



WASHINGTON READING CORPS  
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction



# Peer and Cross-Age Tutoring

WASHINGTON OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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## Peer and Cross-Age Tutoring

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The Washington Reading Corps Toolkit

- Module 1: Volunteer Reading Tutor Training Handbook:  
A Sample Guide for Schools
- Module 2: Creating a Volunteer Reading Tutor Program
- Module 3: A Guide to Community Partnerships and the Media
- Module 4: A Guide to Family Literacy and Involvement
- Module 5: Volunteer Recruitment and Management
- Module 6: Peer and Cross-Age Tutoring

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## Introduction

This module is designed to help explain peer and cross-age tutorial methods and the reasoning behind why schools and tutoring programs might want to consider peer and cross-age youth tutoring as an effective practice. It contains tools, ideas, and strategies to use in the development and maintenance of a peer and cross-age tutoring program. Tutors (adult volunteers and youth tutors) play a crucial role in Washington Reading Corps schools, which correlates to the success of the students served. This tutorial method provides an opportunity for students to serve as tutors to help fellow students and in turn learn by teaching.

### Key:

-  **New Section:** New topic in the chapter
-  **Subsection:** Samples or other elements that provides additional specific information on the topic
-  **Formats and Strategies:** Offers information on sample formats and strategies

## Peer and Cross-Age Tutoring Elements

This chapter provides information on the following:

- What Is Peer and Cross-Age Tutoring?
- Why Use Peer and Cross-Age Tutors?
- What Makes Peer and Cross-Age Tutoring Effective?
- Elements of a Successful Program



### What Is Peer and Cross-Age Tutoring?

The students in your school or tutoring program can serve a vital role as tutors and have a positive affect on the success of your tutoring program's mission. Peer and cross-age tutoring is a tutorial method in which students help each other succeed in areas in which they are struggling. With proper training, continual guidance and support, student tutors can provide individual attention and assist other students in a variety of subjects.

Peer and cross-age tutoring has also been known under many names, including the following:

- Peer teaching
- Peer education
- Partner learning
- Peer learning
- Child-teach-child
- Peer coaching
- Learning through teaching
- Cooperative learning
- Peer cooperation
- Peer helping
- Peer collaboration
- Peer and/or mutual instruction

It is also common for publications not to differentiate between peer and cross-age tutoring and to use “peer tutoring” as an all-encompassing term. This module will use the terms peer and cross-age tutoring separately.

**Peer tutoring occurs when a tutor is of the same age, grade, or academic status as his or her tutee.** These tutors are competent learners, who with minimal training and guidance, help one or more students learn a skill or concept. It is not necessary for these tutors to be experts in a particular subject for this method to be effective. This method of instruction allows student tutors to help fellow students, and in turn, learn by teaching.

**Cross-age tutoring occurs when the tutor is older or in a higher grade level than the student that he or she is tutoring.** Cross-age tutoring provides an opportunity for older students to serve as tutors/mentors to younger students. These tutors are engaged, challenged to learn and reinforce material taught in class, and allowed to take responsibility and an active role in the learning process. Because of the amount of preparation and responsibility that is associated with cross-age tutoring, the student tutors often gain as much as or more than younger tutees.

Adapted from Kalkowski, P. (1995). *Peer and cross-age tutoring*. Retrieved from <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/9/c018.html>, from Gaustad, J. (1992). *Tutoring for at-risk students*. Eugene, OR: Oregon School Study Council. and from Greenlee, G. (1998, Fall). “Cross-age tutoring.” *The Tutor: Back to school: Getting new programs started and improving existing programs*. Retrieved from <http://www.nwrel.org/learns/tutor/fall1998/fall1998.PDF>



## Why Use Peer and Cross-Age Tutors?

The benefits associated with peer and cross-age tutoring consist of the mastery of academic skills, the development of social behaviors, and the enrichment of peer relations and interaction. These benefits are received by both tutor and tutee. Studies have shown that peer interaction is an essential component to a variety of important early childhood achievements, such as:

- Understanding of fairness
- Self-esteem
- Propensities toward sharing and kindness
- Mastery of symbolic expression
- Acquisition of role-taking and communication skills
- Development of creative and critical thinking

The following section details benefits of peer and cross-age tutoring in general, as well as benefits to the tutees, the tutors, and the teachers.

BENEFITS OF PEER TUTORING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Teachers can avoid multiple disruptions in schedules that other forms cannot avoid since tutoring is contained within one class with one group of children.</li> <li>▪ Provides tutors and tutees with a similar language because they are closer in knowledge and status than are students and teachers.</li> <li>▪ Generally both children feel freer to express their opinions and take risks</li> <li>▪ It is cost effective.</li> </ul>

#### ☞ BENEFITS OF CROSS-AGE TUTORING

- Takes advantage of the higher status inherent in the age difference, while still retaining many of the benefits of peer tutoring.
- Can increase tutee's self-esteem.
- Prevents feelings of inferiority that children may experience if they are the tutee of a same-age peer.

#### ☞ Benefits for High Needs Students

Peer and cross-age tutoring *by* students with limited English proficiency, learning disabilities, behavioral disorders, and/or other high-needs characteristics has shown impressive gains in both the academic and emotional areas at all age and grade levels. Low achieving and other high-needs students engaged as peer or cross-age tutors exhibit significant benefits, in the following areas:

#### ☞ BENEFITS OF HIGH NEEDS STUDENTS AS TUTORS

*Peer and cross-age tutoring improves...*

- Academic achievement in various subject areas, particularly reading and mathematics
- Locus of control
- Self-esteem
- Social skills
- Attitude toward school
- Dropout rate, truancy, tardiness

Studies have shown that students with disabilities benefit from being tutored. Cross-age and peer tutoring *for* high-needs students has academic and emotional benefits. This method of instruction has been proven to be as effective as or more effective than the traditional teacher-mediated practices to which they were compared. Specific types of disability have found academic and emotional benefits, specifically improvements in mathematics, social skills, and time-on-task. Types of disabilities that benefit from being tutored by peer and cross-age tutors include the following:

