PEER TUTORING AND SOCIAL BEHAVIORS: A REVIEW

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Children with disabilities often need social skill interventions. Regular classrooms rarely provide training or maintenance programs for social skills to meet the needs of children who are mainstreamed. Educators who work with these children need effective and easily implemented interventions that provide increased practice and opportunities to participate in social interactions with typical peers. Peer tutoring interventions were examined as a means of increasing appropriate social behavior in the classroom. Peer tutoring studies have taken various forms (e.g., cross-age, classwide, reciprocal) and evaluated many different aspects of social behavior. This paper examines such studies and proposes guidelines for future peer tutoring programs. Such guides should improve our knowledge of effective tutoring programs, and their effects on the social behavior of children with disabilities.

Peer tutoring in its simplest form involves a student helping another student learn a skill or task (Franca, Kerr, Reitz, & Lambert, 1990; Sprick, 1981). Peer tutoring can take various forms, such as classwide peer tutoring, small groups, and same-age or cross age dyads (Miller, Barbetta, & Heron, 1994). One-to-one tutoring is the most effective form of instruction known, with a strong data base supporting its use across students of almost all ages and conditions (Slavin, Madden, Dolan, Wasik, Ross, & Smith, 1994). The use of peers as tutors has a long, successful history in education (see Allen, 1976; Meacham, Montague, & McLaughlin, 1994; Montague, Meacham, & McLaughlin, 1991), and peer tutoring programs have been found to be more effective than some traditional teacher-moderated instructional methods (Greenwood, Dinwiddie, Bailey, Carta, & Delquadri, 1984; Kohler & Greenwood, 1989). Well-structured peer tutoring programs need to be examined as ways to improve the academic achievement and social skills of children with disabilities, especially in inclusionary programs in regular classrooms.

Peer tutoring research in the last two decades has focused on the potential benefits and drawbacks of involving children with disabilities as either tutors or tutees. Involving children, especially academically underachieving students, in peer tutoring programs demands strong justification. The potential academic benefits to tutees are persuasive, but insufficient, grounds for implementing peer tutoring programs; if, however, peer tutoring can be shown to meet multiple needs of both tutors and tutees, arguments for its use will be more convincing (Cook, Scruggs, Mastropieri, & Casto, 1985-86; Osguthorpe & Scruggs, 1986). Researchers contend that peer tutoring does produce not only academic benefits for tutors and tutees, but social benefits as well. Improvements in academic achievement as a result of peer tutoring have been found in the areas of math (Greenwood, et al., 1984; Franca et al., 1990; Harper, Mallette, Maheady, & Clifton, 1990; Maheady, Sacca, & Harper, 1987; Maher, 1982), social studies (Maheady, Harper & Sacca, 1988; Maheady, Sacca & Harper, 1988; Maher, 1982), vocabulary (Greenwood, et al., 1984; Hogan & Prater, 1990), spelling (Greenwood, Dinwiddie, Bailey, Carta, Dorsey, Kohler, Nelson, Rotholz, & Schulte, 1987; Greenwood, Terry, Arreaga-Mayer, & Finney, 1992; Greenwood, et al., 1984; Harper et al., 1990; Hogan & Prater, 1990; Muirhead & McLaughlin, 1990), reading/language arts (Cochran, Feng, Cartledge, & Hamilton, 1993; Maher, 1982; Scruggs & Osguthorpe, 1986; Top & Osguthorpe, 1987), sign language (Eiserman, Shisler, & Osguthorpe, 1987; Shisler, Osguthorpe, & Eiserman, 1987), and language and social play (Scruggs, Mastropieri, Veit, & Osguthorpe, 1986).

