

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 talks about guidelines and information to share with peer mentors before they begin supporting students with significant disabilities.

Key understandings

- Peer mentors benefit from initial training and targeted orientation before providing support to a peer with significant disabilities.
- It is important to explain to the peer mentor how and why his or her support is beneficial for the student with disabilities.
- The student's diagnosis and other personal information are confidential and should not be shared with peer mentors.
- Sharing some of the learning goals that the student with significant disabilities is working on can help the peer mentor to know what kinds of supports to provide.

Questions for discussion

- What training is provided in your school to peer mentors?
- What new information might you give peer mentors after viewing this video clip?

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>

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