

# The Power of Peers

## Using Peer Support Networks to Enhance Communication

### Peer Support Strategies



Thoughts/Questions/Ideas

What are the differences?	Peer Networks	Peer Support Arrangements
What is the focus?	Social interactions and friendships	Classroom engagement, learning, and social interactions
How many peers?	3-6 peers	2-3 peers
Who facilitates?	Any school staff A community member	Paraprofessional, special educator, classroom teacher
When do they meet?	Weekly for 30 minutes – during lunch, advisory, clubs, and other non-instructional times	Every class period for the entire class in the general education classroom

### Peer Networks:

#### What is a Peer Network

A social-focused group established around a student with a significant disability that:

<b>Meets Weekly to</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk</li> <li>Participate in shared activities</li> <li>Discuss interactions occurring outside of the group</li> </ul>	<b>Encourages the student to</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Become more involved in everyday school life</li> <li>Be more connected to other school activities</li> </ul>	<b>Is provided (by a facilitator)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular feedback</li> <li>Guidance</li> </ul>
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#### Basic Steps (Peer Networks)

- Identify interested students with a disability
- Identify a peer network facilitator
- Identify and invite 3-6 peers to join the group
- Hold an initial orientation meeting with the peers (and possibly the target student)
- 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 upon, fade support, and maintain the network

To Learn More: Carter, Armus, et al. (2013)

#### Peer Network Ideas

- When might this occur? What activities might occur?
- Who might be involved?
- How can I support this?

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### Peer Support Arrangements:

**What are Peer Support Arrangements?**

One or more peers without disabilities working together with classmates with disabilities as a community of learners supporting each other academically and socially

Peers...

- Support participation in class activities
- Provide frequent feedback and encouragement
- Model communication and other skills
- Support learning by assisting with understanding of task directions and work completion
- Promote interaction with other classmates

To Learn More: Carter, Hogg, et al. (in press)

**Basic Steps (Peer Supports)**

1. Identifying students with disabilities who need assistance to participate in class activities
2. Recruiting peers from within the same classroom to help provide some of these supports
3. Arranging for students to sit next to each other
4. Orienting peers to their roles, explaining the rationale for their involvement, and showing them basic support strategies
5. Providing ongoing feedback and assistance to peers and their partners throughout the semester
6. Shifting paraprofessionals to a broader support role in which they assist all students as appropriate

**Peer Support Arrangements**

4. In what classes might this occur?
5. Who might be involved?
6. How can I support this?

### Peer Support Plan

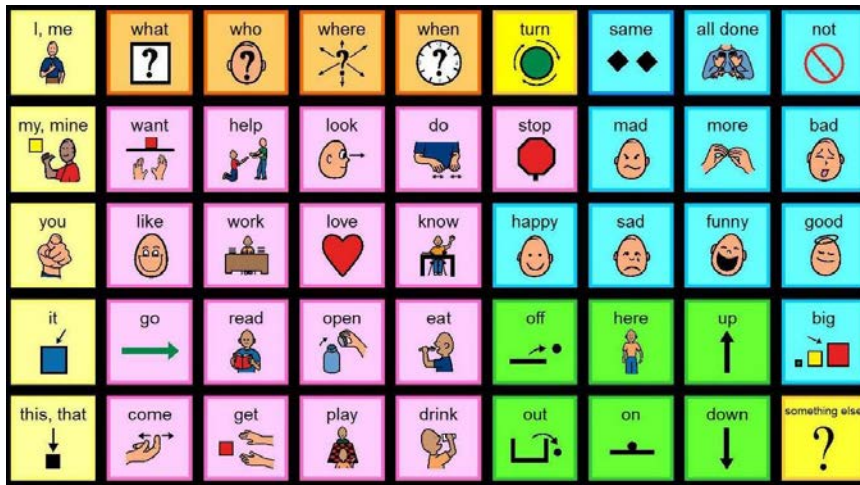
At the beginning of class		
Target student could...	Peers could...	Facilitator could...
During lecture/whole group instruction		
Target student could...	Peers could...	Facilitator could...
During small group instruction		
Target student could...	Peers could...	Facilitator could...

# The Power of Peers

## Using Peer Support Networks to Enhance Communication

### Communication Strategies

What does a Core Board look like?



Considerations:

- Word use opportunities
- Organization on the board
  - Left to right mirrors sentence construction
- Color coding
- Universal design of the board-
  - black background
  - position of symbols
- Deconstructed boards
  - Maintain symbol position

Core Implementation Strategies

**Aided Language Modeling**

**Partner Assisted Scanning**

**Core Boards for Everyone**

**Core Word of the Week**

**Family Implementation**

Communication is multi-model

- WE ALL use facial expressions, gestures, signs, spelling, in addition to speech to communicate a message.
- The Core Board is just ONE mode and should be used with other modes.
- Do NOT require the student to use it if they have other understandable modes.
- Model the use of the board through conversation.