

e-Edition Plus

A current events feature for teaching with electronic editions.

By Emilia Pastina

Teens face more challenges for summer jobs this year

Nearly 6 million American teenagers between the ages of 16 and 19 have a job.

That number may sound impressive, but that's just one in four teens in the work force. It's the lowest percentage of kids in that age group to have jobs since the U.S. Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics began tracking teen workers in 1948.

And with the summer job season about to start, many teens are facing a tougher time landing a paying position for the summer months.

With many adults squeezed out of work because of the economy, young workers are finding themselves in competition for summer jobs with more experienced workers.

To call attention to their work problems, U.S. teens recently held a Youth Unemployment Rally in Washington, D.C. They carried life rafts and life preservers and even called for their own kind of government bailout program that they named the "Teen Age Relief Program."

Legislation to provide \$600 million to states for the creation of summer jobs for teens is up for consideration by the U.S. Senate. A version of the bill has been approved by the U.S. House of Representatives, but it's not clear when the Senate will act.

Tough competition

In April the nation's overall unemployment rate rose to 9.9 percent from 9.7 percent the previous month.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 290,000 new jobs were added that month, but it's hard to keep up with the demand. Around 800,000

workers came back in the job market in April, and since many didn't get jobs, the unemployment rate went up.

The teen unemployment rate was 23.5 percent of all 16- to 19-year-olds who were looking for work in April. And those teens are facing greater obstacles for the summer.

That's because the tough job market has made older, more educated and more experienced workers willing to work for minimum wage, which was raised to \$7.24 an hour last July.

In the past those jobs fell to teenagers, because adults did not want them.

Smart solutions

The good news is more and more businesses are hiring. And experts say

teens can help themselves if they stress their eagerness as well as their skills in ways like telling employers they are willing to work evenings or weekends.

But even if teens don't find paying jobs this summer, career experts say it's important to be productive. If a paying job can't be found, do volunteer or mission work, they say. Or try job shadowing or internships, even if they come without a paycheck.

They offer experience that can pay off down the road.

"Any young person who can walk into a college or employer with work experience will be a cut above the rest," said Tammy Dickinson, director of STEP-UP, a Minneapolis jobs program that connects young people with agencies and companies.

"Even if you cannot find a paid job, get out there and volunteer," Dickinson said in a Star Tribune article. "There are so many organizations that need the help of a young person."

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Teens are facing more competition for summer jobs because adults who are out of work are willing to take low-paying or even minimum-wage positions.

Talk About the News

- **U.S. teens with hopes of a summer job are faced with a number of challenges. One obstacle is competing with jobless adults who have more education, experience and skills. Yet teenagers have a lot to offer the workforce, too. As a class, talk about summer jobs that teens like. What are ways young workers can stand out in their cover letters, resumes and interviews? Discuss the traits needed to be an asset to a company.**

Learning Standard: Engaging peers in constructive conversation about matters of public concern by clarifying issues, considering opposing views, applying democratic values, anticipating consequences and working toward making decisions.

Explore Your e-Edition



- **Experts advise teen and adult job seekers to show prospective employers their education, skills and other positive traits to help land a job. Read the employment ads in the e-Edition and choose a job that interests you. Create a resume based on your education, work experience, hobbies and skills. Write a cover letter to the hiring manager convincing him or her to hire you.**
- **Although volunteer work doesn't come with a paycheck, the skills learned can be invaluable. Read today's e-Edition to learn more about challenges faced by a community or an individual. Write a letter to the editor describing ways young people could make a difference helping out.**

Learning Standards: Responding to a variety of texts by making connections to students' personal lives and the lives of others; writing fluently for multiple purposes to produce compositions, such as stories, poetry, personal narratives, editorials, research reports, resumes and memos.

Learning Standards: Considering the effects of an individual's actions on other people and how one acts in a virtuous and ethically responsible way as a member of society; writing fluently for multiple purposes.

- **As the U.S. economy picks up, more businesses will hire more people. Read today's business section in the e-Edition to learn more about a local company doing well. Based on information in the article, create a job description for a position that would help the business grow even more. Write a classified ad for this job that outlines needed skills and experience.**

Learning Standards: Acquiring information from multiple sources; demonstrating how language usage is related to successful communication in different spoken, written and visual communication contexts, such as job interviews, public speeches, debates and advertising.

How Well Did You Read?

Understanding what you read is a skill that will help you all through life. Review the story about teens and summer jobs by answering the questions below.

- 1. According to the story, how many teenagers in the U.S. have jobs?**
 - A. 9.9 percent
 - B. 23.5 percent
 - C. One in four
 - D. Two in four
- 2. When teens rallied in Washington, what do you think the life rafts and life preservers symbolized:**
 - A. Teens wanting lifeguard jobs
 - B. The need for more jobs for teens
 - C. The need for more teens to know how to swim
 - D. All of the above
- 3. The term "minimum wage" refers to:**
 - A. The lowest wage an employer may pay
 - B. The highest wage an employer may pay
 - C. The average pay of a teen worker
 - D. The average pay of an adult worker
- 4. According to the story, why did the U.S. employment rate recently go up?**
 - A. More businesses filing for bankruptcy
 - B. More housing foreclosures
 - C. More people buying houses
 - D. More Americans entering the work force
- 5. From the story you can infer that an internship is:**
 - A. A minimum wage job
 - B. A college course
 - C. A temporary position (always paid) that gives on-the-job training
 - D. A temporary position (often unpaid) that gives on-the-job training