

# **Parent Involvement**

**Part of the  
Achievement GAP Bridge**



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- ★ Always credit the author

## Welcoming Families

It is more important than ever before to engage parents and guardians and make them feel like family. To do this everyone from the administrator to the office staff to teachers to the school grounds keeper must extend a genuine welcome to parents and make them real partners in the education process. The more parents become involved at school – the more likely they are to help their students at home.

**KEY POINT:** Make parents feel welcome

### Why do Families Become Involved?

Studies link children's school success to their parent's attitudes and beliefs about education. The degree to which parents become involved in education depends on three factors:

1. Their sense of efficacy: the belief in their own capabilities and whether their involvement will make a difference in their child's success in school.
2. Their understanding of the parent role – understanding their responsibility in the development of their child as it pertains to school
3. The invitation they receive from the school – whether they have been encouraged by their children and the staff to become involved – coupled with information and tools they have been provided to help their children succeed in school.

### Most Important Factor – School Invitingness

Research indicates that the most important of these factors as the most consistent predictor of parent involvement is *school invitingness*. This is great news – as this is one thing that school staffs can, indeed, change. An inviting atmosphere is especially important to make stronger connections with families of children of disabilities or in communities with diverse culture, language and economic factors.

Parents report feeling welcomed at the secondary level is just as important and relevant as it is in elementary or middle school.

**KEY POINT:** Don't underestimate "school invitingness"

## How to Be a Welcoming School

- Make sure that “Welcoming” is an active and ongoing process. Parents need frequent invitations, but from the school and from their children.
- Honor the contributions of all families – no matter how large or small – from volunteering at school to helping their children at home.
- Show parents they are respected with frequent “two-way” communication in language parents understand.
- Address parents’ specific concerns.
- Connect family engagement efforts to student learning.
- Help parents understand curriculum expectations.
- Give parents the tools to help their children.

”Specific, well-crafted, and sensitive teacher invitations to involvement appear to meet many parents’ expressed wishes for ideas about how they can help their children learn.”  
– Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005

## Encouraging Front Office “Customer Service With a Smile”

We don’t usually think of educators as providing “customer service”; however, it is a large part of what we need to do to create a thriving and successful school environment. The term “customer service” reflects the fact that teachers, principals and staff are employed by parents and citizens of the community and are charged with the most important role in society – educating future generations of citizens!

Educators and other school staff who view their jobs in this light understand the importance of making parents and guests feel welcome in their schools. All staff are ambassadors for their school. And who are the number one public relations people on the entire school campus – *the front office staff!*

The front office staff is charged with greeting parents and visitors, helping with student registration, answering telephones, dealing with students, dealing with teachers...and emergencies and boo-boos and discipline...the list is endless. Their attitude as they perform the myriad of tasks to which they are assigned and undertake is paramount. As difficult as it may be – they do deal with some issues

that would make anyone's hair curl – it is important that they are **always** professional and courteous.

### **Fairfax Public Schools, Virginia's "The Welcoming Atmosphere Walk-Through"**

#### **The Physical Environment:**

- Are signs posted near the entrances that welcome parents and visitors and give clear directions to the main office?
- Do bulletin boards reflect the school's cultural, racial and linguistic diversity?

#### **Daily Practices of the Staff:**

- Do teachers call parents to report something positive about their children?
- Are alternative communication methods used with parents who speak limited English to help them understand the curriculum and participate in activities

#### **School Attitudes and Actions**

- Do they talk to visitors in friendly, welcoming tones?
- Are written materials friendly, welcoming and respectful?

### **Give Teachers the Tools to Reach Out to Families**

A good teacher, not even a great one, is one of the world's most valuable resources...and should be treated as such. Part of that process must necessarily involve providing teachers with all of the resources necessary to be successful and tools and training regarding parent involvement and interaction is essential to this process.

Staff development can help teachers to understand the benefits of family involvement and show them how to remove barriers to involvement. It can also explain techniques for improving two-way communication between home and schools, and suggest ways to help meet families' overall educational needs.

