



## 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 for students interested in promoting social inclusion and fostering accepting school environments. The course provides the opportunity for nondisabled peer assistants to help students with disabilities build confidence, independence, and social skills through structured interactions. Peer assistants receive training in confidentiality, cueing, prompting, and positive reinforcement to support their peers effectively. The goals of the course include enhancing the abilities of students with disabilities, enabling them to find joy and fulfillment in an active lifestyle, and developing empathy and understanding in peer assistants. This course prepares students for college, careers, or military service by developing skills in interpersonal communication, disability awareness, and supportive assistance strategies. In an inclusive setting, students form meaningful relationships that extend beyond the classroom, enriching their social and academic lives.

### 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 Peer Assistance for Students with Disabilities, the peer assistant understands 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) Peer Assistance for Students with Disabilities is designed for students interested in promoting social inclusion and fostering accepting school environments. The course centers on building

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confidence, independence, and social skills for students with disabilities through interactions with non-disabled peers. Peer assistants receive training in confidentiality, cueing, prompting, and positive reinforcement to support their peers effectively. The goals of the course include enhancing the abilities of students with disabilities, enabling them to find joy and fulfillment in an active lifestyle, and developing empathy and understanding in peer assistants. This course prepares students for college, careers, or military service by developing skills in interpersonal communication, disability awareness, and supportive assistance strategies. In an inclusive setting, students form meaningful relationships that extend beyond the classroom, enriching their social and academic lives.

- (3) Understanding various disabilities and their impact on learning, communication, and independence enables the peer assistant to provide appropriate and empathetic support.
  - (4) Adhering to confidentiality is crucial for protecting students' privacy and ensuring legal compliance with federal laws.
  - (5) Learning and applying the correct techniques, routines, and procedures helps peer assistants foster a positive, inclusive classroom environment that supports their peers' academic success.
  - (6) Statements containing the word "including" reference content that must be mastered, while those containing the phrase "such as" are intended as possible illustrative examples.
- (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 and facilitating their inclusion in the classroom both academically and socially. The student is expected to:
    - (A) explain the role and responsibilities of a peer assistant in supporting students with disabilities, such as providing academic support, facilitating social interactions, implementing appropriate accommodations, and maintaining professional boundaries;
    - (B) explain how activities and communications 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 converting nonverbal signals into spoken words;
    - (D) provide positive reinforcement and supportive language in interactions with peers;
    - (E) support the student in achieving their specific individualized goals by implementing targeted strategies, such as breaking tasks into smaller steps, using visual schedules, providing verbal or gestural prompts, and regularly tracking progress;
    - (F) facilitate and participate in structured activities designed to help students practice social skills, such as group discussions, cooperative games, peer-to-peer conversations, and organized social interactions;
    - (G) model and reinforce appropriate behaviors, such as active listening, following classroom routines, showing respect for others, using appropriate social greetings, and participating in group activities; and
    - (H) persuade the student receiving assistance to engage in academic assignments.

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- (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. This includes addressing common distractions, redirecting repetitive and self-stimulating behaviors, and employing positive reinforcement strategies. The student is expected to:
  - (A) implement redirecting and focusing techniques effectively;
  - (B) identify and respond to repetitive and self-stimulating behaviors, redirecting the student receiving assistance back to the task at hand;
  - (C) recognize and mitigate common distractions for students by applying positive reinforcers to maintain attention;
  - (D) demonstrate and support various communication methods to help students with disabilities express their wants and needs, such as modeling the use of pointing, gesturing, picture exchange communication systems, or electronic devices;
  - (E) apply different types of cueing, including verbal indirect cues, verbal direct cues, pointing, and physical gestures; and
  - (F) apply different types of prompting, such as verbal directions, gesture assistance, 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 students' rights of confidentiality and how they are addressed in IDEA, IDEIA, and FERPA;
  - (B) describe how students' rights of confidentiality apply to the peer assistant and student relationship; and
  - (C) demonstrate the principles of maintaining confidentiality through specific actions and decisions in varied settings and scenarios involving students receiving special education services.
- (4) Learning styles. The peer assistant identifies personal learning styles 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 demonstrates understanding of 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;

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- (B) identify types of equipment used by therapists, such as an activity chairs, 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 summarize findings on a variety of disabilities, such as autism, intellectual disabilities, general learning disabilities, and Down syndrome; and
- (E) analyze and summarize how to support students with disabilities based on an identified need.

### Recommended Resources and Materials:

- Autism Society. "The Autism Experience: Understanding Autism." Autism Society. Accessed August 7, 2024. <https://autismsociety.org/the-autism-experience/>.
- National Center on Health, Physical Activity, and Disability. "Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in Physical Education." Accessed August 7, 2024. <https://www.nchpad.org/resources/universal-design-for-learning-in-physical-education/>.
- Center for Parent Information & Resources. "About Specific Disabilities." Center for Parent Information & Resources. Accessed August 7, 2024. <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/specific-disabilities/>.
- Region 10 Education Service Center. "Partner PE Administrative Guidelines & Curriculum Manual." Region 10 Education Service Center. Accessed August 7, 2024. <https://www.region10.org/programs/adapted-physical-education-ape/partner-pe-manual/>.
- Special Olympics Texas. "Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools." Special Olympics Texas. Accessed August 7, 2024. <https://www.sotx.org/ucs>.

### Recommended Course Activities:

- Facilitate disability awareness activities
- Complete daily journaling
- Maintain a social activity log
- Develop and teach a lesson
- Participate in Special Olympics training, if applicable
- Assist the classroom teacher with hands-on learning and modeling
- Model appropriate behaviors

### Suggested methods for evaluating student outcomes:

- Weekly journal activity
- Disability awareness assessments
- Develop and teach an instructional activity
- Social activity log (outside classroom setting)
- Lieberman-Brian Inclusion Rating Scale (LIRSPE)
- Research projects

## Peer Assistance for Students with Disabilities

### Teacher qualifications:

- High School – Generic Education
- Secondary Special Education (Grades 6-12)
- Special Education: Early Childhood – Grade 12
- Secondary Generic Special Education (Grades 6-12) (Grades 6-12 only)
- All-Level Health and Physical Education.
- All-Level Physical Education
- Physical Education: Early Childhood-Grade 12.
- Secondary Physical Education (Grades 6-12) (Grades 6-12 only)

### Additional information: