PEER-MEDIATED INTERVENTIONS
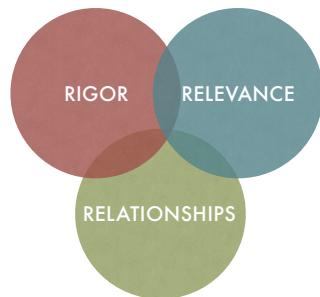
Erik Carter | Vanderbilt University
www.erikwcarter.com
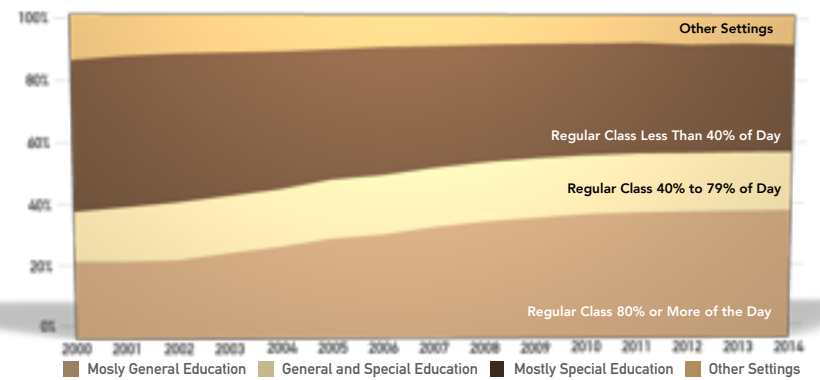
LEARNER OBJECTIVES

➤ Participants will describe the importance of involving peers in efforts to expand social relationships and learning

➤ Participants will identify how peer support and peer network interventions can benefit students with and without disabilities

➤ Participants will learn practical strategies for recruiting students, developing effective intervention plans, orienting students to their roles, and supporting them as they work together
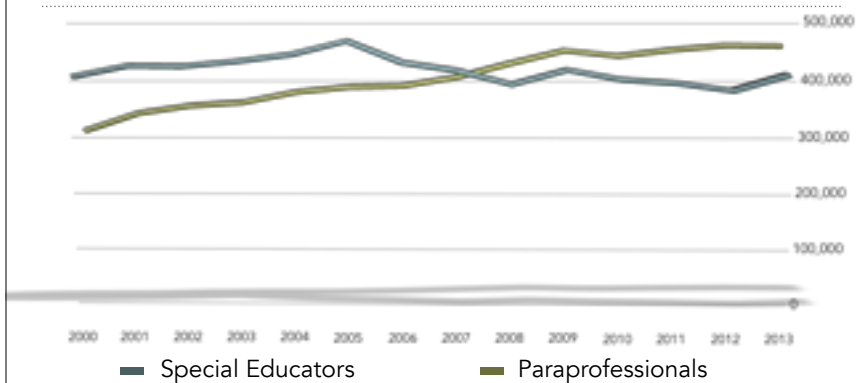
STRONG SCHOOLING FOR STUDENTS [WITH DISABILITIES]

RIGOR   RELEVANCE   RELATIONSHIPS

GENERAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM

Other Settings
Regular Class Less Than 40% of Day
Regular Class 40% to 79% of Day
Regular Class 80% or More of the Day

Mostly General Education   General and Special Education   Mostly Special Education   Other Settings

Source: www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/index.html

CHANGES IN STAFFING RATIOS

| | 500,000 |
| 400,000 |
| 300,000 |
| 200,000 |
| 100,000 |

2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013

— Special Educators   — Paraprofessionals
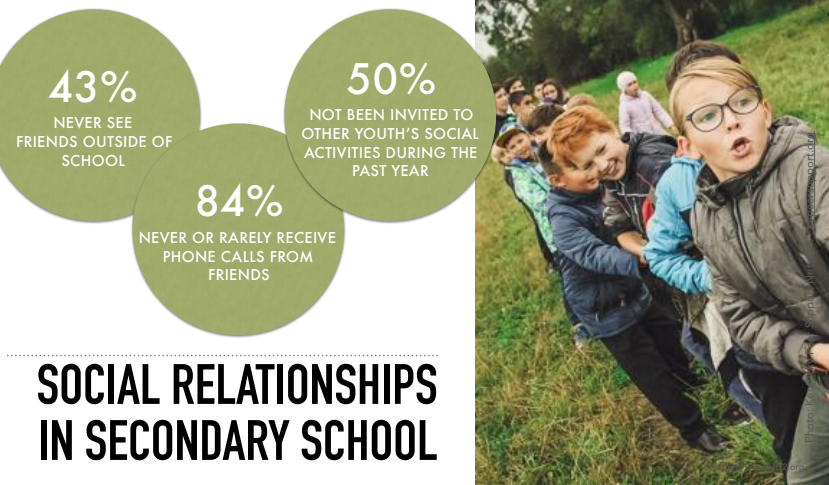

