



Peer Assistance for Students with Disabilities

PEIMS Code: N1290203

Abbreviation: PASWD1

Grade Level(s): 9-12

Award of Credit: 0.5

Approved Innovative Course

- Districts must have local board approval to implement innovative courses.
- In accordance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §74.27, school districts must provide instruction in all essential knowledge and skills identified in this innovative course.
- Innovative courses may only satisfy elective credit toward graduation requirements.
- Please refer to [TAC §74.13](#) for guidance on endorsements.

Course Description:

Peer Assistance for Students with Disabilities is designed to promote meaningful social inclusion and create accepting school environments. Students with disabilities are given a space to develop confidence, foster independence, and improve their social skills through their interactions with their non-disabled peers. Peer assistants obtain initial training in confidentiality, cueing, prompting, and positive reinforcement to be used with the students with special needs that they will be working with. With the guidance of their peer assistants, disabled students can discover new strengths and abilities that help them find joy and fulfillment. Likewise, peer assistants experience growth in their understanding and empathy that carries outside the classroom. In this inclusive environment, students will create a relationship among age-appropriate peers of different abilities, both socially and academically, that will last long beyond the classroom time.

Essential Knowledge and Skills:

- (a) General requirements. This course is recommended for students in grades 9-12. There is no prerequisite for this course. Students shall be awarded one-half credit for the successful completion of the course.
- (b) Introduction.
 - (1) In this course, the peer assistant understands of the impact of relationships with self and others as well as the impact of a student's disability on relationships with age-appropriate peers.
 - (2) The peer assistant demonstrates knowledge of various disabilities, including the implications a disability may have on learning, communication, or independence.
 - (3) The peer assistant describes the importance of maintaining confidentiality for students with disabilities per federal law and complies with federal law such as but not limited to FERPA.

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- (4) The peer assistant describes and demonstrates appropriate techniques, routines, and procedures to support their peers' learning in the classroom.
- (c) Knowledge and Skills.
- (1) Peer assistant skills. The peer assistant understands the importance of developing a supportive and trusting relationship with a student receiving special education services. The peer assistant facilitates inclusion in the classroom both academically and socially. The student is expected to:
 - (A) model and reinforce appropriate behaviors of a leader and a peer assistance;
 - (B) explain how activities and communication may need to be adapted to meet the needs of the student receiving assistance;
 - (C) support the student receiving assistance in social, peer-group settings such as including the students in conversations by asking questions or verbalizing nonverbal communication;
 - (D) provide positive reinforcement and supportive language in interactions with peers;
 - (E) assist the student receiving assistance with identified goals;
 - (F) participate in a variety of activities that provide the student receiving assistance with opportunities to practice social skills; and
 - (G) persuade the student receiving assistance to engage in assignments.
 - (2) Management and communication. The peer assistant identifies and uses techniques for managing learning and behavioral outcomes with assistance from and in consultation with the classroom teacher. The student is expected to:
 - (A) define, model, and implement redirecting and focusing techniques;
 - (B) identify repetitive and self-stimulating behaviors when they occur, and redirect the student receiving assistance back to the task at hand;
 - (C) identify common distractions for students and use positive reinforcers for redirecting attention of the student receiving assistance;
 - (D) identify and describe communication methods that the student receiving assistance can use to express wants and needs such as pointing, gesturing, and using a picture exchange communication system or an electronic device;
 - (E) identify, describe, and model different types of cueing such as verbal indirect cues, verbal direct cues, pointing, and physical gestures; and
 - (F) identify, describe, and model different types of prompting such as verbal directions, gesture assist, visual graphics, student modeling, and physical assistance.
 - (3) Confidentiality. The peer assistant understands students' rights of confidentiality per federal law (Public Law 94-142) Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). The student is expected to:
 - (A) define confidentiality and how it is addressed in IDEA, IDEIA, and FERPA;

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- (B) describe how confidentiality applies to the peer assistant/student relationship; and
 - (C) explain the importance of maintaining confidentiality regarding students receiving special education services in varied settings and scenarios.
- (4) Learning styles. The peer student identifies personal learning style and the learning styles of students receiving assistance. The student is expected to:
- (A) identify and discuss different learning styles;
 - (B) identify personal learning styles using an intelligence model survey; and
 - (C) assess learning styles of students with disabilities within the classroom setting.
- (5) Support services. The peer assistant describes various disabilities and the services needed to support students with disabilities in an educational setting. The student is expected to:
- (A) analyze the need for and importance of support services provided to students with disabilities in an educational setting;
 - (B) identify types of equipment used by therapists such as a Rifton chair, gait trainer, standers, musical instruments, walkers, motor lab equipment, and augmented communication devices, and explain how the equipment is used during therapy sessions;
 - (C) identify and describe how different disabilities may impact a student's ability to participate in the learning environment;
 - (D) research and present a summary of findings on a variety of disabilities such as autism, intellectual disabilities, general learning disabilities, and Down's Syndrome; and
 - (E) analyze and present a summary of findings on how to support students with disabilities based on an identified need.

Recommended Resources and Materials:

"The Autism Experience. Understanding Autism," Autism Society, accessed December 8, 2021,

<https://autismsociety.org/the-autism-experience/>

"About Specific Disabilities," Center for Parent Information & Resources, accessed

December 8, 2021, <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/specific-disabilities/>

"FERPA," Student Privacy Policy Office's Privacy Technical Assistance Center, accessed

December 8, 2021, <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/node/548/>

"Individuals with Disabilities Education Act," Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S.

Department of Education, accessed December 8, 2021, <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>

"Unified Champion Schools," Special Olympics Texas, accessed December 8, 2021,

<https://www.sotx.org/ucs>

Recommended Course Activities:

- Disability awareness activities
- Daily journaling

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- Social activity log
- Develop and teach a lesson with teacher support
- Assist classroom teacher: hands-on learning and modeling
- Model appropriate behaviors

Suggested methods for evaluating student outcomes:

- Disability awareness assessments
- Develop and teach an instructional activity
- Summative research project

Teacher qualifications:

An assignment for Peer Assistance for Students with Disabilities is allowed with a valid secondary Texas certificate appropriate to the grade level of the assignment.

It is preferred that the instructor hold one of the following certifications:

- Secondary Special Education (Grades 6-12)
- Special Education: Early Childhood – Grade 12
- Secondary Generic Special Education (Grades 6-12) (Grades 6-12 only)

Additional information: