



Asset-Building Ideas

for School Administrators

The challenge of asset building in schools is to give each student not only a support person but an entire support system. While school structures and systems vary, administrators can use their influence and position to transform schools into environments that are rich with asset-building occurrences and relationships. In addition to the five commitment-to-learning assets (#21–25), four assets (#5: caring school climate; #12: school boundaries; #14: adult role models; and #16: high expectations) show the connection between an educational system and the health and well-being of young people. Here are some ideas on how school administrators can build all of the assets:

Asset Building in General

- Provide professional development for staff members in asset building.
- Dedicate a few minutes at each staff meeting to share asset-building stories, information, strategies, and ideas.
- Encourage your school board to proclaim an asset-building week within the community.
- Include asset building in your school's mission and goals.
- Add an assets column to the school newspaper. Include students as writers, editors, and reviewers.
- If your community has an asset-building initiative, get involved.
- Create a fax cover sheet that has an asset-building message on it (for example, "You have the power to build assets for kids").
- Leave a message about asset building on your voice mail (for example, "...please leave your name, number, and a brief message, and remember, you can build assets for kids today").
- Train teachers and other staff in asset building and use the assets as part of performance planning and evaluation.
- Print and distribute stickers and buttons that say "I am an asset builder!".
- Print asset-building tips on check pay stubs.
- Support and underwrite the cost of the *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes & Behaviors* survey in your district so that the community has an accurate assessment of young people's assets, deficits, and risk behaviors.
- Distribute information about the assets to all teachers. Consider purchasing asset-building resources for each employee or for a resource library.
- Take advantage of grant opportunities that could support asset-building initiatives in the district. Engage parents with skills in grant writing to help with the process.
- If your school or community has an asset-building initiative, paint the logo on buses, create a banner to hang on school buildings, or run messages about the initiative on the school marquee.



Support

- **Create mentoring programs for staff as well as students.** It can increase school bonding and provide needed support.
- **Share information about developmental assets with parents.** One resource for this is the *Ideas for Parents* newsletter from Search Institute.
- **Create an environment that welcomes students, staff, and visitors.** Have student and staff greeters at the doors. Keep the building clean. Invite parents and other community members to visit. If safety is an issue, work with your local law enforcement to keep the building as secure as possible without giving it the feel of a prison.

Empowerment

- **Recruit community groups and individuals to volunteer** time to build assets in your school(s).
- **Thank staff and students** whenever you see them building assets.
- **Include students on interview teams for personnel selection.** Students can provide tours to informally assess candidates and/or take part in the official interview.
- **Include students** on school-improvement management teams, disciplinary teams, and other working groups.

Boundaries and Expectations

- **Clearly state rules for appropriate behavior and consequences for violating those rules.** Post them in visible places.

Constructive Use of Time

- **Make extracurricular activities like theater, sports, clubs, and academic teams a priority.**
- **Celebrate successes.** Whether it's a commendation in the announcements, a personal letter to a student, or a pat on the back, catch staff and students doing things well.

Commitment to Learning

- **Encourage scholarship contributors to establish criteria and select recipients based on students' asset-building efforts as well as other achievements.**

Positive Values

- **Work with parents, teachers, board members, and others to create a list of shared values for the school.** See the positive values assets (#26–31) as a place to start. Integrate these values into lesson planning, external communication, and boundaries and expectations for behavior.

Social Competencies

- **Provide agendas and calendars for students** to help them with planning and decision making.

Positive Identity

- **Support and attend recognition banquets** and other ways of honoring students.