



# Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together

**Fostering Peer Relationships**  
Module 8 Workbook



Nāku to rourou  
nāu te rourou  
ka ora ai te ākonga.

With my basket and  
your basket the  
learner will thrive.

Published by the New Zealand Ministry of Education.  
[www.education.govt.nz](http://www.education.govt.nz)

All text and images copyright © Crown 2017 except for the image on page 3 copyright  
© Michael F. Giangreco 2002.

All rights reserved. Enquiries should be made to the publisher.



# Contents

<b>About this resource.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 Get started .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2 Watch the presentation.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3 Choose an activity .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4 Plan for practice .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>5 Give it a go.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>6 Talk about how it went.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Activity options .....</b>	<b>13</b>



## About this resource

### Background

*Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together* is a set of modules that teachers and teacher aides complete together.

Each module in this series is a 'ready-to-use' pack with a presentation, workbook and activities so learning can be put into practice. Some modules include self-paced e-learning. The module materials come in different formats to allow choice about how you learn.

Find out more at [Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together](#).

The modules follow an inquiry cycle. The workbook has a section for each step in the cycle.



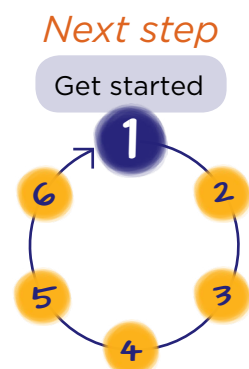
If you are leading the learning, refer to the [Facilitator Quick Guide](#) and gather any additional materials needed to complete the activities.

Download the learning materials from the [Module 8 page](#) of the Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together site.

Note that you have some choices about how you access the module materials. This is the PDF workbook format. It includes links to required resources and printable worksheets for the activities. If you are working with hard copy, you will need to access the online version to activate the links.

For an enhanced online reading experience, access the [e-workbook for Module 8](#). In the e-workbook, activity sheets are Google Docs that you can print, download as Word documents or copy to your own Google Drive for working online.

You also have the option to download a PowerPoint or view a narrated presentation.





# 1. Get started

Start by watching the short video. Then read the cartoon and key principles. They introduce the main ideas covered in this module. Discuss these as a group. The learning outcomes describe what you'll achieve once you've completed the six steps.



Watch the video about [ways to support peer interaction](#) at the Ministry of Education's teacher aide Vimeo album.

“ Before I saw my relationship with the student as the most critical; now I understand that it is my responsibility to help Becca build relationships with other kids, not with me. ”

*Teacher aide, quoted in  
Causton-Theoharis & Malmgren, 2005, p. 18*



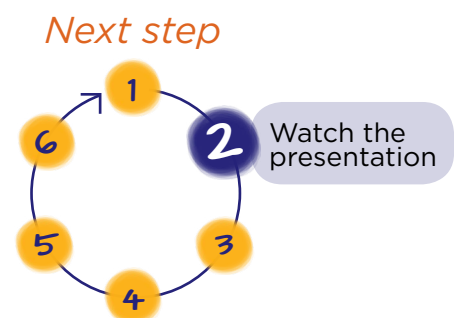
## Key principles

- The support that teacher aides provide can help create an inclusive classroom environment. Teacher aides can enhance relationships between the teacher, students and peers.
- Teacher aide time is best used to ensure that students with additional learning needs learn alongside their peers, rather than being withdrawn to work with one adult.
- Teacher aide support for individual students needs to foster independence, perseverance and interactions with peers and teachers.
- In inclusive classrooms, the identity, language and culture of every student is recognised, respected and reflected in all relationships, environments and programmes.
- In inclusive classrooms, all students feel involved, and that they belong and are valued.

## Learning outcomes

This module is intended to support teachers and teacher aides to achieve four aims:

1. Identify and describe how teachers and teacher aides can impact a student's sense of belonging and their connections with their peers.
2. Discuss what they currently do in their classrooms to support students' connections with their peers and their sense of belonging in the classroom.
3. Plan and implement a new strategy or approach for fostering peer relationships in their class/school.
4. Discuss how the new approach is working and make any necessary changes.

