

Support friendships with structured approaches

A suggestion for implementing the strategy
'Support and strengthen peer relationships'
from the Guide: [Positive peer relationships](#)

Includes:

- Circle of friends
- Develop buddy systems
- Utilise peer support
- Facilitate friendships
- Useful resources

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Supporting positive peer relationships](#)

Strategy: [Support and strengthen peer relationships](#)

Suggestion: [Support friendships with structured approaches](#)

Date

18 September 2025

Link

inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/supporting-positive-peer-relationships/support-friendships-with-structured-approaches

Circle of friends

Creating a student support network.

A teacher shares how she uses the Circle of Friends strategy to tackle challenging behaviour and promote inclusion in year 7.



Video hosted on Youtube http://youtu.be/dYCsvr_rQLc

No captions or transcript

Source:

[Teachers Media \(UK\)](#)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYCsvr_rQLc

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Develop buddy systems

Use buddy systems to promote social skills.

- Buddies are given training on how to help students develop specific skills, such as recreation, social, and communication skills.
- Buddy systems result in personal growth for non-disabled peers.
- Set up mentoring or buddy systems that fit with Te Ao Māori principles, such as [tuakana-teina](#), before transitions or to foster important learning relationships in all curriculum areas.
- To promote high quality interactions, students should also have opportunities to interact in activities that are not always instructional.

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Utilise peer support

Ben has ASD. He needs support with communication skills. His circle of friends and teachers model and explain how the group works for him.



Video hosted on Youtube http://youtu.be/jHtWDNmaC_E

No captions or transcript

Source:

[Education not Limited \(UK\)](#)

https://youtu.be/jHtWDNmaC_E

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Facilitate friendships

Friendships are an important foundation in an inclusive classroom.

Some strategies to create and maintain friendships.

- Identify interests – Allow learners to express their interests through discussion, surveys, games, and clubs to help them discover other students who are like-minded.
- Highlight strengths – Highlight student strengths to help learners to feel valued and confident among their peers.
- Emphasise social skills – Embed opportunities to teach social skills in the curriculum, for example, in games, problem-solving activities, class meetings or discussions.
- Provide opportunities – Encourage friendships through social opportunities such as play, group work, class trips or school-wide activity days.

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Useful resources



Circle of friends: A type of person-centered planning

This explains how to set up a circle of friends.

Publisher: Friendship Circle Special Needs Resource Blog

[Visit website](#)



Primary SEN – Circle of friends – Ben

Ben, his circle of friends and his teachers model and explain how the group works for him in this 13-minute video clip.

Publisher: FAM UK Enterprises

[Visit website](#)



Springboards 2 Practice: Friendship

Teacher strategies for supporting students with disabilities to make friends are outlined in this Ministry of Education publication, from the Springboards 2 Practice series.

[Download](#) PDF (428 KB)

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