

CLASSWIDE PEER TUTORING INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice

DO YOU HEAR THINGS LIKE THIS FROM TEACHERS?

Malia has trouble finishing her work by herself. She will play with her pencil or get out of her seat to talk with other students when they are working on assignments.

Quinn is smart and likes to finish his work quickly. Because he works quickly, he often makes mistakes. He gets angry when I show him his mistakes and tells me he is not going to fix them.

Latoya takes a long time to read and has trouble understanding what she reads. She understands better when she reads with a friend.

I care about what each student needs and I want to work one-on-one with each student. But I have many students in my classroom. This makes it hard to give each student enough time.

DO YOU HEAR THINGS LIKE THIS FROM YOUR CHILD?

Jessica makes fun of me when the teacher calls on me to read out loud.

Mrs. Brown yells at me to hurry up and finish my work. She tells me if I don't finish that I have to do it for homework. But I want to ride my bike with my friends.

This report is too hard. This makes no sense. I don't know why I have to do this dumb project anyway!

WHAT IS CLASSWIDE PEER TUTORING?

Many teachers feel that they do not have enough time in the school day to work one-on-one with every student. Classwide Peer Tutoring is a way for all students to get one-on-one help and enough time to practice and learn. For Classwide Peer Tutoring, every student in the class is paired with another. The teacher writes lessons that one student uses to teach or tutor another. During the tutoring, one student explains the work to another student, asks the student to answer questions, and tells the student whether his or her answers are correct. Classwide Peer Tutoring has been shown to work for students with all kinds of special learning and behavioral needs, like Malia, Quinn, and Latoya.

WHY DOES CLASSWIDE PEER TUTORING WORK?

Classwide Peer Tutoring helps teachers make sure that students have

- someone to sit next to them and personally explain the work in a way that is just right for them—not too slow and not too fast;
- more opportunities to talk about what they are learning, to practice what they are learning, to read aloud, and to write;
- more opportunities to ask questions when they are confused, without fear of being embarrassed in front of the whole class;
- someone who can tell them right away whether their answers are right or wrong; and
- someone to help and encourage them to finish assignments.

DOES CLASSWIDE PEER TUTORING HELP STUDENTS?

Yes. Researchers have carefully studied Classwide Peer Tutoring with large and small groups of students. They have looked at the progress of students over one school year and over many school years.

Classwide Peer Tutoring is helpful to students in reading, spelling, math, and writing. It is used in all grade levels from preschool to high school, and in both regular and special education classrooms. But most of the studies have been done in elementary school.

Classwide Peer Tutoring is helpful for different groups of students (e.g., White, African American, Asian, and Hispanic) and for students identified with disabilities (e.g., autism, learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral disabilities, mild mental retardation, and hearing impairments).

Research shows that Classwide Peer Tutoring works for all students, including students who have problems paying attention, problems learning, and problems with emotions and behavior. It even helps students who learn without problems. Classwide Peer Tutoring is very helpful for students who are “at risk” and for students whose parents and teachers worry that they will start to have problems in school.

HOW DO WE KNOW? LET'S LOOK AT A FEW STUDIES

Studies done in the 1980s showed that Classwide Peer Tutoring helps students learn better and more quickly. Researchers Debra Whorton and Joseph Delquadri did a

study that looked at reading. They found that students who read only 24 words correctly were able to read 48 words correctly after their teachers started using Classwide Peer Tutoring. Joseph Delquadri and other researchers did another important reading study. They found that students with learning disabilities read more quickly and correctly after their teacher started using Classwide Peer Tutoring.

Joseph Delquadri and a team of researchers also studied whether Classwide Peer Tutoring helps students in spelling. They found that students who scored the lowest on weekly spelling tests (getting 8 or more words wrong), started scoring as well as other students in the class (getting fewer than 3 words wrong) after their teacher started using Classwide Peer Tutoring.

A study by John Fantuzzo and Lauren Heller found that Classwide Peer Tutoring helped African American 4th and 5th grade students in math. Most of the students in this study came from homes with low incomes.

