

Peer Supports Facilitator Manual



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Overview of the Center on Secondary Education for Students with Autism

This five-year project funded by the Department of Education focuses on developing a comprehensive program to meet the needs of high school students along the entire autism spectrum. Researchers from six universities across the United States will collaborate with schools, families, and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) to create and implement effective and doable peer-mediated interventions addressing five components in high schools: social competence; transition and families; academics; personal responsibility, independence, and self-management; and professional development.

Which students can participate?

Our project focuses on high school students with ASD who receive special education support under an educational or psychiatric diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder (autism, pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified, or Asperger syndrome). For each participating student, 2-6 high school peers without disabilities will be invited to take part in a peer support group or peer network.

What support strategies are we evaluating?

Peer Supports and Peer Networks are part of the project's social competence component. We have combined what we learned from nationwide stakeholder focus groups in the fall of 2012 with research-based strategies to help teachers and paraprofessionals implement peer-mediated social interventions. Peer support strategies, the focus of this manual, involve arranging for one or more peers to provide ongoing social support to their classmates with ASD after receiving initial training and ongoing guidance from an adult.

What improvements do we expect?

We want to learn how the social interactions, friendships, social skills, support needs, and school participation of students with ASD are improved when they receive support from peers. Our prior partnerships with schools have shown these approaches to be very effective and quite feasible. This information will be gathered through observations, interviews, and questionnaires completed by teachers, parents, and students. We also expect the peers who provide support to benefit as well. In addition, we anticipate teachers and paraprofessionals will find the strategies to be feasible to implement and work well within their schools.

What support will the project provide?

We will provide teachers and paraprofessionals with training on how to implement these strategies, ongoing coaching as they work with students, and generous financial compensation for the time involved in learning the strategies, implementing them with students, and completing assessments. This is a great way to learn support strategies that are both practical and evidence-based!

Peer Supports Arrangements

What are peer supports?

Peer support arrangements involve one or more peers in an inclusive classroom providing social and academic support to a classmate with ASD. Two to three peers without disabilities are identified by the classroom teacher, special educator and/or paraprofessional. These peers receive information on how to provide support to a student with ASD in an initial orientation meeting. Peers also receive regular guidance and feedback from the facilitator as the students work together.

What are the goals of peer support arrangements?

- Increase the number of peers a student with ASD knows and interacts with in class
- Increase the involvement of the student with ASD in classroom activities
- Encourage the student with ASD to receive some support from peers rather than always turning to adults for help
- Help the students become more independent in class
- Provide an intentional way for a student to meet new people and, hopefully, make new friends
- Provide peers a chance to get to know and interact with the student on a regular basis
- Help develop relationships that will last beyond the semester

What is your role as the Peer Supports Facilitator?

- Identify classmates to be peer supports
- Invite those peers to participate
- Brainstorm with the coach (i.e., a member of the project team) strategies peers can use to support student with disability in the classroom
- Have an initial meeting with the peers to discuss strategies and supports
- Check-in regularly with the student with ASD and peer supports
- Provide support and feedback to students around classroom interactions
- Communicate with project team

What are the steps in setting up peer support arrangements?

- 1) **Identifying peers:** The facilitator and teacher, with input from the focus student, other adults and classmates, identifies one or more classmates (called “peer supports”) whom they anticipate would work well with the focus student.
- 2) **Preparing and planning:** The facilitator, with input from the teacher and support from the coach, determines strategies for peer supports to use when interacting with the student with ASD.
- 3) **Initial meeting:** The facilitator and the coach meet with the peer supports during a lunch period or before or after school (for approximately 45 to 60 minutes) to discuss with them basic approaches for:
 - Interacting with student during class
 - Increasing the student’s participation in various class activities
 - Modeling appropriate skills
 - Encouraging interactions with other classmates at appropriate times
- 4) **Checking-in with and supporting students:** The facilitator will provide ongoing support for students to begin sitting next to each other everyday in the classroom; interacting with one another during class; and providing academic and social support. The facilitator should also check with the student with ASD and peer supports to find out how everything is going during class.

Preparing for Intervention

Prior to implementing the Peer and Social Component (PASC), the facilitator, project coach, and other school staff who have agreed to be involved in the intervention should do some advanced planning to design an intervention that is most likely to address the student's needs. Below, we outline considerations for assessing the student's social-related needs, selecting social goals, and selecting settings in which the intervention will be carried out.

Assessing Social-Related Needs

To determine a student's social-related needs, the team can use existing assessment information, including IEPs, psychological evaluations, or other reports (from occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, etc.). In addition, team members can conduct informal assessments by observing the student during times when there are opportunities for interactions with peers. When observing, reflect on the following questions:

1. What communication strategies does the student use? _____

2. What additional communication strategies would enhance interactions with peers?

3. Does the student initiate with peers or avoid peers? _____

4. If the student appears to avoid peers, is it because of an active dislike of peer interactions, because the student is fearful that he/she will not be socially successful, or some other reason? _____

5. How do peers respond to the student in social situations? _____

6. Does the student interact socially with peers in a way that is unsuccessful? _____

7. Is the student aware of the reaction of peers? _____

8. What barriers keep the student from interacting successfully with peers (e.g., lack of opportunity, lack of adult support, school climate, student attitudes regarding students with disabilities, lack of social and communication abilities)? _____

9. Does the student have friendships? _____

10. With whom does the student interact in his/her classes? _____

11. Are there skills he or she should learn that would increase connections with peers?

Facilitators can also speak with other school staff who are familiar with the student to get a sense of how the student interacts with different people in different settings. Consider the following:

- Does the student interact more successfully with adults than with peers?
- What interaction strategies do adults use with the student that peers might also use (keeping in mind that peer interactions should be “equal-status”)?
- Are there particular settings/partners/activities in which the student is more successful than others? What about these situations aid the student in being more successful socially?

Selecting Social-Related Goals

Collecting Information

Next, the facilitator can determine social goals that will enhance peer interactions and could be met through the chosen intervention. These goals will be addressed in the Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) assessment completed throughout the year. Determining appropriate, measureable goals requires:

- Knowing the student’s current strengths and areas of concern. This information can be drawn from informal and formal data sources discussed previously.
- Knowing how peers interact with one another at school. It is important that this information is gathered from observation and discussions with peers and general education staff members.
 - In what kinds of social exchanges do the peers regularly participate?
 - What types of activities are appealing to these students?
 - What social skills are important for participating with these peers?

Determining Goals

Ideally, the facilitator will already have measurable social-related IEP goals and corresponding data from which to draw. These goals must be aligned with student needs and the chosen intervention/context, which may require an iterative process of choosing a goal, deciding which intervention best fits the student’s needs and the school’s resources, and revising the goal based on how the intervention is individualized for the student.

