

Action Research Case Study: Final

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Author Note

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I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

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REQUIRED ITEMS	RESPONSES
Volunteer Teacher's Name	Katherine Johnson
Reviewed Data	In evaluating the need for improvement in our inclusion classroom, my peer partner and I examined a diverse set of formative and summative data sources. This included ongoing assessments such as quizzes and student work samples, providing real-time insights into student performance. Additionally, we gathered qualitative data through student feedback surveys and discussions. Summative data, including standardized test scores and teacher observations, offered a broader perspective on overall student achievement and instructional practices. This collaborative review allowed us to justify the need for enhancements in our classroom curriculum, instruction, and assessment strategies. Solution: Within the inclusive environment, educators will pair a general education student with a special education student, fostering a sense of belonging for both individuals in the classroom. This partnership allows them to collaborate on social and academic objectives. Given that many special education students may hesitate to engage in the general education setting, the introduction of "Peer Partners" serves as a confidence-building mechanism. This initiative aims to enhance the social and academic skills of both general education and special education students.
Data Results	The data results leading to the selection of the action research topic were primarily derived from formative assessment scores and classroom observations. Analyzing the formative assessment scores revealed a consistent pattern of lower achievement among students in specific content areas. Concurrently, classroom observations highlighted challenges in the volunteer teacher's instructional methods related to engaging diverse learning styles. Through a systematic data analysis process, we identified a significant gap in student understanding and engagement. This informed the joint decision to focus the action research on improving instructional strategies in those identified content areas, aiming to enhance student comprehension and participation. Solution: The teacher serves as both a special education resource and inclusion teacher, aiming to reintegrate resource students into the eighth-grade inclusion classroom. With the goal of ensuring success for all students, the implementation of "Peer Partners" in academic classes provides a platform for

	social and academic comfort. Pairing each student with a partner facilitates a supportive environment where resource and inclusion students can ask questions and learn collaboratively. This arrangement also allows "Peer Partners" to assume leadership roles, assisting inclusion students in delving deeper into academic rigor through student-to-student teaching. Recognizing that inclusion students respond positively when information is presented at their level of understanding, "Peer Partners" can effectively demonstrate and describe tasks in a way that resonates with their peers. Introducing 'Peer Partners' establishes a foundation for academic and social growth among all students, with peer leaders adhering to a set of expectations outlined in a rubric, including qualities of leadership, ways to provide assistance, and socially acceptable behavior.
Topic	Teachers in the classroom will introduce "Peer Partnerships" pairing special education students with their general education counterparts.
Guiding Research Question:	Teachers in the inclusive classrooms will enhance student support through academic and social assistance by using peer support. This will be achieved within the next academic 9 weeks by March 9, 2024 through the implementation of structured peer support, specifically by pairing a high achieving student with a low achieving student in a buddy system to help each other with specific skills in writing assignments.
Annotated Bibliography Bogart, Samuel (2019). Perspectives on inclusive education: in the light of educational justice. <i>JSTOR</i>. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/jj.2430381?refreqid=fastly-default. Bogart's (2019) scholarly work investigates the effects of academic peer support interventions on the social interactions among peers in inclusive classroom settings. The study is specifically centered on comprehending how these interventions influence the frequency of social interactions among students. Bogart's research delves into the intricacies of inclusion classrooms, evaluating the efficacy of academic peer support in promoting positive social engagement. The publication underscores the significance of peer relationships within inclusive educational environments and explores the potential advantages associated with academic peer support interventions. Bogart's findings provide valuable insights into the intersection of academic and social development within inclusive classrooms, presenting implications for educators striving to enhance the overall educational experience for a diverse range of learners.	

Galjour, Vivian (2020). Peer tutoring. *Middle School Journal*, 18(1), 20–21.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00940771.1986.11495778>.

Galjour (2020) conducts an in-depth investigation into classroom help networks, individual network positions, and their associations with academic achievement. The study employs a rigorous methodology to scrutinize the configuration of help networks within classrooms and the connection between an individual's network position and their academic success. Through the application of social network analysis, Galjour intricately maps the dynamics of peer interactions and academic support within classroom settings. Her findings underscore the importance of diverse network structures and elucidate how students' positions within these networks influence their academic outcomes. This research yields valuable insights into the social dimensions of academic achievement, offering implications for educators seeking to optimize peer support networks to enhance the learning experience.