Other studies in the 1980s and 1990s showed that Classwide Peer Tutoring increases the amount of class work that students finish. In one study by Charles Maher, students who did not have Classwide Peer Tutoring finished only 3 of their 10 assignments. But when their teachers started using Classwide Peer Tutoring, they finished 8 of their 10 assignments.

In their research, George DuPaul and Patricia Henningson showed that Classwide Peer Tutoring helps students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder pay attention longer and stay in their seats to finish assignments.

Classwide Peer Tutoring is also very helpful for students with behavioral disorders when the materials used are not too difficult—materials need to match the students' skill levels. A study by Thomas Scruggs and Lori Richter found that after receiving or giving tutoring, elementary-age students with behavioral problems did better in school. They especially improved in reading vocabulary and multiplication facts.

Researchers Judith Presley and Carolyn Hughes used peer tutoring to teach social skills and anger control to high school students with emotional and behavioral problems. During the time the students were learning social skills through peer tutoring, they showed less intense anger in situations that happened during the rest of the school day. Catherine Trapani and Maribeth Gettinger also had success with using peer tutoring to teach social skills to 4th through 6th grade boys with learning disabilities.

The benefits of Classwide Peer Tutoring have been found to last even when a student moves into a classroom where the teacher is not using Classwide Peer Tutoring. One group of students participated in Classwide Peer Tutoring during grades 1–4. Charles Greenwood and a team of researchers found that in 6th grade, two years after they had stopped peer tutoring, these students were still making more progress on some parts of a basic skills test than students who had not been in classrooms with Classwide Peer Tutoring.

WHAT TEACHERS CAN DO

1. Explain and demonstrate peer tutoring and give your class time to practice tutoring before they do it for real. Two teachers can pretend to be a tutor and a tutee while the children watch. Show the class how to get into pairs quickly and quietly. Then pretend to go through a reading vocabulary or math lesson. Show the children how to begin the lesson, how to move through the lesson, and how to finish the lesson. Then the children can practice or role-play with other children in the class just as the teachers did. Teachers can give feedback to the children while they practice.
2. Teach children what good tutor and tutee behaviors are before starting Classwide Peer Tutoring. Explain how to tell their partners in a respectful way when they are wrong. Give them tips and demonstrate how not to get angry when another child tells them that they made a mistake. Research shows that practicing these behaviors will avoid many problems later.
3. Teach children how to keep track of their partner's right answers or their own. The tutees will then see that they are getting better over time.
4. Make sure that children are tutoring with materials that are matched to their abilities. Materials that are too hard will frustrate them, and they will not be able to learn.
5. Have children tutor with new information as soon as they have learned the old material. This way they will not get bored.
6. Give all children opportunities to be the tutor, even in subjects where they have problems. They will learn from tutoring other students, and they will gain more confidence in their abilities in that area.
7. Make Classwide Peer Tutoring fun – like a game. Tutors can reward their classmates with points for giving answers that are right or for making progress. Research shows that rewarding children

consistently helps keep them motivated. The handout written by George Dupaul (listed below) gives many examples of how to make tutoring into an exciting game.

HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP

1. If your child's teacher is not using Class-wide Peer Tutoring and you think it might be helpful for your child, share the idea with the teacher with this information brief.
2. Speak with your child's teacher about tutoring behaviors that you can practice with your child, such as how to tell a partner in a respectful way when he or she is wrong or how to not get angry when another child tells your child that he or she has made a mistake.
3. Let your child practice how to be a good tutor by explaining to you or to another adult how to do a math problem or an English assignment.
4. Encourage your child to tell you about how tutoring is going at school. Ask whether he or she was a tutor or a tutee that day, what subjects he or she used tutoring in, and how well he or she got along with his or her partner.

WHAT CAN I READ & WHERE CAN I GET A COPY?

DuPaul, G.J. (1998). Peer tutoring procedures in general education classrooms. In A.S. Canter & S.A. Carroll (Eds.), *Helping children at home and school: Handouts from your school psychologist*. National Association of School Psychologists, Bethesda: MD.

To order a copy, contact:

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