# **A Parent's Role in Teaching Kids they Matter**

## Parents as Asset Builders

**As a parent, care giver or guardian – you are a student’s number one asset builder! This is an important responsibility. Below are some things to remember as you go through the year dealing with students everyday.**

### **Assets are Powerful!**

The Search Institute has identified 40 concrete, positive experiences and qualities – the Developmental Assets – that have a tremendous influence on young people’s lives. These assets have the power to influence choices young people make and help them become caring, responsible adults.

Recent research suggests that beyond food and shelter, today’s young people need three things for healthy development:

- Safe places
- Caring adults
- Positive activities

Research by Search also shows that the more Assets young people have, the less likely they are to engage in high risk behaviors.

On average, young people with more Assets:

- Engage in fewer negative, high-risk behaviors, such as using drugs and alcohol, being violent, and having premarital sex.
- Exhibit more positive or thriving behaviors such as succeeding in school, exhibiting leadership qualities, and valuing diversity.
- Are more resilient in the face of challenges, stresses and difficult situations.

### **Everyone’s an Asset Builder**

Young people need positive external supports and internal strengths – Assets—in order to succeed in life. They need people to help nurture these Assets and help them navigate and thrive in a world that is full of change and challenges.

Everyone is an Asset Builder. It doesn’t take money or special training. You can be a child, teenager, single adult, parent, grandparent or neighbor – anyone can build Assets.

**You can build  
Assets! Start  
today – smile and  
say “Hi” to a kid!**

Review the *50 Ways to Show You Care* for ideas on how you can start building Assets in the young people in your life.

# Asset Categories

The 40 Assets of healthy development that help young people grow up health, caring and responsible are divided into eight categories.

*The first four Asset Categories focus on external structures, relationships and activities that create a positive environment for young people.*

**Support:** Young people need to be surrounded by people who love, care for, appreciate and accept them.

**Empowerment:** Young people need to feel valued and valuable. This happens when youth feel safe and respected.

**Boundaries and Expectations:** Young people need clear rules, consistent consequences for breaking rules, and encouragement to do their best.

**Constructive Use of Time:** Young people need opportunities – outside of school – to learn and develop new skills and interests with other young adults.

*The next four categories reflect internal values, skills and beliefs that young people also need to fully engage with and function in the world around them.*

**Commitment to Learning:** Young people need a sense of the latest importance of learning and belief in their own abilities.

**Positive Values:** Young people need to development strong guiding values or principals to help them make healthy life choices.

**Social Competencies:** Young people need the skills to interact effectively with others, to make difficult decisions and to cope with new situations.

**Positive Identity:** Young people need to believe in their own self-worth and to feel that they have control over the things that happen to them.

*Affirm...Interact...Engage...Empower*

# Build Assets in Kids:

## 25 Ways to Show You Care

1. Notice them
2. Ask them about themselves
3. Be yourself
4. Cheer their accomplishments
5. Go places together
6. Introduce them to new experiences
7. Expect their best; don't expect perfection
8. Catch them doing something right
9. Laugh at their jokes
10. Suggest better behaviors when they act out
11. Hug them.
12. Be curious with them.
13. Play outside together
14. Delight in their discoveries
15. Be available
16. Create a safe, open environment
17. Daydream with them
18. Make decisions together
19. Magnify their magnificence
20. Build something together
21. Let them make mistakes
22. Inspire their creativity
23. Invite them over for juice
24. Listen to their favorite music with them
25. Love them, no matter what

# Is this you...

- ⇒ I know and use the names of people – young and old-regularly when I see them.
- ⇒ I focus daily on all people's gifts and talents.
- ⇒ I help youth use their strengths to overcome their deficits.
- ⇒ I regularly encourage other adults in my community to build assets with young people.
- ⇒ When young people are in trouble, I begin my interactions with them by focusing on their strengths.
- ⇒ I'm expanding my positive influence by pursuing relationships with young people I don't know.
- ⇒ At least once a week, I do something for or with people that goes beyond their normal expectations.
- ⇒ I work hard to maintain relationships with people with whom I am already connected.
- ⇒ I have high expectations for myself, my fellow community members, and young people in my community.
- ⇒ I take the time to listen when people speak with me.
- ⇒ I take the initiative in engaging with people positively.
- ⇒ I smile at and make eye contact with any person -- young or old- as I go about my day.
- ⇒ I believe that my power as an asset builder comes from the relationships that I develop with people.
- ⇒ I engage people of all ages positively where ever I go