Garcia-Melgar, Ana, East, Julianne, & Meyers, Noel (2021) Peer assisted academic support: a comparison of mentors' and mentees' experiences of a drop-in programme, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*

Garcia-Melgar, East, and Meyers (2021) explore the dynamics of a drop-in peer-assisted academic support program by comparing the experiences of mentors and mentees. Published in the *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, their research investigates the efficacy of this support initiative. The authors employ a comparative analysis to discern the perspectives of both mentors and mentees, shedding light on the program's impact from multiple angles. Garcia-Melgar et al. delve into the nuances of peer-assisted support, providing insights into the unique experiences of those offering and receiving academic assistance. This study contributes to the broader understanding of peer support programs, offering implications for the optimization of such initiatives in educational settings.

Tzani-Pepelasi, Calli, Loannou, Maria, Synnott, John, & McDonnell, Dean (2022) "Peer support at schools: the buddy approach as a prevention and intervention strategy for school bullying." *International journal of bullying prevention*.

In their article, Tzani-Pepelasi, Loannou, Synnott, and McDonnell (2022) explore the effectiveness of the buddy approach as a prevention and intervention strategy for school bullying. Published in the *International Journal of Bullying Prevention*, the authors investigate the role of peer support in schools and specifically focus on the impact of the buddy system. The study provides insights into how this approach functions as both a preventive measure and an intervention strategy to address bullying incidents. Tzani-Pepelasi et al. emphasize the significance of peer relationships in creating a safer school environment. This research contributes valuable knowledge to the field of bullying prevention, offering implications for implementing effective peer support programs in schools.

Observation #1

Date:1/25/2024 Time: 10:04-11:04am

Observation Notes

Strategy Implementation	The teacher presents and demonstrates instructions for a reading/writing activity. Both general education and special education students collaborate in groups of four to complete the activity. Their task involves using a previously analyzed text to write one paragraph using the R.A.C.E.S. writing strategy. Initially hesitant, the special education student eventually joins in after observing the enthusiasm of their peers who turn it into a friendly competition. The mentor patiently guides the special education student through the instructions again. Encouraged by their peers, the special education student attempts the activity. It takes some time for the special education student to adapt to the group dynamic, but once trust is established, they become comfortable. The teacher circulates among the students, providing assistance and guidance. She briefly checks in with the group to assess progress and accuracy.
Digital Literacy/Technology Implementation	As I observed the lesson, the collaboration between special education students and higher-level regular education students to write a paragraph using Chromebooks was the main focus. I started by assessing the engagement and participation levels of both groups with the Chromebooks, aiming to gauge their comfort and proficiency with digital tools. Watching their interaction and collaboration during the writing process provided valuable insights into how effectively technology facilitated communication and teamwork. I considered the accessibility and adaptability of the technology to meet the diverse needs of all students involved. This evaluation process allowed me to determine whether the use of technology was successful for all students. Overall, the assessment provided a comprehensive understanding of how effectively digital literacy and technology integration were encouraged within the lesson, enabling informed decisions to enhance future instructional practices.
Equity	I ensured that all students, regardless of their educational background or abilities, had equal access to the instructional resources, including Chromebooks. I observed the distribution of resources and noted any discrepancies or barriers to access. I paid close attention to how instructional practices were implemented across diverse student groups. I looked for evidence of differentiated instruction to meet the varying needs of students, particularly special education students. This included observing whether accommodations were made to support their learning, such as providing additional guidance or adjusting the pace of instruction. I monitored the level of support offered to students throughout the lesson. This involved assessing whether teachers provided equal opportunities for all students to engage with the instructional content and receive assistance as needed. I looked for signs of inclusivity and fairness in the distribution of teacher attention and support. This assessment allowed