- Learning disabilities
- Severe disabilities
- Mental handicap
- Language delay
- Autism
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- Special education

#### ☞ Benefits for Peer and Cross-Age Tutors

The role of a peer and/or cross-age tutor creates a context for the tutor's own learning. This aspect provides the tutor with the opportunity to use his or her own knowledge in a meaningful way. Evaluations indicate that although these tutors may miss some of their own class

time in order to tutor; such tutoring programs actually contribute to positive academic gains and affective growth for the tutors. Moreover, tutoring can be especially beneficial for students who are operating well below their grade level. This aspect is attributed to the fact that tutoring provides a respectful context or atmosphere in which students can review, study and understand material that they have not yet mastered, and is a real motivation to do so. In addition, being responsible for teaching the material promotes a more complex and more meaningful level of understanding on the tutor's part. Tutoring provides an important opportunity for students to gain responsibility and to build their own self-esteem. The experience of being valued, needed, respected, and perceived as competent has a significant impact on the way that these students view themselves. The experience of helping others contributes to their ability to feel successful, like an important component of the whole school community, and that they are having a positive impact on that community.

 BENEFITS FOR PEER AND CROSS-AGE TUTORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improves students' attitudes toward school: reduces dropout rates, truancies, and tardies.</li> <li>▪ Breaks down social barriers and creates new friendships.</li> <li>▪ Provides emotional support and positive role models.</li> <li>▪ Increases sense of pride and accomplishment for having helped someone else.</li> <li>▪ Increases mastery of academic skills.</li> <li>▪ A greater sense of dedication to their own instruction, so they can effectively transmit it to the tutee.</li> <li>▪ Increases self-esteem, confidence, and sense of adequacy as a result of being named a tutor.</li> <li>▪ Increases sense of responsibility and awareness for what teachers must do to transmit knowledge to students.</li> <li>▪ Empathy for tutees for whom learning may be much more of a struggle.</li> </ul>

 BENEFITS FOR PEER AND CROSS-AGE TUTEES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increases amount of individual instruction.</li> <li>▪ Lessons customized to individual students' learning styles and levels of understanding.</li> <li>▪ Instruction free of competition-students progress at their own pace.</li> <li>▪ Increases amount of praise, feedback, and encouragement given.</li> <li>▪ Closer monitoring (from the teacher and tutor) that maximizes time on task.</li> <li>▪ Skills are demonstrated instead of just verbalized.</li> <li>▪ Opportunity for companionship.</li> </ul>

 BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduces time spent on repetitive work, allowing them to carry out more technical and professional tasks.</li> <li>▪ Increases personal monitoring of individual student progress over the monitoring they must provide during whole class instruction.</li> </ul>

- Increases personal gratification in seeing the rewards reaped by both tutor and tutee.
- Improves skills as they perform monitoring, counseling, evaluation, and record keeping functions in conjunction with the program.

### Language Arts Achievement

Research shows that peer and cross-age tutoring has significant, beneficial effects on the language arts achievement of tutors and especially of tutees. Language arts areas include story grammar, comprehension, identification of sight words, acquisition of vocabulary, and general reading skills. Most of this research involved elementary students, and positive results were found for both short- and long-term tutoring.

### Cost Effectiveness

Peer and cross-age tutoring program operation costs are usually lower in comparison to tutoring programs that rely on computer aided instruction, reduced class size, and/or increased school day length. While peer and cross-age tutoring programs may have a high start-up cost due to factors such as, planning time, teacher training, consultation, peer and cross-age tutor training and monitoring, the ongoing maintenance of the program is cost-effective.

This section was based on material from Rosner, R. (1996). *Students teaching students: A handbook for cross-age tutoring*. San Francisco, CA: Partners in School Innovation. Available online at: <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/filemanager/download/589/sts.pdf> and from Kalkowski, P. (1995). *Peer and cross-age tutoring; School improvement research series; Close-up #18*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Available online: <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/9/c018.html>

## What Makes Peer and Cross-Age Tutoring Effective?

Peer and cross-age tutoring programs are successful for many reasons. As with any other school program, it is important to note that no two tutoring programs are alike. Student, school, and community dynamics all contribute to the uniqueness of any given program. Also, the scope of tutoring can vary widely from school to school. Given these differences, there are common benefits and necessary conditions in a successful peer and cross-age tutoring program. Six conditions have been identified which may be needed for effectively transmitting knowledge through peer tutoring:

- (1) The tutor must **provide relevant help**, which is
- (2) **appropriately elaborated**,
- (3) **timely**, and
- (4) **understandable** to the target student;
- (5) the tutor must provide an **opportunity** for the tutee **to use the new information**; and
- (6) the tutee must **take advantage of that opportunity**.

## Adult-Child Instruction versus Peer and Cross-Age Tutoring

- Unlike adult-child instruction, the “expert” in peer and cross-age tutoring is not very far removed from the “novice” in authority or knowledge.
- The interaction between the tutor and tutee is more balanced and spirited than that between an adult and child.
- Because of the similarities in knowledge and status, tutees are less passive than they would be in an adult-child instructional relationship and feel freer to express opinions, ask questions, and risk untested solutions.
- Peer and cross-age tutors may more easily understand tutees’ problems because they are cognitively closer. Studies reveal that third- and sixth-graders were more accurate than experienced teachers in determining from nonverbal behavior whether their peers understood lessons.
- The fact that their “cognitive framework” is similar may also help peer and cross-age tutors present subject matter in language their tutees understand.
- Peer tutors can effectively model study skills such as concentrating on the material, organizing work habits, and asking questions. Similarities between the modeler and learner increase the influence of modeling.
- Higher status also promotes the effect of modeling. Cross-age tutoring takes advantage of the higher status inherent in the age difference while still retaining considerable similarity.
- A child at-risk may more easily identify with a student relatively close in age, particularly one of the same ethnic or social backgrounds, than with an adult.
- Tutors who have struggled academically may be more patient and understanding than those who have not.
- Empathy contributes greatly to low achieving students’ effectiveness as cross-age tutors. Tutors often “pick up on things teachers weren’t able to” because they experienced similar problems a few years earlier.
- This dynamic between peer and cross-age tutors and their tutees creates an atmosphere that is high in mutuality even though the relationship is not exactly equal in status.

