

#WeAreCTA



BUILDING YOUR ASSOCIATION

BUDDY PROGRAM

The “Buddy” program provides support to new hires by more veteran association members, which helps build immediate personal connection between the new unit member and the Association. The Buddy plays an important role in helping the new educator become connected to members at their site, in the district, and in the association. The Buddy is someone who genuinely believes in the cause of building a stronger local association through interpersonal, supportive, relational organizing with our newest educators.

WHAT IS A BUDDY AND WHAT IS THE JOB DESCRIPTION?

The Buddy’s major job is to make sure the prospective member (or new member if he or she has already signed up) has a positive, relevant connection to the Association. It is the part of the program that won’t allow someone to feel alone in a room crowded with people.

The Buddy is assigned to one or two new unit members. The Buddy takes time to get to know the potential member and learn what makes the potential member click. The Buddy is there as an advisor, an advocate, a friend, a sounding board, and a resource.

The Buddy “partners” with a new unit member throughout his or her probationary period and often times, beyond.

The Buddy helps the new unit member learn about how the association can help the member. While she or he doesn’t concentrate solely on association “stuff,” he or she makes it clear that it is the local association’s program that is meant to help ensure the well-being of the new unit member.

The Buddy is there regardless of whether someone joins the association.

The Buddy does NOT take the place of any peer assistance, peer consultant or peer mediation programs, which are usually association and district joint projects.

DESIRED QUALITIES FOR BUDDIES

Here are skills that are desired to be an effective Buddy:

- **Strong interpersonal skills** — Look for a person who both talks and listens.
- **Knowledge of the Association and of the District** — Look for person with a network and an understanding of the systems and how to function well in these systems.
- **Willingness to assist in someone else's growth** — Look for a person who initiates helping contacts with others.

RELATIONAL ORGANIZING THROUGH THE BUDDY SYSTEM

Ideally, you will identify a person in each building who will be trained in relational organizing. The idea is to develop a relationship with the new member or prospective member and to keep that relationship going at least through the probationary period (and hopefully beyond).

The goals for a Buddies are:

- Build a strong relationship based on common interests and beliefs
- Identify potential leaders
- Make a long-lasting positive connection for the new person with the local association / CTA / NEA

When all the other components of the membership engagement program are working, it will not be the work of the Buddy to actually increase membership; it will happen through their work.

When the person joins the association family, the relationship does not end. If the person chooses not to join, the relationship may still continue.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE BUDDY

Ideas for Buddies: Research shows that the most lasting relationships begin with personal one-on-one introductions. Therefore, if it possible, as soon as you are assigned to your new unit member, personally introduce yourself in a face-to-face meeting or at least call the new unit member on the phone. Shortly after your personal introduction, send a letter, postcard or greeting card in the mail to reaffirm that you are the local association partner who is available to help and that you will be calling soon.

Call your new person a couple of weeks before school begins and make an appointment to meet for coffee or tea or bagels or a walk or whatever. Choose a setting and timeframe that allow for a quality conversation. (Planet Hollywood is probably out.)

Let the new unit member know about how long the appointment will last (not less than 20 and not longer than 45 minutes). Stick with what you say.

Note: In some local association's buddies attend the district's new-hire orientation along with the new unit member and on the first work day of school goes with the new unit member to his or her school site to tour the site, introduce him or her to other colleagues, and helps the person set up his or her classroom. At the end of the day, they tweet or post pictures of their completed classrooms and then join other new hires and buddies for an association-sponsored social event.

At your first meeting: Keep the meeting to the timeframe you set. Reschedule another time to continue the conversation.

- Introduce the purpose of the meeting and conversation. Explain that you are from your local association and that you are reaching out to the new person to find out what he or she is thinking.
- The core of the conversation is that you, as a member of the Local Association, want to know what the individual thinks about what it would take to make public education the best it could be.
- Ask what is your favored place and time to meet?

Other questions surrounding this concept are:

- What is your position?
- How many years do you have in the system? (Some new hires will be from other districts and have some long-term experience.)
- What do you like about teaching or (for classified) doing what you do?
- What do you like or dislike about what you've seen so far in this District?
- What things prevent you from doing your job the way you like to do it?
- How do you want to leave your mark on public education?

- What would make it possible for you to provide the best teaching and learning for your students?
- What was the most positive experience and the most negative experience that you had when you were a student, and how has that experience impacted what you want from your students?

This is not an interview. This is a conversation where the Buddy shares his or her own experiences and thoughts for about one-third of the time spent together. These are some suggested questions to get Buddies going.

- ◆ Look for common interests and common ground.
- ◆ Share your story and remember that the focus is on the other person. The questions are meant to give you an opportunity to actively listen to the person's needs, interests, concerns, perceptions and feelings.
- ◆ At the end of the conversation, give the person a sense of where things go from here, the follow-up steps. Ask your new hire/prospective member to think about ways you can assist as he or she settles in the new workplace.
- ◆ DO NOT ASK THE PERSON TO JOIN THE ASSOCIATION OR EVEN IF HE OR SHE IS A MEMBER. YOUR ROLE IS TO BUILD A POSITIVE, SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIP.



