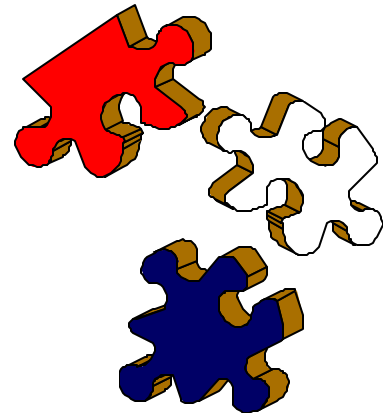


# Chapter 2

## Peer Tutoring: Assembling the Pieces



A peer-tutoring program will be successful only if it is well organized and coordinated. This section presents guidelines to follow when preparing to start peer tutoring in a school to ensure that the program is built upon a firm and lasting foundation.

### **Clearly Define Staff Responsibilities for Program**

An effective peer-tutoring program requires that adults in the school share responsibility for implementing the program. The tutoring program supervisor, school administrator, and teachers with children enrolled in the program all have important obligations to fulfill. Each of these key figures should understand in advance what duties would be expected of them and agree to do their part.

#### ***Peer Tutoring Program Supervisor***

The supervisor of the peer-tutoring program must be prepared to:

- Help teachers to select students to serve as tutors and tutees
- Work with the school administrator (and perhaps others) to locate space and materials needed for the tutoring program
- Train older students to be peer tutors
- Match up tutors and tutees
- Observe student tutoring sessions occasionally to guarantee quality control
- Monitor tutors and tutees using curriculum-based assessment to track the effectiveness of the tutoring program.

#### ***Building Principal***

A cross-age peer-tutoring program will not succeed unless the building principal fully supports it. In addition to giving verbal support, though, the principal should be ready as needed to:

- Assist the tutoring program supervisor to find space and locate materials needed for tutoring.
- Encourage reluctant teachers to nominate children to serve as tutors or tutees.
- Work to remove any unexpected roadblocks that threaten to interfere with peer tutoring
- Build staff and community support for the program by acting as a public 'cheerleader' at faculty meetings and other settings.

### **Teachers of Student Tutors & Tutees**

Teachers who agree to let children from their classrooms be peer tutors or tutees must understand that:

- Instructors are responsible for ensuring that a child being tutored brings reading material (e.g., assigned reading book) to every tutoring session that matches the tutee's reading skills.
- With few exceptions, peer-tutoring sessions should always be given priority in the student's classroom schedule. If the student does need to miss a tutoring session because of a classroom scheduling conflict, the teacher should notify the program supervisor in advance to permit the supervisor to reschedule the peer tutoring appointment or make other arrangements to make up the session.
- Peer tutoring is a necessary instructional support--*not* a privilege to be withheld as a consequence for student misbehavior. In other words, students should never be prevented from attending peer tutoring as a form of punishment.

### **Create System for Records Storage & Organization**

A peer tutoring program requires the collection and storage of a great deal of information: what children will be participating, what meeting times are best for which pairs of tutors and tutees, curriculum-based measurement reading data collected on an ongoing basis for each child enrolled in the program, etc.

As the program supervisor, you should figure out how to store crucial information efficiently as one of the very first steps in establishing your peer-tutoring program. The good news is that there are lots of forms and ideas in this manual to help you manage all of your program information. Here are a few suggestions for getting started:

- Develop a system for organizing and storing peer tutoring information that meets your needs and available resources. Some supervisors might choose to store their program information in three-ring binders, while others may opt to put it into folders and store it in a file-cabinet. Put together a system that works for you.
- Store your tutoring program records in a location that is secure (e.g., in a room that can be locked when it is not being used).
- Be sure that others who might be helping you with your peer-tutoring program can get access to records when they need them. For example, if you have a teaching assistant who regularly monitors the reading performance of tutees in the program using Curriculum-Based Measurement reading probes, that assistant will probably need to have access to your program records to add information about the CBM data that she or he has collected.
- Make extra copies of those forms that you use often (e.g., curriculum-based measurement reading monitoring charts) and store them with your other records for easy central access.

### **Inventory Locations in School Suitable for Peer Tutoring**

Imaginative schools can often find many locations throughout the building that would be suitable for peer tutoring. There are two primary requirements for such locations. First, they should be relatively free of distractions. Second, these locations must be under the general supervision of an adult whenever peer tutoring is taking place.

The school library can be an excellent place for peer tutors to meet with their tutees. Other possible locations may be a table in the cafeteria before lunch, the music room during a free period, or even a quiet corner of a classroom. Any location is acceptable so long as it is on school grounds, allows students to work together in relative quiet, and is supervised by school staff.