> "
>
> What might be the unintended impact of relying too heavily on individually assigned paraprofessionals?
>
> -Poll Question #1

DOES THE CONSTANT PRESENCE OF ADULTS INADVERTENTLY...

➤ Set students apart?

➤ Decrease contact between students and general educators other group leaders

➤ Hinder student learning and achievement

➤ Encourage unnecessary dependence on adults?

➤ Limit interactions with their classmates?

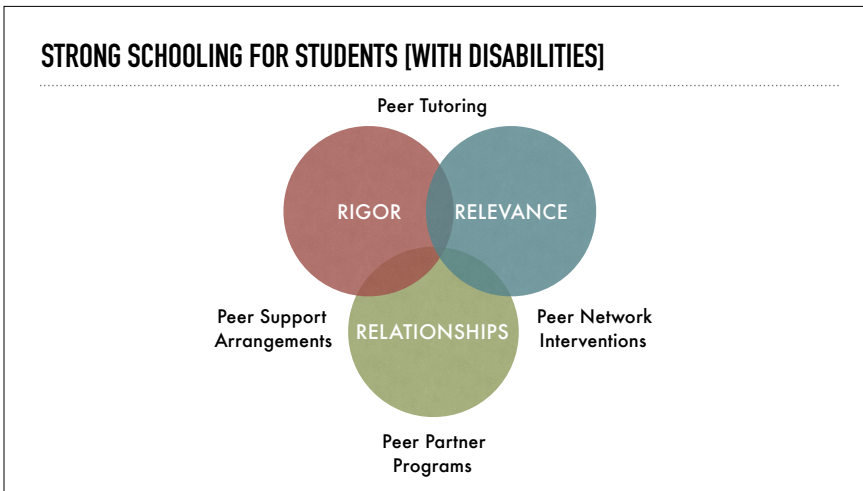➤ Lead to misaligned instruction?

➤ Impact students in other ways?

To read more: https://www.uvm.edu/cess/cdci/giangreco-resources-paraprofessional-support-students-disabilities

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43%
NEVER SEE FRIENDS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

50%
NOT BEEN INVITED TO OTHER YOUTH'S SOCIAL ACTIVITIES DURING THE PAST YEAR

84%
NEVER OR RARELY RECEIVE PHONE CALLS FROM FRIENDS

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

32% NEVER SEE FRIENDS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

81% NEVER OR RARELY RECEIVE PHONE CALLS FROM FRIENDS

32% NOT BEEN INVITED TO OTHER YOUTH'S SOCIAL ACTIVITIES DURING THE PAST YEAR

THE POWER OF PEERS

➤ Peers naturally turn to one another for support

➤ Peers are "experts" on social skills and other social norms

➤ Peers are not as "stigmatizing" as adults

➤ Peers are great problem solvers and can be quite creative

➤ Peers are widely available

➤ Peers can benefit themselves

➤ Peers are future employers, co-workers, neighbors, and congregation members

STRONG SCHOOLING FOR STUDENTS [WITH DISABILITIES]