Based on material from Miller, B.A. (1989). *The multi-grade classroom: A resource for small rural schools; Book 7: Planning and using peer tutoring*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Available online: <http://www.nwrel.org/ruraled/publications/multig7.pdf>, from Kalkowski, P. (1995). *Peer and cross-age tutoring; School improvement research series; Close-up #18*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Available online: <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/9/c018.html>, and from Damon, W., and Phelps, E. "Critical distinctions among three approaches." In *Peer Interaction, Problem-Solving, And Cognition: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by N. M. Webb. New York: Pergamon Press, 1989, 9-19.

## Elements of a Successful Program

There are several factors that are required to make this instructional method work. For example, administrative and teacher support within your school or tutoring program is the essential component to a successful peer and cross-age tutoring program. The teachers need to be willing to shift their role to facilitators and managers of this learning process. Teachers need to be trained and encouraged to put the program in place. In cross-age tutoring programs, they will have to develop a working relationship and the necessary logistics with their teaching partners. Effective peer and cross-age programs have encourage teachers to meet

regularly and communicate with each other. This strategy is beneficial in breaking down teacher isolation and developing innovative partnerships between teachers.

KEY ELEMENTS TO SUCCESSFUL PEER AND CROSS-AGE TUTORING PROGRAMS

- **Assess and design a tutoring program based on its goals, objectives, and resources**, including factors such as the targeted age group, subject area, and the availability of human, physical, and financial resources.
- **Established specific, measurable objectives** enable assessment of individual progress and evaluation of the program's success as a whole.
- **Frequent assessment of student progress** gives program staff feedback on the effectiveness of lessons and encourages both tutor and tutee.
- **Established procedures for selecting and matching tutors and tutees.** Examples of tutee selection criteria include test scores and teacher judgment.
- **Screen tutors** for desired attitudes or levels of academic competence.
- **Provide training to tutors** to accompany carefully structured materials. Extensive training is desirable when tutor progress is the main objective.
- **Provide ongoing supervision and support** for tutors. Younger tutors will require more structure and closer supervision. Tutors gain psychological support by talking about frustrations and sharing success stories with each other. Tutors can learn from each other's experiences as well as from staff suggestions for handling problems.
- **Support by teachers and administrators** is essential for a tutoring program to succeed in long-term.
- **Keep parents and the community informed.** Those who understand and believe in a program's potential to help their children will generally be firm supporters.

Adapted from Miller, B.A. (1989). *The multi-grade classroom: A resource for small rural schools; Book 7: Planning and using peer tutoring*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Available online: <http://www.nwrel.org/ruraled/publications/multig7.pdf> and from Gartner, A., and Riessman, F. (1993, August). "Peer tutoring: Toward a new model." *ERIC Digest*. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education.

## Developing a Program

This chapter provides information needed in order to develop a peer and cross-age tutoring program, including information on the following:

- Developing a Peer and Cross-Age Tutoring Program
- Sample Peer and Cross-Age Tutoring Models



### Developing a Peer and Cross-Age Tutoring Program

#### Developing Program Structure

- Structure a program that works towards your own needs and goals.
- Determine your specific needs and goals. Design your program with these needs and goals in mind. See *Tool 1: Program Planning Worksheet* in the Appendix.
- Decide who will be involved in tutoring. Assemble a planning committee to be responsible for the maintenance and development of the program as a whole (This might include things like making sure the program is addressing needs and working towards goals, stimulating teacher communication, encouraging parent involvement, arranging overall recognition, conducting program assessment and evaluation, and soliciting and acting on feedback).
- Decide how much communication and sharing you will need, and agree on ways that communication and sharing will happen with school staff.
- Decide subjects to be tutored and materials, procedures, and strategies that will be used.
- Be flexible: monitor your program and make modifications as necessary along the way.

For additional information regarding establishing a tutoring program, see *Module 2: Creating a Volunteer Reading Tutor Program*.

Adapted from Miller, B.A. (1989). *The multi-grade classroom: A resource for small rural schools; Book 7: Planning and using peer tutoring*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Available online: <http://www.nwrel.org/ruraled/publications/multig7.pdf>, and from Rosner, R. (1996). *Students teaching students: A handbook for cross-age tutoring*. San Francisco, CA: Partners in School Innovation. Available online at: <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/filemanager/download/589/sts.pdf>

## Sample Peer and Cross-Age Tutoring Models

There are a variety of ways to structure cross-age tutoring for students. Tutoring may happen in many different ways and still be successful for the tutor, the tutee and all of the teachers involved. It is important for whichever model is selected, that tutoring is a visible activity that emphasizes student leadership and responsibility, fun activities for tutors and tutees, and provides tutor appreciation and recognition throughout the school year. This section provides several examples of different models. Since every model has benefits and downsides, programs should use a peer and cross-age tutoring model that fits the needs of their teachers and students.

### One-to-One Tutoring

- Suitable for intensive one on one help in a specific area. Specific sessions can be designed to support the tutee's needs.

Tutors are matched together with tutees in pairs. According to research on peer and cross-age tutoring, this is the most effective form of tutoring. If possible, the tutor and tutee should work together consistently throughout the year. This relationship benefits both the tutor and tutee. The tutor witnesses the progress and growth in his or her tutee, and the tutee has the opportunity to learn from a peer or older learner whom s/he likes and trusts.

NOTE: Without enough support and coaching, the tutor may become bored. In order to avoid this problem, make the work meaningful to the tutor, change subjects or do some fun activities, and/or rotate tutors around to create opportunities to work with new tutees.

### Station Tutoring

- Suitable for explicit station activities that use older students to direct and help your students. The station tutor allows the teacher to work with other students.