In schools where instructional space is scarce, staff in charge of organizing a peer tutoring program may want to walk the building at different times of the day to map out those locations that would be appropriate for peer tutoring and to note the time(s) of day (and perhaps the days of the week) that each tutoring space is available. These prospective tutoring locations can be listed on the *Tutoring Locations Inventory Sheet* (see the Forms & Resources section of this chapter). Be sure, though, to get the permission of any staff members who have ownership of these school spaces (e.g., asking the music teacher if you can use the Music Room during a free period) before you use the locations for peer tutoring. Also, review your list of possible tutoring sites with the building principal. Ask him or her whether these spaces are all right to use. Inquire whether the principal may have any other suggestions for tutoring space.

## Select Students That Will Benefit From Peer Tutoring

A wide range of children can benefit from participation in a cross-age peer-tutoring program, whether they are tutors or tutees. The program is most likely to be successful, though, when children are selected who display good conduct, show motivation and investment to participate in peer tutoring, and possess at least the minimum level of reading skills to take part in the reading activities. At the same time, children enrolled in peer tutoring should represent the full diversity of their classrooms to the greatest degree possible. A child with a special education label, for example, who has the necessary entry-level qualities should be given equal consideration to be chosen as a peer tutor as would his or her 'typical' classmate.

### ***Tutors: Essential Qualities***

Students who will make effective peer tutors don't have to be perfect! To be a peer tutor to a younger child, a student just has to be able to:

- Read comfortably at or above a mid-second-grade level.
- Be willing to take on a helping role when working with younger children.
- Reliably follow a simple set of strategies at each tutoring session (after being trained in how to use these steps).
- Behave appropriately when working with a younger child under limited adult supervision.
- Be trusted to walk through the halls unaccompanied when picking up and dropping off the child being tutored.

***Tutees: Essential Qualities***

Children who make gains in peer tutoring are those who need lots of opportunities to read aloud with encouragement, guidance, and feedback from a competent reader. To be a good candidate to be tutored by an older peer, the younger child has to be able to:

- Read instructionally at or above a mid-first grade level.
- Read aloud in the presence of the peer tutor and accept corrective feedback from the tutor.
- Behave appropriately and follow the directions of an older student under limited adult supervision.
- Accompany the tutor to and from the tutoring session in an orderly manner.

***Helping Teachers to Select Appropriate Peer Tutors & Tutees***

As the program supervisor, you can guide teachers to choose those children from their classrooms who are likely to make the most suitable tutors or tutees. Ideally, you or another program representative should provide a brief initial workshop or inservice to provide an overview of the peer tutoring program.

Such a presentation could be presented to small groups of teachers or to an entire faculty. It might include a description of:

- The goals of peer tutoring
- Selection criteria for tutors and tutees
- Elements of peer tutor training
- A 'typical' peer tutoring session
- Methods used to monitor student program in peer tutoring
- Teacher, student, and program supervisor responsibilities in the program.

You will probably want to follow up a presentation on peer tutoring by putting letters in teachers' mailboxes to encourage them to nominate children from their classrooms as tutors or tutees. (See the *Tutors: Teacher Nomination Letter* and the *Tutees: Teacher Nomination Letter* in the Forms section of this chapter for ideas on how to write your teacher contact letters.) The teacher letter should explain the goals and structures of the peer-tutoring program and also list the 'essential qualities' that children who are nominated for the program should have to be successful.

Once you have collected student-nomination lists from teachers, you will take student names from those lists to assemble a roster of students to serve as tutors and tutees. At this early stage, you should select several more student names (particularly as potential tutors) than you may have program slots available. You will want these extra names because several students may eventually drop off of your list for various reasons (e.g., because parents failed to sign permission forms to allow them to participate).

Next, give teachers the names of those students from their classrooms that you would like to enroll in your peer-tutoring program. (See the *Tutors: Teacher Notification Letter* and the *Tutees: Teacher Notification Letter* in the Forms section of this chapter for models.)

### **Getting Parent Permissions**

Because peer tutoring can represent a substantial modification of a student's instructional day, parents should be notified that their child has been selected to be a peer tutor or tutee. It is also a very good idea to require that the parent give written permission before the child can be formally enrolled in a peer-tutoring program. (See the *Tutors: Parent Permission Letter* and the *Tutees: Parent Permission Letter* in the Forms section of the chapter for models.)

