

ideas for parents

Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

FAST FACTS

**ASSET
CATEGORY**

**Commitment
to Learning**

The more your child is committed to learning, the more likely he or she is to grow up healthy.

**Youth
Speak**

- "Feed my interests."
- "Respect my choices and allow me to devote time to school."
- "Help me treat school as if it is my job."

Encouraging Children to Love Learning

We're turning the corner. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education said that our nation's schools were in trouble. "The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people," the committee reported. But recent studies by the National Center for Education Statistics found promising changes, including:

- More students are taking high-level courses.
- Fewer high school students are dropping out.
- Scores in math and science have improved.
- A higher percentage of young people are going to college after graduation.

As a nation, we are making a firm commitment to education. Our job as parents is to encourage our children to value learning and make a personal commitment to it. How do we do that, especially when many kids say school is boring or no fun?

Most important is to be a role model. Show your child your enthusiasm about learning new skills and information. Remember that learning



doesn't happen only in school. Encourage and support children to find things that get them excited about learning—and provide opportunities (in school and elsewhere) to help them develop those interests further.

By doing so, you'll get your child excited about learning and committed to education.

Quick Tip:
Choose one new thing to learn, and let your child observe your learning process.

5 Key Areas of a Commitment to Learning

Search Institute researchers have identified five assets in the area of commitment to learning that are crucial for helping young people grow up healthy. Check your child's areas of strength:

- Achievement motivation**—Your child is motivated to do well in school.
- School engagement**—Your child is actively engaged in learning.
- Homework**—Your child reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
- Bonding to school**—Your child cares about her or his school.
- Reading for pleasure**—Your child reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

Watch for five more newsletters on encouraging a commitment to learning in your child.

Learning through the Years

Age Ways to Encourage a Commitment to Learning

- 0-1
 - Read picture books with bright colors to your baby daily.
 - Show how pleased you are when your baby learns new skills.
 - Give new, interesting things to your baby to look at, such as toys in different colors, shapes, and sizes.
- 2-3
 - Make a game for your child to learn names of objects.
 - Read to your child.
 - Sing when you do simple chores.
- 4-5
 - Encourage writing with magnetic letters, crayons, and fingerpaint.
 - Keep a box of dress-up clothes for your child to play with.
 - Visit libraries, zoos, museums.
- 6-10
 - Let your child read to you every day as he or she learns to read.
 - Help homework become a part of your child's evening routine.
 - Ask your child "what if" questions to help her or him look at the world in a different way.
- 11-15
 - Encourage your child to collect things he or she gets excited about. Contribute to the collection.
 - Help your child learn how to study with a friend.
 - Find creative ways to help your child link her or his interests with school subjects.
- 16-18
 - Place more emphasis on lifetime learning—not just graduation.
 - Encourage your teenager to listen to her or his heart. Help your teenager connect what's in her or his heart to career interests.
 - Help your teenager think about future goals, and the discipline and boundaries required to reach them.
 - Visit colleges with your teenager to get her or him excited and connected to her or his future.

Ways You Can Make a Difference

Find at least one small way to become involved in your child's school. In the process, you will:

1. **Detect small problems before they become big.**
2. **Make a teacher's day.**
(The #2 teacher frustration—after salary—is parental indifference.)
3. **Show your child you care about her or him.**

More Help For Parents

Raising Lifelong Learners: A Parents' Guide by Lucy McCormick Calkins and Lydia Bellino. This book shows how parents can celebrate and support children's skills as readers, writers, and lifelong learners in all fields. (Published by Perseus Publishing.)

FINAL WORD "Education should be the process of helping everyone to discover his/her uniqueness."—Leo Buscaglia

This newsletter and other asset resources are produced by Search Institute, www.search-institute.org; 800-888-7828.
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