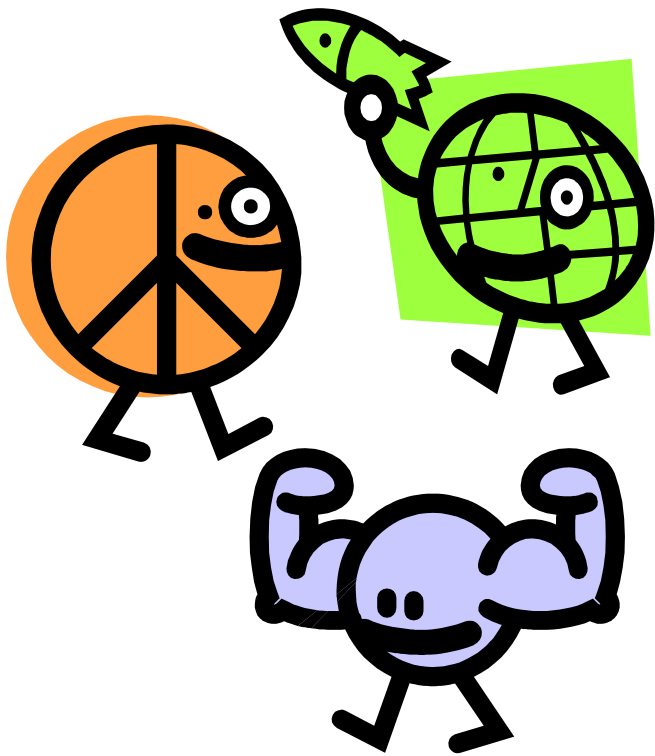


For Peers Joining Peer Networks!