Measurable goals include three crucial components:

1. **Antecedent conditions** (when and/or where a particular skill is supposed to be used)
2. **Observable behavior or skill** that is clearly defined
3. **Criteria level** that allows staff to measure progress accurately and determine when a student meets a specific goal

| <u>Antecedent</u> | <u>Behavior</u> | <u>Criteria</u> |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Setting <input type="checkbox"/> With whom <input type="checkbox"/> Supports provided <input type="checkbox"/> High vs. low structure <input type="checkbox"/> Academic, social, transition, etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> Specific <input type="checkbox"/> Observable <input type="checkbox"/> Measurable | <input type="checkbox"/> # of times <input type="checkbox"/> Amount of time <input type="checkbox"/> Percent <input type="checkbox"/> Consistency <input type="checkbox"/> Data collection method |
| <i>“When this event occurs...”</i> | <i>...the learner will do this behavior(s)...</i> | <i>...at this rate or level of proficiency.”</i> |

Some example goals that can potentially be met via social competence interventions are:

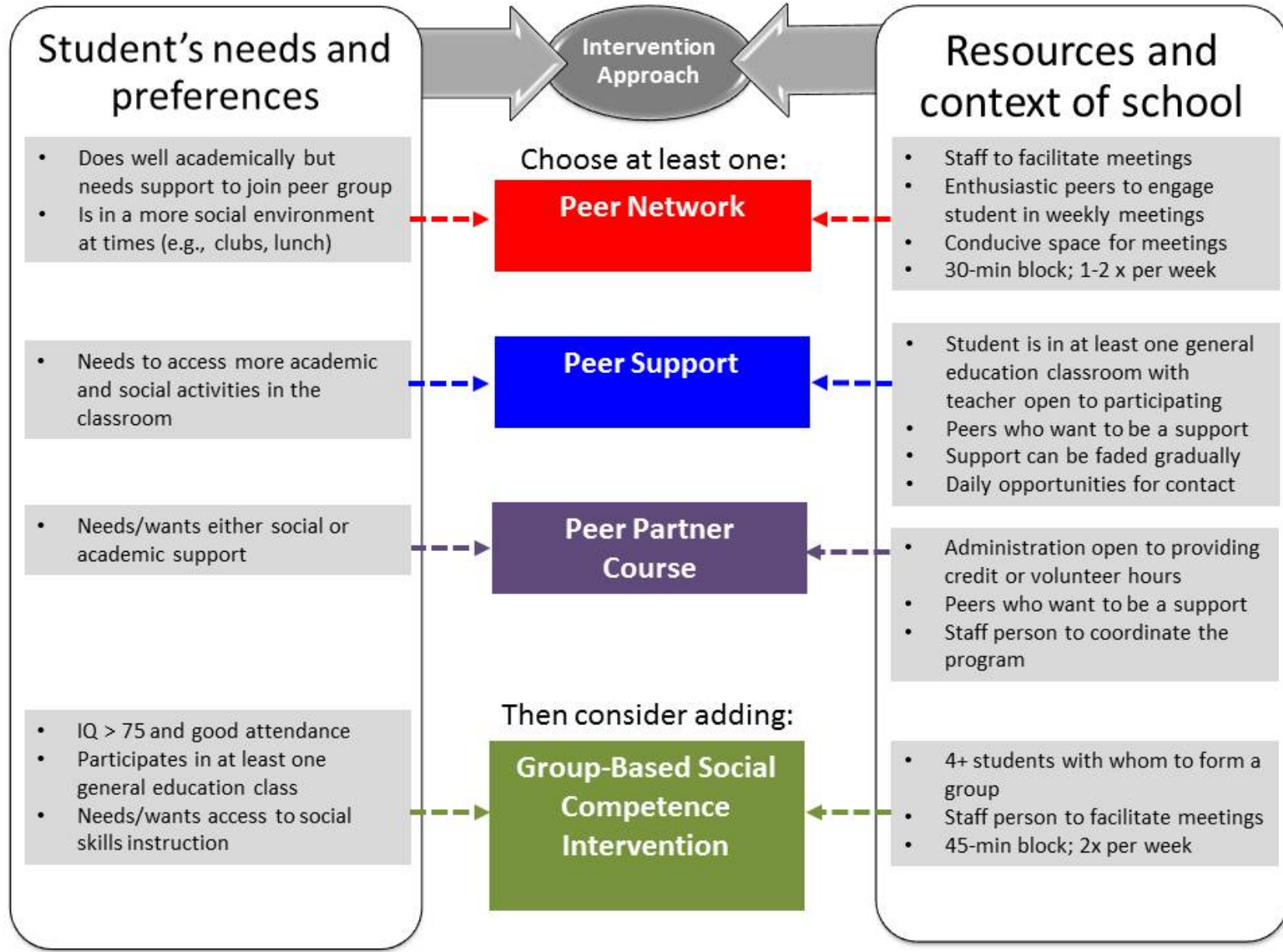
- During a peer network activity, Andrew will initiate conversations with at least 2 peers, 4 out of 5 opportunities.
- When presented with a conversational attempt from a peer, Sam will respond and then continue the conversation by asking a follow-up question for 80% of opportunities over 3 consecutive days across 3 different peers.

Selecting Interventions and Contexts

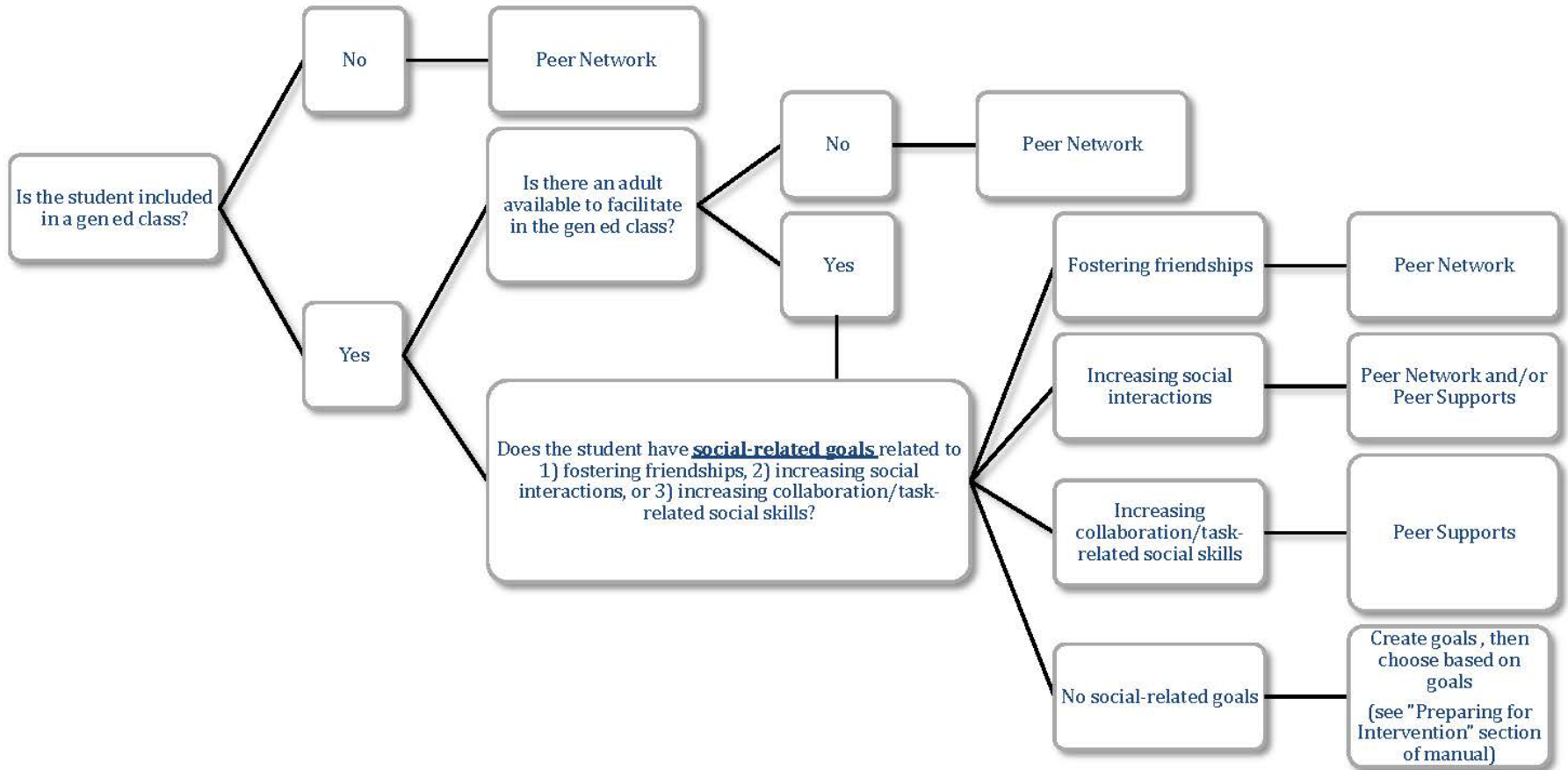
To select the specific intervention that will be a good fit for the student, draw upon formal and informal assessments of a student’s needs. Also consider the student’s preferences:

- Which intervention is the student most excited about?
- Is the student reluctant to be involved in any of the interventions?
- Where are the student’s needs the greatest?

Both the peer networks and peer supports should be in place for a minimum of 6 weeks. The group-based social competence intervention should meet for 8 – 10 weeks. Review the graphic on the next page with your coach to determine which intervention approach is most appropriate for your student.



Peer Network and Peer Support Decision Tree



Identifying Peer Supports

Purpose: To identify peer supports who will be

- Interested and excited to interact with and help support the student
- Motivated to develop a social relationship with the student
- A positive peer model for the student
- Likely to stay involved through the semester

Your Role: As the facilitator you will

- Identify peer supports with help from the focus student, other staff and possibly classmates
- Invite peers to participate
- Answer questions peers might have about peer supports

Starting points for identifying peers:

- Your first step should be to talk with the student about his or her preferences related to peers
- Next you should discuss with the teacher which peers in the classroom might be a good for the project

Important Points

When looking for peer supports it is important to keep an open mind and think creatively; sometimes a student you would not initially consider can make a great peer support. If the student already has relationships with certain peers or shows a preference to a particular peer, start by talking to those students.

How many peers should I invite?

Aim for identifying 2-3 peer supports. Having more than one peer involved minimizes problems with absences and means students can work together to provide support and complete school work. However, having too many students involved can be disruptive.

Who might make a great peer support?

Consider some of the following questions when identifying peers in a class. Remember, there are no rigid requirements for participation in the peer supports arrangements. Of course, being a peer support is a choice and so only students who express interest when invited should participate.

- 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?

What are the different ways I can identify peer supports?

You may identify potential peers using whatever approaches work best in the classroom. The ideas listed below are just some of the strategies you might use to identify peer supports. Again, think creatively.

When deciding on a method for finding peer supports, remember:

- You want to identify peers who would be interested in participating
- You want peers who will be committed to working with and supporting the student daily in class
- You want peers who will interact with the student as he or she would with other classmates instead of as a teacher

Tip #1: Ask the student: If the student can communicate his or her preferences, ask some of the following questions:

- Who do you like to talk with in class?
- Are there classmates with whom you would like to interact more often?
- Who do you look forward to seeing?
- Who do you consider to be your friends?
- Who would you like to sit next to and work with?

Tip #2: Ask teachers for their input.

- Who does the student already interact with in class or at other times?
- Do you know students who might be interested in participating as a peer support?
- Which students like to help their classmates?
- Are there students who would themselves benefit from having an additional role in the classroom?

Tip #3: Look Around: Watch the student during class. Consider the following questions to help identify peers who could potentially be invited.

- With whom does the student already talk?
- Are there peers who say “hi” to the student?
- Are there peers with whom the student often works in class?
- Which classmates are most helpful?
- Who participates often in class?

Tip #4: Talk to the entire class: Another idea is to share with the entire class the opportunity to support another student in the classroom. See information below.

How do I invite peers to participate as peer supports?

- *Talk individually with students*
If there are students who would be potentially good in this role you can approach them individually to ask if they would be interested. 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. Let students know they can come to talk to you afterwards to learn more if interested.
- Ask students who agree to participate if they have recommendations for other classmates to be peer supports

What do I say to peers when I invite them to participate?

The following is a sample of language you might use to invite peers. Of course, this is just an example and how you phrase the invitation is best decided by you.

Hi (peer's name)? Do you have a minute? Hi. I'm (your name). And I help support a student in your (focus class) class. You might have seen me in there?

Well, I help (student's name) in that class, but we are trying to make him feel more part of the class and find a couple of students who could sit next to him, help point out important things in class for him, and just chat him up during free times. As you know, interacting with other students at school is one of the best parts of school and (student's name) would like to get to know more students in class to talk to. Mr/s. (reg. ed. teacher) thought you might be good at this and he suggested I talk to you. Would you be interested?

If Interested: *Great! Because we want to make sure that having students get to know other students can get (student's name) to be more engaged in class, we are making this part of a research study—always good to get proof! So I have a short permission form that explains what we will be doing. You'll need you to take it home and read it along with your parents/guardians if you are under 18. You can either mail it back to the address or bring it to me in class.*

If you know anyone else in the class who might want to do this, let me know. We are hoping to have at least two students participate. Once I get your permission form back, and the others in the class, I'll set up a meeting with all of us to go over some ideas to help support and include (student's name) in class. We can meet over lunch, a study hall, or before or after class. What would be best for you?

I'm really glad you are interested. Thanks!

If not interested: *That's okay; thank you for talking with me about this project. If you change your mind or know someone in the class who might be interested please let me know. Thanks!*

Preparing and Planning For Peer Supports

Purpose: Preparation and planning are needed to:

- Identify strategies with the coach that peers can use to successfully support the student during class
- Determine with the coach strategies and support to provide, as the facilitator, to both the peer supports and student to encourage interactions and increase class participation

Your Role: With the support of the coach, you will:

- Review the *Facilitating Strategies* handout
- Review the information in the *Peer Support Plan* examples
- Complete the *Peer Support Plan* activity for the class the student will have peer supports

Materials needed:

- This guide including:
 - *Facilitating Strategies* handout
 - *Peer Support Plan* examples
 - *Peer Support Plan* form

Reflection on Classroom Activities

For the classroom where peer supports will be provided think about:

- What is the typical routine in the classroom? (e.g., silent reading, then lecture, then group activity, etc.)
- What activities are often completed in class and what are students expected to do? (e.g., listening and taking notes, group work, individual work, lab, projects, discussions, etc.)
- What does the student do during each of these activities? (e.g., complete work, sit in back of room, receive one-on-one instruction, etc.)

After thinking about the different activities in this class and how the students now participate, consider:

- How can students work together during different activities? (see potential strategies for peers)
- How can I encourage students to interact with one another during class? (see potential facilitation strategies for facilitator)

As you consider each activity, think about whether the student can complete tasks:

- On his or her own?
- If given the right technology or adaptive equipment?
- With help from another classmate?
- With help from someone else in the environment?
- With occasional help from a paraprofessional or special educator?
- With ongoing help from a paraprofessional or a special educator?

One goal is to help students participate in class with help from peers or more independently.

