

This learning guide is designed for use by Professional Learning Communities, learning coaches and teacher leaders or as a self-paced study to enhance the use of natural supports to increase the engagement of students with significant disabilities with the school community.

Natural Supports: *In Conversation with Dr. Erik Carter*

This guide is intended to facilitate conversation



General synopsis

In this short video clip, Dr. Erik Carter explains why peer mentors have great potential for providing natural supports to students with significant disabilities.

Key understandings

- Peers are the most available and natural sources of support in any school.
- Peers are generally willing to provide some of the social and academic support needed by their classmates with significant disabilities.

Questions for discussion

- How might peer mentors provide **social support** for classmates with significant disabilities?
- How might peer mentors provide **academic support** for classmates with significant disabilities?

For more information

- For resources and training materials for mentoring, see: Alberta Mentoring Partnership website: <http://www.albertamentors.ca/>
- For an overview of the research on peer mentors for students with significant disabilities, see: Carter, E. (2011). Supporting peer relationships. In M. Snell & F. Brown (Eds.), *Instruction of students with severe disabilities* (pp. 431–460). Boston: Pearson.
- For practical information on peer buddies, see: Carter, E. (2008). *Peer buddy programs for successful school inclusion*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- For an overview of peer support techniques, see: Carter, E. (2008). Promoting rigor, relevance, and relationships through peer support interventions. *TASH Connections*, March/April, pp. 20–23. http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/naturalsupports/pdfs/Peer_Supports_TASH_Connections_2008.pdf
- For examples of activities and materials related to natural supports, see: Natural Supports Project, University of Wisconsin-Madison <http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/naturalsupports/resources.php>

Acknowledgement:

This guide was developed through a collaboration between Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium, Alberta Education and Alberta Mentoring Partnership. It is freely provided in support of improved teaching and learning under the following Creative Commons licence. 

