Bulletin of Education and Language
E-ISSN: 3139-5422
Homepage: https://standoutpress.org/bel
Volume 1, Issue 1, January–April 2026, pp. 38-48
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License [CC BY 4.0]
Publisher: Standout Press

Review Article

Navigating Transitions: A Literature Review of the Multidimensional Outcomes of Peer Buddy Systems

[a]Olive Karylle D. Ayag, [b]Samuel Joshua B. Budeng, [c]Gabriel James A. Estacio, [d]Keifer Glenn P. Galapon, [e]Lara Nicole A. Mariano, [f]Jewel Ezra Marcel P. Paragas, [g]Janwin R. Paytocan and [h*]Marilyn L. Balmeo

[a-g]Third Year Bachelor of Special Needs Education (BSNED), Saint Louis University, A. Bonifacio Street, Baguio City, Philippines
[h]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: March 11, 2026 **Accepted:** April 02, 2026 **Published:** April 09, 2026

Abstract
This qualitative theoretical literature review investigates the role of peer buddy systems in enhancing transition education for learners with disabilities (LWDs). Framed by the mandates of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004, the study examines how peer buddy systems, a component of transition plans, serve as a non-traditional teaching strategy to improve postsecondary outcomes in education, employment, and independent living. Through a synthesis of seven purposefully selected research articles, the review highlights that peer buddy systems significantly improve academic achievement, social-emotional skills, and community inclusion while reducing disability-related stigma. The paper identifies a critical gap in existing research regarding the long-term feasibility and demographic-specific effectiveness of these models. Ultimately, the study concludes that peer support is a vital element for the holistic development and successful transition of LWDs from high school to adult life.
Keywords: Transition Education, Learners with Disabilities (LWDs), Learning Outcomes, Independence.

Introduction

A transition plan is a mandatory part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP), designed to help an individual with a disability achieve their aspirations in education, employment, and independent living. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004, these plans are required for all students in special education aged 16 or older. The plan must be individualized to address three primary areas: further education, employment, and independent living (Kucharczyk et al., 2021). According to Gezun (2024), transition planning is vital for methodically moving students from one educational level to another. Furthermore, Kutscher et al. (2024) mentioned that plans aim to help the student develop self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-advocacy skills.

Consequently, research indicates that transition plans provide recipients with the guidelines and tools needed to successfully navigate the transition from high school to adult life. These plans have been shown to improve multiple areas of a student's life beyond high school (Sadrani et al., 2024). First, students with specified goals in their plans are more likely to pursue postsecondary education and complete their courses of study by utilizing the supports and accommodations identified during the planning process. Second, the career-readiness of those who receive meaningful intervention in this area while in high school is higher. Third, active student involvement can lead to increased motivation and a more active engagement in the learning process, thereby improving the students' overall behavior and educational advancement (Sadrani et al., 2024). Additionally, when goals are aligned with the student's specific needs, they are significantly more likely to achieve those aspirations with coordinated support from the IEP team.

These transition plans for Learners with Disabilities (LWDs) prioritize students as the primary beneficiaries. In addition to academic instruction, such plans deliver individualized support that addresses physical, cognitive, and emotional needs, thereby enabling each learner to achieve their full potential (Black, 2025). Additionally, teachers require collaboration with a comprehensive stakeholder network to ensure program success. Parents act as essential partners by connecting the home and school environments, along with medical professionals, including therapists and psychologists, who contribute valuable clinical expertise. Local businesses and government

agencies also play a crucial role in establishing vocational pathways and obtaining funding for specialized resources. Integrating these diverse perspectives transforms the program from a classroom initiative into a community-wide mission (Tularam & Machisella, 2018).

Furthermore, five core elements in the study of Bonifacio et al. (2025) were evaluated based on their effectiveness in contributing to overall success and effectiveness of the transition plan: *Curriculum design*: The contents of this curriculum shall align with transition goals of preparing students for future challenges, including practical life abilities, and the integration of academic and vocational knowledge. *Teaching and learning strategies*: Educators employ a broad spectrum of instructional methods, thoughtfully adapting their delivery to accommodate varied student needs and learning preferences. *Support services*: Job coaching, accessible health services, and guidance from transition coordinators contribute to developing vital independent living skills, and connecting them with relevant community resources. *Teacher competence*: Teachers and staff must be able to collaborate effectively with families and community agencies, as well as encourage self-determination among students, to prepare them for their future endeavors. *School-community partnerships*: School-community engagement emphasizes providing different opportunities for students with special needs to be engaged, and be exposed to real-world opportunities, with the integration of feedback from community partners, for continuous program refinement.

