***Finding Balance: Coaching across the Generational Divide for Better Staff Retention***

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***Session Overview:*** Recruitment and retention are constant struggles in the field of ECE. Three generations working side-by-side complicates the workplace. Generational differences influence smooth transitions of leadership in a field effected by turnover. Understanding the adaptive challenges and using positive coaching techniques can open the doors for better communication.

***Session Objectives:***

1. Compare generational differences among Boomers, Gen Xer’s, and Millennials in early childhood workplaces.
2. Explore the historical impact of generational peer personality on leadership transitions in the field of ECE.
3. Reflect on the need for adaptive change necessary for the field of ECE to stay relevant and vital while supporting new professionals taking leadership roles.

***Session Activities:***

Video clips of intergenerational workplace differences

Defining generational attributes and the impact of peer personality on the field of ECE

Changing lens, changing perspectives- Leadership transitions in the field of ECE – Adaptive Leadership



**Vocabulary**

**Adaptive Leadership:** A model for mobilizing people to address significant challenges and the individual roles, belief systems and behaviors that affect the dynamics of a system. Adaptive leadership involves the ability to understand a situation and its complexity from a broad perspective. It recognizes multiple perspectives and approaches to tackling a challenge(Haber-Curran & Tillapaugh, 2013).

**Baby Boomer Generation:** People born between the years 1946-1964. Generally, this generation is referred to as “Boomers” because of the large number (a boom) of babies born during this era (Landcaster & Stillman, 2002). Noted as a generation that grew up during a period where major changes took place in space, technology and the global community, Boomers broke down long standing barriers to equality of race, gender and education.

**Generational “Cuspers”:** People born in a year caught between two generations, such as the Traditionalist and Baby Boomers (Landcaster & Stillman, 2002). In the case of the Baby Boomers, those born between 1940-1946. They take on traits of the generation they most identify with.

**Generation X:** People born between the years 1965 to 1982. This group is referred to as Gen Xer’s and is the first generation to see television and media exposure having a dramatic effect on their perceptions of the world. The term “latch key kids” was given to this generation who saw the boom of two parent working households (Landcaster & Stillman, 2002).

**Generation Z: (also known as IGen, Homeland Generation)** People born between 2000-2005 to approximately 2025. Born after 9/11 terrorist attack and no generational memory of a time when not at war –which is loosely defined as terrorism. First generation to have widespread access to the internet from an early age, technology has influenced their education and communication often using social media websites (Howe,2014)

**Millennial:** People born between the years 1982 and 2003. This group is sometimes called Generation Y. The came of age in the shadow of 9/11 and have been raised feeling protected and the focus of attentive Boomer generation parents (Reeves, 2008).

**Peer Personality:** Set of generalized traits that define those who were raised in the same period of time. (Strause & House 2008).

**Professional Development:** Persons participating in a workforce, usually to improve the quality of their work or attain a higher degree of expertise, universally use this term to represent the attainment of additional training and education. The term “professional development” is often linked with other terms, such as “systems,” “plans” and “pathways.” It can also include formal and informal coaching or mentoring systems (NAEYC, 2012).

**Silent Generation**: People born between the years 1925 to 1945. This generation is also known as the Greatest Generation or the Traditionalists. They were raised during the Great Depression and World War II(Hansen & Leuty, 2012).

**Trait Theory**: Defined as patterns of personal characteristics that support effective leadership across a variety of organizational situations (Zaccarro, 2007). Trait approaches to leadership studies are rooted in the idea that certain people are born with traits that make them great leaders (Northouse, 2007).

**The Timelines**

**Cultural events defining generational identity:**

**1960’s**- Kennedy & Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated

Civil Rights Movement

Vietnam war

Woodstock

Space exploration

**1970’s** – The Women’s rights movement

Rock and Roll

Earth Day

TV game shows

Watergate

**1980’s-** Computers

Reaganomics

Materialism & Consumerism- Yuppies

MTV

Cold War

Pop culture- family sitcoms, Star Wars

**1990’s-** Collapse of the Soviet Union

Internet- public domains

Fear of Y2K bug

Columbine High School attacks

**2000’s**-911 World Trade Center attack

War in Iraq –removal of Saddam Hussein, Search for Bin Laden

No Child Left Behind- School reform

Cell phones

**Early Childhood Education Historical Timeline** (excerpts from Table 2.1 Timeline of Major Events in ECE) Bredekamp, S. (2011) *Effective Practices in Early Childhood Education Building a Foundation*. Pg 42-44.

Pearson, Boston.

