

24. Bonding to School

Finding a connection with school

Why do some kids drop out of school and others stay in and even excel? Experts say kids who don't like school and choose not to attend are disinterested, bored, and feel unconnected. On the other hand, those who stay in school and do well have the opposite experience. They like it there. They have people who enjoy seeing them every day and who miss them when they're absent. They also have friends and family who are proud of what they do at school. These young people are stimulated and challenged, have fun, and enjoy learning at school. Bonding to School is Asset 24 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 care about their school are less likely to be involved in violence or the use of alcohol and other drugs. They also are more likely to become good leaders, value diversity, and succeed in school. About 52 percent of young people, ages 11–18, say they care about their schools, according to Search Institute surveys.

Tips for building this asset

Parents and others in the community can make a big difference in improving schools and making them caring places for young people. If you know a young person who doesn't like school, ask her or him why. Remember that for students, part of bonding to school involves knowing someone in their school cares about them. Share your experiences from when you were in school—such as finding an adult or a peer who cared about you—with the young people you know who are struggling to fit in.

Also try this

In your home and family: Tell your child about one adult and one peer who cared about you when you were in school. Help your child identify which adults and friends at school he or she likes best and why.

In your neighborhood and community: Be an involved partner with the school. Volunteer to tutor in an after-school program or as an athletic coach. Use these opportunities to bond with students, helping them in turn to bond to school.

In your school or youth program: Identify young people who do not have an involved adult in their lives and find ways to help them connect to a caring, available adult.