



Using Peer Tutoring to Teach Social Studies Content

What is the level of evidence?

- This is a research-based practice for **students with disabilities** based on two methodologically sound group experimental studies with random assignment across 47 students with disabilities.
- This is a research-based practice for **students with emotional disorders** based on two methodologically sound group experimental studies with random assignment across 31 students with emotional disorders.

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

The best place to find out how to implement peer tutoring to teach social studies is through the following research to practice lesson plan starters:

- [Using peer tutoring to teach world history \(Mastropieri et al., 2003\)](#)

With whom was it implemented?

- Students with
 - **Emotional disorder (2 studies, n ≥ 31)**
 - Learning disabilities (3 studies, n ≥ 15)*
 - Intellectual disability (1 study, n ≥ 1)
- Grades ranged from 7th – 12th
- Gender
 - Males (n ≥ 35)*
 - Females (n ≥ 14)*
- Ethnicity
 - African-American (n ≥ 7)*
 - White (n ≥ 20)*
 - Hispanic (n ≥ 2)*
 - Asian (n ≥ 1)*

*Not all studies disaggregated participants by the above categories. Therefore, these data reflect the number of participants from studies that disaggregated for the relevant category. All studies contributing to the level of evidence for this practice did demonstrate effects for students with disabilities.

What is the practice?

Peer learning has been described as “people from similar social groupings who are not professional teachers helping each other to learn and learning themselves by so doing” (Topping, 2005, p. 631).

Reciprocal peer tutoring was used to teach:

- 20th Century World History (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Spencer, & Fontana, 2003)
- Social studies content from Napp and King’s (1998) text *United States History* and Saffell’s (1998) text *Civics: Responsibilities and Citizenship* (Spencer, Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 2003)

Where has it been implemented?

- Self-contained classroom (1 study)
- Self-contained school for students with emotional disturbance (1 study)

How does this practice relate to Common Core Standards?

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 - Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.3 - Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

How does this practice relate to the Common Career Technical Core?

- Career Ready Practices
 2. Apply appropriate academic and technical skills.
 7. Employ valid and reliable research strategies.
 8. Utilize critical thinking to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.

References used to establish this evidence base:

Mastropieri, M. A., Scruggs, T. E., Spencer, V., & Fontana, J. (2003). Promoting success in high school world history: Peer tutoring versus guided notes. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 18*, 52-65.

Spencer, V. G., Scruggs, T. E., & Mastropieri, M. A. (2003). Content area learning in middle school social studies classrooms and students with emotional or behavioral disorders: A comparison of strategies. *Behavioral Disorders, 28*, 77-93.

Topping, K. J. (2005). Trends in peer learning. *Educational psychology, 25*, 631-645.

This Practice Description was developed by The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT), Charlotte, NC, funded by Cooperative Agreement Number H326E140004 with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). This document has been reviewed and approved by the OSERS. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education. OSEP Project Officer: Dr. Selete Avoke. RSA Project Officer: Kristen Rhinehart-Fernandez. This product is public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted. While permission to reprint this publication is not necessary, the citation should be: National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (2017). *Using Peer Tutoring to Teach Social Studies Content*.