

Everything You Want  
to Know about  
Successful Youth to  
Youth Peer Programs,  
But Were Afraid to  
Ask:

The Power of Peer  
Resource Programs

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**Peer Resource Training and Consulting**

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**CHILDREN'S  
NEEDS MET  
BY FAMILIES:**

**ACCEPTANCE  
LOVE  
POWER  
IDENTITY  
AFFILIATION  
RESPECT  
FRIENDS  
REWARDS  
LOYALTY  
TRUST  
RITES-OF-  
PASSAGE  
FUN**

**CHILDREN'S  
NEEDS MET  
BY GANGS**

**ACCEPTANCE  
LOVE  
POWER  
IDENTITY  
AFFILIATION  
RESPECT  
FRIENDS  
REWARDS  
LOYALTY  
TRUST  
RITES-OF-  
PASSAGE  
FUN**

**CHILDREN'S  
NEEDS MET  
BY SCHOOLS**

**ACCEPTANCE  
LOVE  
POWER  
IDENTITY  
AFFILIATION  
RESPECT  
FRIENDS  
REWARDS  
LOYALTY  
TRUST  
RITES-OF-  
PASSAGE  
FUN**

**“Another avenue for developing positive youth leadership is Peer Resource Programs, in which students are given on-going opportunities to be resources to each other. Programs such as peer tutoring, cooperative learning, cross-age tutoring, peer helping and peer mediation provide opportunities for young people to connect, to develop skills to promote positive change, and to feel a sense of pride as they learn that they can make a difference in the real world.”**

**Delaine Eastin  
California Superintendent of Public Education,  
1995-2003  
December 4, 1996**

**“Clearly, based on the...rationales that included the importance of peers in social development; the need for youth in our society to have more available social support and more opportunities to participate and help; the need for every individual to be socialized to accept and respect diversity; the value of learning collaboration and conflict resolution skills from an early age; and the proven positive academic and social outcomes of evaluated cooperative and peer learning and resource programs, peer programs do, indeed, offer us a "lodestone" to developing health and well-being in our children and youth, and hence, in our society.”**

**Bonnie Benard  
The Case for Peers, 1990**

## **The Peer Resources Research: A Glimpse**

1. A meta-analysis of 120 studies showed that interactive, peer-led peer involvement programs conducted with children in grades 7-9 are significantly better than non-interactive, teacher-led programs in preventing drug, tobacco and alcohol use. (Black, Tobler & Sciacca, in press; Tobler & Tratten, 1997)
2. Peer programs modified youths' self-reported attitudes about violent behavior, improved school discipline and reduced absenteeism (Powell, Muir-McClain and Halasyamani, 1996)
3. Peer-led refusal and resistance skills for children and adolescents appear to be highly effective across cultural contexts and settings and appear more efficacious than teacher-led refusal and resistance skills (Perry, 1989)
4. School referrals to the office for fighting were reduced in middle school because of Conflict Resolution Peer Programs (Salmon, 1992)
5. In an analysis of 143 adolescent drug prevention programs, it was clearly found that peer programs are dramatically more effective in decreasing drug use than all the other programs, even at the lowest level of intensity (Tobler, 1986)
6. The Search Institute indicated that youth, grades 6-12, that engaged in projects and programs to help others on a weekly basis are less likely to report at-risk behavior (Benson, 1990)
7. When peer programs are the major approach in prevention programs for children and youth, it is found that there is no better way to ensure that prevention for all involved in the program, is empowering and is the best course to prevent the negative behaviors. (Benard, 1988)

## **Peer Programs Defined**

### **The California Association of Peer Programs:**

Peer helping provides understanding, support, prevention, intervention, and referral services to individuals and groups by utilizing the human resources of peers trained in communication, decision-making, self-awareness and helping skills. Individuals, especially youth, trained in peer helping skills CAN and DO make a significant contribution to their peers and to the welfare of our society.

### **The National Peer Helpers Association:**

Peer helping is a variety of supportive services initiated by peers in diverse settings. Sometimes students just need someone to listen to their problems and to help sort out the options open to them. Peer Helpers are good listeners and are skilled in the difficult task of helping others to solve their own problems, rather than solving problems for them. Although they assume different roles, peer helpers are not used in place of licensed or certified health professionals or as mental health practitioners. They often serve as referral sources for students who need professional help. Peer helpers provide peers with opportunities for learning, guidance, emotional support and growth. By helping others, they often increase their own self esteem and personal functioning.

