Bulletin of Education and Language
E-ISSN: 3139-5422
Homepage: https://standoutpress.org/bel
Volume 1, Issue 2, May–August 2026, pp. 12-21
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License [CC BY 4.0]
Publisher: Standout Press

Review Article

Exploring the Impact of Peer Buddy Systems in Transition Education Programs: A Mini Literature Review of Reciprocal Benefits, Social-Emotional Growth, and Structured Planning

[a]Veron Kristine P. Balsino, [b]Winsam S. Colcol, [c]John Rylee S. Mila, [d]Honeylyn Jane L. Pre, [e]Athea Jheyne O. Ramirez, [f]Christopher R. Suleta and *[g]Marilyn L. Balmeo

[a-f]Third Year Bachelor of Special Needs Education (BSNED), Saint Louis University, A. Bonifacio Street, Baguio City, Philippines
[g]Marilyn L. Balmeo, PhD, Faculty, Department of Political and Social Sciences, School of Teacher Education and Liberal Arts (STELA), Saint Louis University, A. Bonifacio Street, Baguio City, Philippines
*Corresponding Author Email: mlbalmeo@slu.edu.ph

Received: May 05, 2026 **Accepted:** May 27, 2026 **Published:** June 03, 2026

Abstract
This research literature review explores the role of peer buddy systems as a key part of the Transition Education Program (TEP) for students with disabilities. TEPs are designed to help these learners move from school to adult life by teaching them how to be independent, find jobs, and participate in their community. According to recent studies, a successful transition program depends on five elements: specialized curriculum, effective teaching strategies, support services, teacher skills, and partnerships with the community. The paper identifies how these relationships reduce social barriers and students' bond over shared interests. By looking at current studies, this paper aims to show how peer support helps students with disabilities become more self-reliant and productive members of society. Through a review of six studies, three key themes were identified: reciprocal benefits of peer buddy systems, social and emotional benefits, and the importance of structured planning. The results indicate that peer buddy systems highly contribute to the success of a transition education program by providing social, emotional, and academic benefits to learners with disabilities (LWDs), while helping peer buddies grow in empathy, skills, and confidence. Adequate planning, training, and support are important for teachers, the school, and the families involved to ensure the effectiveness of the TEP. Thus, this study recommends that school leaders should provide time, budget, and clear roles for teachers to run these programs and work with families to explain the goals and address the problem. Future research should conduct long-term studies to see if the benefits last beyond the program.
Keywords: Peer Buddy, Transition Education Programs, Learners with Disabilities (LWDs), Independent Life.

Introduction

Transition education programs (TEPs) are services that are meant to teach learners to become self-reliant, purposeful, and productive members of their families, communities, and society (Department of Education, 2020). Thus, the goal is to educate learners with disabilities to become as independent as learners without disabilities.

Traditionally, TEPs are for high school students transitioning into college or their place of employment. Watson (2000) demonstrates this in the study of transitioning students to a community college. On the other hand, a study by Anal et al. (2025) explores challenges in facilitating a transition-to-career process and demonstrates the transition to employment.

However, TEPs can also be done for other types of transitions. One such example is toddlers entering preschool for the first time (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). However, another instance in which TEPs can be used is for students who transition from primary to secondary education (Norwich & Salazar Rivera, 2025).

The research by Bonifacio et al. (2025) evaluated five core components, namely, curriculum design, teaching strategies, support services, teacher competence, and school-community partnerships. These components complement each other to ensure that a transition education program achieves its objectives, aligns with state standards, and caters to the learner's needs.

Curriculum design involves frameworks that cater to individual student needs. According to Farochi (2022), an effective transition program considers the individualized needs, strengths, and preferences of the learner. It prepares learners for future challenges, including practical life skills and academic and vocational integration. Curriculum design is implemented through teaching strategies that enhance the engagement of students and their skill acquisition in transition-focused educational settings. Teaching strategies include "differentiated instruction methods, adaptive teaching techniques, individualized learning pathways, and evidence-based practices." The differentiated and adaptive teaching strategies improve student engagement and learning outcomes for students with special needs (Pacheco, 2023). To further support such strategies, recommended support services include counseling, therapeutic interventions, assistive technologies, and coordinated support networks to encourage student independence and post-school success. In implementing a TEP, the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of support services are necessary to ensure inclusivity and student well-being. The study of Khasawneh (2024) suggests that access to counseling, training, and assistive supports are strong factors in employment predictability, continued education, and independent living outcomes. In addition, collaboration and involvement between support personnel and families contributed to learners' independence (Bonifacio et al., 2025).

