that the residents’ poems were written as a memory or story, rather than every line being about a different tangible object. The students used many adjectives and descriptive language to explain the story that they learned from the residents. These poems were very long, sometimes written as two poems since there was so much information.

When I analyzed the “Where I’m From” poems about the students, they were very short and talked more about tangible objects. The students did not add many descriptions to the objects they were describing, or used any metaphors to describe memories or experiences they remember.
Reflection and Implications for Future Practice

Learning that communication is the key to understanding, will help students become more aware of the world around them. I feel that the students in my class learned the value in taking the time to listen to someone’s story. The whole class was not excited about talking with the residents of Brookline Retirement Home, when I initially expressed the idea to them. In just a few short months the students have realized that their stereotype of senior citizens handicapped them to not wanting to socialize with this group of people. The students learned that even if they cannot relate to a memory or experience, they should try to understand and learn something from the story that can relate to their lives. In today’s society, I feel that learning about the power of communication and stereotypes that are associated with groups of people are very important. Our country is very diverse with different cultures, religions, and ethnicities. Encouraging students to think about their view of a group of people will help them to be more open minded and accepting of others. My goal in this inquiry was to show students the power that conversation holds in a relationship. My class has achieved my goal and exceeded my expectations by analyzing their thoughts and beliefs to interpret if they have a stereotype towards a certain group of people.

The power in the residents’ stories helped my class develop more descriptive, and powerful poetry. I was thrilled when I compared the students, “Where I’m From” poems and saw tremendous differences in the use of descriptive language and adjectives. I believe that hearing stories helped students generate more descriptive writing. I feel the students remembered more detail from the stories as they were told in first person, rather than reading them from a book. I will be excited to see the residents of Brookline read the poetry that my students have created for them. I hope they realize the impact they have made on my students, and are excited that their stories are appreciated and valued.
Looking back at my inquiry research, I feel that there were many strong aspects of how I taught the children about communication and learning about other people. I enjoyed completing this research and feel that my students learned as much as I did during this process. Now that I have seen the outcome from the mini-lessons that I planned for my students, I will embed these lessons in my future teaching practice. I feel that all students can benefit from learning about different generations and the ability that they have to overcome stereotypes of a group of people.

If I were to use this inquiry research in my future classroom, I would provide the students with additional opportunities to hear more stories. I found that after my class finished their, “Where I’m From” poems about the residents, there was a period of time the class was not working on anything for this project. During this time, I would ask one student per night to talk to their grandparents, parents, or other family members about a memory they remember growing up. I would like the students to come to class the next day prepared to share what they learned about their family member. I believe that everyone could learn something from the stories that would be told. This would be a great way to keep the students enthusiastic until the second visit back to the retirement home.
Inquiry Brief

Classroom Context:

In my sixth grade classroom at Mount Nittany Middle School, there are eleven female students and twelve male students. The cultural background of the class is one student is African American and the other twenty-two are Caucasian. The majority of the class is on a sixth grade academic level with the exception of five being in the learning enrichment program, and three being in learning support, and one being in speech therapy. The students who are in the learning enrichment generally grasp concepts quickly, produce high quality work, and submit assignments on time across the academic subject areas. These students participate regularly in class, go above and beyond in their schoolwork, and strive to be leaders. The students who are in learning support have trouble with their reading and writing skills, These students leave the regular classroom during writing to get one-on-one help with the assignments. Two of these students are also in Title One for reading. One student has Asperger’s syndrome and needs a lot of attention while completing written work in class. Another student has ADD, but is very well regulated with medication. This class also has one student who takes part in multiple grade level classes. She takes high school algebra, eighth grade science and reading, and sixth grade writing.

When preparing the classroom set up, student’s academic levels were kept in mind. The classroom is set up in groups of 4-6 students. The five students who participate in the enrichment program are dispersed among the five groups, so there is a leader in each group. I placed the students who are in learning support and Title One evenly among the groups. The rest of the class is distributed by gender with two boys and two girls sitting in most groups. The regular grade level and learning enrichment students will be good support for the learning support students.

The class as a whole is very social with one another and active in after school activities. The students have not formed any clichés and all get along with one another. Since all the students are coming from different elementary schools, it is always a concern of how they are going to adjust to the new environment. This class has not shown any problems with the switching of classes, or forming friendships. The students are respectful of their classmates and teachers. There has not been any need for disciplinary measures this year.

Rationale:

Family is one of the most important parts of my life. Over the years I watched my grandfather struggle with the effects of Parkinson’s disease, which eventually caused him to enter a nursing home for his last years of life. It wasn’t until this time in his life that I
realized I never talked about his life successes, struggles, or passions with him. If I could take back time, I would treat his presence differently than I did in the past.

I decided to explore the topic of cross-generational relationships because of the personal connection I have with the topic. I would like to expose my students to different generations’ stories and interests, in hope for them to understand the rich conversation that comes from a generation that they may not know anything about. Regardless if students understand the power of these conversations, each one of them will walk away with a conversation about something that has happened in someone’s life. They will learn aspects of someone’s personal story that could relate to them on some level. On the other side of the spectrum, I hope that the residents of the retirement home enjoy speaking with my sixth grade students. Conversation and spending time together is one of the most rewarding experiences that a person can have. The residents will learn about the current generations trends and see how they compare to the way they grew up. Overall, I hope to find that having conversations between people of two generations will create an understanding of one another, and interest my students to explore this relationship within their families.

**Main Wondering:**
How do cross-generational relationships between 6th graders and senior citizens impact their understanding of one another?

**Sub- Questions:**
- How does building cross-generational relationships impact students’ writing? (Comparing work from before/after retirement home visit, interviewing students.)
- What attitudes/feelings do the current generation’s students have about their elders? (Survey, interviews)
- How does visiting the retirement home change the mindset of either/both generational groups? (Interviews, reflections, observations)

**Timeline:**

Week of February 21, 2011

- Reserve flip-cams and vans to take us to Brookline on March 2nd
- Ask students what type of questions they want to ask the residents of the nursing home. Show students more clips from the Storycorps.com. Observe their reactions and write down key points in our discussion. Video tape the conversations that take place. Reflect.
- Give the students a pre-retirement home survey about their feelings of the elderly and older generation in their family (grandparents). Ask about the relationship they have.
- Have students write a poem based on questions that I give them about themselves.
- Analyze survey data.
- Interview a few students based on responses from the survey given.
- Begin finding more sources and format them into an annotated bibliography.
Week of February 28, 2011

- Find additional sources, writing annotated bibliography and inquiry brief
- Visit Brookline retirement home.
- Write observations about interactions at the retirement home. Reflect.
- Interview a few students about their experience at the retirement home afterwards.

Have students start to write the cross-generational poem about the resident with who they met with the retirement home.

Week of March 7, 2011 – SPRING BREAK!

- Analyze/studio code video clips of student interaction with the residents.
- Create a post-retirement home survey for the students to take.

Week of March 14, 2011

- Have students read their completed poems to the class.
- Share some of the interview audio clips between resident and student with the whole class. Point out key points in the interviews that they could write about.
- Have students start to look at their interview data and write their memoirs.

Week of March 21, 2011

- Interview students about their memoir writing process. Ask questions to learn if the retirement home visit helped students during the writing process. (Parts of writing such as, easier to write about someone else, more interested, easier to structure paragraphs, etc.)
- Analyze students’ work before and after the visit to Brookline.
- Document any changes that I notice in students work.

Week of March 28, 2011

- Visit Brookline nursing home to have students read their poems and memoirs to the residents they visited with the first time.
- Observe and record how students/residents interact with one another. Observe residents’ reactions to their stories being read to them/reflect.

Week of April 4, 2011

- Distribute student survey. – Compare results with the first one given.
- Interview the students from previous interview about their thoughts on this visit and the whole project. See how their thoughts/feelings have changed from the beginning. Record this interview.
- Analyze data/reflect.
- Continue writing inquiry paper

Week of April 11, 2011
• Visit and interview nursing home residents about their feelings about our classes visit. Interview six residents. (Half)
• Analyze data/reflect and begin inquiry draft.
• Submit hard copy to grader

Week of April 18, 2011

• Peer edit inquiry paper
• Revise inquiry paper
Start to prepare for inquiry conference

• Week of April 25, 2011
• Second visit to Brookline retirement home
• Analyze data from visit
• Interview residents on the 26th
• Finalize claims

Data Collection Ideas:

Observations

• I will make systematic observations of the body language of the students and residents of Brookline while they are visiting with one another. I will look back on the video recordings of the residents and students interacting to observe casual conversations, detail to eye contact, comfort level, etc. that both my students and residents have with one another.

