



FIG 12-2 Preschool children enjoy friends and often use nonverbal messages to communicate.

Children between 3 and 4 years old form sentences of about three or four words and include only the most essential words to convey a meaning. Such speech is often termed **telegraphic** for its brevity. Three-year-old children ask many questions and use plurals, correct pronouns, and the past tense of verbs. They name familiar objects, such as animals, parts of the body, relatives, and friends. They can give and follow simple commands. They talk incessantly regardless of whether anyone is listening or answering them. They enjoy musical or talking toys or dolls and imitate new words proficiently.

From 4 to 5 years old, preschoolers use longer sentences of four or five words and use more words to convey a message, such as prepositions, adjectives, and a variety of verbs. They follow simple directional commands, such as “Put the ball on the chair,” but can carry out only one request at a time. They answer questions such as “What do you do when you are hungry?” by describing the appropriate action. The pattern of asking questions is at its peak, and children usually repeat a question until they receive an answer.

Personal-Social Behavior

The pervasive ritualism and negativism of toddlerhood gradually diminish during the preschool years. Although self-assertion is still a major theme, preschoolers demonstrate their sense of autonomy differently. They are able to verbalize their request for independence and perform independently because of their much-