



PEER TO PEER PARTICIPATION VS. HELPING

Peer to Peer is a Participation Model, Not a Helping Model

One of the most critical components of designing a successful Peer to Peer program is grounding it in a foundational **"Participation Model"** mindset.

Participation Model



Students with and without disabilities come together to engage in shared activities where **all** students learn together in a reciprocal manner.

Outcomes

- Raises expectations
- Neutralizes power
- Offers reciprocal benefits
- Prioritizes inclusion
- Fosters equitable experiences
- Focuses on strengths and assets
- Creates allies

Helping Model



Students without disabilities, often referred to as "mentors", are assigned to peers with disabilities for the purpose of helping students with disabilities.

Outcomes

- Lowers expectations
- Views students differently
- Incites power differential
- Establishes a hierarchy
- Gives peers authority
- Perpetuates ableism

"Clearly, there is nothing wrong with help; friends often help each other. However, it is essential to acknowledge that help is not and can never be the basis of friendship..."

Unless help is reciprocal, the inherent inequity between 'helper' and 'helpee' will contaminate the authenticity of a relationship." - Norman Kunc

Quick Tips to Move Towards a Participation Model

- **Use inclusive language.** Replace words such as "mentor," "mentee," and "role model" with "peer," "friend," and "LINK."
- **Educate students and staff.** Coach students and staff on an ongoing basis that Peer to Peer is about friendships and engaging together, not about having students acting as mini-teachers.
- **Model participation.** Show students what participation looks like through your own actions.
- **Foster social opportunities in a range of activities.** Emphasize that Peer to Peer is not only occurring during one period in one classroom, but it is the foundation of the entire culture of your building.
- **Explore additional Peer to Peer resources on the [START website](https://gvsu.edu/s/2lb)** (gvsu.edu/s/2lb).