



Using Peer Tutoring to Develop and Support Friendships

Best Practices from the Literature



What Peer Tutors Say....

- You can be *both* a peer tutor and a friend – and the two roles do not have to create conflict or discomfort.
- Peer Buddies liked most both 1) “interacting socially and developing friendships” and 2) “helping students and making a difference in their everyday lives”.

(Hughes et al., 2001, p. 354)



Peer Tutoring and Receiving Course Credit – A Negative Impact?

- Peers receiving credit for working with students with significant disabilities actually reported more positive outcomes concerning their own personal growth and status than those students not receiving credit!
 - (Helmstetter, Peck, & Giangreco, 1994)



Yet We Still Need to Be Thoughtful....

- Peers do interact differently when engaged in *instructional* (teaching) vs. *non-instructional* interactions (just hanging out or doing things together)



Instructional vs. Non-Instructional Activities

- Hughes et al. (2002) found that directed *non-instructional activities* produced more socially related interactions between students, a greater variety of conversational topics, more age-appropriate topics, and higher quality interactions than did instructional activities.



We Need To Strike A Balance in What We Ask Peer Tutors to Do

- Peer Tutors want to make a difference in helping another student, teaching a new skill, *and yet* –
- The promotion of friendships means that we need to set aside at least some time for non-instructional activities as well, so that students can become friends.



General Tips – Essential Elements of Friendship

- Always Emphasize Similarities Between Students
- Always Convey a Tone of Respect to Students and Peer Tutors Alike
- Always Highlight the Competence of Your Students – Technology Can Be A Way to Do This!



General Tips - continued

- Always Use Age-Appropriate Activities and Materials
- Insure that Students Have Engaging and Interesting Things To Do
- There *Must* Be A Sense of Importance to What You and Your Students are Doing



Specific Tips to Promote Social Interactions and Friendships

- Establish a Lunch Bunch
- Establish A Peer Buddy Club to Share Experiences and Ideas – And to Learn New Things!
- Consider Ways to Establish Peer Support for Other School Activities (Student Council, Yearbook)



Specific Tips - Continued

- Establish a Peer Tutoring Advisory Board:
 - students with and without disabilities,
 - general education teachers and administrators,
 - school counselor,
 - parents of peer tutors and parents of students with disabilities



Broadening the Horizons....

- Facilitate the participation of students with significant disabilities in general education classes. This can result in:
 - Increased frequency of social contacts
 - A source for meeting peers who became a part of the student's social network
 - (Kennedy & Itkonen, 1994).



Peer Tutoring Produces Specific Gains for Peer Tutors in:

- *Social willingness* – the extent to which a peer is willing to interact with a person with a significant disability
- *Positive feelings* about interactions with persons with significant disabilities (empathy, etc.)
 - (Carter, Hughes, Copeland, & Breen, 2001)



Though Interestingly....

- Students Who Become Peer Tutors, as A Group, Do Not Start Out as More Knowledgeable About, or With More Positive Affect or Feelings About, Persons with Significant Disabilities than Do Students who Choose *Not* to Become Peer Tutors.
 - (Carter, Hughes, Copeland, & Breen, 2001)



The Lessons of Peer Tutoring

- Students Learn These Things –
Knowledge of Individual Differences/
Disabilities and Positive Affect or
Feelings Towards Persons with
Significant Disabilities - Through Peer
Tutoring!