

**Youth Culture Lesson**  
**Finding Teachable Moments in Culture**  
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**Finding Fantastic Friends**

Who You Hang out with Makes a Difference

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**What Happened:**

What's a friend? It's a simple question that can have lots of different answers. For one person, a friend might be someone with whom you share your innermost secrets. For another, it might be the folks with whom you chat on Facebook. However you define *friendship*, though, scientists believe they're very, very important.

This is especially true when you move out of elementary school—where folks such as teachers and other adults are your primary influences—and into middle school, where your buds and BFFs take center stage.

New research shows that middle schoolers whose friends are socially active and don't make trouble in school tend to get better grades. Meanwhile, kids whose friends get into trouble a lot don't do as well in class.

This is just an extension of what folks have been saying for years: It's important who your friends are. Kids whose friends are into sports tend to play sports. Kids whose friends smoke or do drugs tend to fall into those habits, too. Middle schoolers are in the process of affecting and being affected by the people around them all the time.

"Puberty is taking place," says Thomas Dishion, an author of the study. "The brain is changing rapidly. Kids' brains are almost wired to be reading the social world to see how they fit in, and the school is the arena for it."

**Talk About It:**

Who are your friends? Do most of them fit into a particular clique or category? Do you hang out with people from lots of different groups?

What makes them fun to be with? What do you like to do when you're together? Do you think your friends influence what you like or how you behave? Do you think you influence them? Are there some people who you think might be a bad influence on you?

What qualities make for a good friend? Do they need to be fun? Trustworthy? Reliable? Someone you can talk to when times get rough? What's the most important personality trait a friend should have?

Think about your best friend. What makes them such a good friend? What do you like about them? What do they like about you? How would life be different without them?

**What the Bible Says:**

“He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm” (Prov. 13:20).

“Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character” (1 Cor. 15:33).

“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example” (2 Thess. 3:6-7).

“...Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (1 Thess. 5:11).

“We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing” (2 Thess. 1:3).