



Best Buddies Elementary Curriculum

January Lesson – Don't Limit Me

Session: To help students understand the meaning and application of perseverance and identify well-known individuals with different abilities who have overcome challenges to positively impact the world.

Materials: Whiteboard and markers, computer/projector to access Youtube, PowerPoint, paper bags, assorted classroom items or spaghetti/toothpicks and marshmallows, markers and construction paper

Objective: Students will be able to define the term perseverance, identify and discuss prominent individuals who have persevered, while assessing and applying this new term to accomplish tasks within and outside the school.

Total Lesson Time: Approx 65 minutes

December Recap:

Time: 5 minutes

- *What are some qualities that make up a great friend? (kindness, compassion, someone who listens and plays with you)*
- *How can you be a friend to someone who needs it? (Invite them to play, talk to them)*
- *Who is deserving of a friend? (We all are!)*
- *Who can share about a new friendship that they've made or how they've grown in their friendship recently?*

This month we are going to learn all about the incredible abilities we all possess and how despite our differences, we can accomplish anything we set our minds to!

Perseverance is Power!

Time: 5 minutes

Let's start off by learning a new word; *perseverance*. (Write the term and definition on the board. Encourage students to write it down in their notebooks)

Definition of perseverance: to keep going even when there is difficulty; to persist, to not give up.

Ask students: *turn to the classmate next to you and share about a time when you faced difficulty doing something. Did you give up or continue to keep going even though it was hard? What happened as a result of you not giving up?* Ask a few students to share.

Persevering during obstacles or difficulties is one of the best ways to grow and challenge yourself. Choosing to not give up despite challenges you may face, helps you achieve your goals and dreams! **Ask** students to repeat after you: *Perseverance gives us power!*

How can we encourage others to persevere to succeed in their dreams and goals? (i.e. Say encouraging words, cheer them on!)



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Famous Individuals with Special Abilities

Materials: Computer/projector and PowerPoint

Time: 20 minutes

Throughout history, there have been many individuals who have persevered through hardships and difficulties to accomplish amazing things.

From scientists, to artists, to athletes, people of all special abilities and differences have made a significant impact on this world just by working hard and not giving up!

Let's take a look at some of these people!

Helen Keller

Helen was born on June 27, 1880 in Tuscumbia, Arizona. At two years old, she became blind and deaf after developing a sickness.

Helen faced lots of obstacles, including learning how to speak, read and get around. With the help of her teacher, Annie Sullivan, Helen learned several different ways to communicate including touch-lip reading, Braille, speech, typing and finger-spelling.

Helen went on to graduate college with honors and pursued a passion for sharing her story and helping to improve the lives of others. Helen became a well-known celebrity and lecturer by sharing her experiences and helping others with special abilities.

Helen was an advocate (remind students what this term means) for people with different abilities. She helped create and join new organizations to help others. Keller traveled to 35 different countries and gave many speeches which brought encouragement and hope to millions of people!

Helen wrote a book about herself and her different abilities, which was eventually turned into TV shows, movies and plays.

Some of Helen Keller's awards included the Presidential Medal of Freedom and being elected into the Women's Hall of Fame. She also received honorary doctoral degrees from numerous universities across the world.

Helen Keller set a strong example of how with hard work, focus and perseverance, you can succeed in your goals, no matter what your differences are! Keller became a very admired and internationally known advocate who worked very hard to help improve the lives of others.



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Temple Grandin

Temple Grandin was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1947. She was diagnosed with autism as a child. Autism is another way that some individual's brains work to see and perceive the world around them. People with autism may view or hear or even feel the world a bit differently than others. Individuals with autism may behave or interact in unique ways. For instance, some may take more time getting used to new changes, others may not like loud noises or large crowds. Some move around differently, like rocking back and forth or repeating the same word many times. Others may communicate differently using special devices.

When Temple Grandin was a child, she faced a lot of teasing and bullying from other students for her unique abilities. Despite this, Temple persisted and received assistance from teachers and speech therapists. Although she struggled making friends, Temple was extremely smart and did very well in school, earning a college degree, a masters AND a doctoral degree in Animal Science!

Raise your hand if you like animals! Temple Grandin grew up with a huge passion for animals after spending time on her aunt's farm! She understood the animals and felt compassion for them, and wanted to improve the way many animals, specifically farm animals were treated.

Temple worked with large companies to help teach them how to treat animals with respect and kindness, improving their quality of life.

Temple Grandin went on to write two books on animals about their behaviors and treating them with respect and understanding. Although Temple struggled a lot with communicating as a child, she learned to overcome this with hard work and became well known through her public speaking. In fact, Grandin has gone on to speak all over the world, advocating for people of all different abilities!