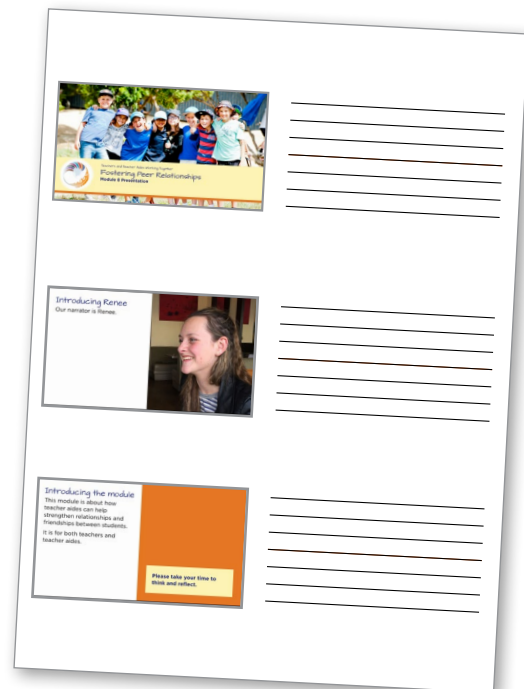




## 2. Watch the presentation

Watch the presentation about how teacher aides can foster students' connections to peers and their sense of belonging at school. Read the discussion on the next pages for further information.

Visit the [Module 8 e-workbook](#) to download or watch the presentation.



### Further information

#### Why this module?

Research in New Zealand and overseas has found that support from a teacher aide can get in the way of students developing friendships and learning from and with their peers. This module is about how teachers and teacher aides can support students who have additional needs in ways that foster their connections to peers and their sense of belonging at school.

#### Belonging

Caring and supportive relationships are critical to students' learning and well-being at school (Alton-Lee, 2003; MacArthur, 2009). When we feel connected, we have a sense of belonging within our community. Teachers and teacher aides have an important role in supporting positive relationships and students' connections with each other.



All school staff need to recognise, respect and include the identity, language and culture of every student. This is demonstrated in their relationships with each other and with students, in the environment and in the school's programmes. It includes modelling the desired behaviours and teaching students to take responsibility for each other. Staff use deliberate strategies to help all students develop a sense of belonging in their school. Examples include greeting a student in their first language, and providing opportunities for students to learn their mihi and use it with pride.

Teachers and teacher aides who have high expectations believe that all students can participate, learn and succeed across many social situations.

## Peer-to-peer learning

Students learn as they engage in shared activities and conversations, with peer-to-peer interaction an essential component. Teachers foster this by providing opportunities for all students to work in paired, team, group and whole-class activities. It is important to consider how all students get full access to, and the most out of, learning from peers. Special consideration about peer-to-peer learning is needed for students supported by a teacher aide.

## Making space for peer-to-peer learning

Viewing teacher aides primarily as a resource to provide one-to-one support for a student can have unintended negative consequences. It can foster the student's dependence on adults and restrict their opportunities to work with their peers (Giangreco & Broer, 2005; Rutherford, 2008).

Teacher aide support for individual students needs to be sensitive to the situation. This means that a teacher aide will sometimes step in to support a student and sometimes simply observe. Observation provides space for spontaneous interactions with peers and teachers and opportunities for the student to persevere with tasks as independently as possible or to interact and learn with others. For example, if a student asks a teacher aide if the student can join in a game, the teacher aide should tell them to ask the student themselves.

## Fostering friendship

Teacher aides can help foster friendships between students by looking for ways to identify common interests and activities and to consider whether students need support to join in. However, if a teacher aide is constantly in close proximity to a student, other students may not approach this student. As a result they (and the teacher) may pay less attention to the student. The student being supported by the teacher aide may feel that they 'stick out' or are different to the others and may become dependent on this adult support, seeing the teacher aide as belonging to them.

## Working together

Teacher aides are used optimally when they work in partnership with teachers in inclusive classrooms where teachers assume responsibility and have high expectations for all learners (Rutherford, 2012). Teachers and teacher aides need to plan how they will work together to ensure all students have opportunities to develop relationships and connect with their peers, as well as learn from them.

## References and additional information

Alton-Lee, A. (2003). *Quality teaching for diverse students in schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Causton-Theoharis, J. N., & Malmgren, K. W. (2005). Increasing peer interactions for students with severe disabilities via paraprofessional training. *Exceptional Children, 71*(4), 431-444.

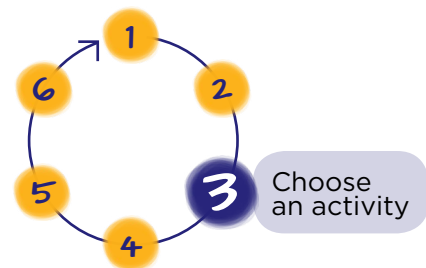
Giangreco, M. F., & Broer, S. M. (2005). Questionable utilization of paraprofessionals in inclusive schools: Are we addressing symptoms or causes? *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 20*(1), 10-26.

