



Best Buddies Elementary Curriculum

October Lesson – Understanding and Accepting Differences

Session: To educate students on different abilities and discuss the importance of accepting each other.

Materials: Tape or markers/cones, Whiteboard and markers, “Partner Up Venn Diagram activity” handout, optional “Turning Words into Action” handout

Objective: Students will gain a greater perspective and knowledge of understanding differences while developing an attitude of acceptance and respect for one another. Objectives will be measured through defining new vocabulary terms, class discussion and thorough participation in written activities.

Total Lesson Time: Approx 65 minutes

September Recap

Time: 5 minutes

Ask students the following:

- *What was something that you learned about Best Buddies that you didn't know before? (i.e. All of the programs, what the word advocate means, what it means to be a “Best Buddy.”)*
- *Who is Anthony Kennedy Shriver? (founder and CEO of Best Buddies)*
- *What is one of the pillars of Best Buddies? (Friendship, Leadership, Employment, Inclusive Living)*
- *What are some of the rules we set as a Best Buddies class? (Be respectful, patient, treat everyone with kindness, etc.)*

Understanding Different Abilities

Time: 5 Minutes

Explain that this month we are going to talk more about different abilities and how we can embrace each other for who we are! Each one of us is made up of different traits that make us unique. For instance, we each may look a bit different – whether it's the color of our hair, skin, if we are short or tall, if we have freckles, the clothes we wear. Some of us play sports while others play an instrument, or both!

Did you know that there is no one like you in this world? *Have students turn to the person next to them and share something that is special about them.*

We all are made up of special qualities that make us unique! *Ask students, what it would be like if we lived in a world where we all looked, talked and acted the same? (i.e. boring, not fun) What would happen as result? (I.e everyone would look at the world the same, would have the same ideas, there would be a lack of creativity, we wouldn't live in the world that we do today)*

Life would be pretty dull if we were all the same, wouldn't it? Our unique personalities, the activities we like to enjoy, our favorite foods, music, movies, are a part of what makes you who you are. Our differences make this world a stronger place! In being different, each and every one of us is able to bring something amazing to this world! We must celebrate all differences and abilities, because we all have wonderful things to contribute.

While we all have differences, we also share a lot of the same things in common! For instance, many of us may like the same hobbies, foods, movies, tv shows, sports, etc. *call upon a few students to share what are some common things that most of us like.*



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No matter what you may look like, how you dress or act from others, we all have many things in common and want some of the same things! For instance, we all want to feel loved. We want people to treat us with kindness and respect. We want a friend that we can play with and talk to.

Activity: What makes us Different? What makes us the Same?

Materials: Tape or markers/cones

Time: 20 minutes

(This activity is best done in a large classroom, gym or outside)

Explain that we're going to transition into an activity where we can identify some of the things we have in common and some things that make us different and unique!

Step 1: Separate the class room in half, with each side facing the opposite wall, leaving a large space in the middle. In the middle of the floor, place a long line of tape, cones or markers. Explain to the class that in this next game, we are going to find out what makes us different from others, and what we have in common with each other!

Step 2: Explain that you will call out statements for students to respond to by having them walk, skip, run, (or a combination of all,) to the middle line on the floor. This can include special character traits, likes/dislikes, items of clothing, etc.

(For example, you may call out "whoever is wearing green shoes." Students with green shoes will gather in middle of the line.)

Encourage the students who walk to the middle of the line to take the time to look at both the students in the group who have the same interests as theirs as well as the ones that are not on the middle line. Have students go back to their respective sides of the classroom before asking the next question.

*Best Practices:

- Include statements that you can AND cannot see (i.e. clothing, favorite food, school subject, musician, song, hair color, experiences, having a pet, preferences)
- For some of the statements, choose ones where all students can be represented. (i.e. "Who loves Best Buddies? Who loves their teacher?")

Step 3: Close out the activity by having students return to their seats and ask the following questions:

- *Who can tell me something they learned about another classmate that you didn't know before?*
- *What were some things you shared in common with a student that you couldn't see just by looking at them?*
- *What differences did you notice between yourself and another classmate?*
- *What was one interest you all shared with each other?*



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There are people with different abilities that might do some things different than you. For instance, you might notice someone who is unable to see, so they might use the assistance of a cane, aide or a service dog. Others may have difficulty with walking or have limited movement and use a wheelchair to get around or use walkers or canes.

Some people may even need some extra help from a teacher or a piece of equipment to help them. Others use special computers and technology to speak. Some people communicate through sign language too! It is important to remember, that while we all have differences we all deserve to be treated with kindness and respect.

There are other differences that you may not necessarily be able to see but may find when you communicate with one another. For instance you might meet someone who likes to jump around a lot or rock back and forth when you talk with them. You might notice others who have a hard time communicating their feelings or get angry or upset all of a sudden. You might meet others who do not like to hug others or feel uncomfortable with loud noises, bright lights or certain smells.

You may also find some peers are full of energy and others are more tired. Some take longer to understand what you are saying to them and need time to process. Others may have a hard time paying attention in class or during a conversation. We all have differences and are each made up of unique traits that make us, us!

Activity: Partner Up Venn Diagram

Time: 15 minutes

Materials: Venn diagram handout, pencils and/or pens

Pair students up in the class and pass out one “Venn Diagram” handout for each pair. Explain that we’re going to use this Venn diagram to highlight both our differences and similarities! A Venn diagram is a chart that allows us to organize information and see the similarities and differences of different subjects. The diagram consists of two overlapping circles.

