

BUDDY SYSTEM

The purpose of implementing a buddy system is to increase social interaction and appropriate play among children in your classroom. A peer buddy can help the child who has difficulty with transitions, difficulty remembering the rules and procedures of routines, or who seems to need a lot of peer attention. It is also a nice way to give children experience in learning how to play together, how to compromise, and ways to teach others how to play with toys.

Materials Needed (optional, depending on whether children can remember who their buddies are):

- A set of matching necklaces (2 red, 2 blue, 2 yellow, etc.) or peer buddy buttons

To use the Buddy System:

1. During the opening circle or before the targeted activity, recruit a child to be the peer buddy. A child could be the peer buddy for the day or for a specific activity. A way to approach this is to ask a child who has good social skills, behaves well, and likes to help others. You might ask the child to be a peer buddy by saying "Emma, Joey has a difficult time remembering the rules and activities of circle time. Would you be willing to be Joey's buddy? You can sit next to him and help him." If you are using necklaces or the buddy buttons, give them to the peer buddy and target child to designate their buddy status.
2. Give the peer buddy direction as to how long they need to stay with the target child (e.g., until the timer rings, for the entire play period, etc.).
3. Let the child know what you expect him/her to do with his/her buddy, (i.e., must agree on the center in which they want to play; they will need to take turns going to each other's play area; they need to play with things together, and work together; etc.).
4. Wander the room during playtime or the activity to encourage the child to play with his/her buddy, provide praise, and pair up "lost" buddies.
5. When the buddy's designated time is over (e.g., peer buddy for playground), debrief with the child. You can ask, "Did you play with your buddy?" or "Did you help your buddy?" Provide the child with praise "Thanks for being Joey's buddy. I think you helped him have a good time".

Supplemental Reading: *You've Gotta Have Friends* (CSEFEL article found in file 2B)

