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PEER TUTORING IN SPECIAL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Peer tutoring in special and inclusive education is a strategy where higher-performing students are paired with lower-performing students or students with disabilities to review or teach academic material. This strategy has been proven to help students on both sides' master content and gain self-confidence in specific skills.

The necessity of using peer tutoring as a strategy is explained by the facts that the intervention allows students to receive one-to-one assistance, students have increased opportunities to respond in smaller groups, it promotes academic and social development for both the tutor and tutee, student engagement and time on task increases, peer tutoring increases self-confidence and self-efficacy [6].

The purpose of the research is to show the content of peer tutoring and to explain its role and importance in special and inclusive education.

The researchers who studied different aspects of peer tutoring are S.Ayvazo, E.Aljadeff-Abergel [1], R.Bond, E. Castagnera [2], L.Bowman-Perrott, M.Burke, N.Nan Zhang, S. Zaini [3], G.DuPaul, R.Ervin, C.Hook, K.McGoey [4], P.Iserbyt, J.Elen, D.Behets [5], D.Stenhoff, B.Lignugaris [11] and many others.

Peer tutoring in special education can be an effective teaching method for all students involved. Let's look at some of the specific advantages [7]:

1) Peer tutors become teachers, which increases their own understanding of the material.

2) Peer tutoring helps the students build relationships, which builds communication and social skills.

3) Some students with disabilities respond better to peers than adults.

4) Students with disabilities get more individual attention than one teacher can provide on their own.

5) Because of increased individual attention, students with disabilities also get immediate feedback and positive reinforcement more frequently, which results in higher academic performance.

Although peer tutoring has many strengths, there are also challenges that should be considered. These include [7]:

1) Planning and preparing for peer tutoring requires additional time and organization for the classroom teacher.

2) Peer tutors must be trained, monitored, and graded, which takes time and energy away from other important classroom tasks.

3) Some parents are opposed to peer tutoring because they don't see the benefits for their child. This means that teachers must educate and convince parents of the benefits.

There are such types of peer tutoring [9]:

1) **Unidirectional peer tutoring.** Unidirectional peer tutoring means that the trained peer tutor teaches the entire time, and the child with a disability remains the student in the pair. This method is effective when working with children with more severe disabilities such as severe autism, intellectual disability, visual impairment, or cerebral palsy. The benefits of this option are that the tutor and student always know their roles, and the peer tutor carries the responsibility throughout the entire program.

2) **Bi-directional, or reciprocal, peer tutoring.** A child with and a child without a disability form a dyad (pair). Both children take turns at being the tutor while the other serves as the student. The instructor can have these children switch roles for each skill, class, week, or unit. This method is most effective with children with mild disabilities. The main benefit of this approach is that each child has an opportunity to be the teacher and experience leadership opportunities.

3) **Class-wide peer tutoring.** Class-wide peer tutoring involves breaking the entire class into dyads. Each child participates in reciprocal peer tutoring by providing prompts, error correction, and help to their partner. Class-wide peer tutoring is unique because all children are given task cards to keep them focused on the objectives of the lesson. The tutor takes the task cards and fills in the skills that are mastered by the student. This method is most effective with children with mild disabilities. The main benefit of this approach is that the entire class is involved in the tutoring activity, so no children are singled out because of disability.

4) **Cross-age peer tutoring.** Cross-age peer tutoring occurs when an older child is chosen to tutor a younger child. This method works best when the peer tutor is interested in working with children with disabilities. A cross-aged peer tutor is more effective than a same-aged peer tutor when the student is very young (below first or second grade) or the disability is more involved (such as severe cerebral palsy, intellectual disability, or autism). The cross-aged peer tutor can be chosen according to willingness, physical skills, and availability. The main benefit of this approach is that the tutor gains valuable teaching experience while the student experiences effective individualized instruction and feedback.

There are tree widely used peer tutoring models are Class Wide Peer Tutoring (CWPT), Cross-Age Peer Tutoring, and Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) [8]:

1) **Class Wide Peer Tutoring (CWPT):** In CWPT, the entire class participates in the peer tutoring activity simultaneously. The teacher splits the class into groups of two to five students and assigns roles to the students. One student acts as the tutor (instructor) and provides a question or stimulus, while the other student(s) acts as the tutee (or learner) and gives an answer or performs a task. These roles are reversed at a

designated point during the activity. CWPT requires the teacher to train students in the process and explain the task, but during the CWPT session every student is receiving individualized attention and continuous monitored practice with feedback for correct and incorrect responses.

