

6. Parent Involvement in Schooling

Get involved, stay involved

When children start kindergarten, most parents are quite involved with their education. They attend parent-teacher conferences, cheer on their children at school concerts, and proudly display their children's artwork. But far too often, parents begin to distance themselves from their children's schooling as the kids grow older. The involvement drops dramatically once young people enter middle and high school—in some respects the most difficult time for young people. Parents don't have to go to school every day or even volunteer monthly, but it's important to know what's going on with their children's education. Parent Involvement in Schooling is Asset 6 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 that young people are more likely to grow up healthy when their parents are involved in their education. Only 29 percent of young people, ages 11–18, say their parent(s) are actively involved in helping them succeed in school, according to Search Institute surveys. Remember, even if they don't always show it, young people need your help with school. Check in with your kids to see how they feel things are going with school—and make sure to communicate regularly with teachers as well.

Tips for building this asset

Young people need their parents to stay actively involved in their education throughout middle and high school. If you're a parent, introduce yourself to your child's teachers and establish clear, open communication. Attend all teacher-parent conferences, or reschedule a more convenient time if needed. If possible, volunteer in small ways, such as speaking on career day or setting up for a classroom party. Also, talk to your child about school. Ask him or her about current assignments and projects. Be available to help when your child needs it. If you're a teacher, reach out to parents and engage them as partners in their children's education.

Also try this

In your home and family: Maintain ongoing communication with your child's teachers. Call or e-mail to check in every other month—or more often if necessary.

In your neighborhood and community: Join a parent-teacher organization. If your time is limited for volunteering do what you can when you can.

In your school: Offer parents easy, convenient ways to get involved in their children's education. For example, tutoring students before exams may be perfect for parents who can't make an ongoing commitment. For parents who miss conferences, try calling them to find out what's keeping them from attending. See if you can work out a way to get together or by phone discuss their child's progress.

In your youth program: Offer child care or transportation to parents who need these services to be able to get involved at their child's school.