



e-Buddies provides opportunities for computer literacy and friendship for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

What is e-Buddies?

e-Buddies is an **e-mail pen pal program** that provides safe opportunities for one-to-one e-mail friendships between people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

People with IDD are often left out of technology education, denying them access to the abundance of social and creative outlets that can be found using computers and the Internet. Computers are an integral part of society and by participating in e-Buddies, participants can develop the skills necessary to become technology-literate and therefore able to compete for higher-level employment and to communicate using a variety of sources.

People with IDD are not always given the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships outside of their families and the people paid to support them. The Internet can become the main way these individuals keep in touch with family and friends. By joining e-Buddies and becoming comfortable with communicating online, participants are more equipped to stay social in the future.

"[My e-Buddy and I] share a lot of things together and Kimberly being in my life has been and continues to be a very good and positive thing for me." –Kim, e-Buddy since 2005



How e-Buddies Works

e-Buddies matches a person with IDD in an online friendship with a person without IDD. Participants are matched based on age, gender and similar interests. Anyone over the age of 10 can participate in e-Buddies. Students are matched with other students and adults are matched with adults.

e-Buddies agree to e-mail each other once a week for the duration of one year.

e-Buddies is always free for people with IDD.

To sign up, participants need an e-mail address and time each week to use the computer. Visit www.ebuddies.org for the online application and for more information.

After applications are received, e-Buddies staff process them, check references and backgrounds before applicants are approved. Once applications are approved, staff then work on finding a match. Then e-Buddies can begin e-mailing each other!

*"Because of e-Buddies, e-mail has become something I look forward to, and the computer has become a way for me to make friends."
–Joshua, e-Buddy since 2000*



e-Buddies is safe, educational and fun!

e-Buddies is SAFE

e-Buddies is dedicated to ensuring the safety and privacy of all our participants with and without IDD. All applicants are screened and must agree to the terms of the e-Buddies Code of Conduct before they can participate. Once matched, all communication is conducted through the e-Buddies E-mail System.

This e-mail system allows users to communicate without divulging their personal e-mail address and also filters out personally identifiable information and inappropriate content.

*"Our students enjoy [e-Buddies] so much and it has been a big help to them. They have increased their skills on the computer, sentence structure, punctuation, [and] thinking ability."
– Pam, Special Education Teacher*

e-Buddies is EDUCATIONAL

e-Buddies can help participants develop skills in the following areas:

- Computer skills
- Communication skills
- Reading and writing skills
- Social skills

e-Buddies helps motivate participants to learn. People that are involved in e-Buddies are more interested in spelling and typing correctly.

e-Buddies is FUN

e-Buddies connects peers in one-to-one friendships. Participants can discuss whatever interests them – sports, movies, school, family, anything!

Teachers love e-Buddies

because it is easy to add to any computer curriculum and can help them achieve multiple IEP benchmarks. And it increases their students' motivation.

Parents love e-Buddies

because it is a safe place for their children to gain access to online social outlets. With a controlled E-mail System, parents are confident that their children are safe, while having fun and developing computer and Internet skills.

Participants love e-Buddies

because they can gain independence with computers and the Internet, all while making a lifelong friend.

"I never knew that I can talk to someone via e-mail and get a response back. It has been a life changing event for me. I enjoy reading my e-mails from my e-buddy."

–Manny, e-Buddy since 2009

e-Buddies is a Best Buddies International program. Best Buddies is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.