



# Five Evidence-Based Keys to Implementing Cross-Age Tutoring



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# Cross-Age Tutoring

**Cross-age tutoring** is the practice of pairing students from different grades—a more advanced tutor in a higher grade level with a less advanced tutee in a lower grade level—to learn and practice academics (e.g., math, reading) together. Cross-age tutoring can be beneficial to both tutors and tutees. Engaging in cross-age tutoring has been shown to improve academic outcomes, promote social bonds between tutees and tutors, boost attachment to the school, and increase attendance. The older tutors can act as role models for the younger tutees, and tutees may have more academic time on task with additional opportunities for immediate feedback from their tutor. Cross-age tutoring may also improve socioemotional outcomes for the tutors and tutees including self-efficacy, self-assurance, and confidence in the academic topic of focus.

Below we present five steps to implementing cross-age tutoring.

## 1. Provide individualized instruction in a dyad consisting of one older student and one younger student.

Effective cross-age tutoring relies on providing targeted instruction by pairing one older student with one younger student to work on academics. Pairing together students you think would be able to support each other both academically and socially may be particularly beneficial. Providing instruction to students with academic difficulties by using tutors from a higher grade level can be especially useful in schools with limited resources and may be more effective than traditional whole-class instruction.

## 2. Use highly structured and evidence-based instructional practices with easy-to-use materials that are designed for student tutors.

Using highly structured instructional practices that are based on evidence and come with easy-to-use materials ensures the school-age tutor can implement the instruction effectively. Less structured, open-ended discussions can be confusing and ineffective for tutors and tutees. When tutors can easily manage materials and instructional routines, they can provide effective instruction to support the tutee in improving their academic performance.

### **3. Provide student tutors with structured training, supervision, and feedback from a knowledgeable educator.**

Structured training, supervision, and feedback from a knowledgeable educator are essential to ensure that student tutors are well-prepared to provide effective tutoring sessions to their tutees. Through training, student tutors can learn to deliver a highly structured program with fidelity. The training should provide clear guidelines and consistent instructional routines for the tutors to use in the tutoring sessions. Supervision and feedback from a knowledgeable educator can help ensure that the tutoring sessions are on track and meeting the needs of the student tutee.

### **4. Provide student tutors and tutees with appropriate reinforcers (e.g., positive feedback, stickers, or other supports) as a means of motivation.**

Appropriate reinforcers may be provided to motivate tutors and tutees, especially those who have struggled academically, to engage in tutoring to the highest degree. The reinforcers can serve as positive supports for the students' efforts and progress, which can help sustain their motivation and engagement in the tutoring program. However, it's important to avoid group rewards that could lead to competition among teams as these are less effective. Individualized rewards can be more effective than group rewards as they can help boost the self-esteem and confidence of the individual student. By using rewards, educators can create a more positive and supportive learning environment, which can contribute to the success of the tutoring program.

### **5. Monitor student progress and adjust tutoring materials as needed.**

Monitoring the progress of students and making adjustments to tutoring materials are important to ensure that the tutoring sessions are effective in improving the students' academic performance. By keeping track of the students' progress, teachers implementing cross-age tutoring can identify areas that have been mastered, as well as areas that need more attention, and can adjust the tutoring materials accordingly. This approach can help keep the students engaged and motivated as they make progress towards their academic goals.







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