**1960’s-** Longitudinal Research- Perry Preschool Project

Head Start – War on Poverty

Sesame Street

**1970’s**- Comprehensive Child Development Act

Professional Organizations strengthen & Develop- Children’s Defense Fund, Head Start Association, National Black Child Development Institute, National Family Day Care Assoc.

IDEA Law passed

**1980’s-** TANF

NAEYC Accreditation

DAP

Birth to Three early intervention funding

**1990’s**- Brain Development Research

Reggio Emilia approach garners national attention

Act for Better Child Care and I Am Your Child Campaign

Child Care Workforce Initiatives

NAEYC Publishes Position Statements and grows to 100,000 members

CCDBG

Resource & Referral networks started

Creative Curriculum

ECERS Rating Scales Developed

**2000’s-** NCLB

Pre-K Now

Research Funding explodes- NIEERS, Foundation for Child Development and others

QRIS

State Child Care Licensing strengthens

Child Safety – car seats, facility security, choking hazards etc

**Generational Differences in the Workplace**

“Conflict in the workplace is nothing new. Views regarding work ethics, flexible schedules and professional development are just a few of the issues that can take on a generational flavor. Boomers, known for their strong work ethic and allegiance to what they believe in, often fight hard for causes or issues perceived as important, such as Head Start or Social Security. Frustration arises when they do not believe that others share their perspectives (Tengesdal, 2014).

There is a difference in the preferences of leadership behaviors between generations (Rodriguez, Green & Ree. 2003). In several studies, Gen- Xers have preferred challenging tasks accomplished within a workday, surfing and purchasing via the Internet, working alone with flexible hours, and having a challenging, fun work environment without the need for job security. Boomers, on the other hand, liked challenging tasks accomplished within several days, utilizing the telephone for comparing prices, working alone with regularly scheduled hours, and having a retirement plan that provides healthcare options, pensions and other financial benefits (Rodriguez, Green, & Ree, 2003).

**Generational Identity**

Taken from Tengesdal, B. (2014)

Maneuvering through generational differences in the workplace can be tricky. Early childhood programs could possibly have three generations working side-by-side in one childcare program. According to the National Survey for the Early Care and Education (Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, 2013), 50% of the medium range of ECE workers have an average of 14 years of experience. Thus, this information shows that Gen Xers and Millennials are working side-by-side with the Baby Boomer Generation. Howe and Strauss (2000) identified three attributes that differentiate generations:

1. a generational identity that begins in adolescence,

2. common attitudes and beliefs,

3. individuals that grow up together in a period of history identified by trends and significant events.

These three attributes are discussed below in regard to the generational identities of Baby Boomers, Gen Xers and Millennials.

The Baby Boomer Generation is confident and was indulged as children. Due to its large cohort size, it has political clout. Boomers grew up in a time of great prosperity and have been optimistic and responsible for many social movements in America. They value their careers and seek a purpose-driven life with meaning (Hansen & Leuty, 2012). Women of the Boomer Generation have had fewer options for careers than those generations that followed. Common historical experiences for this generation include the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War.

Gen Xers has lived with more media influence, typically had both parents working outside of the home and, thus, was left alone more often than the generations before them. They switch jobs often, looking for satisfaction, and have been shown to have less trust in authority (Debard, 2004) than the generations before them. Gen Xers have less interest in staying in one job for a long time and make more career moves than Boomers.

The Millennial Generation is often called the “me” Generation or Generation Y known for constantly taking selfies with camera phones and posting them online. Identified as narcissistic and entitled, the Millennials have high expectations for careers that will tap into their talents. They aspire to achieve and have been told that they can do anything because they are loved and special (Stein, 2013). They believe that the world is unlimited as is the number of friends they keep in their contact lists or followers on Tumblr, Instagram and Twitter.

**Adaptive change for the ECE Field**

**Lessons Learned from Boomer leaders:**

Boomers will not retire…. Just transition to other meaningful work!

Leaders must possess the ability to think long-term and imagine what lies ahead, be willing to “do the time” to garner the experience necessary to scaffold new ideas.

Relationships matter- trust and respect is critical for the greater good of the whole ECE community.

Demonstrate why being part of a membership organization is critical to the greater good of the ECE field.

Research is everywhere! Free information is available for tech savvy Millennials. Look for quality.

Putting knowledge to good practice requires deep reflection- not just a blog.

Raise professional Standards-Worthy Wage MUST HAPPEN NOW.

Share the history as a legacy for the future. Seize the Moment. Investments are being made.

Develop leadership opportunities for Boomer professionals to transition out- not kicked out.

Eliminate the divide between child care, Head Start and Pre-K programs.

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**Additional Resources**

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