Teacher competence is an important component of a TEP, as educators' expertise directly influences the quality of transition education. In order to achieve educational objectives and student preparation goals, teacher competence encompasses professional qualifications, specialized training backgrounds, ongoing professional development participation, and demonstrated competencies. This is further supported by the study of De Arao and Fontanilla (2024), which found that teacher competence in vocational and transition-related skills significantly influences the effectiveness of transition planning and learner outcomes. Lastly, school-community partnerships involve the collaborative relationships between the school and the community stakeholders that further strengthen the effectiveness of TEPs. School-community partnerships allow learners to experience real-world opportunities for students with special needs through partnership structures and sharing of resources. According to Khasawneh (2024), community-based experiences and partnerships provide more opportunities for employment and the practice of independent living skills.

The peer buddy system, also known as the buddy system or peer-to-peer program, pairs general education students who model appropriate behavior and social skills with peers who have learning disabilities, encouraging them to participate more actively in class discussions. These mentors motivate their buddies to initiate conversations naturally across various settings (Foster, 2011). According to Mohd Zahid et al. (2021), the buddy system is a peer-to-peer system in which students initially work in pairs to reach the desired outcome. This concept is based on the principle that friends would be able to help each other rather than compete. Designed for school- or district-wide implementation, this peer-to-peer approach matches students with disabilities to general education peers, promoting awareness of their disabilities alongside active social and academic support throughout the school day (Ziegler et al., 2020). Foster's (2011) study found that the peer buddy system helped regular students better understand those with language learning disabilities while also fostering self-reflection. For instance, students connected over shared interests like favorite TV shows or singer-songwriters, realizing that despite being in self-contained classes, their respondents, the fifth graders, enjoyed similar activities that led to unexpected bonds that had not formed previously between the groups.

Peer buddy systems play a key role in enhancing social inclusion and academic outcomes within transition education programs for students with disabilities (Alqahtani, 2013). Peer mentoring further benefits these students by fostering self-expression, communication, and independence (Williams et al., 2024). Findings from studies by Karr (2022), Wilt and Morningstar (2020), and Van der Meulen et al. (2021) show that emotional peer support interventions generally produced positive outcomes for both students with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) and their peer buddies. Patterns showed improved social skills— such as initiating conversations, appropriate behavior, and self-advocacy—as well as academic gains, including greater independence without paraeducators, increased engagement, and effective use of adapted materials. Peer buddies also benefited, developing interpersonal skills, better class participation, gaining new understandings of intellectual disability and inclusion, forming positive relationships, and experiencing personal growth that prepares students for future careers.

Peer buddy systems play an important role in implementing TEPs, helping ensure the program's effectiveness by improving social skills and academic performance. However, studies about the relationship between peer buddy systems and transition education programs are limited. Current studies on peer buddy systems focus more on their implementation in special education settings, while existing research on TEPs caters more toward post-school outcomes. As a result, the study is guided by the following research question: What do purposefully selected research studies say about peer buddy systems as an element of transition education?

The research review establishes the peer buddy system as the foundational bridge that helps students with disabilities transition from school to their future independent life. The review shows that peer mentoring helps students develop essential social-emotional skills, self-expression capabilities, and career readiness skills, which traditional academic programs do not teach. The studies by Karr (2022), Van der Meulen et al. (2021), and Williams et al. (2024) provide evidence that these interventions facilitate social acceptance, self-advocacy, and increased independence, thereby reducing reliance on adult supervision, as evidenced by the studies of Wilt and Morningstar (2020). The review elucidates the operational dynamics of the system implementation, highlighting funding constraints and teacher time limitations, as documented by Jamil et al. (2025) and Płatos et al. (2025), while also offering schools pragmatic strategies for establishing structured community-based support programs that extend beyond rudimentary buddy systems. This research is significant because it illustrates how shared experiences, characterized by mutual development, empower students with disabilities to convert real-world anxieties into educational prospects.

