

## Establishing a buddy system in the classroom

A buddy system pairs students in your class and asks them to support one another with specific tasks or skills. A child with a cochlear implant may benefit from a buddy that helps signal transitions, repeats teachers' directions, or facilitates the child's participation in noisy environments, like the playground.

The benefits of buddy systems are strongly supported for students who speak English as a second language and students with disabilities. The effective techniques of buddy programs can be used to develop a buddy system for children with cochlear implants and their classmates.

Benefits for children in buddy systems include:

- Greater social integration
- Development of leadership skills
- Better classroom management, and
- Improved academic outcomes

Below we outline strategies for implementing a successful buddy system in your classroom.

### Strategies

- Be sure to match academically higher performing children with those that need more support.
- Assign a buddy to the child with a cochlear implant or assign buddies to every student. Assigning buddies to all students may reduce attention on the child with the cochlear implant.
- Provide clear directions regarding what support the buddy is providing. In the case of a child with a cochlear implant, the buddy's role may be to signal the child during transitions between activities or give one-on-one instructions for classroom tasks.
- Make the buddy relationship reciprocal. Both buddies should support one another even if it's in different areas. For example, the buddy may signal transitions to the child with the cochlear implant, and the child with the cochlear implant may support the buddy with practice on spelling tests or wherever the buddy needs extra support.
- Carefully observe and record the successes and challenges of the buddy system. Adjust the system as needed. Improve the buddy system by reassigning buddies, clarifying tasks, or providing the buddies with clearer expectations.
- Reinforce all participants for being good buddies. Use social recognition or other classroom rewards.
- Rotate buddies throughout the year so children have opportunities to develop many friendships.