

THE IMPACT OF VALUED SOCIAL ROLES FOR CONNECTING STUDENTS WITH AND WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES



In many initiatives aimed at connecting youth with and without disabilities, students with disabilities are identified and/or perceived as the designated “recipients” of help, and students without disabilities are considered “helpers” or “providers.”



If instead, we focus on ensuring EVERYONE has a chance to contribute and become known by their strengths and talents, true reciprocal relationships are more likely to develop. In fact, having “Valued Roles” is one of the building blocks of friendship identified in the Kentucky Peer Support Network Project.

Are we doing enough to ensure that youth with disabilities have **valued social roles** and a sense of belonging? Does the student in your life have opportunities to participate in school and community life? Do they have a voice? Are they known in their communities? Are they

recognized for their strengths and talents?

Examples of Valued Roles

- Sports: basketball player, goalie, cheerleader, quarterback, outfielder, team member
- Arts: Actor, musician, artist, band member, drummer, author
- School photographer, journalist, yearbook committee member



- Employee: school jobs that other students value, paid community job, school intern program
- Volunteer: on- and off-campus volunteer experiences
- Participant in inclusive service-learning projects

- Leader within extracurricular activities
- Member of cooperative learning groups in the classroom, including assigned role within the group (leader, timekeeper, etc.)
- Teacher, e.g., teaching a skill to others



- Participant in group planning
- Meeting facilitator



Reflecting on Valued Roles

Questions to determine if roles assigned to students are truly valued:

- ⇒ Are students with significant disabilities participating in similar ways as their peers?
- ⇒ Would the tasks done by students with disabilities be considered “cool” and “desirable” by their peers?
- ⇒ Are students with disabilities contributing in ways that they choose for themselves?
- ⇒ Are students with disabilities contributing in different roles over time?
- ⇒ Does everyone have the opportunity to give and receive support?
- ⇒ Would someone else need to do the task if the student with a disability was not doing it?



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KY Peer Support Network Project

For more information about this statewide effort, check out the project website: <http://www.kypeersupport.org/>

The Kentucky Peer Support Network Project also has a Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/kypeersupportnetwork?>

For Assistance

Contact the Low Incidence Consultant at your regional Special Education Cooperative for support in implementing Peer Support Arrangements and Peer Networks in your school!
<https://education.ky.gov/specialed/excep/advgroup/Pages/Kentucky's-Educational-Cooperatives-Special-Education-Services.aspx>