Do not be surprised if several parents call you to ask for more information about the peer-tutoring program. Even after you have explained the program to them, one or more parents may decline to allow their child to participate. This is their right. Schools should never pressure parents to include their children in any optional program about which they may have reservations.

### **Collect Baseline Curriculum-Based Measurement Data for All Tutoring Participants**

A school cannot judge whether peer tutoring has been effective in helping a student to become a better reader unless it first collects baseline information about how well the student reads *prior* to starting the tutoring. Therefore, you should collect a minimum of 3 curriculum-based measurement (CBM) reading datapoints for each child enrolled in peer tutoring (both tutors and tutees) before the program begins. Each of the three observations should be collected on different days. If necessary, a survey-level CBM assessment should be completed on a child first to determine the optimal level to monitor during tutoring. NOTE: CBM data should not be collected on children until parent permissions are received. For a free online manual on the use of CBM as an academic assessment tool, see Wright (2000).

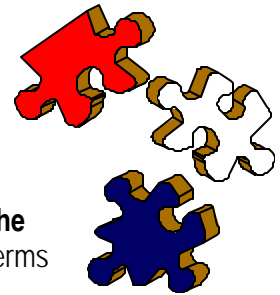
### **References**

Wright, J. (1992). *Curriculum-based measurement: A manual for teachers*. Available online at: <http://www.jimwrightonline.com/pdfdocs/cbmManual.pdf>

## Forms & Resources: Chapter 2/Assembling the Pieces

### Peer Tutoring: Assembling the Pieces Checklist

Use this checklist to ensure that you have covered important steps in preparing your school to start a peer-tutoring program:



- ❑ **Teachers and school administration have been given an overview of the peer-tutoring program.** Staff and administration understand in general terms how peer tutoring in reading will benefit both tutor and tutee, what training students will require to be peer tutors, when the program is likely to start, what typical activities students will engage in during peer tutoring, and how much time per week tutors and tutees will need to spend tutoring.
- ❑ **Staff understand their specific responsibilities to support peer tutoring.** The peer tutoring program supervisor, school administration and teachers of tutors and tutees all know what they are expected to do to support peer tutoring in the school.
- ❑ **A system has been created to collect and store peer tutoring records and information.** The program supervisor has devised a method (e.g., binder, file drawer) to store information about the peer-tutoring program in a centrally located, secure setting.
- ❑ **The school has inventoried locations throughout the school that are suitable and available for peer tutoring.** Staff and administration understand in general terms how peer tutoring in reading will benefit both tutor and tutee, what training students will require to be peer tutors, when the program is likely to start, and how much time per week tutors and tutees will need to spend in tutoring sessions.
- ❑ **Teachers have been requested to nominate students from their rooms to serve as peer tutors or receive tutoring.** Teachers of older students receive letters asking them to nominate children to be peer tutors. Teachers of younger students receive letters requesting the names of children who should receive peer tutoring. The letters explain the essential qualities that peer tutors/tutees should have.
- ❑ **Once teacher nominations are received, the program supervisor selects those children who will be tutors or tutees. Teachers are notified.** The program supervisor sifts through names submitted by teachers to choose the final list of those students that will be trained as tutors or be tutees. Teachers are notified of the names of those students from their room who have been selected.
- ❑ **Before the tutoring program begins, parent permissions are secured for all prospective tutors and tutees.** Letters are sent home to parents of children chosen to be tutors or tutees. The letters briefly explain the benefits of the peer-tutoring program and include a parent permission form. NOTE: No student can participate in any capacity in the tutoring program

until his or her parent(s) have signed the permission form.

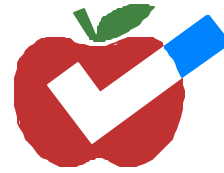
- **Baseline curriculum-based measurement (CBM) oral reading fluency information is collected for all tutors and tutees prior to the start of the program.** A minimum of 3 CBM reading datapoints are collected for each child enrolled in peer tutoring (both tutors and tutees) before the program begins. Each of the three observations should be collected on different days. If necessary, a survey-level assessment is completed on a child first to determine the optimal level to monitor during tutoring. NOTE: CBM data should not be collected on children until parent permissions are received.





### **Tutors: Teacher Nomination Letter**

<DATE>



Dear <TEACHER NAME>:

We are starting a peer-tutoring program at <SCHOOL NAME>. In this program, older students will tutor younger children in reading. These peer tutors will be trained to listen to the younger student read aloud, to correct reading mistakes, and to praise the younger reader for trying his or her best.