• I will observe how students respond to the stories I show them from the website Storycorps.com. I want to see how students react to hearing stories or other people they do not know anything about. I will pay attention to who discusses afterwards what they heard, what details they pick up from the stories, and their facial expressions. I will see who relates the emotional stories to their own lives, or have general taken back reactions.

Surveys
• I will create a survey for the students to take before and after the visit to Brookline retirement home. I will compare the before and after results and see how/if the feelings of the students have changed from the experience.

Student work

• (ONLY AFTER INTERVIEWS) Based on what students say in the interview, I will see if there are any differences in their writing after the visit to the retirement home. I will bring a sample of writing before the retirement home and the writing after, and have my student assess any differences in their writing. I will ask them if they see any differences or even changes in their attitude or feelings about writing.

Interviews

• After I look at the students’ responses in the survey (before/after), I will ask a few students to conduct interviews about their answers in their survey. I will ask them why they felt the ways they did, what makes them think that way, etc. This will give me more in-depth explanations to their responses to their survey answers. Follow up survey- I will ask the students’ how/if their thinking has changed? If they enjoyed visiting the retirement home? I will observe their body language, facial expressions, level of enthusiasm, during these interviews.

• After we have written memoirs and poems about the residents they visit with, I will ask students’ if having this interpersonal relationship with the retirement home residents changed any part of their brainstorming, writing, and revising of their writing. If so, I will ask them why they think it helped? What parts seemed easier? How does this compare to writing that we have done in the past?
• After we are done with the two visits to Brookline, I will individually talk with the resident’s individually about their experience with our students. I will ask them their thoughts on the situation and what they learned for found interesting from meeting this generation of students. I hope to gain the insights on what the residents took away from the conversations we had, and if they learned anything from our students. I would like to ask them what is one thing that they would like our generation to learn from their generation.

Reflections

• I will write a reflection after our lessons dealing with cross-generational interactions. I will write down what our discussions were about and jot down certain quotes from students that I find important during our discussions. This will help me choose students to interview and focus on during our visit.

• I will reflect after the visit about how the students/residents interacted with one another. I will see if their body language corresponds to what they say in interviews/surveys.
B. Annotated Bibliography

**Annotated bibliography:**


AsktheInternetTherapist.com, Retrieved from

http://www.asktheinternettherapist.com/articles/understanding-the-elderly/

This article is about interacting with the elderly. Block talks about how our society has lost the interactions with our elderly. She talks about how we let time go by and do not find out their stories which may be lost if we do not take time to find out what they lived through. She gives suggestions for people to change and realize what they are missing. She talks about this generation being in touch with grandparents or aunts and uncles. This applies to my inquiry since I am examining the relationships between cross generations. I can use parts of this article to talk about how the interaction between generations is important to really understand what the residents went through.


http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a746891395

This study examined changes in children’s perceptions of the elderly following a two-month reading intervention. Pre and post data were taken of the children’s attitudes and reading skills. Studies show that even a relatively brief intervention could change children’s perceptions of the elderly. I used this article to understand if it is possible to change the attitudes of a group of people just by igniting a brief intervention. Even though this study dealt with reading skills, part of it was focused on the perceptions of the elderly. This part of the study relates directly to
the inquiry research that I am conducting. It was interesting to read about different studies
dealing with attitude change, and the results that were discovered.

http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=UvxEoFQ0LYwC&oi=fnd&pg=PA3&dq=changing+stereotypes+of+elderly&ots=zXSehLKTTi&sig=8YWs-zPlq6ZLQdvb7rAZ6geHuA8%23v=onepage&q=changing%2520stereotypes%2520of%25205#v=onepage&q=changing%2520stereotypes%2520of%2520f=false

This study talks about where the attitudes towards the elderly generate from, how the young and middle generations view the elderly differently, and how we can start to change these perceptions. The study conducted many interviews about social behavior around senior citizens. They found that the young and middle age people acted differently while around a senior citizen. They found that the younger generation had the biggest change in attitude and personality. I used this study when analyzing why people have a different perception of the elderly. I found it interesting to see a change in attitude, as people grew older.

http://www.foxfire.org/index.html

Foxfire Fund is an organization that is a learner-centered, community based, approach to create a sense of place and appreciation of local people, community, and culture as essential educational tools. This website is full of ideas for teachers to promote community in the
classroom. It describes a step-by-step approach to achieving these goals in any classroom. I can use this site to generate ideas to bring appreciation of community into my own classroom.


