



Supporting Systems

Creative Brief: My Circle of Family Support

How can I access my circle of family support to help me learn in school?

Purpose

Many classrooms are bustling and active places. Students often feel challenged by the demands of learning. It can be very insightful for teachers and students alike what students perceive as their family support. This support anchor can be useful as a resource during times when a student has difficulty with their regulation and learning



Breathing/Stilling Exercise

- Students may or may not have difficulty with stilling themselves inside or out.
- Children sit in a circle either on chairs or a meeting area rug. When working with elementary school children, they respond to distinct small physical suggestions, like how to cross their legs or how to sit in their chairs with their feet on the ground and sit with their backs straight like trees.
- Teachers and students should breathe in and out slowly a few times. You might begin with a visual aid such as an expandable ball to demonstrate the rhythm of the breathing, then have students close their eyes and breath slowly three times in and out.
- A guided story about remembering their quiet place can be a place to start. Students then can add their family members that support them standing behind them in their quiet place. Have them imagine what kind of supported words their family members would say to them and what are some memories of love. Guide students back after a minute or two, depending on how still the circle is.
- Some students may need re-direction during the exercise. If you know which students might have difficulty, have an adult sit next to them on the floor or ask them to help you demonstrate to the class. I call it "being my second." This establishes my place and gives them one.
- After the exercise, students can share something about what words they heard and what else happens with a partner. The teacher can ask the entire class or a few volunteers to share out, depending on the size of the group.

Circle of Family Support Systemic/Art Exercise

- Invite students to hold their family support place inside of them and return to their desks. Using provided paper and art supplies, students can draw their family circle of support. Who is there? Where are they? They can write some supportive words or sentences. It might enhance the process to move around and quietly reinforce that they are drawing from the inside out.
- Afterward, you can invite students to share again and hang their drawings up. Students can refer to the circles as anchors during their day. They can decide where and how to place them in the classroom. Experiment with different methods, such as oldest to youngest, above their desks, or in a circle. Students may also want to make a second drawing to keep in their desks or bring home.