

**What happens when children and teens teach each other? Here's what researchers found.**

**1 Benefits are broad and deep for all students.**

**Peer tutoring:** Whether students are low-, average-, or high-achieving, researchers have confirmed benefits for tutors and tutees in these areas:

- Subject matter learning
- Motivation
- Self-concept
- Socialization skills
- Cooperative (as opposed to competitive) behavior in the classroom
- Attitudes toward others with disabilities
- Reduced absenteeism
- Improved classroom behavior

**Cooperative learning** strategies appear to be effective

- For low-, average-, and high-achieving students
- With tasks that involve both lower- and higher-level cognition

**Reciprocal teaching** is an approach to improving reading comprehension in which students gradually take over instruction and apply specific instructional support strategies to each other. It has been studied at all K-12 levels and its effectiveness is well documented.

**Gifted students:** There is at this time no good evidence to support the assertion that peer tutoring and cooperative learning have a negative impact on the achievement of gifted students.

**Ability levels:** Low and average-ability children do much better with mixed-ability grouping than with ability-level tracking. The assumed harm to the achievement of high-ability children appears to be negligible when they are placed in heterogeneous groupings.

**2 Benefits require special settings.**

**Certain conditions** increase the effectiveness of cooperative learning:

- Well-structured tasks
- Group rewards
- Training for all students in good cooperative learning practices

**High achieving students** are more likely to participate in small group work and also provide higher quality explanations in peer tutoring dyads and small groups than average- or low-achieving students.

**Children learn most** in collaborative contexts when they provide detailed, elaborate explanations to others in small group work and paired peer-tutoring contexts.

**3 Teaching students to teach preserves the benefits.**

**Structure:** When students are placed in groups or dyads, they need structure or training to help each other effectively. Without guidance, their collaborative skills do not improve with time.

**Skills:** Specific skill training can improve the quality of student interaction in reciprocal peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and reciprocal teaching contexts. These skills include:

- Giving explanations
- Asking higher-order questions
- Practicing helping behaviors

**4 There's much more to discover about kids' teaching abilities.**

**Stay tuned.** Hoenny Center researchers and their partners will expand on these findings and explore other important questions, as we seek to understand and improve the teaching abilities of elementary and secondary school students.

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*For the report and bibliography, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to*  
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## about the Hoenny Center...

*The Inga and Adolph Hoenny Center for Research and Development in Teaching is a not-for-profit research and development agency that seeks systematically to understand and improve the teaching abilities of elementary and secondary school students.*

*Our nation's social and economic future depends on good schools, and our children's economic success depends upon a good education. Learning to teach should be part of it. Teaching something helps one learn it. Teaching effectively is basic to good parenting and productive community leadership. It is important in all occupations where people interact with the public and instruct others within the occupational group. And yet, our society delays the systematic development of effective teaching skills in people until they are adults and confines that development to pre-service professional teachers. The Hoenny Center envisions a future in which professional teachers work knowledgeably, systematically, and supportively to nurture teaching abilities in all people at all stages in the educational process.*

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# Teaching to Learn...

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*what the research supports  
about peer teaching  
in K-12 schools*



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