### **The San Francisco Peer Resources Definition:**

San Francisco Peer Resource Programs operate under the philosophy that everyone has something valuable to offer, and that students can serve as resources for one another. At the heart of this philosophy is the belief that students can be empowered to act as advocates, educators and counselors for their peers.

**A QUALITY PEER PROGRAM TRAINS YOUTH IN VERY SPECIFIC COMMUNICATION AND HELPING SKILLS, WHO WILL THEN USE THOSE SKILLS IN A SYSTEMATIC, WELL THOUGHT OUT WAY TO PROVIDE SERVICES TO OTHER YOUTH.**

## **THE NUTS & BOLTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PEER RESOURCE PROGRAM**

1. Needs Assessment
2. Purpose, Goals and Mission Statement
3. Administrative and Faculty Support
4. Staffing
5. Evaluation and Record-keeping
6. Recruitment of Students
7. Selection of Students
8. Curriculum and Training
9. Supervision of Students
10. Recognition and Celebration

# 11. Funding

## PEER RESOURCE PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

1. **ORIENTATION / TRANSITION ASSISTANCE:** Help new and transfer students adjust to school through personal tours, one-on-one transition partnerships and class presentations.
2. **PEER EDUCATION:** Students develop and lead class presentations or school-wide activities on subjects that impact their peers. These may include presentations and activities with a focus on racism, bullying, sexting, substance abuse, child abuse, decision making, peer pressure, refusal skills, depression, etc.
3. **CONFLICT MEDIATION:** Students are trained in a conflict resolution process and then mediate disputes involving other students, or between students and staff.
4. **VIOLENCE PREVENTION:** Students make presentations and lead group discussions on issues of violence – both verbal and physical – and why violence occurs and how it can be prevented or stopped.
5. **ELL DISCUSSION GROUPS:** Students work in small, safe discussion groups with immigrant and refugee peers, helping them to learn about their new culture, practice English language skills and make connections with American or assimilated youth.
6. **BUDDY CONNECTION:** Match older students with younger ones, or with transfer, immigrant or needy students for formal or informal meetings. This is usually a very active project around orientation time which tapers off during the year.
7. **PEER CONNECTION:** Students do outreach to the nearby middle and elementary schools for one-on-one or small group activities.
8. **SUPPORT GROUPS:** Students lead or co-lead support groups on specific or general topics. These can be held as drop-in or informal groups, in classes, at lunch or after school. Possible targeted student groups could include children of

alcoholics, 9<sup>th</sup> graders, smokers, refugee youth, substance abusers, men's or women's groups, LGBT youth, etc.

9. **PEER COUNSELING:** Students help others through one-on-one contact to assist or refer when necessary. Counseling can take place in formalized, pre-arranged sessions, informally with friends, on a drop-in basis or through staff referrals. Students keep records of these sessions.
10. **TUTORING:** Students tutor their peers in academic subjects before, during or after school, in formalized, drop-in or on an as-needed basis.

### **Peer Resource Program Training Models**

- Class during the school day for credit
- Pull-out activity
- Before school activity
- Lunch activity
- After school activity
- Evening activity
- Weekend Activity
- Retreat training
- Adult School class
- ROP class



- Summer camp training
- Others?

## **RECRUITMENT**

Consider using the following recruitment methods:

1. Ask for recommendations from teachers, counselors and administrators.
2. Make formal class presentations and, if possible, include current peer helpers in the presentation.
3. Recruit in your school newspaper, over the P.A., and on posters throughout the school.
4. Elicit recommendations from students. Many schools ask students to complete a survey naming students they would talk to if they had a problem or students they perceive as positive student leaders. The students whose names appear most often are then invited to interview for the peer assistance program.

## **SELECTION OF PEER HELPERS**

*When selecting peer helpers, you may want to look for the following:*

1. Demonstrated behavior that is caring, accepting, genuine, understanding and trustworthy.
2. An understanding and acceptance of the responsibilities and limitations of the peer helper's role.
3. The ability to be sensitive to students from diverse backgrounds.
4. The time to devote to training and projects.
5. The ability to serve as a positive role model.
6. The willingness to seek and accept adult supervision.

## **FOR WHAT SORT OF YOUTH ARE YOU LOOKING TO DO PEER ADVOCACY WORK?**

Are you big enough to be a Peer Advocate? Do you have a heart big enough to feel for more than just yourself and your friends but also for others in need?