http://www.springerlink.com/content/t50872q6n3065296/

The purpose of this study was to study the age of individual, and the contact they had with the elderly. The outcome of the study was that the more often people are in contact with the elderly, the less of a stereotype there is. Interestingly enough, the elderly themselves had a stereotype of themselves if they did not interact with people their own age. I found this study to be helpful when analyzing how my students thought about the senior citizens. Even though they had grandparents, most of them still perceived the elderly as the stereotype.


http://geronj.oxfordjournals.org/content/49/5/P240.short

This study focused on the perceptions of the elderly. The participants that were being analyzed were the young, middle-aged, and elderly themselves. The researchers focused on trait grouping among the participants. The middle-aged participants viewed aging with a more complex representation than the young did. I used this site to generate ideas about how the young perceive senior citizens. I related this research to conversations and discussions we had in class about the elderly, and characteristics to describe them.

This study focused on whether or not commercial advertising portrayed the elderly with negative stereotypes. The study found that the elderly were perceived negatively, which can be a cause for the stereotypical view of this age group. I used this study when I was talking to students about what they thought of senior citizens. The students held close relationships with their grandparents, but yet still held the stereotypical view of the elderly. This data made me think of where these stereotypes are learned. This article was an interesting look into commercial advertising through a number of years.


In today’s age it is common that families are very mobile and do not plan to live exclusively by their extended family. Young generations are losing their culture and heritage because they know nothing about their grandparents, or family history. The stereotypes of grouchy old people are turning the young off to the interpersonal relationships that they could form. We need to break stereotypes and show the current generation all they can learn from their grandparents or elderly. This study reflects the overall idea of my inquiry project. There were many pieces that were relevant to use as evidence in my paper that these relationships are extremely important for our generation.

This journal talks the “gaps” that are forming between our generations. It talks about how there is a need for community agencies to create programs to bring our generations together. It is believed that family-like environments would bring our generations back together. For my inquiry, I would use this research as evidence of the important need of cross-generational communication between our generation and the elderly.


This study explored the influence of intergenerational programming in adult day centers, and bridging the gap between theory and practice with implications for other aging services. The outcome of the research was that the adults. Results show that positive intergenerational experiences involved adults in a mentoring role, voluntary participation, and initiated contact with children. I will use this research as evidence of positive outcomes from the interactions between generations.
C. Interview Questions Summary of Responses from Students - Before Interviews

Interview questions:

- How do you feel about going to the retirement home? Why do you feel that way?
- Do you have grandparents? Do you have a close relationship with them?
- Do you talk to your grandparents about what life was like growing up for them?
- What are some stories that you know about your grandparents?
- Is there anything you would be nervous about when going to the retirement home? Why?

Summary of Responses:

Sofi – Describes senior citizens as boring, mean, tough. Has grandparents that are living and is close with them. She knows as much about their lives as her parents has told her. Not scared about going to the retirement home. Thinks it will be cool to hear stories.

Mariana – Scared of old people because they are boring, mean, hate kids. Scared of her own grandparents. Doesn’t know anything about their lives.

Shelby – Close with her grandparents but couldn’t tell me any stories. Doesn’t know about their past or stories. Excited to hear stories from other people’s lives.

Adam – Not excited about going. Scared of old people being boring, mean, tough. Close with his grandparents but doesn’t know much about their lives. Scared of the nursing home because it smells. Nervous about meeting old people.

Caleb – Good experience to learn about life years ago. Not nervous. Close with his grandparents but couldn’t tell me stories.

Saede – Excited to learn about all that they have done. Close with her grandparents. Has heard stories about their lives but doesn’t remember many. Her granny is very active. She doesn’t see senior citizens as boring or mean.

Jacob – Nervous about first walking into the retirement home and meeting a person. Close with his grandparents, doesn’t know stories.

DJ – Not close with his grandparents. Is scared of old people and doesn’t want to talk to them. Thinks that all senior citizens are mean.

Casey – Excited about going to the retirement home. Has grandparents that she is close with.
D. - Students’ “Where I’m From” Poems

Where I’m From

I’m from Legos and my iPod
I’m from Hockey, Soccer, and Lacrosse
I’m from R.C. helicopters
and The Hunger Games.
I’m from Scientists and Politicians
Architects and Lawyers,
Hockey and Soccer Players.
I’m from The Discovery Channel and ESPN
and from M&Ms, Milky Ways and Jolly Ranchers.