Possible Strategies for Peers

Some possible ways peers can use in class to interact with the student include:

- Sit next to student during class
- Talk to the student
- Pass out papers with the student
- Share notes with student
- Highlight important information provided in class for student
- Brainstorm answers to questions together
- Invite the student to join a group during group work activities
- Make sure the student receives a role in the group
- Ask the student how s/he is doing with an assignment
- Ask the student a question such as “what number are we on?”
- Tell jokes with the student
- Walk with the student to the next class
- Help organize assignments and class materials
- Remind the student of how to follow classroom routines
- Encourage interactions with other classmates
- Help check the accuracy of assignments and class notes
- Paraphrase lectures or rephrasing key ideas
- Help student self-manage his or her learning
- Offer additional examples of concepts or ideas
- Demonstrate how to complete a problem
- Highlight important information on a worksheet
- Review course concepts with student
- Motivate and encourage the student during difficult assignments
- Help them to “fit in” by learning social norms
- Remind the student to use his or her communication book or device (if appropriate)
- Redirect the student when off task
- Share advice
- Share class materials
- Read aloud a section of an assignment or text
- Reinforce communication attempts
- Explain how to do certain aspects of an assignment

Possible Facilitation Strategies for Facilitator

Some possible strategies you can use as the facilitator to encourage peer interactions in the classroom include (also see facilitating strategies handout for more examples of each strategy):

- Model ways students can interact with one another
- Highlight similarities among students
- Identify varied strengths and differences

- Teach interaction skills to students
- Interpret behavior
- Redirect interactions to student
- Redirect interactions to peers without disabilities
- Ask peers to help the student with specific tasks
- Have students sit next to each other
- Provide positive feedback to groups for working together
- Make sure a student's augmentative communication device to have comments, vocabulary and/or questions related to the topic

Develop the Peer Support Plan

- Read over the three examples of *Peer Support Plan* in this guide
- Complete this worksheet with the coach for the class where the student will be receiving peer supports
- Use the answers and information you determined above to fill in:
 - What the student will do during each part of class
 - What you can do as the facilitator to encourage peer interactions
 - What peers can do to interact with and support the student during class

Next Steps

- Share ideas from the *Peer Support Plan* activity with peers at the initial orientation meeting and brainstorm additional ways they can be involved
- Refer to the *Peer Support Plan* activity throughout the semester to reflect on current strategies being used in the classroom

Facilitation strategies for promoting interactions among students

| Strategy | Examples |
|--|--|
| Modeling ways to interact | <p>"Jasmine would be able to play this game if you could show her how to match her cards."</p> <p>"How does this game work? Oh, I see. You need to match the green cards to the green cards and put the red ones together."</p> |
| Highlighting similarities | <p>"You and Eric might want to compare your essays, each of you have had similar experiences."</p> <p>"Wow! You both like country music. Todd just went to a concert; you should ask him about it."</p> <p>"I heard Monica say that she also wanted to see that movie. Maybe you could go together."</p> |
| Identifying varied strengths and differences | <p>"It sure works great when everyone in a group is good at doing different things. How did each member help get your project done?"</p> <p>"You and Carlos will make great book report partners! You have a talent for writing, and Carlos has a talent for drawing. Together, you should end up with a super project!"</p> |
| Teaching interaction skills | <p>"Randy, let's practice how you could call a friend on the phone and invite him to go to a movie."</p> <p>"John isn't looking. I don't think he heard you. You could ask again. Make sure he sees you."</p> <p>"What is another way that you could ask Patrick to borrow his ruler?"</p> |
| Interpreting behaviors | <p>"Mark, you talk aloud during math because it helps you think through the equations, right?"</p> <p>"That is usually a sign that Sarah is feeling a little anxious."</p> <p>"When Brent hits his hand on the desk, he is letting us know that he is frustrated. He is working hard to learn other ways to let people know what he is feeling."</p> |
| Redirecting interactions to students with disabilities | <p>"Instead of asking me how Mark is doing, why don't you ask Mark himself?"</p> <p>"If you want to know how Jack is, you can ask him yourself. Just make sure he can see you when you ask."</p> <p>"I don't know. He's right here if you want to ask for yourself."</p> |
| Redirect interactions to peers without disabilities | <p>"See if you can get John to help you with this problem."</p> <p>"Why don't you ask Sam that question instead?"</p> <p>"Anita might be willing to check to see if your answers are correct."</p> <p>"Hmmm... I'm not sure what you should do next. Why don't you ask your classmate what the assignment is?"</p> |
| Asking peers to help | <p>"Mary, will you please help Brian with his worksheet?" If you point to and read the question, he can keep his place and answer.</p> <p>"Would you be willing to be his partner and read out loud to him?"</p> |
| Physical proximity | <p>"Brian, why don't you go and sit with your lab group?" "Hmm...the group is about to start and you are still way over here."</p> <p>"Is everyone close enough to be involved?"</p> <p>"Uh, guys, I think you are missing someone..."</p> |

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....

| <i>Brad could...</i> | <i>Peers could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk quietly with his peers (when it is okay with the teacher) • Pass out worksheets or other materials to the class (if there are any that day) • Listen and respond to Ms. Hale do attendance • Boot up his laptop, if he will be taking notes in class | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 |

When there are lectures or whole group instruction...

| <i>Brad could...</i> | <i>Peers could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to Ms. Hale as she presents information to the class • Quietly ask his peers questions about the material Ms. Hale is presenting • Take notes by typing important specific key words or phrases that are being written down by a peer (preferably) or the facilitator • Copy by hand those same key words or phrases with the facilitator's help or highlight notes • Turn off/on the lights when Ms. Hale is using the overhead projector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure Brad has all of the same materials for the activity as they do • As you are taking your own notes, copy down on a separate piece of paper some of the important words or ideas from the class discussion; Brad can then type these as his own notes or copy them down with the facilitator's help. • Periodically check to make sure Brad is doing okay with typing or writing his notes • Occasionally lean over and quietly summarize a key point or interesting fact, or ask him simple questions that help him follow along • Encourage Brad with lots of positive feedback! | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure Brad has the same materials as his classmates • Always brainstorm ways Brad can be engaged in the discussion: Can he answer a question? Can he share an idea? • Help Brad to take modified notes by typing key words/phrases on the laptop (preferred) or writing them out by hand • Encourage Brad to look at Ms. Hale or the whiteboard as instruction is taking place • Let the peers know when they are doing a great job interacting with or supporting Brad • Prompt Brad to ask his peers to double check his notes |

When there are small group or lab activities...

| <i>Brad could...</i> | <i>Peers could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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! | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 group's 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 |

When there is independent seatwork ...

| <i>Brad could...</i> | <i>Peers could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to Ms. Hale as she presents instructions to the class • Work with the facilitator to finish the worksheet or other activity • When other peers are done, ask them for help doing completing his work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before beginning your own work, make sure Brad has all of the materials he needs for the activity • When you are finished with your own work, check in to see if Brad could use some help finishing his own work or help double check his answers • Encourage Brad with lots of positive feedback! | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure Brad has the same materials as his classmates for the activity • Work with Brad on completing the activity in a modified way. Can Brad tell you the answer if you read it to him? If you gave him the answer, could he practice typing or writing it down on the worksheet? • Is there an alternative activity Brad could complete? • Let the peers know when they are doing a great job supporting Brad |

At the end of class...

