

The Buddies Club Process

a gold award by Madelyn Letendre

A detailed account on how to recreate the club



**In three-(ish)
steps!**

1. Research

Researching to create a Buddies Club is an essential step to make it successful in the long run. Research includes an understanding of the topic, awareness of all requirements, gathering assistance, and exploring programs similar to your own.

Below are some tips on what to look for and how I completed my research.



Research is most successful when done individually, as your project is unique to you and your school.

Understanding of the Topic

For my research, I created a research paper. This helped me organize my thoughts into one place and provided the necessary insight I needed to complete my project. However, this is time consuming, so I would recommend simply researching sites that relate to your club and create a bulleted list of information along with citations for future reference.

Research information that you actually need

- Before starting, list any and all questions you want answered, so your research has purpose

Find sites which are relevant to your project

- Search google scholar, school databases, or other research websites with keywords to your topic

Copy and paste any quotes you think are relevant

- I included statistics, explanations, and definitions of terms

Make sure to include the citation for pages you copy and paste from

- If you later use the information in a paper or graphic, you **need** the citation and its easier to have it cited than to work backwards looking for the site

My project was done in a class setting, so I created a formal research paper

- If necessary, you can do so as well, but having the basic information is the main goal

Brainstorming Questions for Research

- How can interactions outside of school improve the social skills of students with disabilities?
- Why are students with disabilities excluded from outside-classroom opportunities?
- What laws are in place to encourage interactions outside of school? What can be done to further these interactions?
- What types of clubs benefit students with disabilities?
- What are IDEA and ADA laws? How do they relate to clubs?
- What is a buddy system? What are its' benefits?

Look for information relevant to your topic, that will help you implement your club

My Research

- Personal and social skills are critical in keeping a job and maintaining friendships. Learning to get along with others is a challenge for everyone. Lack of appropriate personal and social skills is one of the most frequently cited causes of termination of employment.
- <https://www.thoughtco.com/teaching-social-skills-3110705>
- <https://www.crpregon.org/cms/lib/OR01928264/Centricity/Domain/45/Documents/NSTTA-C-Teaching-Self-Determination-Skills-to-Students-with-Disabilities.pdf>
 - Choice making: appropriately choosing between a finite number of choices
 - Problem-solving: weigh pros & cons of potential actions, identify barriers to success
 - Decision making: involves choosing between unlimited options
 - Goal setting and attainment: ability to set appropriate goals for self and achieve the goals with actions
 - Components of Self-Determination
 - Self-regulation: self-monitoring, self-evaluation, self-instruction, self-management (controlling own behavior by being aware of one's actions and providing feedback)
 - Self-awareness: awareness of own individuality, strengths, and areas for improvement
 - Self-efficacy: understanding that own actions have an impact – you are a causal agency in your life
 - Self-advocacy: have knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication skills, and leadership ability

How do inclusive classrooms improve the social and academic skills of students with disabilities? What are their deficits?

- <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/107040/chapters/Success-for-all-Students-in-Inclusion-Classes.aspx>
 - In the past, many students with severe disabilities were separated into special education classes and missed out on the benefits of having long-term social relationships with classmates who did not also have severe disabilities. As a result, when they left the supervised classrooms, they were not ready to join the larger, heterogeneous communities in which they would live and work for the rest of their lives.
- <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/154079699401900101>
 -
- <https://ca01000043.schoolwires.net/cms/lib08/CA01000043/Centricity/domain/168/research%20you%20can%20use/Benefits%20of%20Integration%20of%20Students%20with%20Disabilities.pdf>
 - When students with disabilities are educated with their peers without disabilities, they learn age-appropriate social skills by imitating students without disabilities in the environments where they are needed. Integrated settings provide a challenging environment for students with disabilities. Therefore, these students learn to be more independent and acquire developmentally advanced skills. Also, they may develop friendships and a more positive self image by having the opportunity to do what other students do.
- <https://classroom.synonym.com/advantages-disadvantages-inclusive-education-8367657.html>

Gather Support

School

- Get in contact with the special education department. Talk to various teachers. They will have invaluable insight on both students with disabilities and the nuances of their program.
- Talk to administration. There may be a process to implement a club, like at my school. So make sure to follow all rules and procedures to make the club a success
- Contact teachers from the general student population. At my school, we need club sponsors, so it's good to have options. Teachers can also help advertise the club in class

Outside

- This includes all Gold Award required mentors, friends, family, experts in the field, or people in the community who want to help.

Explore Similar Programs

Research programs you want to model your club after. This is specific to the goals of your club: is it sport based or a social club? Does it meet in or after school? Do meetings regularly or infrequently? Think about your plan for your club and research other programs to offer guidance



Good Sites:

Circle of Friends

Tops Soccer

Kicking the Spectrum

Unified Sports/Prom

Get Approval

Approval of clubs can be extremely different, depending on the school or location. However, these tips should help all schools:

Find Requirements

Do you need to submit a form? Do you need club sponsors? Does the school require a club plan or minimum participants? Ask a counselor or admin for answers to these questions.