Peer Tutoring

RIGOR

RELEVANCE

Peer Support Arrangements

RELATIONSHIPS

Peer Network Interventions

Peer Partner Programs

PEER SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS

PEER SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS

➤ Facilitate student participation in class activities

➤ Provide frequent feedback and encouragement

➤ Model communication and other skills

➤ Promote interaction with other classmates and communication device use

➤ Support progress related to individualized goals

➤ Address behavioral supports, as appropriate and appropriately*

Paraprofessional

Special Educator

Related Services

Peer Partner   Focus Student   Peer Partner

General Educator
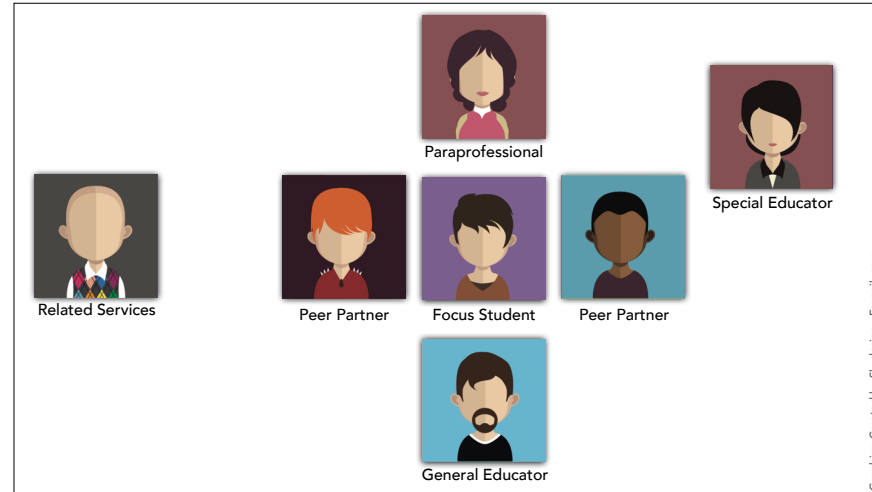
BASIC STEPS

➤ Identifying students with disabilities who need assistance to participate in class activities

➤ Recruiting peers from within the same classroom to help provide some of these supports

➤ Arranging for students to sit next to each other during class activities

➤ Orienting peers to their roles, explaining the rationale for their involvement, and showing them basic strategies for supporting the academic and social participation of their classmate

➤ Providing ongoing monitoring, feedback, and assistance to peers and their partners throughout the semester, as needed

➤ Shifting paraprofessionals to a broader support role within the classroom through which they assist all students, as directed by the teacher

EXAMPLES OF ACADEMIC-RELATED SUPPORTS

✓ Sitting next to the student during class
✓ Sharing notes
✓ Highlighting important information
✓ Brainstorming answers to questions together
✓ Inviting the student to join a group
✓ Making sure the student has a clear role in an activity
✓ Asking how the student is doing with an assignment
✓ Asking clarifying questions
✓ Helping organize assignments and materials
✓ Reminding the student about classroom routines
✓ Helping the student check their assignments

✓ Paraphrasing lectures or rephrasing key ideas
✓ Helping the student self-manage learning
✓ Offering additional examples of concepts or ideas
✓ Demonstrating how to complete a problem
✓ Highlighting important information
✓ Redirecting the student when he or she is off task
✓ Sharing class materials
✓ Reading aloud a section of an assignment or text
✓ Explaining how to do certain aspects of an assignment

Source: Carter, Moss, Asmus, Fesperman, Cooney, Brock, Lyons, Huber, & Vincent (2015)

EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL-RELATED SUPPORTS

- ✓ Sharing jokes with the student
- ✓ Encouraging interactions with other classmates, when appropriate
- ✓ Helping the student to "fit in" by learning social norms
- ✓ Reminding the student to use his or her communication book or device
- ✓ Giving advice on personal matters
- ✓ Offering emotional support
- ✓ Reinforcing communication attempts

- ✓ Talking with the student about shared interests, hobbies, or after-school activities
- ✓ Inviting the student to do something together during "down time" in class
- ✓ Walking with the student to the next class
- ✓ And many, many others…

Source: Carter, Moss, Asmus, Fesperman, Cooney, Brock, Lyons, Huber, & Vincent (2015)

Source: Carter, E. W., Moss, C. K., Asmus, J., Fesperman, E., Cooney, M., Brock, M. E., Lyons, G., Huber, H. B., & Vincent, L. B. (2015). Promoting inclusion, social relationships, and learning through peer support arrangements. TEACHING Exceptional Children, 48(1), 9-18

At the beginning of class…

Stephen could…	Peers could…	The facilitator could…
• Get out materials for taking notes from the board • Converse with peers about a social topic • Say hello to peers	• Prompt Stephen to get out his notebook and copy down information; remind him we do this once every day • If he arrives late, let Stephen copy down the board information from your notebook • Ask Stephen about his day, his hobbies, or his latest culinary adventures • Make sure to greet him when he arrives to class	• Encourage peers to engage Stephen in conversation and provide some conversation starters if peers are uncertain • Offer peers ideas for Stephen's participation and answer any questions peers may have • Look through class materials to see if any adaptations or modifications may be needed

