

BUDDY INTERACTION: CHECKLIST

NOTHING IS OF VALUE UNLESS SHARED

“Hi! It is wonderful that you believe in nurturing relationships and are keen to continue seeding a culture of learning and caring in your ecosystem. I’m excited that you are planning to try out the Buddy Interaction process for yourself! I hope you found value in and have enjoyed going through the pack and resources, so far.

I invite you to use this quick at a glance checklist as a reference to ensure that you do not miss out on any of the key ingredients! It’s really very simple to execute, and here are some things that I keep in mind during the process. **Please feel free to innovate, translate and implement the way you want. And, I would love to know how you have done it. Do share your experience”.**

- *Fozia Contractor*

BEFORE

- ❑ Teachers should have informal dialogues with students on **the joy and comfort** of having a **buddy or a best friend** from another class, in the school community! This will help children to connect to the relevance of having a Buddy Interaction, on a regular basis.
- ❑ The **best time to plan** for a Buddy Interaction is at the **beginning of the month** while chalking out the ‘Month at a Glance’. Decide on a date and time and mark it on the monthly planner. Alternatively, it can also be planned in between the month if the need occurs especially when there is a **performance** or for a **scrutiny**.
- ❑ Home room teachers of the grades that plan to buddy should **plan a meeting** to discuss and brainstorm ideas for that month’s interaction and decide the Buddy pairs. For instance, the grade 1 class teacher could sit with the grade 5 teacher to plan for the Buddy Interaction.
- ❑ The **Buddies** of both the grades should be **introduced**, ideally **in an informal set up** such as over lunch, break time, play time. etc.
- ❑ **A week prior** to the formal interaction, the teacher of the younger buddies **presents the needs of the class** to the older buddy grade. The older buddies come up with the ‘**Best Case Scenario**’ for the interaction along with their class teacher. *However, note that there can also be an Interaction where the younger buddies are called upon to give feedback and add value to a project/presentation that the elder buddies are prototyping.*
- ❑ The class teacher of the older buddies should help them to **plan and refine** their strategy in advance of the interaction (example-designing an assessment sheet, or coming up with a game for the younger ones, or creating a model for storytelling, etc.).

- It's a good idea to follow up with the students (the older buddies) on their plan and preferably ask them to **conduct a demo** for the home room teachers of both grades and receive feedback.
- Teachers should ensure that the buddies are **involved** in **well-designed and purposeful** activities together. The area for Buddy Interaction should be designed in such a way that it lends itself to the physical, social, emotional, cognitive and spiritual **development** of the younger as well as the older buddies. The seating plan for the interaction should allow for the buddies to **interact freely** without any **distraction**.
 - *Check Resources for an exemplar list of themes for a Buddy Interaction.*
- A day before, teachers should remind both the buddy grades about the interaction that has been planned and get the required **resources** for the interaction.

DURING

- At the start of the interaction, **the tone should be set** and expectations from both, older as well as the younger buddies should be clearly defined.
- Students from both the grades come together and **pair up** with their respective buddies.
- The older buddy **starts** with the **informal talk** to make the younger buddy comfortable and then starts with the planned activity.
- Teachers must try to be unobtrusive, yet **always available as floating coaches** to clarify doubts or solve problems.
- **It is the role of the teachers to observe the body language of both buddies;** see whether the older buddy is focused and attentive to the younger buddy; if the younger buddy continues to stay **engaged and present;** and that the interaction is going as per plan.
- Together, the buddies should **wind up** and put the **space in order** before leaving.

AFTER

- **Closing of the Loop is important** with the students after each Buddy Interaction, via **informal dialogue** about the experiences and the learnings. **Buddies** should reflect as a **pair** and also with their **peers** in their respective grades.
- It is also a good idea to ensure that the students try to find something to **appreciate** in their buddy (*maybe their patience, the way they explained something, their humour etc.*)
- Teachers of both the buddy grades can **share their reflections** in order to **deepen their understanding** about the social world of children, and to plan for **future interactions**.
 - *Check Resources for a sample of the Reflection formats for older buddy, younger buddy, teacher & parent.*

SOME IMPORTANT TIPS

- ❑ An age gap of 4 years between the buddies is ideal for comfort between the two. However, **this can be contextualized based on the comfort and maturity** between the two age groups.
- ❑ One of the essential elements for successful buddy interactions is a strong knowledge of the student's temperaments. This helps in pairing students with enough **similarities or complimentary opposites** to get along well with each other.
- ❑ If a Buddy pair does not work, the teachers can decide to **change the pair** in the next month's interaction, but it is important to sometimes, let the students struggle initially, as this can lead to some of the most **transformative** learning moments, if facilitated and managed well.
- ❑ Each subsequent year of Buddy Interaction should aim to **pair different batches** of students.

