

Review Article

Supporting Transitions Through Peer Buddy Systems: Insights from Selected Researches

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Received: April 10, 2026

Accepted: May 02, 2026

Published: May 09, 2026

Abstract

Transition programs are essential in the lives of students transitioning from high school to postsecondary life. These programs are a series of structured activities and planning processes that prepare students for adult life. Peer buddy systems are a critical and promising intervention strategy in transition education, especially for students with disabilities as they navigate their move from high school to postsecondary and adult life as they foster inclusion, skill acquisition, and self-determination. This literature review aims to synthesize existing research about the role of peer buddies in transition programs. It aims to identify themes about peer support in transition education through five steps of the theoretical literature review process. The findings suggest that peer buddy programs support learners with special needs in their transition, addressing the following themes: social integration and peer relationships, holistic development and skill acquisition, inclusive participation, and environmental support. Implications for special education teachers and policymakers include considering the effectiveness of peer buddy systems in helping Learners with Disabilities (LWDs) in their transition curriculum specifically for making laws and designing individualized plans and programs.

Keywords: Transition Programs, Peer Buddy System, Social Integration, Inclusion, Transition Curriculum.

Introduction

The transition period from high school to postsecondary life is a critical phase for individuals with disabilities, which makes transition programs necessary (Gartland & Strosnider, 2023). A transition program is a coordinated series of structured activities and planning processes that are created to prepare students for their move from high school to independent adult life (Best & Burke, 2025). These programs aim to prepare students, particularly those with disabilities, for adulthood, specifically for employment, independent living, and further education (Zainal & Hashim, 2019). According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), students with disabilities are required to have an Individualized Education Program (IEP), which includes a formal transition plan once a student turns 16, or 14 in some states (Best & Burke, 2025; Fontil et al., 2020).

As it is legally mandated to prepare students with disabilities for adult life, transition programs are essential to improve their overall quality of life through individualized support based on their unique strengths and interests (Davis & Lee, 2023). Transition programs include different types of support packages with different learning competencies and standards to help learners succeed in adjusting from home to school, from secondary education to college or workforce (Capinpin & Rabara, 2023). In the context of the K-12 Transition Curriculum in the Philippines, different transition programs are provided depending on what the learner needs for his or her personal growth and development. The different programs provided are the care skills package, life skills package, functional academics package, pre-vocational package, enrichment package, livelihood package, and care skills package (Department of Education, 2020).

Elements of Transition Education Programs

Transition education programs (TEP) involve various elements such as developmentally appropriate education, parental involvement, and other support services like guidance counseling and career preparation (Thomas, 2023). The K-12 transition curriculum often emphasizes aligning the curriculum with appropriate teaching strategies to

equip learners with disabilities with essential skills and knowledge that will make them self-reliant and productive members of the community, and prepare them for higher education and the demands of adulthood. These curriculum programs are strengthened through the combination of different elements such as individualized transition plans, career guidance, vocational training, and parental involvement to ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities, are equipped with the right skills they need for their educational life and beyond (Gezun, 2024).

Peer Buddy System in Transition Education Programs

In a transition education program (TEP), the peer buddy system is important because it creates a supportive environment that helps students with disabilities transition from school to adult life. A peer buddy system pairs students with disabilities with peers who can model good behavior and social skills. One type of peer buddy system is Peer-Mediated Intervention (PMI); it is used to teach behavioral expectations to students within a shared classroom (Chen, 2024). This method is important because it helps students with special needs learn to interact with others in real-world settings. According to Gezun (2024), strengthening these transition programs is key to helping learners with special education needs move successfully into adulthood. Furthermore, it explains that involving students in their own transition services is a core part of modern systematic literature on the subject (Best & Burke, 2025). By using peer buddies, schools can address the “changing landscape” of transition planning that is described as necessary for a successful journey into adulthood (Davis & Lee, 2023). Having these social supports help remove barriers that often make transitions difficult for children with developmental disabilities (Fontil et al., 2020). Finally, the implementation of these specific transition programs helps students with learning disabilities gain the practical skills they need for life after school (Zainal & Hashim, 2019).

