

INSTRUCTIONS FOR BIG BUDDY TEACHERS

Big Buddies showed significant improvements in their reading and fluency....They developed a greater awareness of how they could be classroom leaders and how important teachers really are.

—Reading Buddies fourth-grade teacher

Although the MARTHA SPEAKS Reading Buddies Program obviously benefits Little Buddies, the program also offers numerous benefits for Big Buddies. It provides opportunities for students to practice communication, leadership, organizational, and comprehension skills, and to improve their word awareness and reading fluency. In addition, it offers new and exciting ways for students to interact and succeed as members and leaders of the school community.

This program will require your time and commitment. You will need to train your students to be Big Buddies, as well as practice each session beforehand. However, the program will not only help energize your class, it will provide you with many teachable moments.

Before You Begin

As the Big Buddy teacher, your task is to “train” your students in how to work with younger students, help them get comfortable with the session routines, and make sure they understand the content of the episode, stories, and activities.

Plan Your Big Buddy Training

- 🐾 Obtain one copy of the book *Martha Speaks* by Susan Meddaugh (Houghton Mifflin, 1995) to show the class.
- 🐾 Read the Big Buddy Guide, Games & Activities, and Journal thoroughly, so you know what will be expected of your students.
- 🐾 Assign peer partners. Big Buddies will practice each session with one another *before* they meet with their Little Buddies.
- 🐾 Review each read-aloud picture book that you and the kindergarten teacher have chosen.
- 🐾 You may want to send home the Letter to Big Buddy Families so that parents and caregivers can get involved.
- 🐾 You may want to decorate your classroom with the Classroom Poster.



Design the Practice Sessions

- 🐾 Plan adaptations as needed.
- 🐾 Be sure you have made enough copies of the materials and have enough books for each buddy pair.
- 🐾 If you choose, decide on a “Celebrate Success” party just for the Big Buddies at the end of all ten sessions.

Reading Buddies Training

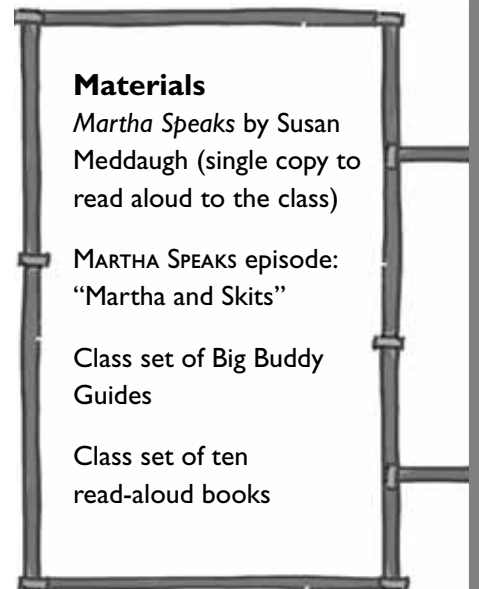
(one-time session in two parts, 60–90 minutes)

Training the students to become Big Buddies is an integral part of the process, and very important to the success of the program. You will need to introduce the program and provide guidelines on how to establish a relationship with a Little Buddy. As a group, practice Session 1 step-by-step, so that students will feel well prepared and confident when they guide their Little Buddies through the same activities. Feel free to adapt the activities and approach them as you see fit. You may want to break up the training into two parts.

PART ONE: Meet Martha!

Tell students that they will be participating in a MARTHA SPEAKS Reading Buddies Program. As Big Buddies they will each be assigned a Little Buddy. The goal of the program is to help the Little Buddies learn new words and to have a good time together reading, writing, and playing vocabulary games.

- 1 Hold up the book *Martha Speaks* by Susan Meddaugh. Ask if anyone has read the book or seen the television series. Let students respond. Which do they think came first, the book or the show?
- 2 As you read the book aloud to the class, ask your students to jot down words that they think might be new or especially interesting to younger students. Afterwards, compile the words.
- 3 Point out to your students that reading and talking about picture books can be a great way to build vocabulary. The MARTHA SPEAKS television series was designed to help younger kids learn new words and expand their vocabulary.
- 4 Tell students that they will be watching the television episode based on the book *Martha and Skits* by Susan Meddaugh (a sequel to the book *Martha Speaks*). Skits is the name of the puppy who comes to live with Helen and her family. Martha becomes Skits’s “big buddy.” She shows Skits how to do things, just like your students will do for their Little Buddies. “Martha and Skits” is also the show that the Big Buddies and Little Buddies will watch together in their first session.
- 5 As they watch “Martha and Skits,” ask your students to jot down interesting words that kids might learn as they watch the show.
- 6 After watching, have a brief discussion about the story and the words. You might want to ask kids to compare the MARTHA SPEAKS television series with the book series and consider why certain changes were made, such as new characters and word definitions.



Note: In general, Big Buddies will not watch the MARTHA SPEAKS show *before* each session (they will be watching it *during* the session with their Little Buddies). Previewing “Martha and Skits” as part of the introductory training session gives the Big Buddies insight into how the MARTHA SPEAKS series has been designed to help build children’s vocabulary. It also helps them understand how viewing a MARTHA SPEAKS show serves as a jumping off point for the rest of the Reading Buddies session.

Assign Peer Partners

Before each session, Big Buddies will work with another Big Buddy to preview and practice the words, read aloud, activities, and journal. This means that partners will gather the materials they need, make sure they understand and know how to say the four special words, then do the activities together—just as you will model with the class in the training. If a Big Buddy is absent on a Reading Buddies day, his or her partner will work with both Little Buddies, and vice versa.

