



## Report to **PARENTS**

# Help Your Kids Make New Friends

For children, fostering friendships post-pandemic carries its own set of challenges. Kids, and even parents, might find themselves overwhelmed and intimidated by returning to in-person activities, and this can cause anxiety, especially for young students who might already have trouble socializing. Isolation—especially during trying times—affected mental health for children and adults alike. School families can use these recommendations to help kids reconnect and socialize.

## Provide Extra Support

Share your own thoughts on friendship and how hard it's been to get back to normal as a way to draw out concerns your child might be having about resocializing after COVID. Say something like, "I remember how I felt when I had to go back to work" or "I remember when I moved to a new school." Reassure your child that social anxiety is normal and affects all of us at one time or another. Role playing can help: Rehearse introductions and simple ways to help join into group conversations.

## Join Group Activities

Outdoor sports and activities provide a healthy, safe way for kids to meet new friends, and the school playground is a natural place for elementary school kids to interact and form friendships. Online gaming sessions can also help your child connect with classmates and friends.

## Reach Out to Old Friends

Ask your child about favorite classmates and suggest a meet-up to ride bikes or do something craft-based. Movie nights, mini golf, and ice cream outings can add structure and ease kids back into face-to-face interactions.



## Observe and Offer Reassurance

If your child continues to struggle with making friends, observe what happens when your child interacts with other kids. Often, when we get uncomfortable, the first impulse is to run and hide. Offer reassurance that this is a normal reaction, and work as a team to come up with creative ways to connect.

## Set Realistic Expectations for Your Child's Friendships

If your child doesn't have as many playdates or invites to birthday parties, that's OK. Being happy with just one or two good friends is normal. It's the quality, not quantity, that matters. Feeling a sense of connection, even if it's with just one favorite friend, is often enough.