Methodology

Research Design

The study utilized a theoretical literature review design to examine current research on peer buddy systems as an element of transition education. The study aimed to identify established theories, analyze their relationships, and assess the extent to which these theories had been investigated. It also aimed to determine the gaps in current knowledge and develop new hypotheses to be tested. The literature review served as the foundation of the study by providing a comprehensive overview of current knowledge, relevant frameworks, and research trends.

Instruments and Data Collection

The researchers used a literature review matrix as the primary instrument for organizing and analyzing collected data. Data collection utilized a systematic search of keywords related to peer buddies and TEPs to identify relevant literature. The data collection process followed a systematic procedure. First, the researchers searched for relevant literature from academic journals with keywords related to peer buddies and transition education programs. Second, the gathered data were evaluated based on factors including credibility, relevance, and publication date (not exceeding five years). Third, the selected literature was analyzed to identify recurring themes and gaps in existing literature. Fourth, the study outlined the structure of the literature review by organizing related studies and concepts into a coherent framework. Finally, the researchers synthesized their findings to provide comprehensive insights into the topic.

Results

The literature review synthesizes findings from six selected research articles that determine the role of peer buddy systems in transition education programs for students with disabilities. The common patterns and key ideas were identified and organized into major themes. These themes reflect the shared insights of the studies regarding the outcomes, benefits, and implementation of peer support systems in educational settings. Specifically, three main themes emerged: reciprocal benefits of peer buddy systems, social and emotional benefits, and the importance of structured planning. These themes provide a framework for understanding how peer buddy systems contribute to the effectiveness of transition education programs.

Themes

Theme 1: Reciprocal Benefits of Peer Buddy Systems

The studies highlighted the benefits of peer mentoring and buddy systems for both the students with disabilities and the peer buddies. In the study by Williams et al. (2024), it was discussed that peer mentoring helped students with disabilities to improve their self-expression, communication, and independence, especially when mentors had similar experiences. Similarly, Wilt and Morningstar (2020) emphasized that while peer mentoring helped students with learning disabilities build personal connections and social engagement, it also benefited peer support by fostering new insights into inclusion, developing positive relationships, and preparing for future careers.

Theme 2: Social and Emotional Benefits

Most of the studies reported social and emotional benefits to the students with disabilities through peer mentoring. Several studies reported on the improvements in terms of social interaction, confidence, and relationships. According to Van der Meulen et al. (2021), peer support interventions increased social acceptance, self-esteem, and empathy among students. In addition, according to Karr (2022), peer-to-peer programs helped students with developmental disabilities to improve their social behaviors such as initiating conversations and practicing appropriate social interactions.

Table 1. Literature review matrix.

