



Youth Social Connectedness *Resources for Students & Families*



Facts & Data

- School connectedness is the feeling of being accepted, supported, respected, valued, and feeling like you belong at school, home, and in community.
- Research from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows that students who feel connected to school are less likely to struggle with mental health concerns including suicide, missing school, engaging in risky behaviors, violence, and substance use.
- 76.6% of Washington 10th graders reported that there are people at school who will help them. Students with no absences in the previous 30 days were 6.4% more likely to report having support than students who missed one or more days.
- Positive relationships, even just one, with family, friends, teachers, coaches, and other trusted adults help young people build confidence, resilience, communication skills, and a strong sense of belonging. 75.2% of 10th graders reported moderate to high levels of hope in the 2025 Washington Healthy Youth Survey.
- Although technology can be helpful, too much screen time can reduce opportunities for face-to-face conversations, physical activity, family connection, and sleep. The goal is to develop healthy habits and balance.
- Some children may feel lonely, disconnected, and withdrawn from friends, avoid activities they once enjoyed, or struggle to build healthy relationships. Recognizing these changes early can help families get support before problems become bigger.

Action Items

- Spend regular 1:1 time with your child through conversations, meals, shared activities and model healthy relationships—listen with interest and without judgment.
- Ask your child about their friends, classmates, teachers, and other adults at school and how to build positive relationships with trustworthy and supportive people.
- Students who attend school regularly build friendships, connect with supportive adults, and feel part of their school community.
- Talk about how technology affects your child. Practice and encourage device-free times during meals, family activities, homework, and before bedtime.
- Watch for signs of loneliness, isolation, withdrawing from friends, avoiding activities, expressions of not belonging, start a conversation with them and reach out for help if concerns continue.
- Encourage participation in sports, clubs, music, volunteering, faith-based, or community activities.

Conversation Starters

- "Who did you enjoy talking with today?"
- "What are two things about today that you want to share with me?"
- "Who did you choose to spend your time with today? What did you do together?"
- "When do you feel most connected at school? Are there times you feel less connected?"
- "When you're having a hard day, who helps you feel better? Is there an adult you go to for help?"
- "How do your phone and social media help you stay connected with people? Are there times they make things harder?"
- "When do you notice it's time to take a break from your phone? Are there times you wish your friends would take a break from their phones?"
- "Is there a club, activity, class, or group you want to try?"
- "What helps you feel most connected to your friends and family?"
- "What are you (not) looking forward to at school tomorrow?"

*Tip: Sometimes children and teens engage more easily during shared activities such as walking, driving, cooking, or playing a game together.

Additional Resources

- [CDC – School Connectedness](#): Evidence-based information about the importance of school connectedness and strategies that support student well-being.
- [CDC – Positive Childhood Experiences](#): Resources describing how supportive relationships and safe environments promote lifelong health.
- [Search Institute: Developmental Relationships Framework](#): and practical tools for strengthening relationships between young people and caring adults.
- [Advancing Social and Emotional Learning – CASEL](#): Family resources on building relationships, belonging, and social-emotional skills.
- [Child Mind Institute](#): Parent-friendly guidance on friendships, loneliness, social development, and healthy technology habits.
- [American Academy of Pediatrics – HealthyChildren.org](#): Evidence-based parenting resources on friendships, bullying prevention, digital media use, and healthy relationships.
- [Healthy Youth Survey](#): The survey asks students their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors about a variety of health and safety topics, including school climate, community safety, and mental health.