	me to identify any areas where adjustments may be needed to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed in their learning.
Notes for Improvement	
Date/Time Post Observation Conference Date: 1/29/2024 Time: 1:12 pm	Reflecting on the observed lesson, there are several ways the teacher could have enhanced instructional effectiveness. Firstly, the teacher could have implemented more explicit strategies to ensure equitable participation and engagement among all students. This could include providing differentiated instruction tailored to the diverse needs of learners, particularly special education students, to better support their comprehension and involvement in the collaborative writing task. The teacher could have fostered a more inclusive learning environment by actively encouraging peer support and collaboration, ensuring that higher-level regular education students effectively scaffolded their special education peers throughout the writing process. The teacher could have incorporated more varied instructional methods and resources to cater to different learning styles and preferences, thus maximizing the engagement and learning outcomes for all students. By addressing these areas for improvement, the teacher could create a more inclusive and effective learning experience that better supports the diverse needs of all students.

Observation #2	Date: 2/13/2024 Time: 10:04-11:04
Observation Notes	
Strategy Implementation	The teacher gives and models instructions for a writing assignment in English class. Both general education and special education students are working in groups of four to complete the assignment. They are collaborating to brainstorm ideas and draft paragraphs. Initially, the special education student is hesitant to participate, but after observing the enthusiasm of their peers, they decide to join in. The group quickly becomes engaged in the writing activity, with the other members eager to contribute and make progress. The mentor patiently guides the special education student through the instructions again, while the other students offer encouragement and support. It takes some time for the special education students to adjust to the group setting, but once trust is established, they feel more comfortable sharing their ideas. Throughout the activity, the teacher circulates among the groups, providing assistance and giving directions. She also meets with each group briefly to check the progress and accuracy of their writing project.

Digital Literacy/Technology Implementation	The students were using Chromebooks and copies of the short story "The Tell-Tale Heart" to create their writing piece, which provided an opportunity to assess their digital literacy skills and the integration of technology into the learning process. I observed the students' engagement with the Chromebooks, noting their proficiency in navigating digital platforms and accessing resources. Many students demonstrated comfort and confidence in using technology to search for information and reference the text, indicating a successful integration of digital tools. The collaborative nature of the activity allowed students to leverage technology to collaborate effectively, sharing ideas and editing their writing pieces collaboratively on the Chromebooks. This highlighted the role of technology in facilitating communication and teamwork among students. I reviewed the quality of the final writing pieces produced by the students, considering how technology influenced their writing process and the overall outcome. Overall, the lesson effectively encouraged digital literacy and technology integration by providing students with the tools and resources to enhance their learning experience and collaborate more effectively in their writing assignment.
Equity	I carefully assessed the degree to which instructional practices and resources were provided equitably to students. Firstly, I ensured that all students, regardless of their educational background or abilities, had equal access to the necessary resources, including Chromebooks and copies of "The Tell-Tale Heart." This involved monitoring the distribution of resources and ensuring that every student had access to the tools they needed to participate fully in the lesson. I paid close attention to how instructional practices were implemented across diverse student groups. I looked for evidence of differentiated instruction to accommodate the varying needs of students, particularly those with special education requirements. This included observing whether teachers provided additional support or guidance to students who required it, ensuring that all students had the opportunity to engage meaningfully with the material. I monitored the level of support offered to students throughout the lesson, ensuring that all students received equal opportunities for assistance and feedback. This involved observing the teacher's interactions with students and ensuring that she provided equitable support to students of all abilities. I was able to ensure that instructional practices and resources were provided equitably to all students, regardless of their individual needs or abilities.
Notes for Improvement	
Date/Time Post Observation	To enhance differentiation of instruction in this lesson, the teacher could implement several targeted strategies to address the diverse

