

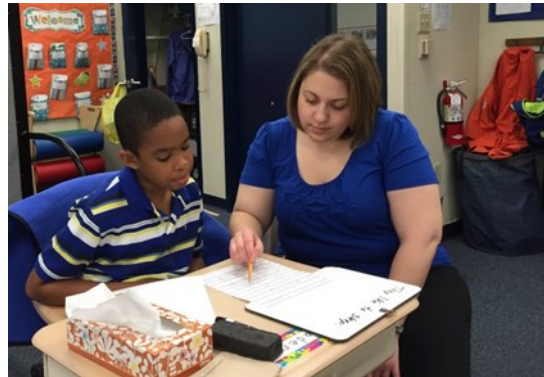
Big Buddy, Little Buddy

**By Sara Pileggi,
Autistic Support Teacher, Hatfield**

Moving an entire school to a temporary location during renovations is not always an ideal situation. However, I decided to make the most of this move and start a buddy program pairing up middle school students with the students in the Hatfield autism support program. I partnered with Pennfield school counselor, Tim McCloud, to gather a group of dedicated and enthusiastic students who would participate in activities with the Hatfield Autistic Support class one study hall period per cycle. Thus, the Big Buddy Little Buddy program was born!

The program consists of 24 eighth and ninth grade Pennfield students who work with the autistic support classrooms on a rotating schedule. The buddies work with students on a variety of skills including social skills, reading, math, self-help skills, and play skills. The students in the autism support program enjoy working with the buddies. This also provides the classroom staff with an opportunity to assess student skills for carryover and generalization.

The autism support students have also thrown several fun parties with their new friends, including a cookie exchange around the holidays. This program will continue through the remainder of the year. It's been a great experience for all and both the autism support students and the middle school buddies have greatly benefited from the program.



Sara has been teaching elementary autism support in North Penn for eight years. She is actively involved in several district committees and is one of the co-chairs of the Data Analysis sub-committee of the Inclusion Task Force. She also works part time as a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. In her spare time she enjoys traveling and volunteering for local organizations close to her heart.