Significance of the Study

Most existing research focuses on peer buddies in relation to general academic or social contexts but not specifically in transition programs. This makes a literature review significant in order to synthesize different but related findings on the specific topic. A research review is a key part of the study because it includes a detailed overview of academic sources on a specific topic (Leite et al., 2019). It defines the current state of knowledge relevant to the study and helps researchers determine which theories will be useful to support the study, which research methods are accepted as valid for the study’s purpose, while highlighting specific gaps in existing research that the current study can address (Luft et al., 2022). Furthermore, this process is significant because it helps establish the relationships between existing theories and evaluates the extent to which they have been investigated. By identifying key themes, the review allows researchers to develop new hypotheses for future testing that will ensure the study can rely on a framework that is both rigorous and relevant for the study. Through this literature review, guidance and understanding of how a peer buddy system can be utilized in student transition programs for those who have special learning needs will be provided. It provides a framework for how peer support, through the use of a peer buddy system, can support the student’s social interactions, social inclusion, development of skills, and ultimately, readiness for adulthood (Pointon-Haas et al., 2024).

For students with disabilities, the study indicates that a peer buddy system can help facilitate transition from school to postsecondary education by enhancing confidence, independence, and providing a supportive network for developing social relationships.

For teachers and educators, the findings in this study are useful in providing insight into the potential of peer-mediated interventions as effective strategies for transition education and can assist in creating inclusive classroom practices and structured support systems that will encourage students to participate and become engaged while in school.

For parents and caregivers, the study provides an understanding of how vital peer relationships are to children with disabilities in the development of student transition goals and encourages them to work collaboratively with schools on achieving those goals.

Statement of the Problem

This literature review aims to synthesize existing research about the role of peer buddy systems in transition education. Specifically, it answers the following question: *What do purposefully selected research/literature say about peer buddy systems as an element of transition education?*

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilizes a qualitative research design, specifically a theoretical literature review to explore the role of peer buddy systems in the transition education of students with special learning needs. A theoretical literature review is

a systematic survey of scholarly sources on a specific topic, which provides an overview of existing knowledge that allows identification of relevant theories, methods, and gaps, which helps in establishing theories that already exist and the relationship between them, to what degree the existing theories have been investigated, and to develop new hypotheses for future research (Leite et al., 2019; Snyder, 2019). This approach is helpful in identifying themes related to peer buddy systems and transition education of students with special learning needs.

In this study, literature on peer buddy systems and transition education was identified and analyzed to develop themes highlighting the connection between peer buddy systems and transition education for students with special learning needs. This process enables the identification of patterns, themes, and relationships between the literature, which is essential in building a strong foundation (Luft et al., 2022; Snyder, 2019). To achieve the expected outcome of this study, the theoretical literature review process will be conducted in five steps. The first step involves searching for relevant literature, systematically locating articles on peer buddy systems and transition education in reliable databases and search engines (Xiao & Watson, 2019). The second step is to evaluate sources by assessing their credibility and relevance to the topic, and ensuring they are peer-reviewed (Snyder, 2019). The third step focuses on identifying different themes within the literature to highlight the connection between peer buddy systems and transition education. The fourth step involves outlining the structure by grouping related themes to ensure a logical flow of discussion (Machi & McEvoy, 2012). Finally, the fifth step is writing the literature review by organizing the findings from the literature on the connection between peer buddies and the transition education of learners with special needs (Machi & McEvoy, 2012; Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Results and Discussion

Based on the six research studies that were synthesized, a peer buddy system supports individuals with special needs in their transition in terms of their social integration and peer relationship, holistic development and skill acquisition, inclusive participation, and environmental support preparing them for their future.

Social Integration and Peer Relationships

The peer buddy system enhances social interaction between students with learning disabilities and their peers, fostering growth through shared experiences and mutual trust. Kristi Foster (2011) and Van Ryzin et al. (2024) suggest that having a peer buddy system enhances individuals with disabilities' social integration and peer relationships. When LWDs are paired with other peers, they learn how to interact with other people. They become more comfortable expressing themselves and feel a sense of belonging. Peer support fosters growth through shared experience and mutual trust. Through interaction with their peers, communication skills improve which is an important aspect of their transition into society.