We would like to train selected students from your classroom to be peer tutors. Research shows that children who serve as peer tutors often achieve significant reading gains themselves. They also have a valuable opportunity to practice helping skills with younger children.

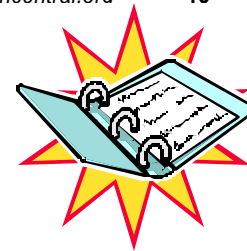
Students who will make good peer tutors don't have to be perfect! To be a peer tutor to a younger child, a student just has to be able to:

- Read comfortably at or above a mid-second-grade level.
- Be willing to take on a helping role when working with younger children.
- Reliably follow a simple set of strategies at each tutoring session (after being trained in how to use these steps).
- Behave appropriately when working with a younger child under limited adult supervision.
- Be trusted to walk through the halls unaccompanied when picking up and dropping off the child being tutored.

If you have children from your class that you believe would be good peer tutors, please write their names on the attached sheet and leave it in my mailbox in the main office. After I receive the list, I will contact you to set up a time to train these peer tutors.

Thank you,

<YOUR NAME>, <YOUR TITLE>, Supervisor  
Peer Tutoring Program



Return to: \_\_\_\_\_

## Peer Tutor Nomination Form

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Classroom \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please list below students from your room that you would like to nominate to be peer tutors. If possible, list students in descending order, with those that you would *most* like to see selected as tutors appearing at or near the top of the page.

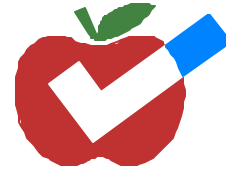
1. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_

*To be a peer tutor to a younger child, a student should be able to:*

- Read comfortably at or above a mid-second-grade level.
- Be willing to take on a helping role when working with younger children.
- Reliably follow a simple set of strategies at each tutoring session (after being trained in how to use these steps).
- Behave appropriately when working with a younger child under limited adult supervision.
- Be trusted to walk through the halls unaccompanied when picking up and dropping off the child being tutored.

**Tutees: Teacher Nomination Letter**

<DATE>



Dear <TEACHER NAME>:

We are starting a peer-tutoring program at <SCHOOL NAME>. In this program, older students will tutor younger children in reading. These peer tutors will be trained to listen to the younger student read aloud, to correct reading mistakes, and to praise the younger reader for trying his or her best.

We would like to sign children from your room up to be tutored by older students. Research shows that children who receive peer tutoring are able to strengthen their reading skills. They can also gain confidence as independent readers.

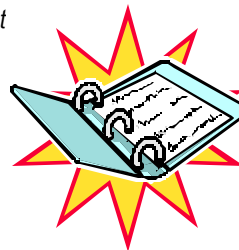
Almost any student can benefit from peer tutoring. To be a good candidate for tutoring, a child just has to be able to:

- Read instructionally at or above a mid-first grade level.
- Read aloud in the presence of the peer tutor and accept corrective feedback from the tutor.
- Behave appropriately and follow the directions of an older student under limited adult supervision.
- Accompany the tutor to and from the tutoring session in an orderly manner.

If you have children from your room that you believe would benefit from peer tutoring, please write their names on the attached sheet and leave it in my mailbox in the main office. After I receive the list, I will contact you to let you know which students we can include in the peer tutoring program and when tutoring sessions will begin.

Thank you,

<YOUR NAME>, <YOUR TITLE>, Supervisor  
Peer Tutoring Program



Return to: \_\_\_\_\_

## Peer Tutee Nomination Form

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Classroom \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please list below students from your room that you would like to receive peer tutoring in reading. If possible, list students in descending order, with those that you would *most* like tutored appearing at or near the top of the page.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Rdng Level \_\_\_\_\_

*To be a good candidate for tutoring, a child should be able to:*

- Read instructionally at or above a mid-first grade level.
- Read aloud in the presence of the peer tutor and accept corrective feedback from the tutor.
- Behave appropriately and follow the directions of an older student under limited adult supervision.
- Accompany the tutor to and from the tutoring session in an orderly manner.

**Tutors: Teacher Acceptance Letter**

<DATE>



Dear <TEACHER NAME>:

You recently nominated several students from your room to be trained as peer tutors. At the bottom of this page you will find the names of those students that we were able to accept as peer tutors at the present time. Please note that:

- Students on this list must have signed parent permission forms before we can train them as peer tutors. I will be sending permission forms home to parents and will let you know when I have received those signed forms back.
- Once I have received the signed parent permissions, I will contact you to schedule times to train your students as peer tutors. The training will take 4-5 sessions of about 30 minutes each.
- When the peer-tutoring program begins, tutors from your room will start tutoring younger children 2-3 times per week for 20-30 minutes each session. I will coordinate your tutors' schedules with you so that they do not miss important instruction when they are out of the room for tutoring.