Social benefits of peer tutoring have been measured and reported in many studies, but vastly different methods of defining and measuring results have been used. Social behaviors have been defined as attendance (Maher, 1984; Scruggs et al., 1986), cooperation (Cochran et al., 1993), social acceptance (Shisler et al., 1987), social status (Franca et al., 1990), specific characteristics of peer interactions (Cochran et al., 1993; Graesser & Person, 1993; Maheady & Sainato, 1985; Scruggs et al., 1986; Trapani & Gettinger, 1989), number of disciplinary referrals (Maher, 1984; Scruggs et al., 1986), aggressive behavior (Lazerson, 1980), and self-concept (Franca et al., 1990; Labbo & Teale, 1990; Lazerson, 1980). Measurements have been made through teacher ratings (Cochran et al., 1993), student ratings (Cochran et al., 1993; Shisler et al., 1987), interviews (Cochran et al., 1993), direct observation (Franca et al., 1990; Scruggs et al., 1986; Trapani & Gettinger, 1989), administration of scaled instruments designed to measure social behaviors (Giesecke, Cartledge, & Gardner, 1993; Labbo & Teale, 1990; Scruggs et al., 1986) and anecdotal observations by teachers, students, parents, and/or naive observers (Balentzano, Agte, McLaughlin & Howard, 1993; Giesecke et al., 1993; Maher, 1984; Scruggs et al., 1986; Tabacek & McLaughlin, 1994). Observations have occurred
Social skill deficits also affect friendships, employment relationships, and other aspects of normal day-to-day life (Sabornie, 1991). Schumaker and Hazel (1984) speculated that social skill deficiencies may be as disabling as academic deficits, creating double handicaps for many children with disabilities. Research attempts to discover the essential social competencies necessary for adjustment to work and school environments have identified: (a) competencies that enable compliance with expected norms, such as listening, staying on-task, promptness, and compliance; and (b) competencies that promote positive interactions with other people, such as positive responding, appropriate conversation skills, and the ability to maintain social interactions (Conway & Gow, 1988; Walker, Todis, Holmes, & Horton, 1988). Walker et al., (1988) further contend that social competence is situation-specific, with standards of acceptability established by the people relevant to a particular situation. Social skills are the distinctive strategies employed in social interactions that allow decisions to be made about an individual's social competence (Walker et al., 1988). Schumaker and Hazel (1984) define social skills as any cognitive function or overt behavior in which an individual engages while interacting with another person or persons (p. 422). Cognitive functions are further delineated as empathizing; discriminating and acting on social cues; and anticipating and making decisions based on expected consequences of social behaviors (Schumaker & Hazel, 1984). Overt behaviors include nonverbal and verbal interaction elements, such as eye contact, body language, utterances, and sign language. (Schumaker & Hazel, 1984).

Social interactions are reciprocal, consisting of both initiations and responses (Odom & Strain, 1986).

Social skill deficiencies are frequently manifested as failures to initiate interactions with peers, failure to respond to peer initiations, or inappropriate responding to peer initiations (Goldstein & Ferrell, 1987). Many students with disabilities exhibit these interpersonal communication skill deficiencies (Goldstein & Ferrell, 1987; Maher, 1984), which contribute to their failure in regular education settings (Meadows, Neel, Scott, & Parker, 1994; Mercer & Mercer, 1994; Sabornie, 1991). These students are often rejected by their non-disabled peers, and occasionally choose to reject their typical peers (Sabornie, 1991).

The movement towards full inclusion demands that educators recognize and intervene in social skills deficiencies. Competent social skills not only contribute to academic and vocational achievements, but might help students compensate for academic deficiencies (Mercer & Mercer, 1994). Regular education teachers may recognize the presence of social skills problems in students with behavior disorders, but usually fail to make accommodations for them (Meadows et al., 1994). Students with behavior disorders receive little, if any, social skills instruction in mainstream settings, and any training begun in more segregated settings usually ceases when the child enters the regular classroom (Meadows et al., 1994). Meadows et al. (1994) reported finding that 79% of regular classroom teachers acknowledged using the same techniques to manage the behavior of all students, whether disabled or not. They speculated that regular teachers may expect the behavior problems of children with disabilities to have been fixed in self-contained or pull-out programs, with no further adaptations necessary (Meadows et al., 1994). Such fixing does not occur and maintain without regular classroom intervention. Analog training has failed to produce significant generalization of social skills to other, more natural, environments (Strain & Shores, 1983); teaching students to role-play in clinical settings, such as pull-out or self-contained classrooms, has failed to improve social skills in the regular classroom and on the playground. One reason for this failure is that socially responsive peers are essential to any social behavior intervention (Strain and Shores, 1983). Typical students both initiate social exchanges and respond to social initiations more than students who are socially withdrawn (Shores, 1987). Analog training rarely includes typical peers as models or subjects. Integrated settings, therefore, provide greater opportunity for the practice and reinforcement of social skills (Shores, 1987; Strain & Shores, 1983). Researchers have recommended structured peer tutoring programs as a way to increase opportunities for students to engage in appropriate social interactions with their peers (Ehly & Larsen, 1976; Eiserman et al., 1987; Kohler & Greenwood, 1989; Scruggs et al., 1985; Strayhorn, Strain, & Walker, 1993).

