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PROJECT SIGNATURE PAGE

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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

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THESIS ABSTRACT

As students with more diverse learning needs are entering the general education classroom it is becoming increasingly important to increase supports and services for all student. Along with this need is that the reality of the financial situation of schools is on the decline, with no financial upswing in sight. The researcher saw an opportunity to increase supports within the classroom, without impacting finances. She saw that the older students were naturally mentoring younger students and created a systemic program that would ideally benefit everyone: teacher, students and peer teachers. The researcher created a peer-teaching program, where upper classmen would co-teach alongside the classroom teacher to underclassmen once a week. The researcher did an ethnographic study to see if the program, in deed, do what was intended. Through survey, interview and observation the research found the program was making a positive impact on students, teachers, and the peer teachers. The researcher learned that although the goal of building in extra supports for students was reached, an unintended impact also occurred. Through the peer-teaching program it was the peer teachers themselves who had the most positive impact through this program.

KEYWORDS: peer teaching, inclusion, special education, co-teaching, general education, mentor, supports
Acknowledgments

Many thanks to all the family and friends that helped me make this a reality.
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Sarah Soriano

Masters Thesis

Specific Area of Emphasis

Ethnographic Study of Students as Peer Teachers
Chapter One: Introduction

Rationale

The researcher works at an inclusive high school and is constantly looking for extra supports within the school. The researcher saw that the older students were naturally mentoring younger students and saw an opportunity to create a systemic program that would ideally benefit everyone. The researcher created a peer-teaching program, where upper classmen would co-teach alongside the classroom teacher to underclassmen once a week. The researcher had no idea how it would go, but thankfully it appeared to be a huge success in the first year. The researcher wants to look at how it is benefiting the classroom students. Seeing the success of this program motivates the researcher to learn more about students co-teaching and all the benefits that can be achieved.

Introduction

As the author researched this area she found that most studies are focused on students as peer tutors or as a supplement to the teaching. Although this has been found to be effective, using students as co-teachers has been found to be equally, and usually,
more effective both academically and socially. The research indicates that, when done correctly using students as co-teachers has been proven to be effective.

The research the author looked at is seeing how students can be used as resources in and out of the classroom. There are studies on children with and without disabilities, of all age ranges, many subjects, and different ways students have been used in the classroom. Not one study mentioned that having students support the learning was detrimental in any way. The studies look at not only the effect this is having on the students’ academic skills, but also socially how students are improving.

**Importance**

As students with more diverse learning needs are entering the general education classroom it is becoming increasingly important to use any resources available. Along with the diverse learning community is the reality that the financial situation of schools is on the decline, with no financial upswing in sight. Using peers to support academics is important because the variety of needs in the classroom can be addressed. Fellow peers can help supplement the learning, teach, tutor, mentor, and be an overall resource to the other students and the teacher. It is important for all students to feel supported; and the reality of the education financial decline must not negatively affect the education in the classroom.

**Background Information**

Prior to IDEIA of 2004 students with disabilities were taught in separate special education classes or pulled out of the general education class to receive their special education services. In general, special education teachers and paraprofessionals provided the support for students with disabilities within the special education classroom for
students with more moderate to severe disabilities. In this exclusion model, students were not included in learning alongside their peers without disabilities. Along with the exclusion from learning together, students with disabilities were also not given opportunities to socialize with peers without disabilities.

For students with more mild to moderate disabilities, they were included in the general education classroom, but pulled out for support and services. Paraprofessionals or specialists would pull out students to a separate room to receive the services to support their education. This “pull-out” would happen during class, usually during a social studies or art lesson.

As outlined in the following chapter these systems had flaws that could be easily fixed with inclusion and peer support. Students not only missed out on the academic benefits of being included full time with their peers without disabilities, they missed out on the social benefits of being included. The use of special education teachers, as well as paraprofessionals and specialized therapists, is still imperative in the education and support of students with disabilities, but within an inclusive environment with peer support.

Following the passing of IDEIA of 2004, teachers in California, and across the nation, faced another issue of how to best support students: budget cuts. With funding being taken away from schools, class size increase, and teacher and support staff (including paraprofessionals) fear being laid off every year, supporting students with disabilities became increasingly difficult. Teachers were trying to figure out how to manage a bigger class size, and fear of being laid off every year, they also had to manage
now having students with disabilities in the general education classroom-without the resources there once were.

There are many ways in which classroom teachers dealt with this financial difficulty, one of which was using the resources within the classroom: students. As discussed in the following chapter, there are a variety of ways in which teachers have used and continue to use students as resources in supporting learning in the classroom. One popular method is having “peer buddies”, which is partnering students without disabilities with students with disabilities in the classroom. This is helpful to get support to the students who need it by pairing them with students who have a higher understanding of the curriculum. Another popular method is having peer tutors, which is similar to peer buddies, but can happen in and out of the classroom. Peer tutors can supplement the curriculum in the classroom by providing help and understanding. Another growing method is having students included in the teaching process. Although this method is not as common the research has found it to be very beneficial. The aforementioned methods of using peers to support learning generally benefits the student being supported, whereas when students take the role of a teachers it is more beneficial to everyone.

**Hypothesis and Research Questions**

Hypothesis: Using students as co-teachers in an inclusive classroom will benefit the students academically and socially.

Research Questions:
1. Can peers as co-teachers have a positive impact on students?

2. Can students co-teaching to younger peers have a positive impact on themselves?

3. Can teachers benefit having a student as co-teacher?

**Important Terms**

**IEP**- is an acronym for Individual Education Program. It is an educational plan specific to an individual student. The plan includes: present levels, annual goals, and any accommodations or modifications the team deems necessary for each individual student.

**Peer Teaching**- is a term to describe a practice in which students, generally older, or more informed, take on a teaching role in a school setting in order to share their knowledge with other students, generally younger, or less informed.

**Peer Tutoring**- is a general term used to describe when students, generally in pairs, work together to reinforce specific content or a skill. The students are generally paired as an older, or more informed student, with a younger, or less informed, student.

**Inclusion**- is a model of learning in which students with and without disabilities are learning together in the same classroom all day.

**IDEIA**- is an acronym for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. This is a federal law aimed at ensuring equality, accountability and excellence in educating students with disabilities. This federal mandate grants students with disabilities
access to the general curriculum, with supports and services, in the least restrictive environment.

**FAPE**- is an acronym for Free and Appropriate Public Education. This is an educational program that is designed to meet the needs of each child and prepares them for further education, employment and independent living.

**EL**- is an acronym for English Learner. This is any student whose native language is other than English.

**Co-teaching**- is a term that describes when two or more people share responsibility in planning, teaching and assessing students.

**HSHMC**- is an acronym for Health Science High and Middle College. This is the school where the study was done.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Through the change in educational law in IDEA, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, in 2004 schools have to give all students access to the least restrictive environment. In most cases, this takes students out of special education classrooms and moves them into general education classrooms. The idea is to include all students to promote a better educational environment for all students. This inclusive environment has been a big change to teachers, and an even bigger change to students, with and without disabilities. It takes a lot of work to have a successful classroom in which everyone can access the curriculum. One of the ways to best support the classroom and learning is to use the resources within the classroom: the students.

This literature review outlines the benefits of peer support to all people in the classroom: a) the benefit to the teachers of peers supporting the learning in the classroom, b) the benefit to the peers of leadership who are tutoring their fellow peers; and c) the benefit to the peers who are receiving support by their own peers. The literature reviewed indicates a need for more education on how peers can better collaborate with the teachers to best support the learning in the classroom. Very few studies show peers
teaching alongside the teacher. Generally, the students are instead taking a secondary role, not being used to directly teach curriculum.

**Teachers Benefit From Peer Support**

As the laws of education have changed, teachers are now required to include students with disabilities in the general education classroom. With this change in the classroom, teachers are learning how to best support all students, as well as how to co-teach with the special education teachers. Often teachers find they benefit from the co-teaching model. In a study with general education and special education teachers, 139 collaborative teachers who taught kindergarten through 12th grade in the same district were surveyed. The survey had two parts: demographic information and solicited information according to four specific categories relevant to teacher perceptions of collaboration relative to: current experience, recommended collaborative practices, teacher preparation, and school-based supports that facilitate co-teaching. The results of the survey were that both general and special educators benefited from working together and that co-teaching was a worthwhile experience (Austin, 2001). It should be noted that both general and special education teachers agreed the general education teacher does the majority of the teaching and the special education teacher has the more supportive role. When surveyed regarding perceptions of inclusion and how successful teachers felt they were doing in inclusion (Martin, 2010), both general education and special education teachers felt positive regarding inclusion and felt successful. Regardless of years of experiences, both types of teachers felt good about an inclusive classroom. An inclusive classroom has to allow for different types of support including peer support, along with helping the students in the class, can be very beneficial to the teacher. When children
with severe disabilities were included in a general education classroom and had peer supports they had more social outcomes than the students being supported by paraprofessionals (Shukla, Kennedy & Cushing, 1999). This study compared two approaches for supporting the social participation of students with severe disabilities in general education classrooms. The two approaches compared were direct assistance by a paraprofessional and peer support supervised by a special education teacher. The purpose of the study was to provide teachers, administration and researchers help selecting appropriate support strategies. The results were that peer support program produced more frequent and longer social interaction for all the students with severe disabilities.