Check Deadlines

If your school has a deadline for club proposals, start early! Even if they don't, the process after submission may be lengthy, so plan ahead, timing wise.

Submit

After going through the submission process, there may be follow-up meetings with admin and any teachers involved in the club. Once the process is done, You're free to begin the club!

Advertising

The next step is to raise awareness of the club by advertising in your school and the community. This will generate interest and participants for your club.



Advertise in places you know students will look or listen, including:

- ▶ **Flyers in halls, bathrooms, by water fountains, over school publications**
- ▶ **Over school announcements or a video-style news program**
- ▶ **Write announcements on teacher whiteboards or ask teachers to make an announcement to their classes**
- ▶ **Talk to school organizations for support and to recruit (Student Council, NHS)**
- ▶ **Talk to students one-on-one!**

Teacher Recommendations

A sure way of getting club members is asking teachers for recommendations. Students are more likely to participate if they are recommended and it guarantees you'll get responsible, dedicated members.

1. Ask for recommendations:

Send a notice to teachers (like the one below) asking for student recommendations

Hi Palmer Ridge Teachers,

I am creating a club to help integrate students with disabilities into the social life at Palmer Ridge. To do this, I am recruiting students from the general school population to pair with students with disabilities in order to form a buddy system club. To make this club a success, I hope to recruit compassionate, hardworking, and responsible students.

Please recommend 1-2 students per navy and gold day (2-4 total) that you think fit these criteria and would be interested in my club. Include first and last names. Please place completed forms at your respective neighborhood secretaries by Friday 9th. Thank you for your time!



**Set a due date,
or teachers may
forget!**

2. Contact Students:

I sent out the flyer below to encourage students to come to the informational meeting.

THE BUDDIES CLUB

"U and I"

INFORMATIONAL MEETING

Hi, if you are receiving this flyer, a teacher has recommended you based on your compassion, hard work, and responsibility.

The Buddies Club is new to Palmer Ridge and is a club to help integrate disabled students into the social life of PR. To do this, we are forming a buddy system, where you will be paired with a disabled student and become their friend for the semester.

This is a great service and resume opportunity, so please join us for a quick informational meeting!
(donuts provided)

DETAILS

Thursday 15th- 3 pm
Room 1202

Text 703.755.5123 or
talk to Mrs. Doan for more info

Informational Meeting

Holding an informational meeting is a good idea if you want to let people know what your club is, answer questions, and gather interest. At my meeting, I discussed the purpose and goal of the club. This included the different types of meetings we would have and events we were thinking about. I also outlined expectations for the club. Finally, I gathered all members' phone numbers for contact.



Apps like groupme, band, and remind help with club communication

3. Implement Club

After letting people know about the club, get started! First, plan meetings and goals for the club. Then, hold club meetings and events. Finally, grow your club by creating new events or growing participation. Try to ensure your club will continue after you leave by utilizing a club 'hierarchy' (president, secretary, etc) or partner with Student Council.



At this step, make sure you have completed all requirements and reflect on the process.

Club Meetings *and such*

Decide how often your club will meet. Ask participants what days and times work best for them. This will ensure the most participation.

Large events take place every 2-3 months, to avoid overwhelming participants. This included holiday dinners, dances, or other outings. They were planned by separate meetings of the 'executive council'.

Special occasional meetings included the beginning of the year orientation meeting (next page) and other meetings as necessary

I utilized lunch meetings for simple socialization between members, buddies switched every few weeks, depending on the student.

Afternoon meetings had bigger activities like crafts, sports, movies, or board games. Occurred once every 1-2 weeks.

Orientation Meeting

An orientation meeting is an essential first meeting of the year for buddies.

First, outline all expectations of the club, including behavior, minimum participation, and other expectations.

Additionally, facilitate a training with the special education teacher about people-first language, how to interact with students with disabilities, and strategies to help disabled students work towards their individual social goals (modelling behaviors, dramatic cues)

Finally, you **MUST** use permission slips for ALL involved parties: both buddies and students with disabilities. This prevents legal liability if anything goes wrong!!!

Growing Club

Events and Partnership:

Participate in school events, such as prom or sports games. Partner with other clubs or organizations (United Prom/Basketball) to provide new events and grow club popularity.

Club Hierarchy:

Vote on club president, vice president, treasurer, etc. Have separate meetings for students who want more responsibility to plan large events. This allows tiers of time commitments depending on the buddy.

School Agreement and Expansion:

Make the school pledge to continue your club. Talk to school legislation to require curriculum on how to include students with disabilities. Or talk to other schools in the district to add chapters of the club.

Wrap Up

Overall, creating this club should be something you are passionate about and enjoy completing. This manual was created as a part of my Gold Award Project, but can be adapted for whatever situation you are using it for. I hope the outline and tips helped you spread this essential club to other locations. Contact me at madelyn.letendre@gmail.com for more help. Enjoy!