Peer tutoring could augment social skills training by (a) promoting the generalization of social behaviors in integrated classroom settings and (b) involving typical peers as models of appropriate social interactions. Peer tutoring can...
improve the chances for students with disabilities to succeed in regular classrooms by not only increasing peer interactions (Miller, et al., 1994), but by establishing behaviors that promote peer acceptance, such as cooperation and positive reinforcement (Eiserman et al., 1987). Peer tutoring should not, however, be implemented simply for the benefit of students with disabilities, but should target typical children as well. Sabornie (1991) argued that social skills training procedures should target both students with disabilities and their peers. One possible benefit is increased social acceptance. Instructional interventions designed to increase the social acceptance of students with disabilities by their typical peers have primarily focused on altering the attitudes of typical children, while excluding actual contact with children with disabilities (Eiserman et al., 1987). Such analog attempts to create empathy and sensitivity may simply promote stereotyping of students with disabilities (Shisler et al., 1987). Typical children need to become aware of not only the differences, but the positive attributes, competencies, and commonalities of their exceptional peers (Shisler et al., 1987). Peer tutoring deserves consideration as a way to accomplish this goal.

Learning to self-manage behavior is a critical life skill (Hogan & Prater, 1993), and Odom and Strain (1986) assert that social interactions in the classroom need to be self-managed. Teachers rarely receive training in how to promote social interactions between students (Odom & Strain, 1986), and teacher-involvement has been shown to hamper or terminate student interactions (Strain & Powell, 1982). A well-structured peer tutoring program may well address these issues by providing teachers with a tutor-training format, a means of shaping and monitoring student interactions with a minimum of involvement, and by establishing tutor-tutee interactions patterns. Interventions designed to foster social behaviors in children with disabilities must target behaviors that will promote the reciprocity of social interactions, both on the part of the subject students, and on the part of their peers (Mercer & Mercer, 1994; Odom & Strain, 1986). Structured and well-run peer tutoring programs can do this successfully.

Research has repeatedly demonstrated that peer tutoring is an effective academic intervention (Scruggs & Osguthorpe, 1986). Effective academic instruction has been shown to have a positive impact on both academic and social behaviors (Maheady & Sainato, 1985; Strayhorn et al., 1993). Research suggests that behavior-focused interventions may have positive effects on behavior but are unlikely to impact academic performance (Morgan & Jenson, 1988). Improving academic performance, however, is quite likely to contribute to improved social behavior (Morgan & Jenson, 1988; Strayhorn et al., 1993). The most effective programs for underachieving students emphasize prevention over remediation (Giesecke et al., 1993; Maheady et al., 1988b), use direct instruction (Giesecke et al., 1993), increase meaningful on-task time (Giesecke et al., 1993; Greenwood et al., 1984), increase responding (Giesecke et al., 1993; Greenwood et al., 1984), and individualize instruction in reading, writing, and math (Giesecke et al., 1993). Academic achievement is also strongly linked to frequent testing, student access to content materials, interactions with proctors, and rules and contingencies linked to on-task behavior and academic attainment (Greenwood et al., 1984). Effective programs must also be viable across settings, students, behaviors, instructors, and time if they are to have a broad impact (Slavin et al., 1994). Structured peer tutoring formats can be shaped to meet all of the above criteria for effective instruction. Peer tutoring is probably not in and of itself sufficient to address the social skills needs of students with disabilities, but a well-structured program can improve academic achievement; provide modeling and practice in appropriate reciprocal peer interactions across settings, time, and persons; and increase the acceptance of students with disabilities by their typical peers.

Research In Peer Tutoring with Social Skills Measurements
Cochran et al. (1993) conducted a cross-age peer tutoring study involving 16 African-American 7 to 11 year old boys with behavior disorders in a self-contained school. Eight students functioned as controls, four served as tutors, and four were tutees. Ratings for the students on a teacher-completed Behavior Evaluation Scale ranged from 44 to 85, with particular difficulties exhibited in excessive motion, noncompliance, aggression towards adults and other students, and off-task behaviors. Pre- and post-treatment measures of social skills were rated by teachers, who assessed the students’ social skills, problem behaviors, and academic competence; and by the students, who rated their own cooperation, assertion, empathy and self-control skills. Direct observation was also used to measure cooperative and uncooperative statements, and social validity was rated through individual interviews with the students at the end of the study. Teachers perceived significant increases in tutees’ social skills, decreases in problem behaviors, and significant academic achievement increases as compared to control students. Tutors were rated similarly in these social skills areas, but scored a significant decline in academic competence, nearly twice that of their controls. Increased academic cooperative statements and decreased uncooperative and put-down statements were observed during the tutorials and lunch period for all students involved in the intervention. The tutors and tutees also self-reported academic progress, improved interpersonal relationships, program satisfaction, and a willingness to function as tutors or tutees again. Tutors reported improved understanding of the tutees, and teachers reported observing more positive attitudes towards schoolwork and increased self-confidence.
The authors credited the improvement in positive and cooperative statements to: (a) tutor training in prompting and feedback and reinforcement or corrective feedback for these behaviors; (b) the use of stickers as reinforcers for following the established format and for making more positive cooperative statements than negative or uncooperative statements; and (c) the tutorial nature of the intervention (Cochran et al., 1993). These students were rated among the worst behaved in a self-contained school for children with behavior disorders. The peer tutoring intervention produced significant improvements in their social skills. Perhaps a longer study, or one involving typical students would produce even better results.

