

22. School Engagement

Academics are important, but there's more to an education

Each day is a new beginning, a new day to learn. For some young people, this prospect is exciting and exhilarating. For others, it's scary. Sometimes learning is difficult, but it doesn't have to be scary. Help young people understand that academics are just part of the education they must complete to successfully attain goals. Find creative ways to show young people learning means more than studying for or worrying about tests. Opportunities for learning are everywhere, and they're fun! School Engagement is Asset 22 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 are actively engaged in learning exhibit more positive than negative behaviors. About 55 percent of young people, ages 11–18, say they are actively involved in their learning. It's time to help even more young people discover—and achieve—personal success in and out of the classroom.

Tips for building this asset

The best way to keep young people engaged in school is to focus on their individual interests and goals. Listen to young people and pay attention to the activities they most enjoy. Once you're aware of what they want (or need), help them tie their interests and goals to what they learn in and out of school. Since learning doesn't just happen within the four walls of the school, look for—or design—additional learning activities that complement school curricula. Acknowledge and celebrate school successes. Help young people address any challenges they may face.

Also try this

In your home and family: Help your child stay interested and involved at school by ensuring he or she is getting enough sleep, eating well, and managing difficulties. Show your child that learning is more than just the classes they take at school. Talk to your child about things he or she is interested in, and help your child find new ways of experiencing and learning about those interests—outside the classroom.

In your neighborhood and community: Look for ways to address the curiosity of young people through books, plays, artwork, or hobbies. At the local library or community center, post notices about fun community events or activities, such as author signings, school debates, or museum classes.

In your school or youth program: Help young people focus on their personal ideas of success. Have them create goals that encompass academics, hobbies, and values. After several weeks, evaluate students and participants based on their goals. Celebrate successes and talk about steps to take to improve where needed.