

# ideas for parents

## Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

### FAST FACTS

#### ASSET #22: School Engagement

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when they are actively engaged in learning.

**61%**

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. "School engagement" 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 Power of Learning

**Y**oung people may be surprised by where their learning and their interests can lead.

A 13-year-old loved playing with children. She often organized play groups on her neighborhood block, and she enjoyed home economics, human development, and art at school. When she turned 16 and wanted to work part time, her parents and her teachers encouraged her to apply to the city parks and recreation department.

As a parks and recreation coordinator, she found she could earn money and do what she enjoyed best: being and playing with kids.

The next summer, she learned clowning and traveled from park to park on her bike to entertain kids. The following year, she teamed up with two other creative high school students to design a puppet wagon for the parks and recreation department.

Soon other cities were interested in creating a puppet program like the one these three young women had developed. As first-year college students, they spoke to these



communities and showed them how to get a program started.

These opportunities gave the youth chances to see how learning relates to every aspect of life and how it even affects career possibilities. In fact, one member of the group majored in child development in college, and opened a day-care center after she graduated. Another runs programs in an inner-city YMCA. A third enjoyed writing scripts so much, she became a writer.

### Helpful Hints

**Tips that help your child stay involved at school:**

- **Help your child be alert by getting enough sleep, eating well, and coping with difficulties.**
- **Set expectations for learning at school.**
- **Attend school conferences, performances, and other events.**
- **Talk with your child every day about what is happening in school.**
- **Make your home an engaging learning place.**

### time together

Three ways to help your child stay interested in school:

1. Ask what other learning options are available at school. Are there special classes, programs, or minicourses to take?
2. Your child may show interest in certain subjects. Find one that sparks her or his curiosity and build on that.
3. Involve your child in hobbies and interests that you enjoy.

## Take a Learning Risk

Each day is a new beginning, a new day to learn. So try some of the following activities:

- Watch a subtitled foreign movie together.
- Sit with your child and explore a Web site on a topic that is new to her or him—Buddhism, architecture, economics.
- Together listen to music that you have never experienced before—Brazilian, samba, New Orleans jazz.
- Read a book together on a subject you know nothing about.
- Practice new forms of exercise together such as yoga or tae kwon do.

**Quick Tip:**  
Home learning excitement leads to school engagement.

### Form a Partnership

*Think of your child's teacher(s) and yourself as partners in your child's education. Work together to ensure that learning is stimulating and engaging at school and at home.*

### talk together

Questions to discuss with your child:

- How important is learning to you?
- What do you really like learning about in school? Why?
- How can we make learning more interesting and adventuresome?



### More Help for Parents

**Your Child's Growing Mind: A Guide to Learning and Brain Development from Birth to Adolescence** by Jane M. Healy. This resource gives tips for guiding your child's learning from birth through the teen years. (Published by Main Street Books.)

## FINAL WORD

**“Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow.”**

—Anthony J. D'Angelo

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