

**FIGURE 8.5 Seven Steps to Starting a Peer Buddy Program****Step 1: Develop a one-credit course.**

- ☐ Incorporate into your school's curriculum a peer tutoring course that allows peer buddies to spend at least one period each day with their partners with disabilities.
- ☐ Begin building a base of support with the administration, school counselors, and teachers in your school for the inclusion of students receiving special education services in general education activities.
- ☐ Follow the established procedures of the local and state educational agencies when you apply for the new course offering.

**Step 2: Recruit peer buddies.**

- ☐ Actively recruit peer buddies during the first year. After that, peer buddies will recruit for you.
- ☐ Include announcements, posters, articles in the school newspaper and PTA newsletter, videos on the school's closed-circuit television, and peer buddies speaking in school clubs and classes.
- ☐ Present information about the new program at a faculty meeting.
- ☐ Start slowly while you establish the course expectations.

**Step 3: Screen and match students.**

- ☐ Have school counselors refer students who have interest, good attendance, and adequate grades.
- ☐ Arrange for students to interview with the special education teachers.
- ☐ Have students provide information regarding their past experience with students with diverse abilities and about clubs or activities that they are involved in that their partners could join.
- ☐ Allow students to observe in the classroom to learn about the role of a peer buddy and whether they would be an appropriate match for the class.

**Step 4: Teach peer buddies to use instructional strategies.**

- ☐ Model the use of prompting and reinforcement techniques.
- ☐ Conduct a peer buddy orientation that includes the concept of "people first," disability awareness, communication strategies, and suggested activities.
- ☐ Communicate teachers' expectations for the peer buddy course including attendance and grading policies.
- ☐ Provide suggestions for dealing with inappropriate behavior, setting limits, and modifying general education curricula.

**Step 5: Evaluate the program.**

- ☐ Schedule observations and feedback sessions with peer buddies to address their questions or concerns.
- ☐ Provide feedback on their interaction skills, time management, use of positive reinforcement, and activities engaged in with their partners.
- ☐ Have peer buddies keep a daily journal of their activities and reflections, which should be reviewed weekly by the classroom teacher.
- ☐ Establish a peer buddy club, which allows students to share experiences and ideas as well as gives the teacher an opportunity to offer ongoing training and feedback.

**Step 6: Hold a Lunch Bunch.**

- ☐ Invite peer buddies to join special education students for lunch in the cafeteria.
- ☐ Encourage the peer buddies to invite their general education friends to join the group, increasing social contacts for their partners.
- ☐ Remind general education students who, because of class conflicts, are unable to enroll in the course to join the Lunch Bunch.

**Step 7: Establish an advisory board.**

- ☐ Develop an advisory board that includes students (peer buddies and partners), students' parents, participating general and special education teachers, administrators, and school counselors.
- ☐ Include community representatives to expand the peer buddy program to community-based activities, such as work experiences.
- ☐ Meet at least once each semester to obtain insight and suggestions for evaluating and improving the program. Thank all members for their participation.

*Source:* From "They are my best friends:" Peer buddies promote inclusion in high school by Hughes, C., Guth, C., Hall, S., Presley, J., Dye, M., & Byers, C., *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 31(5), 1999, 32-37. Copyright 1999 by The Council for Exceptional Children. Reprinted with permission.