Tutors are stationed at various tables around the room. They are trained to be station leaders and are provided with written instructions and explicit tasks. Tutors interact with multiple students; therefore, the work is always different and is less likely to become boring. The tutor may not develop deep relationships with the tutees in this configuration. Students usually respond well to the explicit expectations in this highly structured method.

### Floater Tutoring

- Suitable for an entire class with a few tutors.

Tutors roam the classroom and help students who are experiencing difficulty with their work. In this model, it is necessary for tutee teachers to provide explicit instructions for tutors to use while they float as to limit confusion about their tasks. Another option is to have tutors be responsible for their own group of tutees. This

added structure allows tutors to focus their attention on smaller groups of students and more specific tasks.

#### Whole Class, One Schedule Tutoring

- Suitable for tutoring that is built into the class schedule and curriculum. In this model, the entire class tutors together at the same time each week. This allotted time permits the teacher to observe students tutoring and to provide coaching. It also creates a built-in time for training, reflection and communication. Benefits to this model include student recognition of effective tutoring behaviors, opportunities to provide feedback to their classmates, and feeling supported while developing new skills as well as applying them to their own learning.

#### Whole Class, Multiple Schedules

- Suitable to fit multiple schedules and classrooms. Allows all students the opportunity to tutor. It emphasizes student responsibility; however, it does not offer a chance for the tutor teacher to observe his/her students. In this model, every student in the classroom has the opportunity to tutor. Various teachers and classrooms may be involved, and tutors are free to go at times convenient for the tutee teacher but they do not all tutor at the same time. The tutors have different tutoring shifts according to their schedule; it is their responsibility to remember to leave for tutoring and to make up the class work that they miss.

#### Tutoring in Shifts

- Suitable for small groups of students (up to class size, as long as done in shifts). Allows the teacher to send a smaller group of tutors out and not involve the entire class at one time. This model also does not offer an opportunity for teachers to observe his/her students. This model works for small groups up to an entire class of students who would like to tutor. First, the tutor and tutee teachers arrange times for tutoring. Then, the tutor teacher sends out a selected number of students to tutor one day and the rest of them to tutor on another day. The two groups tutor the same students on an alternating basis. The tutor teacher may decide to strategically divide the tutors into skill or reading groups so that he/she has a consistent group to work with while the other group is tutoring.

#### A Few Good Tutors

- Suitable for a few students who are interested in tutoring or who really could benefit from cross-age tutoring. This model has an emphasis in student responsibility. In this model, teachers release a few of their students to tutor a few times a week. The tutors are responsible for making up the class work they miss while they are tutoring. Because of the fewer number of tutors leaving the classroom, the rest of

the class stays more or less intact for teaching purposes. It is important that these tutors continue to receive support and recognition from their teachers, even though the rest of the class is not involved. This helps to ensure a positive experience in tutoring. Training, reflection, and teacher collaboration will be more difficult in this model because it does not structure tutoring into the curriculum as do some of the other models.

Based on material from Bernstein, S., Boquiren, C., & Cho, A. (1997). *Keeping cross-age tutoring alive: Growing and sustaining a school-wide tutoring program*. For more information, go to: <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/filemanager/download/610/XAT.pdf>

## Tutor Training and Management

This chapter provides information needed in order to provide Peer and Cross-Age tutor training and to effectively manage tutors, including information on the following:

- Peer and Cross-Age Tutor Training
- Peer and Cross-Age Tutor Support
- Ongoing Tutor Support and Management
- Volunteer Retention and Appreciation



### Peer and Cross-Age Tutor Training

Training is essential to the success of peer and cross-age tutoring programs. Schools should provide training that will prepare these tutors for and help them learn from their tutoring experiences. Training is an ongoing process that begins before the tutor starts tutoring and continues for the duration of the experience. Ongoing training helps tutors be effective, and learn as much as possible themselves, and feel supported. For additional information regarding tutor orientation, training, and ongoing management and support see *Module 1: Volunteer Reading Tutor Training Handbook: A Sample Guide for Schools* and *Module 5: Volunteer Recruitment and Management*.

#### **Three primary components of tutor training:**

- 1) Initial training/orientation
  - a) Subject specific training
  - b) General tutoring skills training
- 2) On-the-job training and coaching
- 3) Ongoing training/reflection
  - a) Group reflection (regular structured reflection sessions)
  - b) Individual reflection (journal)

During the initial tutor training, tutors learn both subject-specific information and expectations, and general tutoring skills and strategies. General tutoring/helping skills are essential as well.

#### **At a minimum, tutors need skills in the following areas:**

- 1) How to help tutees without doing their work for them

- 2) How to be positive and encouraging
  - a) How to provide appropriate positive reinforcement
  - b) How to encourage risk-taking
- 3) How to pose questions and interact socially

**In addition, tutors should learn skills in the following areas:**

- 1) Listening skills and nonverbal communication
- 2) Awareness of who tutee is developmentally
- 3) Empathy (what it is like to be a tutee)
- 4) Responsibility and the obligations of being a role model

In addition to training sessions outside of the classroom and tutoring room, on-the-job training can provide attention and critical assistance to the tutors. During this type of training, the trainer actually observes the tutors in action and notes strengths and areas for development. As part of the observation session (or immediately following), the trainer might give tutors appropriate praise, offer helpful hints, or suggest additional strategies. The trainer might also use her observations as the basis for future training sessions with the tutors, especially if several are having difficulty in the same area.

### Role Playing for Tutors

Role play can be an especially useful tool to help peer and cross-age tutors process and learn from their own and their peers' tutoring experiences. Role play should be done with groups of peer and cross-age tutors periodically for training and ongoing support. They can be created based directly on actual situations observed during tutoring sessions, or they can be more general. See *Tool 2: Sample Role Play Topics* in the Appendix for role plays that may or may not be relevant to your group of tutors

**NOTE:** Whenever possible, try to use actual props that the tutors encounter in the tutees' classroom. For example, if the tutees' class uses math stations, see if you can borrow one or two math stations for the role plays. Use anything that will make it easier for the actors to connect what they are acting out to the real situations they deal with in tutoring sessions.

