



Frequently Asked Questions

Elementary School Program

What is Best Buddies?

Best Buddies is a non-profit organization established in 1989 by Anthony Kennedy Shriver. The mission of Best Buddies is to establish a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment, leadership development, and inclusive living for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

How does Best Buddies create inclusion?

Best Buddies seeks to spread the mission of inclusion to students with and without disabilities by providing unique, fun, accessible opportunities for peers of different ability levels to spend time together, learn leadership skills, and have fun together in their classrooms.

What does a Best Buddies chapter do?

Chapters provide opportunities to students who might have different learning schedules or who are secluded to different classrooms with the chance to socialize with their peers. Best Buddies has found that by providing an equal and inclusive environment for peers to develop social skills, learn leadership skills, and play together, it mitigates the possibility of segregation and exclusion of peers with disabilities throughout the schooling years, when social inclusion is so important. Best Buddies seeks to provide every child with a friend and a chance for birthday parties, integrated sports, sleepovers, and learning side by side with their peers, despite differences in ability levels.

Who can participate in the Best Buddies program?

Best Buddies is open to all students – with and without disabilities. At the elementary level, Best Buddies introduces the ideals and goals of inclusive friendships students with and without disabilities on the same school campus through group events and integrated activities. School faculty and Best Buddies staff work together to identify students who are committed to the opportunity of making new friends and are interested in partnering with their peers with and without disabilities in group settings.

What are the goals of the Best Buddies program?

Chapter activities and events address four areas of focus: awareness, engagement, empowerment, and interaction. Awareness to educate club members, peers, and the community on the goals of disability inclusion. Engagement to get peers in the school and members in the community involved in Best Buddies. Empowerment to provide people with the opportunity to be a leader and a voice for Best Buddies. And interaction to provide opportunities for interaction with people with IDD. Planning events with these areas of focus in mind ensures each chapter makes the greatest impact possible in their school and community.

What are the requirements of an elementary school chapter?

Members must sign up to participate in the Best Buddies chapter by completing a [membership application](#) using the Best Buddies Online system. Each school chapter is provided with a portal, which will serve to collect membership applications and provide additional information, support resources, and activity guides. Members will be approved by the school's faculty.

What can parents do to support their child's participation in this program?

Parents should start by approving their child's membership application on [Best Buddies Online](#) or on permission slips sent home before their student joins the chapter. Parents are encouraged to speak with their child's teacher about their son's/daughter's involvement to learn about the specific activities and events planned for the chapter.

Above all, parents can be the greatest support by talking with their child about their involvement in the club. They are encouraged to ask questions, like what their children learn at Best Buddies events, about their new friends, and support their involvement in a club that seeks to provide an inclusive, accepting environment for all students. Children in Best Buddies are joining a global movement and their interest and passion in the Best Buddies organization is changing the world! We are excited to have their involvement and thank you for your support!