Holistic Development and Skill Acquisition

Peer buddies support the academic and social development of learners with disabilities and help improve self-regulation and independence. Building on the established framework of transition education, the thematic analysis by Alqahtani and Murray (2015) and Chen (2024) underscore the critical role of peer-mediated interventions in fostering holistic development and skill acquisition. Alqahtani and Murray (2015) found that these programs help students with disabilities achieve better grades and higher scores in math and reading, which are key to succeeding after high school. At the same time, Chen (2024) explains that peer support helps students learn to follow routines and manage their own behavior, giving them the independence they need for adult life.

Inclusive Participation

Peer support enhances the participation of learners with disabilities in different activities. Fernandez et al. (2025) observed that when students with disabilities have peer buddies in classes like physical education, they participate more and feel like a real part of the school. Furthermore, in physical education and similar settings, peer buddies increase their participation, ensuring that learners with disabilities are included rather than just merely observing their peers.

Environmental Support

Van der Meulen et al. (2021) suggest that a successful transition is not about "fixing" the student, but about changing the school culture to be more accepting and helpful. By involving families, teachers, and the whole school, these programs reduce social risks and prepare students to confidently enter their community as adults. Additionally, the so-called "Circle of Friends" approach is a notably successful peer support model in primary settings for reducing bullying and social isolation. This model contributes to an effective transition by focusing on how to change the school culture to be more accepting, rather than merely attempting to "fix" the student. By involving the school community, including families and teachers, this system can help build emotional support and minimize social risk that students need to be confident in transitioning to their community as they grow older.

Table 1. Literature review matrix.

	Research 1	Research 2	Research 3	Research 4	Research 5	Research 6
Title	Using a Peer Buddy System to Increase Interaction Between Students with Special Needs and Their Peers	High School Peer Buddy Program: Impact on Social and Academic Achievement for Students with Disabilities	Secondary Peer Buddy Program in Physical Education	Implementation of a Peer-Mediated Intervention to Teach Behavioral Expectations for Two Students on Autism Spectrum and a Student with ADHD in an Inclusive Elementary Classroom in Taiwan	Emotional Peer Support Interventions for Students with SEND: A Systematic Review	The Effects of Cooperative Learning on Self-Reported Peer Relations, Peer Support, and Classroom Engagement Among Students with Disabilities
Author/s	Kristi Foster	Ragea Alqahtani and Francie R. Murray	Rosa Fernandez, Melissa Bittner, Amanda Young and Kasia Givenrod	Yu-Ling Chen	Kevin van der Meulen, Laura Granizo and Cristina del Barrio	Mark J. Van Ryzin, Christopher Murray and Cary J. Roseth
Goal of the study	This study examined the effectiveness of a peer buddy intervention to increase social interaction between students from a self-contained classroom and students from a general education classroom. It is hypothesized that having a buddy during special related classes will increase socialization with students with disabilities.	The study examined the increased social and academic achievement by high school students with disabilities participating in a peer buddy program.	The study demonstrated the positive motor and social-emotional effects of a peer buddy program within a high school adapted physical education (APE) class.	The study aimed to identify the effect of Peer-Mediated Intervention (PMI) on supporting the self-regulation of children on the autism spectrum and with Attention Deficit and Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) to complete the behavioral expectations of routines in an inclusive elementary classroom in Taiwan.	The study performed a systematic review focusing on emotional peer support interventions in school contexts (kindergarten, primary, and secondary school) for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).	The study aimed to determine whether specific instrumental methods could foster greater social integration. Its primary goal was to investigate whether classroom-level practices, specifically Cooperative Learning (CL), improved peer relationships, peer academic support, and classroom engagement for middle school students both with and without disabilities.
Objective/s of the study	The study aimed to answer the following questions: 1) How does a peer buddy system increase social interaction between students with special needs and their peers? 2) What are some methods that can be done to implement a peer buddy? 3) Does having a peer buddy significantly impact students with special needs?	The study aimed to answer the following questions: 1) Do students with learning or behavioral disabilities who are participating in the peer buddy program show improvements to their social skills? 2) Do students with learning or behavioral disabilities who participate in peer buddy programs show	The study aimed to answer the following questions: 1) Does participation in a peer buddy program increase social interaction and school-wide engagement? 2) What are the social-emotional and motor effects on these students? 3) How can a peer buddy program be successfully navigated and initiated in a physical education setting?	The study aimed to answer the following questions: 1) What is the effect of a Peer-Mediated Intervention (PMI) on target participants' behavior during the transition to activities? 2) What is the effect of the peer training on the peer models for assisting the target participants? 3) To what degree did the peers implement PMI as designed? 4) What are the target children's and peer models' perceptions on participating in the PMI program?	The research aimed to answer these questions: 1) Which types of peer support have been employed and what is their degree of success regarding interpersonal outcomes and individual results for both SEND students and peer supporters? 2) How are peer supporters selected and trained, and what is the level of active student participation versus adult structuring in these	The study aimed to answer the following questions: 1) What are the effects of participating in cooperative learning over a two-year period on the peer relationship, peer support and classroom engagement of middle school students? 2) Do the beneficial effects of cooperative learning on social and academic outcomes differ between students with disabilities