#### BASIC ROLE PLAY PROCEDURES

- Act out a situation
- Process or reflect on what has happened in the scenario
- Discuss what happened in scenario with group of peer and or cross-age tutors
- Ask group of tutors what they could/would you have done and why
- Explore other questions

Based on material from Rosner, R. (1996). *Students teaching students: A handbook for cross-age tutoring*. San Francisco, CA: Partners in School Innovation. Available online at: <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/filemanager/download/589/sts.pdf>

## Ongoing Tutor Support and Management

### Peer and Cross-Age Tutor Support

Students are key stakeholders in schools and in their own learning, but often their concerns, opinions, and perspectives are ignored. Students actually have a lot to offer to schools and the way they work.

When provided with meaningful opportunities and effective guidance, students have the capacity to participate in and profoundly influence the way their schools and classrooms operate. When we ask students to help shape their schools and their classrooms, we are not only creating school environments which more accurately reflect their contributions and needs, but we are also providing students with opportunities to develop their own skills. Therefore participation in peer and cross-age tutoring programs can be an incredibly effective way for students to increase their self-confidence, build their self-esteem, increase their sense of responsibility, and improve their academic achievement.

Based on material from Riessman, Frank. 1990. "Restructuring Help: A Human Services Paradigm for the 1990s. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 18 (2): 221-230.

#### TUTOR SUPPORT AND MANAGEMENT TIPS

- Make sure tutors have adequate preparation and support to do their job effectively, including initial and ongoing training, opportunities for reflection, and tutor recognition.
- Choose your tutors with care. The smartest students do not necessarily make the best tutors.
- Value peer and cross-age tutoring. Tutors readily pick up the messages you send about how important peer and cross-age tutoring is, and will transfer these values to their work.
- Plan together. Spend time with your planning committee to envision how your program could start.
- Publicize. Make announcements over the school intercom. Visit classrooms and distribute flyers to students during lunch.
- Make tutoring a privilege. Provide incentives for tutors (i.e. t-shirts, school supplies, books).
- Observe tutors and give feedback on a regular basis.
- Give them time to reflect on the importance of their work. Allow tutors to self-evaluate their performance.
- Give tutors hints and suggestions if they need help.
- Intervene only if it is necessary; otherwise, take tutor aside after the incident to coach.
- Notice and record areas that the tutors are generally having trouble with, so these things can be addressed during regular training sessions.
- Point out and praise positive things the tutors are doing.

- Provide support for tutors. Work with teachers to help student tutors maintain their own grades.
- Reward tutors regularly for a job well done. Don't just wait until the end of the school year to show your appreciation for them.

## Tutor Retention and Appreciation

Ongoing communication, recognition and appreciation are vital to tutor retention in a program. Generally, tutors want and need both formal and informal recognition. Recognition is a way of saying tutors are valuable and their work is significant. As a result, their level of productivity, motivation, and commitment increases. Tutor recognition techniques should align with personal motivators for tutoring. Informal recognition should be integrated into the daily program operations. Formal tutor recognition such as an event should take place at least twice annually

### SAMPLE WAYS TO SHOW APPRECIATION

- Smile, greet them, and use their names
- Ask about their life and well being in general
- Call when ill
- Verbally thank in-person, be about specific about contribution
- Thank volunteers-frequently and sincerely
- Write personal thank-you (or from school staff, teachers, or students)
- Send birthday, holiday, and/or for any occasion cards
- Take time to communicate and check-in with each other
- Respect individual differences and cultural sensitivities
- Match volunteer to his or her preference
- Include volunteers in planning process and staff meetings
- Provide a volunteer suggestion box
- Nominate for awards
- Have a volunteer of the month program
- Provide adequate orientation, training, and appropriate tools
- Award certificates
- Give a photo of them at work with a certificate
- Dedicate a bulletin board for volunteers
- Have a special treat like flowers or balloons
- Provide foods or drinks
- Have a recognition event
- Social or informal event
- Write an article on a volunteer's contribution for your newsletter
- Have local media write an article
- Write a letter of recommendation
- Create a sign for cross-age tutors' lockers
- Give additional responsibility
- Provide name badges

➔ APPRECIATION STRATEGIES

- Include the entire team of volunteers
- Involve students
- Make it appropriate for the volunteer
- Write or thank them personally
- Make it as public as possible (at least within the school community)
- Provide opportunities for students to share personal experiences
- Include statistics
- Be consistent
- Make it tangible, or displayable

*Adapted from NAPE's workshop training handbook and from Students teaching students. (1996). Southern Regional Council.*

## Reflection and Evaluation

This chapter provides information needed in order to reflect on and evaluate Peer and Cross-Age tutoring programs, including information on the following:

- Peer and Cross-Age Tutor Reflection
- Evaluation of Peer and Cross-Age Tutoring

### Peer and Cross-Age Tutor Reflection

Tutor reflection should be ongoing in order to introduce new tutoring strategies and methods, as well as reinforce skills and methods that have already been introduced. Group reflection sessions give the tutors an opportunity to process their tutoring experiences. Sessions also provide a forum in which they can share their successes and their challenges with their peers.

#### Individual Reflections

Each peer and or cross-age tutor should have his or her own tutoring journal. Tutors should write in their journals on a regular basis (i.e., at least once a week). The journals can be collected by whoever is supervising them, such as a trainer, teacher, or volunteer coordinator, at reflection sessions. For additional information, see *Tool 3: Sample Reflection Questions* and *Tool 4 Sample Journal Entry Format* in the Appendix.

#### Structured Reflections

Structured reflections by peer and cross-age tutors are an integral part of the training component. Through reflection, tutors have the opportunity to think about and process their experiences, so they can better learn from what they are doing. Group reflection sessions give them an opportunity to share their successes and challenges, and to hear what their peers have to say about tutoring. Tutors can engage in individual reflection through personal tutoring journals as well. Some journal entries could be responses to specific questions or situations posed during training and/or reflection sessions, whereas others could be on a personally chosen topic.