Source: Carter, E. W., Moss, C. K., Asmus, J., Fesperman, E., Cooney, M., Brock, M. E., Lyons, G., Huber, H. B., & Vincent, L. B. (2015). Promoting inclusion, social relationships, and learning through peer support arrangements. TEACHING Exceptional Children, 48(1), 9-18

When there are small-group or lab activities…

Stephen could…	Peers could…	The facilitator could…
• Listen and follow directions • Ask questions of specific peers who are sitting at his table • Make a choice about which parts of the lab activity he would like to take the lead on • Record all required subject matter in calendar or planner	• Involve Stephen as much as possible in the lab by modeling key steps, checking for understanding, and asking for his input • Provide Stephen with choices about which aspects of the activity he will take the lead on • Ask Stephen directly to do something specific	• Observe to make sure Stephen remains involved in and contributes to his group • Redirect Stephen's questions to one of his peer partners • Offer suggestions to the peers in Stephen's group if they are uncertain what he can do • Look for signs Stephen may engage in challenging behavior, particularly if he is unsure of what is coming up next

Source: Carter, E. W., Moss, C. K., Asmus, J., Fesperman, E., Cooney, M., Brock, M. E., Lyons, G., Huber, H. B., & Vincent, L. B. (2015). Promoting inclusion, social relationships, and learning through peer support arrangements. TEACHING Exceptional Children, 48(1), 9-18

ORIENTATION TOPICS

☐ Introductions
☐ Rationale for their involvement
☐ Background about the student
☐ Goals for the peer support arrangement
☐ General goals for the class
☐ Confidentiality and respectful language
☐ Expectations specific to the classroom
☐ Technology and communication systems
☐ Basic instructional and support
  strategies
☐ Student motivation and feedback
☐ When to seek assistance
☐ Other student-specific issues

MONITORING THE PEER SUPPORT ARRANGEMENT

☐ Is the student seated next to the peer(s) with whom he or she is paired?
☐ Does the student have the same materials as his or her classmates (e.g., worksheets, books, lab materials, writing utensils, computers)?
☐ Are the student and his or her peers actively engaged in ongoing instruction?
☐ Is the work the student is doing closely aligned with work expected of the rest of the class?
☐ Are interactions among the student and his or her peers appropriate given the context or the types of interactions other students have?
☐ Are students completing class activities in a timely fashion or at a reasonable pace?
☐ Do the student and his or her peers appear to be enjoying working together?
☐ Are students truly working together? (rather than simply next to each other)
☐ Other: _____
☐ Other: _____

FACILITATION SHARED ACTIVITIES AND INTERACTIONS

Facilitation Strategy	Examples
Modeling ways to interact	"Here is how you can help Abby program her communication device so that she can contribute to the group presentation."
Highlighting similarities	"You also like country music? I think Todd went to a Toby Keith concert last week. You should ask him about it."
Identifying strengths	"It looks like everyone played an important role in getting this project done. Ruben's cover art looks fantastic, and the materials Devin gathered go perfect with it!"
Interpreting behaviors	"You know how you give someone a 'high five' when something goes really well? Anna expresses her excitement in a different way—usually by rocking back and forth."
Redirecting peer interactions to students with autism	"If you want to know how Jack is doing, just ask him yourself. Just make sure he can see you when you ask."
Redirect student interactions to peer partners	"Hmm, I'm not sure what you should do next. Why don't you ask your classmate what the assignment is?"
Asking peers to help	"Would you be willing to be his partner and read this section out loud to him?"
Increasing proximity	"Brian, why don't you go and sit with your lab group?"

REVISITING SOURCES OF SUPPORT

➤ Can the student do it...
  ➤ ...on his or her own?
  ➤ ...if given the right technology or adaptations?
  ➤ ...if taught self-management strategies?
  ➤ ...with help from a peer partner or classmate?
  ➤ ...with **occasional** help from an educator or paraprofessional?
  ➤ ...with **ongoing** help from an educator or paraprofessional?

