

Promoting Inclusion With Peer Support Arrangements

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES





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What We'll Talk About Today

- Accessing the Potential Benefits of Inclusion
- The Reciprocal Benefits of Peer-Mediated Intervention
- Peer Support Arrangements in Inclusive Settings
- How to Implement Peer Support Arrangements
 - Selecting Peers
 - Planning
 - Meeting with Peers
 - Supporting Peers and the student with a severe disability
- Beyond Peer Support Arrangements

Potential Benefits of Inclusion

Accessing the general education curriculum

- Learning grade-level content alongside peers

Social and communication development

- Learning social norms
- Practicing communication and social skills with peers
- Seeing good social models
- Building relationships and friendships

Realizing these benefits requires intentional planning and support



Individually Assigned Support in Inclusive Settings

Associated with:

- Fewer interactions with peers
- Less general education teacher involvement
- Separate curriculum
- Insular relationships



Malmgren & Causton-Theoharis, 2006; Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 2001

Peer Support Arrangements

Are Peer Support Arrangements an Evidence-Based Practice? A Systematic Review

The Journal of Special Education
2017, Vol. 51(3) 150–163
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sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0022466917708184
journals.sagepub.com



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Abstract

Peer support arrangements involve peers without disabilities providing academic and social support to students with severe disabilities (i.e., students eligible for their state's alternate assessment) in general education classrooms. We conducted a systematic literature review of studies published through 2016 to determine whether peer support arrangements meet Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) criteria as an evidence-based practice. From our review of 11 studies, we found that peer support arrangements are an evidence-based practice for promoting social interactions for secondary students with severe disabilities in both core academic and elective classes. Evidence for increased academic engagement of students with severe disabilities is mixed, and evidence for other outcomes is promising—including increased academic engagement for peers who provide support. We provide recommendations for teachers.

Keywords

peer support arrangements, evidence-based practice, severe disabilities, peer-mediated intervention, social interactions

The field of special education has emphasized the importance of evidence-based practices for over a decade. However, some teachers remain unfamiliar with the concept of evidence-based practice, and others report implementing practices with little or no empirical support (Burns & Ysseldyke, 2009). Moreover, teachers of students with severe disabilities are often tasked with selecting instructional strategies appropriate to address the widely varying needs of their students—a challenge that grows as students enter middle and high school, and are enrolled in a wider range of classes. Secondary educators struggling to effectively support students with severe disabilities in inclusive settings may turn to unproven models of support, such as overdependence on paraprofessional support—a practice that may have an inadvertent negative impact on students' social outcomes (Giangreco, 2010). Efforts to ensure the implementation of evidence-based practices must target

practices based on the strength of supporting evidence (CEC, 2014). Not only are these standards widely accepted as an effective means of establishing evidence-based practices, their application to research on educational practices for students with severe disabilities is particularly fitting. CEC's guidelines include quality indicators designed to identify studies that are methodologically sound and sufficient to establish a causal relation between practices and student outcomes. In addition, CEC's categorization of practices as *evidence based*, *potentially evidence based*, having *mixed evidence*, having *insufficient evidence*, or resulting in *negative effects* provides guidance for educators beyond a dichotomous distinction of evidence based or not evidence based. Identification of evidence-based and promising practices for students with severe disabilities is especially critical, given the relative scarcity of evidence-based practices currently identified for this population. For exam-



Peer Supports as an Alternative to Direct Support

One or more peers without disabilities providing ongoing social and academic support to classmates with disabilities within the classroom.

Peers

- Facilitate student participation in class activities
- Provide frequent feedback and encouragement
- Model communication and other skills
- Promote interaction with other classmates
- Support progress related to IEP goals
- Support current behavior intervention plans, as appropriate

Outcomes for Peers Without Disabilities

- Contrary to a common misconception, there is strong evidence that peer-mediated intervention have **no negative effects on peers academic behaviors** (e.g., Jimenez, Browder, Spooner, & Dibiase, 2012)
- In fact, there is evidence that interacting more with students with IDD may increase students engagement in class (Carter, Cushing, Clark, & Kennedy, 2005; Schaefer, Cannella-Malone, & Brock, 2017)



Outcomes for Peers Without Disabilities

- Peer-mediated have also lead to increases in:
 - Peers' report of the quality of interactions (i.e., their rating of how enjoyable a conversation was) (e.g., Carter, Hughes, Guth, & Copeland, 2005)
 - Peers' perceptions about students with IDD (e.g., Piercy, Wilton, & Townsend, 2002)
 - Peers' report of friendships formed with students with IDD that may maintain overtime (Carter et al., 2016)
- Descriptive evidence also suggests that these interventions may provide meaningful character education to peers (e.g., providing opportunities to discuss diversity and equality)

Reciprocal Benefits of Peer Supports

Students with disabilities who are supported by peers may...

