



Making Friends: Tip Sheet for Parents

Here are some learning strategies or programs that support social development and help children make friends.

As a parent, you have information about your child's strengths and challenges – and so does his or her teacher. Sharing your thoughts with one another can be helpful in order to find strategies to help your child develop friendships. If you are not sure who to talk to, consider talking to your child's teacher, student support teacher, the special education teacher, counsellor or the school principal.

This handout will help you to know what to say when you talk with school staff and help you to work together to support your child.

Social skills are taught at school!

The BC curriculum outlines what children are expected to learn at each grade level. This includes goals for social/emotional learning (check out: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sco/resources.htm). Responsibility for social/emotional learning is *shared* by parents and school staff. Specific programs and the way they are delivered varies by school and district. So the parent could...

- ➔ Ask the child's teacher how he or she supports social skills in the classroom.
- ➔ Ask the principal if there is a school or district-wide approach to social/emotional instruction.

Teachers can support social/emotional development and friendship making abilities in various ways. The way this support happens differs from school to school.

Teachers may help your child by:

- pairing your child with a student or group of students who can help your child make friends and are particularly welcoming.
- including your child in small groups to learn and practice specific social skills.
- coaching your child to practice specific friend making strategies and then discussing the strategies afterwards to make sure your child understands how these strategies work.
- providing buddy opportunities for your child (with both older students and younger buddies).
- monitoring and reporting on your child's progress.
- asking to speak to your physician with your permission.
- determining appropriate social/emotional and friendship making goals with and for your child.

PARENT TIP

It is best to make an appointment with school staff rather than just dropping in for a meeting. Be sure to mention that you are looking for help with developing your child's social skills and ability to make friends. This will help the teacher or other staff member prepare for the meeting.



“I think it is so important for parents and teachers to develop a good working relationship and for parents to be aware that teachers want the very best for their children.” — Teacher

Teachers may also help your child by:

- making referrals to school counseling support or other district resources.
- suggesting activities such as parent-directed neighborhood sport games, or specific programs offered through your local Community Center or Parks & Recreation Department that can help your child develop friendships through shared activities with children his or her own age.
- discussing with you ways of making these events more successful, based on your child’s personality or special needs.
- providing tips like the following ones for play-dates:
 - Set a start and finish time for the play-date to avoid burn-out or over stimulation of your child.
 - Plan activities for the play-date if your child struggles with unstructured play time.
 - Supervise the play date. If your child does something that is not helping him make friends pull him aside and explain how his actions might be affecting the other child.

Some school-based programs may be available, for example:

- **Friend 2 Friend** – A program that helps children learn how to talk to each other, learn imaginative play and develop friendships (developed for children who have autism and problems relating to autism).
www.friend2friendsociety.org
- **FRIENDS for LIFE** – An anxiety prevention and resiliency program that helps children learn life skills, including those needed to develop friendships. Parent component reinforces skills at home.
www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/mental_health/friends.htm

“PLANS”

Behaviour Plans, Learning Plans and IEPs are three different types of plans. The goals included in such plans vary from child to child according to need.

An IEP (or Individualized Education Plan) is a document created for students with designations who have been identified with a clear set of needs. These students require help beyond the regular classroom teacher support.

If educators mention a plan for your child, be sure to clarify with them the type of goals to be included in that plan.



Educators are well trained and will be able to advise you about programs available in your school and how they might work best for your child.

- ➔ Ask about your child’s social development in the classroom, share what you know about your child’s strengths and challenges and your hopes for their social development.
- ➔ Ask your child’s teacher about the types of classroom, school and community activities that might help your child make friends. You could consider asking if the teacher has some tips that might make the events and activities successful.
- ➔ Ask your child’s teacher what school based programs are available in the school and how your child can access them.
- ➔ Ask what you can do to support the process.

Work with your physician and your child’s school to get the best support for your child!



Visit the BC Pediatric Society website for more information for Families: www.bcpeds.ca/families