Where I am From

I am from Legos and computers, kick-boards, and bikes,
and from the three sports soccer, softball, and skiing,
from my yard, which I love to roam,
and from Marit Larsen, who no-one here knows,
from the chocolate tootsie rolls that stick to your teeth,
and Wizards of Waverly Place with the magic on the street,
I am from Hero splattered on paper by Mike, Mike Lupica with the books that I like,
I am from photography and writings like these

Where I come From
I come from the world of xbox 360
I come from the sport of Wrestling
not WWE
from the land of t.v
I’m from Bruce Springsteen and the E street band
from Andrew Alton to Labron James
I come from sour patch kids
from chilax man
I come from two and a half men
I come from the maze runner to The hunger games
I come from a Lawyer
but most of all I come from a Olympic wrestler
E. - Interview Questions Given to Brookline Residents
(Front of Interview Questions)

Cross-Generational Questionnaire

1. What toys did you play with?

2. What sports and games did you play?

3. What else did you do in your spare time? What were your hobbies?

4. What singers or groups did you listen to?

5. What celebrity or public figure did you admire or have a crush on?

6. What candy did you buy?

7. What was your favorite TV show?

8. What was your favorite book or series of books?

9. What was a saying or expression that adults or other kids were using?

10. What did you want to be when you grew up?
11. What is your earliest childhood memory?

Throwing on his brother when he was 8 or 9.

12. What is a memory that you remember when you were my age?

Track home was bigger only when he was 16, long run, we rest, he was last.

13. What is a memory that you remember from when you were entering high school or college?

Never forget that entering high school, no try but radio. Pearl Harbor Bombed, Dec. 7, 1941. Dec. 8 Roosevelt declared war on Japan because all of the American soldiers died. I could only go to school and watch, listen to the radio.
WHERE I AM FROM

John A. Lucas

Where I am from
I am from monopoly inside on the rainy days
From the long distances that I love to run, and the sprints where I come in last.
The best singing voice of Frank Sinatra
I am from Jane Russell's amazing-ness
From the lovely-tasting, but teeth-busting milkyways
I am from Archie Bunker being the funniest in All In The Family
And from Joseph Allsherler, and reading in the Boston Library's kids' corner
From my mother saying, "Go out and play, watch out for the automobiles, and be home at 6:00!"
I am from being too young for the army, and only being able to join 2 years after my desire
I am from living all my life with the thought of lunch all over my brother's shoulders.
And from my only lies to my mother in letters to her from the cold, smelly Korea.

Boston, Massachusetts
1927

Composed on March 22, 2011
G. Survey Given to Students After Retirement Home Visit

Name: Shelby

This survey will not be shared with anyone besides Ms. Pricci.

Answer every question honestly.

1. Are you/were you close with your grandparents?
   Yes, we always were together

2. Do you know stories about your grandparent’s past? If yes, what is a story you remember them telling you?
   No, I never really asked

3. Are you comfortable talking to the residents of Brookline? Why or why not? Will you feel more comfortable going back for a second time?
   Yes, I had a lot of fun talking to them

4. What are two words that describe how you felt about going to the retirement home before our visit?
   Scared and exited

5. What are two words that describe your feelings about visiting a retirement home after the visit?
   Really fun and wanting to go back

6. How have your feelings about senior citizens changed since our visit?
   No, not really.

7. Have you learned anything about senior citizens from this visit? If so, what?
   That these not old and grumpy most of the time.

8. On a scale of 1-10 (10 being the most) how comfortable would you say you felt about senior citizens before our visit?
   1

9. On a scale of 1-10 (10 being the most) how comfortable do you feel now about senior citizens after our visit?
   10

10. After realizing the importance of hearing stories from people from a different generation, would you be more likely to ask your grandparents about their lives growing up?
    Yes, I would want to know like were they’re from,
H. Reflection Journals

February 10, 2010

Today in class I explained to the students that we would be visiting a retirement home to visit with the residents. We would be talking to the residents about their stories and learn about their lives. We will take the information and use it in poetry and memoir writing. One student said that she was afraid of old people and was scared of what they would think of her. Another student came up to me and said that she is scared of her grandparents because they are old and wrinkly. She said that they forget everything and smell funny. Another student said he was more nervous about going to the nursing home and smelling the disgusting smell. Another girl said that when she pictured old people, she thinks of the stereotypical old person who is cranky and mean. Not many of the students seemed thrilled about going to the retirement home to visit with the residents.