**Peers Benefiting Academically and Socially from Supporting Their Own Peers**

Within the classroom, there are many opportunities for students to learn from each other. Not only do the students benefit from being taught by their peers, but the students also benefit from teaching their peers both academically and socially. When students were in classes in which they had to teach class material to their fellow peers (Velez, Cano, Whittington, & Wolf, 2011), they enjoyed the material more because they were able to choose the way in which the information was taught. Students enrolled in a single course, 23 from a main campus and 16 from a branch campus. Three weeks into their class the students broke up into small groups (2-3) and were given a section of the textbook that they would be teaching to their peers. Students were also given $25 to purchase materials for their lesson. Data collection was done by: various professors observing interactions, taking notes and comparing, student reflections of their peer teaching experience, individual interviews with 8 random students, and focus group
interviews from students from both campuses. Overall students enjoyed teaching to their peers, and being taught by their peers. Students also felt they had a better grasp of the content when teaching to their peers.

When students at a university were enrolled in a teaching course, they were able to integrate the theories they learned in class and had a better understanding of their learning. Researchers used qualitative content analysis studying and analyzing expressions. The participants were 31 students enrolled in a teaching course. The findings were: students were able to integrate theory better, students significantly benefitted from program, and had a change in pedagogical thinking. (Kroksfors, & Jyrhama, 2006). Not only did students benefit from teaching their peers, but they also benefited by using the theories in practice (Muir & Van Der Linden, 2009). In this study this purpose was provide college students with a large class with an opportunity and a chance to develop a deeper understanding of an aspect of psychology, provide an opportunity to connect the concepts with actual children, expose elementary students to psychology, strengthen connections between college students and the community. Both the undergraduate student and elementary students felt satisfaction in doing this study. As one undergraduate student stated, “In order to really know a subject, one should try to teach it. The elementary school project was a blast!” (Muir & Van Der Linden, p. 172, 2009)

Not only do students benefit academically in the classroom from tutoring their fellow peers, but they also benefit socially and feel a sense of pride. When students with autism received peer support in their inclusive classroom, instead of support from paraprofessionals, (Jones, 2007), the students with autism benefitted, as did the student tutors. The aim of this study was to look at the impact of peer tutoring children with
autism on the peer tutors. The study was done at a primary school that has 12 children diagnosed with autism. The method was a questionnaire given to the tutors and the parents. The results were that every peer tutor said they enjoyed being a peer tutor and helping children with autism. The students stated they felt they did something good and, through the survey given, they stated they felt confident, responsible, and acknowledged different people in class.

This peer-to-peer support can also happen outside the classroom, and with similar benefits. In a peer buddy program in which students with and without disabilities are paired together for academic and social purposes (Copeland, Hughes, & Carter, 2004), the students without disabilities gained social benefits. The students without disabilities learned how to be good role models to fellow students without disabilities as well as students with disabilities, and the students then felt good about themselves. The students without disabilities also became advocates for students with disabilities. Through this program, the students without disabilities learned more about themselves and about students who are different from them. This was a great benefit to all of the students.

Students Benefit Socially and Academically from Being Supported by Peers

Students who receive support from peers, both in and out of the classroom, benefit academically and socially. Students with disabilities typically receive support in the classroom from paraprofessionals; this is especially true when students have more significant disabilities. Within an inclusive classroom, this type of support can make students with disabilities feel separated and segregated within their own classroom. When students with severe disabilities received support from peers, under the guidance of
the special education teacher, versus receiving support from paraprofessionals the social outcomes for the students with disabilities were much higher than their fellow peers (Carter, Sisco, Melekoglu, & Kurkowski, 2007). The purpose of the study was to examine the effectiveness of peer support interventions at improving social and academic outcomes for students with severe disabilities. The participants were four high school students with disabilities, and four classmates without disabilities. The results were that the social interactions were much higher when working with a peer versus a paraprofessional. Some academic engagement increased, where 2 students had no change in academic engagement. It should be noted that when supported by peers, versus paraprofessionals, the academic outcomes of students with disabilities did not decline. Students with disabilities supported by fellow peers in the classroom have more frequent and longer social interactions in the classroom (Shukla, Kennedy & Cushing, 1999). Students with disabilities can benefit from the social interactions, especially students with Autism. When in a peer-tutoring program, they benefitted the most socially (Jones, 2007). Both the students and the parents stated this explicitly. Parents saw the social gain and wanted their children to continue in the peer-tutoring program. When peers are partnered up in a peer-tutoring program, they academically outperform their peers who are not in a peer-tutoring program (McDuffie, Mastropieri, & Scruggs, 2009). In this study, not only did students with peer-tutors do better academically, but also socially, so they gained much more than the students not in the peer-tutoring program. Not only do students with disabilities benefit from peer support and teaching, but also all students can benefit. In a classroom where peers who recently took the same course they accompanied students’ learning in the class, and the students benefitted from this student support
(Lockspeiser, O'Sullivan, Teherani, & Muller, 2008). In this study the purpose was to identify and describe the views of participants in a supplemental peer-teaching program. They created focus groups with first- and second-year medical students participating in a supplemental peer-teaching program at one institution. From the learner focus group themes, they developed a questionnaire and surveyed all first-year students. The survey was anonymous and voluntary. The themes of the survey were: learning from near-peers, exposure to second-year students, need for review and synthesis, teaching modalities and for the peer-teachers, the theme of benefits for the teacher. The results of the survey were students’ valued learning from near-peers because of their recent experience with the materials and their ability to understand the students’ struggles in medical school. The students in the classroom enjoyed learning from students who were close to the material and felt they had a better understanding of the material. Although this study was done qualitatively, a quantitative study would have helped to see the academic growth from the students who received this support.

Peer support is very helpful in the classroom. As more and more classrooms are becoming inclusive, with students who need lots of support, there is a need for more support in the classroom. Although there are more teachers in an inclusive classroom, as well as paraprofessionals, the number one priority needs to be the students in the classroom. Inclusive education is more than simply putting all students in the same class, it is supporting the whole student: academically and socially. Students feel secure and benefit from receiving peer support. Peers should be used as more than a back up to the curriculum, and should be part of the teaching process as well.
Since peers who are in the class are learning the curriculum at the same time, one way to support learning and use peers as part of the teaching process is to use peers who have previously taken the course. Since these peers are still close in age, and the knowledge is very fresh in their minds, they can be a part of the teaching process. Using peers to teach the new curriculum allows the students to hear the information in a new and different manner. This way of teaching the curriculum can be very valuable to the students in the class, it supports the teacher in their teaching, and it supports the student teaching.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

With growing class size and inclusion of all learners in the general education classroom it is evident that more supports are needed to meet the needs of each learner in the classroom. Paired with this need is the fiscal reality of education, simply there is not enough money to fit the demands of the growing classroom. The researcher looked within the school to create a program to help support the needs of the classroom. Through survey, observation, and interviews the researcher did an ethnographic study to determine the research questions: Can peers as co-teachers have a positive impact on students? Can students co-teaching to younger peers have a positive impact on themselves? Can teachers benefit have a student co-teacher? It is through these methods the researcher was able to collect data in such a way that the researcher imposes the least amount of her own bias on the data gathered.

Research Design

The design was aimed to collect data so the researcher was able to examine the peer-teaching program through an ethnographic lens. Through surveys, interviews, and observations, all created and done by the researcher, the researcher was able to get a holistic view of the program and its impact. The researcher aimed to design the instruments so that she could understand the impact on all participants involved: classroom students, classroom teacher, and the peer-teachers. These methods were a good match to answer the research questions because they allowed for the researcher to get input from the participants as a whole and individually, while also allowing the researcher to gather information through her own inspection. The participants were able
to give information anonymously through the surveys, which allowed for all participants to give their opinion candidly. Through interviews participants gave the researcher further information and insight to the program the surveys were not able to provide. Finally through observation the researcher was able to take note of the program and impacts she witnessed.

**Instruments**

The instruments used to study the peer-teaching program were surveys, designed by the researcher, interviews, conducted by the researcher, and observations, done by the researcher. The surveys were created on Google forms, with statements for each participant. The student survey had the following statements:

1. I liked having a peer-teacher in my classes
2. I would like to continue having a peer-teacher in my classes
3. I received help from one of the peer-teachers
4. Hearing information from the peer-teacher helped me to better understand the subject.
5. The peer teachers were knowledgeable about the subject.
6. The peer teachers seemed excited about the subject.
7. The peer teachers were good role models in class
8. I believe I did better in my classes because of the peer teacher

The peer-teachers had the following statements in their survey:

1. I am happy I chose peer teaching as my internship this year.
2. I learned how to be a better teacher and mentor
3. I felt more confident in the subject I taught after my peer teaching experience
4. I recommend continuing this as an internship at HSHMC

5. I feel my leadership skills have improved through this program.

6. I have a better idea of what I would like to do after high school because of this internship.

7. I feel I made a positive impact on the classroom I taught in this year.

The classroom teachers had the following statements in their survey:

1. I am happy I choose to have a peer teacher in my classroom.

2. Having a peer teacher made things easier for me this year.

3. I would like to have a peer teacher again.

4. My peer teacher helped me to be a better teacher.

5. I worked well with my peer teacher.

The surveys were a rating scale from strongly disagrees to strongly agree. This was a good tool to get a better understanding of the impact of the program because it allowed for participants to give short and quick feedback. This instrument was also helpful because the participants could be more honest knowing the researcher did not know who the information was coming from.

The interviews were done one on one with participants from each of the subgroup. The researcher interviewed 45 students, 20 from 9th grade and 25 from 10th grade, 2 peer teachers and 2 classroom teachers. Each subgroup of participants was given identical questions and the interviews were recorded to avoid note taking and misunderstanding of answers. The interviews consisted of 5 questions, which aligned with the questions given in the survey. The interview questions for the students were:

1. What was your favorite part of having a peer teacher?
2. Did you use the peer teacher as a resource, if so how?
3. Did you like it when the peer teacher would teach, why or why not?
4. Did you feel comfortable asking the peer teacher for help, why or why not?
5. Is there anything you would like to change about the program?

The interview questions for the peer-teachers were:

1. What was your favorite think about being a peer teacher?
2. Did the students use you as a resource, if so how?
3. Did you like teaching to the class, why or why not?
4. Did you feel comfortable helping students when they needed help, why or why not?
5. Is there anything you would like to change about the program?

The interview questions for the teachers were:

1. What was your favorite thing about having a peer teacher?
2. Was the peer teacher a resource to you, if so how?
3. Did you like when the peer teacher taught, why or why not?
4. Did you feel comfortable having a peer teacher in your class, why or why not?
5. Is there anything you would like to change about the program?

The researcher selected participants at random, and participants were told the interview was optional and voluntary. This tool was a good match to understand the impact because the researcher was able to hear the opinions of the participants. Since the participants knew the interview was voluntary they chose to disclose how they felt.

The researcher did the observations. The researcher chose 4 classrooms, at random, and sat in the back of the room observing the interactions of the participants in
class. The researcher took notes on: how often students sought out peer-teachers versus
teachers, amount of time peer-teachers spent with students versus time on other tasks
(such as grading, making copies, running errands, sitting and listening), and the emotions
of all participants while peer-teaching was taking place. The researcher did not interact
with any participants and sat in the back corner of the room as to not disturb or influence
the environment in any way. Doing the observations was a good tool because the
researcher was able to get a visual on the impact of the program. The researcher did the
observations following the survey and the interviews, this allowed for the researcher to
see what the participants were explaining. This also allowed for the researcher to gain
further evidence that was not provided in the survey and interview.

**Procedures**

The study was designed with the intent to look at the impact of the peer-teaching
program on all participants and look for opportunities for growth and development within
the program. The goal was to implement the program and analyze the impact it had on
the classroom environment, as well as those who participated. The researcher first looked
at and researched the levels and types of support already present in the classroom.
Through the findings the researcher found there were supports present in the classroom,
but more supports could be used. The researcher than implemented the peer teaching
program in 6 classrooms. As the program started the researcher sought out to learn how
the program was impacting the participants, and what changes could be made to improve
upon the program.

The researcher first started with a survey designed to get feedback from each
participant. The researcher created the survey with questions aimed at understanding if
the program was effective and if so, to what extent. The researcher wanted to keep the survey anonymous to allow for honest and reliable feedback. The researcher sent out the link to the survey via electronic mail to each participant in the program. The researcher allowed for the survey to be done in 1 week, it took between 5-10 minutes to complete and the researcher wanted to allow for extra time if it was necessary. The results of the survey were then sent to the researcher’s Google drive where she could access them at any time.

Following the results of the survey, the researcher did random interviews with participants from each subgroup in order to gain more feedback and insight into the program. The questions asked in the interviews were aligned with the questions asked in the survey. The researcher sent out an electronic message to 20% of the participants in each sub group (55 students, 2 peer-teacher, 2 classroom teachers) at random asking to interview them regarding the program. Of the participants asked to participate, 45 students, 2 peer-teachers, and 2 classroom teachers agreed to be interviews. The researchers set up times to interviews participants, the interviews took between 15-20 minutes. The researcher recorded each interview as to not misinterpret any of the interviews. The researcher than took notes following the interviews on general themes and ideas that came up as a result of the interviews.

Finally the researcher chose 4 classrooms to do observations and take objective notes on what she observed in the classroom. The researcher did not give advance notice to the participants of the observation, as she wanted to see the program naturally. The researcher went into the classroom with only a pen and paper and sat in the back corner
of the class. The researcher observed the interactions between: the peer-teachers and the
students, the peer-teacher and classroom teacher, and the classroom teacher and students.

Setting

The setting was in general education classrooms in 9th and 10th grade at Health
Science High and Middle College (HSHMC). Health Sciences High and Middle College
is a public charter high school located in City Heights in San Diego, CA. Charter schools
are public schools and HSHMC is open to all San Diego County residents. Because of
this there is a very diverse population due to students being from all over the county.
HSHMC has a health focus and is partners with Sharp hospital. Along with the general
education curriculum every student has an internship once a week. In the first 2 years the
students all intern at one of the Sharp hospitals, and in the last 2 years they either remain
at the hospital or choose a different internship better suited to their future endeavors.
There are 550 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Around 30% of the students who attend
HSHMC are from the surrounding neighborhood, while the others are from as far away
as 30 miles. In 2011-2012 15% of the student population was classified as an English
Learner (EL), and 12% qualify as having a disability and have an IEP. This has generally
been the percentage of ELs and students with disabilities the school has had since it
opened in 2007.