| <i>Brad could...</i> | <i>Peers could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk quietly with his peers (if everyone's work is completed) • Collect any materials for Ms. Hale • Put away his things • Shut down his computer if he was taking notes in class | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask Brad about his day, what he is doing after school, or upcoming events • Help Brad put away his things • Walk with Brad to or part way to his next class | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure Brad has the same materials as classmates • Try to draw all peers at the table into conversation with Brad—you may have to do a little modeling to get things started |

Big Ideas for Peers

- Get to know him...ask lots of questions and find out what he enjoys
- Involve him in conversations with other classmates at your table—interacting with others is an important goal
- Look for opportunities to involve him in class activities, even in small ways
- Make sure you complete your own work; learning the class material is still your priority

Specific Ways to Offer Support

- When it is okay with the teacher—such as before the bell rings, when your own class work is finished, or at the end of class—talk with your partner. Some things he enjoys are country music, surfing the Internet, and _____. Some conversation starters could be...
 - “What did you do this weekend?”
 - “Have you seen any good television shows lately?”
 - “What are your plans for after school today?”
- Whenever you are doing an activity in class, make sure he has the same class materials that you do, such as a worksheet, book, paper, pencil, or lab materials. If you see that he doesn’t have something he needs, you can ask me or Ms. Hale. You can also simply share your materials with him...this is a great way to involve him in class.
- When the teacher is presenting a lecture or there is a whole class discussion, occasionally lean over and summarize the key point or interesting fact. You could also ask him periodic questions that help him follow along. For example:
 - “Ms. Hale is explaining the idea of _____. Do you think that _____?”
 - “Ms. Hale said that _____. Did you know that?”
- During labs or other activities you do as a group, try to find ways that your partner might contribute to the group’s work. Perhaps he can be in charge of marking the group’s answer on a worksheet, helping set up materials for the lab activity, or giving an answer or input into the activity. Some simple questions you can ask that might draw him in could be:
 - “What do you think about this question?”
 - “How would you like to help the group?”
- Some ideas for how you might draw him into working together:
 - “Could you help me out with...”
 - “Would you like to work together on this worksheet?”
 - “Let’s compare our notes and make sure we have everything down.”
 - “Let’s work together on this as a group...what part would you like to do?”
 - “Would you like to share my notes?”
- Whenever you feel like you are unsure of what to say or do, it is absolutely okay to ask me or Ms. Hale.

Some General Ideas for Supporting Your Classmate

- Walking with him from one class to the next
- Talking about his interests and things they do outside of school (when okay with the teacher)
- Helping keep his assignments and class materials organized
- Reminding him how to follow established classroom routines
- Helping him to pass out class materials
- Encouraging interactions with other students in the class
- Helping him check the accuracy of their assignments and class work
- Sharing notes or assisting them to take complete his notes
- Paraphrasing parts of lectures or rephrasing key ideas
- Encouraging him to answer a question or contribute an idea during class discussion
- Writing down answers he gives verbally or when using a communication device
- 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
- Helping him to “fit in” by learning accepted social norms
- Motivating and encouraging him when they get frustrated
- Encouraging him to use their communication device (if they have one)

Example Two of Peer Support Plan

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

At the beginning of class....

| <i>James could...</i> | <i>Peers could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk quietly with his peers • Pass out materials to the class (if there are any that day) • Listen and respond to Mr. Smith • Make music suggestions to play in class | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask James about his day or upcoming school events • Help James get any materials • Make sure James has all of the same materials for class • Help James get on his smock | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to draw some of the peers at the table into conversation with James—you may have to do a little modeling to get things started or give them ideas of things they could ask about (things James enjoys doing)...or prompt James to ask questions of his peers • Make sure James has the same materials as his classmates • Look through the materials to see if there are any things that could be adapted readily |

When there are lectures or whole group instruction...

| <i>James could...</i> | <i>Peers could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to Mr. Smith as he presents information to the class • Quietly ask his peers questions about the material Mr. Smith is presenting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure James has all of the same materials for the activity as they do • Occasionally lean over and quietly summarize a key point or interesting fact for James, or ask him simple questions to help him follow along • Encourage James with lots of positive feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always brainstorm ways James can be engaged in the discussion: Can he answer a question? Can he share an idea? • Encourage James to look at teacher during instruction • Let the peers know when they are doing a great job interacting with or supporting James—reinforce their efforts |

When there are small group or lab activities...

| <i>James could...</i> | <i>Peers could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to Mr. Smith as he presents instructions to the class • Participate in activity • Ask peers for help doing his part of the activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure James has all of the same materials for the activity as they do • Give James opportunities to make choices about or give input into his project • Even if James can't do all of his project, he can probably still do a part of it • Encourage James with lots of positive feedback! | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure James has the same materials as his classmates for the activity • Always brainstorm ways James can be engaged—even in small ways—in the activity: Can he be asked his opinion about a sculpture? • Give peers ideas for questions they can ask James or ways they can involve him—think creatively! • Let the peers know when they are doing a great job supporting James • Give James examples of questions he can ask his classmates |

When there is independent seatwork ...

| <i>James could...</i> | <i>Peers could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to Mr. Smith as she presents instructions to the class • Work with the facilitator to finish the worksheet or other activity • When other peers are done, ask them for help doing completing his work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before beginning your own work, make sure James has all of the materials he needs for the activity • When you are finished with your own work, check in to see if James could use some help finishing his own project or encourage conversation with him • Encourage James with lots of positive feedback! | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure James has the same materials as his classmates for the activity • Work with James on completing the activity in a modified way. Can James do the work with adaptations or minimal support? Is there a way to make it more interesting to his topics for him to complete it? Is there an alternative activity James could complete? • Let the peers know when they are doing a great job supporting James |

At the end of class...

| <i>James could...</i> | <i>Peers could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk quietly with his peers • Collect any materials for Mr. Smith • Put away his things | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask James about his day, what he is doing after school, or upcoming events • Help James put away his things • Walk with James to or part way to his next class | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure James has the same materials as classmates and can put them away with someone • Try to draw all peers at the table into conversation with James—you may have to do a little modeling to get things started |

Big Ideas for Peers

- Get to know him...ask lots of questions and find out what he enjoys
- Involve him in conversations with other classmates at your table—interacting with others is an important goal
- Look for opportunities to involve him in class activities, even in small ways
- Make sure you complete your own work; learning the class material is still your priority

Specific Ways to Offer Support

- When it is okay with the teacher—such as before the bell rings, when your own class work is finished, or at the end of class—talk with your partner. Some things he enjoys are country music, surfing the Internet, and _____. Some conversation starters could be...
 - “What did you do this weekend?”
 - “Have you seen any good television shows lately?”
 - “What are your plans for after school today?”
- Whenever you are doing an activity in class, make sure he has the same class materials that you do, such as a worksheet, book, paper, pencil, or lab materials. If you see that he doesn’t have something he needs, you can ask Mr. Smith or me. You can also simply share your materials with him...this is a great way to involve him in class.
- When the teacher is presenting a lecture or there is a whole class discussion, occasionally lean over and summarize the key point or interesting fact. You could also ask him periodic questions that help him follow along. For example:
 - “Mr. Smith is explaining the idea of _____. Do you think that _____?”
 - “Mr. Smith said that _____. Did you know that?”
- During labs or other activities you do as a group, try to find ways that your partner might contribute to the group’s work. Perhaps he can be in charge of marking the group’s answer on a worksheet, helping set up materials for the lab activity, or giving an answer or input into the activity. Some simple questions you can ask that might draw him in could be:
 - “What do you think about this sculpture?”
 - “How would you like to flatten the clay?”
- Some ideas for how you might draw him into working together:
 - “Could you help me out with...?”
 - “Would you like to work together on this slab?”
 - “Let’s ask Mr. Smith to find out what we could do next.”
 - “Let’s work together ...what part would you like to do?”
 - “Would you like to share my tool?”
- Whenever you feel like you are unsure of what to say or do, it is absolutely okay to ask me or Mr. Smith.

