



Developmental Assets

There are 40... How many does your child have?

Asset #21 – Achievement Motivation

It is important for children to want to do well in school and other activities, to work hard and practice so they will develop a sense of achievement with their efforts. Achievement Motivation is one of 40 Developmental Assets; the more assets a young person has, the less likely they are to experience a variety of social problems, and the more likely they are to thrive! Most young people will not do well at every school subject or activity they try. However, as adults, we can all become “treasure hunters” with the young people in our lives – giving them opportunities to find their talents and develop their skills.

A landmark study some 30 years ago found that children who have a positive and stable relationship with a parent are better able to achieve. Young people need to know and observe motivated, successful adults. They also need a sense of the lasting importance of learning and a belief in their own abilities.

Here are some ideas for building this asset:

- ❖ Encourage motivation from the *inside out*. Tap into your child’s interests and passions and try to connect it to what they are learning in school. Don’t “pay” young people to learn with money, rewards or excessive praise; that’s motivation from the *outside in*.
- ❖ Clearly communicate to young people that you value learning – that you think school is important and you want and expect them to take it seriously.
- ❖ Model life-long learning! Show an ongoing interest in learning new things, making new discoveries and exploring new topics.
- ❖ Encourage young people to do their best at school but don’t expect perfection, and leave room for mistakes. You may want to check out Howard Gardner’s books on multiple intelligences which looks at “how you are smart” rather than “how smart you are”.
- ❖ Stay in contact with teachers about young people’s progress in school; don’t wait for report cards.
- ❖ Learn along with your child. Read the book they are studying and discuss; take a community education class together.
- ❖ If a young person seems apathetic about school or resists going, try to find out why. Is school too easy for them or too hard? Do they feel safe at school? Are they getting the support they need? Brainstorm solutions with their teacher.