



WHAT IS IT?

Peer pairing involves purposely setting up interactions between a student who is struggling to engage successfully with others in the classroom and a peer in the classroom who does this well.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Noel's teacher notices that Noel often wanders around the room and has difficulty successfully joining in play with others during Center Time. She asks Nathan (a student who is very helpful and sociable) to be Noel's "buddy." She gives them matching necklaces and explains that she would like them to play together during Center Time. She then gives them guidance on what and where to play – "How about you two play over here in this quiet space with the blocks." She provides specific labeled praise to them after they play to reinforce skills such as turn-taking and friendly talk.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Peer pairing works because it provides an opportunity for a student to learn from a peer who is particularly skillful at social interactions. The target student observes the socially-skilled peer interact, who serves as a model of how to display prosocial skills. This is a positive experience that benefits *both* children and provides opportunities for each child to enhance their social skills. Further, the socially-skilled peer is more likely to help resolve small disagreements, which results in longer periods of play time.

How to Use Peer Pairing

Using the "Buddy System" from the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention (TASCEI):

- ☒ **Identify a student** who has difficulty with a specific skill.
(e.g., sharing, turn-taking, communicating, initiating play, resolving disagreements).
- ☒ **Identify a "buddy"** – a second student who is strong in that specific skill area.
- ☒ **Pair students** by giving matching stickers/necklaces/etc.
- ☒ **Instruct students to play together** for a certain period of time/during a certain activity.
- ☒ **Observe and provide praise** as the pair plays together and demonstrates prosocial skills.
- ☒ **Ask students to reflect** on their time with buddies at the end of play.

*See *Peer Pairing Activity* and *Buddy System* handouts for more information.

RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT PEER PAIRING

Buddy System

[Available as PDF](#)

TACSEI M/S©

Peer Pairing Activity

[Available as PDF](#)

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