		improvement in academic skills?			interventions? 3) How is adult, school, and family support performed and integrated into the intervention?	and their typically developing areas? 3) Can cooperative learning serve as an effective implementation of Intergroup Contact Theory to reduce social barriers in diverse middle school settings?
Gap of the study	The “lunch bunch” group could not be composed of students with and without social skill difficulties, and the leaders of the social skills group approached the guidance counselor about how the students without disabilities should not be in the group. The idea for “lunch bunch” is for the students with disabilities to improve their skills. Training with the guidance counselor was limited.	Many of the examined social interactions between students with disabilities and their peers without disabilities took place in the preschool and elementary setting, but there is limited knowledge on the interaction between students with disabilities and their peers in the secondary inclusive general education classroom.	There is a limited amount of information and research on how to initiate specifically and navigate a peer buddy program within physical education (PE) settings, as most existing literature focuses on other school environments.	Research on Peer Mediated Intervention (PMI) for behavioral expectations and self-regulation is limited, especially in Taiwan where ABA-based PMI for classroom routines has not been studied. Existing work often overlooks treatment integrity and social validity of peer models, despite calls for peer-driven approaches over adult-led methods. The pandemic prevented collection of maintenance data, and lack of instructor consent limited generalization across transitions.	The researchers identified a gap in educational literature on emotional peer support for students with SEND, noting that existing PMI reviews focus narrowly on isolated disorders or academic social skills rather than broader aspects like befriending or emotional companionship. They also highlighted the lack of attention to the “whole school” context, including institutional support, teacher roles, and family involvement, which are crucial for peer support success. Finally, they pointed out limited clarity in current research about the balance between student agency and adult-led structure.	The research identified several gaps in existing literature that this study wanted to address. First, most prior research on Cooperative Learning (CL) focused on elementary-aged students. Second, these studies typically utilized short time frames of less than one year, meaning the long-term impact of extended participation was not well understood. Finally, existing research focused on how peers without disabilities viewed their classmates with disabilities based on their social status, rather than examining the self-reported perceptions and experiences of the students with disabilities themselves.
Significant findings	• The three students who participated in the study demonstrated improvement in socialization, maturity, and	• The Social Skills Improvement System showed different perspectives on the improvement of students with LD	• There was a significant increase in participation in physical activities after the peer-buddy program. • Students with disabilities reported enjoying PE activities, with their mean	• There is a functional relation between the Peer-Mediated Intervention (PMI) and improved ability of the three target students to complete their classroom routines. • The average percentage of	• Emotional peer support reduced anxiety and increased engagement, socialization, independent social engagement and Shared Play, with 19	• Classroom-level practices, specifically Cooperative Learning (CL) can effectively help the social risks faced by middle school students with