> ❝
>
> How might students with disabilities be positively impacted through peer support arrangements?
>
> -Poll Question #2
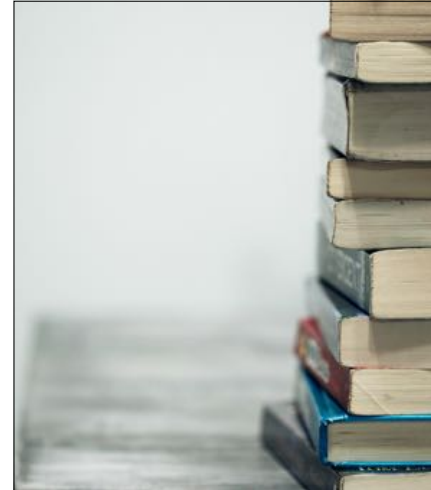
RESEARCH SUPPORT

➤ More than a dozen studies have examined the efficacy and social validity of peer support arrangements in general education classrooms

➤ They have been implemented both core academic (e.g., math, science, language arts, social studies) and elective (e.g., art, band, chorus, computers, culinary arts, dance, digital arts, music, theater, wellness) classes

➤ Paraprofessionals tend to serve as facilitators, though this role can also be assumed by special and general educators

➤ Peer support arrangements are an "evidence-based practice" for improving social-related outcomes of students with severe disabilities

Source: Brock & Huber, 2017; Carter, 2018

SELECTED RESEARCH FINDINGS RELATED TO PEER SUPPORTS

SOCIAL BENEFITS

- More social interactions take place when students work alongside their peers
- Students make substantially more progress on their social-focused IEP goals
- Students spend more class time in proximity to other classmates who don't have similar disabilities
- Students make substantially more friends
- Students show at least small gains in social skill acquisition

ACADEMIC BENEFITS

- Students become more academically engaged when working with peers
- Students work more closely on work that is aligned with the general curriculum
- Students make some progress on their academic-related IEP goals

PEER NETWORK INTERVENTIONS

PEER NETWORK INTERVENTIONS

A social group established around a student with a disability that:

- ➤ Meets weekly to talk, participate in a shared activity, and plan/discuss interactions occurring outside of the group
- ➤ Helps the focus student become more involved in everyday school life and get connected to other school activities
- ➤ Receives regular guidance and support from an adult facilitator (e.g., coach, educator, paraprofessional)
- ➤ Lasts throughout an entire one semester

Focus Student

Related Services

Peer Partners

Special Educator

Network Facilitator

Parents

Graphics: Created by Skydesign - Freepik.com
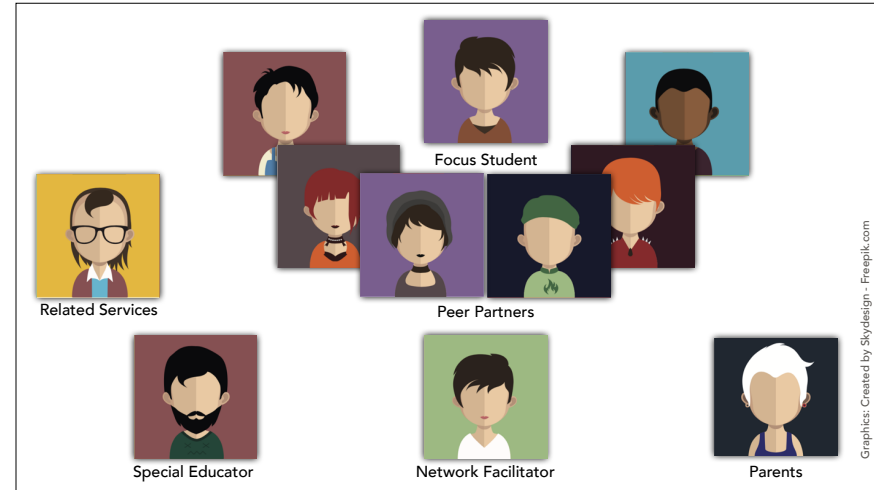
BASIC STEPS

- ➤ Identify interested students with a disability
- ➤ Identify a peer network facilitator (teacher, counselor, etc.)
- ➤ Identify and invite 3-6 peers to join the group
- ➤ Hold an initial orientation meeting with the peers
- ➤ Facilitate regular peer network meetings
- ➤ Arrange a mutually enjoyable activity
- ➤ Check in on weekly social contacts
- ➤ Encourage expansion of the network
- ➤ Provide ongoing feedback and support
- ➤ Reflect, fade, and maintain the network

"

What qualities or experiences would you look for in potential peer partners?

-Poll Question #3

SELECTING PEER PARTNERS

➤ Which peers share **interests, hobbies, or activities in common** with the student?

