

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 discusses considering other forms of support before arranging individualized one-to-one adult-delivered support.

Key understandings

- Consider the student’s abilities and needs before deciding on a form of support.
- Consider whether assistive technology or some additional instruction might help the student to participate more actively and/or independently in class activities.
- For some situations, peer support can be more effective and more enjoyable for the student than adult support.

Questions for discussion

- What other types of supports could help students with significant disabilities participate more independently in school?
- What are some strategies for determining the “just right” amount of support for an individual student?
- What are the benefits of providing “just enough” support?

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. 