	appropriate behavior. • Their development was evident, and the mentors also became more empathetic and understanding toward students from the language learning disabilities class. • Rather than viewing students from the self-contained class as “different,” mentors became more inclusive and open to discussing and valuing their ideas. • The fifth-grade participants enjoyed being part of the study, and their involvement may create future opportunities for similar social groups or mentoring programs. • Their participation also encouraged broader interaction, allowing other general education fifth graders to build social connections with these students. • One student who has a strong-willed personality and difficulty accepting	and EBDs’ social skills. For the students and the special education teachers perspective, the peer buddy program positively improved and increased the students with LB and EBDs use of social skills. While the general education teachers perceive that the peer buddy program did not have a significant impact on students' social skills. • The students who participated in a peer buddy program showed improvements with their academic performance based on their scores in different tests which were gathered before the peer buddy program and after the peer buddy program: • Grade Point Average - significant improvements in their GPAs rising by an average of 0.22 points [pre-GPA	score increasing from 3.8 to 6.0. • Peer buddies also demonstrated improved awareness and understanding of disabilities, which helped them engage more effectively with their peers. • Students with disabilities also showed slight improvements in their enjoyment of PE, participation in sports, and interaction with peers. • Peer buddies continued interacting with students with disabilities outside structured programs, supporting ongoing social connections and inclusion.	completed steps rose significantly from low baseline levels to 91% for Henry, 83% for William and 54% for James. • The effectiveness of the intervention was rooted in a one-time 40-minute peer training session, which enabled typically developing peers who initially showed 0% accuracy to correctly provide prompting and reinforcement at high levels, often reaching between 95% and 100% for William’s and James’ groups. • One peer in Henry’s group struggled with gentle prompting and the consistent use of visual cards, which lowered their specific group average. • Social validity results showed that 100% of the target children felt the peer support made their routines easier to finish, and teachers reported observed increases in student independence, with Henry’s teacher even noting generalization of these skills outside of the research sessions. • Non-compliant behaviors, particularly in James’ case, could diminish the peer models’ willingness to assist in the future, highlighting the importance of considering student personalities and providing additional support for peers.	papers reporting statistically significant increases in one or more of these areas for focus children. • In addition to fostering socialization, these practices also lead to increased self-esteem and empathy for both the child receiving support and the child providing support. • Of particular interest was that the first "whole-class meeting" associated with the Circle of Friends (CoF) intervention was identified as being a more powerful factor in social acceptance than the small group meetings that were held weekly thereafter. • There also appeared to be a gender difference in voluntary participation in these programs; boys and girls had an equal number of children selected by adults to participate and were equally represented in the aggregate analysis; but girls had a greater likelihood of volunteering than boys for programs that	disabilities. • The research included a large overall sample of students from 15 rural middle schools, with a specific analytic sample of students after excluding those missing disability status. Approximately 13.9% of the participants were receiving special education services. • Students with disabilities in control schools showed a substantial decline in social and academic outcomes over two years, while those in CL classrooms maintained identical to their typically developing peers.
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	help from others would benefit from continued involvement in social skills groups or meetings to build greater comfort and confidence in collaborative settings.	M=2.35; post- GPA M= 2.85] • FASTT Math-significant improvement with their fast math scores rising by 63.39 points [pre-test M= 43.90; post-test M=107.29 • System 44-significant improvement with their Lexile reading scores rising by 107.57 [pre-Lexile M=627.29; post-Lexile M= 734.86] • Acuity Assessment-significant improvement with their acuity scores with a difference of 65.13 points. [pre-Acuity M=386.75; post-Acuity M= 451.88]			utilized student interest as a criteria to determine who could participate.	
Conclusion	The peer buddy system proved effective in increasing interaction and improving social skills among special education students. Over the two-month study, all participants both mentors and mentees, showed notable growth in socialization, maturity, and empathy. Students with disabilities became more	The results of the data collected indicates that there is a statistical improvement in the academic and social achievement of the students with learning disability (LD) and emotional and behavioral disorder (EBD) after taking part in the peer buddy program. The difference in perspective	PE and APE teachers should consider implementing a peer buddy program to benefit both students with and without disabilities. However, it is vital to train peer buddies extensively, covering essential aspects such as skill acquisition, understanding of disability categories, providing instructional support, fostering a positive attitude, willingness to engage, assigning roles effectively, and promoting social interaction.	The study concludes that Peer-Mediated Intervention (PMI) based on Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) principles is a safe and effective evidence-based strategy for enhancing the self-regulation skills and independent completion of classroom routines for students with autism and ADHD in inclusive settings. The research expands the application of PMI beyond traditional social or academic domains and addresses a significant regional gap in Taiwan	The systematic review of 23 studies concludes that emotional peer support interventions are highly effective in fostering social inclusion for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Most of the research showed a clear increase in social interaction and communication between students with SEND and	This study concludes that Cooperative Learning (CL) is a highly effective, minimal instructional strategy for improving social and academic experiences of middle school students, particularly with those with disabilities. While all students in the sample showed positive gains, the intervention was critical for students with disabilities.