Class size has risen in the past two years and there are about 35 students in each
class. The school has an inclusion model where every student, regardless of disability, is
included in the general education classroom. The peer teacher program is designed to
help meet the demands of the classroom, by both supporting the learning of the students
as well as supporting the work of the classroom teacher.
**Participants**

The participants for this study were all part of the Health Sciences High and Middle College. The students who participated were all of the 9th and 10th grade students enrolled at HSHMC. There were 134 9th grade students and 141 10th grade students, all range from the ages 13-16. The 9th grade students were enrolled in 4 classes: English 1, Earth Science, Math 1 and Art. Of the classes enrolled 3 classes had a peer-teacher: English 1, Earth Science, and Math 1. The 10th grade students were enrolled in 4 classes: English 2, Math 2, Biology and World History. Of the classes enrolled 3 classes had a peer teacher: English 2, Biology and World History.

The peer-teachers who participated were 12th grade students enrolled in HSHMC, all range in age from 17-18. There are 6 peer-teacher participants. Each peer-teacher applied for the program at the end of the junior year and chose to do peer teaching as their internship. The requirements of being a peer-teacher are: 2 teacher recommendations, received a B+ or better in the subject they are supporting, an interview with the internship coordinator, and an administrator signature. Each peer-teacher is assigned to a teacher at the beginning of the year. This is decided with the peer-teacher and classroom teacher. The peer-teacher interned with the classroom teacher one day a week for the entire school year.

The classroom teachers who participated are 9th and 10th grade teachers. The internship coordinator sent an electronic message to all 9th and 10th grade teachers asking who would like to be involved in the program and all the teachers interested replied. More teachers expressed interest than there were peer-teachers, the internship coordinator
decided who would get a peer-teacher based on: need, student interest, and good fit. There are 6 teachers who had a peer-teacher in their classroom.

**Summary**

The researcher reached out to HSHMC community and implemented a peer-teaching program that would ideally help fill in the gaps where support was needed. Following the implementation of the peer-teaching program the researcher did an ethnographic study of the program, looking at the program from the inside out. Through surveys, interviews and observations the researcher obtained information from all parties involved about the effects and impact of the program on all of the participants.
**Chapter Four: Study Analysis**

**Introduction**

As more supports are needed in the classroom and finances are tight the researcher looked within the school to see what additional supports could be used that would result in additional supports without added money. The researcher implemented a peer teaching program in which older student would co-teach alongside a classroom teacher. Following the implementation of this program the researcher did an ethnographic study to determine: Can peers as co-teachers have a positive impact on students? Can students co-teaching to younger peers have a positive impact on themselves? Can teachers benefit have a student co-teacher?

Following surveys, interviews, and observations the researcher obtained and analyzed data from students, peer teachers, and teachers. Through the data collected the researcher interpreted the results to assess the impact the program had on all of the participants.

**Data from students**

Of the 275 students participants, 248 students filled out the on-line survey. All of the 248 students who filled out the survey 100% answered each rating scale statement. The results of the survey, as seen in table 1.1, show the students responses to the given statements. Overwhelmingly the students answered agree or strongly agree to the positive impact statements on the survey. The information given from the students in the survey showed that a majority of the students, more than 70% in each question, enjoyed having a peer teacher in classroom and had a better learning experience because of this additional support in the class.
When followed up by interviews, the responses the students supported the data given in the survey. The researcher asked the students what their favorite part of having a peer teacher was and the answered varied from “having a friendly face” to “better understanding material” to “if the teacher was busy someone else was there”. When asked if the students used the peer teacher as a resource every student responded that they did use the peer teacher as a resource. They generally used the peer teacher as a resource to clarify information given or to gain additional insight on a particular topic. When asked if they enjoyed the peer teacher teaching to the class the student had varied answers from “a little” to “a lot”, and it depended on the topic and the difficulty of what was being taught. The students remarked that they enjoyed listening to a different voice, but they preferred to learn from a teacher when the topic was difficult. When asked if they felt comfortable asking the peer teacher for help the students all said they felt very comfortable asking the peer teacher for help, and at times felt more comfortable asking the peer teacher than the classroom teacher. As for changing anything about the program the students answers were generally in one of 4 categories: change nothing, have peer teachers in every class everyday, only have peer teachers teach easier topics, and to move around the classroom more. Students reported that the peer teachers tended to work with certain groups of students more than everyone in the class and they would like if peer teachers made an effort to support all student not just the same ones each time.

When the researcher observed the classroom what she saw aligned with the survey and interviews. Students appeared to be very comfortable with the peer teachers, as she saw there were constant interactions between peer teachers and students. Students asked peer teachers questions twice as often as they asked the teacher. Students were
observed laughing with peer teachers, asking clarifying questions, and having conversations that went beyond the content being taught. When a peer teacher was observed teaching a lesson students appeared to be paying attention, taking notes, and asking meaningful questions.

**Data from peer teachers**

Of the 6 peer teachers asked to fill out the survey, all 6 filled out the survey completely. The results of the survey, as shown in table 1.2, show the peer teachers responses to the statements given. The information shows the peer teachers all enjoyed being a peer teacher, as shown by 100% of them answering agree or strongly agree to the positive impact statements given. Most noteworthy was the response to the statement regarding being happy they chose to be a peer teacher for internship. One hundred percent (100%) of the peer teachers marked strongly agree to this statement.

