

Helping Kids Succeed – Alaskan Style!

Practical Suggestions for Building Assets in Your Child

Asset # 21- Achievement Motivation

To Build Asset # 21 Parents and Extended Family Can . . .

Always be learning something yourself, and show your children what it looks like to be committed to learning.
— *Tenakee*

Talk with your children about how their effort in school now will give them more choices in life later on. Think of real people or characters they know and notice how their past effort or lack of effort affected their life.
— *New Stuyahok*

Be supportive and helpful if your child is struggling. Help to problem-solve. Don't just assume your child isn't trying hard enough.
— *Petersburg*

Learn things with them. Turn school projects into activities you can do with your child.
— *False Pass*

Celebrate with a special dinner when one of your children accomplishes something special.
— *Elim*

Traditional Ways to Promote Asset # 21

Let your children know what you expect of them, and praise them when they do what you expect.
— *Kluti-Kaah*

Remind your child daily that school is important.
— *Savoonga*

Recognize and honor cultural differences.
— *Shishmaref*

Invite Elders or local residents into school to teach the cultural history.
— *Copper Center*

Asset # 21 — Achievement Motivation

Kids are motivated to do well in school

63% 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 Encouragement

As a recent High School graduate I remember the night of my school's graduation ceremony. I cherish the memory of walking across the gymnasium to receive my diploma.

I was elated; I'd made it. And, to add to the whole experience, I had most of the community in the audience celebrating my success with me. To each one of us graduates, that was our night. We claimed it as our celebration.

Currently as a sophomore in college I look back and wonder, "What motivated me to do well in school?"

My family comes to mind first. My parents intentionally encouraged and supported me. One tradition we held was every quarter, after report cards were sent home, we would go out for a celebration dinner at the restaurant of my choice. During dinner, we would discuss the events of the world, the events of my life, and the events of the family. My family was proud of me, and they let me know it.

My parents built a bridge between themselves and the school by communicating with my teachers and coaches. They attended school activities, from concerts to sports activities.

There was also a bridge between me and the community; from the Rotary Club, City Council, newspaper, School Board, and others. I felt connected and that connection seemed to propel me toward further and further success.

As far as external influences, my teachers challenged and inspired me. I was not often required to do "busy work" and my teachers created an interesting learning environment. I wanted to learn and it was fun and rewarding for me to do so.

All my success can't be credited to my environment, because something in me wanted to do well; I wanted to succeed. I had goals in mind and looked towards those goals. I knew I would attend college. I had expectations for my life. I had dreams.

One of the principle ideas of my motivation is celebration. When I succeeded, we celebrated. (Maybe it is because when I succeeded, WE had succeeded - the family, the community, everybody!)

Celebrating the successes in life can be so simple. It need not be money or gifts, rather just a sincere acknowledgement of one's accomplishments. Those little milestones kept me going and motivated me to reach farther, jump higher and keep on going. Are you doing enough to celebrate the young people in your life?

— Jennifer Loesch,
Former Alaska ICE Project Developer

Research

Some rather obvious research findings about achievement motivation - the desire to do well in school - are the improved attitudes in students towards school, an increase in higher grades and test scores, as well as a more positive attitude toward schoolwork. Perhaps some findings that aren't as obvious are that students who desire to learn often have better communication skills, improved mental health and lower levels of risk behavior.

Here are some other positive findings associated with Achievement motivation:

Increased high school completion
(Brooks-Gunn, Guo & Furstenberg, 1993)

Increased enrollment in college
(Wilson-Sadberry, Winfield, & Royster, 1991)

Increased positive perceptions of school and of teachers
(Entwistle, Kozeki, & Tait, 1989; Jessor et al., 1995)

Increased school effort
(Goodenow, 1992)

Increased goal setting and positive expectancies for success
(Hay, 1993; Harter 1982)

Research has found that the more people who positively contribute to a student's desire to do well in school, the better a student will do. From the ages of about 6 - 18, students spend most of their time either at home or school. The environment they learn in will affect their future outlook. By creating a positive learning environment in both places, a student is more likely to succeed.

Quote:

"A young person's commitment to learning is strongly influenced by relationships with family, peers, and others, as well as by the school environment."

"Education is far too important to be left wholly to the educators." *Alaskan School Board Member*

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