**For the complete 40 Developmental Assets  
(Search Institute) program – log on to  
<http://www.search-institute.org/assests/>.**

**It is truly awesome.**

## Parent Involvement Idea

### Host a Monthly Asset Reading Night

"Children learn from adults.  
If you don't read for fun,  
why would your kids?"  
Robert Munsch

Step 1: Have a Parent Developmental Assets Workshop

Step 2: Monthly Asset Reading Night: Load up on the following books, invite parents into a school or a classroom and have reading and activity night...

**Raising a Reader:** Reading is the most important skill that students will ever master. It is what they need to know to survive – thrive – achieve – and succeed.

Literacy, the ability to read and write, is essential in the world today. Communicate to parents that it is important to enjoy 15 to 30 minutes of reading every day and that by doing so...they can truly make a difference.

Only the best books are good enough for children – encourage parents to check out many from the library - -because only a handful of those many will be good enough to buy and read over and over.

#### **Message to Communicate to Parents:**

- ⇒ Read for pleasure – being a positive role model is essential
- ⇒ Read with their child – it helps them bond and create meaningful memories
- ⇒ Have fun – read aloud with expression and drama
- ⇒ Find books on topics that interest their child
- ⇒ Bring books to life. Help parents understand how to link reading to the world around them with related talk and activities inspired by what they are reading with their children.

**Parent Asset Reading Pre-Service – Parent Instruction Power Point**

## Raising a Reader

## **From the National Association of Education for Young Children**

As parents and caregivers, you can help lay down the foundation for a love of reading and nurture children's development. Here are some things you can do to raise a lifelong reader:

### **Talk, Sing, and Play**

Babies delight in hearing language. Talk as you do simple everyday things together: recite nursery rhymes, and do finger plays, games and action songs.

### **Make Time to Read**

Try to read with your child every day at a regularly scheduled time. If possible, choose a time when you can be relaxed and not rushed. If you have more than one child, spend time reading with each child separately, especially if they're more than two years apart. On days that are particularly hectic, bring a few books when you take children along on errands. Taking time to read to children on a regular basis sends the message that reading is worthwhile.

### **One More Time...PLEASE?!**

As every adult who cares for children knows, they often ask to hear the same story again and again. They delight in knowing what comes next and often learn a favorite book so well that they can "read" it on their own. That favorite story may speak to your child's current interests and emotional needs, so it's important for the adults in their lives to be patient during this phase. Young children are eventually ready for different stories if they are continuously exposed to a variety of books.

### **Slow Down**

It's not just what you read to children, but how you read that matters. If adults rush through stories or read without enthusiasm, children quickly lose interest. Try to read with expression and use different voices for the characters. Reading at a leisurely pace with occasional pauses gives children time to take in what they hear, mull it over, and imagine the people, places, and events. Pose a question or make a remark that will prompt the child to think, express himself, or relate the story to his own experiences. It's also a good idea to follow children's cues. Sometimes they are caught up in the story and don't want stops and detours along the way.

### **Choose Books with Care**

Reading together often, you learn a lot about the kinds of books your child likes and understands. Visit the local library and involve your child in deciding what to bring home. Selecting books that relate to what's happening in the child's life at that time is a good way to ease transitions and allay fears about upcoming events. Topics such as potty training, new siblings, adoption, or moving to a new home are covered in a variety of books that are written specifically for young children.

**Surround Children with Reading Material**

In addition to library books, children also like having some books of their own that they can read whenever the mood strikes them. Affordable used books can be found at yard sales, thrift stores, secondhand book stores, and public library book sales. Consider subscribing to a good children's magazine--children love having something come in the mail just for them!