In 2010, a movie was made sharing Temple Grandin's story and how she overcame obstacles to make a positive difference in the world!

Suggested Reading:

The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin, By Julia, Finley Mosca, illustrated by Daniel Rieley

Aaron "Wheelz" Fotheringham

Aaron was born with Spina Bifida, a birth defect that effects the spinal cord that left him without the use of his legs. Aaron uses a wheelchair to get around. Despite the obstacle of learning how to use a different way to walk, he refused to let this stop him from achieving his goals.

Aaron learned how to crawl using just his hands, quickly mastering the use of a walker and crutches. When he was 8 years old, Aaron started riding with a wheelchair at skate parks after watching his brother Brian, a BMXer (a bicycle or motorcycle sport) ride.



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The first time Aaron started riding, he took a big fall. Do you think this stopped him? No! Aaron quickly picked himself up and continue to practice and work hard. With passion and perseverance, Aaron went on to win many competitions and perform many different stunts, including the first ever wheelchair backflip!

Aaron is passionate about what he does and works to change people's view on using wheelchairs. He wants people to see each other's different abilities in a new way! Aaron has become well known for his skating and has traveled across the world, speaking and performing. Aaron shows people like you and me that a wheelchair should be seen as a tool and not something that holds you back.

Watch "Wheelchair Freestyle" Video: <https://youtu.be/AUUvfPy0UqI>

Ask students: What would have happened if Helen Keller, Temple Grandin or Aaron Fotheringham gave up when things became difficult? (*they wouldn't have made an impact on the world or others, they wouldn't have fulfilled their dreams*)

Just like these individuals, we can work to overcome any obstacles or challenges that come our way with hard work and perseverance!

Tower in a Bag Challenge

Materials: Timer, Brown paper bags, assortment of objects around the classroom (OR spaghetti, toothpicks and marshmallows can also be used)

Time: 20 minutes

Step 1: Split the class into groups of 4-6 students. Have groups spread out throughout the classroom and hand out one bag to each group filled with either an assortment of classroom items (or for best practices, use spaghetti or toothpicks and marshmallows) Do NOT have kids look or empty their bags yet!

Step 2: Explain that to test our perseverance, we are going to work in groups to build the tallest structure using the items that are in your bags! When you say "Go!" students will have 10 minutes to build the tallest tower they can only using the objects in their bags.

Step 3: During the course of the activity, stop the class at several time intervals to create various challenges (I.e. You can only use one hand, cannot use your thumbs, can't talk with each other, etc.) Remind students how much time they have throughout the activity and do a final 10 second countdown at the end.

Step 4: When the timer stops, have students put down any materials and sit down. Have each group share their finished tower structure and answer the following questions:

- *What did you find the most challenging about building the tower? (The materials inside the bag, having to only use one hand, not being able to talk, etc.)*
- *How did you feel when you were given challenges? Did you give up or keep going?*
- *How did you overcome the challenges you were given to build your tower?*



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New Year, New Goals!

Materials: *New Year, New Goals* handout, markers, crayons, colored pencils, (optional: stickers, glitter, etc.)

Time: 10 minutes

Pass out the handout activity and markers to each student. Explain that January is the start of a brand new year and that during this time, it can be exciting to think about the wonderful opportunities the lie ahead for us!

Have students reflect on something they wish to accomplish this year that might feel challenging or difficult for them. Ask students to write down or draw what their goal is and how they plan to persevere through it! (For example: *my goal is to ride a bike, I will persevere/not give up by asking my parents to teach me, practice every day after school, get back up and try again if I fall down, etc.*)

After students have completed the activity, ask a few volunteers to come up to the front of class and share what their goal is and how they plan to practice perseverance.

Sometimes we can face difficulties that leave us scared or upset when working to achieve our goals. The individuals we learned about also had times where they felt frustrated or discouraged.

Ask: *What are some things that helped encourage these individuals to overcome challenges they faced? (They were given support from teachers and family members, they worked hard, they tried their best.)*

Wrap Up

Time: 5 minutes

It's important to know that we do not need to be alone when working on our goals. Helen Keller, Temple Grandin and Aaron Fotheringham all had help and support from their teachers, family and friends. As a Best Buddies class, we should all support and encourage one another. If you need help, ask your teacher, family member or friend!

Challenge

Challenge students to display their goals at home or in the class and reflect and work on them throughout the year!

Biography. (2014). *Temple Grandin Biography*. [online] Available at: <https://www.biography.com/activist/temple-grandin> [Accessed 1 Sep. 2019].

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