



Elementary Curriculum

September Lesson – Welcome to Best Buddies!

Session: To provide students with an overview of Best Buddies & peer connection opportunities

Materials: Sanford Harmony Cards, “More Alike than Different” Activity handout, Whiteboard and markers, PowerPoint, Large paper pad.

Objective: Students will gain a knowledge of the history of Best Buddies International and the various programs in the organization. This lesson will be measured by the level and frequency of student participation through discussions on class expectations and engagement of activities to promote and foster collaboration and friendship.

Total Lesson time: Approx 65 Minutes

Welcome!

Materials: “Welcome to Best Buddies” PowerPoint (optional)

Time: 10 Minutes

Introduce and welcome students to Best Buddies. Explain that Best Buddies is all about connecting with new people, making friends and having fun! Through meetings and activities, Best Buddies gives you the opportunity to meet all different people!

We will be meeting as a group every month to participate in different fun activities to learn more about each other! We will have lessons focusing on different topics that include opportunities to connect with one another, learn about our differences and commonalities while creating friendships and growing in our leadership skills!

Ask Students: *Why do we need Best Buddies?*

Making friends can be difficult sometimes. Best Buddies gives you the chance to do the things you love, like playing and learning with others that you may not know or fellow classmates who may need some extra help in making friends. By being a part of Best Buddies, you can make a difference for people at your school while creating amazing friendships along the way!

By being a part of Best Buddies you will learn how to make a positive change in your school! New friends, activities, learning about each other, that’s what Best Buddies is all about!

If time permits, go around the room and have each student introduce themselves (name, grade)

Icebreaker

Materials: Sanford Harmony Quick Connection Cards

Time: 10 min

Using the Sanford Harmony Quick Connection Cards, divide the class into groups of 4-5 students each. Give each group 3-4 Conversation cards, have one student read the question on the card and take turns answering. (i.e. a card may ask: “If you could have lunch with someone famous, who would it be and what would you talk about?” someone might answer, “*I would like to have lunch with Tom Brady and ask him how he became professional football player.*”)



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History of Best Buddies & Programs

Materials: www.bestbuddies.org (Teachers can show students the Best Buddies website and the programs offered - Optional)

Time: 10 minutes

Best Buddies International is an organization dedicated to improving the lives of people with different abilities. Best Buddies provide opportunities such as jobs, friendships, leadership development and inclusive living for people of all ages!

Best Buddies started in 1989 by Anthony Kennedy Shriver. Anthony Kennedy Shriver and his family are great advocates for people of different abilities!

Write the word “*advocate*” on the whiteboard. **Ask:** *What do you think the word advocate means?*

An advocate is someone who stands up for others who many not have the ability to do so themselves. An advocate fights for people’s rights and gives others a voice. The Shriver family has made it their mission to be advocates for people with different abilities.

Anthony Kennedy Shriver was very close to his aunt Rosemary Kennedy Shriver, who had different abilities. Growing up, Anthony noticed that many people with different abilities were being treated unfairly. They were often lonely and didn’t have friends nor the same opportunities that many of us are given.

Inspired by his aunt Rosemary, Anthony made it his mission to create an inclusive and accepting world where all people are valued and respected regardless of what differences or abilities they have. He started the first ever Best Buddies at his college at Georgetown University, where he paired students from his school with individuals at a local group home so they could get to know each other and become friends.

Since starting the first chapter in 1989, Best Buddies has since spread to all 50 states in over 50 countries! From Egypt, to Mexico to Thailand, thousands of schools like ours and across the world, participate in the mission of inclusion and friendship!

(For a list of U.S States and Countries that Best Buddies is in, please visit:

<https://www.bestbuddies.org/international-programs/>)

Just like you and me, we all have goals that we want to accomplish! This could be doing well on a math test, learning to ride a bike or even playing an instrument. Did you know that Best Buddies has goals as well? Can you guess what some of them are? (i.e. Make friendships, spread inclusion, acceptance, kindness, etc.)

Best Buddies has an ultimate goal: To one day go out of business! **Ask the class to discuss why this is the ultimate goal of Best Buddies.**

We want to live in a world where all individuals feel valued, included and respected, regardless of their abilities and are given the same opportunities as you and me! In starting Best Buddies at our school, we can help create a world where everyone is treated equally and with respect.



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Best Buddies follows four pillars: **Leadership, Friendship, Jobs and Inclusive Living**. Within these pillars, Best Buddies offers nine different programs that help people with all abilities feel included and valued in their schools and communities! Let's talk about a few of these programs!

Elementary: Best Buddies Elementary introduces students like you to the mission of inclusion and friendship! During the school day, students of all abilities participate in special lessons and activities that help us get to know one another, make new friends and teach us how to treat each other with kindness and understanding.

Middle School, High School & College: Best Buddies isn't just in the elementary schools, it's in middle, high schools and colleges as well! The Best Buddies Middle, High School and College programs help students of all abilities form friendships. These school programs help create a place of belonging and excitement for students to feel safe and valued. It also provides the opportunity for students to grow as leaders and learn new skills to run these programs at their schools!

