



Train up a child in the way he should go:
and when he is old,
he will not depart from it.
Proverbs 22:6

BUDDY SYSTEM

"The School's policies which are made from time to time are made pursuant to the requirements set out in section 47 of the Education Act and of the Board of Studies for registration for the school."

TEACHERS INFORMATION

Buddy systems contribute to the creation of **safe, friendly and caring environments** in which **respect** is a key value and children learn the skills associated with **empathy and compassion** through consciously constructed activities and by looking after and caring for other people. This helps to **combat bullying** and other forms of anti-social behaviour such as harassment and teasing

The Buddy system also addresses evidence suggesting that the teaching of pro-social values and social skills can contribute to the development of resilience in children - a protective factor as they experience hardship and loss.

RESEARCH

A summary of recent research findings about buddy systems conducted by The Alannah and Madeline Foundation:

We increasingly understand social and emotional learning to be equally important as academic learning for the success and wellbeing of students. Schools are beginning to develop programs that assist in building respect, care and support, and in doing so, reduce bullying behaviours, and assist students to become responsible and socially skilled.

Buddy systems contribute to children's social and emotional learning, increase student self esteem, improve school climate and contribute to the development of caring learning communities. Older students undertake supportive and caring relationships with younger students and are involved in behaviours they would naturally enjoy, such as talking and playing instructional games. Through active involvement, they develop empathy as they learn more about each other, and gain recognition for their efforts. The technique also seems to make learning more interesting and more fun with higher levels of engagement and focus shown than in general teacher-directed instruction.

FIVE EFFECTIVE FEATURES OF BUDDY SYSTEMS

1. Cooperative group work

Cooperative groups help with the forming of friendships between buddies. Learning listening skills, co-operation, empathy, and problem solving skills helps to foster social helping behaviours in children.

2. Peer tutoring

Buddy programs work best when the older buddies participate in structured teaching activities with their younger buddies rather than just socialising with them. As students assist others in learning, they are learning themselves.

3. Age difference between buddies

The most successful age difference between buddies is at least three years.



4. Effective planning and preparation

Buddy systems are more effective when they are deeply embedded in a whole-school wellbeing focus and integrated in school policies. Give time and consideration to decisions about buddy partnerships, design of buddy activities, training of older students, and informing younger students about what is happening, and carefully monitor and evaluate the process. Since programs can be disadvantaged by poor implementation, give time to setting up buddy programs and arranging activities during the initial stages

5. Teacher commitment

Awareness of the buddy system by all students and staff and teacher commitment to it are important features of successful programs. Teachers 'buddying up' with other colleagues serves as a model for students own behaviour as a buddy. The buddy system itself encourages teachers to work in partnership for planning.

POSITIVE EFFECTS OF BUDDY PROGRAMS

1. Creation of a positive, caring and supportive learning environment

Buddy programs incorporating peer tutoring contribute to more positive, supportive and caring learning environments through a reduction in competitiveness and an increase in helping behaviours.

2. Increased self esteem and connectedness

Older students see themselves as valued participants involved in the teaching and learning of others. Being part of a buddy system can reduce school absenteeism by creating connectedness of older and younger buddies with their school.

3. Development of pro-social values and social skills and behaviours

Other benefits of buddy programs are improved social skills and stronger pro-social values. Older students experience positive feedback from caring about someone else and so feel valued, while younger students experience a sense of worth and observe and receive kindness. Buddy programs can provide more opportunity for students to learn to accept individual differences.

4. Collaborative learning reduces the anxiety that competitive learning imposes

Cross-age buddy relationships can also provide students with opportunities to socialise without some of the threats and expectations that may accompany same-age interactions. Older students can feel freer to adopt a warm and friendly manner with their younger buddies and this modelling often has a positive effect on them.

5. Reduction of bullying behaviours

Programs that contribute to the building of positive peer relations can help reduce the impact of negative behaviours such as bullying. Older students become positive role models as they feel some responsibility for the behaviours of the younger students, who frequently seek them out if they need help.

Children are not born with the skills to make friends; through their experience of the friendships of buddies, they are often motivated to create similar relationships with other students of their own age. Having friends helps protect students from negative behaviour such as bullying. They feel more connected to one another and are encouraged to help their friends and peers if they witness bullying, rather than doing nothing. The development of responsible and ethical behaviour, empathy for others and understanding of the impact of negative behaviours such as bullying has long-term beneficial effects for individuals and society as a whole.



6. Buddy systems help to ease students into transition

Students who have buddies at the beginning of their primary school year or secondary school year feel a sense of friendship and connectedness to the school because of the support and guidance given by older students. Ideally, these students are positive role models.

7. Buddy systems are beneficial for all students

" Those who teach others, teach themselves."

Cross-age buddy tutoring enriches both tutor and tutee in achievement, motivation and interpersonal relations where buddies can learn as they teach. Buddy systems help in the classroom by providing one-to-one instruction under teacher-based direction.

Students benefit because they are actively involved in learning, observing each other's work, and questioning what is happening. Tutoring adds to the growth and development of an individual, providing friendship, protection, counselling, and 'intellectual nourishment' in a nurturing environment. Students begin to have a greater understanding of each other and bridge differences.

Cross-age buddy systems use diverse methods and cover an array of subject areas where disadvantaged students and those with disabilities can also experience positive outcomes. Where students have buddies as tutors, the instruction can be tailored to the student's rate of learning with on-the-spot practice and amendments to instructions when needed. These tutors do not have to be exceptional students; in fact, all students are capable of being buddy tutors. Both older and younger students benefit from being buddies, where they interact, guide and support each other.

8. Buddy systems are beneficial for the whole school

There are benefits for teachers, parents and the school and improved student attitudes towards being at school. Teachers become more involved in working collaboratively, planning and helping each other; parents can be involved in planning and social events, and are more aware of what is happening in their school through information sessions and home activities. Students show positive attitudes toward each other, learn to share, to help, to comfort and empathize.

Procedure

At the beginning of each school year students in Year 1 will be paired with a student in either Year 5 or Year 6. That student becomes the Buddy for the Year 1 student. The Buddy system will also be use with all new students up to year 10.

Each Buddy is responsible for helping to integrate the student into the student body, and to act as a guide to foster an understanding of school guidelines. The Buddy system is a yearlong commitment in the Primary Department and a one term commitment for the high school department.

Please not that some students are able to integrate at a faster or slower rate. Each department is to judge as to the appropriate length of time the buddy system is to be in place for each student.

The school Headmaster is responsible for the updating of this policy document.