

The TEACHER CENTER of Broome County
Teacher Study Group Grant
2002-2003

FINAL REPORT

Port Dickinson Elementary School
Peer Learning Study

The initial goal of the group was to study the various methods of partner learning and implement such methods into the current curriculum. Several resources including books, teacher reference guides, and teacher interviews were incorporated into the study. The group held several guided discussions to extract the valuable and accessible information from the aforementioned sources.

There were some adjustments made to accommodate each teacher in their efforts to integrate peer learning into their instructional practices. The topic was very broad and had to be streamlined into specific models of peer or partner learning. Some of the teachers were in favor of multi-age partners, while others wanted to keep the partners at the same academic age level. Another topic that needed to be addressed was what type of content would be the focus of an experimental partner lesson.

At the conclusion of discussion pertaining to models of peer learning and various partner activities, the group created three lessons. (see attached) One of the lessons was to be implemented with first and third graders working as cross-age partners. The other lessons are specific to content for children at the same grade level.

Each lesson centers on a particular trade book. The books were chosen through group discussion. Many books were read and evaluated for potential partner reading and activities that follow the reading. The books that were chosen for the lessons were, The Mitten by Jan Brett and Even Steven and Odd Todd by Kathryn Cristaldi.

One outcome of the study was discovering that any book, skill, or concept could be the basis of a partner activity.

Two methods were used to evaluate the group's intended results. First, the group reflected upon the study during the last meeting. Second, the group invited other teaching professionals to read and observe the partner lessons. The other teachers were then asked to provide verbal feedback

All of the teachers who participated in the study found the information to be very beneficial and highly appropriate for learning at the primary level. The evidence lies in the fact that all of the teachers are actively designing future peer learning lessons and activities.

The students have enjoyed the experience of learning through one another as opposed to traditional methods. Many children benefited in ways that content assessments do not indicate. Some of the more introverted students learned skills that promoted greater social well-being. The lower achieving students were able to benefit from witnessing some of the learning strategies employed by the higher achievers.

The study group process was a very valuable and positive approach to learning a new instructional technique. The group dynamics were quite powerful through the discussion process. All members of the group came away with an alternate perspective that guided further thought. The group has decided to work together on future programs in an effort to accumulate an array of instructional practices, which will lead to more diverse styles of teaching.