Ambassador: The Ambassador program is part of our Leadership pillar. Both students and adults of all abilities learn how to give speeches and be leaders within their schools and communities! Ambassadors share their stories about inclusion, acceptance and friendship with others throughout the state and even the country! You can be an Ambassador at any age!

e-Buddies: e-Buddies is an e-mail pen pal program that matches individuals of all abilities in a one-to-one e-mail friendship. E-buddies is a fun and safe way for members with to make a new friend, and can help develop computer, communication and social skills.

*Best Practice:

Students or classrooms can sign up to participate in e-Buddies! Please note that a student must be at least 10 years old in order to participate. Engaging in the e-Buddies program can serve as an additional Best Buddies chapter activity for students! By participating in e-Buddies, members develop technology literacy skills and become more confident communicating online, opening up opportunities for higher-level education and employment. To learn more and enroll, please visit: <https://www.bestbuddies.org/what-we-do/ebuddies/>

In addition to these programs, Best Buddies also offers our Job's program, adult friendship Citizen's program and our newest pillar, Inclusive living.

(To find out more about the other programs we offer, please visit: www.bestbuddies.org)

With all of the exciting programs Best Buddies has to offer, you can choose to be involved in Best Buddies your whole life!

Pop quiz! Ask students to raise their hand or shout out the answers to these questions to test their knowledge of Best Buddies!

- Who started Best Buddies? *Anthony Kennedy Shriver*
- What are the four pillars of Best Buddies? *Leadership, Friendship, Employment, Inclusive Living*
- How long can you be a part of Best Buddies for? *You can be a part of Best Buddies your whole life!*



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Introduction to Different Abilities

Time: 5 minutes

There are all kinds of different abilities. Some different abilities you may not be able to see in a person, others might be more noticeable. Regardless of what someone's differences might be, the most important thing to understand is that we are all people first and foremost. We all have our own unique gifts, skills and talents! Many of us also have the same interests, we like the same things as others. Most importantly, we are all deserving of respect, kindness and friendship.

In your school or in the community, you might see people who look or act a bit different than you. For instance, in school you might see someone who has trouble walking around and might use a wheelchair or walker. You might notice another student who communicates differently, through sign language or a computer program, or tablet. Or you might see a student who needs a little extra assistance from a teacher in class.

Ask students: *If you see someone who looks or acts different than you, what do you do?*

*Best Practice: Posing this question to the classroom regularly throughout the year can help teachers gauge students' perspective on understanding and accepting different abilities. It can also serve to evaluate progress of their understanding throughout the year and what additional lessons need to be taught in order for objectives to be met.

We each have unique abilities that are a part of who we are. If you see a peer who talks, walks or behaves differently than you that is okay! That's what makes each of us unique in our own way.

Call upon a few students and ask them to share one thing that makes him or her unique.

(I.e. I like to sing, I like to bake, dance, I can speak two languages, I use a wheelchair to get around, etc.)

More Alike than Different!

Materials: "Favorites Activity" handout

Time: 20 Minutes

After a few students have shared, explain that while we each have unique traits and differences that make up a part of who we are, we also share many commonalities and interests!

While our differences help shape us into who we are, we all share many of the same wants and desires. For instance, we all want and are deserving of a friend, someone who you can talk with, play and have fun with! We also all want to feel loved and accepted for who we are and to be treated with kindness and respect.

When you start getting to know someone, you will realize that many of you have the same interests, whether it's playing on the playground, enjoying videogames at a friend's house or going to the movies. We all have so much in common!



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Favorites Activity

Using the More Alike than Different handout, explain that the class is going to discover each other's shared interests with this next activity! Have each student fill out what their favorite things are in the corresponding boxes under the "answer" portion. After they have completed this, encourage students to take the next 5-10 minutes walking around the classroom and finding different peers who wrote or identified the same favorite. When a student identifies the same favorite item as theirs, write the peers name under the "buddies name" column.

After students have collected names, have them return to their seats and ask a few to share what favorites they have in common with another student. (I.e. "Sam and I's favorite food is pizza!")

Overview of the Year

Materials: Large sticky notepad or poster board, markers

Time: 10 minutes

Explain that as a class we will be learning about different topics that relate to Best Buddies. These topics involve:

- Understanding disabilities
- The importance of friendship
- Bullying
- Leadership
- Being kind
- Perseverance
- Inclusion
- Equality

Goals & expectations

Using a large sticky notepad or poster board, brainstorm together as a group what you hope to get out of the year in participating in Best Buddies. For instance, it could be making a new friend who you didn't know before or learning about different abilities. *Have each student share.*

In starting Best Buddies off on the right note, we need to create some rules and expectations together to make sure everyone feels comfortable, respected and of course, excited! Using the whiteboard, ask students to share some rules for the class. This can include: *Be respectful, be patient, use kind words, take turns, ask questions, raise your hand, give everyone a chance to talk, etc.*

After your first lesson, display the list in class and revisit it throughout the year to ensure students are adhering to the class rules

Close out the lesson with the Best Buddies cheer!

"Best, Best Buddies

Best, Best, Best Buddies Whoo!

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 Whoo!" **Video:** https://youtu.be/HJulPBF_800

*Best Practice: Have a student(s) help lead this cheer at the beginning or end of every lesson!