**Don't Pressure Children About What or When to Read**

Nagging children about their reading habits may cause them to resist reading all-together. Some school-age children choose to read only comic books or fan magazines after their homework is completed. Try not to criticize--after all, they are reading. If a child makes a mistake when reading aloud, don't interrupt. If the mistake doesn't change the meaning, let it go.

**Show That You Value Their Efforts**

Nothing is more important for fostering readers than showing genuine enthusiasm. Ask your child to read to you, a younger child, or a special visitor. Talk with him about what he is reading and respond positively.

**Use the Read Aloud Table to Keep Track of Reading...**

Read Aloud Table							
Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Weekly Total

## Books with Meaning

### Asset Rich Books for Parents to Read With Students

Books that are engaging and illustrate "Support":

- ★ Everything on a Waffle, by Polly Horvath
- ★ Once Upon a Time, by Niki Daly
- ★ Naomi and Mrs. Lumbago, by Gilles Tibo
- ★ Something from Nothing, retold by Phoebe Gilman
- ★ There's a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom, by Louis Sachar
- ★ Waiting for Whales, by Sheryl McFarlane

Books that are engaging and illustrate "Empowerment":

- ★ Boxes for Katje, by Candace Fleming
- ★ Caribou Song/atihko ininkamon, by Tomson Highway
- ★ The Great Go-Cart Race, Elizabeth Chapin-Pinotti
- ★ The Fishing Summer, by Teddy Jam
- ★ On Sand Island, by Jacqueline Briggs Martin
- ★ Very Last First Time, by Jan Andrews
- ★ Ruler of the Courtyard, by Rukhsana Khan

Books that are engaging and illustrate "Boundaries and Expectations":

- ★ Arnie and the Skateboard Gang, by Nancy L. Carlson
- ★ Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus, by Mo Willems
- ★ Officer Buckle and Gloria, by Peggy Rathmann
- ★ A Promise is a Promise, by Robert Munsch & Michael Kusugak
- ★ Ramona the Pest, by Beverly Cleary
- ★ Yang the Youngest and His Terrible Ear, by Lensey Namioka

Books that are engaging and illustrate "Constructive Use of Time":

- ★ Bubblegum Delicious, by Dennis Lee
- ★ Hannah's Collections, by Marthe Jocelyn
- ★ Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices, by Paul Fleischman & Eric Beddows
- ★ Knock at a Star: A Child's Introduction to Poetry, by X.J. & Dorothy M. Kennedy
- ★ 'Til all the Stars Have Fallen: A Collection of Poems for Children, by David Booth

Books that are engaging and illustrate a "Commitment to Learning":

- ★ Aha!: The Most Interesting Book You'll Ever Read About Intelligence (Mysterious You), by Trudee Romanek
- ★ Chin Chiang and Dragon's Dance by Ian Wallace
- ★ Frindle, by Andrew Clements
- ★ Oh, The Places You'll Go, by Dr. Seuss
- ★ 7 x 9 = Trouble, by Claudia Mills
- ★ The Several Lives of Orphan Jack, by Sarah Ellis

Books that are engaging and illustrate "Positive Values":

- ★ Each Living Thing, by Joann Ryder
- ★ Grandmother Bryant's Pocket, by Jacqueline Briggs Martin
- ★ The Great Go-Cart Race, Elizabeth Chapin-Pinotti
- ★ The Incredible Journey, by Sheila Burnford
- ★ Roses Sing on New Snow: A Delicious Tale, by Paul Yee
- ★ Stone Soup, by Jon J. Muth
- ★ The Thumb in the Box, by Ken Roberts

Books that are engaging and illustrate "Social Competencies":

- ★ The Final Game, by William Roy Bownridge
- ★ How Smudge Came, by Nan Gregory
- ★ The Jacket, by Andrew Clements
- ★ Noses are Red, by Barbara Reed

Books that are engaging and illustrate "Positive Identity":

- ★ Anne of Green Gables, by L.M. Montgomery
- ★ Bud, Not Buddy, by Christopher Paul Curtis
- ★ Life on the Farm, by Heather Gardam
- ★ Omar On Ice, by Maryann Kovalski
- ★ A Place to Grow, by Soyung Pak
- ★ Scooter, by Vera B. Williams