2) **Cross-Age Peer Tutoring:** When an older student is paired with a younger student, it is called cross-age peer tutoring. In this scenario, the older student is the tutor sharing knowledge or providing support to the younger student. Cross-age tutoring can be carefully scripted in nature, or it can be informal. Cross-age tutoring may involve a whole class, or only a few student pairs. Cross-age tutoring is particularly relevant to functional, behavioural, and social skills training and may be used to support students with disabilities or to introduce school routines to younger students at the start of the school year.

3) **Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS):** PALS is based on a specific peer-tutoring model with structured reading and math programs. Students are paired with others of similar ability levels and one student coaches their partner on a specific skill or topic. Partners often switch roles when addressing different skills, so that each student has the chance to both teach and learn.

Peer tutoring models are flexible and can be altered to meet individual student or class learning needs. The academic task should dictate the appropriate model based on content and learning goals. While there is some upfront planning and instruction, once students develop an understanding of procedures, groups or dyads can be altered dependent upon the setting, activity, or desired learning outcomes [6, p. 2].

Students should master each step of the model selected before learning additional skills. A teacher will need to closely monitor student progress to ensure that established procedures are followed, students utilize interpersonal skills, and content is covered [6, p.3].

In most peer tutoring approaches learners are instructed in how to undertake their roles effectively, often using specific and structured aspects of an interaction (such as learning the question types in reciprocal peer tutoring, or using specific prompts and questions in cross-age peer tutoring).

Peer assessment involves learners of the same or different ages providing feedback to peers relating to aspects of their academic performance and can have different forms such as reinforcing or correcting aspects of learning. Where this includes a teaching role to support the learner being assessed to act on such feedback, studies are to be included as peer tutoring. If peer assessment is undertaken purely as marking, particularly if the aim is to develop the assessor's understanding of the marking criteria, without support to improve, it would not be included.

What can be done to support peer tutoring initiatives? [6, p.3]

1) Provide direct, systematic instruction for the peer tutoring process selected.

2) Consider providing cue cards summarizing procedures or post procedures until automaticity is established.

3) Model error correction procedures.

4) Chart, and consider posting, student or group progress.

5) Praise use of tutoring procedures in addition to correct responses.

What steps are needed to plan for peer tutoring implementation? [6, p.4]

1. Clarify the specific objectives of the tutoring program, including both academic and social objectives when appropriate.

2. List objectives in a form that can be easily measured. For example:

- "Students serving as tutees will improve reading fluency by 30% on classroom reading materials in the next 12 weeks."

- "Performance of all students on weekly spelling tests will improve to an average of 85%; no student will score lower than 60%."

- "Within 8 weeks, students involved in tutoring will report that math is at least their third favourite class."

3. Choose tutoring partners carefully. No firm conclusions can be drawn to direct tutoring choices; nevertheless, several considerations should be taken into account. Some teachers have recommended choosing students as tutors who are conscientious in class, and who generally have to work for their grades. These teachers have believed that the brightest students may have less empathy for students who do not learn easily), although, exceptions to this are commonly found. Other considerations include the compatibility of the tutoring pair. Teachers should find pairs who will work together well; however, they should also encourage pairing students who are different in gender, race, or socioeconomic status whenever possible, and not exclusively support established groupings.

4. Establish rules and procedures for the tutoring program. These rules should cover how students are to interact with each other, and specify the type of interactions that are not acceptable. Procedures should specify the times and dates of tutoring, the materials to be used, and the specific activities to be undertaken.

5. Implement the tutoring program, monitor it carefully, and be consistent in enforcing the rules and procedures. Modify rule and procedures as necessary.

6. Evaluate the program frequently, and do not wait for the end of the program to determine whether it was effective. Collect information throughout the program, and predict whether it will be successful. If progress is not being made, modify the program.

So we can make a conclusion that peer tutoring is a general name for a strategy in which students support other students in the learning process. While the act of initial instruction in any skill or topic should be done by the teacher, students can be successful in providing support, reinforcement, or modelling for a variety of academic topics. In addition, peer tutoring can involve functional, behavioural, or social skills. Key characteristics of peer tutoring are [8]:

Teachers choose a model best suited to their students' needs.

Teachers train students to effectively act as peer tutors.

Students support other students in the learning process.

Teachers monitor the peer tutoring process.

The peer tutoring definition allows for different types of student pairings. Some models pair peers of similar abilities, while other models pair a higher-performing student with a lower-performing student for a target skill. Some models pair students of different ages. Teachers should pair students based on the skill being addressed as well as on their behavioural and personality needs. Some peer tutoring follows

carefully prescribed format and steps, while other peer tutoring is less formal. Peer tutoring has been a part of the American education system for many years and has been the subject of much research and development.

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