COLORADO
Assistance for those
SERVICES TO
with both vision
CHILDREN WITH
and hearing loss
DEAFBLINDNESS

Fact Sheet

Circle of Friends

Sometimes a more intense strategy for facilitating friendships is necessary. "Circle of Friends" is an activity completed with students without disabilities to discuss the importance of friendships and relationships in their lives and to generate ideas for ways in which they can be friends with peers who have disabilities. The ensuing steps are followed when implementing the "Circle of Friends" process (adapted from O'Brien, J., & Forest, M. (1989). Action for inclusion: How to improve schools by welcoming children with special needs into regular classrooms. Toronto: Inclusion Press).

1.   Discuss the importance of friendships and relationships in everyone's lives.

2.   Provide students with four concentric circles (see next page) and ask them to identify the important relationships in their lives. After completing each circle, ask students to share their responses if they are willing.

   (a) In the inner circle, ask them to put the names of those individuals to whom they are closest (e.g., those they love the most, those with whom they share their secrets).

   (b) In the second circle, ask them to list those people they really like, but not quite as much as those in the first circle (i.e., those with whom they do not share their secrets).

   (c) In the third circle, ask them to identify those individuals with whom they like to do things because of the groups to which they belong (e.g., sports teams, clubs, dance groups, Scouts).

   (d) In the fourth, or outermost, circle, ask them to list those people who are paid to be in their lives (e.g., doctor, dentist, teachers, coaches).

   (e) After discussing the circles of several volunteers, show the class the circles of an individual who has very few relationships (e.g., only family members in

the inner circle, perhaps no one in circles 2 and 3, and numerous service providers in circle 4).

(f) Ask the students to discuss (1) how they would feel and (2) how they would act if their circles looked like those of someone with few relationships. List their responses on chart paper.

(g) Explain to the class that _____'s circles may not look very different from that of the hypothetical individual with few relationships. Ask them what they could do to change that situation. List their responses on chart paper.

(h) Ask the class if there is anyone who would like to become part of _____'s circles. Be sure that they know that not everyone must do so. List the names of those who are interested.

(i) Hold regular meetings with _____'s newly developed circle of friends on a weekly basis to help them to brainstorm ways of interacting and being friends.

Implementing strategies such as Circle of Friends can encourage students with and without disabilities to interact with one another. Encouraging positive interactions may be the first step to the development of meaningful friendships that are important for everyone.

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