



# Best Buddies Elementary Curriculum

## December Lesson – The Gift of Friendship

**Session:** To learn and understand the importance of friendship, the characteristics of a being a good friend and its impact on peers of all abilities.

**Materials:** Whiteboard and markers, computer to access YouTube, Sanford Harmony Quick Connection Cards, hula hoops or cones

**Objective:** Students will be able to recognize and discuss healthy and positive social interactions and characteristics that promote and foster the creation and development of new friendships between peers of all abilities. Objectives will be measured through peer-to-peer collaboration, visual aids and classroom discussion.

**Total Lesson Time:** Approx 75 minutes

### November Recap:

**Time:** 5 minutes

- *What does the word Inclusion mean?* (Embracing and accepting everyone regardless of differences; treating everyone equally)
- *How can we include others during the school day?* (Inviting them to play, sit with you at lunch or on the bus)
- *What was your favorite activity during our Kindness lesson?* (Kindness bingo, “What would you do?” Scenarios)
- *How can we celebrate World Kindness Day all year round?*

Call upon a few students to share the progress they made on their Kindness Bingo Cards by asking the following prompted questions: “*Who filled out their whole bingo card?*” “*What was your favorite small act of kindness you completed?*” “*What did you learn from this activity?*” \*Best Practice: hand out stickers or small prizes for students who completed the cards

This month, we are going to learn all about friendship and what a wonderful, life changing gift it is!

### Characteristics of a Great Friend

**Time:** 5 minutes

**Ask** What does the word friend mean?

Definition: A person whom you know well and like, and who likes you.

A friend is a person you have a strong bond with and whom you trust. A friend is someone you share common interests with and who you enjoy spending time with

**Ask** students to share qualities or characteristics that make up a good friend and write their answers on the board. (i.e *kind, good listener, funny, plays with you, shares, trustworthy, someone you can count on, cheers you up, helps you*)

**Ask** the class: *How can you be a good friend to others?*

- Be patient
- Be Kind
- Accept someone for who they are
- Take turns
- Help someone
- Encourage others
- Listen to them
- Say sorry

Remember that friendships take time and are built on simple things! The more you spend time with each other, the more you get to know one another and grow in your friendship!



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Explain that in our first lessons together, we discussed what makes us different and unique from each other, and what things we have in common. A commonality that we all share is wanting friendship. We are all deserving of a friend, someone who loves us for who we are, who values us and accepts us.

Just because someone may look, act or communicate differently than you, doesn't mean they don't want or like the same things as you. Regardless of how different we may be, each and every one of us deserves a friend!

**Ask:** *How do you help a friendship grow during school?*

- Eat lunch together
- Play on the playground at recess
- Work on a project together
- Pair up during Best Buddies activities!
- Read together

**Ask:** *How do you help a friendship grow outside of school?*

- Invite a friend over to play with you after school
- Go to a park
- Go out to eat
- play board games

**Activity:** Buddy Up!

**Materials:** Sanford Harmony Quick Connection Cards: Conversation Card deck & Collaboration Card Deck, materials listed on Collaboration Cards.

**Time:** 20 minutes

Pair up students with and without disabilities in your classroom. Hand each pair 2-3 Conversation Cards and one Collaboration Card. Explain that, to help grow in our friendships right here in Best Buddies, we're going to pair up and engage in some one-to-one conversations and activities!

For the Conversation Cards, have the buddy pairs take turns reading aloud the cards and discuss their answers with their buddy. Encourage the students to be patient and take the time to listen to one another. Have them ask follow-up questions to encourage further conversation.

The Collaboration Cards involve having pairs complete a fun activity together. Some of these cards involve materials such as paper and markers or certain craft items. Select cards ahead of time that would be appropriate for the pair. During or after the activity, encourage students to discuss what they liked about the activity and what they learned about their new buddy!

**Best Practices:**

- Prepare buddy pair matches ahead of time. This can be dependent on friendships between students you have seen evolve this year, what students think would be a strong fit to participate in this activity together, or simply providing the opportunity for students to meet new peers.
- Have teachers/aids walk around the classroom as assist pairs in reading their cards or with activities if needed and help prompt answers from the students.
- For students who are nonverbal or are unable to communicate their answers, have them engage in a couple of collaboration cards or find a simple activity that can be done together.
- For a holiday flair, put the cards in gift bags or wrapped boxes and have the students each pick a card out of the bag.



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After the activity, have students return to their seats. Call upon a few buddy pairs to share some of the answers to the cards they had and a unique quality or characteristic they learned about their buddy (i.e. Friendly, funny, energetic, etc.)

### **Discovering New Friends**

**Time:** 10 minutes

Making a new friend is as exciting as receiving a gift! Let's discuss some ways we can make new friends!