I will keep in touch with you to let you know when we are ready to start training your peer tutors.

Thank you for your help!

Sincerely

<YOUR NAME>, <YOUR TITLE>, Supervisor  
Peer Tutoring Program

**Peer Tutors (Awaiting Parent Permissions)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Tutees: Teacher Acceptance Letter**

<DATE>



Dear <TEACHER NAME>:

You recently nominated several students from your room to be tutored in reading by older students (peer tutors). At the bottom of this page you will find the names of those students that we were able to accept to be tutored at the present time. Please note that:

- Students on this list must have signed parent permission forms before they can start peer tutoring. I will be sending permission forms home to parents and will let you know when I have received those signed forms back.
- Once I have received the signed parent permissions, I will contact you to schedule times that your students can receive tutoring. When the tutoring begins, children on this list will receive tutoring 2-3 times per week for 20-30 minutes each session. I will coordinate your tutees' schedules with you so that they do not miss important instruction when they are out of the room for tutoring.

I will keep in touch with you to let you know when we are ready to start the peer tutoring for your students.

Thank you for your help!

Sincerely

<YOUR NAME>, <YOUR TITLE>, Supervisor  
Peer Tutoring Program

**Peer Tutees (Awaiting Parent Permissions)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Tutors: Parent Permission Letter**

<SCHOOL ADDRESS>

<DATE>

Dear Parent:

Our school would like to have your child, \_\_\_\_\_, become a peer tutor in a program in reading at <SCHOOL NAME>. This tutoring program gives children at our school extra opportunities to practice their reading skills. Your child's teacher selected your child as someone in the class who would be an excellent reading tutor.

If you agree to let your child participate in this tutoring program, you child will work individually as a reading tutor with a younger student from our school. As a peer tutor, your child will listen to the younger student read aloud, will correct the student's reading mistakes, and will praise the younger reader for trying his or her best.

- Before the tutoring starts, staff at our school will train your child to be a reading tutor.
- Tutoring sessions will take place 2-3 times per week during school hours and will be supervised by adults.
- Each session will last about 20-30 minutes.
- Tutoring sessions will be scheduled so that your child does not miss important classwork.

We need your permission in order to allow your child to be a reading tutor. If you would like your child to participate, please sign your name at the bottom of this form, date it, and return the form to me in the enclosed envelope. If you have any questions about this peer-tutoring program or would like to discuss it further, please feel free to call me at <PHONE NUMBER>.

Sincerely,

<YOUR NAME>, <YOUR TITLE>, Supervisor  
Peer Tutoring Program

**Parent Permission for Student to Serve as Peer Tutor**

Yes, I agree to have my child, \_\_\_\_\_, become a reading tutor the peer-tutoring program in reading at <SCHOOL NAME>.

\_\_\_\_\_   
Parent Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_   
Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_   
Date

**Tutees: Parent Permission Letter**

<SCHOOL ADDRESS>

<DATE>

Dear Parent:

Our school would like to have your child, \_\_\_\_\_, participate in a peer-tutoring program in reading at <SCHOOL NAME>. This tutoring program gives children at our school extra opportunities to practice their reading skills. Your child's teacher selected your child for this tutoring program.

If you agree to let your child participate in this tutoring program, your child will meet individually with an older student from our school who is trained as a reading tutor. During tutoring, you child will read aloud from books as the tutor listens, will have the tutor correct any reading mistakes, and will receive praise from the tutor for trying his or her best.

- These tutoring sessions will take place 2-3 times per week during school hours and will be supervised by adults.
- Each session will last about 20-30 minutes.
- Tutoring sessions will be scheduled so that your child does not miss important classwork.
- The goal of these tutoring sessions is to help your child to become a more skilled and confident reader.

We need your permission in order to give your child this extra reading tutoring. If you would like your child to participate, please sign your name at the bottom of this form, date it, and return the form to me in the enclosed envelope.

If you have any questions about this peer-tutoring program or would like to discuss it further, please feel free to call me at <PHONE NUMBER>.

Sincerely,

<YOUR NAME>, <YOUR TITLE>, Supervisor  
Peer Tutoring Program

**Parent Permission for Student to Receive Tutoring**

Yes, I agree to have my child, \_\_\_\_\_, receive tutoring in the peer-tutoring program in reading at <SCHOOL NAME>.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date