Role-Play Big Buddy Behavior

Your students will need to establish good working relationships with their Little Buddies. Take time to discuss and practice good techniques that Big Buddies can use. Here are some suggestions.

Ask the class to pretend they are meeting their Little Buddies for the first time. (You may want to mention that their buddies are new to the school, they are little, and that the “Big” Buddies look pretty big to them.) Ask: *How do you imagine the little buddies will feel on your first meeting? How do you think they will see you?* (A “big kid,” someone “cool” to look up to)

Help students brainstorm ideas for how to make their Little Buddies feel comfortable (see suggestions below). Choose one or two suggestions and select a student from the class to be the Little Buddy. Role-play and model some of the recommended ways Big Buddies can introduce themselves to their Little Buddies.

You may want to ask students for “not recommended” behaviors. You can list and role-play some of these as well.

Recommended	Not recommended
Get down on the Little Buddy’s level and say hello. You could shake hands.	Enter loudly, shouting to friends and ignoring your Little Buddy.
Ask the Little Buddy what his/her name is. Introduce yourself using a voice that is not too loud or too soft.	Be overly enthusiastic or quiet (could frighten or confuse a kindergartner).
Smile and make eye contact.	Do not make eye contact with the kindergartner. Act uninterested.



PART TWO: Preview Session I

Practicing the entire Session I together will help Big Buddies understand how each session will work, what their role is, and so on.

Distribute the Big Buddy Guide. Let students flip through the pages. Point out the blank, lined page where they can take notes, as well as the space in the chart for them to fill in the selected read-aloud book title for each session, then have the class read the welcome letter together. Turn to Session I: Martha and Skits.

- 🐾 Read “About the Story” together.
- 🐾 Ask the kids what the “special” words are (*the vocabulary words that we are helping the Little Buddies learn*) and review them.
- 🐾 Have students gather the materials they will need for the activities.
- 🐾 Guide partners as they practice each step of the session together. This will help them feel ready to lead their Little Buddies through the same activities at their first meeting.

1. Talk and Play

Have partners discuss the questions: *What special talent makes Martha unique and extraordinary? What is Skits’s special talent? Would you rather have a dog like Martha or a dog like Skits as a pet? Why?* Let students know that for this session only, the answers to the questions are given in parentheses. Have the students cut out the “Choose and Chat” game cards. Review the directions. Point out that in order to learn new vocabulary, Little Buddies need to hear and use the special words many times, in many different ways. The game is a way to get Little Buddies to use the special words as they talk about the show as well as their own experiences and ideas. Have partners play the Choose and Chat game together. Walk around the classroom and monitor, offering suggestions where necessary.

2. Read Together

Modeling is the best way to show your students some of the things they will need to keep in mind when reading with their Little Buddy.

Have a student play the role of a Little Buddy and, using the selected book for Session I, model the “recommended” and “not recommended” ways to read a book to your buddy (see chart below). As you model the “not recommended” way to read, ask students: *Would this be a good way to read a story together? Why not? What might be a better way? Why is it important for your Little Buddy to see the words and the pictures?*

Recommended	Not recommended
Be sure the Little Buddy can see the words and pictures.	Do not let the Little Buddy see the words and pictures.
Read slowly and with expression. Speak clearly.	Read very fast or in a monotone. Mumble the words.
Pause to ask the Little Buddy a few questions such as, <i>What’s happening in this picture?</i>	Read the entire story without stopping.

After modeling the recommended way to read aloud, give each peer pair a copy of the Session 1 book and have them take turns reading aloud to each other. Encourage kids to jot down any unfamiliar or difficult words. As a class, you can discuss and clarify these words.

Let volunteers ask and answer the discussion questions in the Big Buddy Guide. The questions give the Little Buddies another opportunity to hear and use the special words.

3. Write Together

During each session, Big Buddies will be helping their Little Buddies write in their Reading Buddies Journal. If possible, plan to take photos of the Big and Little Buddies pairs at the first session. Students can then glue the photos on the cover of their journal.

Have the class brainstorm ideas in response to the writing prompt for Session 1: *What does Martha see that is so extraordinary?* The more ideas, the better!

Practice Sessions (30–40 minutes before each Reading Buddies session)

It is important for your students to rehearse and prepare for each lesson *before* they meet with their Little Buddies. The peer partners will prepare and play the vocabulary game, read the session’s picture book aloud to each other, and discuss the journal writing prompt. In the beginning, they may need a good deal of supervision and support, but as the program progresses and they are more familiar with the process, student peer partners should be able to prepare more independently.

Before each practice session, help peer partners to:

- 🐾 Review the special words. Practice saying them together and have students use them in sentences.
- 🐾 Gather materials.
- 🐾 Do the activities and answer the questions posed in the instructions for each session.

Celebration for Big Buddies

In addition to whatever celebration you plan with the Little Buddies teacher, you may want to hold your own ceremony to acknowledge the work of the Big Buddies. You may want to note each student’s particular achievement or contribution to the program as you present their Certificates of Achievement. If funds are available, you may want to reward the Big Buddies by giving each of them a classic book about dogs to take home, such as *Because of Winn Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo, *Shiloh* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, or a similar title. Younger Big Buddies might enjoy the easy reader *Puppy Power* by Judy Cox, which is not only about a girl training her disobedient dog, but includes a reading buddy scene in it as well. You may also want to check out the **MARTHA SPEAKS** TV tie-in easy chapter books published by Houghton Mifflin.

