Using Peer Assistance to Teach Academics

Where is the best place to find out how to do this practice?

The best place to find out how to implement Peer Assistance is through the following research to practice lesson plan starters:

- For using non-instructional activities to increase social interactions [Non-Instructional Activities-social (Hughes et al., 2002).pdf]
- For using peer tutoring to teach the Next Dollar Strategy [Next Dollar Strategy (Schloss, Kobza, & Alper, 1997).pdf]

What is the evidence base? A strong level of evidence based on a high quality meta-analysis of 14 intervention studies including 3 within-subjects designs, 8 single subject designs, 2 group designs, and 1 qualitative study.

With whom was it implemented?
- A total of 165 participants were included
- Students with
  - learning disabilities (3 studies)
  - emotional/behavioral disorders (3 studies)
  - moderate/severe disabilities including mental retardation, Down syndrome, and hearing impairments (4 studies)
- Ages ranged from 13 – 17 years old (14 studies)
- 10 studies included samples that were predominately male, while 4 studies had samples that were predominately female
- Ethnicity/race information were not reported for all participants

What is the practice? Teaching using peer assistance includes strategies such as:
- Peer tutoring is the delivery of academic instruction by another student, either older or the same age as the tutee (Scruggs et al., 1985).
- Cooperative learning is when groups of students of different ability, sex, or ethnicity work together to achieve mutual goals (Tateyama-Sniezek, 1990).
- Peer instruction is when students are given specific roles to assist other students in completing an activity or teaching of a lesson (Hughes, Carter, Hughes, Bradford, & Copeland, 2002).
Where is the best place to find out how to do this practice:

- Students with disabilities worked together to complete computer-assisted mathematics lessons and recorded their scores (Bahr & Reith, 1991)
- A classwide peer tutoring approach using the teacher assigned tutor/learner dyads based on prior performance rankings (Bell & Young, 1990)
- Student-directed instructional procedures during pauses in teacher-delivered lectures (Hawkins, 1988; Hawkins & Brady, 1994)
- Peer tutoring with undergraduate college students tutoring at-risk youth and students with learning disabilities in mathematics through four instructional phases including (a) student approach assessment, (b) co-construction of new approach, (c) teaching of new approach, and (d) application of new approach (Hock, Pulvers, Deshler, & Schumaker, 2001)
- An instructional role intervention in which conversational partners were asked to assist each other in classroom assignments (Hughes, Carter, Hughes, Bradford, & Copeland, 2002)
- An individual peer tutoring approach in which students without disabilities were trained to assist students with disabilities in academic tasks (Martella, Marchand-Martella, Young, & MacFarlane, 1995; Schloss, Kobza, & Alper, 1997; Staub, Spaulding, Peck, Gallucci, & Schwartz, 1996)
- A classroom peer tutoring approach in combination with multi-element curriculum and accommodations (McDonnell, Mathot-Buckner, Thorson, & Fister, 2001)
- A cooperative learning strategy was used to investigated conversational interactions between deaf/hard-of-hearing students and hearing teachers/classroom peers (Miller, 1995)
- Students completed, graded, and made corrections to homework assignments in heterogeneous groups during class time using the Cooperative Homework Team approach (O’Melia & Rosenberg, 1994)
- Students with learning disabilities were taught to recruit peer assistance during cooperative learning activities in general education classrooms (Wolford, Heward, & Alber, 2001)
- Peers served as instructional supports within a cooperative learning approach that used interactive dialogues to teach a specific writing strategy (Wong, Butler, Ficzere, & Kuperis, 1997)

Where has it been implemented?
- Public school
- Community settings
- Self-contained classroom

References used to establish this evidence base:
Additional references:


