

Asset-Building Ideas for Schools

Asset Building in General

- ◆ Support administration of the *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors* survey in your district.
- ◆ Encourage your school board to pass a resolution supporting asset building and to make a commitment to promote it within the school system and the community.
- ◆ Include information on asset building in each school newsletter.
- ◆ Educate parents about the assets and use the asset language when talking with them about their children.
- ◆ Share the asset-building model with coaches and other extracurricular leaders. Make asset building part of the philosophy guiding extracurricular programs.

Support

- ◆ Keep class sizes small to give teachers and staff more time with each student.
- ◆ Encourage teamwork.
- ◆ Offer parents easy and convenient ways to get involved in their children's education (asset 6). For example, one-time activities such as tutoring high school students right before exam time can be perfect for a parent who wants to volunteer but cannot commit to regular involvement. For parents who never come to conferences, have an educator call them or go to their homes to meet with them.
- ◆ Create a parent education program that starts by serving breakfast to families. When the students start their class day, invite the parents to stay for a message on parenting or child/adolescent development. Also offer learning opportunities during evenings or following conferences. Consider offering bus rides to parents who do not have transportation.
- ◆ Invite senior citizens to have lunch with students. It's a wonderful way to "civilize" a cafeteria, and it helps students to connect with adults in the community.
- ◆ Work with your parent-teacher organizations to build an educational component into their activities. Encourage them to bring in speakers on parenting and child/adolescent development.
- ◆ Assign each class a building maintenance or cleaning project that requires them to work with the custodians. It will sensitize the students to the care of the building and build bridges between the custodial staff and the students.

Empowerment

- ◆ Engage students as leaders and decision makers, including getting their input on school board decisions.
- ◆ Seek learning opportunities that take students out into the community and bring community resources into the classroom as well.
- ◆ Invite students to discuss their school experiences with the school board.

Boundaries and Expectations

- ◆ Expect everyone to do their best.
- ◆ Set high standards for student and staff behavior. Be consistent about following through with consequences when these standards are not met.

Constructive Use of Time

- ◆ Work with congregations and cultural groups in your community to avoid scheduling school events that conflict with families' religious or cultural commitments. Find out if your community has a calendar of events to help with this planning. If not, consider creating one.
- ◆ Provide constructive before- and after-school programs for young people who would otherwise spend the time unsupervised (and probably lonely). One way to do this is to link with existing programs and help expand them through financial, human, or in-kind resources.

Commitment to Learning

- ◆ Have administrators greet students and staff at the door each morning. The connection will create a caring environment (asset 5) and reinforce the commitment students and staff have to one another (asset 24).
- ◆ Create a visual reminder of asset building. For example, one school made an assets quilt that it hung in a prominent central location.

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

- ◆ Train all students and staff in cultural competence and nonviolent conflict resolution.
- ◆ Open your building to community groups and organizations during nonschool hours.

Positive Identity

- ◆ Focus on students' long-term goals as well as short-term assignments and projects. Help students develop plans and visions for the future and the skills to make those dreams come true.