One intervention that could support the success of transition education is the integration of a peer buddy system. The peer buddy system is a peer-to-peer assistance and monitoring approach in which a group of individuals (peers) collaborates as a team to achieve the desired outcome (Zahid et al., 2021). Compared to traditional teaching methods, which are generally teacher-centered, the peer buddy system is a non-traditional teaching strategy that is considered better at equipping students with meaningful and practical skills (Tularam & Machisella, 2018). In this regard, peer buddies are chosen based on their motivation to help others and their shared experiences with similar challenges, such as social exclusion or being neurodivergent. Choosing a peer buddy should be based on shared interests or specific activities, rather than on a clinical diagnosis. Crompton et al. (2022) suggested that peer buddying is not just about pairing; it must have a clear direction and training to establish and maintain peer support relationships.

Peer buddies help students with disabilities feel included rather than being isolated. By building meaningful, one-on-one connections, buddies share interests and activities just as they would with other friends. This peer interaction provides social and emotional support, resulting in "more genuine" or "more real" friendships than those they shared with their non-disabled peers. Additionally, buddies learn how their peers communicate and assist them in practicing social skills during club events (Cavender, 2022). Furthermore, buddies support their peers with disabilities by modeling and reinforcing appropriate behavior. They offer companionships (befriending) to students who may find it difficult to make friends. By acting as a bridge, they increase students with disabilities' participation in general education settings, school activities, and during recess or lunch. In certain programs, buddies also help them with academic work and daily activities. Ultimately, by offering support, buddies provide their peers with emotional relief and an increased ability to cope with problems (Van der Meulen et al., 2021). The responsibility of a peer buddy is not just to help them with their academics, but it is also in terms of how they interact using their language and personal interests. Knowing them deeply means a lot to students with special needs, because they also want to express themselves by becoming more positive towards others (Foster, 2011).

Peer support is included to support students with special needs (Gal & Ryder, 2025). Mastam and Zaharudin (2024) discuss the essential role of having a peer buddy in the classroom. Students with disabilities acquire knowledge about communication with the help of their classmates. In terms of collaboration, students with special needs learn from their classmates as they help them navigate and explore their surroundings. Although some students may hesitate to help other learners with disabilities, as the months go by, students adapt to learning, and want to experience how to interact with students with disabilities (Saroyan, 2021). Various studies show that peer support systems significantly enhance the transition experiences of learners with disabilities. Across the literature, peer buddy programs were found to improve academic achievement and functional skills (Alqahtani & Murray, 2015), foster social interaction and communication (Van der Meulen et al., 2021), and promote personal growth, confidence, and independence (Crompton et al., 2022). They also reshape perceptions of disability by reducing stigma and encouraging empathy among non-disabled peers. At the same time, teachers and families observed safer, more inclusive school environments (Płatos et al., 2025), which empower learners with disabilities to take on valued social roles and be seen as capable members of their communities (Pfeiffer et al., 2024).

Upon synthesizing various studies on the transition education program and the integration of the peer buddy system to ensure its success, most focused on the benefits, importance, and overall effectiveness of these strategies and programs. The overarching gap identified was the scarcity of comprehensive research on the practical feasibility, long-term impact, and demographic-specific effectiveness of peer support models across diverse educational and

professional settings, particularly for students with disabilities. Hence, this research aims to expand the current understanding of peer buddy systems and transition education programs by demonstrating how these models go beyond academic support to foster holistic development, identity formation, and social inclusion. Specifically, this research aims to answer the question: *"What do purposefully selected research and literature say about the peer buddy system as an element of transition education?"*

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative theoretical literature review in identifying how the peer buddy system functions as an element of transition education. Qualitative theoretical literature review is a type of qualitative research that focuses on interpretation, themes, and narrative analysis and takes on a more interpretative role (Poudel, 2025). It helps to establish what theories already exist, the relationships between them, to what degree the existing theories have been investigated, and to develop new hypotheses to be tested. Specifically, a literature review is a survey of scholarly sources on a specific topic. It provides an overview of current knowledge, allowing the researchers to identify relevant theories, methods, and gaps in the existing research that could be applied in their paper, thesis, or dissertation topic. This aligns with the goal of this study: to understand peer buddy systems and transition education programs and to show how these models go beyond academic support. The seven articles were chosen based on the narratives of involved students, the different perspectives they offer on these models, and the success of their implementation.

Data Analysis

When synthesizing different articles, a procedure should be followed to ensure the credibility and alignment among studies. Specifically, five steps are to be followed: *Search for relevant literature*: Gather existing studies, theories, and academic works aligned with the topic. *Evaluate sources*: Ensure the studies are credible and useful. *Identify themes, debates, and gaps*: Analyze the gathered data from various sources to identify patterns and recurring themes. *Outline the structure*: Establish the flow of ideas before beginning to input. *Write your literature review*: Turn your outline into a concise analytical discussion.

Results and Discussion

Analyzing existing research and literature allows for more perspectives and leads to institutional and societal innovations. Below is a presentation of the literature review of purposefully selected research.

Seven articles were gathered that discussed the impact of implementing the peer buddy system in a transition curriculum. They reflected on the general perspective of the students, the experiences gained when joining, and the success of the implementation of this program. Four themes were derived from the synthesis of different results: *Social and academic skills enhancement*; *Personal growth and development*; *Positive perceptions towards learners with disabilities*; and *Effectiveness of peer support models*.

Theme 1: Social and Academic Skills Enhancement

In terms of the educational aspect, the said peers are the reason for their educational growth to come into effect. This is evident in the mention of statistically significant increases in GPA and improved assessment scores (Alqahtani & Murray, 2015). Furthermore, peer buddies also helped learners to engage with classroom activities and understand their lessons. Beyond traditional academics, peer support helped students develop functional classroom skills such as using a calculator, typing, and using social media (Crompton et al., 2022). On the other hand, their social skills improved in communication with others, especially with their classmates and teachers. However, some of the research findings do not align with each other's goals which are to develop autonomous learning and social skills. Despite the challenges, many of their peers contributed their efforts to help students with disabilities become better learners in terms of the school environment and educational growth.

Theme 2: Personal Growth and Development

In special education, it is seen that personal growth and development is a major theme that includes the support and inclusion that help learners build their confidence and social skills. Flexible weekly sessions which allow learners time for reflection and give the staff to guide them through the transition. Peer support is very beneficial, particularly for autistic students who benefit from each other and share in their experiences (Crompton et al., 2022). The interactions can increase students' self-efficacy which helps them gain confidence in their abilities and potentially change their perspective on career possibilities for people with disabilities (Pfeiffer et al., 2024). The integration of these students into mainstream settings which is seen as very positive, and promotes empathy, better communication, more positive attitudes towards disability, and also improves self-esteem and self-expression (Van der Meulen et al., 2021). As a whole, these experiences help students develop patience, improve their communication skills and put things into a larger perspective.

Table 1. Literature review matrix.