- Have more interactions with classmates
- Be more actively engaged in class activities
- Turn to peers for assistance instead of relying only on adults for help

Peers providing support to classmates with disabilities may...

- Develop a new friendship
- Gain a better understanding of and attitude toward people with disabilities
- Know how to interact with someone with complex communication challenges

Step 1: Selecting and Inviting Peers

- Aim to select 2–3 peers
- Identifying prospective peers
 - Talk with students
 - Talk with general education teacher



What makes a good peer partner?

- Which peers in the class already know the student and are considered to be a friend?
- Who has shown an interest in getting to know the student in the past?
- Who has consistent attendance in class?
- Who seems willing to help other students in class?
- Who would model positive behaviors for the student?
- Who has good interpersonal skills?
- Which students seem willing to learn?

Ways to Invite Peers

- Talk individually with students

This conversation can happen between classes, during lunch, at a club meeting, or another time you would typically interact with students.

- Talk to the entire class

Present the opportunity very generally to the class to see who may be interested. The peer supports should be presented as a general opportunity for students to support another student in the classroom.

- Ask peers who agree to participate if they have recommendations for other classmates who might also want to be a peer support.

Step 2: Planning

- Reflect on classroom activities
 - What is the typical classroom routine and expectations?
- Accommodations, Modifications, and Supports
 - What activities can the student do on his/her own without accommodations, modifications, or extra supports?
 - What activities could the student do with the right technology or equipment?
accommodations
 - What activities will need to be modified so that the student with a severe disability can be successful? (modifications)
 - What activities can the student do with help from another classmate?
peer support
 - What activities might require some occasional or ongoing help from an adult?
adult support



Example One of Peer Support Plan

The Biology class is a great place for Brad to work on goals related to developing social and conversational skills, as well as expanding his typing and writing skills. Below are some ideas for how Brad might become more involved in class activities during Biology, as well as some ideas for how the peers at Brad's table could support him.

At the beginning of class Brad could:

- Talk quietly with his peers (when it is okay with the teacher)
- Pass out worksheets or other materials to the class
- Listen and respond to Ms. Hale do attendance
- Boot up his laptop, if he will be taking notes in class

Example One of Peer Support Plan

At the beginning of class peers could:

- Ask Brad about his day or upcoming school events
- Help Brad pass out any worksheets
- Make sure Brad has all of the same materials for class, such as a book, worksheets, lab materials, etc.
- Help Brad get out his notebook, pen, paper, etc. for class

Example One of Peer Support Plan

At the beginning of class the facilitator could:

- Try to draw some of the peers at the table into conversation with Brad—you may have to do some modeling or give them some ideas of things they could ask about or prompt Brad to ask questions of his peers.
- Make sure Brad has the same materials as his classmates, such as a book, any worksheets, paper, pencil, lab materials, etc.
- Look through the materials quickly to see if there are any things that could be adapted readily

Example One of Peer Support Plan

When there are small group or lab activities Brad could:

- Listen to Ms. Hale as she presents instructions to the class
- Participate in the small group or lab activity
- Ask peers for help doing his part of the activity

Example One of Peer Support Plan

When there are small group or lab activities peers could:

- Make sure Brad has all of the same materials for the activity as they do
- Give Brad opportunities to make choices about or give input into the activity
- Even if Brad can't do all of an activity, he can probably still do a part of it
- Encourage brad with lots of positive feedback

Example One of Peer Support Plan

When there are small group or lab activities the facilitator could:

- Make sure Brad has the same materials as his classmates for the activity
- Always brainstorm ways Brad can be engaged—even in small ways—in the activity: Can he mark the groups answers on the worksheet? Can he be asked his opinion about an answer?
- Give peers ideas for questions they can ask Brad or ways they can involve him—think creatively!
- Let the peers know when they are doing a great job supporting Brad
- Give Brad examples of questions he can ask his classmates

Some General Ideas for Peer Support

- Walking with them from one class to the next
- Talking about their interests and things they do outside of school (when okay with the teacher)
- Helping keep their assignments and class materials organized
- Reminding them how to follow established classroom routines
- Helping them to pass out class materials

Some General Ideas for Peer Support

- Helping them to pass out class materials
- Encouraging interactions with other students in the class
- Helping them check the accuracy of their assignments and class work
- Sharing notes or assisting them to take complete notes
- Paraphrasing parts of lectures or rephrasing key ideas
- Encouraging them to answer a question or contribute an idea during class discussion
- Writing down answers they give verbally or when using a communication device

