

12. School Boundaries

Make sure everyone knows the rules

All schools need rules. In fact, young people actually learn better when school boundaries—expectations for how they should act—are clear and consistent. Setting these standards isn't always easy, however, and neither is enforcing them. Many schools struggle with how to discipline students appropriately and effectively. It's a balancing act in which school administrators, parents, and students play important roles. Working together, families and educators can ensure young people reach their highest potential. School Boundaries is Asset 12 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 who attend schools with clear rules and consequences are more likely to display positive behaviors and attitudes, rather than engage in risky behaviors. About 52 percent of young people, ages 11–18, say their schools provide clear rules and consequences, according to Search Institute surveys. Work to ensure schools help young people focus on positive, rather than negative, behavior.

Tips for building this asset

It's important for parents to stay involved in their children's school. Teachers and administrators can help by creating a conduct code at the beginning of the school year and sending it home to parents. Parents can reinforce the rules set by the school. Conflicts may still occur, and when they do, allow everyone—students, parents, teachers, and others in the community—to feel comfortable voicing their concerns and suggesting solutions to the problem. The more families, schools, and communities work together to establish consistent boundaries, the better off young people will be because they'll know what to expect.

Also try this

In your home and family: Learn about school boundaries by visiting or volunteering at your child's school. Ask yourself: Overall, how are students behaving? How do adults and students interact with one another? When conflicts occur, how are they resolved? How do the school boundaries match your home boundaries? When you're at home with your child, talk to her or him about why school rules are important.

In your neighborhood and community: Understand the local school leaders' expectations for the behavior of young people in the neighborhoods surrounding the school. If the school handbook isn't specific, help administrators address the issue.

In your school or youth program: Work with the young people in your school or program to create clear rules and norms about appropriate behavior.