

General Description:

Best Buddies is the world’s largest organization dedicated to ending the social, physical, and economic isolation of the 200 million people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The focus of this program is building productive friendships between people with and without disabilities, offering social mentoring while improving the quality of life through community inclusion. This service targets leadership development and educates and empowers participants to become leaders, public speakers, and advocates. The purpose of the program is to provide support in creating opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment, and leadership development for Texas middle school and high school students with IDD.

Program oversight is provided by Education Service Center Region 10.

Goals and Objectives or Anticipated Outcomes:

As specified by TEA, the following were targets of the current biennium:

- Serve Best Buddies chapters in Texas high schools; and
- Establish 500 or more successful one-to-one matches between regular high school students and students with IDD; and
- Support 200 inclusive group activities involving students with IDD; and
- Provide ambassador and leadership training to at least 200 students with IDD and all chapter leaders; and
- Provide support to Best Buddies chapters in Texas high schools by building participation and reaching at least 2,000 participants; and
- Complete state-level quarterly and end of year reports.

Program Impact

Participating youth were served through 56 Best Buddies high school chapters. In 2021-2022:

- 2,809 participants (Goal of 2,000)
- 607 participants are students with IDD (22%) (Goal of 500)
- 654 friendships established between students with IDD and typical peers (Goal of 500)
- 93 high school student leaders attended regional leadership conferences
- Delivered 212 inclusive group activities (Goal of 200)

Source: Best Buddies 2022 Q4 Report

Authority and Funding:

The General Appropriations Act, 87th Texas Legislature, Article III, Rider 66. From funds appropriated above in Strategy A.2.4, School Improvement and Support Programs, the Commissioner shall allocate \$250,000 in each fiscal year of the 2022-2023 biennium to support the Best Buddies program.

Funding

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| <i>Appropriation</i> | |
| General Revenue (fiscal year 2022) | \$250,000 |
| General Revenue (fiscal year 2023) | \$250,000 |
| <i>Use of Funds</i> | |
| Grant to ESC Region 10 (fiscal year 2022) | \$250,000 |
| Grant to ESC Region 10 (fiscal year 2023) | \$250,000 |
| Total Projected Expenditures: | \$500,000 |