Following the survey the researcher interviewed 2 of the peer teachers. The interviews supported the data given in the survey. When asked their favorite part about being a peer teacher one responded with feeling good about herself and the other responded with having a new respect for teachers. When asked if the students used them as a resource both peer teachers laughed and said yes. To what extent the students used the peer teachers the answers varied from, “asking follow up questions” to “getting help when stuck” to “help getting assignments done”. When the researcher asked if the peer teachers enjoyed teaching to the class one student said yes, while the other responded that they preferred to help with the teaching rather than teach to the class. The peer teacher who replied yes said she liked to teach because it makes her feel special and also because she really enjoys the subject. The student who preferred to support the learning said he
feels self-conscious in front of the class and gets nervous students are going to ask questions he which he has no answers. When asked if they feel comfortable both students responded they did feel comfortable in the class. One of the peer teachers remarked, “I feel like these are my students and I am another one of the teachers. When I am absent I know they miss me and that makes me want to come to school everyday!” Finally the peer teachers were asked what they would change about the program, one said he would like additionally training on how to teach as well as more formal meetings with other peer teachers to hear their experiences. The other peer teacher said she would want to peer teach alongside another teacher once during the year to see the differences and learn how another teacher teaches.

When the researcher observed the classroom what she saw with the peer teachers went along with the surveys and interviews. In all 4 classrooms observed the peer teachers were moving around the classroom the entire time. The peer teacher would move from student to student answering questions and sitting and doing work with the students. The peer teachers were observed talking with the classroom teacher and appeared comfortable with all of the students. In each classroom observed the peer teachers appeared to stay to one side of the classroom or at certain tables. The area in which the peer teacher was seemed to be students who were struggling with the content due to the amount of questions asked. All of the peer teachers did move around throughout the class, but spent a majority of their time in a specific area. One thing the researcher noticed was that in all 4 observations the peer teachers never left the room to run errands for the teacher, and was seen working with students the entire class period. The researcher also noticed that while electronics (cell phones, ipods, ect) are permitted
in the classroom the peer teachers did not use their electronics and would remind students to either put away their electronics or use them in a respectful manner.

**Data from teachers**

Of the 6 teachers asked to fill out the survey, all 6 filled out the survey completely. The results of the survey, as shown in table 1.3, show the teachers’ responses to the statements given. The responses show the teachers enjoyed and benefitted from having a peer teacher in their classroom, as shown by 100% of the teachers answering agree or strongly agree to the positive impact statements given. Most significantly, when teachers were asked if they would like to have a peer teacher again next year they all marked strongly agree.

Following the survey, the researcher then interviewed two teachers regarding their experience having a peer teacher in their classroom. The responses given aligned with the information given from the survey. When asked the favorite thing about having a peer teacher both teachers remarked they enjoyed having the additional support in the classroom. When asked if the peer teacher was a resource in the classroom both teachers responded that the peer teacher was a resource. One teacher went on to say the peer teacher was like having a student teacher in the classroom and she had to remember the peer teacher was only in high school. The other teacher remarked that the peer teacher was an extra set of eyes and ears in the classroom which helped to support students the teacher did not see or hear due to helping other students. When asked if they enjoyed the peer teacher teaching one teacher said she enjoyed it every once in a while, but that she preferred the peer teacher as a support to the teaching because the peer teaching was good with small groups and one on one support. The other teacher said she built the peer
teacher into the day so the students got to hear information from another person. The teacher also said she enjoyed what the peer teacher brought to the content, both in knowledge and personality. When asked if they felt comfortable with the peer teacher in the classroom both said yes. One teacher remarked, “I feel uncomfortable when my peer teacher is not in the classroom; it does not feel the same!” Finally the researcher asked both teachers what they would change about the program. One teacher said she would like to see more training on how to teach the content. She said the peer teacher knew the content well, but would at times struggle with how to give the information to the students. The second teacher said she would like to build in more meeting time with the peer teacher in order to reflect more often with the peer teacher and also have time to give feedback.

When the researcher observed the classroom much of what was shown in the survey and said in the interview she saw. In all 4 classrooms the researcher noted the teacher talking with the peer teacher at least once every 15 minutes. During these conversations they could be overheard clarifying information, encouraging the peer teacher, and telling the peer teacher where they would like to have them support. Most notable to the researcher was the rapport between the peer teacher and the teacher. They smiled when they spoke to one another, and appeared to enjoy working together. The researcher also noticed the tone the teacher had with the peer teacher; it was different than the tone the teacher had with the students. The teacher spoke with the peer teacher in the same tone as the teacher had with fellow teachers. The teacher and the peer teacher appeared to have a plan prior to the class period because the researcher noticed they both had places to be in the classroom and moved in sync with one another. In one classroom
where the peer teacher taught part of the lesson the teacher fluidly gave the floor to the peer teacher and the students did not appear to behave different when the peer teacher began to teach. When the peer teacher taught the classroom teacher walked around and supported students, the same was also seen with the peer teacher when the classroom teacher taught.