February 16, 2011

Today I explained to the students that we would be going to the Brookline nursing home to visit with the residents there. Some of the students asked if we could go to Foxdale retirement home since they had grandparents there. We told the students that in pairs they would be visiting with a resident and learning about their lives. We would think of questions as a class that they wanted to find out. The students seemed a bit more relieved when they realized that they were going to be with a partner to talk to the residents. I explained to the students that I was very close with my grandfather but look back at our conversations, and realize that they were more about what happened on a day to day basis and weren’t rich conversations about life. I regret that I didn’t have those conversations when I could. My mentor talked about a funny story that he remembers about his grandfather playing a trick on him. He said that he sent him a card in the mail while he was at camp pretending to be a scout for the Philadelphia Phillies. My mentor said that he was ecstatic and couldn’t want to tell his parents. When he brought the post card home from baseball camp, his parents told him that it was from his grandfather playing a trick on him. Even though he was mad at the time he looks back at it now and laughs about the situation. The students laughed at his story. After we talked, we showed the students clips from Storycorps.org. One story was a man talking about his wife. He said talked to his daughter about how much he loved his mother and she was the woman of his dreams. He said that every day was a memorial in her memory. Our usually talkative class grew silent. We asked the class what they thought about the clip we just heard and no one had a response. Some students said “Wow.” Many of the students explained that was powerful and touching. It seems that actually hearing the personal stories coming from someone’s memories touched the students. Seeing my usually very talkative and opinionated class grow silent, said a lot.

February 21, 2011

I gave each student a survey full of questions. I told the students that they would partner with one of their good friends and ask each other the questions. This would be preparation for interviewing the retirement home residents and at the same time, they would learn something about their friend. Everyone had a sigh of relief when that was said.
Some students made the comment, “Oh thank gosh!” They were happy not to be talking individually to residents. I felt that the class grew more involved in the activity when we told them this. All the students grew talkative and started asking more questions about the visit. Some students asked, “When are we going to visit? Can we pick our partners? How are we going to remember all the information they tell us? What are we going to do with the information they give us?”

The students took about 15 minutes to ask each other the questions from the survey. Everyone was smiling and laughing as they answered the questions about one another. After the students were finished, we sat on the carpet to talk about some of the results that we found about each other. First, we asked if anyone found out something that they didn’t know about their friend before the survey. Every hand in the classroom rose. Then we asked volunteers to read something about their partner that they found interesting and was new to them. Many of the students raised their hands to talk about their partner. This sharing time gave the students the opportunity to learn more about their classmates rather than just the person they were interviewing. At the end of the conversation, we talked about the importance of communication and learning about one another. The students were surprised at how much they found out about a friend who they thought they knew a lot about. We then talked about the value of talking with the residents of the retirement home since they have lived through a lot. We talked about how they would learn about these people’s lives, and the time period that they grew up in.

February 26, 2011

Today we started class by reading two “Where I’m from” poems to the class. After we finished I asked, “What are these poems about?” To my surprise, only one person raised their hand to answer. He said that he thought they were about the person who wrote the poem since they were different candies, TV shows, sayings etc. Many of the students had blank faces and just stared ahead. I explained to them that these people that wrote these poems looked back at the things that made them who they were today. They looked at different aspects of their childhood and put that into a poem. I told the class that they were going to fill out questions about themselves and format a poem like the ones I read. After I told the class what we gave the students a list of questions that they were to answer about themselves.

On March 2, 2011 –

We visited the retirement home and all of our kids met with 10 of the residents there. There was one group who met with a man who could not answer many of the questions. When we first entered the retirement home, the students were nervous and not familiar with seeing wheelchairs, and the older residents. They seemed a bit reluctant to walk into the room. The students sat with their resident and immediately started talking. Some of the students were very quiet and others were very personable. The one student who was reluctant to go to the nursing home was the most talkative and had many stories to share with the residents. I walked around the classroom listening to some of the students’ stories. For the most part the students stuck to asking the questions and getting answers. As I walked around I asked more questions to make it more of a conversation
April 8, 2011

Today the students placed their “Where I’m From” poems into a program called Pages. The students used templates for newsletters to format their poems to give to the residents. I announced to the students that in the beginning of May we would be going to the retirement home to read their poems to the residents. The class was very excited to return back. Some students made comments such as, “Can we also bring our poetry books to read to our partner?” “Ohh good!” “Can’t wait!”

