

**Choose Health Action Teens:
A Review of a Teens as Teachers Nutritional Education Training
Curriculum**

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Abstract: This review draws from published research related to the best practices for the utilization of teens as teachers to examine *Choose Health Action Teens* (CHAT), a teen's as teachers (TAT) training curriculum. Research shows that there are various components necessary to build a high quality TAT program. Most of these components fall under four areas in which training is necessary for teens and adults: Teaching strategies, youth/child development, subject matter to be taught, and youth-adult partnerships. These four areas provide a framework to review the *Choose Health Action Teens* (CHAT) (Crosiar & Wolfe, 2013) teens as teachers training program curriculum.

Resource Review

The *Choose Health Action Teens* (CHAT) teens as teachers training curriculum, developed by Cornell University (Crosiar, & Wolfe, 2013), was specifically created as a companion to the

Choose Health Food Fun and Fitness (CHFFF) nutrition education program. CHFFF is a program designed to provide nutrition and health information to children aged 8-12. This curriculum is novel in that it is designed to be facilitated by older teens in collaboration with adults; few programs include specific training for teen facilitators. The CHAT training curriculum consists of 12 lessons that provide teens the opportunity to learn about and practice teaching the lessons from CHFFF. Teens are trained on teaching strategies, principles of youth/child development, CHFFF curriculum content, and youth-adult partnerships through activities and lessons geared to their developmental level.

Teaching Strategies

The opportunity for teens to learn about teaching strategies prior to program implementation is important. Research shows, for instance, that teen teachers need to learn about classroom management, which can help them stay organized and handle disruptions (Arnold, & Nott, 2010; Story, Lytle, Birnbaum, & Perry, 2002; Wilson, et al., 2006). The CHAT curriculum includes several lessons that aim to enhance teens' leadership, communication, decision-making, critical thinking, planning and goal-setting abilities. Increasing teens' knowledge and skill in these areas helps create teachers who are more confident and prepared. CHAT also includes several lessons that increase teen teachers' ability to give and receive feedback on their performance by working in teams. Providing teen teachers opportunities to give and receive feedback helps teens improve their facilitation skills, while strengthening relationships with peers and adults (Lee, & Murdock, 2001).

Youth/Child Development

CHAT also includes lessons on the principles of youth/child development. Including information on the ages and stages of child development helps teens learn how to interact with younger children across age groups. Understanding developmental phases can help teens make sound decisions in the classroom and build confidence as teachers. Through successful classroom management, teens can build leadership qualities and a sense of themselves as responsible adults, which can transfer to other personal and professional contexts.

Program Curriculum

A successful teen teacher program relies on providing teens with a strong curriculum to teach. Through exposure, practice, and teamwork teens can build their expertise with the curriculum they are teaching (Lee, Murdock, & Paterson, 2001; Meyer, Nicholson, Danish, Fries, & Polk, 2000; Rinehart, & Kleon, 1996; Ripberger, Devitt, & Gore, 2009). Because CHAT is tied directly to the CHFFF program, teens are exposed to practical hands-on experience with the nutrition education curriculum. Throughout the CHAT program teens view how each CHFFF lesson is delivered and then practice teaching the lesson. Teens also work together to prepare food for the lessons and facilitate the active games.

Youth-Adult Partnerships

Meaningful relationships built between teens and program staff or adult volunteers are central to a TAT programs' success (Hammond-Diedrich, & Walsh, 2006; Lee, Murdock, & Paterson, 2001; Murdock, Lee, & Paterson, 2003; O'Donoghue, Kirshner, & McLaughlin, 2002; Ripberger,

Devitt, & Gore, 2009). Including time for teens and adult partners to share quality time together helps build these relationships. Although CHAT does not have a dedicated curriculum that specifically addresses youth-adult partnerships, teens do get the opportunity to learn from and work alongside adults during the “teach-back process.” During these teach-back lessons, teens learn the key ingredients to teaching effectively by working with peers and adult educators. Learning how to deliver lessons by working alongside of, and learning from, the adult educator can help teens form stronger bonds with adults through the training process.

That CHAT provides teens the opportunity to learn how to teach program lessons with their peers and adult educators is beneficial, yet having dedicated time for youth-adult partnerships (Y-APs) would strengthen the CHAT curriculum. Providing a designated training for building youth-adult partnerships can strengthen relationships and enhance the program’s success (Arnold, & Gifford, 2015).

Teens as teachers training programs and curricula offer teens the opportunity to develop their skills sets while also creating meaningful relationships with peers and adults alike. While implementing more programs that incorporate teens as teachers is advantageous, using a curriculum like CHAT, which is dedicated to building youth competencies and relationships prior to program implementation, is important to the success of a teen teaching endeavor.

Ordering Information

Choose Action Health Teens - Free, can order online at:

https://fnec.cornell.edu/Our_Initiatives/CHFFF.cfm

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