 SAMPLE REFLECTION TOPICS

**Tutoring skills/methods:**

- How to help the tutees instead of doing their work for them.
- How to use questions in a productive way.
- Encouragement and positive reinforcement.
- How to get tutees to listen (building relationships, earning respect, etc.).
- Active listening and non-verbal communication.
- Empathy.
- Dealing with awkward situations (for example, when neither the tutor nor the tutee know the answers).
- Being a responsible role model.
- Learning and the different ways people learn.
- Awareness of who the tutees are developmentally (What was it like to be that age? How do they learn? Why do the teachers do the things they do with student of that age?).

**The tutor's experience:**

- What am I learning through tutoring?
- Using each other as resources/Collective problem solving.
- Tutoring skills/methods.

This section is based on material from Rosner, R. (1996). *Students teaching students: A handbook for cross-age tutoring*. San Francisco, CA: Partners in School Innovation. Available online at: <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/filemanager/download/589/sts.pdf> and from Greenlee, G. (1998, Fall). "Cross-age tutoring." *The Tutor: Back to school: Getting new programs started and improving existing programs*. Retrieved from <http://www.nwrel.org/learns/tutor/fall1998/fall1998.PDF>



## Evaluation of Peer and Cross-Age Tutoring

Evaluation is an essential part of tutoring. How will you know if your program has achieved goals unless there is some form of evaluation? The evaluation should reflect the peer and cross-age tutoring program's goals. For example, if your program said you wanted to use peer tutoring to increase student fluency and motivation in reading, how would you know if this goal had been achieved? Do students who received tutoring read more fluently now than when they began tutoring? Do they act more motivated by checking out more books, volunteering to read during oral reading activities, or choosing reading during free time?

The following list will provide your program with some possible sources of information to help you assess the effect tutoring has in your classroom:

 SAMPLE METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

- Interview learners
- Review textbook testing materials
- Observe learners and note changes in behavior
- Standardized testing
- Talk to the tutor
- Talk to parents

- Informal assessments (i.e. hot/cold reads and tracking words per minute)
- Make up a test or use workbook pages
- Create surveys

Based on material from Miller, B.A. (1989). *The multi-grade classroom: A resource for small rural schools*; Book 7: Planning and using peer tutoring. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Available online:

<http://www.nwrel.org/ruraled/publications/multig7.pdf>

STRATEGIES FOR GENERAL CHECK-IN WITH TUTORS

- Remind the tutors about the ground rules/group norms for being a tutor.
- Have each tutor check-in about tutoring: “How are things going? Is there a pressing problem that you are having that you would like others’ help on? Is there something that went especially well that you would like to share?”
- When appropriate, have the group try to address a challenge that someone is having or an issue someone is facing.

From Rosner, R. (1996). *Students teaching students: A handbook for cross-age tutoring*. San Francisco, CA: Partners in School Innovation. Available online at: <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/filemanager/download/589/sts.pdf>

# Appendix

**Contains additional resources to assist in the development and use of peer and cross-age tutoring programs.**

## Tool 1: Program Planning Worksheet

### General Questions

Your planning committee should ask the following questions to help design a peer and/or cross-age tutoring program:

- 1.) What needs and goals will your program be addressing?
- 2.) Keeping your needs and goals in mind, ask:
  - Who will be tutored? In what subject(s)? In what format (i.e., one-on-one, small group tutoring, station tutors, etc.)?
  - When will the tutoring take place?
  - Where will the tutoring take place?
  - How often will tutoring take place?
  - How will tutors be selected?
  - Who will train the tutors? Who will conduct reflection sessions with them?
  - Who will be responsible for actively observing the tutors?
  - How will participating teachers communicate with each other?
- 3.) In what ways will you publicly recognize and celebrate your tutors?
- 4.) How will you assess your program?
- 5.) How will you communicate with parents regarding their children serving as a tutor?

Adapted from Rosner, R. (1996). *Students teaching students: A handbook for cross-age tutoring*. San Francisco, CA: Partners in School Innovation. Available online at: <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/filemanager/download/589/sts.pdf>

### Deciding Who to Involve

The selection and matching of tutor and learner is an important task. There are 10 crucial areas that have been identified when considering who should participate in tutoring. These areas will help guide you in making decisions regarding student participation. Each area is designed to be used for both the tutor and the learner.

1. How will students be selected?
  - Will you ask students or other teachers?
  - Will you observe the students?
2. What level of students will be tutored?
  - Will you select same-grade/-age tutors, cross-age tutors, or both?
  - What are the advantages and disadvantages of either approach?
3. What kind of academic skills will the tutor have?
  - Will you select tutors with higher-than-average scholastic ability?

## Tool 1: *Continued*

- Will you select students with below-average ability in order to help them develop their skills?
  - Will you select students with the same scholastic ability?
4. Have you thought about student relationships?
- How will you deal with existing positive or negative relationships among students?
  - How will you deal with weak and strong personalities?
5. Have you considered the number of students to be tutored?
- Will you begin with tutor-learner pairs or small groups?
  - How large will the groups be?
  - How many tutors can you effectively monitor?
6. Have you considered student characteristics?
- How independent and responsible is the student?
  - What are student work habits like?
  - How cooperative is the student?
  - Does the student get along well with others?
7. How much consideration do you want to give to student preferences?
- How much will students have to say about who they work with?
  - Will you have male-female pairs or only pairs of the same sex?
  - Will you mix pairings by culture or race? (Your knowledge of student working relationships and cultural backgrounds will be helpful.)
8. How will you handle tutor absenteeism?
- Will you have standby tutors to fill in when one of the regular tutors is absent or quits?
  - How many standbys will you have?
  - Will you need to inform parents?
9. How much information do parents in your community need regarding your tutorial program?
- How will you get information to parents if it is needed?
10. Do you feel tutors will need special incentives?
- Do you feel it is necessary to reward tutors?
  - Should the rewards be extrinsic (e.g., verbal praise, stickers, privileges)?
  - Should the rewards be intrinsic (e.g., personal satisfaction)?

