



Leveraging Grandparents in Education

September 12, 2021 by Educator Barnes

National Grandparents Day takes place on the Sunday after Labor Day. It was designated an official day by President Jimmy Carter. Not only is this a great opportunity for students to spend time with their grandparents, it is also a time to consider how grandparents can be leveraged in education.

In his proclamation declaring Grandparents Day an official day, Carter said, "Grandparents are our continuing tie to the near-past, to the events and beliefs and experiences that so strongly affect our lives and the world around us." When historical events are covered grandparents can share what they can remember, or they can share the experiences their parents or their grandparents told them. Many times history books give a general national perspective, but if the grandparents lived locally during the event, they could share the local impact of the event.

Grandparents are extensions of families. Some students are raised by their grandparents or their grandparents are part of their caretaker team in addition to their parents. There are times when notes are sent home and students are told to ask a parent. Simply adding "or grandparent" is another way to meaningfully incorporate them into the students' learning.

Before the pandemic, my twin sons' school had a grandparents day each year which my parents attended. I'm thankful, now that my dad has passed, that my sons have those memories of him coming to school and participating in their education.



Jeremiah Barnes with his grandparents on Grandparents Day at his school - 2017

Because grandparents are more likely than parents to be retired, they have more flexibility in their schedules to support their grandchildren. Additionally, elders in the community who don't have children and therefore don't have grandchildren should not be counted out. They may be seen as a community grandmother or grandfather and can also spend time supporting learning in the school.

Anyone who still has grandparents alive, should be thankful. There's an old African proverb that states, "When an old man dies, a library burns to the ground." We should learn from the wealth of knowledge our grandparents have and be grateful for the opportunity to learn from them.