

# Friendship Helps Protect Your Child Against Bullying

*The door slammed. Jason shuffled into the kitchen and slumped in a chair. His mom could tell he had not had a good day. The telephone rang. It was Jason's friend Gary. Jason's mom overheard Jason say, "Boy, am I glad you called. I had a rotten day." Moments later, Jason asked to go to the park. Jason's mom noticed that as he left, Jason stood a little taller and walked with a little more bounce in his step.*

Research shows that friendship plays a powerful role in preventing bullying and protecting children from the effects of bullying. Children with at least one friend are less likely to be bullied and are better able to cope with bullying once it has occurred. Children without healthy friendships don't seem to do as well academically.

Your child is participating in *Steps to Respect* lessons on finding, making, and keeping friends. Try the following ideas at home to help your child develop a circle of friends.

- Ask your child to share his interests with you. Sharing common interests is a good way to make friends. Help your child develop interests that can be shared with new friends. Think about activities that require at least two people, have easy-to-learn rules, and allow time for the participants to talk with each other.
- Think about places your child could find new friends. Team sports, church, art classes, and scouting groups may give her a chance to develop new interests and meet others who share those interests.
- Help your child carve out time to spend with his friends. Some children are involved in so many activities that they don't have any free time to just "hang out" and get to know their friends better.
- Practice good conversation skills with your child. Help her understand how to keep a conversation going and be a good listener. Conversation is an important tool for getting to know friends.

Sometimes we take friends for granted, but we must remember how important they are for our children. Thank you for helping develop your child's friendship skills and working with us to help create a safe and friendly school.