



Talking Points *For Education Leaders*

Generation What? *Why should we care?*

Three generations traveled to New York City with a long list of places to visit in a short two-day time frame. Upon leaving the hotel, the baby boomer in the group would ask someone knowledgeable for directions to a specific site or restaurant and it felt good to her that people were generous enough with their time to guide the threesome to several destinations. That got them heading out the door the right way. Unfortunately, the directions often had twists and turns requiring further instruction along the route. The Gen Xer in the group, an independent survivalist, carried the map guiding the other two along the street routes. The generation Z and youngest member of the group used her cell phone GPS for directions. She was confident and influential in not only the routes they would take but also about the choices they would make along the way.

This little story exemplifies the diverse models and mindsets of three generations and how, when working cooperatively and when the value of each is appreciated, they can accomplish what they set out to do. Are there challenges along the way? Often. For example, the Gen Z person might lose connectivity, and the Gen X person might need to begin with identifying North, and the baby boomer's information might be limited by her source. Inevitably, someone will say, "I don't think this is the right way." After new analysis, the group will commit to a route.

This scenario plays out in board rooms, classrooms, and homes every day. The challenge is to utilize the most effective methods and tools to establish effective collaboration and reach specified goals.

Authors David Stillman and Jonah Stillman in their book [Gen Z @ work](#)¹ assign certain generalized characteristics to each generation.

Traditionalists, 75 million, born pre-1946: "The Silent Generation." Traditionalists upheld many traditional values including loyalty and patriotism but were unlikely to speak up at work or share personal information or feelings freely.

Baby Boomers, 80 million, born between 1946 and 1964. Also known as the "me" generation. They pursued the American dream that was promised to them. They are idealistic and tend to support equal rights, equal opportunities and be anti-establishment and opened up communications like no generation before them.

Generation X, 60 million, born between 1965 and 1979. This generation was named after the variable "X" in mathematics because they grew up in the shadow of the Boomers and had less definable characteristics than the generations they are sandwiched between. Gen Xers were children during a time of shifting societal values. They believe quality and quantity of time are equally relevant to parenting.

Millennials, (also known as Generation Y) 82 million, born between 1980 and 1994. They came of age in a period of economic expansion and have never lived without computer availability or high-speed technology. They are the first generation of kids with “schedules.” As Children, Millennials were invited to participate in parents purchasing and travel decisions. They are generally well educated.

Generation Z, (also known as post millennials) 73 million, born between 1995 and 2012. According to Forbes (2015), the generation after Millennials, Generation Z, make up 25 percent of the U.S. population, making them a larger cohort than the Baby Boomers or Millennials. Generation Z are predominantly the children of Generation X, but they also have parents who are Millennials. They are comfortable in both the physical and digital world. They have grown up in the aftermath of 9/11 and during the recession. Terrorism and uncertainty are part of their lives.

Generation Z has only known a world with a shared economy and will push the workplace to break down silos. They tend to be driven and competitive.

We're all different. No descriptor or timeline can truly capture us. But when communicating with one another, it is important to consider and respect where they have come from and where they are heading. Effective leaders will capitalize on the perspectives and histories available to create the most profound educational opportunities for our future.

Familiarity with each will promote the following:

- Increased ability to identify the characteristics and leverage the strengths of the members of each generation.
- Improved capacity to build understanding and respect among and between members of different generations.

¹Gen Z @ Work, David Stillman - Jonah Stillman - Harper Business --2017

About Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA)

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