

Article #25

In an effort to learn more about the developmental strengths present or lacking in our school aged children, Pulaski Community Partners Coalition gathered data from 4th and 5th grade students across the county. The data, collected in the spring of 2005, relates to the Developmental Assets framework of healthy youth development.

Developmental Assets are important in the lives of all young people, regardless of gender, race, age, or size of community. There are eight categories of assets: support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. In the next five articles we will explore the asset category *commitment to learning*.

Nurture in young people a commitment to learning.

One of the keys to a successful adulthood is getting a good education. It's something every parent wants for her or his child. But getting that good education requires—from both students and parents—a strong commitment to learning.

Commitment to learning includes the desire to succeed in school, a sense of the lasting importance of learning, and a belief in one's own abilities. This commitment is strongly influenced by relationships with family and peers, as well as by the school environment.

How can you nurture that commitment in the young people you know? Studies indicate a number of ways, including support, school reforms, and reading aloud:

- By supporting young people and reminding them of the intrinsic rewards of learning, schools, family, and community members can help them deepen their engagement in learning.

- In a national sample of nearly 9,000 8th graders, researchers found that students in schools employing team teaching, less departmentalization of subjects, and less tracking had somewhat higher average levels of engagement and achievement.
- When children are read to, especially by more than one person, have book collections in the home, and limits on TV watching, they are more likely as adolescents to read for pleasure and for lifelong learning.

But how do those study findings translate into everyday actions? Search Institute asked a group of young people for their ideas, and the students offered these suggestions:

Keep classes small; keep hallways friendly; pay attention to me; help me treat school as if it is my job; welcome me; respect me; treat me like a human being; introduce me to a new author; be excited about your subject; be sincere; and give me a chance (and a break every once in a while).

From *Get the Word Out: Communication Tools and Ideas for Asset Builders Everywhere*.

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