➤ Which peers have **shown an interest in getting to know the student** in the past?

➤ Which peers have **consistent attendance**?

➤ Who would model **positive behaviors** for the student?

➤ Who has **good interpersonal skills**?

➤ Which peers are themselves **"on the margins"**?

➤ Which peers are part of a **larger friendship networks**?

➤ Which peers have **common time available** with the student with a disability during the school day?

COMMON APPROACHES FOR RECRUITING PEERS

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Student-identified peers	?	?
Casual observations	?	?
School announcements	?	?
Teacher recommendations	?	?
Existing social networks	?	?
Working within an extracurricular	?	?
Formal "peer buddy" programs	?	?

s

RESEARCH SUPPORT

➤ At least a dozen studies examined the efficacy and social validity of peer network interventions within inclusive K-12 schools

➤ These networks have been delivered in a wide variety of settings, including cafeterias, advisory periods, and extracurricular programs

➤ An array of staff have served as facilitators, including special and general educators, paraprofessionals, school counselors, coaches, club leaders, and others

➤ Peer network interventions are considered an "evidence-based practice" for improving social-related outcomes of students with severe disabilities

SELECTED RESEARCH FINDINGS RELATED TO PEER NETWORKS

BENEFITS TO STUDENTS

· Social interactions take place at substantially higher levels when students with disabilities began participating in a peer network

· These interactions sometimes—though not always—generalized to other schoolmates

· Students developed significantly more friendships over the course of one semester; many of these friendship maintained one year later

· Students had significantly more social contacts in school with others, including peers outside of their network

BENEFITS TO PEERS

· Peers report that they themselves benefit socially from being part of a peer network

· Some peers also indicate that they benefit academically from their involvement

· Peers indicate their views about disability and their schoolmates with autism have changed for the better

· Peers develop new friendships that last over time and sometimes spill

PEER PARTNER PROGRAMS
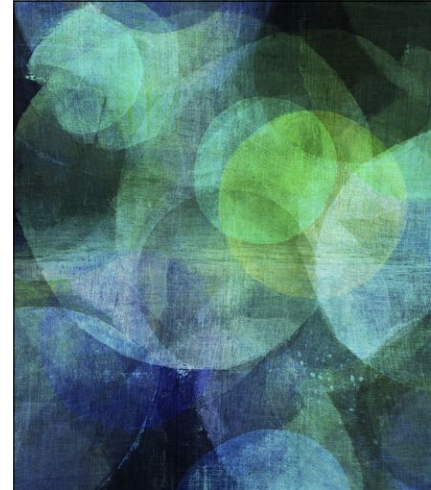
PEER PARTNER PROGRAMS

➤ Formal efforts to create more welcoming school cultures, expand the quality of opportunities students with and without disabilities have to get to know and spend time with one another, and strengthen the social skills and friendships of all students

Examples include:

➤ Peer buddy programs

➤ Best Buddies high school

➤ Peer partner clubs

RESEARCH SUPPORT

➤ Peer partner programs are feasible to implement and reach a wide number of students

➤ They can be adapted to meet the needs of schools with different resources and cultures

➤ Peers attribute a wide range of benefits to their involvement

➤ Students with disabilities meet and develop friendships with a wide range of peers whom they might not otherwise have met

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE FOR FREE?

➤ **Peer Mentoring to Students with Disabilities**
http://www.engagingalllearners.ca/sal/peer-mentoring/

➤ **Starting Points and Possibilities for Promoting Relationships and Learning**
https://www.pattan.net/supports/inclusive-practices/other-projects-and-trainings/

➤ **Kentucky Peer Support Project**
http://www.kypeersupport.org/how-to-modules/

STARTING POINTS AND POSSIBILITIES
Promoting **Inclusion**, **Learning** and **Relationships** for Students with Complex Needs

How peer mentors can provide natural supports

Human Development Institute

A GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING
PEER SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS
Erik Carter, Ph.D.
Vanderbilt University

STUDIES EVALUATING PEER SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS

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- Kamps, D., Mason, R., Thiemann-Bourque, K., Feldmiller, S., Turcotte, A., & Miller, T. (2014). The use of peer networks to increase communicative acts of students with autism spectrum disorders. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 29,* 230-245.
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PEER-MEDIATED INTERVENTIONS

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Tri-State Autism Spectrum Disorder Webinar Series