	Research 1	**Research 2**	**Research 3**	**Research 4**	**Research 5**	**Research 6**	**Research 7**
Title	'Someone Like Minded in a Big Place': Autistic Young Adults' Attitudes Towards Autistic Peer Support in Mainstream Education	High School Peer Buddy Program: Impact on Social and Academic Achievement for Students with Disabilities	How Far Can Social Role Valorisation Theory Help in Transition Planning for a School-Leaver with Significant Special Needs?	Promoting Autistic Students' Transition from First to Second Level of Elementary Education: Pilot Evaluation of the School Buddy Program	Emotional Peer Support Intervention for Students with SEND: A Systematic Review	Best Buddies Club: A Phenomenological Study of the Non-Disabled Peer Perspective on Socially Interacting with Students with Disabilities	Peer Support Provided by People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: A Rapid Scoping Review to Develop a Toolkit for Inclusive Research
Author/s	Catherine J Crompton, Sonny Hallet, Harriet Axbey, Christine McAuliffe and Kaitie Cebula	Ragea Alqahtani and Francie R. Murray	Helen Connaughton and Tony Cline	Mateusz Płatos, Anna Droś and Kinga Wojaczek	Kevin Van der Meulen, Laura Granizo and Christina del Barrio	Joanna Marie Cavender	Beth Pfeiffer, Taye Hallock, Luke Tomczuk, and Jessica Kramer
Goal of the study	The aim of this study was to elicit the views of autistic school leavers on school-based autistic peer support.	The goal of the study was to examine whether participation in a high school peer buddy program improves the social skills and academic achievement of students with learning disabilities (LD) and emotional/behavioral disabilities (EBD).	The primary goal of this study was to explore the application of social role valorisation (SRV) theory to the transition process for a single school-leaver, Rutchelle, who has a significant intellectual disability.	The goal of the study was to describe the responsibility of a peer buddy within the school environment, including the specific and appropriate training for peer buddies to help autistic children do better and progress independently in their given school works or any of the academic concepts.	The study aimed to provide an understanding and implementation of evidence-based emotional peer support for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).	The goal of the study was to describe the shared experiences of non-disabled peers serving as a "best buddy" to high school students with a disability in the southeastern United States.	The goal of this study was to identify strategies and expand the use of peer support as an inclusive research method by developing a peer support toolkit.
Objective/s of the study	The main objective of this study is to explore the perspectives of young autistic people in relation to the concept of autistic peer support, within the context of their school experience, including their support experiences and	This study examines whether participation in a high school peer buddy program improves the social skills and academic achievement of students with learning disabilities (LD) and	There are two objectives considered for this study. First is to explore the application of social role valorisation (SRV) theory to the transition process for one school leaver with a moderate intellectual disability, and to inform	One of the main objectives of this certain research is observing the developmental milestone of autistic learners by the help of their peer buddy. The peer buddies are able to obtain the information of	The objective of the study is to perform a systematic review focused on emotional peer support interventions, to analyze these interventions in the school context (kindergarten, primary,	The objective of the study is to understand the lived experiences of non-disabled students who are serving as a peer buddy to students with disabilities. Where it focuses on how they experience interacting	The objective of this study is to identify the key components, roles, strategies, and supports used by individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) that could translate into

	preferences at school, peer relationships and autistic identity.	emotional/behavioral disabilities (EBD).	transition policy for school-leavers with an intellectual disability.	learners with autism about their problem in terms of classroom environment. One major problem is how do their peer buddies help the learners without any specific knowledge about the disability known as autism. Therefore, it is stated in the research that peer buddies are able to orient learners with disabilities when it comes to classroom transition along with the new environment.	and secondary school), and to gain knowledge about this type of evidence-based practice.	with other individuals, what are the challenges that they encounter, and how other perceptions of students with disabilities change throughout their participation in the program.	methods for research engagement.
Gap of the study	Previous studies have shown evidence that suggests that autistic peer support could be a valuable mechanism for supporting autistic young people, but little to no study pertains to its desirability or feasibility within mainstream schools.	Most previous research on peer support programs focused on students with intellectual disabilities or autism and primarily at the preschool or elementary level. Particularly, there is limited research on high school students with LD and EBD, specific peer programs that target both social and academic skills together, and effects of peer interactions in secondary inclusive classrooms.	The most significant gap the authors highlight is the lack of direct research investigating the extent to which social role valorisation (SRV) constructs actually have a positive impact on the lives of people with intellectual disabilities.	The basis on the given research includes that some of the research does not focus solely on educational transition about learners with autism. There is little research about educational transition along with the learner's peer buddy. The main point is there is little research about learners with autism transitioning by leveling up to upper elementary by the help of their peer buddies.	There is research on peer proximity/involve-ment/mediation for children with ADHD, but there are no studies on peer-mediated intervention, and no conclusion has been found about the efficacy of these types of interventions to improve children's social functioning.	The study aims to fill the existing gap of the literature on the social isolation of students with disabilities at the high school level. It also has limited research on the perspectives of non-disabled peer buddies regarding their interactions and relationships with disabilities.	There is a dearth of research that specifically addresses or systematically examines the use of peer support to facilitate engagement within inclusive research teams.
Significant findings	Most participants reported a positive perception towards the concept of autistic peer support, minimizing the stigma	Students showed statistically significant improvement in social skills based on self-reports and special	The personalized transition project enabled the participant to access many experiences typical of her peers, such as	The qualitative analysis identified three main themes related to the teachers' perception of the peer buddies	In 19 of the total 23 papers, an increase of social interaction with peers was found, labeled as enhanced	Shared Experiences: Participants enjoyed interactive social activities and shared experiences with their	The significant finding was, it addresses a major gap in existing literature, where peer support has rarely been

	around their diagnosis by spending time with others with similar experiences to them. Autistic peer support may offer a unique opportunity to develop a positive autistic identity, reducing internalized stigma. Clear coordination with the peer supporter, the staff, and the environment allows for a more inclusive environment for them to discuss different things they find difficult, and elicit a variety of coping strategies. This concept should be flexible, with weekly sessions deemed as the best frequency for it, providing a range of preferences in terms of group and size. This may allow them to make positive relationships, with commonalities on coping strategies for school stress, and improve communication with teachers. Combining activities based on interests can provide opportunities for deeper relationship building with other people with autism. Participants felt that peer support from other autistic young people can produce insights and advice that	education teacher ratings. GPA significantly increased after participation in the program. Scores in FASTT Math, System 44 (reading), and Acuity assessments significantly improved. Special education teachers observed academic growth. General education teachers did not observe significant changes in social or academic performance.	independent travel, using a bank card, and managing her own money. Through mainstream peers valued social roles were acquired successfully, including employee, commuter, gym member, girlfriend, consumer, classroom assistant, and retail assistant. The participant's success shifted her father's perception from seeing her as a child to an independent adult with potential, similar to how her peer mentors realized their similarities. Integration into mainstream settings led to rapid development in personal image (such as using makeup and wearing fashionable clothes) and competencies, including using a calculator, typing, using social media, and independent bus travel.	program: 1) Benefits for autistic students; 2) Benefits for buddies; and 3) Barriers and facilitating factors. According to teachers, the program allowed autistic students to explore the school building while being safeguarded by older students. Most of the teachers believed that inclusive school culture and a support system effectively prevented serious bullying in their institutions. However, they also believed that the program could strengthen these prevention mechanisms by teaching children how to ask for help and by involving older children in safety surveillance, as often bullying occurs out of teachers' sight of better understanding of autism, and being a buddy allowed children to better understand autistic children's behaviors, including challenging or atypical ones, but also to see their strengths, such as good memory. The peer buddies program gained high acceptance from	engagement, socialization, or shared play. Four studies noted an enhanced quality of interaction between the focus students and their peers. Six papers found an increase of communicative behaviors (including verbal initiation, expressive language, more variety of topics in conversations). Six articles showed an increase of peers' social acceptance towards the focus student. Reviewed study shows: enhanced empathy, improved understanding, changing to positive attitudes toward classmates with disabilities, perceptions of similarities more than differences, thinking of focus students as positive role models, feelings of connection, increased interaction strategies, communicative behavior, and enhanced self-esteem and self-expression.	peers with disabilities, which helped them foster meaningful connections and a high level of involvement. Self-Growth: Participants recognized personal growth from the results from their experience as peer buddies, such as patience, improved communication skills and gaining a new perspective on things. Challenges: Participants experienced challenges, which is limited to interactions and the program activities, difficulty communicating with students with language disorders or are non-verbal, the challenge of getting other participants in the peer buddy program. Perceptions of Students with Disabilities: Participants' perceptions changed after becoming a peer buddy. Some of the participants were initially scared at first; however, after joining the club they realized that students with disabilities are not	systematically examined as a mechanism for research engagement. By focusing on peer support provided "by and for" people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), the research challenges the over-representation of non-disabled "peers" and emphasizes the expertise of lived experience. Furthermore, the study translates its findings into a practical peer support toolkit, which: empowers team members with IDD by moving them from being subjects of research to active, central collaborators. Increases self-efficacy, potentially changing perspectives on career possibilities for people with disabilities. Enhances research quality by ensuring results are more meaningful, accepted, and directly informed by the community being studied. Provides a model for inclusive methodology, as the study and toolkit were themselves developed through a collaborative team including researchers with IDD.