Shisler et al. (1987) examined the effects of peer tutoring on the social acceptance of fifth and sixth grade students with behavior disorders by their typical peers. A reverse-role format was used to meet the criteria established by Watts (1984, as cited in Shisler et al., 1987) for increasing the social acceptance of students: (a) minority group students must be of equal or higher status than majority students, (b) intimate personal interactions should be fostered, and (c) both groups should be working towards a mutual goal. Pretreatment assessment determined that the students in two regular classrooms viewed their peers in the two self-contained classrooms for the behaviorally disordered more negatively than they did typical peers in other classrooms. Posttreatment evaluation revealed a significant improvement in the attitudes of the students in the regular classrooms towards their tutors in the self-contained classroom which had provided tutors for them. A three-month maintenance check determined that those attitude changes had persisted over time. The authors found that improved attitudes did not, however, generalize to the students in the other self-contained classroom (Shisler et al., 1987). Shisler et al. (1987) effectively used a peer tutoring intervention to improve the attitudes of typical peers towards specific students with behavior problems. If the students from the self-contained setting had spent time in the regular classroom, with additional opportunities to interact with their typical peers, perhaps more dramatic changes would have occurred. Future studies should also examine the social behavior and attitudes of the tutees.

Bolich (1982) conducted a 10-week comparison study involving three groups of six high school students with conduct disorders as either cross-age peer tutors, tutees in an established peer tutoring program, or recipients of formal group counseling. Academic achievement was measured in regular-classroom math, language arts, and social science classes. Targeted social behaviors were the number of teacher-written disciplinary referrals made to the vice principal, and rate of attendance. The cross-age tutors made slight improvements in math over the other groups, significant improvements in language arts over the counseling group, and significant improvements in social science over the peer tutoring group. The cross-age tutors also had significantly fewer absences than either of the other two groups, whose absentee rates increased significantly throughout the intervention and follow-up periods (Maher, 1982). Maher also found the tutors to have significantly fewer disciplinary referrals than the others. The cross-age tutors also had significantly fewer absences than either of the other two groups, whose absentee rates increased significantly throughout the intervention and follow-up periods (Maher, 1982).
reported positive changes in social behavior only for the cross-age tutors. Maher's (1982) peer tutoring intervention not only required tutors to interact with younger children with disabilities, but also demanded that tutors walk to a different school, and spend 15 to 20 minutes each week collaborating with the tutee's special education teachers to plan lessons and evaluate the intervention. Increasing tutor responsibility within a well-structured cross-age peer tutoring program resulted in significant positive behavior changes.

Lazerson (1980) measured social behavior in a cross-age peer tutoring study involving 60 withdrawn and aggressive students. Measurement took three forms: an adapted version of Luski and Shmuck's (1960) Self-Concept Scale was used to measure student self-concepts, the Devereaux Elementary School Behavior Rating Scale was used to measure aggressive and withdrawn behaviors, and teachers filled out a questionnaire at the conclusion of the study to rate student behavior. Tutors received two brief training sessions in corrective and reinforcing feedback, but had free manipulation of the content material during tutorial sessions. The tutors were encouraged to hold sessions over 5 weeks for 20-30 minutes each, but the participation rate was low, with some students only meeting with their tutees as few as 5 of 23 possible sessions. The students who actively participated showed significant gains in attitude and self-concept, but Lazerson (1980) concedes that the study would have benefited from (a) teacher-generated structure; (b) consistent sessions, preferably daily for 20 minutes; (c) well-defined tutor and tutee roles; (d) better matching of dyad members; and (e) the implementation of evaluation procedures.