Do you have a heart and mind big enough to understand more than just your own feelings but how someone outside your group might feel? Do you have the ability to listen to all sides of a problem without giving advice and just be there for someone who needs you just to listen? Are you strong enough to keep what you hear and see to yourself when you are helping someone. to

never gossip about or put someone down you are to help?

Do you want to be part of a school that feels safe to all students no matter who they are?

If you think you are a big enough person to do these things, then we need you to be a Peer Advocate.

### **HOW TO GET YOUR FACULTY/ADMINISTRATION TO SUPPORT FOR YOUR PROGRAM**

- 1) GIVE THEM WHAT THEY WANT!! ASK THEM FOR PROGRAM IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS.**
- 2) FORM AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE. (PICK SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT LIKE OR APPROVE OF YOUR PROGRAM, AND ALSO PICK SOMEONE WITH A HOUSE IN RETREAT SETTING!)**
- 3) CREATE A ONE PAGE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER WITH INFORMATION ON WHAT YOUR PROGRAM HAS ACCOMPLISHED, PLANS ON DOING, STATISTICS, AND UPCOMING EVENTS.**
- 4) ACKNOWLEDGE PEOPLE'S CONCERNS.**
- 5) GET USED TO SAYING "WHAT A GREAT IDEA THAT IS!!" OR "WE REALLY SHOULD DO THAT!!" MAKE YOUR PROGRAM IDEAS COME FROM THEM.**
- 6) SPONSOR A FACULTY/STUDENT RAP GROUP. HAVE YOUR STUDENTS INVITE THEIR TEACHERS. (ESPECIALLY THE ONE WHO YOU'RE ALWAYS PULLING STUDENTS OUT OF.)**

- 7) **INVITE THE ADMINISTRATION TO SIT IN ON YOUR TRAINING/CLASS. HAVE THE STUDENTS ASK THE PRINCIPAL WHAT HE/SHE SEES AS THE MAJOR ISSUES/PROBLEMS AT THE SCHOOL!!**
- 8) **MAKE PRESENTATIONS TO YOUR SCHOOL BOARD.**
- 9) **MAKE PRESENTATIONS TO YOUR PTA.**
- 10) **RECRUIT YOUR PTA'S PRESIDENT'S CHILD INTO YOUR PROGRAM.**
- 11) **DO A YEAR-END REPORT/EVALUATION. DISTRIBUTE THEM TO FACULTY.**
- 12) **GIVE THEM WHAT THEY WANT!! ASK THEM FOR PROGRAM IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS.**

## ***Build for Success***

*Ingredients for a Successful Peer Program*

<b>Rank of Importance</b>	<b>Program Category</b>
<b>1</b>	Strong Program Coordinator
<b>2</b>	Good Training for Students
<b>3</b>	Clear Program Goals
<b>4</b>	Student Commitment & Ownership
<b>5</b>	Faculty Support
<b>6</b>	Supervision of Students
<b>7</b>	Program Coordinator's Contact With Students
<b>8</b>	Diversity of Students
<b>9</b>	Confidentiality Rules Observed

<b>10</b>	(tie) Recruitment of Students and Value Exploration and Reflection
<b>11</b>	Student Empowerment and Decision Making
<b>12</b>	Good Community Resources
<b>13</b>	Rewards and Incentives

### **Why Programs Fail:**

- **Failure to involve the rest of the school or community**
- **Program Coordinator leaves the program**
- **Not enough time for the Coordinator to plan and supervise**
- **Over-ambitious goals**
- **Not enough funds**

**“The list of essentials for creating a peer resource program...seems fairly simple and unimposing; why, then, does this model, which has been proven so effective in building academic and social success in youth for years and which has been advocated by educational reformers and preventionists for even more years, remain the exception instead of the mode in classrooms and schools throughout the United States?**

**The answer to this question... is quite simple: Adopting a peer resource model of education involves paradigmatic change...**

**Basically, this paradigm change involves a process of demystifying professional expertise and empowering people to help themselves and each other.”**

**One of the paradigm shifts that educators must make is moving from a perspective that youth are problems to one that youth are**

**resources.**

**“Considering how difficult collaboration is for adults – how entrenched and turf-conscious we can become after a lifetime of relating in a competitive, individualistic mode – it seems imperative we encourage and provide youth the opportunities to relate to each other and work together in a cooperative and/or collaborative way from early childhood on.**

**No better preventionist training exists than peer collaboration and cooperative learning programs that engage youth in mutual problem solving, decision making, and conflict resolution in a climate of mutual helping and respect.”**

**Bonnie Benard**

**The Case For Peers: The Corner on Research, 1990**