	can be beneficial to other people with autism.			the teachers, autistic students, and senior students serving as buddies. As evidenced by high satisfaction ratings and answers to open-ended questions, children liked both social and activity-related aspects of the program and enjoyed individual and group meetings.		intimidating but are similar to them in many ways. Peer supporters gained better understanding of disabilities and increased knowledge of how they can interact with students with SEND.	
Conclusion	The study concludes that most of the participants have perceived the concept of autistic peer support as something positive, pointing out the opportunity for them to interact in a natural, comfortable way, and with the implementation of correct trainings addressed to their rights, needs and preferences are crucial in ensuring the success of this and any other peer support programs.	The peer buddy program had a positive impact on both social and academic achievement of high school students with learning and emotional/behavioral disabilities. The results suggest that peer support interventions can be effective in inclusive high school settings, especially when supported closely by special education teachers.	The study concludes that while social role valorisation (SRV) theory is a useful tool for guiding the transition process, it is insufficient on its own to ensure full inclusion and a typical social life for individuals with significant intellectual disabilities.	The study aims to support learners with autism focus on their social and educational development in terms of classroom setting. One prominent concept where individuals gain knowledge about the disability known as autism. This clarifies the importance of workshops and programs regarding the orientation regarding the functions and attributes of autism. This entails the importance of avoiding ignorance and focusing solely on the developmental milestone of learners with autism in terms of educational settings.	The systematic review concludes that emotional peer-support interventions, such as befriending models like circle of friends and peer buddying, have big positive outcomes for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). These interventions lead to increase in social interaction and communicative behaviors, enhanced social acceptance and improved individual traits.	The study concludes that a buddy system in the school will be able to develop the students' relationship inside the community and also to establish a supportive structure for the students to help them face the issues or challenges they encounter.	The research concludes that peer support is a vital, yet underutilized, framework for creating equitable and inclusive research teams. By identifying five key peer roles—communication, sharing experiences, helping peers learn, peer development, and creating a welcoming environment—the study provides a roadmap for effective engagement. The study highlights that success requires a combination of key components (like reciprocity and shared lived experience) and structured support (both individual and environmental). Ultimately, utilizing the toolkit helps ensure that research is not just performed "on" people

							with IDD, but is led "with" and "by" them, leading to more effective outcomes and a truly inclusive research environment.
Analysis as a reader/ researcher	Students with autism may feel disconnected with their school environment, affecting their social and emotional well-being, and further influencing their isolation. This study centers around the perspectives of each student regarding their association with a peer buddy that is also diagnosed with autism. The result of this study generally perceives a positive outcome, particularly allowing them to be more expressive of themselves, without being concerned of how they will be perceived. Proper integration into schools, as well as an intensive support system must be given for them to be able to develop and nurture. Also, support shouldn't be limited to a few people, but it is a collective effort of the community that ensures its success.	The peer buddy program will be of big help towards learners and their buddies. Peer buddies can be supported by special education teachers which means that it is a bureaucratic process in choosing a peer buddy. With this program, learners with difficulties will also improve emotionally, physically, and socially.	Rutchelle's experience revealed the truth about the nature of peer mentorship and the society's tendency of showing physical inclusion over genuine social belonging. In the study, while the application of SRV theory through the help of the peer mentors and mainstream peers successfully provided the participant to gradually learn a valued role in society: an employee, a gym member, a girlfriend among others, we can't just easily mandate the society to accept them. Often, the public continues to expect and see the stigmatized image of disability rather than the person. Similarly, while peer buddies may support almost every aspect of a student's life, they often remain stuck in a "support" mindset. Collaboration with people with disabilities to help them transition in terms of	As a reader and a researcher, I would be providing my personal sentiments about this research, by having a certain analysis regarding the conclusion. The most appropriate way to live inside the society is by increasing the knowledge of citizens regarding the concept of autism, not just in the area of education. This will enhance their understanding and in the research the promotion of students with autism transition to the first and second level of their educational milestone is a very crucial step for them along with their well-being. Their skills were enhanced by the help of their teachers, parents, classroom structures, and peer buddies. This allows them to train their peer buddies through a program in order for them to have sufficient support within their	A student with special educational needs and disabilities has difficulty in attaining positive relationships with their peers and is more vulnerable to social exclusion and bullying, including after transitioning from primary to secondary school. The purpose is to have a better understanding and implementation of evidence-based emotional peer support for students with SEND. Over the reviewed 23 studies covering four primary befriending models include: Circle of friends (CoF), a smaller group supporting focus students. Peer buddying, a one-on-one pairing. Peer networking is a small group of peers who meet regularly to support the students' social engagement. Social clubs are organized groups of students who share interests that facilitate natural	It has a powerful purpose of having a peer relationship in creating an inclusive school environment. The program has provided a meaningful and supportive environment for all students where it helps them face their challenges together rather than facing it alone. The experiences that the non-disabled students shared that being peers with a person with disabilities have a meaningful connection to them. That it also promotes their patience, understanding, deeper sense of relationships with their peers, which shows the success of integrating peer buddy, and having awareness and perspectives of peer supporters.	This study feels both practical and transformative. Where it doesn't just say peer support is helpful—it shows how it can be structured into clear and effective roles and supported by shared experience. Also, it emphasizes the change in research from being done on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to being done with and by them makes the findings powerful, because it reframes inclusion as active leadership rather than token participation. In short, it's like a roadmap for making research teams genuinely equitable and effective.