Labbo and Teale (1990) implemented a cross-age reading program with 20 fifth grade students who were below-average readers as measured by the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. Many of them were also judged to be at-risk. Students were divided into three groups: one control, one to engage in art interactions with kindergarten students, and one to read to kindergarten students. The readers' roles had four structured stages: (a) teacher-guidance in selecting a picture book in the school library, individual repeated practice reading the book, and teacher-direction in how to introduce and discuss the book; (b) prereading collaboration with peers to share readings; (c) cross-age reading sessions; and (d) post-reading collaboration with the teacher. The Piers-Harris was used to measure student self-concept and showed significant gains for the fifth grade readers. While not strictly a peer tutoring intervention, this study shows that creating well-structured teaching opportunities for students can improve their self-concepts.

Trapani and Gettinger (1989) compared the results of a structured social communication skills training intervention alone, and in combination with a cross-age reverse-role peer tutoring component, to a control group. The subjects were 20 fourth to sixth grade boys with learning disabilities, randomly assigned to one of three groups. Resource room teachers had rated the boys on the Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist (WPBIC) as deficient in targeted social skills: Greeting, asking questions, answering questions, complimenting, and listening. The Test of Written Spelling (TWS) was used to measure spelling ability. The social skills training for the two intervention groups consisted of seven days of 30-minute direct instruction in the individual target behaviors, with students required to exhibit mastery by stating a behavior's definition, correctly identifying positive and negative examples, and implementing the skill correctly in five role-playing situations. Students in the peer tutoring group then tutored typical second-grade boys in spelling thrice weekly for 4 weeks. The 20-minute sessions were designed to provide multiple opportunities for the tutors to practice the targeted social skills. After each session, tutors completed a self-monitoring checklist, and received additional feedback on their use of the target behaviors from an observer. Separate observations were conducted three times in the natural classroom by trained independent naive observers. These pre-, mid-, and post-intervention observations randomly recorded occurrences of the target behaviors. Results showed (a) peer tutors scored higher on the TWS than either of the other groups; (b) no significant difference on WPBIC scores; and (c) tutors exhibited significantly higher rates of both greeting and answering questions in the classroom. Anecdotal reports suggested the tutors experienced an increased sense of personal responsibility. The authors speculate that the WPBIC ratings showed no significant improvements due to teacher bias and/or instrument insensitivity. The targeted social skills may not have been particularly valued by teachers, and changes may have occurred in so short a time, or been of such a nature that they failed to register on the WPBIC.

The tutoring intervention used in this study was designed to link social skills training and the generalized application of those skills to the natural classroom setting by providing opportunities for guided practice and active rehearsal of target behaviors. Future research over longer periods of time should continue along these lines. Scruggs et al. (1986) involved 24 third to fifth grade students with behavior disorders in a cross-age peer tutoring program. Students were randomly assigned to be either tutors or controls over four 5-week sessions. Tutees were three low-functioning, severely multiply disabled children aged 10 to 12, enrolled in a separate self-contained classroom. Two tutors taught language skills using DISTAR materials, while the third modeled and consequated socially relevant play behavior by playing classroom games with the tutee. The researchers measured a variety of social behaviors for the five weeks preceding and five weeks
duration of each student's involvement as tutor or control. Measurements were made with the Attitude Toward School survey, the Devereoux Child Behavior Rating Scale, absences, disciplinary actions by teachers, two independent observations by a naive observer in different settings both before and after each student's involvement as either a tutor or control, and daily data on an individualized target behavior for each tutor (i.e. kicking, arguing, positive comments). The results found no significant differences in absences between tutors and controls or in the number of disciplinary actions made by teachers. The formal instruments found no significant differences in attitudes toward school or behavior ratings, and the control students alone made insignificant improvements in target behaviors. Observations found 14 tutors and 7 control students exhibiting more appropriate school behaviors, with tutors making insignificantly more positive statements to tutees during sessions. Ten of the 12 tutors in this study self-reported improvements and satisfaction with the tutoring program, while one moved before the study was completed and the other was concerned over missed school work. The results of this study illustrate the need to carefully structure and monitor peer tutoring programs. Particular attention must be paid to dyad formation: involving students in separate classrooms, who have no further opportunities for meaningful social interactions is likely to do little to enhance the social behavior of students with social deficits.