Based on material from Miller, B.A. (1989). *The multi-grade classroom: A resource for small rural schools; Book 7: Planning and using peer tutoring*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Available online: <http://www.nwrel.org/ruraled/publications/multig7.pdf>

## Tool 1: *Continued*

### Deciding Where and When Tutoring Will Take Place

*If your peer and cross-age tutoring program will take place during the class time, you should ask yourself the following questions to help organize your peer and cross-age tutoring program. You need to consider what else will be going on during tutoring. If you choose to have tutoring occur in pairs during a designated time like reading time, then the entire room might become a tutoring zone. However, if you have students of several ages in your room at once and you want older students to tutor younger students in a particular subject matter, you may need to designate a special area for tutoring. This tutoring may be either in the classroom or outside, depending on available space. Whatever plan you choose, you should have your expectations for behavior clearly understood and tutoring areas well defined. The planning committee should ask the following questions to help determine when tutoring should take place:*

- Will tutoring occur during class time?
- During breaks or recess? After school?
- For what time periods will tutors work?
- Will it be the same time each day, or will the times vary with student need?

### Deciding How Tutoring Will Take Place

When deciding how tutoring will take place, several key areas need to be addressed: materials, tutoring strategies, tutor training, monitoring/ feedback, and evaluation. See the list below.

1. Structure
  - Will materials be highly structured and sequenced or open-ended?
  - Who will prepare structured materials, or can existing materials be used?
2. Difficulty
  - Will level of difficulty be controlled by materials?
  - Will the skill level of the tutor limit difficulty?
3. Choice
  - Will the tutor and learner have choices in the materials used?
  - Will they have a choice in how the materials will be used?
  - Will the teacher decide on both materials and strategies?
4. Sources
  - What materials are available and where can they be obtained?
  - Will materials have to be teacher-made?
  - Will tutors be allowed to make their own materials?
5. Storage
  - Where will materials be stored?
  - Who will have access to them: Tutor? Learner?

## Tool 1: *Continued*

6. Progression
  - Who will determine when the learner should progress to the next activity, materials, or skill?
7. Expectations
  - Will you model or role play how to tutor?
  - How will you convey the importance of being positive and supportive in the tutoring relationship?
  - How will you make your expectations for behavior clear?
  - Will tutoring procedures (schedules, using materials, etc.) be in writing?
8. Tutor Expectations
  - Will tutors be responsible for keeping track of the learner's progress?
  - If so, how will this be done (chart, workbook, graph, etc.)?
  - Will the tutor be responsible to report progress to the teacher?
  - If so, how often and in what form?

## Deciding On Tutoring Materials, Procedures, and Strategies

### **Tutor training**

1. Drill and
  - Will you emphasize the importance of varying activities in order to increase learner motivation?
2. Correction
  - Will correction procedures be clear and simple? The tutor needs to either know the correct answers or where they may be found (e.g., answer sheets provided by the teacher).
  - Will tutors be shown how to correct verbal responses?
3. Praise
  - How will tutors know how often to give praise and what to say (“ok,” “good,” “you’re doing great,” etc.)?
  - Will tutors be shown how to give both verbal and nonverbal praise in a genuine manner?
  - Will tutors know how to avoid criticism and sarcasm, either in tone of voice or in words?
4. Social
  - Will tutors understand how to establish rapport by relationship, sharing interests, demonstrating concern, and so forth?

## Tool 1: *Continued*

### 5. Methods

- Will you hold group discussions with the tutors? Learners?
- Will you directly observe the tutor-learner process (most revealing method)?  
What will you look for if you observe?
- Who else might observe and give you feedback?

### 6. The Tutoring Process

- Are the tutoring sessions occurring on schedule?
- Are the materials being used appropriately?
- Are the tutor and the learner working well together, without friction?

## **Monitoring/feedback approach**

### 1. Tutor Assessment

- Was the tutor prepared for the lesson?
- Were materials ready?
- Did the tutor understand what was being taught?
- Did the tutor give clear directions?
- Did the tutor use negative reinforcement?
- Did the tutor use frequent positive reinforcement?
- Did the tutor actively involve the learner in the lesson?
- Was the tutor enthusiastic?
- Did the tutor keep the learner on task?
- Did the learner appear interested in the lesson?
- Did the learner complete the lesson?

Based on material from Miller, B.A. (1989). *The multi-grade classroom: A resource for small rural schools; Book 7: Planning and using peer tutoring*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Available online: <http://www.nwrel.org/ruraled/publications/multig7.pdf>

## Tool 2: Sample Role Play Topics

**Issue:** *How to use questions in a productive way.*

**Situation:** Tutee doesn't know the answer/keeps answering incorrectly. Tutor needs to help him by using guiding questions.

**Roles:** Tutor, tutee

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**Issue:** *Encouragement/positive reinforcement.*

**Situation:** The tutors are doing everything right!

**Roles:** Tutor, tutee pair

---

**Issue:** *How to get the tutee to listen to the tutor.*

**Situation:** Tutees ignore the tutor and just socialize.

**Roles:** Tutor, tutee pair

---

**Issue:** *How to get tutees to listen to the tutor*

**Situation:** Tutee is not listening/goofing off/not cooperating with tutor.

**Roles:** Tutor, tutee

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**Issue:** *How to get the tutee to listen to the tutor; building relationships/trust with the tutee.*

**Situation:** Tutee is very shy—the tutor is having a lot of trouble getting the tutee to respond.

**Roles:** Tutor, tutee

---

**Issue:** *Dealing with awkward situations.*

**Situation:** Tutees are not getting along with each other; tutor needs to deal with it.

**Roles:** Tutor, tutee pair

---

**Issue:** *Dealing with awkward situations.*

**Situation:** The tutor is helping the tutee with the work. Neither the tutor nor the tutee knows how to do the work.

**Roles:** Tutor, tutee

---

**Issue:** *Dealing with awkward situations.*

**Situation:** The tutee says that he knows how to do the work, and that he doesn't need help, but once they start doing the work, the tutor finds that the tutee does not really understand the work.

