

Subject Area: Life Skills

Grade Level(s): Kindergarten – Adolescents

Title of Instructional Method: Support Networks

Description of Instructional Method:

Support Networks are organizations for children who have difficulties making friendships. The object is to make sure the child is included in activities and feel as a part of a group. A facilitator can be used if needed and could be a parent, counselor, or teacher. Most of these organizations are nonprofit and are dedicated to enhancing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities by providing opportunities for one-to-one friendship and integrated employment. These references are for not only the educator but also families as well, since family plays a very important role in the lives of children with disabilities and schools. They are to be used to help support families that need additional help or maintenance.

References:

- Cooke, N.L., Miller, M.C., Test, D.W., & White, R. (2003). Effects of friendship circles on the social interactions of elementary age students with mild disabilities. *Journal of Behavioral Education*, 12, 167-184.
- (2006). About best buddies. Retrieved January 16, 2007, from Best Buddies Web site:
<http://www.bestbuddies.org/site/c.ljJOJ8MNI5E/b.933717/k.CBF8/Home.htm>
- (2006). About us. Retrieved January 16, 2007, from Special Olympics Web site:
<http://www.specialolympics.org/Special+Olympics+Public+Website/English/About+Us/default.htm>
- (2006). About cec. Retrieved January 16, 2007, from Council for Exceptional Children Web site: <http://www.cec.sped.org//AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home>

“How-To” Information:

If a teacher wants to start using these organizations in their classroom or in the school, he/she would need to contact each specific organization from the websites included in this information and find out more about how they can start the

implementation process. This is a great idea/method for teaching social interaction and having children start lasting relationships in and out of the school settings, however the majority of the work to start this will be on the teacher.

These resources can also be of use for families and once a teacher assists the family out, the information will be in the hands of the parents/guardians and they will have to look further at using the organizations to their benefit.

Implications for Practice/Other Considerations:

This is a good way to have your students/children start long-lasting friendships. This is also a positive way to teach social interaction among peers. If you don't have a lot of time, this probably won't work because the majority of getting these organizations started relies on the teacher contacting the different agencies. These support networks can also help parents of children with disabilities and are good resources for families to use. Although these links are initially for educators use, teachers will be able to assist parents that need additional help and support for their families.

Additional Links:

- <http://www.inclusion.com/bkcirclesoffriends.html>
- http://www.kintera.org/site/c.kuIXLeMSJpE/b.1378807/k.5332/Best_Buddies_Illinois.htm
- <http://www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/socialcircle.html>
- <http://www.independentliving.org/>
- <http://www.lifeskills4kids.com/>

These are just a few websites found that contain some good information that teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents can use. Some contain materials that can be purchased from them.

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