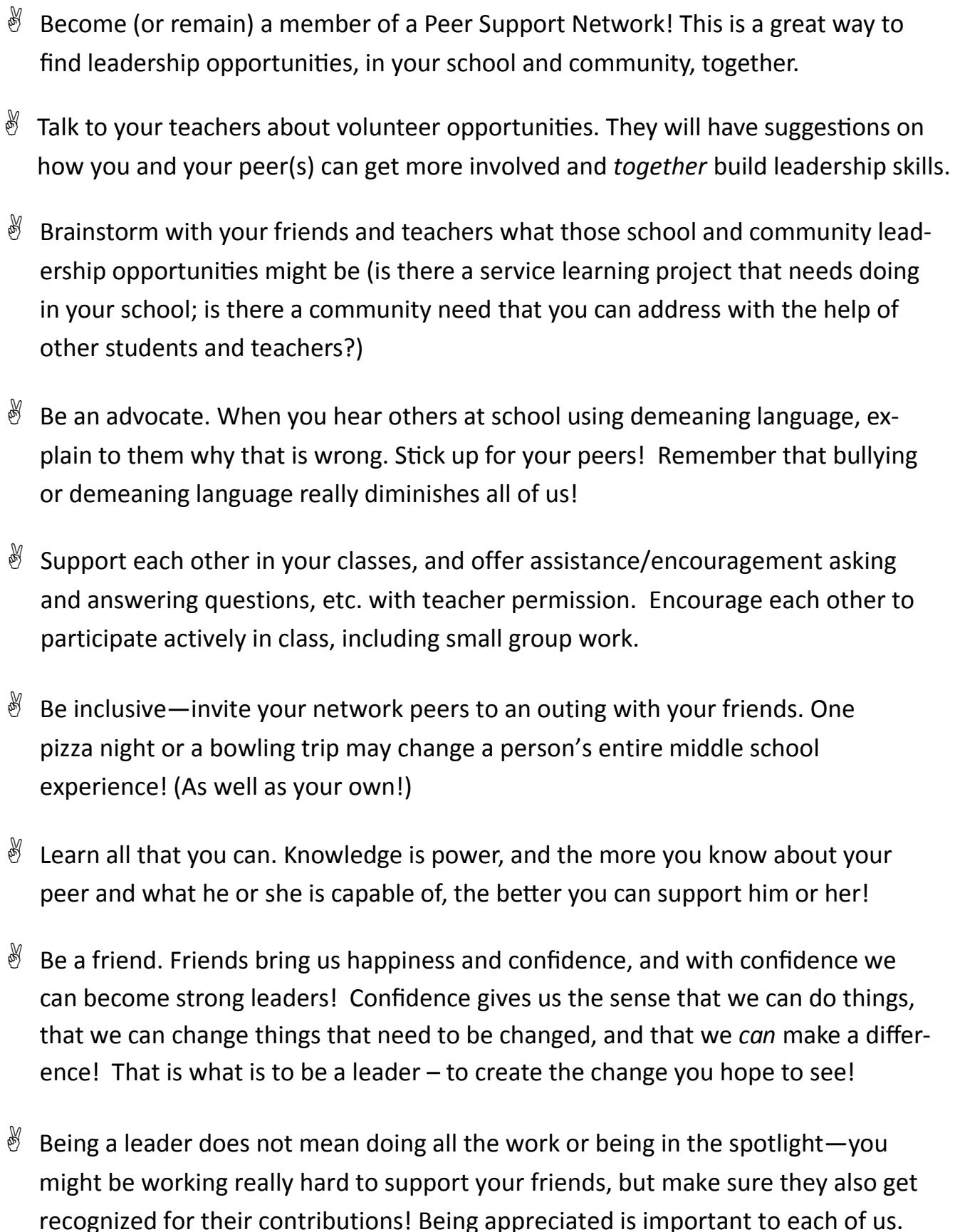
Kentucky
Peer Support
Network
Project



As a member of a Peer Support Network, you will be working on developing new, unique friendships, as well as developing leadership skills. Everyone needs a strong social group and learn how to make good decisions, and leadership skills can play a big part in that! Become part of a peer network. As a group, you can encourage each other to get more involved in school organizations and increase confidence when making new friends. Ask your teacher about how to get involved.

You will learn more from your teachers about how to be a supportive partner and help each other make new friends beyond your own network. Here are some tips you can use to work together to build leadership skills (Carter et al., 2010):



- 
- ✌️ Become (or remain) a member of a Peer Support Network! This is a great way to find leadership opportunities, in your school and community, together.
 - ✌️ Talk to your teachers about volunteer opportunities. They will have suggestions on how you and your peer(s) can get more involved and *together* build leadership skills.
 - ✌️ Brainstorm with your friends and teachers what those school and community leadership opportunities might be (is there a service learning project that needs doing in your school; is there a community need that you can address with the help of other students and teachers?)
 - ✌️ Be an advocate. When you hear others at school using demeaning language, explain to them why that is wrong. Stick up for your peers! Remember that bullying or demeaning language really diminishes all of us!
 - ✌️ Support each other in your classes, and offer assistance/encouragement asking and answering questions, etc. with teacher permission. Encourage each other to participate actively in class, including small group work.
 - ✌️ Be inclusive—invite your network peers to an outing with your friends. One pizza night or a bowling trip may change a person’s entire middle school experience! (As well as your own!)
 - ✌️ Learn all that you can. Knowledge is power, and the more you know about your peer and what he or she is capable of, the better you can support him or her!
 - ✌️ Be a friend. Friends bring us happiness and confidence, and with confidence we can become strong leaders! Confidence gives us the sense that we can do things, that we can change things that need to be changed, and that we *can* make a difference! That is what is to be a leader – to create the change you hope to see!
 - ✌️ Being a leader does not mean doing all the work or being in the spotlight—you might be working really hard to support your friends, but make sure they also get recognized for their contributions! Being appreciated is important to each of us.

Here are some activities to help you and your peers build leadership skills!



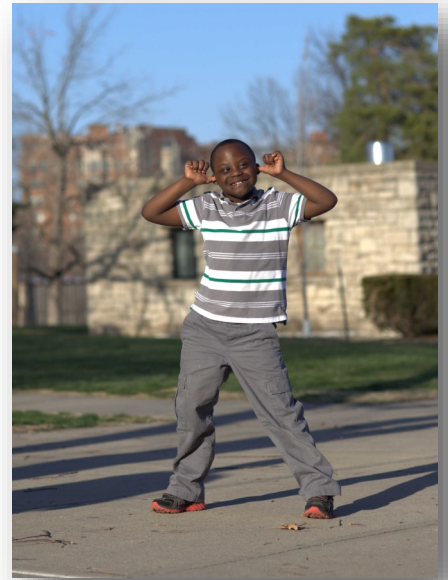
Activity 1:

Think of your own leadership skills. What are you really good at that can make a difference for others? Now think of your partner with a disability - what he is or she really good at that could make a difference? How can you apply those skills *together*?

Discuss these questions with one another. Then write a short reflection about what you learned about each other and how you can use your strengths to help others. Each of you should write your own reflection (and you can also help each other write your own reflections)!

Activity 2:

Invite a peer in your network to attend a school event with you. You can go to a basketball game, a play, even just a meeting of a club you are involved in! If you invite your peer to a club meeting, encourage him or her to join the club after he or she has become more familiar with what the club does. If your friend seems uninterested in that club (and we all have things that interest us and don't interest us!), offer to attend some other club meeting together, so you both can figure out what interests you might have in common. Involvement builds opportunities for leadership (like becoming a club officer!) and ultimately can help build self-determination, leading to a more fulfilling and independent life. Write a short reflection about your experience, and what you learned.



Want to Learn More about Supporting Leadership and Inclusion?

Spread the Word to End the Word Campaign: www.r-word.org

National Youth Leadership Council: <http://www.nylc.org>

National Inclusion Project: <http://www.inclusionproject.org>

(Carter et. al., 2010; Test et.al., 2005)

Copyright 2014, Kentucky Peer Support Network Project ©

Kentucky Peer Support Network Project