

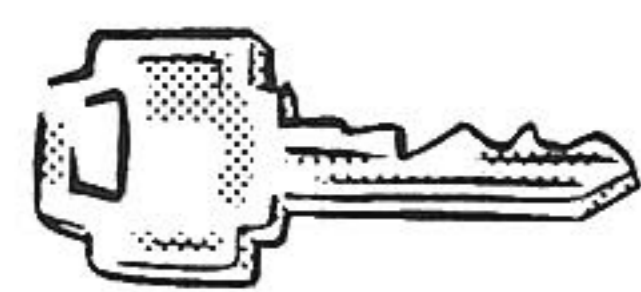
1 Teenagers as Teachers

Teenagers can be extremely effective teachers of young children:

- Children respond well to teen teachers.
- Teenagers can be positive role models for young children.
- Using teenagers as teachers is efficient. A team of eight teenagers can teach 60 or more children organized in small groups.

Teenagers benefit from being teachers:

- Attitudes toward teachers and school can improve.
- Self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment can increase.



Key Research Findings

- Teenagers were sometimes seen by program planners as convenient teachers for large groups of children. However, the benefits to the teenagers quickly became evident.
- With adequate training, teens were effective, innovative teachers.
- Teenagers with similar backgrounds to the children they taught (for example, from the same neighborhood) were often powerful, positive role models.
- As role models, teenagers often felt the most important lesson that they taught younger children was to “keep away from the bad stuff and go into the good stuff.”
- For many teenagers, their teaching position was their first job, providing the opportunity to impart positive work behaviors and attitudes.
- Teenagers who were struggling with the challenges of living in high-risk environments often benefited most from their experiences as cross-age teachers.

“When teens work in their communities, they learn about themselves, what they can do, and what options they have...they gain self-confidence, and they believe in themselves.”

—ASSISTANT DIRECTOR



Tips from the Field

- Constantly promote the positive development of teen teachers.
- Provide adequate initial and ongoing training for teen teachers (chapters 4 and 5).
- Use plenty of positive reinforcement, recognition, and rewards to support cross-age teachers (chapter 9).
- Set up teenagers for success by having incrementally higher expectations (chapter 8).
- Make teenagers your highest priority; for example, scavenge for program supplies (garage sales, recycling office supply outlets, etc.) but treat teens as the most valued component of your program.

Basic Program Elements

- Teenagers teach small groups of young children.
- Teenagers teach an established curriculum.
- Programs are for enrichment, not remediation.
- Programs are long enough so that teenagers develop relationships with one another and with the children.