



Peer-Mediated support strategies are now considered a recommended and evidence-based practice for promoting relationships for students with disabilities. These types of interventions use peers to promote more natural support strategies. Below are three peer-mediated strategies that are most commonly used and are empirically supported:



1. Peer Support Arrangements

- Used within the inclusive primary or secondary classrooms.
- Two or more students without disabilities are paired with a student with a disability in the classroom to offer academic/social support across the entire school year.
- Teachers invite students to be a part of peer mentoring and provide a brief orientation on roles and responsibilities within these arrangements, monitor interactions and fade support as groups become more comfortable.

For Example: Students support learning and class participation of the student with a disability by working on collaborative school projects together, reviewing each other's work and offering feedback, initiating conversations, encouraging communication device use, introducing other classmates, and modeling appropriate social skills.

2. Peer Network Strategies

- Represents an individualized intervention focusing on fostering friendship beyond the classroom.
- Educators discuss the network for a particular student with other transition team members to decide the focus of the group along with who should be invited to the student's group.
- A cohesive social group (3-6 students) is developed for a student with a disability that meets over the school year. Group is formed based on shared interests (e.g. crafts, watching sports, music, etc.)

- An orientation meeting is conducted with an adult facilitator who leads the first few meetings.
- Students participate in shared activities (games, lunch, etc.)
- Students decide on other meeting times (after school, between classes etc.) and decide on the activities.
- The facilitator fades as the group becomes more connected and peers take the lead in organizing shared activities.

By including the student with a disability into an already existing network of peers, they are more likely to form friendships outside of school.

3. Peer Partners Programs

- These groups consists of peer buddy, peer tutoring, peer mentoring and Best Buddies programs usually involving a larger number of students.
- These types of school-wide peer partner programs can be implemented in a variety of ways, but the school should consider:



From: <http://durfee.org/awardee/circle-of-friends/>

- How to create interest/support from administrators for program implementation?
 - What process will we use to select peers?
 - What strategies will we use to train students on their roles and responsibilities?
 - What methods will we use to support students as they interact with one another?
 - What strategies will we use to sustain and expand the program?
- Peer Partner Programs should focus on fostering friendships, advocacy/awareness and having fun!

Reference:

Carter, E.W., Asmus, J., & Moss, C.K. (2013). Fostering friendships: Supporting relationships among youth with and without developmental disabilities. *Research and Practice in Developmental Disabilities*, 14-17. Retrieved from http://www.tpronline.org/article.cfm/Fostering_Friendships

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