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.

General synopsis
In this short video clip, Dr. Erik Carter discusses the differences between peer supports and adult-delivered supports.

Key understandings
• Students’ academic engagement, class participation and social connections in the class may be hindered when they receive all of their support from adults.
• Students receiving adult-delivered support tend to have fewer interactions with classmates.

Questions for discussion
• How is support from one’s peers different from the kinds of support a student would receive from adults?
• What are some benefits a student might gain from being supported by a peer instead of an adult?

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 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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