Friendships are built off of sharing both common interests and celebrating differences. In making a new friend, we can follow a few simple steps! (Write the following steps on the board)

1. Say "hello!"
2. Say your name! (Introduce yourself! "*my name is....what is your name?*" Offer a handshake or wave!)
3. Ask questions ("*what grade are you in?*" "*What do you like to do for fun?*" "*What's your favorite TV show?*" Share your favorite things to do with them too!)
4. Offer a high five, handshake or hug! (invite them to play with you or join in on an activity)

You may see another classmate who is shy or may have difficulty speaking or communicating. Should you ignore them or walk away just because they might communicate differently than you? Of course not! **Ask:** *What should you do?* Go up to them and introduce yourself! Be patient, always look someone in the eyes, and take the time to listen or observe what they have to say. If you are having trouble communicating with someone new, ask a teacher for help!

You may find that a student uses a special device or electronic board to communicate, ask your teacher for help in how to use these devices to communicate. You may see another student who needs special equipment to travel around school or has extra assistance from a teacher. You may meet another classmate who likes to jump around, rock back and forth or may even have very limited movement.

Whatever a person's different abilities are, does not exclude them for wanting the same things as you and me. Practicing patience, kindness and respect as we discussed in our earlier lessons, will help you grow in your friendships with each other!

\*Best Practices: For students who use tablets or computer programs to communicate, take some time to teach peers how to use the device to promote conversations and relationships! For students with specific methods of communication (sign-language, movement, gestures, etc.) plan ahead and teach students simple ways they can connect and communicate with their peers.

**Activity:** Freeze Dance Friends

**Materials:** fun, upbeat music, hula hoops or cones

**Time:** 20 minutes

Clear a space in the classroom or move into the gym and have students spread out. Place hula hoops or cones around the room. Explain that for this next activity, we're going to practice making new friends! When the music starts, dance or move around the room. When the music stops, shout FREEZE and have students go to a hula hoop or cone. Have students standing in the hoola hoop or around the cones introduce themselves to one other classmate, following the steps above. (i.e. Say hello, exchange names, ask a question, offer a wave, high five, handshake or hug!)



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Repeat the process until all students have had a chance to meet someone new and/or speak with their peers. If you do not have cones or hula hoops, have students run up to a new person in the room during every turn. Every student needs to be matched with a new peer each turn.

After the activity, have students go back to their seats and ask the following follow-up questions:

- *What was your favorite greeting that you used to introduce yourself to others? (high five, handshake, hug, etc.)*
- *How did you feel introducing yourself to someone you either never met or have never really talked to? (Excited, nervous, shy).*
- *What was something you learned about your classmate? (have them introduce the person they met and include a fun fact about them. i.e. “This is Sarah. I learned that she loves to play board games!”)*

### **Examples of Friendship**

**Materials:** Computer/projector

**Time:** 15 minutes

Explain that we’re going to take a look at a couple of videos that highlight friendships between people of all abilities. In these videos, pay attention to what they say about their friendship, what’s unique about it and what stands out to you.

**Video:** Best Friends in Middle School

**Materials:** <https://youtu.be/8V9blwskuHY>

**Time:** 5 minutes (including questions)

Follow up questions to ask the class:

- *What were some things that Aidan said about his friendship with Jessica? (“It’s a privilege to be friends with someone like her” “it’s an honor).*
- *What did Aidan say after his friends asked, “why are you friends with Jessica?” (“Why wouldn’t you be friends with anybody?” “Because she’s an awesome person.”)*
- *What did Jessica have to say about her friendship with Aidan? (“He tells jokes” “I really felt that I would never have a friend”)*
- *When the interviewer asked Aidan if Jessica is different than your friends, what did he say? (“Not a bit different” “she’s funnier than them.”)*
- *What did Aidan and Jessica’s friendship teach you? (i.e. You can be friends with anyone, we have a lot of things in common, we are the same)*

**Video:** Biffin and Turner

**Materials:** <https://youtu.be/sJLSj43nSil>

**Time:** 5 minutes (including questions)

Follow up questions to ask the class:

- *What’s Biffin’s favorite thing about Turner? (“his laugh”)*
- *What did Turner say about Biffin? (“He’s my best friend.” “I love him”)*
- *When Turner and Biffin were asked “what do you think you’ll be like when you’re both adults?” what did they say? (“Kind and loving”)*
- *What did you learn from this video? (i.e. That they love each other, they are best friends. They see each other the same, they argue just as friends or siblings do at times)*



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**Ask:** *What can we learn from these friendships?* Despite the differences these friends had, they were each united by common interests and a mutual respect and love for one other! These videos show us that no matter what our differences may be, we can still have meaningful and lasting friendships with each other! Having friends of all abilities, helps us grow in character and teaches us how to be understanding and respectful of others.

### **Wrap Up**

**Time:** 5 minutes

Let's work together to create a classroom and a school that includes and accepts everyone! **Ask:** *What are some ways that we learned in how you can be a good friend to someone?* Remember that friendships take time and are built from simple things such as sharing similar interests, listening and showing kindness, respect and patience.

### **Challenge**

Introduce yourself to a student that you've never met OR get to know a friend better by enjoying a fun activity that you both enjoy!

### **Suggested readings:**

- *How to Be a Friend: A Guide to Making Friends and Keeping them*, by Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown
- *Big Dog and Little Dog*, by P.D. Eastman
- *Frog and Toad are Friends*, by Arnold Lobel

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