**Roles:** Tutor, tutee

---

**Issue:** *Get tutors to use each other as resources. Tutoring can be very frustrating at times--tutors can help each other work out difficult situations.*

**Situation:** One of the tutors had a really tough tutoring session today.

**Roles:** Two tutors

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From Rosner, R. (1996). *Students teaching students: A handbook for cross-age tutoring*. San Francisco, CA: Partners in School Innovation. Available online at: <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/filemanager/download/589/sts.pdf>

## Tool 3: Sample Reflection Questions

- 1) What do you do in a typical tutoring session?
- 2) How has this changed since you first began tutoring? (For example, do you have more/less responsibility now? Do you do the same activities as when you first began? Etc.)
- 3) What was it like when you were in [tutee's] grade? How did you feel about people who were [tutor's] age? Why?
- 4) Pick a tutee to watch during silent reading. Write down everything you notice him/her doing. Then, think about what he/she is doing tells you about his/her involvement in reading.
- 5) Please describe what you did today, and with whom.
- 6) What do you think your tutee liked about the book or activities you did together?
- 7) Tell about a person who you find interesting or challenging to be with. Explain why.
- 8) If a time warp placed you back at the first day of tutoring, what would you do differently the second time around?
- 9) What did you like best about today?
- 10) What did you do especially well today? What could you improve? What criticism has been given to you and how did it make you feel? How did you react?
- 11) Did you take (or avoid taking) some risk this week? Were there things you wanted to say or do that you didn't?
- 12) What happened this week that made you feel like you would or would not like to do this as a career?
- 13) What kind of person does it take to be successful at tutoring?
- 14) What did you do this week that made you proud? Why?
- 15) What feeling or idea about yourself seemed especially strong today?
- 16) Tell about something that you learned as a result of a disappointment or even a failure.
- 17) Think back to a moment when you felt especially happy or satisfied. Describe what led up to that moment. Why did you feel happy or satisfied?
- 18) Describe the tutee you worked with today.

## Tool 3: *Continued*

- 19) Pretend you are one of the students who you tutored today. From your pretend perspective, write about what was good and what was difficult about today's session.
- 20) Do you think you are a good tutor? Why or why not?
- 21) Do you like tutoring? Why or why not?
- 22) Describe what is happening in this photograph/video/other. (Provide and modify question based on relevant photo/video/other.)
- 23) What do you think your tutee learned today? Why do you think he/she learned it?
- 24) What is something you have learned from being a tutor?
- 25) How did you get your tutee involved today?
- 26) What do you think is easy for your tutee? What do you think is hard for your tutee? Why?
- 27) Watch [the teacher in the tutees' class] read aloud to her class. What do you notice about how she reads aloud? Make a list of your observations. (Think about how she keeps the students' attention, how she acts when she reads aloud, how and when she changes her voice, how she involves her students, etc.)
- 28) Describe a problem you are having with your tutee. Why do you think your tutee is having this problem? How does this problem make you feel? What can you try to solve this problem? Who can you ask for help with this problem?
- 29) Describe a time when tutoring went really well. What things do you think made tutoring go so well? What did you do that made it a successful session? What skills are you using when you are tutoring? (Describe your social skills.)

From Rosner, R. (1996). *Students teaching students: A handbook for cross-age tutoring*. San Francisco, CA: Partners in School Innovation. Available online at: <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/filemanager/download/589/sts.pdf>

## Tool 4: Sample Journal Entry Format

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. What happened today at tutoring?

2. What was good about tutoring today?

3. What was hard about tutoring today?

Adapted from Rosner, R. (1996). *Students teaching students: A handbook for cross-age tutoring*. San Francisco, CA: Partners in School Innovation.  
Available online at: <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/filemanager/download/589/sts.pdf>

## Frequently Asked Questions

Q: DO TUTORS GET SOMETHING OUT OF TUTORING THAT THEY DON'T GET FROM "TRADITIONAL" INSTRUCTION?

Research on collaborative learning shows that school achievement, creation of positive race relations, and socialization are higher in cooperative (or peer) settings. Both mainstream and minority students show far greater increases in academic achievement when they participate in collaborative learning projects than when they remain in traditional teacher-focused classrooms.

Q: SINCE SCHOOLS ALREADY DEMAND SO MUCH FROM TEACHERS, WHY BURDEN THEM WITH ANOTHER RESPONSIBILITY?

Teachers today are faced with extensive time and energy demands, but cross-grade tutoring projects need teachers' involvement. By acting as literate models, teachers can model behaviors that can be used by students at home, for example, in helping siblings with homework. The promise that such forms of learning have for dealing with important and pressing issues in the education of minority students should not--and, indeed, cannot--be ignored for (when teachers integrate learning outside and inside the school) minority students move to academic competence.

Q: HOW IS LITERACY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CROSS-GRADE TUTORING DOCUMENTED?

Although it is more difficult to assess cross-grade tutoring outcomes than more traditional teacher-centered instruction outcomes, many agree that the traditional ways of assessing students' learning--ascertaining whether students can get the 'right answers' to close-ended questions--do not adequately account for students' language competence. Teachers can observe and interact with their students during tutoring and writing sessions and profile changes in reading, talking, writing, and taking responsibility for learning. Students themselves can also assess and describe their own growth.

Q: IS IT FAIR TO USE NON-EXPERT ENGLISH SPEAKERS AS TUTORS?

Yes. The older students must be trained to act as competent tutors, no matter what their reading/writing level through modeling, watching videotapes, and discussing the activity and its meaning with teachers and other tutors. Tutors must understand that they have a responsibility for their tutees' learning as well as their own. Research has shown that medium and low achievers benefit more from collaborative learning than high achievers do, while high achievers perform equally well in both learning environments. If tutors are educated to see themselves as responsible and competent models for their tutees, the younger students always benefit.

Based on material from Kalkowski, P. (1995). *Peer and cross-age tutoring; School improvement research series; Close-up #18*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Available online: <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/9/c018.html>

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