

Helping Kids Succeed – Alaskan Style!

Practical Suggestions for Building Assets in Your Child

Asset # 14- Adult Role Models

To Build Asset # 14 Parents and Extended Family Can . . .

Model responsible behavior. Discuss your own action sometimes: how and why you behave as you do.

— *Craig*

Look for ways your child can be around people you know are good role models.

— *Klawock*

Be honest about your shortcomings. Set goals for overcoming those things that make you less than a good role model for your children.

— *Anchorage*

Talk with your children about the role models seen in TV and movies. Discuss how these role models match or conflict with your family's values and behavior standards.

— *Kenai*

If a single mom, try to have male friends who are positive role models spend some time with your children, especially your sons.

— *Juneau*

Traditional Ways to Promote Asset # 14

Rather than telling a child what to do, tell a story with a lesson so they can decide for themselves.

— *Chevak*

Help get kids and Elders together, like the talking circles with visitors and tourists.

— *Kotzebue*

Grandparents are quiet teachers. They don't always tell us what to do. We watch them and then try to do it ourselves.

— *Toksook Bay*

Asset # 14 — Adult Role Models

Parents and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.

27% of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.*

*Based on Search Institute surveys of almost 100,000 6th to 12th grade youth throughout the United States

What are Assets?

Assets are 40 key building blocks to help kids succeed. Like a dream catcher, assets are the supporting threads in a young person's life that can keep away harm and invite goodness.

Words of Wisdom:

Take a moment to consider the effect we would have on our children and teens if we adults would all model positive, responsible behaviors. Kids would have to learn their negative behaviors from books, the television, the entertainment industry, and from other sources that are "out there".

Unfortunately, most kids don't have to look far to find opportunities to learn how to smoke, drink, fight, curse, use drugs, and/or be rude. Kids throughout Alaska tell us that they are watching us adults, and they are not exactly thrilled with what they are seeing.

They laugh when we blame the television for their violent behavior. They explain that what they see on television is seldom different from the world that is being created by the adults around them. They tell us that we adults are too busy pointing fingers at the "problem out there" to realize that there are three of our own fingers pointing back at us. They tell us that we adults are very focused on fixing the behaviors of others. Unfortunately, the kids report that we seem far less interested in improving our own behaviors.

If you want to go out and build asset #14 in the kids you know, here are a couple things you can do. First, you can remind youth that there are adults in every community that are extremely positive role models. Ask them to notice the positive adults that are all around them.

Second, remind youth that people are complicated and that while some adults do occasionally model negative behavior, this does not mean these adults are all bad. All of us make mistakes. Just because a person slips up a couple of times does not mean that we should judge them to be a negative role model. Invite the youth to remember the positive qualities of the adults they encounter during the day.

Finally, I recently heard a parent talking to their teen age son about the adult role models in the their community. The teen was very good at finding the blemish on every adult the parent mentioned. The parent, finally, looked into his son's eyes and said, "Son, all adults are role models. You will choose to model yourself after the characteristics in them that you admire. What characteristics do you choose to admire?"

Isn't that a good question for all of us, teens and adults alike, to answer?

Research

For the past 50 years, social scientists have known that people develop our complex social behaviors and skills from modeling the behaviors of others. Beginning in infancy, with the imitation of facial expressions, gestures, and sounds, human beings begin to internalize the behaviors of those around them.

We know that imitation declines during the elementary school years. However, observational learning and modeling continues throughout life. We also know that there is a natural delay between when a behavior was first modeled for a child/youth and when the behavior presented itself.

Modeling impacts everyone. In the teen age years, research has shown that a teen's expectation about their future lives, level of educational attainment, work, and family life are all significantly influenced by adult role models. These role models are people who the teens perceive to be "like them" or whom they wish to be like.

Positive adult role models are associated with:
Higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy;
Decreased problem behaviors;
Decreased early sexual intercourse among females;
Reduced smoking;
Reduced alcohol use;
Reduced use of drugs;
Improved high school graduation rates;
Positive school adjustment; and
Higher occupational aspirations and expectations.

How are you a positive role model for the youth in your community? Do the youth see you enough to learn these behaviors from you?

Quote

Kids will do as adults do, regardless of what adults say. No one has ever molded a child's life through mere words and commands. However, words backed up by personal actions can impact a child forever.

Derek Peterson

This newsletter and other asset resources are produced by the
Association of Alaska School Boards'
Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement (Alaska ICE)
316 West 11th Street
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Tel: (907) 586-1486
Fax: (907) 586-1450
Email: alaskaice@asab.org