**Please use this as a guide, not a rule book.
Tailor it to fit your association's needs.**

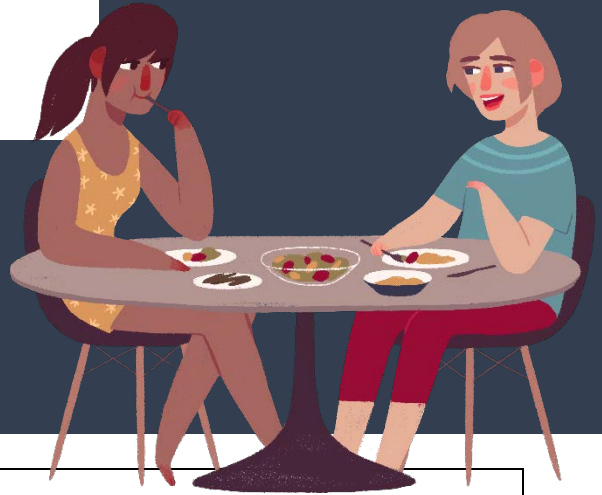
You will not be selling membership to the person. You may, at some point, invite the person to join, but you can discuss that with the site rep, "recruiter," "Finder" for your school site.

After your first meeting, take a few minutes to write down what you both talked about. Then, make sure you connect this person with other members you know who have similar interests or are in similar situations. For example, if the person has young children, connect her or him with others in your school or worksite who have young children. Chances are, they can share information about good babysitters, consignment stores, day care, and day-to-day young kid stuff. If your person is a passionate gardener, connect him or her with other gardeners. Introduce them. Help your partner fit in and reach out from the very first day of school.

Keep the relationship going. Check with the person before and after their formal employer evaluation. Ask the person how you can support him or her over the first scary months. Send a card to say hello, etc.

SCHOOL YEAR:

ASSOCIATION:



BUDDY PROGRAM ASSIGNMENT CHART

NAME OF NEW EDUCATOR	
SITE	
HOME ADDRESS	
PERSONAL EMAIL	
NAME OF ASSIGNED "BUDDY"	
WORK SITE	
PERSONAL EMAIL	
PHONE	

NAME OF NEW EDUCATOR	
SITE	
HOME ADDRESS	
PERSONAL EMAIL	
NAME OF ASSIGNED "BUDDY"	
WORK SITE	
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SCHOOL YEAR:

ASSOCIATION:

BUDDY PROGRAM CHECKLIST



	Leadership follows local by-laws and standing rules to create a Buddy Program and select a Chair
	Budget is officially allocated for “Coffee cards” to enable Buddy mentors to take their Buddies out for coffee, etc.
	System is put in place to receive receipts and allocate new cards as needed
	Buddy Mentors are invited to sign up to serve in May, June, and early August
	Local chapter requests data in June on new district hires to estimate number of needed Buddy mentors
	Chapter uses PowerPoint and other Toolkit materials to train local Buddy mentors
	Chapter has a plan in place in case Mentor and Buddy are not a good fit
	Chapter gets final list of new hires and pairs mentors up with their new Buddies
	Chapter holds Kick-off Gathering for Mentors and Buddies, giving time for exchange of contact information and relationship building
	Chapter considers a “99 Contract Days Left” gathering for a second check-up on Mentors and Buddies
	Chapter schedules an end of year Mentor/Buddy gathering as a culminating event, where Mentors and Buddies determine steps for year two.
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SCHOOL YEAR:

ASSOCIATION:

BUDDY PROGRAM POTENTIAL MEMBER INFO

(Do not fill out in front of prospective member)

USEFUL DATA ABOUT EACH PROSPECTIVE MEMBER COULD INCLUDE:

NAME:		
SCHOOL:		
YEARS IN LOCAL:	YEARS IN OTHER LOCALS:	YEARS OF PREVIOUS ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP, IF ANY:
REASON FOR DROPPING ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP:		
INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS, ACTIVITIES:		
PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS ABOUT ASSIGNMENT, WORKING CONDITIONS, OR LOCAL:		
PERCEPTIONS ABOUT IMAGE OF ASSOCIATION VERSUS ANY COMPETING ORGANIZATION:		
REASONS FOR NOT JOINING ASSOCIATION (IF KNOWN):		
NAMES OF FRIENDS WHO ARE MEMBERS AND MIGHT BE INFLUENTIAL:		

SCHOOL YEAR:

ASSOCIATION:

BUDDY PROGRAM SAMPLE INTRODUCTION LETTER

Use Your Association Letterhead and Personalize

Dear [First Name],

Welcome to (School District). My name is (name) and I am a [how many years] member of the (Local Association). As a member, I have volunteered to be a part of our Association Buddy Program.

I'm pleased that I have been selected to work with you as you move through two years of probationary status.

As your Association Buddy, I am offering my personal assistance to you. I will answer questions you might have regarding your employment with the (School District), help you navigate your way around your school site and/or help you with anything you might need during your employment with the (School District). And as your Association Buddy, I am here to answer any questions/concerns you have about the (Association).

I would like to meet with you and discuss any concerns or answer any questions you might have regarding your employment with (School District), or just to sit down and have a cup of coffee (or drink), and get to know each other.

Please contact me so we can schedule a meeting time that is mutually convenient for us to spend a few minutes together.

My contact information is:

Name: _____

Cell Phone Number: _____

Personal Email Address: _____

School Site: _____

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Name