MacArthur, J. (2009). *Learning better together: Working towards Inclusive Education in New Zealand Schools*. IHC New Zealand Inc: Wellington.

Rutherford, G. (2008). *Different ways of knowing? Understanding disabled students' and teacher aides' school experiences within a context of relational social justice* (PhD). University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

Rutherford, G. (2012). In, out or somewhere in between? Disabled students' and teacher aides' experiences of school. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 16(8), 757-774. doi: 10.1080/13603116.2010.509818

Next step





## 3. Choose an activity

Choose one or two activities to do in pairs or small groups. Go to the back of the workbook for each activity's instructions, worksheets and resources.

### Activity 1

#### Supporting peer relationships

In this activity, read examples about supporting peer relationships. Discuss and record how you help students to connect with and learn from each other in your school or class.

### Activity 2

#### Sharing your mihi

In this activity, learn and share your mihi. You might need help from others in your community or go online to [Mihimihi: Tikanga Māori](#).

### Activity 3

#### Building students' connections throughout the day

Review your school timetable and discuss strategies and opportunities for fostering friendships and peer-to-peer learning throughout the school day. This activity works best when it is done by teachers and teacher aides who regularly work together.



## Activity 4

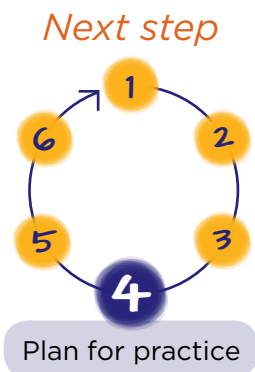
### Discussing scenarios about fostering a sense of belonging

In this activity, talk about examples where schools have fostered students' sense of belonging and then discuss your own examples.

## Activity 5

### Exploring online resources about effective teacher aide practice

In this activity, explore a section of the guide *Supporting effective teacher aide practice on Inclusive Education*. It covers content about how teacher aides can support student interactions and friendships.





## 4. Plan for practice

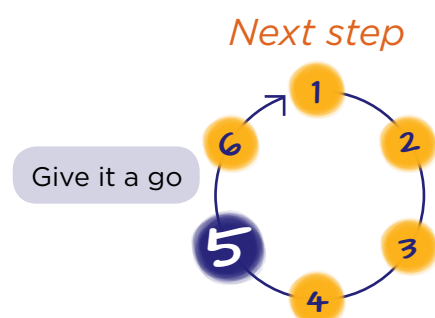
It's time to plan how you will put your learning into practice. Try one of these suggestions in your work together over the next few weeks.

Try a teacher-teacher aide classroom observation. Observe how your colleague supports students to connect with each other. Write down your observations, noting the things you could try. Meet afterwards and discuss the following questions:

- In what ways can we help students to connect with others?
- What are some strategies or techniques we can learn from each other?
- In what ways can we work together to better support all students in class?

If you tried activities 1, 3 or 4, you will have discussed a range of strategies for building students' peer relationships, connections and sense of belonging. Choose one of these to try in your class. Decide what the roles of the teacher and teacher aide will be. Try the strategy over a couple of weeks.

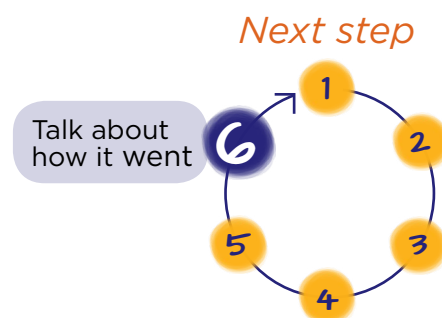
Talk with members of the school leadership team about ways to get feedback about how peer relationships and students' sense of belonging are fostered in your class. For example, this might be included as a topic when your school/class holds a whānau (family) forum. Ask questions and listen to family/whānau preferences and ideas about ways to support their children. You could also discuss how the teacher aide works in the classroom to foster peer-to-peer learning and connections.





## 5. Give it a go

Implement the strategy you decided on in Step 4. Use the space below to make notes about what you did and how it went.





## 6. Talk about how it went

Meet to talk about how the strategy from Step 4 went. Discuss and plan how you might adapt or modify your practice. Use the questions below to guide your reflection.