Some General Ideas for Supporting Your Classmate

- Walking with him from one class to the next
- Talking about his interests and things they do outside of school (when okay with the

teacher)

- Helping keep his assignments and class materials organized
- Reminding him how to follow established classroom routines
- Helping him to pass out class materials
- Encouraging interactions with other students in the class
- Helping him check the accuracy of their assignments and class work
- Sharing notes or assisting them to take complete his notes
- Paraphrasing parts of lectures or rephrasing key ideas
- Encouraging him to answer a question or contribute an idea during class discussion
- Writing down answers he gives verbally or when using a communication device
- 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
- Helping him to “fit in” by learning accepted social norms
- Motivating and encouraging him when they get frustrated
- Encouraging him to use their communication device (if they have one)

Example Three of Peer Support Plan

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

At the beginning of class....

| <i>Steve could...</i> | <i>Peers could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get out Alpha Smart and notes for note taking • Listen and respond to attendance • Chat with peers—ask questions about likes, dislikes, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompt Steve to get out materials • Ask Steve about weekend activities, likes, find common interests | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure materials are available: Alpha Smart and notes • Make sure Steve has conversation cards to prompt questions/conversation with peers |

When there are lectures or whole group instruction...

| <i>Steve could...</i> | <i>Peers could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type key concepts/words from overhead on Alpha Smart • Listen to teacher and type concepts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point out key words that are important that Steve can type into Alpha Smart • Direct Steve to look at the screen and read out loud what words to type • Check in/summarize concepts for Steve. "Wow, _____ is _____." | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure notes are out for Steve to follow along • Give positive feedback for Steve staying on task |

When there are small group or lab activities...

| <i>Steve could...</i> | <i>Peers could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steve could choose who in the group will go first or what question to answer first. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask Steve to help with a certain aspect of the project • Could he take notes on the Alpha Smart or fill in the answers on a worksheet? • Could he read the question out loud for everyone in the group? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure Steve understands the directions. Perhaps review a script with him. • Make sure appropriate materials are provided • Encourage Steve to participate. Let's do these five questions and then you can _____. • Try to keep Steve participating in the class for the whole period |

When there is independent seatwork ...

| <i>Steve could...</i> | <i>Peers could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circle choices • Work on completing work • Follow along with a peer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check work with Steve • "Let's review our papers to make sure we have everything we need." | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help Steve follow along on the worksheet or the questions • Make adaptations or give choices (<3) |

At the end of class...

| <i>Steve could...</i> | <i>Peers could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect his things and put them in his backpack • Chat with peers about favorite topics or use topic cards • Type favorite lists on Alpha Smart | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chat with Steve about where he goes next or his favorite topic • Ask Steve about his lists or rhyming words • Walk with Steve partially to next location | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure Steve puts away his materials • Make topic cards available |

Big Ideas for Peers

- Get to know him...ask lots of questions and find out what he enjoys
- Involve him in conversations with other classmates at your table—interacting with others is an important goal
- Look for opportunities to involve him in class activities, even in small ways
- Make sure you complete your own work; learning the class material is still your priority

Specific Ways to Offer Support

- When it is okay with the teacher—such as before the bell rings, when your own class work is finished, or at the end of class—talk with your partner.
 - “I went to _____ this weekend. I wonder if you went somewhere.....”
 - “What are your plans for after school today?”
 - Often times questions may overwhelm. Try rephrasing things as a fill in the blank or leave open ended.
- Whenever you are doing an activity in class, make sure he has the same class materials that you do, such as a worksheet, book, paper, pencil, or lab materials. If you see that he doesn’t have something he needs, you can ask me. You can also simply share your materials with him...this is a great way to involve him in class.
- When the teacher is presenting a lecture or there is a whole class discussion, occasionally lean over and summarize the key point or interesting fact. You could also ask him periodic questions that help him follow along. For example:
 - “Ms. Jones is explaining the idea of _____. Do you think that _____?”
 - “Ms. Jones said that _____. Let’s type/write that down.”
- During labs or other activities you do as a group, try to find ways that your partner might contribute to the group’s work. Perhaps he can be in charge of marking the group’s answer on a worksheet, helping set up materials for the lab activity, or giving an answer or input into the activity. Some simple questions you can ask that might draw him in could be:
 - “What do you think about this question?”
 - “How would you like to help the group? Do you want to do _____ or _____?”
 - “Help me by getting out the _____. By measuring _____.”
- Some ideas for how you might draw him into working together:
 - “Please help me out with...”
 - “Let’s work together on this worksheet.”
 - “Let’s compare our notes and make sure we have everything down.”
 - “Let’s work together on this as a group...what part would you like to do?”
 - “Here, you can share my notes.”

Some General Ideas for Supporting Your Classmate

- Walking with him from one class to the next
- Talking about his interests and things they do outside of school (when okay with the teacher)
- Helping keep his assignments and class materials organized

- Reminding him how to follow established classroom routines
- Helping him to pass out class materials
- Encouraging interactions with other students in the class
- Helping him check the accuracy of their assignments and class work
- Sharing notes or assisting them to take complete his notes
- Paraphrasing parts of lectures or rephrasing key ideas
- Encouraging him to answer a question or contribute an idea during class discussion
- Writing down answers he gives verbally or when using a communication device
- 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
- Helping him to “fit in” by learning accepted social norms
- Motivating and encouraging him when they get frustrated
- Encouraging him to use their communication device (if they have one)

Blank Peer Support Plan

At the beginning of class....

| <i>The student could...</i> | <i>Classmates could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • | • | • |

When there are lectures or whole group instruction...

| <i>The student could...</i> | <i>Classmates could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • | • | • |

When there are small group or lab activities...

| <i>The student could...</i> | <i>Classmates could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • | • | • |

When there is independent seatwork ...

| <i>The student could...</i> | <i>Classmates could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • | • | • |

At the end of class...

| <i>The student could...</i> | <i>Classmates could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • | • | • |

Initial Meeting Guide for Peer Supports

Purpose: The initial meeting is for peers to

- Discuss the goals of the peer supports arrangements
- Find out more about the student
- Learn strategies for support the student during class
- Share their ideas for increasing interaction with the student
- Ask questions

Your Role: As the facilitator you will

- Facilitate discussion by asking questions and sharing ideas
- Model how to respectfully talk about the student
- Answer any questions
- Provide some general information
- Help peers brainstorm strategies to support the student during class
- Set a relaxed tone for the meeting and make it fun and enjoyable for students as much as possible

To prepare for the meeting:

- Complete and copy the *Peer Support Plan* for the class
- Bring this notebook to the meeting including: *Meeting Checklist* form

Complete the *Meeting Checklist* during the meeting. This form will be collected from the coach following the meeting. The following elements should be addressed during the orientation meeting

1. Introductions

Start with introductions

- Introduce yourself and your role with the focus student
- Have students introduce themselves and share how well they know the focus student

2. Rationale for Peers Supports Strategies

Start by sharing with the students some of the overall goals of the peer supports arrangement:

- Increase the number of peers a student knows and interacts with in class
- Increase the involvement of the student in classroom activities
- Encourage the student to receive some support from peers rather than always turning to adults for help
- Help the students become more independent in class

- Provide an intentional way for a student to meet new people and, hopefully, make new friends
- Provide peers a chance to get to know and interact with the student on a regular basis
- Help develop relationships that will last beyond the semester
- Help the students become more independent in class

Share the rationale for involving classmates rather than only relying on adult support:

- Students do not want to only interact with adults at school
- Students often learn best from each other

Ask peers: What do you think are some of the benefits of being a peer support?