	comfortable communicating and building relationships with their peers, while general education students developed greater understanding and acceptance of differences.	of the general education teacher and special education teacher on the improvement of the students may be explained by the fact that high school teachers only spend time with students in one school year while special education teachers constantly check on the improvement of students.	Implementing a peer buddy program has the potential to enhance socialization, manage larger PE class sizes effectively, increase opportunities for inclusion, and promote greater disability awareness among all students involved. These efforts can contribute significantly to creating a supportive and inclusive environment within physical education settings.	because of the functional relation between the intervention and improved behavioral outcomes. Furthermore, the study highlights the feasibility of using young, typically developing peers as effective interventionists who can implement procedures with high integrity while providing valuable social validity data. The researcher also suggests that strategically matching students and utilizing naturalistic peer support aligns with inclusive education laws and trends, and they encourage the replication of this PMI program across diverse participants and settings given its lack of identified negative effects.	their peers. Beyond social frequency, the studies highlighted individual benefits for everyone involved: students with SEND reported higher self-esteem and reduced anxiety, while their peer supporters developed greater empathy and better communication skills. While various models like "Peer Buddying" and "Peer Networks" were effective, particularly in secondary schools, the "Circle of Friends" approach was notably successful in primary settings for reducing bullying and isolation. Ultimately, the success of these programs relies heavily on a supportive school culture—or "ethos"—where leadership, teachers, and families all back the initiative.	Without CL, these students will experience a significant decline in peer relationships and engagement over time. By implementing the principles of Intergroup Contact Theory, such a positive independence and individual accountability for Cooperative Learning successfully integrated students with disabilities into the classroom, allowing them to maintain social and academic identity identical to their typically developing peers.
Analysis as a reader/ researcher	Upon reading the research article, I found a significant finding on how peer buddies impact the life of students with special needs and the other way around. Through this article, it became evident that using a peer buddy system improves interaction, social skills, and builds relationships among students. Students with special needs became	Upon reading the research, I realized that peer buddies are effective in helping learners with learning disabilities in developing their academic and social skills. The peer buddy system is helpful in terms of helping LWD achieve academic and social improvement which could be beneficial for a	Upon reading the research article, I learn that LWDs participate well in the PE activity because they have a peer buddy who will guide them in the given activity. This means that the research shows there is an increase in participation with the peers knowing that their classmate has a disability.	After reading the research and reading the results, I realized that one of the most effective support for students with special needs comes from their own classmates. Rather than focusing on teacher-led prompts, peer-mediated support can actually be very helpful for students with autism and ADHD to build independence and improve self-regulation. One of the striking information from the research is the capacity of children to take on the role of an interventionist. These children were able to implement	As a researcher, an analysis of the data suggests that these interventions work not necessarily by "fixing" the social skills of students with SEND, but by changing the attitudes of the surrounding peer group. By fostering a deeper understanding of a classmate's challenges, peers become more patient and proactive in their inclusion efforts, creating a friendlier environment	I see it as a very important piece of research because it shows that we don't always need expensive or complicated programs to help students with disabilities feel included. As a researcher, I am interested by the fact that the authors followed these students for two full years. Most students are much shorter, but by staying with the students longer, the researchers were

