

4. Students got to know others better. Initially, the group came together to help Sue but in the process they got to know each other better. For instance, at first Scott described Eric as a goof and the class clown. But as they spent time together because of Sue, he came to see that Eric was actually quite serious.

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING PEER GROUPS

Peer groups are as unique as the individual students in them. There is no one way of forming groups, but here are some points worth consideration:

1. Students need to be asked to participate in solving problematic situations. They quickly learn to become passive in an adult-centred world which tries to solve all their problems for them.
2. The class may need to be involved in discussions and reach a consensus that there is a problem for one of the students. For someone with special needs it could be an issue of inclusion. For the at-risk student it could be strategies to help the student attend classes. For the student who just moved to the school it can be how to make them feel welcome. By discussing and comparing prior experiences to the current problematic situations, students will come to see that they already know solutions. For example, students can be encouraged to examine how a stranger is made welcome in their home. In the process of decreasing the gap between the way things are and the way they should be, children come up with rich alternate strategies. This process brings out values of equity that the children know about but may never have acted on before. It provides the peer group with a rationale and may benefit all students who lack adequate peer support and inclusion, not just the student in question.