Classwide Peer Tutoring a Wok

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Wanted: An effec tive ins truc-tional method for.heterog e neous groups of stud en ts who function at highly va.ried sk ill leve ls . Method 111 ust be cost-effecrive and user-friendly and must keep my students actively involved.

Are these req uirements too mu.ch to e;,cpect from any one ins tructional met hod? Although no one method can address *all* ins truc tiona l nee ds, slrong researc h sup port exists for class- wide peer tutoring (see boxes, " What Does the Lite rature Say?" and "PALS Reading Results") .

This article provides help for an y teacher interested i.n improving student learning-for *all* students, both wit.h and without disabilities. What are the s te ps for class room use of classwide peer tutaring ?

Guidelines for Implementi Classwide Peer Tutoring

Figure 1 list s 9 gene ral g uidelines for beginning to im plement classwide peer tutoring. These guidelines will help you prepare stud en ts with minimal experi-ence to work in collaborative dyads effec tively.

Once stud ents are familiar wit11 tJ1e procedures, select t.he op tim a l content to be covered. It makes sense to start with simple drill and practice of letter sou nds, spelling words, vocabulary words and definitions, or mat.h facts before progressing to higher-order areas. We recommend attempting a transition to more challenging content only after students .have become profi-cient with tutoring procedures. This provides time to "work the bugs out "-particularly related to logistics (e.g., smoothly transit ioning to pairs) or social-skill issues t.hat may emerge.

Figure 2 shows a sa mple script you cou ld use for peer turoring in spelling .

Preparing and Selecting Classroom Materials

You can use classwide peer tutoring with either sta ndardi zed, commerciall y pre pa red materials or teache r-made materials. Selecting materials o f the proper difficulty level is key. If mat ed als are sell-cor recting (e.g., flash ca rds with the answers available) studen ts may be paired, regardless of sk ill levels. In phys-ical ed ucation, stud ents ca n co mpa re their partner's stance or body posiLio n with a written standard that shows observable s teps for the correct posi-tion s. For reading, effec tive gu:ided-prac-

Serving in the role of tutor seems lo be parli,ulorly benefidal lor improved sell-esteem ol students with low atl,ievement.

Figure I • l111ple111entatlon Guidelines

1. Explain the purpose and rationale for th.e technique . Stress the idea of increased opportunities for practice and "on-task" behavior.
2. Stress collaboration and cooperation rather than competition.
3. Select the content and inslructional materials for tutoring sessions.
4. Train students in the roles of tutor and tutee. Include specific procedures for (a) feedback for correct res ponses, (b) error correction procedures, and (c) score-keeping.
5. Mode l appropriate behaviors for tutor and tutee. Demonstrate acceptable ways to give and accept corrective feedback.
6. Provide sample scripts for student practice of roles. Divid e the class into practice pairs and teams.
7. Let pairs practice roles of tutor as teacher circulates, provides fee dback, a nd reinforcement .
8. Conduct further discussion regarding const ructi.ve and nonconstructive pair behavior. Answer questions and problem-solve as needed .
9. Let pairs swi tch roles and practice new roles as teacher circulates and pro-vides feedback, and reinforcement. Repeat Step 8.

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tice activities could include word lists or passages that contain previou s ly le a rned words.

Clearly, we want our students to develop int rins ic motivation for reading and other school tasks, which is more likely to occur as students im prove their skills and self-co nfidence. Yet, you may iind extrinsic mot ivato rs, such as points, helpful for some students (e.g., those with long histories of reading fai l-ure or those with auemion deficit/ l1yperactivity disorder or emotional / behavioral disorders). You might award srudems points not o nly for correct responses, but also for effort and for appropriate collabo rative behaviors, to level the playing field for s tudents with disab ilities. Figure 3 pre se nts a short case study and sa mp le sc ript, with ada pta tion s for a s tudent with behav-ioraJ di sor ders.

Making Assignments to Pairs

Some researchers sugges t th a t te ach- ers ma ke *rand om* student partner assignments, whereas others say that teachers should pair students after pretes ting s tud e111 s kill level s. One sys- tematic method for pairing includes ranking students by achieve ment (high to low), dividing the list in two, and pairing the first student in List 1 with the firs t student in Lis t 2.

Pay particular attention to social inte ractio n. If two s tude nts are mat ched by following the split-list procedure, yet are socially incompa ti-ble, it may be prudent to pair them with more amenable parmers.

You may also wish to crea te week- ly or biweekJy teams from the pairings for a friend ly class competitio n. Keep in mind that some students will be suf-ficien tly intrinsically motivated with the academic and sociaJ benefits of class-wide peer tutoring, to preclude the need for additional reinforcers or for team competition. You should rely on stu-denrs' in trinsic morivation when ever possible and to "fade, " or decrease, the use of e xtrinsic motivators as soon they are no longer needed. When you do use teams, however, rotating pair and team membership frequenrly should encour-age active participation of all members and increase opportunmes t.o win.

Figure 2. Spelllng-Sample Steps

Students workl11g on the same spelling words are assigned to pairs. The "coach" should be able to read the definitions to check accuracy.

1. All students neatly write their spelling words on separate 3 x 5-inch cards. Words are checked against models for accuracy. Students write the defini-tions of the wor,ds on the flip side of the cards, as needed.
2. The coach prompts the player to spell a word either oraJly (e.g., "Spell jar-gon") or in print (e.g., "Write jargon' ').
3. The player repeats the word and then s pells ("jargon: j-a-r-j-o-n.)
4. The coach provides feedback for an incorrect oraJ response (" No, jargon is spe lled ... j-a-r-g-o-n. Now you spe ll it").
S. The player repeats the correct spelling and the coach reinforces with ..That 's right."
6. Or the coach prompts the player to compare his or her spelling to tJ1e correct model (" No, jargon is spelled j-a-r-g-o-n. Now you spell it").
7. The coach asks for the definition ("What does jargon mea n?") and provides appropriate feedback for either a correct or incorrect response.
8. The s tude nts switch roles and repeat the process in their new roles.

Figure 3. Case Study with Sample Script for Providing Feedback

Meet Joe, a bright sixth-grader with behavior disorders. Predictably, Joe has poor sociaJ skills and does not accept correction gracefully. Ms. K. wanted to preven t Joe from becoming defensive following his tutor's corrections, which Joe might try to escalate into an argument. Joe has a goal on bis individualized education program (TEP) abour accepting correction without becoming argu- mentative.

Ms. K. carefully selected Ben as a partner for Joe, because Ben is good-natured and dependable. As tbe pair practiced giving and responding to feed□ back, Ms. K. emp hasized the importance of staying with the following feedback script.

1. Following a correct response, the tutor says, "Yes, that's right."
2. Following an incorrect response, the tutor says, " Nice try, but tbe correct answer (or word) is_ . Now you say it. Good job!"
3. Because Joe needs frequent reinforcement, after every third response, the tutor says, "Good job! You're really working hard today."
4. Joe is awarded a separate token reinforcer, per his behavior management plan, for staying on task and completing the tutoring session without arguing.

Student Training

Don' t forget to provide adequat e stu-dent training before you begin a class-wide peer tutoring program. Here are some helpfuJ tips:

- Teach the studen ts abou t the rationale and purpose of the model (i.e., "'to help each other learn "). If you plan ro use points and ream com petitions, emphasize collabora tion ra tJ1e r than competition (i.e., "When we help each other, everyone wins").
- Model and discuss appropriate ways to provide corrective feedback. In an inclusive classroom or in other set-tings with two adults (teache r and ass is tan t), you may want to use short skirs to demonstrate examples and nonexamples of a ppropriate soc ial behaviors. Role-playing with prepared sc ripts is anot her effective method of demonstrating positive ways for peers to interact with their paru1ers. The goaJ here is to prevent stud ents from becoming aggressive or demeaning lo their partners. The teac her may target

What Does the Literature Say About Classwide Peer Tutoring?

Classwide peer tutoring has many advantages for implementation in inclusive or resource classes, as follows:

- Students with learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral disabilities, and mild mental retardation, as well as students at risk for failure or those with limited English proficiency, have benefited from the strategy.
- Teachers can use classwide peer tutoring across subject areas, not only in the basic skill areas of reading and math, but also in subjects such as science, social studies, physical education, foreign languages, and health/safety.
- This strategy keeps students actively involved and "on-task." Optimal use of the strategy includes "guided practice" activities that maximize students' active engagement with course content.
- The model has improved on early peer-tutoring models by specifying that *members of each tutoring pair will alternate in roles of tutor and tutee.* In inclusive settings, teachers often pair students with disabilities with their peers without disabilities; in resource or self-contained classes, students with disabilities can tutor one another successfully. Serving in the role of tutor seems to be particularly beneficial for improved self-esteem of students with low achievement, and all participants have the opportunity to improve their social skills. In addition, students with "mild" disabilities, as well as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and autism, generally respond positively to the structured format of classwide peer tutoring and the increased opportunity to respond and get immediate corrective feedback.
- Nearly two decades of research have supported the strategy as effective. Researchers at the Juniper Gardens Children's Project developed the original classwide peer tutoring model. Two-year and 12-year classroom follow-up studies indicated that classwide peer tutoring led to faster, more effective student learning outcomes than did teacher-mediated instruction (Greenwood & Delquadri, 1995; Greenwood, Terry, Utley, Montagna, & Walker, 1993). Further, at-risk first-graders who received a classwide peer tutoring intervention in spelling, math, and reading demonstrated long-term benefits, compared to students in control groups, with fewer referrals to special services and lower dropout rates in the 11th grade.

students, such as Joe (see Figure 3) for whom additional practice and supervision of the social skills aspects of the model is warranted.

- Pay close attention to logistics. People frequently overlook this component. More specifically, students should practice gathering materials, moving to their partners, and getting ready to work quickly and quietly.
- Demonstrate the role of "tutor" so that students learn how to ask questions and deliver content, appropriately. Delivering positive feedback and correction should be reviewed, practiced, and reinforced. Ensure that you accurately assign points when you use points and teams. Students must understand that learning the content and spending quality time on task is more important than accumulating points. In short, provide sufficient guided practice until students are fluent with the model's procedures.

Implementation in the Classroom

Classwide peer tutoring sessions are generally 15-30 minutes in length, depending on the content. Ideally, students will smoothly proceed into assigned pairs with all necessary materials. The session begins when the tutor asks a question, points to a content item or flash card, or assigns a reading passage. Next, the tutee responds to the presented item orally or with paper and pencil as necessary. For a correct response, the tutor provides verbal reinforcement ("That's right!") and awards points, on a schedule selected by the teacher. For example, three correct answers may be worth 1 point. When the response is incorrect, the tutor provides the correct response, and the tutee practices the correct response. After 10 minutes, students switch roles for a second 10-minute session. The teacher is responsible for keeping track of time, circulating among the pairs to monitor implementation, and awarding additional points. At the end of the session, points are tallied.

At the end of the week, the second-place team may provide a silent cheer for the first-place team and vice versa. New partner assignments are made. Because of this rotation, students are given more opportunity to be on the "winning" team. Students with disabilities also have genuine opportunities to become contributing members of their teams. Posttests and content assessments are given separately from the classwide peer tutoring sessions.

Reading Model Implementation

To use peer tutoring in reading instruction, employ the pair assignments and motivational procedures described previously. Reading activities consist of three areas: passage reading with partners, paragraph shrinking or telling the main idea, and prediction relay (see box, "PALS Reading Results"). Due to the increased content demands, tutoring sessions may need to be increased to 35 minutes.

Partner Reading

In partner reading, the more-proficient reader begins oral reading for 5 minutes. The less-proficient reader performs as tutor or "coach." The students then switch roles. The less-proficient reader has heard the material read, and should have less difficulty now with the material.

Errors are pointed out during the reading. The tutor points to the misread word, and states, "You missed this word. Can you figure it out?" If the reader correctly identifies the word, the tutor asks for a rereading of the sentence. If the reader cannot identify the word, the tutor provides it. Self-corrections are not counted as errors. Errors consist of omissions, additions, or waiting over 4 seconds to supply the word. Points may be awarded as desired (e.g., for correctly read sentences, self-corrections, and effort).

Second, students use retelling activities to improve reading comprehension. Following reading, the students retell what they have read for 2 minutes. The tutor prompts the reader by asking, "What did you learn first? Second?" The tutor may assist the reteller as necessary. After 2 minutes, the students switch roles. Ten points are awarded if the partners believe they put forth a good effort.

PALS Reading Results

Recent studies involving large-scale applications of classwide peer tutoring have demonstrated that this type of instruction is more effective for improving students' reading achievement than traditional reading classes. More specifically, researchers at Vanderbilt's Peabody College developed a peer-assisted learning strategies (PALS) reading intervention and validated the model in urban schools in Grades 2-6 (Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, & Simmons, 1997). Daily PALS sessions consisted of three strategic reading activities designed to improve reading fluency and comprehension, as follows:

1. *Partner reading with retell*—The "reader" (or tutee) reads aloud, receiving immediate corrective feedback for word-calling errors.
2. *Paragraph shrinking*—The reader states the main idea (i.e., who or what the passage was about); gives a 10-word summary; and provides a sequential retelling of the important events of the passage.
3. *Prediction relay*—The students predict what is likely to happen next in the passage. In addition, arranging for the stronger readers in each pair to read first, provides an opportunity for the weaker readers to preview the passage and review difficult words before it is their turn to read.