- What did we try?
- What happened when we did this? How did the students respond to the strategy?  
How did the adults experience and respond to the strategy?
- How might we change our practice next time?
- What have we learned about how teachers and teacher aides can impact peer-to-peer learning and students' friendships?
- To what extent is our work enhancing relationships in the classroom?
- What are we going to do next to foster peer relationships and a sense of belonging in our class?

### Possible next steps

When thinking about what you might do next, consider the other topics in this series:

- Teachers and Teacher Aides: Who Does What?
- Keeping Our Work Confidential, Professional and Safe
- Supporting Students with Complex Needs
- What Do We Think about Disability and Diversity?
- Identifying Students' Strengths
- Students Participating in their Individual Education Plans (IEP)
- Understanding the New Zealand Curriculum
- Creating Inclusive Classrooms
- Supporting Student Learning in the Whole Class
- Teacher Aide Interaction that Supports Student Learning

Visit [Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together](#) to access these modules.



# Activity options

<b>Activity 1: Supporting peer relationships .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Activity 2: Sharing your mihi .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Activity 3: Building students' connections throughout the day .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Activity 4: Discussing scenarios about fostering a sense of belonging .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Activity 5: Exploring online resources about effective teacher aide practice .....</b>	<b>22</b>



## 8 Fostering Peer Relationships

### *Supporting peer relationships*

### *Activity 1*

In this activity, read the examples for supporting peer relationships. Discuss and record how you help students to connect with and learn from each other in your school or class.



Working individually to begin with, read the handout (see over) of suggestions for supporting peer relationships.



In pairs or small groups, discuss the examples. Identify strategies that are also used in your school or classroom.

Discuss the other ways you support students to connect with each other.



Record the strategies on the blank worksheet.

## 8 Fostering Peer Relationships

---

### *Supporting peer relationships (continued)*

## Activity 1

### How do we support students to connect with each other?

*In what ways are students in our class similar to each other? How do we highlight this?*

Some students like the same sports – Abbey is a soccer player just like others in the class. We use our knowledge of students to highlight their shared interests to each other.

*How do our students communicate a desire to join in with others? How do we support this?*

We provide models of ways to ask each other to join in social activities. We make resources for individual students, such as a photo book, and teach all students about the communication and what it means. We model ways to play and interact, such as taking turns.

*How do we provide opportunities for social interactions within learning tasks?*

We set up learning tasks that require people to work together and where part of the criteria for success is to illustrate that everybody has contributed to achieving the shared goal. Sometimes we use behavioural supports. These are rewards that involve all the students. For example, most students view activities such as playing computer games as cool. When a student has earned a reward, such as computer time, we encourage them to share that experience with a classmate.

*How do we use natural situations, such as classroom responsibilities, to foster relationships?*

We use buddies to complete shared tasks such as daily helpers in the classroom and wider school.

We have students work in small groups to talk about their ideas before sharing them with the whole class.

*How do we help students understand each other?*

We produce booklets about some of our students that explain their needs, preferences and the best ways to support them. We share this information with other students in a respectful way that builds students' understanding of each other. We talk with the student and their family/whānau before sharing information about them with others.

*How do we recognise when our support is a barrier to students' developing relationships with each other?*

When students are talking with each other, the teacher aide moves away and leaves the students to it.

## 8 Fostering Peer Relationships

---

### *Supporting peer relationships (continued)*

### *Activity 1*

How do we support students to connect with each other?

In what ways are students in our class similar to each other? How do we highlight this?

How do our students communicate a desire to join in with others? How do we support this?

How do we provide opportunities for social interactions within the learning tasks we develop?

How do we use natural situations, such as classroom responsibilities, to foster relationships?

How do we help students understand each other?

How do we recognise when our support is a barrier to students' developing relationships with each other?

## 8 Fostering Peer Relationships

### Sharing your mihi

### Activity 2

In this activity, you will learn and share your mihi. You might need help from others in your community or go online to: [Mihimihi: Tikanga Māori](#).

Participants need access to a laptop or tablet with Internet access and speakers if they want to access the online resources.



Work in pairs or small groups to learn your own mihi. You may need support to do this. Could members of your group or other participants doing the module help you? Alternatively, an explanation of mihi and a simple template for writing one can be found at: [Mihimihi: Tikanga Māori](#).



Share your mihi.

Discuss with each other how comfortable you feel presenting your mihi.



At a later stage, you may like to get support for sharing your mihi with other staff, students or people outside of the school.