			their daily life and education.	progress in their personal transition.	interaction. Furthermore, these interventions help students with SEND, increase social interaction and social acceptance and for peer supporters it enhances empathy, improves communication skills and increases self-esteem. In summary, these interventions can help students with SEND in their transition and gain positive empathy, and inclusivity. As a future special needs education teacher, it is important to promote a meaningful connection to each of our students to build a safe base and to encourage active learning. When they feel they are supported they are more likely to engage and have better academic outcomes.		

Theme 3: Positive Perceptions Towards Learners with Disabilities

Findings from almost all the literature indicate positive perception of learners with disabilities. The peer buddy system can offer a unique opportunity for people to develop a positive identity and reduce internalized stigma, which can lead to a successful transition (Crompton et al., 2022). This can also affect how the parents of learners with disabilities perceive them as independent adults with potential (Crompton et al., 2022). Furthermore, the effects of the peer buddy system showed an increase in peers' social acceptance as they gained a better understanding of the disabilities, and upon interacting with learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), were able to relate similar personal experiences to those of learners with disabilities (Van der Meulen et al., 2021). Additionally, teachers believe these programs can create a safe school environment that allows students with disabilities to be involved with other students, strengthening prevention mechanisms by teaching children how to ask for help (Van der Meulen et al., 2021).

Theme 4: Effectiveness of Peer Support Models

Inclusion happens by design, not by accident, requiring both changes in the system and active collaboration. These two elements are essential for transition education, especially when utilizing peer buddies. A common theme among the seven articles is the need for varied peer support models that differ across the studies. For instance, there are one-on-one pairing, peer networking, circles of friends, social clubs, and educational level buddy programs that serve as structured guides for student support (Van der Meulen et al., 2021). Moreover, for these models to truly succeed, coordination or collaboration is key. A dedicated support team composed of peers, mentors, teachers, and parents must work in unison to provide the individualized assistance necessary for a student's successful transition.

The peer buddy system serves as a strategy for integrating a student with additional needs into their own community by providing appropriate support through collaboration, interaction, and communication. It also allows these students to build positive relationships with others, express themselves freely, and develop a sense of confidence and belonging. As a result, this can encourage changes in self-perception, and perceptions from peers, reflecting a shift from being someone to pity to valuing their worth and capabilities. The results from these seven studies pertain to the effectiveness of the peer buddy system in enhancing holistic wellbeing by serving as a conduit of knowledge, empathy, and integration.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The main idea of the peer support system centers around fostering inclusion among learners with disabilities, and their regular peers. Seven studies were gathered and synthesized to determine the impact of implementing the peer support system in a transition curriculum. The results of these studies indicate that peer support systems are crucial for creating an inclusive school environment that centers on holistic empowerment and social acceptance. Through this system, LWDs and regular students can collaborate on school activities and communicate their concerns and interests. As a result, LWDs in particular can gain confidence and self-efficacy in their abilities and potential, while allowing the community to shift its stereotypes towards a more positive and accepting environment.

Given the benefits and impacts of implementing the peer buddy system in educational institutions, it is recommended that policy makers, school administrators, and teachers prioritize the integration of the peer buddy system into the formal curriculum. Teachers may utilize these findings in monitoring the effectiveness of peer buddy pairings in the classroom.

School administrators may use these syntheses to provide training sessions and functional seminars for regular peers on disability awareness and proper assistive techniques. Policy makers may use the knowledge from these analyses as the foundation for laws and programs that aim to integrate the peer buddy system into the curriculum.

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 were employed during any phase of this study or in the preparation of the manuscript. All aspects of the work, including design, data collection, analysis, and writing, were completed independently by the authors.

