

ED289949 1987-12-00 Peer Helping Relationships in Urban Schools. ERIC Digest.

ERIC Development Team

www.eric.ed.gov

Table of Contents

If you're viewing this document online, you can click any of the topics below to link directly to that section.

Peer Helping Relationships in Urban Schools. ERIC Digest.....	1
---	---



ERIC Identifier: ED289949

Publication Date: 1987-12-00

Author: Webb, Michael

Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education New York NY.

Peer Helping Relationships in Urban Schools. ERIC Digest.

THIS DIGEST WAS CREATED BY ERIC, THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ERIC, CONTACT ACCESS ERIC 1-800-LET-ERIC

TEXT: Young people help each other in many ways. Beginning in childhood, as they play together, children learn important lessons such as sharing, communicating, and cooperating. Now, research has shown that students can benefit from structured in-school helping relationships in which peers assume formal roles as tutors.

Although peer tutoring was standard practice in schools as early as the nineteenth century, there was little mention of it in educational literature until the 1960s when several factors made it newly attractive as a practice, particularly in urban areas.

The passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 provided impetus for the creation of peer tutoring programs and practices designed to improve the academic performance of student populations such as limited English proficient students and low achieving students. In addition, American education shifted toward learning relationships involving small groups and teaching methods most appropriate for the individual student.

Desegregation efforts also sought to increase interracial understanding through diverse, structured peer relationships. Finally, a growing number of research studies demonstrated the positive outcomes of peer tutoring on student achievement.

More recently, in-school peer helping relationships have been viewed as a vehicle for diversifying and redefining the role of the classroom teacher, as a response to personnel and resource limitations, and to facilitate learning through the powerful influence of peer relationships.

Peer tutoring consist of students teaching other students, of the same or a different age, on a one-to-one basis, or one tutor working with two or three students simultaneously. Peer tutoring is a cooperative undertaking in which students share not only the answers but the process used to reach answers.

Students generally identify more easily with peer helpers than with adult authority figures. Modeling is an important dimension of peer tutoring, and while teachers may more flawlessly demonstrate cognitive skills than tutors, tutors often provoke higher efficacy, because students believe greater efforts may result in achievement equal to a tutor's, while matching a teacher's ability is impossible. Further, students being tutored benefit from receiving immediate feedback and clarification of information they don't understand.

As a result of their efforts to help others, tutors reinforce their own knowledge and skills, which in turn builds their self-confidence and self-esteem. Peer tutors also develop a sense of responsibility as a result of helping students to learn. Finally, explaining the subject matter to others often helps tutors better understand it themselves.

Both tutors and students being tutored have also reported improved attitudes toward school as a result of their participation.

The use of peer tutors in the classroom can make teachers more flexible and enable them to better target their efforts toward individual students. They can introduce learning activities that could not be accommodated within their regular teaching load. Peer tutors, by assuming responsibility for the reinforcement of what has been covered in class by the teacher, or for remedial instruction, can free teachers for new roles as coordinators and facilitators instead of their functioning solely as dispensers of knowledge.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the peer tutoring relationship. Students in effective programs consistently reach higher levels of academic achievement than students in conventional learning, or mastery learning situations.

While there is some evidence suggesting that benefits are greatest for students who have previously demonstrated difficulty in relating to their peers and students who lack experience in working cooperatively with others, neither the nature of the child being tutored nor the characteristics of the tutor seem to matter as much as the sense of "mutual reward," some of which may be intrinsic to the tutoring process. Cross-age tutoring may be especially effective with those students whose cultural tradition includes an emphasis on the responsibility of older children for their younger siblings. Others have postulated that while mixed race/ethnic pairings may result in more positive interethnic/racial relationships, a culture shared by two students of similar backgrounds may also contribute to the beneficial outcomes of peer tutoring.

Peer tutoring programs have been incorporated into the regular classroom structure and as separate programs that take place in a laboratory, resource room, or tutoring center. The subject matter to be covered and the objectives of the program often determine the facilities and organization used. It has been shown, in addition, that teacher planning, training, and management are critical and continuing factors in successful program implementation. Finally, effective programs include a feedback component to allow for ongoing evaluation and change.

The following steps in developing a tutoring program can both help facilitate its implementation and deflect possible opposition because of misunderstandings:

- Establish a planning group to collect suggestions, and prepare written plans and a budget.
- Assess student needs through faculty discussion and a review of student records.
- Develop measurable program goals and objectives consistent with the educational and social goals of the school.
- Determine facility, material, equipment, and personnel requirements.
- Formally present a draft plan to school authorities for review, and a revised plan to teachers, parents, district administrators and other stakeholders.
- Conduct an orientation for students, faculty, and program staff to review tutor recruitment and selection; training; matching and assigning students; and coordination of routine tasks.
- Conduct ongoing evaluation following implementation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Ashley, W., J. Jones, G. Zahniser, and L. Inks. PEER TUTORING: A GUIDE TO PROGRAM DESIGN. Research and Development Series No. 260. Columbus: Ohio State University Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1986. ED 268 372.

Bloom, B. "The Search for Methods of Group Instruction as Effective One-to-One

Tutoring." EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP 41 (1984): 4-17.

Cohen, P. "Outcomes of Tutoring." AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL 19 (1982): 237-248.

Crushon, I. PEER TUTORING: A STRATEGY FOR BUILDING ON CULTURAL STRENGTHS. DOCUMENTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN URBAN SCHOOLS, 1977. ED 228 367.

Schunk, D., A. Hanson, and P. Cox. PEER MODELS: EFFECTS ON CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENT BEHAVIORS. Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Washington, D.C., August 1986. ED 178 372.

Strain, P. (Ed.). THE UTILIZATION OF CLASSROOM PEERS AS BEHAVIOR CHANGE AGENTS. New York: Plenum Press. 1981.

Wagner, L. PEER TEACHING: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES. Connecticut: Greenwood Press. 1982.

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under OERI contract. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or the Department of Education.

Title: Peer Helping Relationships in Urban Schools. ERIC Digest.

Document Type: Information Analyses---ERIC Information Analysis Products (IAPs) (071); Information Analyses---ERIC Digests (Selected) in Full Text (073);

Available From: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Box 40, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027 (single copies free).

Descriptors: Classroom Techniques, Elementary Secondary Education, Learning Strategies, Outcomes of Education, Peer Influence, Peer Teaching, Student Attitudes, Student Motivation, Teaching Methods, Tutorial Programs, Tutors, Urban Education

Identifiers: ERIC Digests

###



[\[Return to ERIC Digest Search Page\]](#)