## 8 Fostering Peer Relationships

### *Building students' connections throughout the day*

### *Activity 3*

In this activity, review the school timetable and discuss strategies and opportunities for fostering friendships and peer-to-peer learning throughout the school day.

This activity works best when it is done by teachers and teacher aides who regularly work together.



Working in pairs or small groups, refer to the worksheet (see over) about building students' connections throughout the school day.

For each time period on the worksheet, discuss the questions and consider the following:

- How do all the students in your classes experience each time period?
- How do students who get individual support from a teacher aide experience each time period?
- What strategies or ideas could you try to support all students in your class to connect with their peers at these times?
- For each strategy or idea, what is the teacher's role in implementing this? What is the teacher aide role?



Make some notes on the worksheet to record your strategies and ideas, and how you could implement these.

## 8 Fostering Peer Relationships

---

### *Building students' connections throughout the day (continued)*

### *Activity 3*

Before and after school

Do students travel to school with other students? Does a school club operate after school? Is there time to socialise before the bell goes?

At break times

How do students select where they sit? How can we support students to cope at break times? Where do they want to spend their break time?

Working in pairs or groups in the classroom

What are our guidelines for deciding who will work with who? How is this affected by our knowledge of the nature of the task and of the learners themselves? How do we ensure that students experience working with a range of people over time? In which activities is it appropriate for students to pick their pairs or groups? How do we support this process so everyone is included?

Moving between classes

Who are the other students going to the same class? What opportunities are there for students to move between classes?

Free or choice time

Do students know how to use all the equipment for choice time? Who can model some of the games in a group? Can everyone make a choice?

During class time

Do all the students have a way to ask for or borrow things? Do they all get opportunities to do a class responsibility or job?

## 8 Fostering Peer Relationships

### *Discussing scenarios about fostering a sense of belonging*

### *Activity 4*

In this activity, talk about examples where schools have fostered students' sense of belonging, then discuss your own examples.



In pairs or small groups, read and discuss each scenario (see over).

Use these questions to guide discussion:

- If this scenario occurred at your school, what role would the teacher play and what role would the teacher aide play?
- If students you work with were asked to write about their sense of belonging at school, what do you think they would write?

Share examples from your own experience where schools have fostered students' sense of belonging.



If you have questions or suggestions about fostering students' sense of belonging, talk to others in your school about this activity, such as a member of the senior leadership team.

## 8 Fostering Peer Relationships

### *Discussing scenarios about fostering a sense of belonging (continued)*

### *Activity 4*

1. Writing is hard for me. I can use my iPad in all my classes to complete my work.
2. Others find it difficult to understand my speech. There are symbols in all my classes so I can get my message across.
3. My teacher and teacher aide know I love water, so they support me to leave my wheelchair and get in the kayak at water polo sessions in the school pool. I get to play a sport I love.
4. Teachers think about how to make picking teams fun. They change around the leaders so everyone gets a turn.
5. In assemblies it often gets noisy. I sit with my class, but I am at the end of the row so I can leave when I've had enough.
6. We have a beanbag in our classroom, so when anyone feels overwhelmed or tired they can use it for a break.
7. The price list in our school shop has pictures of the food, as well as the words, so everyone can make a choice about what they want.
8. I love sports, but team sports are hard for me because I can't run very well. The school rugby team is going in the provincial competition, and they have asked me to be their manager.
9. All classes in the school have a copy of my gesture dictionary. This means that everyone can learn what I mean when I am trying to communicate with them.
10. I earn rewards and certificates at assembly just like everyone else.
11. My family and teachers meet to talk about the help I need when I go on camp. They know how much I love camp.



## 8 Fostering Peer Relationships

### Exploring online resources about effective teacher aide practice

### Activity 5

In this activity, explore a section of the guide *Supporting effective teacher aide practice* on Inclusive Education. It covers content about how teacher aides can support student interactions and friendships. There are questions to guide your discussion.



Explore the section about approaches to supporting student interactions and friendships in the guide *Supporting effective teacher aide practice*.



Discuss the content you have just explored.

To support your talk, consider these questions:

- Thinking about the student quote on the 'Standing back' tab, in what ways do teacher aides at your school camouflage themselves 'as a tiger who hides in full view'?
- Refer to the ideas on the last tab about 'Supporting friendships'. What examples from your own practice and experience relate to each idea?
- How do teacher aides support student interactions and friendships in your school? Of the approaches you have just explored, which ones could you adopt?



If you have any questions about supporting student interactions and friendships in your school, talk about this activity with others, such as a member of the senior leadership team.