

**Speak Up Stand Up Save A Life**  
**Desert Mirage Elementary School**

**Title of Project: The DM Buddy System**

**Start Date of Planning: March 1, 2017**

**Project Pilot Start Date: May 1, 2017**

**Summary of Project:** The Desert Mirage Youth For Youth Club was inspired to help all students on campus. The club met every Wednesday from 12pm-1pm for two months, where it discussed the major concerns at Desert Mirage and what the club could do to implement change on campus. The major concern this club found was that there is not enough support of students who are struggling behaviorally, socially, or in their home lives. The Y4Y club felt that younger kids needed to know their problems and challenges are real and nothing to be brushed aside. The Club came up with what is now known as the DM Buddy System. Each Y4Y Club Member (15 in total) was paired up with one K-4 grade student who was struggling behaviorally, socially, or academically. Sarah Davis (DM School Counselor) and Jon Mitteness (DM TOSA) were responsible for choosing and pairing all K-4 students with their Y4Y buddy. Once students were chosen and paired, the Y4Y club met to discuss the pilot of the Buddy System. Every Monday and Friday, each Y4Y student spent 15 minutes of recess with his/her buddy. The students would walk to the office where they would sign in and wear their nametags. They would then head to their buddies' classrooms and first check in with the teachers. The teacher would tell the Y4Y student what his/her buddy was struggling with or doing well with that day. The Y4Y student would then spend 15 minutes doing a certain activity with his/her buddy. These activities included the following:

- Walk with their buddy on campus
- Sit on a bench outside and get to know their buddy
- Use drawing materials to get to know their buddy
- Sit with buddy in class and assist with academic work
- Sit with buddy at lunch or recess

Much of what the activity was depended on what where the Y4Y students' recess time overlapped with their buddies' schedules. After 3 weeks of meeting with their buddies twice a week, students felt that they had created significant connections with their buddies. From the counselor's perspective, the younger students highly looked forward to meeting with their Y4Y buddies and found this to be a highly effective project implementation.

(\*All buddy parents were notified that their students would be pulled for 15 minutes twice a week and had the option to opt their students out).

Project continuation: The Y4Y students developed a detailed lesson plan on how to advertise the club for the 2017-2018 school year. This lesson consists of the following components:

- Icebreaker
- A summary of mental illness (depression, anxiety, self harm) and other challenging concerns students deal with (delivered by the counselor)
- Class activity called “labels” (students would write labels on themselves, peel them off, and throw them away as a way to remind students that they do not have to live up to the labels they or anyone else put on them)
- Advertisement of a middle school student-led student support group to meet once a week during recess/lunch

This lesson is to be delivered to the 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade students by the current 7<sup>th</sup> grade Y4Y club members in hopes of gaining more club membership as well as voicing student concerns.