

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 describes how the role of the educational assistant in the classroom could shift to more actively facilitating positive peer interactions.

Key understandings

- The role of the educational assistant can shift from supporting individual students to supporting all students in a classroom.
- Other roles for educational assistants could be to facilitate peer interactions and model support strategies that students can use with their peers.

Questions for discussion

- How might educational assistants work differently in your school?
- What kind of training and support will educational assistants and teachers need to work differently?

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
- Causton-Theoharis, J. N. (2009). The golden rule of providing support in inclusive classrooms: Support others as you would wish to be supported. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 42(2) 36–43. http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/cdesped/download/pdf/ssn_goldenrule.pdf
- Giangreco, M. F. (2010). One-to-one paraprofessionals for students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms: Is conventional wisdom wrong? *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(1), 1–13. [http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/archives/mgiangre/IDD2010%2048\(1\)%201-13.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/archives/mgiangre/IDD2010%2048(1)%201-13.pdf)
- Giangreco, M. F., Doyle, M. B. & Suter, J. C. (2012). Constructively responding to requests for paraprofessionals: We keep asking the wrong questions. *Remedial and Special Education*, 33(6), 362–373. [http://www.vasonline.org/RASE12%2033\(6\)%20362-373.pdf](http://www.vasonline.org/RASE12%2033(6)%20362-373.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>

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