More recently, researchers extended the strategy to a first-grade PALS program for beginning readers that combined phonological skill training with the three-step comprehension strategy described here (Mathes, Grek, Howard, Babyak, & Allen, 1999). Sessions began with student practice in letter sounds, word segmenting, and sound blending. Second, students engaged in "pretend" reading (i.e., making predictions based on story illustrations). Third, students alternated roles of reader and coach to allow repeated readings of simple passages. The session concluded with story-sequence retelling (e.g., "What happened first? Next?")

Teachers and students alike have been enthusiastic about their use of classwide peer tutoring. Teachers often report that students improve academic skills, on-task behaviors, and social skills. Students comment that they enjoy both playing the role of the teacher and receiving extra help with their skills.

Paragraph Shrinking

Paragraph shrinking is a strategy designed to improve reading comprehension. Students are instructed to identify who or what the paragraph is about (subject) and summarize the main idea (e.g., What happened to the important who or what) in 10 words or less.

You may create samples or select models of student summaries to help tutors decide whether specific summations are accurate. If after two tries, the reader is incorrect, the tutor provides the answer and roles are exchanged. Tutors award 1 point each for identifying the subject, stating the main idea, and summarizing in 10 words or less.

Prediction Relay

To implement prediction relay, use larger portions of connected text. Students take turns predicting what will likely happen in the next half-page of text. After the text is read, the student sum-

Read More About Classwide Peer Tutoring...

Articles

Bullock, L. M., & Fitzsimons-Lovett, A. (1999). Meeting the needs of children and youth with challenging behaviors. *Reaching Today's Youth, 3,* 56-62.

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Books

Fuchs, D., Mathes, P. G., & Fuchs, L. S. (1995). *Peabody peer assisted learning strategies (PALS): Reading methods.* Nashville, TN: Peabody College, Vanderbilt University.*

Web sites

http://www.lsi.ukans.edu/jg/Abst-Resp.htm
The sustainability of classwide peer tutoring: An effective instructional intervention for students with disabilities in inclusive and special education classroom settings.

http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/9/c018.html
Northwest Regional Education Laboratory School Improvement Research Series.

http://www.cgcs.org/services/whatworks/achievement/p25.htm
Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) in Reading.

http://www.dundee.ac.uk/psychology/kjtopping/pal.htm
Peer Assisted Learning.

http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/reading/peer_assisted.html
Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies in Reading.

http://www.lsi.ukans.edu/~tech%20grant/CWPTLMS/ProjectInfo/blueprint.htm
A document for those considering the CWPT-LMS for their school.

http://www.itma.vt.edu/Abingdon/sword/portfolio/research.htm
Anne Sword's Educational Research.

marizes the half-page using the "10 word rule" and predicts what the next half-page will be about. Students switch roles after 5-minute blocks, and the responsibilities of the tutor are the same as for the first two activities. One point is awarded for each correctly completed activity.

Final Thoughts

Do you want not only effective but *cost-effective* instructional techniques? Try the proven classwide peer tutoring procedures developed by Juniper Gardens Children's Project or the Peabody PALS reading procedures. These methods provide effective ways to actively involve students of diverse skill levels in inclusion as well as resource settings, and have additional benefits for students' self-esteem and improved social skills.

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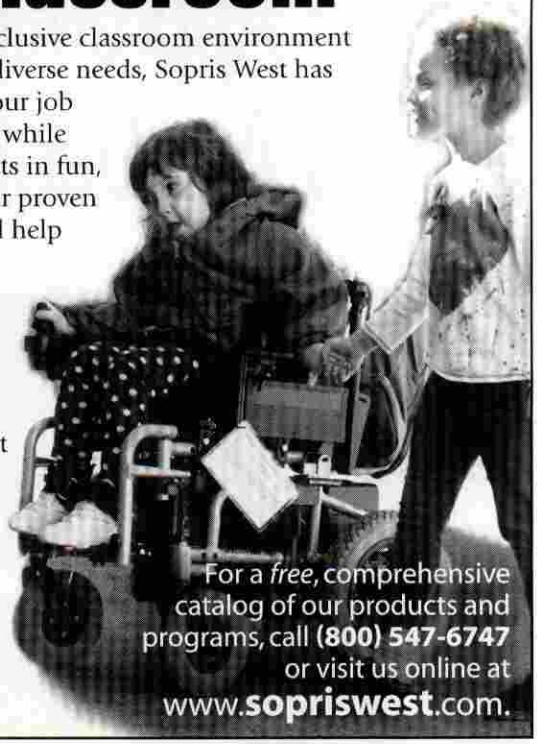

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