Some possible responses are listed below:

- Learn about someone whom you may not know much about and potentially develop a new friendship
- Become more confident in interacting with classmates with disabilities
- Learn from the strengths of the student and other peer supports
- Help create a more inclusive environment in the classroom
- Learn the class material in a new way by providing support to a classmate

3. Background about the Student

Ask peers what they already know about the student. Below is some additional information that you might share with them. Do not share confidential information with peers such as information about the student's diagnosis, personal information, or IEP information. Keep information very general.

- Share strengths and interests of the student (e.g. what does he like to talk about? What does she like to do?)
- Share what is enjoyable about interacting with this student
- Provide peers with ideas of how they might interact with the student
- Instead of providing diagnostic information or other personal information of the student that is not specifically relevant to the peer support arrangement, share with the peers characteristics about the student that are relevant to their interactions.
 - e.g. "Sometimes Jack does not look at you when he talks to you; this does not mean he is not interested or listening." or "Occasionally Alexis will keep talking about the same topic. If you want to talk about something else, you can change the topic like you would with any other friend."
- Let students know if an interaction seems challenging, think about how you would respond to another classmate who was acting that way and then decide if that is an appropriate way to respond to this situation

4. General Goals in this Class

Share with the peer supports general social and learning goals for the student such as:

- To converse more with peers and to strengthen social communication skills
- To be more involved in class activities

- To get to know other classmates
- To use his/her communication device
- To make choices

5. Confidentiality and Respectful Language

Ask students: What information about the student do you think is okay to share with others?

The following tips may be helpful to share with peers:

- When answering questions from others about the student, consider what you would want shared, or not shared, about yourself
- Information about a student's strengths or interests can be shared in an appropriate social situation
 - e.g. "Oh Vanessa you like that movie too, right?" or "Johnny might be able to help you with that video game, he's really good at it"
- If discussing the student with another peer support, be sure to do so in a private area where others will not hear your conversation
- If you have friends who are interested in interacting with the student, introduce them to the student as you would any other friend
- If you are not sure how to answer someone's questions or handle a particular situation, you can always talk to me about it

6. Expectations Specific to the Classroom

- Discuss general expectations such as:
 - Sitting together during class
 - Supporting the student during class activities
 - Introducing the student to other classmates
 - Working together with other peer supports
 - Completing their own schoolwork
 - Talking with the facilitator about any challenges, questions or concerns

7. Peer Support Strategies

Provide students with the *Peer Supports Plan* handout to review specific to supporting the student. Collect this handout at the end of the meeting.

- Discuss specific strategies related to supporting student during various classroom activities using the *Peer Supports Plan*
- Ask peers for their ideas and add them to the plan

A. Technology and Communication Systems (if applicable)

If a student has limited communication, ask peers:

- Have you talked to (the student) before?
- What do you know about how (the student) communicates?

Then provide further information to peers about the student's communication:

- If the student uses an augmentative communication device (Picture Exchange Communication System [PECS], sign language, or voice output system) share this

information with peer supports and make sure they understand how this communication system works. Ask the students for ideas of phrases that could be programmed into the student's device for social interactions or related to classwork.

- If the student is verbal, but has limited language, talk about what the student can and cannot say. Give some ideas for talking with the student such as saying hi, giving a hi-five, or other appropriate social gesture, or asking questions to which the student knows an answer.

B. Promoting Class Participation

To encourage participation of the student, peers can:

- Clarify assignments to student
- Restate instructions
- Assist student in locating needed materials
- Share notes

C. Promoting Interactions with Classmates

To encourage interactions with other classmates, peers can:

- Say hi to the student
- Ask the student how her or she is doing
- Ask the student to work with you during a group project
- Give complements, high fives or knuckles, or share jokes
- Introduce the student to some of your friends

D. Student Motivation and Feedback

Peers can encourage positive behaviors of the student in the classroom by:

- Providing the student with praise and positive feedback for positive behaviors as they would to other classmates (e.g. "wow, you smoked that assignment!").
 - Focus on giving more positive than negative feedback
 - Always start with positive feedback before offering suggestions
 - Offer suggestions ("You could try...") rather than directives ("Do this")
- Responding to the challenging behaviors displayed by the student as you would another classmate. If the behavior continues, ignore the behavior and continue with your schoolwork. Your role is not to manage behavior; the facilitator will provide this support.

8. When to Seek Assistance

- If you have questions, please come talk to me. The best time to find me would be (before or after class, during class, etc.)
- I will check in with you throughout the week to see how things are going
- As the peer support, your role is not any of the following:
 - To be the teacher
 - Manage behavior
 - Anything that they feel uncomfortable with

9. Discussion and Questions

Find out if peers have any questions about their new roles. Consider asking the following questions:

- What are you excited about?
- What are your concerns?
- What do you hope to gain from this experience?
- What questions do you have for me?
- Let students know how they can contact you to talk about any ongoing questions or concerns.

10. What Happens Next

Explain to students what should happen next:

- In class, I will introduce you and the student and remind you to sit next to each other
- During transition times in class, talk to the student
- Remind the student of what he or she should be doing, when needed
- Ask the student if he or she needs help
- I will check in with you throughout class
- I also may model some strategies we talked about today
- Please feel free to ask me questions before class, after class, or during a transition time in the classroom

Initial Meeting Checklist

Facilitator: _____ Focus Student: _____
Date: _____ Peer Supports: _____

- Rationale for peer supports strategies
- Background about focus student
- General goals
- Confidentiality and respectful language
- Expectations specific to the classroom (drawing from *Peer Support Plan*)
- Peer support strategies relevant to the student including communication system (if applicable), promoting class participation, promoting interactions with classmates and student motivation and feedback.
- Guidance on when to seek assistance from educators or paraprofessionals
- Additional roles and responsibilities:

- Questions or concerns of peer supports (write these below)

Checking in with and Supporting Students

Purpose: checking-in and supporting students is needed to:

- Monitor and provide ongoing support to students in class
- Determine how current strategies are working and what may or may not need to be changed about peer support strategies

Your Role: As the facilitator you will

- Monitor peer support arrangements throughout class
- Provide support and feedback, as needed, to students in the classroom
- Facilitate interactions between students as needed and fade support over time
- Observe the peer support arrangements during the entire class weekly and complete *Checklist for Monitoring Peer Support Arrangements* (these will be collected at the end of the semester)
- Check-in with peer supports and student at least one time per week

Materials needed:

- This notebook, including:
 - *Peer Support Plan* for student
 - *Facilitation Strategies* handout

Getting Started

Prior to starting peer supports in the classroom, be sure to:

- Decide with the teacher when the student and peer support(s) begin to sit next to each other in class
- Let the student know in advance that a new classmate will be sitting next to him or her in class and that student is available help him or her with class activities

On the first day of implementing peer supports:

- Introduce the students if they do not already know each other
- Remind students to sit next to one another
- Start a conversation by sharing something that both students are interested in
- Model appropriate language and strategies for peer supports
- Make sure that everyone has the right materials (notes, communication device, etc.)
- Remain close by as students begin working together. It may take time for students to feel comfortable and confident working with one another.
- When appropriate, begin to step back and observe the students working together (watch the students and wait before interacting with them)

- If students are not interacting with each other after a while, use a facilitation strategy that is appropriate to the activity
- If students are interacting with one another, continue to observe and provide positive feedback to both students about the interactions at the end of class
- Check with students after class to see if they have questions
- During class you can also find natural times, such as transitions, to check in with students

Fading Adult Support

As peers begin supporting the student, continue to fade your direct involvement with the student during class and instead observe the peer supports arrangements and consider what other strategies or supports could help the student become more independent in the classroom.

