

Writing Intervention Manual  
Peer Tutoring in Writing: A school systems approach

Summary: The peer tutoring approach is a technique that has been in existence for over 40 years. Peer tutoring normally involves the training of students to use instructional strategies in order to assist both younger and same-aged students. It is considered by many to be one of the most practical individual instruction strategies used with children with special needs. This research study concentrated on using peer tutoring to help seven students, aged ten to eleven, with written language using the process writing approaches. The process writing approaches involve:

*Planning or pre-writing:* This step involves setting the occasion for writing to occur and selecting the topic for writing.

*Drafting:* This stage includes the first attempt at developing a piece of writing based on the proposed plan.

*Revising:* This involves reviewing the first draft that was created by making changes, improvements and corrections to the piece. This step can be done independently, with a peer, with a group of peers, or with a teacher.

*Publishing:* This is the final stage and includes the writer sharing the piece with a selected audience.

Baseline & Progress Monitoring: Baseline data should be collected by administering a writing probe to student (can be timed or untimed, but whichever is used for baseline data collection, must be used consistently for progress monitoring). The total words written and number of correct written sequences will be totaled. Probes on three different occasions should be administered to the student and the median score used as baseline, to obtain a sample of typical performance. The total words correct score can be obtained by counting the number of words or word segments in a passage. Spelling does not need to be correct, as long as the words are recognizable as words. Correct written sequences are calculated by counting the number of segments of two words which are punctuated and spelled correctly. In addition, the correct written sequences should make sense within the paragraph, whereas the total words written do not need to make sense in context.

Example:

My mother tole me not hitting my brother. She says that's not a good way to be. Many times, she tell me not to do that. I still do it. Why you hit you brother she asks I don't know why I say but I want to stop.

My- mother tole me not hitting my- brother.- She- says that's- not- a- good -way -to- be.-  
Many- times,- she tell me- not -to -do- that.- I -still- do- it. Why you hit you brother she- asks I  
don't- know- why I say but- I -want- to- stop.

In the example above, there are 44 total words written (each word is underlined), but only 30 correct written sequences (indicated by a – between the two words), mostly due to improper grammar or punctuation.

Target Goal: The writing intervention using peer tutoring has a goal to increase the rate of the words and sentences in the piece, increase the accuracy of the punctuation and the spelling used in the piece, and increase the quality of the enjoyment in reading the samples by the teacher and improving the teacher's rating of the clarity of the written sample.

Script:

Step 1: This stage involves the selection of suitable peer tutors for the peer tutoring program. Peer tutors should either be older than the tutees or of the same age to participate in the program. As well, peer tutors need to be informed that their participation is voluntary and they can withdraw from the program at any time for any reason. (Was this step implemented exactly as written? \_\_\_\_\_)

Step 2: This step includes training the peer tutors. During this phase, discussion of the role of a tutor is discussed in which the peer tutors are told that they would be helping a friend develop independent writing skills. The peer tutors are also taught the specific tutoring procedure. As well, the peer tutors are given writing samples to proofread for meaning and accuracy. They receive instruction on how to ask appropriate questions to prompt the writer to make changes or improvements and on conducting pre-writing conferences with peers to develop a writing plan. (Was this step implemented exactly as written? \_\_\_\_\_)

Step 3: The next step of the intervention is to collect baseline data on the students. Five writing samples are collected during the baseline phase and were analyzed based on the goals of the intervention. (Was this step implemented exactly as written? \_\_\_\_\_)

Step 4: The peer tutors work with the tutees four times a week for 20-minute sessions during the tutees regular writing instructional period. During this time the tutors provide the tutees with ongoing support throughout the writing process as they were trained. These behaviors include assisting the tutee in developing a plan for writing, using questions to expand or clarify the plan for writing, assisting with the development of the plan, providing prompts to assist the tutee with the writing process, providing encouragement, assisting the tutee is attempting to use difficult words, asking questions to promote editing changes, assisting with proof-reading for accuracy in spelling, assisting with proof-reading for accuracy in punctuation and providing praise for the writer's efforts. (Was this step implemented exactly as written? \_\_\_\_\_)

Step 5: Throughout the intervention stage, samples of the tutees independent writing are taken for analysis. These samples should be class writing assignments in which the tutees do not receive assistance from the peer tutors. The conditions for these writing assignments should be matched to those of the baseline phase. (Was this step implemented exactly as written? \_\_\_\_\_)

Possible Modifications: Peer tutoring style interventions can also be used with reading programs, social skills training, or to make gains in mathematics, or reading comprehension.

Progress Monitoring: For this study, progress monitoring was completed in the form of taking writing samples from the tutees in which they worked independently without the assistance of the peer tutors. These writing assignments were analyzed based on rate, accuracy, and quality.

Treatment Integrity: For this research study, treatment integrity was collected in the form of audio-taping peer tutoring sessions and identifying if all necessary steps were implemented. However, treatment integrity can also be done as a teacher self-report or an observation. It is suggested to use the above script as a guideline or checklist to ensure treatment integrity.

Based On:

Medcalf, J., Glynn, T., & Moore, D. (2004). Peer tutoring in writing: a school systems approach. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 20*(2), 157-178.

Supported By:

Dineen, J., Clark, H., & Risley, T. (1977). Peer tutoring among elementary students. Educational benefits to the tutor. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 10*, 231-238.

Greenwood, C. & Delquadri, J. (1995). Classwide peer tutoring and the prevention of school failure. *Preventing School Failure, 39*, 21-25.