April 12, 2011

Today in class I taught a lesson about stereotypes. The students understood what the term meant and gave me many examples of the stereotype. I asked the students, “Do senior citizens have a stereotype?” The kids started laughing and throwing out characteristics that described “old people” such as boring, mean, cranky, and tough. I said to the class, “I know a lot of you viewed senior citizens this way before we went to meet them at Brookline. Now that we talked with these people, do you see them the same way as you did before?” Many of the students raised their hand and said no. They explained that it was interesting to hear stories from a different generation. They learned about what games and entertainment people used to play with back then. The students learned interesting stories from people’s lives and had a good time meeting them.

<p>| Annotated Bibliography QUANTITY | At least 10 resources are included with a complete paragraph for each. The annotated bibliography features at least 3 types of sources (e.g., books, articles, face-to-face interview, websites, etc). (4-5) Check formatting | At least 6-9 resources are included with a complete paragraph for each. The annotated bibliography features at least 2 types of sources (e.g., books, articles, face-to-face interview, websites, etc). (2-3) | 5 or fewer resources are included. Paragraphs may or may not be complete for each. (0-1) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annotated Bibliography</th>
<th>Each annotated paragraph is thorough, containing both a summary of the source and its application to the inquiry. (4-5)</th>
<th>Most annotated paragraphs are thorough, containing both a summary of the source and its application to the inquiry. (2-3)</th>
<th>Many annotated paragraphs are incomplete. (0-1)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description of teaching context</td>
<td>1 to 2 paragraphs describing the classroom context as it relates to the inquiry. (e.g., grade level, classroom diversity, school culture and/or other environmental factors) (4-5)</td>
<td>Some details included but missing key information related to the inquiry. (2-3)</td>
<td>Few details included and/or poor description. (0-1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wonderings and Questions</td>
<td>Main question is clearly stated and sub-questions are directly related to main question. (8-10)</td>
<td>Main question is clear but sub-questions are unclear or not related. (5-7)</td>
<td>Main question is unclear. (0-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection and Analysis Process</td>
<td>Clear description of data collection and the steps taken to analyze the data. Both address the inquiry question directly. (12-15)</td>
<td>Description of data collection steps and/or analysis process lacks detail or does not address the inquiry question sufficiently. (7-11)</td>
<td>The description of data collection and/or analysis is extremely limited or unclear. (0-6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explanation of Findings (Including Claims and Evidence) (15)</td>
<td>List of claims is clear and indicates growth related to the question (i.e., claims would not have been possible prior to conducting inquiry). The paper and appendix provides a clear explanation of the evidence that supports each claim. (12-15)</td>
<td>List of claims is not clearly related to the question. OR claims are limited in depth. The supporting evidence for some (but not all) of the claims is clear. (7-11)</td>
<td>Claims are unrelated to question or lack depth. The explanation for the evidence that supports the claims is unclear or unlimited. (0-6)</td>
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<td>Reflections and Future Practice (15)</td>
<td>Implications for your future practice as a teacher are clear and detailed. Reflections on the process and results of the inquiry are directly related to the process and findings (12-15) Think of adding a bit more detail here.</td>
<td>Implications for your future practice as a teacher are somewhat clear and details are lacking. Reflections on the process and results of the inquiry are somewhat related to the process and findings (7-11)</td>
<td>Reflections on the process and/or implications for your future practice as a teacher are minimal or missing. (0-6)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong> (10)</td>
<td><strong>The paper’s organization is clear and logical, using headings, etc.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The paper lacks organization in some aspects. The paper is not concisely written.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The paper is neither well organized nor concise.</strong></td>
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<td>The body of the paper is concisely written approximately 10 pages in length (double-spaced, 12 point font).</td>
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<td>[This does NOT include the annotated bibliography, the inquiry brief, or the appendix]</td>
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<td><strong>Mechanics</strong> (5)</td>
<td><strong>Paper is professionally done in terms of mechanics (spelling, punctuation, grammar, citing sources, etc). There are no mechanical errors.</strong></td>
<td><strong>There are fewer than 5 noticeable mechanical errors in the paper.</strong></td>
<td><strong>There are many noticeable mechanical errors in the paper.</strong></td>
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