Teens AS TEACHERS

TIP SHEET: ADULT MENTOR ROLE

Adult mentors are a key component of the 4-H Teen Teacher program. Each teen-taught program requires a significant investment of wrap-around time and support by adults to ensure a quality experience and safe environment for both Teen Teachers and youth program participants. This support is often a combined effort of 4-H staff, Teen Teacher cohort / club / group leaders, on-site adult mentors, and subject-area mentors.

Youth-Report of Mentor Qualities That Matter
- Some who cares about me and my success
- Someone who wants to spend time with me
- Someone who is patient
- Someone who is organized
- Someone who I can go to with my questions
- Someone who will give me support and advice

An Effective Adult Mentor is Someone Who…
- Builds a strong relationship through regular communication and face-to-face time
- Models appropriate teaching roles
- Provides opportunities for teaching practice and reflection
- Provides feedback throughout planning and teaching process
- Facilitates planning and feedback sessions to help teens make choices about adaptations to learning activities that will address different learner needs and interests (e.g. ages and stages, differences in subject-matter knowledge, etc.)
- Connects teens with subject-matter support as needed to teach identified learning activities
- Helps teens find answers to their questions
- Helps coach teens through situations in which they feel stuck
- Stays onsite to help ensure risk management
- Empowers teens to take responsibility for teaching
- Creates a safe place for teens to take risks, try new things, and make mistakes
- Supports and legitimizes the Teen Teacher role in front of younger youth who are being taught
- Supports teens in planning program logistics – e.g. promoting the program to younger youth, identifying and purchasing program supplies, confirming program location, etc.

Strategies for Feedback and Reflection

- Create cohort experiences in which Teen Teachers can observe, share, reflect and teach with peers.
- Provide model teaching experiences and invite reflection on "good teaching" from a learner perspective.
- Establish an expectation for and value in regular reflection.
- Debrief after every session and at the conclusion of the program.
- Use "teaching reflection log" directly after each program session to prompt thinking about different aspects of the teaching experience.
- Use teaching reflection logs as a communication tool with adult mentors to identify Teen Teacher successes, challenges, and needs.
- Collect feedback from program participants (i.e. learners) and use in de-brief session to help Teen Teachers made decisions about adaptations for future teaching.
- Create opportunities for teens to share experiences and compare how teaching experiences may vary across different content areas and sites.
- Describe what you observed about teaching using descriptive terms (You gave learners an opportunity to work in pairs as well as a whole group) vs. judging terms (You did the right/best thing by giving learners a chance to work in pairs)
- Share observations of teaching and invite teens to analyze "what worked" and "what could be different next time"?
- Focus on behavior and avoid statements that define the person being observed – i.e. "You are shy and I know that was hard for you to talk in front of others" vs. "I noticed that you were speaking softly and it was a little difficult to hear you at times"
- Provide a balance of affirmation (positive) feedback (i.e. what a Teen Teacher is doing well) with feedback that makes suggestions for change or improvement.
- Be aware of feedback overload! Help teens identify targeted goals and focus feedback on those areas.
- Support risk taking by framing "mistakes" as an important part of the learning process and an opportunity for growth
- Collect index cards at the end of teaching sessions. On one side ask them to write "Something I feel good or confident about in my teaching". On the other side ask them to write "Something I am nervous or unsure about in my teaching".