

Let's learn from our elders

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Dufferin Parent Support Network values the relationships between children and grandparents. At Montgomery Village Public School, they've developed a program to help students connect with their elders.

Hi. Our names are Jenna Witor and Sarah Kee, and we are students from Montgomery Village PS. We would like to tell you about three things. First, we want to tell you about a program we are involved in at our school. Second, we want to tell you why we think the program has been awesome for us.

Lastly, we want to give you some tips for how your child can have some of the same amazing experiences we have had.

If you go to Montgomery Village PS, you might have taken part in the Grandpals program. Basically, the program involves students connecting with a senior citizen who lives at the Montgomery Village seniors centre in Orangeville. This is easy for students at Montgomery Village PS, because the seniors centre is located right behind the school.

During the program, students meet with their Grandpals for several sessions.

They interview their Grandpals about their different life stories, with questions like, "When you were younger, did you live in the city or country?" Students might also ask harder, more personal questions like, "What do you feel have been the most important successes in your life?"

The Grandpals can also ask students questions about what it's like to be a young person these days. One senior asked us, "Do you think there's more to life than an iPad or iPod?"

The Grandpals program has been really awesome for us students, because we have been able to hear some really amazing, true stories. For example, we learned that one of our Grandpals was raised by her grandparents. Her mom developed severe arthritis when she was just a toddler. Her mother ended up bedridden, unable to move her arms and legs, which curled up and froze close to her body. As a result, her mother could not care for her and she was taken in and raised by her grandparents from the age of two or three. Stories like this teach us about how brave some people can be.

They also make us really grateful for what we have.

Not every student can be part of a Grandpals program, but parents can help their kids connect with senior citizens. For example, parents can help their children volunteer at one of the seniors' residences in Orangeville.

They will definitely learn some new things by doing this. Perhaps the easiest thing that kids can do is focus on asking their grandparents (or other elders) better questions the next time they see them.

Maybe there is a family dinner coming up and parents could help their children come up with some good questions to ask. Here is just one example: "What's your best advice for living?"

If they focus on asking some questions like these, they will be well on their way to respecting and learning from their elders.

*Jenna Witor and Sarah Kee
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