Consider for the student for each activity:

Can the student do it:

- On his or her own?
- If given the right technology or adaptive equipment?
- If provided with some additional skill instruction?
- If shown how to use basic self-management strategies?
- With help from his or her peer support?
- With help from another classmate?
- With help from someone else in the environment?
- With occasional help from a paraprofessional or special educator?
- With ongoing help from a paraprofessional or a special educator?

For some students, peers may begin supporting them successful in the classroom very quickly. For others, this will be a gradual process where they may still need some direct support from you and some direct support from peers. Remember, the goal is for the student to be as independent as possible while participating in classroom activities and interacting with classmates.

One time per week, observe the peer support arrangements and complete the *Checklist for Monitoring Peer Support Arrangements*. Use this form to consider if peer supports are adequately supporting the student and what further support you could provide to peers. Check-in with students a few times per week to see how things are going.

Examples of Check-in Questions

Ask student:

- Do you like working with (names of peer supports)?
- What things do you do together?
- What do they do that you like?
- Is there anything they do that you don't like?
- Is there something they can do to help you?
- How can you help your classmates?

- What things in class are going well?
- What things in class are not going well?

Ask peer supports:

- What things have been going really well?
- What things have not been going well?
- Are you enjoying being a peer support? Why or why not?
- Do you feel comfortable with your role?
- Do you feel that your role is important?
- Have you noticed any changes in the student?
- What strategies do you find helpful?
- What strategies are not helpful?
- Are there new strategies that you have discovered?

You can talk to the coach from the project team at any time to discuss any concerns you encounter.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if students are talking too much during class (e.g., during lecture, instruction or tests)?

If students' talking is disruptive to class, you can provide feedback immediately (quietly remind students of class rules) or, if the talking is not interrupting class, remind students of class rules at a later time. If peer supports are concerned about how to support the student during times when talking may be disruptive, brainstorm ideas with the students about non-verbal strategies that can be used to remind the student what he or she should be doing during that time.

What if the student becomes too "attached" to one peer?

If the student becomes too attached to one peer, this may be a good opportunity to have the other peer supports provide more support and fade the support of that particular peer. This is one of the benefits of having more than one peer support. Also, the peer who the student is attached to could begin introducing the student to other classmates and encouraging him or her to engage with new people. Remind the peer who the student is attached to that he or she should respond to the student as he/she would to other peers who behaved the same way.

What if students are not interacting?

If students are not interacting, refer to the facilitation strategies and use strategies to facilitate interactions between students. If students are still not interacting, it is important to find out why. Talk to the peer supports and student to find out what is inhibiting interactions (Are they not sure how to interact? Are they not sure when to interact? Do they not like interacting with each other?). Then remind students of the goals and rationale for the peer supports and brainstorm ideas to overcome these barriers.

What if students are absent?

This is a good reason to have more than one peer support in the classroom. If one peer support is absent, the student can still receive support from the other peer. If all peer supports are absent, see if the student can sit next to a different peer. You may need to provide more support during class but see if the other peers around the student naturally begin to support him or her as the peer supports do. If the student is absent, see if peers can provide him or her with copies of assignments and touch base at another time with the student about what was missed in class (as they would another classmate).

What if one student is dominating the conversation?

If a student is dominating the conversation, you can use the facilitation strategies to facilitate opportunities for other students to contribute to the conversation. Peers of the student should also be encouraged to respond as they naturally would to any other classmate who was dominating the conversation. Lastly, if this problem still persists after implementing other strategies, you may need to practice appropriate conversation skills with the student outside of class.

Can modifications be made to the student's assignment/classroom activities?

Yes, modifications can be made to assignments and class activities as needed to increase the student's participation and success in the classroom. If modifications are needed, this should be discussed with the general education and special education teachers to determine what modifications would be most appropriate for the student.

If I am not directly working with the student during class, am I doing my job?

The goal of additional support for students is so they can appropriately engage in classroom activities and learn. Often times, having an adult work one-on-one with a student is the first support provided. However, rather than immediately providing direct support, adults should first look to see if students can be supported in other ways. We should first consider what activities the student can do without support. Then we should consider what the student can do with adaptive equipment, additional instruction, or self-management systems. The next supports to be considered should be help from peers in the classroom. If a student cannot be successful with those supports, then the adult may need to provide additional support directly to the student. However, the goal is for the student to become more independent, so adults working with that student should always be considering how to fade support. Simply because an adult is not working directly with a student, does not mean that individual is not providing appropriate support to that student. Often the most appropriate supports can be provided indirectly from adults, rather than directly.

Peer Support Weekly Meeting Checklist

Student: _____ School: _____
 Facilitator: _____ Coach: _____ Date: _____

Peer Supports Present: _____

Circle Y (yes) or N (no) based on whether or not these behaviors occurred during the observation. **Complete one time per week and provide to your intervention coach.**

1. **Y N** Are peer supports in **close proximity** to the student during class?
 Y N Do the students sit next to each other?
 N/A Y N Do the students remain in close proximity during out-of-seat class activities?
 N/A Y N During group activities, do the students join the same group?
 Other notes about proximity? _____

When does proximity occur during class (circle all that apply): Beginning Middle End

2. **Y N** Are peer supports **interacting** with the student in class?
 Y N Do they greet the student (e.g. "Hi" or "see you later")?
 Y N Do students engage in conversation?
 Y N Do peer supports include the focus student in interactions with other peers?
 Other notes about interactions? _____

When do interactions occur during class (circle all that apply): Beginning Middle End

3. **Y N** Are peer supports assisting the focus student **academically**?
 Y N Do the peer supports help the student participate in class activities?
 Y N Do peer supports repeat or rephrase instructions for the student?
 Y N Are peer supports appropriately prompting the focus student?
 Y N Do peer supports provide appropriate feedback to the focus student?
 Y N Do students work together on classroom activities?
 Y N Do students share work materials?
 Other notes about academic assistance? _____

When do support behaviors occur during class (circle all that apply): Beginning Middle End

4. **Y N** Are **you (facilitator) supporting** peer supports and the target student?
 Y N Do you facilitate interactions during class when appropriate?
 Y N Do you provide reminders/feedback to peer supports before, during, or after class?
 Y N Do you provide praise and feedback to students during or outside of class?
 Other notes about supporting students? _____

Examples of feedback to give peer supports:

- "Matt really appreciates it when you ask him about his weekend."
- "Lily might not always respond to questions, but she loves connecting with you and other students. If you give her a bit of time to answer and she still doesn't, you can ask her the question again."
- "You do a great job always sharing your notes with Kelsey."

Feedback you gave, or will give, to peer supports: _____

