



Fostering friendships, learning, and inclusion for students with significant disabilities.

KY Peer Support Network Project



Dear Families,

Your student has been invited to participate in our school's **Peer Support** and/or **Peer Network** programs! These programs are helping create inclusive activities and providing the opportunity for friendships between students with and without disabilities in our school and community.

What is the Kentucky Peer Support Network Program?

Research tells us that making friends can be especially hard for students with significant disabilities. Peer support arrangements and peer networks can help foster relationships by bringing students together!

Administered by Kentucky Department of Education and the regional Special Education Cooperatives, the Kentucky Peer Support Network Project helps schools throughout the state to set

up Peer Support Arrangements and Peer Networks for their students.

Peer Support Arrangements and Peer Networks involve identifying and equipping a group of peers to form relationships and provide ongoing support to each other in or outside of the classroom.

Peer Support Arrangements

Within *inclusive classrooms*, Peer Support programs train peers (usually 2-3) to provide academic and social support to each other during ongoing learning activities for a specific class.

Peer Networks

Beyond the classroom, a group of peers (usually 3-6), along with a student with a significant disability, form a Peer Network to help foster social connections and friendships between classes, at lunch, in extracurricular activities, or beyond the school day. School staff facilitate these groups to ensure their success.

How Can I Support the Program?

- Attend school events.
- Provide transportation.
- Ask your child about his or her experiences!
- Have a great idea? Let us know!

For More Information

www.kypeersupport.org

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/cep/advgroup/Pages/Kentucky's-Educational-Cooperatives-Special-Education-Services.aspx>





KY Peer Support Network website and Facebook page

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?ref=hl>

What About Grades?

Some parents worry that if their child participates in Peer Support Arrangements in academic classes, their grades may suffer. However, just the opposite is true. Research conducted by Dr. Erik Carter, of Vanderbilt University, shows that students who were A or B students *continued* to do very well in their classes when they provided peer supports. And most surprisingly, students who *themselves* were just getting by or even struggling in a class raised their grades by over a full letter grade in that class where *they* supported a peer with a significant disability!

Friendships matter. However, friendships and a sense of belonging are often elusive for youth with disabilities. Our school and community are better when EVERYONE has an opportunity to participate!