	Research 1	**Research 2**	**Research 3**	**Research 4**	**Research 5**	**Research 6**
Title	Peer Mentoring for Students with Learning Disabilities: The Importance of Shared Experience on Students' Social and Emotional Development	Student Perspectives on Peer Supports in an Inclusive Postsecondary Education Context	Emotional Peer Support Interventions for Students with SEND: A Systematic Review	Exploring the Effectiveness of a Peer-to-Peer Program on Special Education and General Education High School Students	Promoting Autistic Students' Transition from First to Second Level of Elementary Education: Pilot Evaluation of the School Buddy Program	Effects of Buddy System on Year 9 Students' Mathematical Discernments and Performance
Author/s	Charles J. Williams, Jacqueline M. Chen, Allison Quirion, and Fumiko Hoeft	Courtney Lane Wilt and Mary E. Morningstar	Kevin van der Meulen, Laura Granizo, and Cristina del Barrio	Lydia Karr	Mateusz Płatos, Anna Droś, and Kinga Wojaczek	Siti Nur Amalina Jamil, Masitah Shahrill and Yurizka Melia Sari
Goal of the study	The goal of the study was to explore how peer mentoring programs support learners with learning disabilities (LD) in academic and social-emotional development.	The goal of the study was to better understand the impact of peer support (peer buddies) from the lived experiences of students with intellectual disabilities attending inclusive postsecondary education programs (IPSE), as well as their peer supports.	The goal of the study was to conduct a systematic review that focuses on emotional peer support intervention implemented in school settings (kindergarten, primary, and secondary levels) for students with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) with the intention of expanding understanding of this evidence-based practice.	The primary goal of this study was to effectively examine the social and academic effects of peer-mediated interactions in high school settings.	The primary goal of this pilot study was to evaluate the feasibility, compatibility, and acceptability of a new peer-mediated intervention called Peer Buddies – A Friend Start	The goal of this study was to evaluate the feasibility and potential benefits of implementing a buddy system in mathematics learning within the Southeast Asian context.
Objective/s of the study	a) Review key literature on the benefits of peer mentoring for students with learning disabilities; b) Identify how shared experiences between peer mentors and mentees influence the social and emotional outcomes of students with LDs.	a) In what ways do students with intellectual disabilities perceive and experience support provided by peers in an IPSE context? b) How do peer supports view the impact of their roles on themselves and their peers with intellectual disability?	a) Identify the types of peer support programs used in schools for students with SEND and assess their effectiveness. b) Examine how peer supporters are selected and trained. c) Explore how schools, families, and adults support the implementation of these programs.	a) Test if pairing students with developmental disorders and general education students facilitates higher academic and social performance for both. b) Analyze progress toward individual IEP goals for social skills and academics.	a) Assess the preliminary effects of the program on students' social and emotional well-being. b) Gather perceptions of its acceptability among stakeholders. c) Identify barriers and facilitators to its successful implementation.	a) Evaluate the feasibility of implementing a buddy system in mathematics learning by examining both students' performance and perceptions conducted within the Southeast Asian context. b) Evaluate the benefits of implementing a buddy system in mathematics learning by examining both students' performance and perceptions conducted within the Southeast Asian context.
Gap of the study	While peer mentoring programs	While research is emerging	While many studies examine	Previous studies have	The primary gap addressed	For the gap of the study,

	for students with LD have been studied, the majority of the available literature focuses primarily on academic outcomes or adult mentors. There is limited research on how peer mentors support social-emotional development during educational transitions.	associated with the outcomes of peer mentoring programs, little is known about the experiences of students with intellectual disability involved in peer mentoring as described by the students themselves.	peer support programs in schools, research specifically on emotional peer support for students with SEND remains limited. Additionally, there is insufficient understanding of the roles of peer supporters (peer buddies) and the involvement of schools, families, and adults in supporting these interventions.	explored methods to enhance social skills in students with ASD, but these ideas haven't been used much in high schools, especially for other developmental disorders beyond just ASD.	by this study is the lack of empirical research examining the effectiveness and feasibility of transition-focused peer support programs for autistic students.	students often treat these forms as unrelated leading to confusion and underperformance. However, most studies on the buddy system focus on areas like language learning or support for students with disabilities.
Significant findings	The findings of the study indicate that peer mentoring is beneficial to students' self-expression, communication, and independence. The importance of shared experiences was highlighted; the benefits of mentoring were more evident when mentors had faced similar challenges themselves. In programs with mentors without LDs, frustration was reported for both the mentors and mentees. The outcomes are especially important during educational transitions, when students with LD are at greater risk for academic and social challenges.	The findings indicated that peer support has a positive impact on both peer supports (peer buddies) and students with intellectual disability. For the IPSE students (the students with intellectual disabilities), they described their experiences with peer supports in terms of personal connections and individual goals for social engagement, which is further divided into four types: academic, emotional, informational, social networking. For the peer supports, they reported new understandings of intellectual disability and inclusion, positive relationships, and personal growth and development in preparation for future careers.	The systematic review found that emotional peer support interventions generally produced positive outcomes for both students with SEND and their peer supporters (peer buddies). The studies reported improvements such as increased social interaction, greater social acceptance, enhanced self-esteem, and the development of empathy. For students with SEND, findings indicated better engagement with peers, improved socialization and shared play, increased communicative behaviors, and reductions in anxiety, challenging behaviors, and reliance on adult support. Peer supporters (peer buddies) also demonstrated more positive attitudes toward classmates with disabilities, stronger	Through a thematic analysis, the results focused on the social and academic changes of both target students and their peer buddies. Patterns showed improved social skills (initiating conversations, appropriate behavior, and self-advocacy) and academics (independence without paraeducators, engagement, and adapted materials) among target students. Peer buddies also benefited, gaining interpersonal skills and better class participation.	This pilot study assessed the feasibility and acceptability of the "Peer Buddies – A Friend (for) Start" program for 11 autistic students transitioning to 4th grade in Polish schools. Paired with older "buddies," these students engaged in daily activities during recess, leading to medium improvements in social and emotional inclusion, as reported by teachers, and a decrease in verbal bullying among students. Stakeholders reported high satisfaction with the program, highlighting enhanced student safety and prosocial development for buddies. However, overall feasibility was mixed due to barriers like insufficient teacher time, lack of funding, and parental concerns about autism stigma.	Research revealed an overall improvement in test scores, although a few students experienced slight declines. Students generally perceived the buddy system positively, citing peer guidance, emotional support, and collaborative learning as key benefits.

