EDUCATOR GUIDE

When Learners Become Guides

A Champions of Learning adaptation inspired by Kristin Jean Grender. This suggested activity is not her verified procedure or an endorsed resource.

Purpose and practical setup

Goal: Older learners explain a useful skill, invite questions and adjust their teaching. Younger learners practice the skill and explain their next step.
Suggested: Grades 6-12 mentors with younger partners; adapt to readiness. Allow 45-60 minutes plus 20-30 minutes of adult preparation. Estimated added cost: $0 with existing supplies; printing varies.

Prepare a meaningful teaching opportunity

Choose a low-risk task learners already know, such as finding a library resource, reading a simple campus map or using an accessible classroom tool. Gather maps or task cards, pencils and an observation checklist. Invite mentors voluntarily, check their skill and rehearse a clear explanation. Ask both partners about preferred communication and access supports. Adults retain supervision and responsibility.

Try it in four steps

1. Notice expertise (5 minutes). Ask: What can you help someone else learn? Agree on one observable goal and let partners choose suitable roles.
2. Rehearse (10 minutes). Mentor models one step, asks a question and waits. Practice offering help without taking over.
3. Teach and try (15-20 minutes). Younger learner attempts the task. Mentor explains or offers a cue as requested. Adult observes and supports both.
4. Reflect and repeat (10 minutes). Each partner names what helped and what remains confusing. Revise one instruction and try again.

Access, safety and alternatives

Offer large print, accessible digital text, tactile materials, verbal descriptions and the learner's communication system as appropriate. Provide time to explore materials and decline help. Paper task cards are a low-tech option. Do not simulate disability. Start on campus; community travel requires school procedures and qualified orientation and mobility support when needed. Peer mentoring never replaces specialist instruction.

Look for learning, then extend

Record what each learner completes independently, with a cue or with adult support. Compare an initial attempt with a later one without claiming causation. Ask mentors: What did you change when your partner needed help? Ask partners: What can you now explain? Repeat with a new task or invite reciprocal teaching so both learners contribute expertise.

Three Prompts for Thoughtful Adaptation

Optional AI support. Replace brackets and use a school-approved tool. No claim is made that Grender used AI. Share no identifiable student information.

1 Plan a supported peer-teaching experience

Plan a [minutes]-minute activity in which [older age group] teaches [younger age group] to [specific skill]. Use [available materials] and support [access and communication needs]. Include voluntary roles, mentor rehearsal, adult supervision and a low-tech option. Separate suggestions from requirements. Do not invent learner needs or outcomes.

Educator check: Review accuracy, readiness, accessibility and supervision before use.

2 Create materials that leave room for learner agency

Create a one-page mentor card for teaching [skill]: one modeling step, two open questions, wait time and a way to ask whether help is wanted. Add an accessible partner task and an adult checklist for independent, cued and supported attempts. Use [format and communication supports]. Avoid doing the task for the learner.

Educator check: Test every instruction and format with the relevant educator or specialist.

3 Reflect on evidence and improve

Using only these anonymous observations [summary], suggest two changes to our peer-teaching activity about [skill]. Distinguish what we observed from possible explanations. Include questions for both partners and one follow-up check. Do not infer diagnoses, confidence gains or causal effects from limited evidence.

Educator check: Compare suggestions with actual work, learner feedback and professional judgment.

Credits and research context

Inspired by Grender's supplied draft chapter, *Finding Another Way In*, describing an older learner helping younger peers during a community trip. This guide adapts that idea to a supervised school setting.

2025 cross-age tutoring meta-analysis: positive average academic effects for tutors and younger learners. It did not evaluate community travel instruction, Grender's work or this adaptation.