

Helping Kids Succeed – Alaskan Style!

Practical Suggestions for Building Assets in Your Child

Asset # 7- Community Values Youth

To Build Asset #7 Parents and Extended Family Can . . .

1. Attend school and community functions, sports activities, concerts, etc. in which your kids are involved. — **Juneau**
2. Encourage your kids to participate in conferences concerning issues that affect them. Help them to give testimony. Help them write letters to the newspaper about issues affecting young people. — **Metlakatla**
3. Lead a youth program or group that gets involved in issues of the day. — **North Pole**
4. Support community efforts that address the needs of youth. Example: building a skateboard park. — **Wasilla**
5. Hire neighborhood kids to do chores such as gardening, lawn work, shoveling snow, or painting. Do projects with the kids to get to know them better. — **Anchorage**
6. Encourage your newspaper, radio, or TV station to recognize youth for the contributions they make to the community. Go beyond sports and academic excellence. — **Fairbanks**
7. Encourage the AC (Alaska Commercial) or other local businesses to give discounts or certificates to young people who have shown some exceptional achievement. — **Bethel**
8. Attend village, city, or borough council meetings to make sure the needs and opinions of young people are heard. Invite young people to go with you. Keep youth issues in the spotlight with decision-makers. — **Kenai**
9. Write thank-you notes to youth groups who have made some contribution. — **Palmer**
10. Nominate a worthy youth group you know for the "Spirit of Youth" award each year. — **Anchorage**

Traditional Ways to Promote Asset #7

Give praise to any child or youth whenever you see them doing good. If a boy chops wood for an Elder, compliment him and tell him he is valuable.

— **Toksook Bay**

Tell your children where their grandparents and great-grandparents come from. Help them see the connection to their place and to their family.

— **Chuathbaluk**

Celebrate each youth's first successful hunt.

— **Noorvik**

Teach children traditional songs. — **Lower Kalskag**

During the whaling festival, people gathered for the blanket toss. Many hands held the skin cover of an umiat (boat). Children, teenagers, and some adults would jump high in the air as people cheered and shouted.

— **Barrow**

Show you appreciate kids. In Toksook Bay, the community had the children stand in the center of the gym and all the adults formed a circle around them on the outside and sang the song, "We are the World." This was magical and loving.

— **Toksook Bay**

Asset #7 — Community Values Youth

20% 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:

During a recent Alaska Youth Leadership Institute, 55 youth broke into six groups to discuss three questions. The first question asked them to report on the strengths they bring to their communities. The second question asked them to describe how they think the adults in their communities view teenagers. The final question asked them to consider how they would like to be perceived by the adults in their communities. Their answers tell us a great deal about the quality of the youth in our midst.

1) What are the strengths that youth bring to their communities?

Focused, respect, energetic, willingness to learn, curiosity about our culture, willingness to change, ambitious, intelligence, more worldly than our parents, motivation, willing to work together, new and different ideas, non-traditional learning styles, high goals, ability to use technology, ability to research solutions from a wide variety of sources, cooperation, drive/perseverance, capable, resourceful, quality education, self-control, creativity, higher levels of education than our parents, fun, independence, self-esteem, listening skills, cultural awareness, unity, friendly, integrity, responsible, open-mindedness, and self-direction.

2) How do you think the adults in your community view teenagers?

Delinquents, lazy, disrespectful, adults don't feel safe around us, sexually promiscuous, criminals, drugies, lazy, potential leaders, not as real people, not capable of making decisions, strong, agents of change, adults don't accept that we are growing up, alcoholics, pot smokers, disrespectful, no pride in our culture, unable, disgrace, unworthy, leaders, intelligent, future leaders, weird, disgraceful, gangs, criminals, stupid, uneducated, irresponsible, rude, immature, troublemakers, punks, put us down a lot, we can't do the things they do, lazy, gangsters, and they judge us by who we hang out with.

3) How would you like the adults in your community to view teenagers?

As individuals, as resources instead of future resources, as equals, educated, compliant, capable, having integrity, organized, sufficient, achievers, good, do-gooders, responsible, mature, capable, future, trustworthy, belief in tradition, faith, encouraging, confident, responsible, mature, polite, respectful, worthwhile-good, integrity, helpful, organized, trustworthy, energized, all around good kids, confident, young adults, smart, intelligent, capable, resourceful, motivated, and high goals. It is interesting to review the answers of our youth. In the first question they measured themselves; their honest assessment of their strengths. In the second question they measured their environment; their heartfelt assessment of their barriers. In the final question their answers seem to indicate that they, the youth, would like us to simply acknowledge, and respect, their strengths, accomplishments, skills, and potential. After reviewing our student leaders' thoughts, we must ask ourselves, "Are the perceptions that our youths have of us correct?" AND, regardless of whether the answer to the question is YES or NO, "What are we, adults, going to do about it?" I can assure you that the youth considered what they were going to do about it. They planned to SHOW us, repeatedly, how well they are able to get people and communities working together for the benefit of all.

News You Can Use

The research clearly shows that youth who feel valued and useful are more likely to have better mental health, higher levels of moral reasoning, and to be more involved in the community. The research goes on to show that youth who feel valued by and connected to the community results in reduced substance use, violence, and delinquency. There are, of course, more important things that happen when youth feel valued and connected. A few of them are:

- Higher self-esteem and a better self concept.
- Greater sense of person control and a sense of optimism about the future.
- Greater achievement of self-actualization.
- Higher levels of moral reasoning and higher levels of thinking.
- Greater social and personal responsibility.
- More effective parent-child relationships.
- More complex relationships with other.

One study of 1600 elementary, middle, and high school students found that 7 out of 10 kids believed that parents, police, teachers, and senior citizens thought negatively about the youth today. Over 50% of the kids surveyed thought that adults viewed them with extreme negativity.

How do you, the adult reader of this paper, feel about the youth of today? If your feelings are negative, why? If they are positive, have you expressed this to the youth you encounter?

Quote:

When you plant corn, if it does not grow well, you don't blame the corn. You look for reasons it is not doing well. It may need fertilizer, or more water, or less sun. You never blame the corn. Yet if we have problems with our young people, we blame them. But if we know how to take care of them, they will grow well, like the corn. Blaming has no positive effect; none at all. It does no good — it only causes harm. The only good comes from understanding.

Elder from Tok

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