			empathy, improved communication strategies, and enhanced self-confidence. Some studies additionally noted early signs of friendship formation, although the review emphasized that more precise and long-term data are needed to confirm the durability and broader impact of these effects.			
Conclusion	In conclusion, the existing literature suggests that pairing students with LD with peers with similar experiences can offer academic, social, and emotional benefits. Peer mentoring supports self-advocacy, emotional well-being, and career preparedness, while also supporting mentors' development. The research suggests that future studies should look into identifying the most effective components of peer mentoring programs and consider factors such as culture and race.	Individuals with intellectual disabilities experience stigmatizing interactions across many aspects of their lives. As such, the researchers encourage further discussion on these students' voices in the context of IPSEs.	The research concluded that emotional peer support interventions in schools generally lead to positive outcomes for students with SEND and their peer supporters. The studies reported improvements in social interaction, social acceptance, self-esteem, and empathy. Some evidence of friendship development was also observed, although further research is needed to confirm long-term effects. The authors emphasized the importance of support from teachers, schools, and families, while noting that these factors remain underreported and should be explored in future studies.	The researcher concluded that the peer-to-peer program worked well to boost the social and academic skills of the target students during the duration of the study. However, the results weren't fully supported because of limited time and resources. More studies over long periods could show this method helps special education students on a bigger scale.	The study concludes that the "Peer Buddies – A Friend (for) Start" program is a potentially effective intervention for improving social and emotional inclusion of autistic students transitioning to 4th grade, supported by positive teacher feedback and decreased bullying. Despite strong acceptance among participants, the program's feasibility is challenged by implementation barriers such as limited teacher time, funding issues, and parental concerns about autism stigma. The researchers emphasize the need to address these systemic and social obstacles for successful adoption and scaling of peer-mediated support in schools.	Definitely, mathematics has posed many challenges not only at the secondary level but across different stages of learning. We continue to struggle with mathematics even up to now. Converting between decimals, fractions, and percentages is a skill that students often forget. Within the context of the buddy system, students also face challenges in teaching DFP conversions to their fellow ninth-grade classmates. Cooperative learning which emphasizes peer interaction and student-centered instruction, can help students support one another. Based on the research I have read, the buddy system is one of the promising strategies to address these difficulties,