**Interpretation**

After the information had been analyzed it appeared the peer-teaching program had a positive impact on all participants. The students stated they enjoyed having a peer teacher in the classroom, both through survey and in interviews, and used them as resources to support their education. It was evident the students created positive relationships with the peer-teachers, which helped to allow for this positive impact. Students also reported receiving better grades, as well as having a better understanding of the curriculum due to having a peer teacher. Many students told the researcher they wish they had a peer teacher in all of their classes. The students not only learned academically from the peer teachers, they also were able to learn social how to improve their classroom behavior through the peer teacher modeling good student behavior. This was seen in the survey, told to the researcher during the interviews, but mainly the researcher saw this when she observed the classroom. There were students, although very few, who expressed they did not have a positive experience with the peer teachers this could be due to many factors, including negative impressions or events with one of the peer teachers, not having many interactions with the peer teachers, or preferring the classroom teacher.

The data imply that the peer teaching had a positive impact on the peer teachers themselves. The peer teachers stated, through survey and interview, they enjoyed their
internship and took away new skills. The researcher observed the leadership and cooperation skills the peer teachers obtained through the program in the classroom observations. The peer teachers had higher self-confidence, were more knowledgeable about the subject they taught, and had a better idea about their future endeavors after high school.

The data also imply the peer teaching program had a positive impact on the classroom teacher. The teacher had additional support within the classroom and enjoyed having a peer teacher in their classroom. Although the survey showed this information, it was through the interviews and observations the researcher found the positive impact to be true. The interactions each teacher had with their peer teacher appeared positive and a good working relationship. During the interviews the teachers separately praised their peer teacher and how happy they were to have asked to be part of the program. All teachers stated they wanted to continue with the peer-teaching program and would be unhappy if they did not have a peer teacher the following year.

It should be noted that since the author implemented the program and worked at the school and knew every participant, it might have impacted the findings and interpretations. Due to the author having a such a strong link to the program this may have limited the study and had another researcher without a connection to the program done the study he/she might had yielded different results.
Chapter Five: Recommendations and What I Learned

Introduction

Going through the process of looking at the peer teaching program at my school gave me time to reflect and learn about the affect the program has had on my school. I am now able to take what I have learned and make changes so the program can continue to grow and have a positive impact on the school. This chapter will focus on not only what I learned, but also what surprised me and where I would like to go with this project in the future.

Summarize Your Project

For this project I did an ethnographic study of a program I started at my school, peer teaching. Students in this program co-teach alongside a classroom teacher to younger peers. I wanted to look to see how this program was impacting all parties involved, and what, if anything, could be improved for future years. I studied the impact on the teacher, peer teachers and students. I did this through survey, interview and observation. What I learned is that the program made a positive impact on all participants of the program.

Future Plans for Use of Project

I plan to use this information to make changes to improve the peer-teaching program. Through my study I learned this program is having the biggest impact on the peer teachers themselves. I would like there to be a bigger impact on the students, which was the original purpose of starting the program. Through the survey and interviews I learned the students feel not everyone is interacting with the peer-teachers. I would like to structure the program so that peer-teachers are interacting more with each student in
the class. I would also like to have peer-teachers teaching more small group lessons as I learned this is the way all the participants had the most positive impact.

Comments on Future Research and Projects

Doing this study was fascinating to me because I really got to have an in depth look at the program I started. I would like to now to do a longitudinal study on the program to see how it is making an impact over the years. Also I would like to see how the changes I am going to make are making an impact.

Conclusion

Doing an ethnographic study was the perfect thing to do because I had the opportunity to study something I am invested in and want to make an impact at my school. I feel this program is my legacy at the school and I want it to do so well that it could carry on without me. I think peer-teaching is a resource that should be considered at all schools and if done right can make a positive impact on everyone participating.
References


### Table 1.1: Peer teacher survey for students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I liked having a peer teacher in my classes</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to continue having a peer teacher in my classes</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received help from one of the peer-teachers</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing information from the peer-teacher helped me to better understand the subject.</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The peer teachers were knowledgeable about the subject.</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The peer teachers seemed excited about the subject.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The peer teachers were good role models in class</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I believe I did better in my classes because of the peer teacher.
### Table 1.2

**Peer teacher survey for peer teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am happy I chose peer teaching as my internship this year.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned how to be a better teacher and mentor</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt more confident in the subject I taught after my peer teaching experience</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I recommend continuing this as an internship at HSHMC</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel my leadership skills have improved through this program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a better idea of what I would like to do after high school because of this internship.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I made a positive impact on the classroom I taught in this year.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1.3  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am happy I choose to have a peer teacher in my classroom.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a peer teacher made things easier for me this year</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to have a peer teacher again</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My peer teacher helped me to be a better teacher</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worked well with my peer teacher</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>