Conference Date: 2/15/2024 Time: 1:12pm	needs of students. She could provide alternative formats of "The Tell-Tale Heart" to accommodate varying reading levels, such as simplified versions or audio recordings, ensuring that all students can access the text at their individual proficiency levels. The teacher could offer flexible grouping arrangements, allowing students to work in pairs or small groups based on their learning preferences and needs. This would enable students to support each other and receive personalized guidance from peers. The teacher could provide scaffolding tools, such as graphic organizers or sentence frames, to assist students in organizing their ideas and expressing themselves effectively in their writing. By tailoring instruction to the specific needs of each student, the teacher can ensure that all students are able to engage meaningfully with the material and achieve success in their writing assignment.
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Observation #3	Date: 2/26/2024 Time: 10:04-11:04
Observation Notes	
Strategy Implementation	In observing the lesson, the teacher's implementation of pairing high achieving students with lower leveled special education students directly addressed the guiding research question. By pairing students in this manner, the teacher effectively provided structured peer support, which aimed to enhance both academic and social assistance within the inclusive classroom setting. The strategy aligned with the goal of utilizing peer support to improve student learning outcomes and was implemented through the collaborative writing task on symbolism in the short story "Button, Button." Each pair of students worked together to analyze the story and write a three-paragraph essay, supported by multi-level scaffolded copies of the text and graphic organizers. This approach fostered a supportive learning environment where higher achieving students could offer guidance and assistance to their peers, while also promoting social interaction and collaboration. Through the implementation of this strategy, the teacher successfully met the research goal of enhancing student support through structured peer support within the inclusive classroom, thereby contributing to improved academic and social outcomes for all students involved.
Digital Literacy/Technology Implementation	In assessing instructional effectiveness related to the encouragement of digital literacy and technology integration within the lesson, several key indicators can be considered. The utilization of multi-level scaffolded copies of the short story "Button, Button" and graphic organizers demonstrates a deliberate integration of technology to support students' comprehension and organization of

	ideas. This suggests a proactive effort to leverage digital tools for enhancing literacy skills. The pairing of high achieving students with lower leveled special education students for the collaborative writing task not only promotes social interaction but also provides an opportunity for peer-assisted learning, which can be facilitated through the use of technology platforms for communication and collaboration. Observing how students engage with the provided resources, such as utilizing the scaffolded copies of the text and graphic organizers on their Chromebooks, can offer insights into their digital literacy skills and the effectiveness of technology integration in supporting their learning process. Assessing the quality of the three-paragraph essays produced by each pair of students can indicate the extent to which technology and digital literacy were effectively utilized to examine the symbolism in the story. Overall, evaluating instructional effectiveness in this context involves examining the seamless integration of technology into the lesson and its impact on enhancing students' digital literacy skills and learning outcomes.
Equity	The teacher's implementation of multi-level scaffolded copies of the short story "Button, Button" and graphic organizers ensured that students of varying abilities had access to appropriate materials tailored to their individual needs. This demonstrated a proactive effort to accommodate diverse learning styles and levels of proficiency, thereby promoting equitable access to resources. The pairing of high achieving students with lower leveled special education students for the collaborative writing task further fostered equity in the learning process. By pairing students with complementary strengths and abilities, the teacher created opportunities for peer support and collaboration, ensuring that all students had the necessary assistance to engage meaningfully in the task. The provision of Chromebooks for each pair of students facilitated equitable access to technology, enabling all students to leverage digital tools for research, writing, and organization of ideas. This ensured that technology was integrated into the lesson in a manner that supported the learning needs of all students, regardless of their background or abilities. The observed instructional practices and resources demonstrated a commitment to promoting equity and inclusivity within the classroom, with efforts made to ensure that all students had access to the support and resources needed to succeed in the lesson.
Notes for Improvement	
Date/Time Post Observation Conference	To enhance the lesson, the teacher could consider implementing additional strategies to further support student learning and engagement. The teacher could provide more explicit guidance on how to effectively utilize the scaffolded copies of the short story and

