

Responsibilities of a Peer Buddy

Peer means equal – Treat everyone the same way no matter if they have a disability or not. People without disabilities are not better or more able than people with disabilities.

Respect everyone – Each and every person deserves respect. If you show respect to everyone equally, then others will observe you and begin to do the same.

Be a friend – Remember that when you get out of school, you will probably have friends to hang out with, talk on the phone to, and go out with. Students with moderate to severe disabilities often have very few friends outside of school. Sometimes, their only friends may be peer buddies. When class starts, the peer buddies are their ‘friends’ and when class is over, unfortunately some peer buddies walk out the door and do not think about or see them again until the next day. How would you feel if your friends only interacted with you during class time? You certainly would not call it a friendship! That kind of relationship is being a classmate, and nothing more.

True friendships are developed over time and not just in the classroom. Please make and take the time to be a true friend and try to spend time with your buddy in other contexts such as the lunchroom or extra-curricular activities. You do not need to (nor can you) spend every moment with your buddy, but all friendships require a different amount of work to keep going. This may be an opportunity for new friendships for you – be open to it! *And remember to introduce your buddy to your other friends- this is how we all expand our circle of friends!*

Be a Role Model – Part of the job of being a peer buddy is being a role model, both with your actions and with your words. Students with disabilities will look up to you. They see you as “someone to look up to” and they want to be like you. They see you doing all of the things that they dream of doing (having friends, hanging out, going places, driving, dating, etc.) so they figure if they act like you, then they will fit in. So, think before you act (or speak) and ask yourself if this is something that you want others to do (or say).

Follow the schedule – The teacher does have the expertise and the knowledge. If there is a schedule, then stick to it and do not deviate without permission, unless harm may be involved if you do not. There may be reasons for what has been scheduled that you do not know about. If you have questions, then ask. Hopefully, the teacher will explain things so that you will understand.

Attend to Confidentiality – This is a big issue in the area of special education. Would you want your weaknesses known and discussed openly? Would you want others to talk about the private issues of your life? Many things that you will observe and hear in the special education program are confidential, but by the nature of the situation, you will see or hear these things. Remember that it is a privilege to be a peer buddy, and to keep these things in the classroom. If it troubles you, then talk with the teacher. If you are still troubled, talk with the school counselor.

Be a Sales Person – Many people in the school environment are afraid to spend time with students in the special education program or to interact with people with disabilities, due to their lack of knowledge. As a peer buddy, you will need to help them realize all of the positive things that go on in the classroom and all of the positive attributes of students with disabilities. You will need to share the positive and get others more familiar and aware that students with disabilities are no different and have a great deal to offer.

Teach others in your school – You will learn a great deal from being a peer buddy, use your experience to teach others in the school and the community about disabilities. Perhaps you can discuss with other students in the school how to be respectful with your language, or how to react

when a student with a disability behaves a certain way. Explain why another student's reaction is not appropriate and help that student learn what is appropriate. Help the other students in the school see students with disabilities for who they really are and what they have to contribute in this world—these are what are known as “teachable moments”.

Always report any problems to your teacher – If you observe any problems or situations that may arise, please alert the teacher. If it is a small situation that you feel as a peer you can handle (**Hint:** Would you be able to handle it if it was one of your friends without a disability?), then try to handle it. If you feel that it is important for the teacher to handle, then discuss it with the teacher immediately. Treat the students with disabilities as you would any of your friends.

Assist with schoolwork – You certainly can assist your buddy with schoolwork. Do not tell him or her what to do or do it for your buddy. You are not helping your buddy learn when you do the work for him or her. *Under teacher or paraeducator guidance*, you may need to make accommodations (adjustments for support) or modifications (changes to lessons or materials) for your peer buddy. You may need to do part of the work with their input, such as perhaps writing what your buddy says (this is called being a scribe). Always ask the teacher what you should and should not do.

Have fun – Always come to class with a smile and be ready to go. As you will see, the mood that you walk into the classroom with will affect the entire classroom, especially the student with whom you are working. He or she will feel your “vibes” and will share your mood. Your buddy will likely care a lot for you and will worry with you, become frustrated with you, and celebrate with you.

Major Guidelines :

- Learn together and from each other.
- Remember to keep things you see and hear confidential. It is important that private information is not spread around school.
- Treat the students with disabilities the same as you would your friends without disabilities.
- Be open and honest. Do not disrespect your buddy by lying to them, or beating around the bush.
- Do not give sympathy to or ‘baby’ your buddy. Remember that your buddy is in high school like you and wants to be treated as such! Empathy, or considering what it would be like to walk in your buddy's shoes, however, is *a/ways* appropriate.
- Have patience. Do not rush with your time.
- Listen to everything that your buddy says to you. Many students with moderate to severe disabilities communicate in different ways. Pay attention to all ways that your buddy may be communicating with you (behavior included).
- Be positive, not negative.
- Deliver praise for a job well done.

- Stay motivated.
- Develop a positive relationship with all students. This will help all of us be more successful. Let students with and without disabilities know that you care.
- Ask and listen to what the teacher has to say.
- Use humor and have fun.
- Discuss whatever you are working on. When you are done, discuss the results of your activity.
- Follow all classroom rules; they are there for a reason.
- Always keep an open ear and eye to learn from everyone in the classroom.

Peer Tutor/TA-Disclosure Document- Responsibilities of a Peer Tutor

Please sign and return this portion and keep other Introduction and Responsibilities pages for your reference.

I have read and understand the Class syllabus and Peer Tutoring Introduction packet

yes no

I understand the Confidentiality guidelines and Responsibilities of a Peer Tutor- yes no

Parent Signature

Date

Student Printed Name

Class Period

Student Signature

Date