



Buddy Circles

An Examination of a School-Wide *Circle of Friends* Approach in an Urban Setting

February 2017

# THE SOULARD \* SCHOOL Philosophy



★ Value Social & Emotional Intelligence

★ Encourage students to advocate for themselves and others

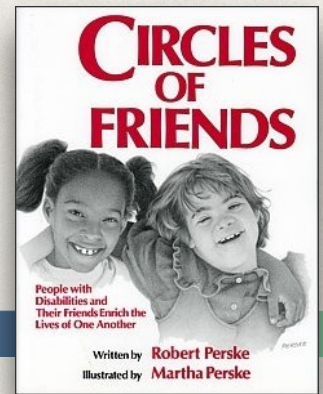
★ Empower students with nurturing, direct language

★ Integrate tools for self-regulation

★ Include a diverse community

“They help the people that are the Center of the Buddy Circle, and the Buddies.”

# An Opportunity Presents Itself



- ★ Natural conversation between peers led to a desire to formalize an approach to self-advocacy and peer-mentoring
  - ★ Care Team brainstorm session — How can a situation like this help us be proactive as opposed to reactive?
  - ★ Modeled on Circle of Friends approach
  - ★ Buddy Circles began in the 2012-2013 school year as a way to introduce and acclimate new students
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# A Measure of Understanding & Inclusion

✧ Initially began as a way to support relationships and self-perceptions of students with disabilities

✧ Social, Behavioral, Academic

✧ It's all of our responsibility to educate and advocate

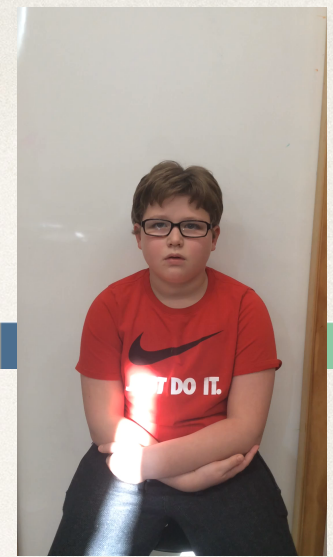
✧ Organically transitioned to consider various types of diversity

✧ Ability, family structure, gender identification,

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# Being a Buddy: A Daily Practice



★ Each student has the opportunity to share, learn, partner, and support

★ No matter the dynamic, they are learning about the responsibility within a community, and doing the work that tells them they are a valued part of the community

★ “What happens in a Buddy Circle stays in a Buddy Circle”

“As Buddies we take care of each other’s hearts. Buddies are someone you can talk to, and trust.”



# What Does a Buddy Circle Look Like?



**A Buddy Circle is comprised of:**

**A Center:** Student who is the focus

**Buddies:** Students selected by both the Center and the adult facilitators

**Adult facilitators:** School staff



**When do Buddy Circles meet?**

Meetings are scheduled weekly or bi-weekly

Lunch

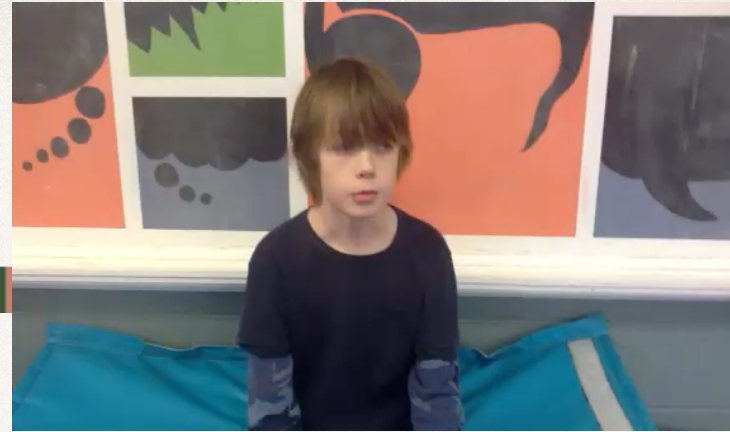
Recess


In coordination with classroom teachers




“Being a buddy is basically being someone who helps others and you care for the whole school.”

# How are Students Identified?




 A new student (Tier 1)

 A student exhibiting characteristics that inhibit their relationships or social-emotional development

-Experiencing challenges at school (Tier 2/3)

-Diagnosis (Tier 3)

 A student experiencing difficulties outside of school (Tier 1/2)

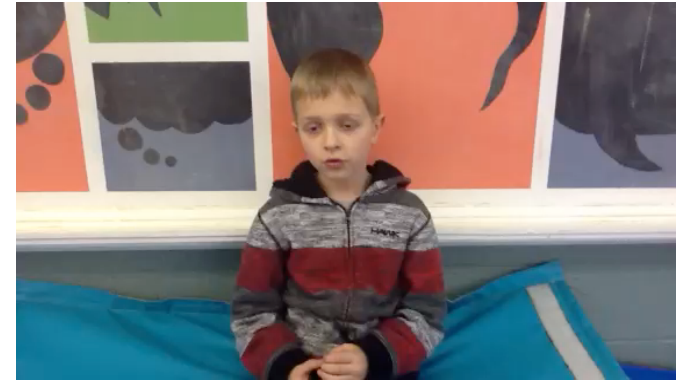
 A student that self-identifies (Tier 1/2)



# What Does a Meeting Look Like?

## ★ Meetings 1 & 2: THE INTRODUCTION

- How to be a Buddy
- Strengths & Needs
- Goals (Individual & Shared)
- Create a plan for where & how to support
- Introduce school language & traditions



## ★ Meeting 5: CELEBRATION

- Discuss outcomes
- Discuss changes
- Something special

## ★ Meetings 3 & 4: PROBLEM SOLVING

- Share Buddy moments
- Review
- Problem-solving & Sharing Strategies
- Plan & Discuss
- Continue school language & traditions



“Buddies make the other person feel supported”

*Following meetings may go bi-weekly and are a continuation of Meetings 3 & 4.*

<http://tssbuddycircles.weebly.com/>



# What We See

"I learned that I'm important, and everybody else is, in a Buddy Circle. So that's what helped me, and I think that's what's going to help other kids too."

★ Students are increasing their understanding of empathy, acceptance, and inclusion

★ Relationships made/changed in Circles are continuing beyond official meetings.

★ Students are increasingly successful during the school days.

★ Students are applying these concepts to real-life, abstract conversations



**Thank you!**  
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