**LINK Peer to Peer Support Program Development Checklist**

**Middle and High School**

**Establishing the LINK Class**The LINK (Peer to Peer Support) class is a local school board approved peer to peer support course/credit program taught by a certified teacher (Special Education or General Education), and is consistent with MDE’s Pupil Accounting Manual, Section 6b. Pupils receive a syllabus, are assessed through formative and summative content and performance measures (such as journals, papers, portfolios, teacher observation, quizzes or tests) and the pupil performance/credit is graded rather than pass or fail. Prior to starting a LINK Program, a team from the district should attend a Peer to Peer Support Presentation offered through the START Project. Please check the START website [www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter](http://www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter) (see START events) to register for Peer to Peer Support Presentations.

**Program Development Checklist:**

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| **Program Development Task** | **Date(s)**  **Completed** |
| Obtain support of your Special Education Director and Building Principal. |  |
| Review and understand Section 6b – LINKS Program. This document can be obtained at [www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter](http://www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter) under the Peer to Peer Support button on the left hand column. |  |
| Establish a team to assist in guiding the development of the LINK Program. Plan to meet on a once a week during the development of the program and monthly or quarterly thereafter. |  |
| Decide how the curriculum will be delivered to the LINK students (e.g direct classroom instruction, online) and the grading method. START has established a curriculum for the LINK Class designed for grades 6-12. It can be utilized as an on-line class or a direct instruction class. You can access this curriculum on the START website under the “Peer to Peer Support” button ([www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter](http://www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter)). |  |
| Designate one to two team members (e.g. Team Leaders) who will have primary responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the LINK Program. These individuals could be teachers, social workers, guidance counselors, school psychologists, teacher consultants, etc. These individuals will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of program requirements such as student recruitment, training, scheduling of LINKS, case conferences, and fundraising activities, etc. These tasks may be delegated to others, but the Team Leaders are responsible to assure the tasks are completed. |  | |
| Designate “teacher of record” for the LINK class. This person is responsible for creation of the syllabus, daily attendance, assessment of LINK students through formative and summative content and performance measures (such as journals, papers, portfolios, teacher observation, quizzes or tests), and grading. |  | |

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| **Program Development Task** | **Date(s)**  **Completed** |
| **Recruitment (Pick at least two below)** |  |
| Set up a LINK Booth during lunch periods, sports activities, assemblies, etc. to recruit students. |  |
| Schedule LINKS through the building’s Course Catalog. |  |
| Do a LINKs presentation and pass out recruitment materials in individual classrooms. |  |
| Contact the counselor in the building, and ask the counselor to help recruit students. |  |
| During the recruitment phase, stress the “win-win” nature of the program. The LINKs gain valuable problem solving experiences, collaboration skills, and an understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders which can be used in the future (e.g. college, employment, future contact with individuals with ASD, personal growth). The student with ASD makes gains in social, communication & independence skills, increased participation in the classroom and other school environments, and receives ongoing daily support. |  |
| **Scheduling the LINK Students** |  |
| Determine how many LINK students are needed to support the identified students with ASD for the semester / trimester. For example, if you have 10 students with ASD and you want two LINKs with each of the students with ASD each hour of the day (e.g. 5 periods), then multiply 2 x 5 x 10 which equals 100 students to recruit. |  |
| Match students according to schedules. Having a school counselor involved in scheduling is helpful. Data suggest that LINKs are most effective if they are the same age or older than the student with ASD. LINKS should not be younger. |  |

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| **Program Development Task** | **Date(s)**  **Completed** |
| **Data Collection** |  |
| Refer to forms on Data Collection START website. (dispro) |  |
| Determine period of time data will be collected. |  |
| Determine who will collect, maintain and review data. |  |
| Determine measuring data points on students with ASD. (Batrow data) |  |
| Share information at a Building Team meeting in the fall with teachers/administrators on the LINK program data collection. (share out data in the spring – to measure growth and success) |  |

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| **Program Development Task** | **Date(s)**  **Completed** |
| **Training / Curriculum** |  |
| A comprehensive curriculum has been developed through the START Project specifically for training LINKS. “The Master Planning Document,” which provides the titles and internet hyperlinks to training modules, is available on the START website ([www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter](http://www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter)). |  |
| Utilize supplemental articles from newspapers, magazines, and periodicals to give LINK students a current perspective on ASD. |  |
| Establish a “Journaling” protocol for LINKs. Although not a requirement, daily journals, recorded by the LINK students, have the following advantages:   * + They encourage the LINK student to reflect on their experience with the student with ASD.   + They provide information to the LINK teacher about what is happening in the classroom.   When recorded on a password protected blog, LINKS have a forum for sharing ideas, especially when they are working with the same students. Teacher of Record or Team Leaders should identify an adult(s) who will monitor the blog to assure information is relevant and appropriate. |  |
| **Case Conferences** |  |
| Establish a Case Conference schedule for each student with ASD. Case conferences are meetings of all the LINK students that are supporting the same student with ASD to discuss student progress and problem solve areas of concerns. These meetings should be held every 3-4 weeks or more frequently if needed. A general agenda for case conferences includes:  1) Positive experiences with the student with ASD  2) Concerns about the student with ASD  3) Brainstorm ideas to address concern areas  Case conferences can be held before or after school, during lunch hour (e.g. provide pizza, McDonald’s etc. to create an engaging, relaxing environment) or during other class periods. Develop and obtain a permission slip from the missing class teacher if a LINK student will be missing class for the case conference. |  |

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| **Program Development Task** | **Date(s)**  **Completed** |
| **Maintaining LINK Students** |  |
| Designate a room in the building that is identified with the LINK program and available all day. This room is a safe-haven for students with ASD, a training site for LINKS, and a great place for LINKS and their peers with ASD to interact. |  |
| Consider having a “LINK of the Week” including a bulletin board designated for posting a picture of the LINK with the student’s name and some relevant information about them. You might also use a bulletin board to post pictures of all LINK students. |  |
| Schedule an end of the year banquet for all LINK students, the students with ASD, and their families. |  |
| Design & create a LINK T-Shirt for all participants in the program. Having a contest for students to design the t-shirt encourages investment in the program. Have the program participants or the entire student body vote on the winning t-shirt design. Print the design on the T-Shirts and distribute to both students with ASD and the LINK students at the banquet. |  |
| Create and provide a Paper Plate Award for all LINK students and students with ASD in the program. These awards can recount the year’s most memorable events with the students. During the year, keeping a log of the most memorable events for each student is the most efficient way of creating the paper plate awards at the end of the year. |  |
| Create a certificate of appreciation for students who were LINKS for the school year. |  |
| **Fundraising – Must get approval from Administration** |  |
| To cover the costs of t-shirts, parties, lunch meetings, etc., fundraising activities are often needed to assure funds are available for such events. The following fundraising ideas may be helpful: |  |
| Bagel Sales in the morning prior to the start of school. Have LINKS and students with ASD sell the bagels. |  |
| Pizza and pop sales at parent teacher conferences. Have the LINKS and the students with ASD sell the pizza and pop. |  |
| Hat Day – Students in the building pay $1.00 to wear a hat to school on a specific day. |  |
| Bake Sales – The parents of the students with ASD and the LINK Students organize a bake sale before school or during lunches |  |
| Sell candy bars, pencils, etc., the LINK Students and Students with ASD can do this during school hours |  |
| LINK Sponsored Dances |  |
| Jeans Day for Teachers – Each teacher pays $5.00 to wear jeans on Friday. |  |

Additional ideas for running a LINK program can be found at the START website, under the Peer to Peer Support tab ([www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter](http://www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter)).