

Counselor's Corner

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The Development of Close Friendships

Parents often become very concerned when their child reports that he or she doesn't have any close friends, and rightly so. Friendships are an important part of elementary school and without a good friendship circle, it is hard to develop the skills needed to get along with others. As elementary school children grow, they relate to their close friends more deeply. Parents can help to encourage individual friendships, which later grow into friendship circles. Typical development of close friendships by grade and gender:

Grade	What they do with close friends	How they view close friends
Kindergarten & 1 st grade	They will play with anyone. Closer friends are determined by how often they get together after school.	Close friends share activities and toys.
2 nd & 3 rd grade	Boys and girls often publicly avoid each other. BOYS: Start to organize into small group games with rules. They form temporary clubs with a leader. GIRLS: Closer 4 or 5 friends sometimes become a friendship circle.	Close friends begin to cooperate and adjust to each others' actions and thoughts. BOYS: sometimes exclude others from their clubs but it's only temporary. GIRLS: sometimes threaten each other with "not being friends" but they don't mean it.
4 th grade	Best friends begin to emerge. BOYS: Small groups begin to hang around with each other. GIRLS: Friendship circles are more constant, and begin to center on interests-bike riding, ballet, soccer, theater group, etc.	Close friends have common interests, likes and dislikes, similar abilities, compatible personalities.
5 th grade	BOYS: Hang around exclusively with a group of other boys with similar interests. GIRLS: Longer telephone calls and sharing secrets make their debut.	Close friends are intimate and support each other.

**Good Friends Are Hard to Find, Fred Frankel, Ph.D.*