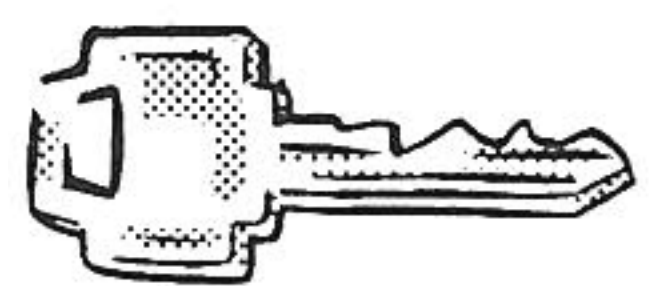


9 Preparing Teens for Success

Good program directors do not expect success to just happen. In addition to providing high-quality initial and ongoing training, they take active steps to ensure that teenagers will experience success as teachers.



Key Research Findings

- Programs that foster success believed that teenagers could be good teachers. Adult staff regularly expressed their confidence in the teens' abilities.
- Adult staff had high expectations of the teenagers. These, too, were regularly expressed to the teens.
- Adult staff paid attention to each teen's teaching readiness, providing the teenagers with incremental increases in responsibility and autonomy.
- Success was fostered by providing teenagers with flexible curricula that could be revised or adjusted as needed.
- Words like these were heard often at the sites of successful programs:

You can do it!

I'm impressed!

Good job!

Great thinking!

Way to go!

I'm proud of you!

You must be proud of yourself!

Thanks for your hard work.

"I don't take the teens out until I feel they're ready. Because I don't want them to go out and have a horrible experience... So, I make sure the teens are comfortable, and then I sort of take them out and bring 'em in, take 'em out and bring 'em in, and then I sort of push them on."

—PROGRAM DIRECTOR



Tips from the Field

- Continually express your confidence in the teenagers.
- Teach with gusto and demonstrate your enthusiasm for your work. Teenagers will follow your example.
- Pay attention to the teen-child ratio. Too many children per teen can be overwhelming whereas too few can flatten the energy level of the entire group.
- Provide prompts for teens so they can teach without worrying about forgetting the material. The prompt may be a scripted lesson, a large piece of butcher paper with activity directions written out, or a chart that they fill out with children's help.
- In the beginning, use a rotation or center-based system of lesson organization. That is, have each teen teach at one activity center, and have small groups of children rotate through the centers. This reduces the number of activities the teenagers have to know.
- Provide extra activities to fall back on in case the planned activity does not work or the children complete activities early.
- Encourage teenagers to revise or eliminate activities that have not worked even though they have really tried.