

Alternative Modes of Teaching and Learning

Alternative modes to delivery

Peer Teaching

Definition

Peer tutoring is the system of instruction in which learners help each other and learn by teaching. Tutoring schemes, known variously as Peer Tutoring, Cross-Age Tutoring, Youth Tutoring Youth, and Each One Teach One, have used students to teach students, students to teach children, non-professional adults to teach adults and children, and children to teach children. In every case of peer tutoring, a professional teacher organises the activity of the non-professionals (tutors) as they minister to the needs of the ultimate beneficiaries of the process (tutees).

Goodlad, S. and B. Hirst, *Peer Tutoring: A Guide to Learning by Teaching*. 1989, London: Kogan Page Limited. 184.

Peer tutoring involves students teaching other students in a given subject area and takes a variety of forms, including one-to-one tutoring by more experienced students; formal student presentations in seminars and tutorials; and students actively assisting other students, both in small-group learning activities in tutorials or labs, or informally with friends outside of class contact hours.

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<http://www.csd.uwa.edu.au/newsletter/issue0397/peer.html>

Advantages

- Involves students directly in the teaching and learning process
- The act of teaching others enhances student's own learning
- Encourages collaboration between learners
- Enriches learning environment
- Shares responsibility for teaching between teacher and learners
- Uses expertise in the learning group
- Can be viewed as a strategy for dealing with individual differences in the classroom

Disadvantages

- May put too much pressure on individual learners
- Not all students will be 'good' teachers
- Level of instruction offered by a peer may not be high enough

Cross-age Teaching

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What is cross-age teaching?

Cross-age teaching engages teens as teachers for pre-teens or younger children, typically in nonformal educational settings. In many communities, cross-age teaching has been a useful strategy to influence and educate younger youth. Preadolescents and young children look up to and want to emulate teenagers. At the same time, research shows that teenagers can have a positive impact on the knowledge, attitudes and behaviors of children as well as their same-age peers (Meyer, et al. 2000) by taking an active role in program implementation and leadership. This idea of peer influence is not a new one – “social learning theory” suggests that our attitudes and behaviors are reflective of the people that we come into contact with on a regular basis (Bandura, 1977). Parents, teachers, siblings and peers all have strong influences on our behavior through modeling. Adolescence marks a time when peers become a strong influence in the development of behavior and values (Meyer, A., Nicholson, R., Danish, S., Fries, E., & Polk, V. 2000). Consequently, peer leaders have the potential to take an active role in influencing their peers in participating in healthy behaviors. Cross-age teaching by teens can play a unique role in influencing younger youth to develop healthy behaviors.

Why is cross-age teaching important?

Similar to the benefits of youth-adult partnerships, cross-age teaching is a win-win situation for both the teen and the younger person. Pre-teens and younger children often respond more enthusiastically to modeling by teens than adults; because younger youth look up to teens, rapport is established very quickly. There are benefits for the teens as well. Cross-age relationships reinforce learning for teens. Teen teachers learn to be organized, and they become actively involved in and responsible for positive change in their communities (Hoover, A.B., & Weisenbach, A., 1999). In addition to developing leadership skills and learning to be positive role-models for youth, teen leaders tend to start “listening to their own advice.” From their experiences as teachers, many teens begin to make more responsible choices (Marczak & Peterson, 1999).

How do I encourage cross-age teaching in my community?

Many program curricula include training ideas and resources that can be used to train older teens in mentoring and teaching younger children. Lee, Murdock, and Paterson (1998) outline “twelve essential elements” for successful cross-age teaching drawn from in-depth research on 14 cross-age teaching programs in California. Among these essential elements are having a committed adult program director, the careful recruitment and selection of teens for the teacher role, the use of an established curriculum, the importance of ongoing training and support, and the role of monitoring and evaluation (Lee, Murdock, & Paterson, 1998). The additional links below can be used to enhance programs that are not initially designed with cross-age teaching in mind.

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- The Role of Cross-age Teaching in Supporting Adolescent Development by 4H Center for Youth Development. Available online: <http://fourhcyd.ucdavis.edu/extending/pubs/report/pdf/CYDReportCrossage1.pdf>

Links

Cyfernet: www.cyfernet.org

Cyfernet is a clearinghouse for Cooperative Extension based information regarding children, youth, families and community. Use "cross age teaching" as a search phrase and you will find some good information and links to further resources.

League of Minnesota Cities: www.lmnc.org

This website has a great section of resources to aid in understanding youth development and involvement in programs. Do a search on the website using the key terms "youth involvement."

At The Table: www.AtTheTable.org

An online clearinghouse featuring everything you need to know about effectively involving youth in your organization and community.

Youth Leadership Institute: www.yli.org

An organization that provides information for training youth leaders, adult allies and the systems that support them.

Search Institute: www.search-institute.org

An organization and website that has several resources on youth-adult partnerships, youth development and mentoring.

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