Date: 2/28/2024 Time: 1:12pm	graphic organizers. Offering mini-lessons or modeling sessions on how to navigate and utilize these resources could help students better understand their purpose and maximize their effectiveness in organizing their ideas for the writing task. The teacher could incorporate more opportunities for student collaboration and discussion throughout the lesson. Encouraging students to share their interpretations of the text and brainstorm ideas together could foster a deeper understanding of the story's themes and symbolism. The teacher could offer differentiated writing prompts or extension activities to cater to the varying needs and interests of students. By providing options for students to explore different aspects of the story or express their ideas in alternative formats, the lesson could better accommodate diverse learning preferences and levels of proficiency. Overall, by implementing these enhancements, the teacher could create a more dynamic and inclusive learning experience that promotes deeper engagement and understanding among all students.
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Post- Observation Conference #1	Date: 1/29/2024 Time: 1:12 pm
Discussion Summary: Strategy Implementation	
During the discussion with the teacher regarding the effectiveness of the strategy observed in the first lesson, we primarily focused on the integration of technology and peer support in promoting student learning. The teacher expressed satisfaction with how the pairing of high achieving students with lower leveled special education students facilitated collaborative learning and provided additional support for all students. We also discussed the importance of providing clear instructions and guidance on utilizing the scaffolded copies of the short story and graphic organizers effectively. We agreed that there is room for improvement in promoting more active participation and discussion among students, as well as in providing differentiated writing prompts to cater to diverse learning needs. While the teacher acknowledged the positive aspects of the strategy implemented, we identified several areas for refinement to enhance the overall effectiveness of future lessons.	
Quality of Assessment	The formative assessments, such as the collaborative writing task and peer discussions, were praised for their ability to provide ongoing feedback and support student learning throughout the lesson. However, we acknowledged the need for clearer criteria and rubrics to guide students' understanding of expectations and facilitate self-assessment.
P-12 Student Performance	We began by reviewing the formative assessment data collected throughout the lesson, which included observations of student engagement, participation in collaborative tasks, and peer

	interactions. We analyzed this data to identify trends in student understanding and areas where additional support may be needed.
Discussion Summary: Ideas for Improvement	
Date/Time for Next Observation	2/26/2024 10:04

Post- Observation Conference #2	Date: 2/15/2024 Time: 1:12pm
Discussion Summary: Strategy Implementation	
We highlighted several strengths of the lesson, including the integration of technology through the use of Chromebooks and the collaborative writing task. The teacher expressed satisfaction with how the pairing of high achieving students with lower leveled special education students facilitated peer support and promote inclusive learning environments. We also discussed the positive impact of providing multi-level scaffolded copies of the text and graphic organizers to support student comprehension and organization of ideas. However, we identified areas for improvement, such as the need for clearer instructions and guidance on how to effectively utilize the provided resources, as well as opportunities to foster more active participation and discussion among students. Overall, while the teacher acknowledged the positive aspects of the strategy implemented, we collaboratively identified areas for refinement to enhance the overall effectiveness of future lessons.	
Quality of Assessment	During our discussion regarding the quality of the formative and summative assessments used in the second lesson using "The Tell-Tale Heart," we examined them through the lens of best-practice research. We acknowledged the effectiveness of formative assessments such as peer discussions and collaborative writing tasks in providing ongoing feedback and supporting student learning throughout the lesson. However, we identified a need for clearer criteria and rubrics to guide students' understanding of expectations and facilitate self-assessment. Regarding summative assessments, the three-paragraph essays analyzing symbolism in the short story were deemed valuable measures of student comprehension and analytical skills. Yet, we recognized the importance of incorporating more varied assessment methods to capture different aspects of student learning, such as oral presentations or multimedia projects. Overall, while the assessments utilized in the lesson demonstrated alignment with best-practice research in some aspects, there remains a need for refinement to ensure a more comprehensive and effective assessment

	approach in future lessons.
P-12 Student Performance	We began by reviewing the formative assessment data, which included observations of student engagement, participation in collaborative writing tasks, and the quality of peer interactions. We interpreted this data to identify trends in student understanding and to pinpoint areas where additional support might be necessary. We examined the summative assessment data, particularly the essays analyzing symbolism in the short story. Together, we analyzed student strengths and areas for improvement revealed by the assessment results, considering how they aligned with learning objectives and standards. Through our collaborative interpretation of the assessment data, we identified patterns in student performance and discussed potential instructional adjustments to address individual student needs effectively. This discussion allowed us to make informed decisions about instructional planning and support student progress comprehensively.
Discussion Summary: Ideas for Improvement	
Date/Time for Next Observation	2/26/2024 10:04

