

ideas for parents

Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

FAST FACTS

ASSET #21: Achievement Motivation

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when they are motivated to do well in school.

67%
of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.*

What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 values, experiences, and qualities that help kids succeed. "Achievement motivation" is one of five commitment-to-learning assets.

* Based on Search Institute surveys of 217,277 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States during the 1999-2000 school year.

The Benefits of Motivation from the Inside Out

When you leave your child alone, what does he or she usually do?

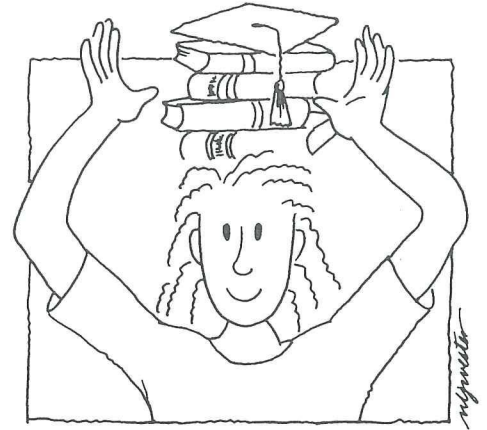
What if you disconnected the refrigerator, the television, the telephone, and the computer?

Children motivated from the inside out choose activities based on something inside of them that gets them excited. On the other hand, children who choose to hang out with friends or get bored when they are alone are typically motivated from the outside in. They want someone to tell them what to do or give them ideas, and are motivated by rewards and structure.

Schools usually work the second way: from the outside in. Teachers assign homework, tests, and papers. Success is based on a system of rewards like grades or special privileges. In this kind of setting, students aren't often encouraged to pursue their own interests, be creative, or take the initiative.

Getting any child motivated to do well in school can be tricky, especially one who is more interested in other things. If you use tactics such as promising money, rewards, or praise, some young people will find the fastest, easiest route to getting by—and then may go on to something else.

If you can encourage your child to feel motivated from the inside, then you'll launch a lifetime of



learning. A child who is motivated from the inside out:

- Loses track of time while learning.
- Discovers new things about her- or himself in the process.
- Has fun while learning.
- Enjoys the challenge of figuring out a difficult subject or concept.
- Is curious about subjects.
- Chooses learning experiences when many options for activities are given.
- Takes delight in learning new things.

time together

Three ways to help your child become motivated to do well in school:

1. Tap into your child's interests and passions. Try to connect those with what he or she is learning in school.
2. Encourage your child to do her or his best, but leave room for mistakes. Don't expect perfection.
3. Don't wait for report cards. Make contact with your child's teachers about her or his progress.

talk together

Questions to discuss with your child:

- How do you feel about school? Which subjects are you excited to learn more about? Why?
- What are your friends' attitudes toward school?
- How can I help you enjoy school more and help you succeed?

Your Role in Your Child's Motivation

“Adults and children alike become more interested in what they are doing when they get straightforward feedback about how they are doing,” says Alfie Kohn, author of *Punished by Rewards*. Kohn says we should help our children develop self-determination, and he encourages parents to ask themselves these questions:

- When you comment on your child's schoolwork, are you helping her or him feel in control?
- Are you helping your child make her or his own judgments about what's good performance?
- Whose agenda are you promoting: yours or your child's?
- Do your comments encourage your child to become more involved in the subject?
- Who does your child want to please most? You, the teacher, or her- or himself?

More Help for Parents

Unlocking Your Child's Learning Potential: How to Equip Kids to Succeed in School and Life by Cheri Fuller. This book discusses different learning styles and how to help children make the most of their strengths. (Published by NavPress.)

Quick Tip:
Keep expectations high but realistic.

What Helps and What Hurts?

Researchers at California State University writing in the *Journal of Educational Psychology* have found ways to motivate (or stop motivating) your child:

MOTIVATES

- Give opportunities to keep your child from getting bored.
- Help out when school work gets hard for your child.
- Encourage your child to enjoy and be persistent in doing homework.
- Help your child be independent.
- Encourage your child to accomplish tasks.

DISCOURAGES

- Get angry.
- Use threats.
- Give extra privileges.
- Take away certain privileges.
- Expect your child to try.
- Reward.
- Punish.

Final Word

“Motivation is a fire from within. If someone else tries to light that fire under you, chances are it will burn very briefly.”—Stephen R. Covey

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