

## Peer Interaction

The following are some strategies to assist in motivating classmates this year to get involved with the student. Try the ones you think might work for you:

- a) Be clear about what the classmates are helping the student to learn and why. As mentioned earlier, identify the student's job and the classmate's job in the activity or interaction.
  
- b) Record keeping: Record keeping can help some individuals feel that what they are doing is of value. Have classmates assist in recording information on "yes/no" or "choice making" data sheets for the student and the assistant.
  
- c) Place the student in a position where classmates need and want him/his/her to perform a service for them. In this way, they will need to interact with the student to request the service. The following are some suggestions to assist classmates:
  - The student could switch access with a Powerlink, rock music played in the classroom during lunchtime.
  
  - Classmates could bring their favourite tapes but they could only be played if the student uses the switch to turn them on.
  
  - The student could also switch access the class' tapes outside on the playground during recess with a small ghetto blaster.
  
  - Try rewarding the class' interactions by using a sign up sheet ( e.g., when the whole class gets a total of 30 days, they can have a pizza party during lunch hour)!
  
  - You could also reward individual students by tallying up their points on the sign up sheet or calendar (e.g., when a student gets 10 days, they get to skip the spelling test for that week, or choose the activity for P.E. for that week, or take a spare, etc.)
  
  - Try videotaping some of the classmates' interactions or activities with the student if they wish. Classmates often like to watch themselves on T.V. Reinforce verbally what they are doing correctly with the student on the video.
  
  - Have classmates record jokes each day on the BIGmack. Peers can ask the student to tell them the joke throughout the day.

- The student could collect the attendance from classes when it is due. Have one of the classmates record on the BIGmack, "Excuse me, could I please have your attendance?" A different classmate could accompany the student in the rounds each morning.
- The student could switch access an electric pencil sharpener for classmates to use. They would have to ask a question and wait for the student's response as well (e.g., "Could you help me sharpen my pencil?")

	
<p>Helping a peer to sharpen a pencil...</p>	<p>Peers record Step by Step for attendance...</p>

- The student could access a science/socials tape or filmstrip with the Powerlink II and a switch. When the tape stops, the classmates need to ask the student to use the switch to continue.
  - The student could switch access a popcorn maker to make popcorn before a socials video for the class. Classmates could assist the in packaging it and distributing it to the rest of the class. The T.A. can facilitate this activity.
- d) Build humour into interactions with other classmates: Humour breaks down many barriers. Classmates also enjoy a good joke! The following are some suggestions:
- Jokes or riddles on a loop tape. Classmates record the jokes.



Telling a joke on his voice output...



Drying peer's nail with Powerlink...

- Age appropriate question or greeting that stimulates open-ended conversation. (e.g., "Hey man, what are you doing for Halloween?" or "What did you think about that NHL game on the weekend?")
- The student may get to choose the theme for "theme" day. (e.g., beach day, backwards day, hat day, etc.)

### **Brainstorming Mutual Interests**

This activity involves the entire class brainstorming their areas of interest. The teacher records different areas of interest (e.g., computers, books, swimming, movies, etc.) and lists various classmates' names under these categories. The special needs student is included with information from home and verbal input provided from the T.A. if needed.

The T.A. or resource teacher records all of the classmates' names under the areas of interest, which are similar to the student. This list (along with a class phone list) can be forwarded to the parents of the student. It may be easier to call and arrange a "get-together", when it revolves around an activity, which is enjoyed by both parties. The parent may wish to invite two classmates as this is often helpful in generating discussion and alleviating any anxiety when getting to know the student.

The teacher can encourage all classmates to engage in a phone number exchange at the end of this exercise with scraps of paper. This encourages the classmates to expand their own social networks with those who have mutual interests. *We often have friends who facilitate new relationships for us.*

## **Building A Peer Support Group**

If classmates are unsure as to how to respond to the student, they may need support in this area. Peers can also be helpful in identifying problematic areas in which the student may need some assistance to be more involved. Peers can identify interests and social activities, which adults and caregivers may otherwise forget. Sometimes a peer support group is helpful. The children who come together into the circle often become part of a group and support themselves as well as the student.

Here are some suggestions for a peers support group:

- Gather together a volunteer group of children who have shown interest in the student.
- Outline the goals and purpose of the program (e.g., inclusion).
- Ask questions to stimulate discussion and thinking:
  - a) What do we want for the student?
  - b) What don't we want?
  - c) What do we need to get started?
- List suggested activities and types of support that may be needed in order for the student to be included.
- Set up committees with student committee leaders with an adult resource person.
- Set up timelines for particular responsibilities.
- Explain the necessity for weekly or bi-weekly meetings.

The facilitator of the peer support group should have lots of social connections with the classmates, (e.g., a resource teacher who teaches Homec or Volleyball after school or an assistant who relates well to other peers.)



**PROVINCIAL INTEGRATION SUPPORT PROGRAM**