The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects.

Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom. In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. The activity is structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Students are encouraged to further reflect on the issues.

Core Skill Sets:
These icons identify the most relevant core skills students will develop using this resource. Learn more about the WE Learning Framework at www.we.org/we-at-school/we-schools/learning-framework/.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

How can we improve the quality of life for our aging population? (Photo: Patrick Landmann, Getty Images)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- As of July 2015, there were 5.6 million Canadian senior citizens over the age of 65. For the first time in Canada’s history there are more Canadians over the age of 65 than children under the age of 15. (CBC)
- The population of Canadians over 65 is currently growing every year, and growing faster than any other age group. (CBC)
- There are currently about 564,000 Canadians living with dementia illnesses. This number is expected to almost double to 937,000 over the next 15 years. (Alzheimer Society of Canada)
- Only 16,000 of the dementia cases involve people under the age of 65. (Alzheimer Society of Canada)
- Dementia disproportionately affects women. 85 percent of Canadians who live with dementia are women. (Alzheimer Society of Canada)
- It costs our health care system and individual Canadians a total of $10.4 billion every year to care for people living with dementia.
- Dementia conditions are “progressive.” That means they almost always get worse over time. Common dementia effects include loss of short and medium-term memory, confusion, decreased ability to think clearly and reason, and loss of language skills. As diseases like Alzheimers progress, people often end up not recognizing their family members. As these problems get worse, patients will often experience dramatic changes in mood and personality and can have behavioural problems like depression and aggression. They frequently wander and are at risk of getting lost. (Alzheimer Society of Canada)
- Alzheimer’s Disease was first identified in 1960 by a German psychiatrist and brain researcher named Dr. Alois Alzheimer. Studying people suffering from dementia, he found that, in some of them, their brains’ ability to function was being affected by deposits of material called “plaque” and “tangles” in brains cells. These problems were killing brain cells, causing the dementia symptoms. (Alzheimer Society of Canada)

KEY TERMS

Baby boomer—A person born between 1946 and 1964. During the two decades following World War II, western nations in North America and Europe experienced a dramatic increase in births and population growth. This was called the “Baby Boom.”

Nursing Home—A residence for seniors that provides medical care to support elderly people dealing with physical or mental health issues. Also called assisted living homes or convalescent homes.

Dementia—A generic term covering a range of mental health issues that affect a person’s memory and cognitive ability (their ability to think and reason clearly). Dementia illnesses most commonly affect the elderly, but can affect people of all ages. Alzheimer’s Disease is one of the most common and well-known dementia conditions.
THEMES AND COURSE CONNECTIONS

• **Themes:** Human Rights, Local Issues, Volunteering, Values and Ethics
• **Course Connections:** English, Technological Education, Careers Social Science and the Humanities.

MATERIALS

- Front board
- Paper and writing utensils
- Computer/tablet with Internet access and video capability

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Develop a sense of empathy for senior citizens
- Understand how one small interaction can make a large impact
- Design a facility that meets the social, emotional, medical and physical needs of senior citizens

DISCUSS

1. How can interactions between seniors and youth create positive impacts for both parties?
2. Can improvements in the design of a nursing home improve the psychological and emotional well being of the elderly?
3. How might the environment of a nursing home be described?
4. The article states that seniors with Alzheimer’s die within a year of being admitted to a nursing home. Why do you believe this occurs and what small changes can be implemented to create a long term impact?
5. What changes can you make to your interactions with family or community members who are elderly to improve their quality of life?

DIVE DEEPER

Read the *Global Voices* article “Bringing creativity to senior care” with students and encourage students to discuss the questions above.

In groups of two to three, ask students to reflect and discuss what they imagine their life to look like when they are 70 years old. Where do they imagine they will live, who will be a part of their lives, are they happy?

Ask students to think about the reason for their assumption? Why do they believe their lives will turn out in the manner they described above? Is this assumption created from their interaction with the senior citizens in their own life? For example, if you live with a grandparent, do you assume that when you are older, you too will live with family?

Share the video Dutch Retirement Home Breaks Boundaries and Age Divide www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZgGb4p0xoO (2.36) or the read the article Dutch Nursing Home Offers Rent-Free Housing To Students www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/dutch-retirement-home-offers-rent-free-housing-students-one-condition/

Discuss the following questions in pairs:

a. How can interactions between youth and senior citizens create positive impacts?

b. What are benefits of communal housing in nursing homes for youth and senior citizens?

c. If you were living in this type of housing, what contributions would you make in your 30 hours per month contribution?

In groups of three to four, design a nursing home or retirement community for yourselves in the future. Thinking about the design features in the indoor neighbourhood nursing town in Amsterdam, how would you design a nursing home or community that would be a warm and comforting environment for you to live in? Design using Minecraft: The Education Edition, a diorama or pencil and paper.

Consider the following areas while designing your retirement home:

a. How can this retirement community or nursing home feel like a “home away from home”?

b. What facilities will you include to ensure that there are spaces to socialize?

c. How can you include opportunities for interaction with youth?

d. What aspects of your current community will you include?

e. Does this space meet the social, emotional, medical and physical needs of those who will live in it?

For each element that you include within the nursing home or retirement community, provide a rationale as to why you included it within the design. How will it provide residents such as yourself an avenue to alleviate the feeling of isolation, helplessness and depression that at times comes from residing within a nursing home?

Ask students to reflect further on their designed nursing home or retirement community, discuss and create a justification as to why the design of your facility will assist individuals living with dementia and how this model of living will ensure a better quality of life for senior citizens.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Intergenerational learning: exchanges between young and old | Jurriën Mentink | TEDxAmsterdamED https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pt5f8fu-TjWc