						especially those with disabilities.
Analysis as a reader/ researcher	As a reader, the research made me reflect on how the peer mentoring system is not a mere assignment of a "buddy" to a student with a disability. There are several factors to consider, and in this case, it is the importance of shared experience between the mentor and the mentee. Shared experience allows better understanding for the mentor in how to instruct, teach, and socialize with the mentee. In existing and future peer mentoring programs, it is important to consider the compatibility of the students to create a positive learning experience that benefits both sides. This is especially important during educational transitions, because a mentor with similar experiences can help them adjust, build confidence, and develop self-advocacy skills.	There is emerging research on the outcomes of peer mentoring programs. However, there is much to know about how these programs affect those involved. We should not only ask about the impacts of these programs but also ask about the experiences of students with disabilities and their peer mentors. Although knowing the effects of peer mentoring programs does contribute to this area of research, knowing the feelings and experiences of those involved in these peer buddy programs can be just as beneficial.	The study shows that emotional peer support interventions can positively influence students with SEND by improving social interaction, confidence, and peer relationships. It also highlights benefits for peer supporters, particularly in developing empathy and understanding. However, the limited long-term evidence and lack of detailed discussion on adult and school involvement suggest that these programs may require stronger support systems to ensure lasting impact. Overall, the findings indicate that peer support is promising, but further research and improved implementation are necessary.	Upon reading the research study, I saw the importance of having peer buddies for students with developmental disabilities, especially in high school. This is a big help for students for their transition in college, allowing them to effectively start a conversation, perform better behavior, and have independence. It also shed light to the importance of having an IEP to know the goals we will achieve for the success of the plan. The peer buddy system not only improved the growth of the target students/students with developmental disabilities, but also the peer buddies. It also somehow made the work of the paraeducator easy as the target students gained independence with minimal assistance.	The "School Buddy Program" pilot study demonstrates how social relationships help autistic students manage their transition from third to fourth grade. The program established authentic social connections through its recess activities, which paired younger students with older "buddies" rather than relying on clinical training methods. The teachers reported improvements in social and emotional inclusion, but I found it more humane to see how students had more confidence in their progress. The research shows that outside assistance creates safe spaces, but people need more time to handle their emotional changes. The older buddies developed empathy, which enabled them to serve as "safe people" for their mentees. The study demonstrates that successful programs face challenges in maintaining operations because teachers experience burnout and schools lack sufficient resources.	The article shows the persistent difficulties students face with DFP by introducing a buddy system, the study attempts to address these challenges through peer support and cooperative learning. As a reader, I notice that the study adapted an action research approach embedded within a mixed methods framework. Action research was chosen not only for its practicality but also for its suitability in inquiry-based classrooms.

Theme 3: Importance of Structured Planning

The studies emphasized the importance of proper planning and implementation to ensure the effectiveness of peer support programs. Van der Meulen et al. (2021) examined how selecting and training peer support in addition to support from schools and families are important for successful implementation. Similarly, Strnadova et al. (2023) emphasized that successful transition planning for students with disabilities requires a personalized, student-centered, and collaborative approach supported by effective communication among teachers, families, and other school stakeholders. Płatos et al. (2025) discussed that even though the peer buddy program improves social and emotional inclusion for students with autism, there were challenges encountered such as limited teacher time, funding, and parental concerns which affected the effectiveness and feasibility of the program.

Discussions

The themes identified from the six research articles highlight the important role of peer buddy systems in transition education for learners with disabilities. Peer buddy systems create a platform where fellow students help learners with disabilities adjust to new school environments and expectations. It helps students build the necessary skills they need socially and academically. However, Strnadova et al. (2023) emphasized that successful transition support also depends on the strong collaboration among teachers, families, and school stakeholders, because teachers face challenges due to limited training, support, and communication during transitions. The study discussed that in order to help students with disabilities successfully adjust to new educational environments, there is a need for coordination and collaboration in support systems and planning. The first theme shows that peer mentoring and buddy systems benefit both learners with disabilities and their peer buddies. In the context of transition education, implementing a peer support system can be an effective strategy to help students with disabilities adjust to new environments while also promoting inclusion and experiences within and among peers. Wilt and Morningstar (2020) reported that students with disabilities found peer support helpful in improving their holistic well-being, while their peer buddies reported personal growth, an improved understanding of intellectual disabilities, and the development of positive relationships. These further highlight that peer buddy systems foster reciprocal learning, in which both the LWDs and the peer buddies develop skills that support inclusivity and positive environments for transition education.