Giesecke et al. (1993) conducted a study involving fourth grade low-status tutors who were reading at the third grade level, and third grade tutees who read at grade level. Tutors received one week of 30 to 40 minute training sessions before the intervention, which consisted of 19 30-minutes sessions over five weeks. A multiple baseline design across sets of 20 words was employed, with the number of correctly identified sight words measured. A structured format was adopted, with tutors trained to use scripted lessons, various games, and testing and charting procedures. The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and individual student interviews were used to assess the tutors' self-perceptions. The tutees showed dramatic improvements in sight word acquisition, with tutors also showing significant improvement. The Piers-Harris showed substantial post-test gains for three of the tutors, with one unavailable for testing. The tutors self-reported enthusiastic satisfaction, a desire to continue the program, pleasure in getting to help other students, with only one tutor concerned about missed seat work. Teachers anecdotally reported improved tutor behavior in the classroom. This was a well-structured and closely supervised tutoring program. The authors contend that functioning competently in the role of teacher encouraged students to assume characteristics of leadership, (e.g. prestige, competence, authority). Implementing a classwide peer tutoring program would eliminate student concerns over missed work by involving all students simultaneously.

Graesser and Person (1993) found that separate peer tutoring programs implemented with seventh graders and college students generated approximately 240 times more tutee questions then regular teacher-led instruction. They speculate that the tutoring setting removed some of the social barriers that typically hinder student questioning and created an environment where students felt comfortable and appropriate asking questions (Graesser & Person, 1993). In this case, peer tutoring increased student interactions dramatically in an academic context. The study was not designed to measure non-academic social interactions, but increased academic-oriented interactions in peer tutoring settings have been shown to generalize to other settings (Balenzano et al., 1993; Tabacek & McLaughlin, 1994). Studies examining the effects of reverse-role peer tutoring in sign language on social behavior found the tutors, who were labeled as mentally retarded, engaging in significantly more positive social interactions with their typical peers; an increase that maintained over time (Osguthorpe & Scruggs, 1986). Peer tutoring programs were originally recognized as being multifaceted experiments in socialization, and on-task behavior and cooperation were the initial effects of peer tutoring noted by Bell in his classic peer tutoring program (Osguthorpe & Scruggs, 1986).

Maheady et al. (1988a) conducted an effective study of classwide peer tutoring in a secondary resource room social studies program, where students reported feeling they were better liked, peers were nicer to them and thought they were smarter, and that they in turn were nicer to their peers. Teachers also reported satisfaction with this program. A similar study by Maheady et al. (1988b) in three regular social studies classrooms including 14 students with mild disabilities and 36 typical students produced significant academic improvements and was also pleasing to teachers and students. Maheady and Sainato (1985) evaluated the effects of peer tutoring on the social interactions, social status, and academic achievement of students in three regular fifth grade classrooms. One dyad was formed in each classroom, consisting of a high-status tutor and a low-status tutee. Thirty minutes of math tutoring prior to lunch produced significant improvement in the tutees' daily math scores. Observations of social interactions during lunch found an increase in positive exchanges and a decrease in negative social interactions which maintained somewhat over a four-week follow-up period. Slight positive changes in the social status of tutees were also noted. Inclusion programs can use similar peer tutoring procedures to ease the transition of students with disabilities into regular classrooms. Further involving low-status tutees as tutors might increase social benefits and improve status even more significantly.

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Conclusions

Social skills training and the promotion of positive relationships between peers are important elements of successful education programs (Strayhorn et al., 1993). Social interaction skills are best taught and learned through actual practice with others under close monitoring and supervision (Strayhorn et al., 1993). Peer tutoring programs can increase and promote the generalization of social skills by providing opportunities for students to (a) learn and practice specific interaction skills and behaviors, (b) enhance self-confidence and language skills, (c) respond and practice content material, (d) learn complex chained behaviors, and (e) engage in fun activities with cognitive benefits (Tabacek & McLaughlin, 1994) in meaningful interaction with other children. Preventative measures are preferable in social behavior education, and improving the overall effectiveness of classroom instruction with methods such as peer tutoring may be more important than developing procedures to compensate for behavior problems that occur as a result of poor quality instruction in the first place. (Maheady et al., 1988b).

Inclusive programs are becoming increasingly widespread as educators seek to improve the education of children with special needs; peer tutoring is ideal for integrated classrooms (Byrd, 1990). Peer tutoring appears to be a way to meet the need for preventative measures and effective instructional procedures that will ensure the academic and social achievement of all students (Maheady et al., 1988b). Both inclusion and peer tutoring are essential elements in the future of regular and special education.

(Byrd, 1990), and future research is needed to discover how best to implement peer tutoring programs that enhance the academic and social behaviors of children with disabilities.
References


