

Peer Modelling

Another powerful technique which requires less preparation than peer tutoring is peer modelling. In this situation, a student models for another classmate how to perform an activity or skill. For example, one student might show his classmate with a disability how to use a pencil sharpener, play a cassette player, or find his way to the next class. Sometimes, the teacher first needs to model the procedure for the non-disabled student. Often, however, students spontaneously initiate and devise clever ways to encourage a peer to take part in a myriad of activities.

A high school computer teacher described how a capable student voluntarily spent time in class with Todd, a non-verbal and overly timid classmate. Todd was often observed standing back from the other students with his arms held up tight against his chest, wringing his hands. The student worked with Todd, teaching him how to use a simple computer program. As weeks passed and opportunities for exchanges between Todd and his computer partner were maximized, Todd's classmates noticed him showing more interest in communicating with and being around other students and teachers during the day. He still stood apart from his peers often, but he now exhibited a more relaxed body posture. The speech pathologists and teachers then reviewed their efforts to encourage Todd in his attempts to speak, identifying additional strategies to build his new-found confidence. Meanwhile, the computer student was challenged by her involvement with Todd. On her own, she designed several other computer programs for him, which were later entered in the district Science Fair.

CREATING TIME AND SPACE FOR FRIENDSHIPS

Teachers who realize the importance of peer friendships for students with disabilities capitalize on the many opportunities for interaction that naturally arise during the course of the