

"OUR FAVORITE MEMORY TOGETHER IS PLAYING VOLLEYBALL BECAUSE EMMA GOT TO HELP ME."
-AMELIE RODGERS (6) AND EMMA BELIAEVA (6)



"OUR FAVORITE MEMORY IS HAVING GYM TOGETHER, AND WE WERE ON A BASKETBALL TEAM AND CHAK GOT REALLY MAD BECAUSE I SUCK AT BASKETBALL."
-CUTTER NUNLEY (8) AND CHAK TING LI (8)



"OUR FAVORITE MEMORY IS GOING TO WATERWORLD BECAUSE THE RIDES WERE FUN AND BRAYDEN JUMPED OUT OF THE TUBES ON THE RIDE STORM. I'LL ALSO REMEMBER WHEN WE GO TO FOOTBALL GAMES, AND TABLE TOPPING PEOPLE."
-PAYTON NGUYEN (7) AND BRAYDEN DAVIES (7)



"OUR FAVORITE MEMORY TOGETHER IS PROBABLY A SLEEPOVER BECAUSE WE WOULD PRANK CALL PEOPLE."
-AVERY SMOLENSKI (7) AND ALI ROTONDO (7)



ARE EVERYTHING



"OUR FAVORITE MEMORY TOGETHER WAS GOING TO GLENWOOD SPRINGS AND GOING TO THIS AMUSEMENT PARK BECAUSE WE MADE A LOT OF JOKES AND WENT ON A LOT OF ROLLER COASTERS, AND WE GOT TO EAT FROZEN GRAPES."
-IZZY HILDEBRAND (7) AND BAILEY CHIPETTA (7)

Friendships weigh heavily in the middle school experience.

Story by Evelyn Moore

Spend any amount of time with middle schoolers and most will tell you their friends are everything to them. But the reason for that might be more complicated than even they realize.

In an article posted on KQED, author Gail Cornwall shared this analysis from educator Mitch Prinstein: "Spending time with their friends isn't just a pastime," he said. "It's actually something that they need for their brain development and identity formation."

Prinstein, a professor of psychology and neuroscience at the University of North Carolina, said many middle schoolers "don't know who they are until they see themselves through their peers' eyes. So there is a lot of testing out new roles, new relationships."

Drake students said friendships were incredibly important to them. "Friends are basically the highlight of everybody's lives. We hang out with our friends 24/7. I don't know what I would do without them," Payton Ninesling (8) said.

A study by the Queensland, Australia government in July 2023 determined that "friendships with other students can give children a sense of belonging and a greater connection to their school."

Friendships also help students with social skills by teaching them how to work with other kids and

even help them manage when difficult social situations arise. "Middle school's hard and there's lots of drama, but friends can help you deal with it," Caleb Dixon (7) said.

While friendships are usually valuable, some relationships could have a negative impact on middle school students. In a "Journal of Youth and Adolescence" study, authors Maria von Salisch and Janice L. Zeman said, "Conflict with friends is a major source of stress for adolescents because it has the potential to endanger the friendship and may entail the loss of social and emotional support."

It can be hard to talk with friends after a disagreement. "When you have a fight or an argument with a friend, it can be hurtful, and it could even ruin the friendship," said Gianna King (6).

But just because an argument can ensue, that doesn't mean people shouldn't communicate honestly with their friends. "If there's an issue, I try to text and call my friends just to try and talk it out with them," Colin Doyle (7) said.

With the ups and downs of middle school, friendship is one of the most important parts. Even if friendships occasionally cause disagreements, they are still a critical part of middle school and life in general. "If you're going through a hard time, friends can help you get through it, and they will always be there for you," Luca DeCarlo (6) said.

WHY FRIENDS

Students explain why friends matter so much.

"Because they help me through life and they're nice and caring. Middle school's tough because there are a lot of drama sometimes, so it's really important to have close friends."
-Vivian Mosher (8)

"It's nice to have friends, and when you get to high school, there are a lot of people, and it's harder to make friends. It's nice to have your friends in your classes."
-Lillia Leahy (6)

"Friends are important to help you get through things and to have someone to talk to."
-Summer Vigil (7)

"They help me when I'm having a stressful day. They also help me with school work. Middle school can be stressful, and it is nice to have someone to sit with at lunch."
-Ellie Zanon (6)

Match the Besties

See if you can identify who is best friends with whom. Answers at bottom.

A Aven McFarlane (8)	1 Malia Peer (6)
B Izzy Guadagni (7)	2 Jimmy Karolak (7)
C Maebry Lawrence (6)	3 Carter McDonald (8)
D Casen Mueller (7)	4 Rory Finnick (7)

Answer key: 1C,2D,3A,4B