

Dialogue Buddies!

An Ongoing Activity

Organizer Guide

An ongoing, low-pressure pairing program where youth participants meet monthly for casual, OSS-style conversations over snacks, games, and/or creative prompts. Designed to build comfort with dialogue, this program helps develop empathy, listening skills, and relationships across differences among peers.

Advanced Planning: Goals and Steps

Goals:

- Creates habits of open, reflective conversation among youth.
- Help participants practice listening, perspective-taking, and personal storytelling.
- Create continuity and relationship-building through recurring interactions.

Steps:

1. Recruit Participants: Invite students (middle/high school) to sign up for a “Dialogue Buddy.”
 - Use opt-in sign-ups with clear expectations: monthly meetups, 30–45 minutes, light snacks/games provided.
 - The sign-ups should have a few questions for the participant to craft a short bio for matching purposes (i.e. age, grade, what do you like to do in your free time, what topics do you enjoy talking about, etc.).
2. Match the Buddies: Pair participants based on age compatibility, interests, etc.
 - Share light bios or “conversation cards” so they have a starting point.

3. Design Conversation Guides:

- Offer printed or digital OSS-style questions each month (or let participants choose).

4. Host Monthly Meetups:

- Provide snacks, comfortable seating, and optional games (Jenga, Uno, origami, etc.).
- Keep facilitation light; staff or volunteers can circulate to offer support.
- It is at the discretion of the facilitator if pairs remain consistent or switch from month to month. Adjust according to numbers, specific needs, etc.

Marketing

- Feature the activity during teen programming or community events.
- Create flyers and/or social media posts advertising the event.
- Keep the sign up sheet in a highly-visited location in the community.
- Emphasize that it's a low-pressure way to meet someone new and get better at conversation.
- Ask previous participants to help recruit new buddies, and bring a friend.

Budgeting

A detailed budgeting breakdown for this activity is still being developed.

Day-of-event Activity

1. Welcome (5 minutes):

- Greet buddies, offer snack table access, set up game and convo zones.
- Display ground rules:

We agree to:

- Practice active and empathetic listening.
- Challenge the idea, not the person.
- Be both teachers and learners.
- Take space and make space.
- Stories stay, lessons leave.
- Use “I” statements.
- Welcome rough drafts.
- One microphone.
- Be here now.

We will challenge ourselves to:

- Embrace discomfort.
- Trust intent and name impact.
- Be honest with ourselves and others.
- Acknowledge judgements and assumptions (including our own).
- Accept that things may remain unresolved, we might not feel a sense of closure.

2. Conversation Time (25–30 minutes):

- Buddies pick a few questions to explore (or draw cards from a stack).
- Encourage pairs to alternate who shares first.
- Use quiet games (Uno, Jenga, etc.) to keep participants busy and engaged.

3. Optional Wrap-Up (10 minutes):

- Invite participants to reflect on what they learned or appreciated.

- Offer OSS take-home cards to continue conversations at home or online.

Advice

- Include icebreaker rounds at the first few meetings.
- Try to create pairs that are of similar ages.
- Use themed months using topics such as family, school, identity, values, etc.
- Let teens help shape future questions and choose monthly snacks/games to increase participation.