	more comfortable to share their thoughts and to interact with their peers. On the other hand, the peer buddies developed a sense of deeper understanding and acceptance to students with special needs. This system is proved to be effective in fostering inclusivity.	smooth transition program. I also realized that the opinions of SPED teachers and regular teachers on the improvements of LWDs are different since the SPED teachers spend more time with the students compared to the regular teachers, which explains the reason why they notice LWDs improvements.		systematic prompting and reinforcement with only a 40-minute training session. However, there were also downsides that were mentioned in the study. It was mentioned in the study that non-compliant behaviors from the target students can affect or reduce the willingness of the peers. Overall, the study made me realize that inclusion can be achieved through the help of peers that are willing to assist their classmates with special learning needs. This does not only help students with special needs but it can also help the peers to develop leadership skills and empathy. Additionally, peer buddies are not just “tools” for intervention but they are social beings whose emotional experiences and motivation must be carefully monitored and considered.	regardless of the student's specific behaviors. The research also emphasizes that "real" participation—where students have the power to suggest activities rather than just following adult instructions—leads to more authentic and long-lasting relationships. However, there is a visible gender gap in volunteerism, with girls significantly more likely to join support programs, suggesting that schools need to actively work on making "caring" roles seen as a shared responsibility for all genders. Finally, many programs appear "fragile" because they often depend on a single dedicated teacher or external researcher; for these benefits to persist, the support system must be officially integrated into the school's long-term policies and resources.	able to show that the benefits of Cooperative Learning actually get stronger over time. It wasn't just a “quick fix” that faded away, it was a lasting change in how students treated each other.
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Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the overall theme shows that these six studies highlight how peer-mediated support is effective in creating an inclusive environment where students with disabilities can thrive. A central theme is Social Integration and Peer Relationships, which emphasizes the importance of the peer buddy system: it does more than just provide help; it also builds genuine trust and friendships. By pairing students, schools reduce social isolation and help everyone feel they belong. Furthermore, the research focuses on Holistic Development and Skill Acquisition, showing that these programs help students improve their academic performance, physical participation in activities like PE and “soft skills”, such as regulation and independence. Another theme is the shift toward Environmental and Systematic Support suggesting that the success of inclusion depends on a “whole-school” culture where the environment is adapted to be supportive, rather than simply trying to “fix” the individual student’s needs. These programs create a mutual gain, meaning that both students and their peer buddy grow together through shared experiences. This leads to a more compassionate school community where students are seen as valued peers who contribute to the social interaction of the classroom instead of being seen as “different”.

The peer buddy system is a foundation of effective transition in education, as it directly prepares students with disabilities for independent living by developing their social, academic, and life skills that are necessary for their adulthood. These researches show evidence of peer buddies being an effective aspect of developing LWDs and helping them in transition education. With these findings, policymakers, and special education teachers should take into account the effectiveness of peer buddies in helping LWDs in their transition curriculum. Policymakers could use this research as their basis in making a law that would integrate peer buddies into the transition curriculums to develop the students’ academic and social skills and make them ready for a transition. Teachers on the other hand could make use of these researches as a guide in designing different individualized plans and programs that utilizes peer support as a part of the transition education of LWDs.

Declarations

Acknowledgements: The current study would like to express sincere gratitude to the Undergraduate Research Coordinator of the School of Teacher Education and Liberal Arts, Dr. Keven John N. Allit for the guidance and supervision provided to the student researchers.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Statement: The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools or AI-assisted technologies were used in the preparation, writing, analysis, or editing of this manuscript.

Author Contributions: ZMPB, ERGJ, JKMM, KJGN, SJOP, DMBS: Development and framing of the entire research; MLB: Adviser and consultant, editor, evaluator of all manuscript and research content; theories and concepts in the study.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Consent to Publish: All authors agree to publish the paper in Bulletin of Education and Language.

Data Availability Statement: The data sets generated and/or analyzed during this study are not publicly available but are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Funding: This research is not in any way under any funding agency or institution.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in this study.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This study was conducted in accordance with the course requirements of the subject BSNE 323-Transition Education. We have taken approval from the Department Head of Professional Education to conduct this classroom-based research work through the approved course syllabi. During the conduct of this research, no ethics committee approval for undergraduate research was required at our institution.

Research Content: The research content of the manuscript is original and has not been published elsewhere.

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Citation: Baliton, Z. M. P., Gazmen, E. R., Jr., Mangonon, J. K. M., Nisperos, K. J. G., Perez, S. J. O., Sarmiento, D. M. B., & Balmeo, M. L. (2026). Supporting Transitions Through Peer Buddy Systems: Insights from Selected Researches. *Bulletin of Education and Language*, 1(2), 1–11.

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