



# USING LEARNERS AS A Resource for Learning Support

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The risk when teaching with an abundance of learning support materials is that the teacher may miss the opportunities of social interaction and learning which happen with peer teaching.

Alternatively, when learning support materials are lacking, the teachers' best resource can often be their learners.

## 2 HOW DOES PEER TEACHING IMPACT LEARNING?

- **Literacy increases** – Learners who read and discuss story passages with their peers recall more content and score higher on assessments.
- **Reasoning and critical thinking skills develop** – Learners who work in pairs and groups become active learners, discussing and rationalizing lesson concepts in their own words.
- **Improved confidence and interpersonal skills** – Shy or withdrawn learners have a chance to express themselves and interact with a partner or the group
- **Increased comfort and openness** – Learners identify more easily with peer helpers than with adult authority figures. They are more comfortable about asking questions and work through challenging problems in an environment free from class ridicule.
- **Versatility** – a range of peer teaching exercises based on different subjects and objectives can be used, possibly involving other grades and classes.

## 1 POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF PEER TEACHING

- **Parent pushback** – When parents learn about peer teaching from their kids, they may see it in a negative light. In that case the teacher is advised to send an explanatory letter home.
- **Learner inexperience** – Teaching tips and guidelines which the learners will need to use should be clearly indicated. Teachers should give guidance on avoiding harsh criticism or belittling, which could be hurtful.
- **Learner reluctance** – Pairing students together can backfire, as some may feel inferior when being taught by certain peers. Some learners will not be keen to do the peer teaching. For it to be a success, the concept must be clearly described and tested by the class teacher.

## 2 PEER TEACHING STRATEGIES

**Make the purpose of the peer activity very clear** – then outline the process of reaching learning objectives. This is usually the same as that for the whole class, but may sometimes be different.

## 3 TEACH TUTORING SKILLS

- **Positive feedback** – This should be honest, natural and supportive.
- **Corrective feedback** – Simply say what went wrong and show how to reach proper solutions.

## 4 CHOOSE THE RIGHT PEER TEACHERS

Gifted learners may have less empathy for those who do not learn easily, causing friction. Choose those who are active class participants, work hard to achieve high grades, and interact well with others, regardless of factors such as gender and socioeconomic status.

**Drama** – This builds confidence, promotes team work and is a very liberating experience – peers can encourage and enjoy each other’s abilities in a safe space!

**Board games** – These can form the basis of a collaborative learning experience and are great fun to set up, with different tasks assigned to learners.

**Making pictures** – Learners can cooperate to make pictures. These can include flashcards for the lower levels, pictures which can create context and predict what the lesson is going to be about, and pictures as prompts for discussion.

**Singing** – It is exciting for young learners to form rap groups and it requires no resources. Music is also a good way to integrate different cultures through language learning.

**Interviews and stories** – Learners can interview classmates and write up their stories. These can then be brought to the class and shared as reading and discussion material, encouraging intercultural understanding and connection.

### RESOURCES

- ▶ [www.witslanguageschool.com](http://www.witslanguageschool.com)
- ▶ Marcus Guido Teaching Strategies, Teaching Tools Learners as a resource to support teaching for all – Inclusive Education South Africa – video

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact: Inclusive Education South Africa

Cape Town – 021 762 6664 | [projects@included.org.za](mailto:projects@included.org.za) | [www.included.org.za](http://www.included.org.za)

For more information about the *Teaching and Learning for Inclusive Education* project: [vovb.be/southafrica](http://vovb.be/southafrica)



*“What a child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow”*

Vygotsky

*“Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn”*

Benjamin Franklin

### Tips

- ▶ Well-constructed peer groups serve as an anchor for learning.
- ▶ Look around your classroom, peer teaching is already happening informally!
- ▶ Good planning for peer teaching makes large classes manageable.

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