Ask each pair to write their own name at the top each circle. Each circle represents who you are and what makes you unique. The middle of the diagram where the circles overlap, represents what you both have in common! With your partner, discuss and write down what are some things that make you different and what are somethings you have in common!

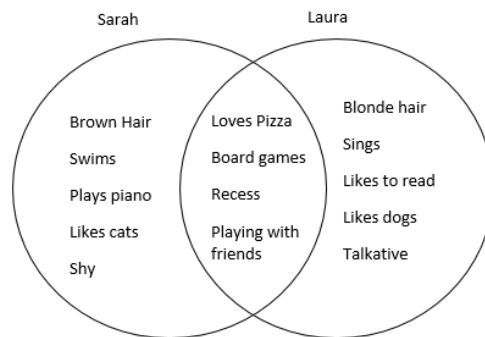
*Best Practice: Have teachers/aids walk around and help buddy pairs to help them sort and identify commonalities & differences on the chart. If needed, show an example on the board before getting started. Younger students may draw in place of writing.

You can prompt the class by asking (what’s their favorite food, dessert, book, movie, school subject, sport, animal etc.) one at a time. When the students identify the same interests, write them in the middle circle. The Venn Diagram should be filled up enough to include the differences of each student along with a variety of similarities they both share. (See below for example)



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Once all pairs have completed their Venn Diagrams, call upon a few students to share what they have in common and what makes them different. Follow up Questions:

- *What was something that you didn't know about your buddy before doing this activity?*
- *Why do you think finding common interests can help us make new friends?*
- *Why is it important to get to know more about someone in our class?*

Don't Judge a Book by it's Cover

Materials: Whiteboard and markers

Time: 5 minutes

Explain that now that we've talked about our differences and what we have in common, we're going to move into discussing *how* we can be accepting towards everyone.

Ask students what they think the word acceptance means. Write down their answers on the board.

Definition of acceptance: The act of embracing and supporting someone for who they are.

Ask: *Why is it important for all people to feel accepted?* (i.e. everyone deserves to be treated equally, to make people feel welcome, loved)

Have you ever heard the expression, "Don't judge a book by its cover?" What do you think that means? *Call upon a few students to share.*

Imagine yourself at a library and you are looking to pick out a new book, however, instead of opening up the book and reading it, you just look at the covers to make your decision. What kind of book covers might stand out to you? Are they bright and colorful? Do they have a funny title? Do they have pictures of cute animals or super heroes on the cover? What about the books that don't have any pictures? What about books that are plain with no illustrations or books that are torn or have bent pages? Would you pick one of those?



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Let's say you decided to select and bring home the colorful, bright book only to discover that upon reading it, it was actually really boring or not the book you had hoped to read? What if you went back to the library, picked up one of the more plain-looking books, started reading it and discovered that it was this amazing story full of adventure, great characters and humor?

The expression to “not judge a book by its cover,” can relate to how we sometimes see and judge others. Sometimes it can be easy for us to look at someone or briefly talk to a person and form a negative opinion or judgement, just by our small interaction with them. We can judge people on how they look or act, how they walk or talk. To not judge a book by its cover means to not to jump to a judgement about a person before getting the chance to know them.

It's important to know that we are made up of so many different personality traits, interests, emotions, likes/dislikes and life experiences that help shape us as we grow. While some of us may look or act a certain way that does not define who we are on the inside. We need to take the time to get to know each other, to talk to play and discover who that person really is.

Activity: Turning Words into Action

Materials: “Turning Words into Action” Optional Handout, Whiteboard and markers

Time: 10 minutes

Explain that in taking the time to really get to know each other, it's important that we learn and practice a few key terms that can help us in our relationships: Kindness, respect and patience (*write the words and definitions on the board*) Encourage students to fill out the definitions on their handouts.

Kindness: The quality of being friendly, generous and considerate.

What are ways that we can demonstrate kindness towards others? (*Write down responses*)

Respect: To be thought of with honor, admiration and/or consideration.

How can we treat others with respect? (*Write down responses*)

Patience: The ability to calmly put up with trouble or hardship without getting upset or angry.

How do we practice patience when getting to know someone? (Write down responses)

Follow up questions:

- *What are some examples of what we can say or how we can act when we disagree with someone else or share a different interest or opinion?*
 - *“it's okay to not agree on everything,” “we can have different opinions!” I respect what you have to say even though I don't feel the same way”*
- *How can we show kindness, respect and patience to people who act, look or communicate differently than us? - What are some specific things we can say to them? What are ways we demonstrate these words to others through our actions?*



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Have students fill out the corresponding questions by writing or drawing a picture on their handout for how they can demonstrate kindness, respect and patience this week, in their school and/or at home.

Wrap up

Time: 5 minutes

Encourage students to share with the class what they took away from this lesson and field any questions.

Challenge

Challenge the students at the end of this lesson to meet one new student this week and practice kindness, respect and patience when getting to know them!

Close out the lesson with having a couple of students lead the Best Buddies cheer!

“Best, Best Buddies

Best, Best, Best Buddies Whooh!

Best, Best Buddies

Best, Best, Best Buddies!

B-U-D-D-I-E-S, B-U-D-D-I-E-S

Best, Best Buddies

Best, Best, Best Buddies Whooh!”

Video: https://youtu.be/HJulPBF_800

Optional Suggested Readings:

- *I'm Like You, You're Like Me: A Book About Understanding and Appreciating Each Other* written by Cindy Gainer, Illustrated by Miki Sakamoto
- *Celebrate You, Celebrate Me! (Sesame Street)*, written by Leslie Kimmelman, illustrated by Tom Brannon
- *What I like About Me!* Written by Zobel Nolan, Allia, illustrated by Miki Sakamoto

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