

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 some of the benefits that students without disabilities gain from working with their peers with significant disabilities.

Key understandings

- Students with significant disabilities learn a range of social, academic and self-determination skills when they have opportunities to learn alongside their peers without disabilities.
- Students without disabilities acquire greater appreciation of diversity, and of their classmates and themselves from learning alongside their peers with significant disabilities.

Questions for discussion

- What statements in this video clip caught your attention? Why?
- What are some benefits that students without disabilities in your school might gain from learning with peers with significant disabilities?
- Give some examples of how students in your school have advocated for their peers with 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. 

