

Collaboration and Communication

Working Together Across Generations Activity

Directions: Often, Cooperating Teachers and Teacher Candidates are from different generations, and these generational differences can help explain both varying world views and attitudes toward the workplace. Take some time to read through the following generational information. What strikes you the most about these descriptions? How accurately does your generation description describe YOU? What would you change or add to this description? Discuss with your co-teacher.

Baby Boomers

(Born 1946-1964)

Baby Boomers entered a thriving economy after WWII. The US had established itself as the preeminent power in the world. Factories were pumping out new cars and appliances. Houses were being built at a record pace. The proliferation of TVs in the 1950s forever changed the way that those growing up viewed the world.

Boomers grew up feeling more secure than their parents. They began to question policies, rules and practices that had been in place for years. From this emerged civil rights protests, anti-war protests and a host of other rumbling that unsettled prior generations.

Because of their size, this generation has received lots of attention. Companies focused their products. Politicians focused their messages. Rock and roll music took over the air waves. As a result, Boomers have grown up thinking the world is their oyster.

As boomers entered the work place, they forever changed the way business was done. Many have taken advantage of college opportunities which raised the bar for many positions. Boomers focused on efficiency, teamwork, quality, and service. These efforts have produced a thriving “self-help” industry which feeds Boomers’ optimism and quest for eternal youth. The size of this generation continues to drive the economy and they place increasing emphasis on convenience. Financial security will remain a central issue for many, forcing thousands to work well past the age at which their parents retired. Their quest to remain eternally young will alter the face of lifestyles, the work force, consumer products, entertainment and public policy. But they will never forget their optimism.

Cultural icons:

Captain Kangaroo

Hula hoops

Romper Room

Fallout shelters

Bell bottom pants

The peace sign

The Laugh-In Show

The Ed Sullivan Show

TV dinners

What to remember about Baby Boomers:

- Boomers live to work
- A general sense of optimism regardless of what happens
- The size of their generation has allowed them unprecedented influence on government policies and consumer products
- They have always been willing to go into debt, betting on future income
- They tend to be team and process oriented, sometimes to the detriment of results
- Boomers strive for convenience and personal gratification
- Boomers are very nostalgic about their youth and seek to preserve it

Generation X

(Born between 1965-1980)

While Boomers entered a world filled with optimism and economic prosperity, Generation X had a significantly different experience. Beginning with the assassination of JFK in 1963, the US was plunged into social turmoil, during which Generation X was born – women’s lib, civil rights, anti-war protests, Watergate, inflation, massive layoffs, the Challenger tragedy and a host of other troubling events.

Baby Boomers were the first generation of dual career couples. These dual career couples produced latch key kids, the Xers, who came home from school to an empty house. This taught them resourcefulness at a very young age. The Boomers also divorced at an unprecedented rate. By one estimate, 40% of Xers have lived through at least one divorce.

Xers are also a product of technology. At ages three, four and five, they became glued to the TV when Sesame Street debuted in 1969. From it, they learned their ABCs and 123s, but they also expected to see Big Bird and Cookie Monster at the front the classroom.

From these experiences, Xers came to believe that many of the institutions in which they were taught to believe in had betrayed them. “Marriage is forever, but my parents got divorced.” “If you work hard, you will always have a job, but my parents were laid off.” “The government should be trusted, but then there was Watergate.”

As a result, Xers have become a generation skeptical of traditional practices and beliefs. They have learned that jobs are not forever and therefore they should make the most of their time and effort.

Cultural Icons:

The Brady Bunch	Jaws	Izod Shirts
Cabbage Patch Kids	Pet Rocks	The Simpsons
Microwave ovens	MTV	ET
Sesame Street	Videotapes	Cassette Recorders

What to Remember about Generation X

- Xers work to live rather than live to work
- Jobs are viewed as a contract
- Clear and consistent expectations are essential
- Providing the opportunity to grow will lengthen tenure
- A sense of contribution while having fun will keep an Xer productive
- Earning money is only one part of a larger equation
- To them, versatility of skills & experiences ensure employability

The Millennials

(Born 1981-1999)

Where Xers were taught certain beliefs about family and society only to have them betrayed, Millennials are growing up in a world where these beliefs have already been compromised. While media has enlightened them about things older generations never dreamed of, it has also taught them that they can challenge every convention and individual. To them, nothing is necessarily what it seems. OJ appeared guilty, but was acquitted. They called Desert Storm a war, yet it seemed more of a demonstration in high technology to those at a formative age. The President lied to the nation, yet 63% of those polled at the time approved of the job he was doing. At the same time, they are growing up in a world of unprecedented growth in the US economy and development of technology. This generation has been born into a world of cell phones, pages, and internet. As they enter the workforce, they too, are having an impact. They are the most demographically diverse generation in US history. One in three is what the US government defines as a minority. One in four has grown up in a single parent home. Many enter jobs with what employers call a disturbing lack of basic skills, yet they are able to navigate software programs that intimidate those in their 40s.

As Millennials continue to grow up in this new world of terrorism, technology and situational ethics, they will bring to the table new expectations and perceptions that older generations never dreamed possible.

Cultural Icons

Barney	Pogs	The X games
Cell phones	Princess Diana	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
Pokemon	Britney Spears	Mia Hamm
Michael Jordon	Beanie Babies	The Spice Girls
The internet	Bill Gates	

What to Remember about Millennials

- They have been conditioned to live in the moment
- They are used to the immediacy of technology and expect it
- Clear and consistent expectations are essential to ensure productivity
- They earn money for the purpose of immediate consumption
- They will demonstrate respect only after they have been treated with respect
- They have grown up learning to question everything
- As a generation, they are astoundingly diverse demographically

Source: *The Center for Generational Studies*, www.gentrends.com

Tips on how to work together across generations

- ❖ **Be aware of differences**
- ❖ **Appreciate the strengths**
- ❖ **Manage the differences**

When working with Boomers:

- Show respect
- Choose face-to-face conversations
- Give them your full attention
- Play the game
- Learn the school history

When working with Xers:

- Get to the point
- Use email
- Give them space – do not micromanage
- Get over the notion of dues paying
- Lighten up
- Avoid judging – look for things in common
- Find balance between work and life

When working with Millennials:

- Challenge them
- Ask them their opinion
- Find them a mentor
- Provide timely feedback
- Be flexible

Adapted from the work of Clair Raines www.generationsatwork.com