Second, the transition education process benefits students with disabilities through peer mentoring offering important emotional and social support that helps them develop adult skills and their ability to live independently. These programs provide necessary academic requirements by teaching students essential life skills which include self-advocacy for their needs and the development of self-esteem that enables them to explore new opportunities and improved communication which allows them to interact with other people. Williams et al. (2024) demonstrated how peer mentoring helps students develop their self-expression and independent skills which become important during school transitions because students encounter difficult experiences. The peer buddy system establishes emotional ties which reduce student anxiety while improving their social skills and creating an environment that helps students prepare for their future outside educational settings. Accordingly, the research converges on a key finding: peer support is the foundational bridge for students with disabilities transitioning into adulthood. By weaving together mutual growth for all participants, the cultivation of essential life skills, and the creation of a supportive social environment, these programs do more than just tutor; they build resilience. This holistic support system transforms the “real world” from a source of anxiety into a context of growth ensuring that transition education is not just a curriculum but a community-driven path to independence. Therefore, the evidence indicated among these three themes suggests that peer support systems are the cornerstone of a successful transition education program. These programs create an inclusive culture that extends far beyond academic tutoring. The social and emotional advantages that these provide can lead to developing their resiliency better and self-advocacy needed for them to navigate the move into adulthood.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The three themes from these studies clearly show that peer buddy programs are key to successful transition education for students with disabilities. The first theme highlights mutual benefits, where these systems help both students with disabilities and their buddies grow through inclusion, better connections and tutoring. The second theme focuses on the social and emotional benefits as students with disabilities build life skills, including self-advocacy, greater confidence, improved communication, reduced anxiety, and greater social acceptance. The third theme shows how peer support acts as a bridge to adulthood, building independence and real-world skills to make the shift from school to adult life successfully.

In conclusion, the research articles show that peer buddy and mentoring programs give strong social, emotional, and academic benefits to learners with disabilities, while also helping the peer buddies grow in empathy, skills, and confidence. These programs make transitions between grades or school levels easier by building connections, reducing anxiety and bullying, enhancing communication, and improving independence and self-advocacy. At the same time, the studies point out that good planning, training, and support from families, teachers, and schools are needed. Overall, peer support systems are an important part of transition education because they create a more inclusive environment that supports students with or without disabilities beyond academics.

For the recommendations, schools should design and use structured peer buddy programs for learners with disabilities during key transition years, such as moving to a new grade level or school, and make sure to train the peers in communication, inclusion, and basic support skills. So that they know how to accommodate students with disabilities properly. School leaders should also provide time, budget, and clear roles for teachers to run these programs, and work with families to explain the goals and address the challenges. Future researchers should conduct long-term studies to determine if the benefits last beyond the program, while also focusing on other disabilities to understand their unique needs and challenges. They should also conduct studies to see which parts of peer support are most effective so the teachers will have an idea about their strategies. It is also important to study the challenges being experienced by peers throughout the program and see how they grow and change through the program.

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 state that no artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted technologies were utilized at any stage of the preparation, writing, analysis, or revision of this manuscript.
Author Contributions: VKPB, WSC, JRSM, HJLP, AJOR, CRS: 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 BSNED 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.