Post- Observation Conference #3	Date: 2/28/2024 Time: 1:12pm
Discussion Summary: Strategy Implementation	
We highlighted several positive aspects of the lesson, including the utilization of multi-level scaffolded copies of the text and graphic organizers. The teacher expressed satisfaction with how these resources supported student comprehension and organization of ideas, particularly in the collaborative writing task. We also discussed the benefits of pairing high achieving students with lower leveled special education students, which facilitated peer support and collaboration. However, we identified areas for improvement, such as the need for clearer instructions and guidance on how to effectively utilize the provided resources, as well as opportunities to promote more active participation and discussion among students. Additionally, we discussed the importance of providing differentiated writing prompts to cater to diverse learning needs and interests. Overall, while the teacher acknowledged the positive aspects of the strategy implemented, we collaboratively identified areas for refinement to enhance the overall effectiveness of future lessons.	
Quality of Assessment	During our discussion concerning the quality of the formative and summative assessments used in the third lesson utilizing "Button, Button," we critically evaluated them in light of best-practice research. We recognized the effectiveness of

	formative assessments, including peer discussions and collaborative writing tasks, in providing ongoing feedback and fostering student learning throughout the lesson. However, we identified the necessity for clearer criteria and rubrics to guide students' understanding of expectations and facilitate self-assessment. In terms of summative assessments, the three-paragraph essays analyzing symbolism in the short story were acknowledged as valuable indicators of student comprehension and analytical skills. Yet, we acknowledged the importance of incorporating a broader range of assessment methods to capture various aspects of student learning, such as oral presentations or multimedia projects, aligning with best-practice principles. Overall, while the assessments employed in the lesson demonstrated alignment with certain aspects of best-practice research, there is room for enhancement to ensure a more comprehensive and effective assessment approach in future lessons.
P-12 Student Performance	We began by reviewing the formative assessment data, which included observations of student engagement, participation in collaborative writing tasks, and the quality of peer interactions. We interpreted this data to identify trends in student understanding and areas where additional support might be needed. We examined the summative assessment data, particularly the essays analyzing symbolism in the short story. Together, we analyzed student strengths and areas for improvement revealed by the assessment results, considering how they aligned with learning objectives and standards. Through our collaborative interpretation of the assessment data, we identified patterns in student performance and discussed potential instructional adjustments to address individual student needs effectively. This discussion allowed us to make informed decisions about instructional planning and support student progress comprehensively.
Discussion Summary: Ideas for Improvement	
Date/Time for Next Observation	3/7/2024 10:04

Part 4: Building Professional Capacity

Meeting Professional Staff Needs

As an administrator hiring new faculty or providing professional development for existing faculty, it's crucial to consider the professional staff needs identified through evaluations

of instructional practices and assessment quality. These needs include enhancing clarity in instructional guidance, developing effective formative assessment strategies, and diversifying summative assessment methods. When hiring new teachers, prioritizing applicants with demonstrated proficiency in providing clear instructions, utilizing varied assessment techniques, and fostering collaborative learning environments would strengthen the school. Additionally, investing in professional development opportunities focused on refining instructional practices and assessment strategies would support existing faculty in addressing identified needs. Qualities such as adaptability, a commitment to ongoing learning, and a collaborative mindset are essential in candidates or faculty members to ensure they can effectively implement best practices and contribute to the school's overall improvement and success.

Prospective Faculty Application Materials

When evaluating a prospective teacher applicant's materials, I would prioritize several key attributes and experiences that align with the professional staff needs identified in our school. Firstly, I would look for evidence of clear communication skills and the ability to provide explicit instructional guidance, as this is crucial in fostering effective learning environments. Additionally, I would seek candidates who demonstrate proficiency in utilizing diverse assessment strategies to support student learning and growth. This could include examples of formative assessment techniques, such as peer discussions or collaborative tasks, as well as evidence of creative and varied summative assessment methods. Furthermore, I would value applicants who highlight their commitment to ongoing professional development and collaboration, as these qualities indicate a willingness to adapt and grow in response to identified needs. Overall, the ideal candidate would possess a combination of strong communication skills, diverse assessment expertise, and a collaborative mindset, all of which would contribute to strengthening our school community.

References

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