

Creativity helps students navigate the increasingly collaborative and information-rich world that awaits them once they leave school. It boosts students' academic performance, perseverance, social-emotional skills, self-confidence, and more. Use these strategies to cultivate your child's creativity.

Prioritize Imaginative Play

Flashy electronic toys are fun, but they don't offer children opportunities for open-ended, imaginative play. Have basic art supplies—paper, crayons, glue, and clay—at home, along with toys like building blocks, puzzles, or costumes for dress-up.

Limit Screen Time

Set limits on TV and iPad time. Make it a family affair: Pick a time each week for the entire family to put away phones and tablets and work together on a creative project.

Embrace Mistakes

Children who are afraid of failure are less likely to think creatively. Teach your child that mistakes are opportunities for growth. Be patient with your child—and model patience as they learn new skills or try a new project.

Encourage Curiosity

When your child shows natural curiosity by asking a lot of questions, embrace it! Ask, "What if" questions, and encourage your child to use their imagination.

Offer Constructive Feedback

Instead of offering general praise ("You're so smart!"), offer specific feedback that praises



your child's effort or the process they used ("You found a great way to paint that scene," or "I can tell you've been practicing.") Offer non-verbal praise (a hug or a thumbs-up) or encouragement by displaying your child's work in the home.

Take a Step Back

If a child feels like you're hovering, they might be less likely to try new ideas. Give your child space to play and create on their own. Wait until your child is finished with a project to ask what they have made.

Use Community Resources

Check your local library, museum, or community center for art classes or workshops to try new creative skills. Keep an eye out for poster or story contests offered by community organizations, too. Or team up with a friend to host an art playdate.



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.