

21. Achievement Motivation

Doing your best always makes the grade

Do you know young people who always try their best in school, without rewards or punishments dangling over them? These students have found a reason to work hard; they have *achievement motivation*. Doing well academically means different things to different people. It doesn't have to mean getting straight A's or being the valedictorian. It does mean doing their best work and caring about their performance, whether they're creating an art portfolio or writing an essay. There are plenty of reasons to work hard in school—getting good grades, making parents happy, or earning a spot on the honor roll. But the biggest incentive for young people to do their best—in school and out—comes from within: personal pride from knowing they gave it their all. Making an effort in school and other activities now, can give young people more reasons to feel proud later on. Achievement Motivation is Asset 21 of Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets, the qualities, experiences, and relationships that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

Here are the facts

Research shows young people who try their best in school have better grades, are more likely to finish high school, and are better at managing stress. They're also better at setting goals and more likely to enroll in college. About 65 percent of young people, ages 11–18, say they are motivated to do well in school, according to Search Institute surveys. Help young people understand how important school is so they study hard, pay attention, and do their homework.

Tips for building this asset

What drives the young people you know to do their best? Whatever their reasons, remind them that when they try their best they can *always* feel good about the results, no matter what the grade.

Also try this

In your home and family: Ask your child about what motivates her or him to succeed in school. Find out what challenges he or she faces and discuss ways to overcome them. Share any tips or advice you learned from your own school experience.

In your neighborhood and community: When you say, "What's new at school?" to young people in your neighborhood, focus on their interests instead of their grades.