

Dear Andrew Jackson Students and Families,

We are pleased to begin our chapter of Best Buddies here at Andrew Jackson Middle School. The intent of Best Buddies is to pair students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) with neurotypical peers in order to foster inclusion and community.

According to the international Best Buddies organization mission statement: “Best Buddies gives people with special abilities a chance to make friends, speak up, be heard and advocate for themselves and others within their community.” The mission also states: “[Best Buddies] builds friendships between people with and without IDD, offering social mentoring while improving the quality of life and level of inclusion.”

Students with and without IDD are encouraged to join Best Buddies to celebrate our inclusive community. The cost to join the club is \$20 annually, this will provide the student with a t-shirt and help some of the costs of monthly activities. Students who join are asked to make a monthly commitment if they become a peer buddy and are matched with a buddy: student with IDD. When a student is matched with their buddy, they are committing monthly to 2 face-to-face interactions, 4 verbal interactions and reporting on the Best Buddies 360 app. Best Buddies will hold monthly events for students with IDD and their peer buddies to attend which can be one of their face-to-face interactions. Some events will be free, others will come with a cost that will require fundraising. If there is a need, there are limited sponsorships available to allow students that cannot cover the cost of the club registration fee.

Students will need to attend regularly and manage their behavior, grades and interactions. Administration and leadership will address concerns individually with students and parents.

If you have more questions, please contact Teacher Sponsor: Dani-Lynne Wright, wright.dani@brevardschools.org. Payment must be made in cash and registration form completed online using the QR code. T-shirt size can be ordered online once payment has been made and registration completed.

For more information visit the International Best Buddies website at <https://www.bestbuddies.org/florida>