Some General Ideas for Peer Support

- Offering additional examples of a concept or ideas
- Demonstrating how to complete a problem
- Highlighting important information in the text or on a worksheet
- Reviewing course content to ensure understanding
- Supporting involvement in cooperative group activities
- Motivating and encouraging them when they get frustrated
- Encouraging them to use their communication device (if they have one)

Step 3: Meeting with Peers

1. Introductions
2. Rationale for Peer Support Strategies
3. Background of Student with a severe disability
4. General Goals in the Class
 - Conversing more with peers
 - Increasing class involvement
 - Getting to know other classmates
 - Using alternative communication system (if applicable)
 - Making choices

Step 3: Meeting with Peers

5. Confidentiality and Respectful Language
6. Expectations
 - Sitting together with student during class
 - Supporting student during class activities
 - Introducing student to other classmates
 - Working together with other peer supports
 - Communicating and taking direction from facilitator
7. Peer Support Strategies
 - See peer support plan

Step 3: Meeting with Peers

8. When to Seek Assistance
9. Discussion and Questions
 - Eliciting what peers hope to benefit
 - Encouraging peers to contribute their own ideas
10. What happens next
 - Outlining next steps
 - Emphasizing that taking on support role can be gradual

Step 4: Support Through Facilitation

	Prompt	Reinforce	Provide Information
Social Interactions	Encourage or suggest a way for the focus student to interact with peers, or the peer to interact with the focus student.	Praise the focus student for his interactions with peers, or the peers for their interactions with the focus student.	Provide information to peers that might help peers to better interact with the student, including information about: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How student communicates• Interpreting student's behavior• The student's interests• Possible conversational topics
Academic Support	Encourage or suggest a way for peers to work with the focus student to help him participate in class.	Praise the peers for the way they are working with the focus student to help him participate in class.	Provide information to peers so that they might better support the student, including information about: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengths and needs• Accommodations and modifications• Instructional strategies

Starting a Plan

1. Think of a student with a severe disability
2. Reflect on a class or time period that he/she spend in a general education setting
3. Think about the routine and classroom expectations

Peer Support Plan

Peer Support Plan



Brief description of student's goals for participation in the class:

At the beginning of class....

The student could...

*

Classmates could...

*

The facilitator could...

*

When there are lectures or whole group instruction...

The student could...

*

Classmates could...

*

The facilitator could...

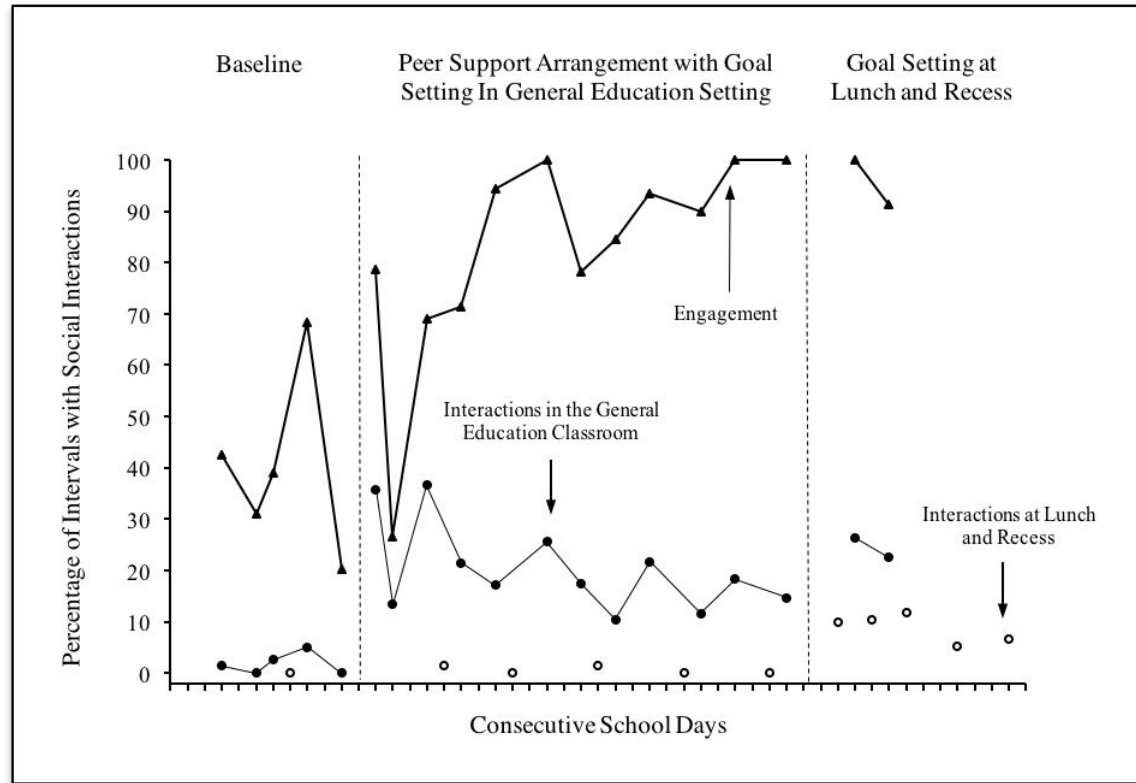
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Beyond Peer Support Arrangements

