



FIG 3-11 Peers become increasingly important as children develop friendships outside the family group.

Toys

The type of toys chosen by or provided for children can support and enhance children's development in the areas just described. Although no scientific evidence shows that any toy is necessary for optimal learning, toys offer an opportunity to bring children and parents together. Research has indicated that a positive parent-child interaction can enhance early childhood brain development ([Glassy, Romano, Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care, et al, 2003](#)). Toys that are small replicas of the culture and its tools help children assimilate into their culture. Toys that require pushing, pulling, rolling, and manipulating teach them about physical properties of the items and help develop muscles and coordination. Rules and the basic elements of cooperation and organization are learned through board games.

Because they can be used in a variety of ways, raw materials with which children can exercise their own creativity and imaginations are sometimes superior to ready-made items. For example, building blocks can be used to construct a variety of structures, count, and