

Franklin Public Schools

Office of Pupil Personnel Services
355 East Central Street, Suite 3
Franklin, Massachusetts 02038



Telephone: (508) 553-4811

FAX: (508) 553-4897

March 16, 2015

Dear Keller School Families,

It is with tremendous enthusiasm that we write to share some exciting news with you. The Franklin Public Schools, and specifically Helen Keller Elementary School, has been chosen to create the first Elementary Best Buddies Chapter in the nation. This spring there will be a multitude of events, including, but not limited to, informational meetings, a kickoff event, and a student workshop, which will assist in selecting students who will participate in Best Buddies; this initial year, we will be targeting students who are currently in third and fourth grade.

Best Buddies is a non-profit organization established in 1989 by Anthony Kennedy Shriver. The mission of Best Buddies is to establish a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In middle schools, Best Buddies operates as a student-run friendship club, which creates buddy pairs between students with and without disabilities.

The Franklin Public Schools have long been active participants in Best Buddies, with a chapter at Franklin High School since 1997 and one at the middle school level since 2004. FPS has consistently taken an active role in ensuring all of our students are integral members of their school community. An Elementary Best Buddies chapter will help to minimize the impact disability can have on students and maximize the opportunities for children with disabilities. In addition, it will continue to foster a school culture grounded in respect and tolerance for each unique individual. Within the scope of forming an Elementary Best Buddies chapter, it was important to consider the developmental level of typical elementary school students as well as the unique, and sometimes delicate, needs of elementary aged students with intensive special needs.

This next chapter within the FPS and Best Buddies partnership will allow Franklin Public School's STRIVE Program, a district wide program for students who contend with significant cognitive and communication disabilities, which is woven into the fabric of the Helen Keller Elementary School community, to become part of a growing movement consisting of people with and without disabilities, dedicated to ensuring everyone has the opportunity to have a friend.

Please join us in thanking all of the contributors and supporters, without whom this would not have been possible: Senator Karen Spilka, Maureen Sabolinski, Superintendent of Schools, and Elizabeth Fitzmaurice, Director of Special Education. We personally invite you to join us on April 9th at 7:00 pm at Helen Keller Elementary School to learn more about this exciting opportunity.

Stephanie L. Geddes
IEP Coordinator

Eric T. Stark
Principal