Author Contributions: OKDA, SJBB, GJAE, KGPG, LNAM, JEMPP, JRP: 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., & Murray, F. R. (2015). High school peer buddy program: Impact on social and academic achievement for students with disabilities. *European Journal of Educational Sciences, 2*(1), 1–16.
2. Black, K. (2025). *Transition curriculum: Five key elements*. Let's Go Learn.
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. Cavender, J. M. (2022). *Best buddies club: A phenomenological study of the non-disabled peer perspective on socially interacting with students with disabilities* (Doctoral dissertation, Liberty University). Scholars Crossing. https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/3494
5. Connaughton, H., & Cline, T. (2021). How far can social role valorisation theory help in transition planning for a school-leaver with significant special needs? *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *49*(1), 80-86.
6. Crompton, C. J., Hallett, S., Axbey, H., McAuliffe, C., & Cebula, K. (2022). 'Someone like-minded in a big place': Autistic young adults' attitudes towards autistic peer support in mainstream education. *Autism: The International Journal of Research and Practice,* 27(1), 76–91.
7. Foster, K. (2011). *Using a peer buddy system to increase interaction between students with special needs and their peers* (Master's thesis, Rowan University). Rowan Digital Works. https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/257
8. Gal, C., & Ryder, C. H. (2025). Between two worlds: Experiences of students with learning disabilities navigating special education and mainstream classroom settings. *Learning Disabilities: A Contemporary Journal*, 23(1), 87-107.
9. Gezun, J. E. S. (2024). Strengthening the transition programs of the learners with special education needs (LSENs). *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability and Excellence (IMJRISE)*, 1(11), 126–137.
10. Kucharczyk, S., Thomas, J., & Whitby, P. S. (2021). "It would be nice if": Analysis of transition experiences through grand challenges. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, *40*(3), 117–131.
11. Kutscher, E. L., Mazzotti, V. L., McDaniel, S. L., Zeng, W., Reardon, K., Bumble, J. L., ... & Harris, R. (2024). Mixed methods research in secondary transition: A systematic literature review. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, *49*(1), 7-20.
12. Mastam, N. M., & Zaharuddin, R. (2024). Inclusive education: A Systematic review of the impact and efficacy of soft skills development for students with disabilities. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counselling*, *9*(53), 191-205.
13. Pfeiffer, B., Hallock, T., Tomczuk, L., & Kramer, J. (2024). Peer support provided by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities: A rapid scoping review to develop a toolkit for inclusive research. *Social Sciences*, *13*(1), 47.
14. Płatos, M., Droś, A., & Wojaczek, K. (2025). Promoting autistic students' transition from first to second level of elementary education: Pilot evaluation of the school buddy program. *International Journal of Developmental Disabilities*, 1-14.
15. Poudel, K. (2025). From theory to practice: Understanding literature reviews in qualitative research. *Far Western Review*, *3*(1), 133-145.
16. Sadrani, B. A., Alarbi, K., Mohamed, A. H. H., Alsalhi, N., & Gharaibeh, F. A. (2024). An analysis of special educators' perceptions of individualized education plans (IEPs). *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, *24*(1), 104-116.
17. Saroyan, J. S. (2021). Developing a supportive peer environment: Engaging students through cooperative skills in the classroom. *Advances in Developmental and Educational Psychology*, *3*(1), 81-89.
18. Tularam, G. A., & Machisella, P. (2018). Traditional vs. non-traditional teaching and learning strategies: The case of e-learning. *International Journal for Mathematics Teaching and Learning, 19*(1), 129–158.
19. 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.
20. Zahid, A. Z. M., Saifullizam, N. Z., Chik, W. S. W., Khalid, N., Kamaruddin, S. F., & Zin, M. M. (2021). Intervention programme: The implementation of buddy system programme amongst civil engineering students. *Insight Journal, 8(3), 16-25.*

Citation: Ayag, O. K. D., Budeng, S. J. B., Estacio, G. J. A., Galapon, K. G. P., Mariano, L. N. A., Paragas, J. E. M. P., Paytocan, J. R., & Balmeo, M. L. (2026). Navigating Transitions: A Literature Review of the Multidimensional Outcomes of Peer Buddy Systems. *Bulletin of Education and Language*, *1*(1), 38-48.
Copyright: © 2026 Ayag, O. K. D., 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.