References

1. Alqahtani, R. M. (2013). *Influence of peer buddy program interventions for adolescents with disabilities in a high school setting: Impact on social and academic achievement* (Publication No. 3589928) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Northern Colorado]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED558898
2. Anal, A., Alwi, A. S. Q., & Shaari, A. (2025). The challenges in facilitating the transition-to-career process special needs integrated special education programme. *Kajian Malaysia, 43*(2), 81–100.
3. Bonifacio, R. M. A., Delos Reyes, N. R. T., Espina, R. C., Tenerife-Cañete, J. J. L., Capuno, R. G., Mamites, I. O., & Pinili, L. C. (2025). Probing the effectiveness and impact of transition education on the holistic outcomes of special education students in Canlaon City, Negros Oriental, Philippines. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 9*(9), 6609–6640.
4. De Arao, R. R. J., & Fontanilla, M. C. (2024). SPED teachers' level of competence towards transition skills of learners with special educational needs. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research and Innovation*, *2*(2), 30-46.
5. Department of Education. (2020, August 20). *DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2020: Policy guidelines on the adoption of the K to 12 transition curriculum framework for learners with disabilities*. https://www.deped.gov.ph/2020/08/20/august-20-2020-do-021-s-2020-policy-guidelines-on-the-adoption-of-the-k-to-12-transition-curriculum-framework-for-learners-with-disabilities/
6. Farochi, M. S. (2022). Optimizing the transition program for students with special needs in vocational high schools. *Pinisi Journal of Social Science, 1*(2), 45–60.
7. Foster, K. (2011). *Using a peer buddy system to increase interaction between students with special needs and their peers* (Theses and Dissertations No. 257) [Master's thesis, Rowan University]. Rowan Digital Works. https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/257/
8. Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, Pub. L. No. 108–446, 118 Stat. 2647 (2004). https://www.congress.gov/108/plaws/publ446/PLAW-108publ446.pdf
9. Jamil, S. N. A., Shahrill, M., & Sari, Y. M. (2025). Effects of buddy system on year 9 students' mathematical discernments and performance. *Journal of Research and Advances in Mathematics Education, 10*(2), 81–89.
10. Karr, L. (2022). Exploring the effectiveness of a peer-to-peer program on special education and general education high school students. *Journal of Student Research, 11*(4), 1–9.
11. Khasawneh, M. A. S. (2024). Evaluating the impact of transition services on post-school outcomes for Saudi students with special needs. *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development, 8*(15), Article 5651. https://doi.org/10.24294/jipd5651
12. Mohd Zahid, A. Z., Saifullizam, N. Z., Wan Chik, W. S., Khalid, N., Kamaruddin, S. F., & Mat Zin, M. (2021). Intervention programme: The implementation of buddy system programme amongst civil engineering students. *INSIGHT Journal, 8*(3), 16–25.
13. Norwich, B., & Salazar Rivera, J. (2025). Evaluation of a novel primary to secondary school transition personal and social education programme. *Pastoral Care in Education*, *43*(4), 540-561.
14. Pacheco, E. (2023). *Digital technologies in the context of university transition and disability: Theoretical and empirical advances*. *arXiv*. https://arxiv.org/abs/2304.13262
15. Strnadova, I., Dowse, L., Lowe, K., Danker, J., Willow, S. A., Tso, M., & Xavier, A. (2023). Primary to high school transition planning for students with disability: A systematic review. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *120*, 102188.
16. Van der Meulen, K., Granizo, L., & Del Barrio, C. (2021). Emotional peer support interventions for students with SEND: A systematic review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*, 797913.
17. Watson, L. (2000). Working with schools to ease student transition to the community college. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *2000*(111), 53.
18. Williams, C. J., Chen, J. M., Quirion, A., & Hoeft, F. (2024). Peer mentoring for students with learning disabilities: The importance of shared experience on students' social and emotional development. *Frontiers in Education, 9*, Article 1292717.
19. Wilt, L. W., & Morningstar, M. E. (2020). Student perspectives on peer supports in an inclusive postsecondary education context. *Journal of Postsecondary Education, 2*(1), 1–20.
20. Ziegler, M., Matthews, A., Mayberry, M., Owen-DeSchryver, J., & Carter, E. W. (2020). From barriers to belonging: Promoting inclusion and relationships through the peer-to-peer program. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *52*(6), 426-434.

Citation: Balsino, V. K. P., Colcol, W. S., Mila, J. R. S., Pre, H. J. L., Ramirez, A. J. O., Suleta, C. R., & Balmeo, M. L. (2026). Exploring the Impact of Peer Buddy Systems in Transition Education Programs: A Mini Literature Review of Reciprocal Benefits, Social-Emotional Growth, and Structured Planning. *Bulletin of Education and Language, 1*(2), 12–21.
Copyright: © 2026 Balsino, V. K. P., et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author(s) and the source are credited.