- Peer support arrangements have been shown to:
 - Increase interactions with peers
 - Maintain high levels of academic engagement
 - Sometimes develop relationships that last after the class
- However, you cannot assume that peers and students with IDD that interact well in the context of a peer support arrangement will carry their relationship over



Don't Assume Relationships Will Carry Over



Combine Efforts in Other Areas

- Other interventions may also need to be layered on top of peer support arrangements to:
 - Improve social skills
 - Improve communication skills
 - Achieve specific academic goals
- Ensuring increased engagement in different school environments, may require direct support in each of those places



Utilize a Team Across Environments

- Plan collaboratively with other teachers, related service providers, families, and peers to provide support in all environments
- Set goals that target skills used in multiple environments
- Think about how the roles of the student with IDD, their peers, and the adults supporting both of them change across environments

Comprehensive Social Inclusion Support Plan					
Target Student:	Adrian	Date of Review:	4/26/17	Date of Next Review:	10/23/17
Team Members					
Special Ed. Teacher: Mrs. Prince	General Ed. Teachers: Ms. Grey (Science) Mr. Banner (ELA) Ms. Williams (Civics)	Paraprofessionals: Mr. Claus (Science) Mrs. White (ELA)	Related Services: Mrs. Ross (SLP)		
Settings (by class period)					
General Ed. Classes: 2nd: Science (Room 121) 4th: ELA (Room 245) 7th: Civics (Room 113)	Other Inclusive Settings: 5th: Lunch 6th: Study hall (Room 178)	Self-contained Settings: 1st: Homeroom (Room 154) 3rd: Resource (Room 154) 9th: Math (Room 154)			
Communication and Social Goals for Target Student					
<p>1. When presented with a difficult task, Adrian will appropriately approach his peers or an adult in the classroom and articulate what specifically he needs help with.</p> <p>2. During group work, Adrian will first ask peers or accept peers' invitation to join their group, and then Adrian will remain on task and contribute to the group.</p> <p>3. When given free time (e.g., the last few minutes of class), Adrian will appropriately engage peers in conversation about common interests or activities.</p>					
3-Point Plan for Ms. Grey's Science Class (This section is should be filled out for each inclusive setting listed above)					
Assessment and Instruction	Peer-Focused Practices	Environmental Modifications			
<p>Mrs. Prince, all three general education teachers, and Mrs. Ross will use the Communication Competence Inventory to determine that Adrian struggles with initiating interactions, social communication (e.g., conversationally turn taking), and repair strategies (e.g., restating or rephrasing a message, asking for help).</p> <p>Mrs. Prince and Mrs. Ross will plan lessons during Adrian's resource time and speech therapy sessions to address these needs.</p>	<p>Mrs. Prince, Ms. Grey, and Mr. Claus will use a peer support arrangement in science class.</p> <p>Ms. Grey has recruited Jose and Tyler, two of Adrian's 9th grade classmates in the class.</p> <p>Mrs. Prince will sit down with Jose and Tyler, as well as Ms. Grey and Mr. Claus to make a peer support arrangement plan.</p> <p>Ms. Grey and Mr. Claus will facilitate the arrangement by coaching Jose and Tyler. They will regularly check in with the peers.</p>	<p>Adrian struggles with navigating the hallway during transitions. Consequently, he often misses social opportunities at the beginning of class. To avoid that, Mrs. Prince will give Adrian a pass to leave homeroom 3 minutes early to transition before 1st period lets out.</p> <p>Ms. Grey will plan more group activities and class discussions to give Adrian more opportunities to interact with his classmates. She will also allow Jose or Tyler to work with Adrian during independent work activities.</p>			

Resources

- To download an article with step-by-step directions for implementing peer support arrangements, go to **go.osu.edu/PeerSupportArticle**
- To download an article focused on spreading peer connections across the school day, go to **go.osu.edu/AcrossSchoolDay**



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