

Classwide Peer Tutoring

Collaborative Learning for Students With Disabilities in Inclusive Classrooms

Although the idea of students teaching one another is not new (Lancaster, 1806), peer tutoring has been the focus of much recent interest in special education. In traditional approaches to peer tutoring, the teacher identifies a high-achieving student to help a classmate who has not mastered a particular skill. In contrast, today's classwide peer tutoring (CWPT) models include low achievers and students with disabilities as full participants in an ongoing, whole-class activity in which all students help one another learn new curriculum content.

FOUR EVIDENCE-BASED MODELS

Four models for designing and implementing systematic peer tutoring have emerged from more than 20 years of solid empirical research as educators and researchers have successfully implemented, evaluated, and refined peer-tutoring models to varying degrees across a range of age and grade levels in general and special education classrooms (Alber Morgan, 2006; Maheady, Mallette, & Harper, 2006).

The Juniper Gardens Children's Project The Juniper Gardens Children's Project CWPT model was the brainchild of Greenwood, Delquadri, and Carta (1997). The whole class is divided into two weekly competing teams that are further broken into tutoring dyads and triads. Tutors present individual items, evaluate tutees' performance, and provide feedback and points. Daily and weekly public posting of team points serves as motivation.

A 12-year longitudinal study that compared groups of at-risk and non-risk students who had or had not received CWPT instruction found that CWPT increased students' active engagement during instruction in grades 1 to 3; improved pupil achievement at grades 2, 3, 4, and 6; reduced the need for special education services by seventh grade; and decreased the number of students who dropped out of school by the end of 11th grade (Greenwood, Maheady, & Delquadri, 2002).

The Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies The Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) program was developed by researchers at Vanderbilt University working collaboratively with local school districts (Morgan, Young, & Fuchs, 2006). The original PALS program was designed for use in reading and math by students in grades 2–6 (D. Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, & Simmons, 1996). More recently, K-PALS for kindergarten (Mathes, Clancy-Menchetti, & Torgesen, 2003), First Grade PALS for beginning reading instruction (Mathes, Torgesen, Allen, & Howard-Allor, 2003), and High School PALS for content-area instruction (L. Fuchs, Fuchs, & Kazdan, 1999) have been added.

PALS tutors and tutees interact in a set of structured activities for three weekly sessions of 35 minutes. Examples of reading activities include Partner Reading with Retell, Paragraph Shrinking, and Prediction Relay. Teachers use brief scripted lessons to train all students to implement the activities independently. Nearly 15 years of research have demonstrated the effectiveness of this CWPT program in improving the reading performance of students at all performance levels, including students with disabilities, from kindergarten through high school (McMaster, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2006).

SUNY Fredonia Classwide Student Tutoring Teams

SUNY Fredonia Classwide Student Tutoring Teams (CSIT) combines elements of Slavin's (1986) Student Team Learning model with components from the Juniper Gardens CWPT model. Pupils work in four-member, heterogeneous learning teams and take turns reading and responding to items on teacher-developed study guides and/or concept cards. Tutor roles rotate clockwise on each item, and the process continues until a predetermined time limit (e.g., 20 to 30 minutes) has elapsed (Maheady, Mallette et al., 2006). One study compared CSIT instruction to conventional teacher-led instruction on the math performance of 91 low-achieving ninth- and tenth-grade pupils enrolled in a program for potential high school dropouts (Maheady, Sacca, & Harper, 1987). During CSIT instruction, students' weekly math quiz scores increased by an average of 20 percentage points.

The Ohio State University Model The Ohio State University CWPT model began in the late 1970s and early 1980s with research aimed at finding a low-cost, relatively easy approach for individualizing instruction of basic reading and math skills for diverse groups of learners in the primary grades (e.g., Heron, Heward, Cooke, & Hill, 1983; Heward, Heron, & Cooke, 1982; Parson & Heward, 1979). The OSU model has been replicated and extended by hundreds of teachers in elementary, middle, and secondary classrooms across a wide range of curriculum areas such as spelling, science facts and vocabulary, algebra, geometry, reading fluency, foreign language vocabulary, and social studies (e.g., Gardner et al., 2001; Miller, Barbetta, & Heron, 1994; Wright, Cavanaugh, Sainato, & Heward, 1995). Daily sessions last about 20 minutes, with each student serving as both tutor and tutee during the session. When in the role of tutee, the child responds to questions presented by his or her partner (tutor) using a set of individualized task cards of unknown facts, problems, or items determined by a teacher-given pretest. The basic elements of the OSU model follow.