



NORTHWEST PARENTS' CORNER

Fall 2008

***A quarterly newsletter of parenting tips,
reflections, and ideas***

Funded by a grant from the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation

The Power of One -

You do make a difference!

The Search Institute surveyed more than one million kids across the U.S. to determine what causes some kids to have a successful transition from childhood to adulthood. They identified 40 Developmental Assets - positive experiences and qualities that all of us have the power to bring into the lives of children and youth. The more positive experiences children have in their lives, the greater the likelihood they will succeed!

So what can adults do to help build a child's assets? Here's what the kids say they need:

Support -

"Never give up on me." *"Try to understand me."* Do you know a young person who doesn't seem to have a lot of support from adults outside his/her family? What can you do to reach out to him/her?

Empowerment -

"Give me a voice." *"Take me seriously."* *"Help me change things for the better."* Where are the places in our community where young people are valued and listened to? Where can they take leadership roles?

Boundaries and Expectations -

"Be a role model." *"Set fair boundaries."* *"Challenge me to succeed and comfort me when I fail."* Respect a teenager's privacy, but take interest in their friends and activities. When setting boundaries, explain the values behind them.

Constructive Use of Time -

"Let me play." *"Offer lots of fun things to do after school."* *"Open up more places for young people to go."* What opportunities do

young people have to be involved in positive activities? Do you think it is important to regularly spend time at home with others in your family?

Commitment to Learning -

"Feed my interests." *"Make school more like a community."* *"Be excited about your subject."* Do you have a special interest you can share with a youth? Or, ask a young person to teach you a new skill!

Positive Values -

"Help me act from my ideals." *"Listen when I talk about the things that mean something to me."* Remember that mistakes are part of living and growing. Listen. Be responsible for all your thoughts, words, actions.

Social Competencies -

"Be open to the possibilities of people." *"Teach acceptance and respect, and we won't have to learn tolerance."* Learn and model peaceful ways to resolve disagreement. Have family meetings where children have a voice in decision-making.

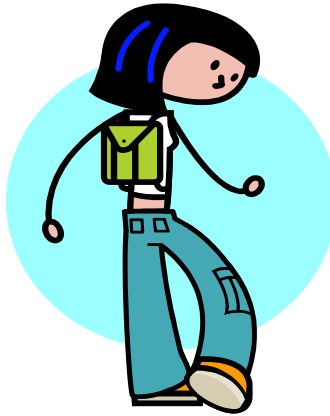
Positive Identity -

"Tell me what's good about me." *"Help me hope and dream."* *"Celebrate my uniqueness."* Dwell on what children do right instead of what they do wrong. Avoid comparing young people.

A caring adult can make all the difference in the life of a young person. Who made a difference in your life when you were young? It's all about being who you are and doing what you do, and being genuine about it. Be consistent. Share your strengths and your weaknesses to build trust and a strong relationship with a young person.

Good Habits Make Good Students!

Every parent wants their child to get off to a good start in school, but what habits can they develop to help themselves succeed? *The Parent Institute* has come up with a list of seven common characteristics of responsible students. As parents, you know these *sound* good, but putting them into *action* is the hard part. However, experts say that if we repeat an action every day for just 21 days, it is likely to become automatic. So, for the next 21 days, encourage your kids to take on the habits of responsible students. Perhaps they'll soon find they're doing some of these things without even thinking!



So what habits can your child practice to lead to success in school and beyond? Well, they can...

Set goals. Goals keep kids focused on the future. That's why they are the foundation of responsible behavior – and success in school. To help your child set goals, ask: How much improvement would she like to see in this week's test? How would he like to improve his grades this marking period? What are two things she would like to accomplish this school year? What will be needed to meet those goals? Goals help students focus on what's important and what's not. If they have a vision of where they want to go, they're more likely to get there. And students with goals find it easier to say "no" to irresponsible behaviors... because they are saying "yes" to their vision of the future.

Plan their time. Responsible people meet their obligations – whether it's turning in a paper on the day it's due or having a report on the boss's desk when it's needed. But it takes planning.

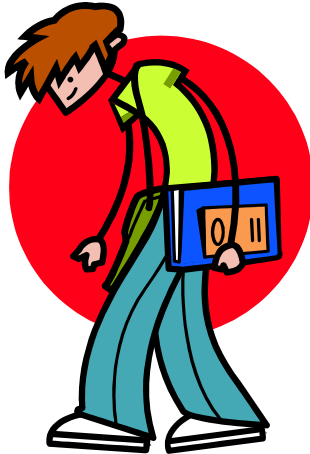
(Remember the old saying, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.") Use a big calendar to help teach your child how to organize her time. Have her write down all her commitments and use the calendar to plan time for homework each day. On a day when she has soccer after school, she'll need to study after dinner – but the next day, when she has choir practice in the evening, she'll need to study right after school.

Study every day. Learning any subject is like building a brick wall – you do it steadily, one step at a time. Responsible students set aside time for homework or studying every day. On the days when their teacher assigns no homework, these students "assign themselves." That may be the day they review vocabulary words. Or, they may take a few minutes to review notes.

Take notes in class. Students who earn all "A's" seem to have one thing in common: they take notes in class. They have learned that teachers will almost always spell out what they think is important (which is what's most likely to be on the test). Teach your child to take notes when the teacher is talking. Spend time reviewing them before a test – and watch grades go up!

Have the right stuff. A carpenter wouldn't think of showing up without a hammer. A nurse always has a stethoscope. Likewise, students need to go to class with the pencils, paper, and other tools they need. Students who arrive with the tools they need are ready to learn and get the job done!

Keep commitments. Responsible people honor their commitments – others and to themselves. They succeed in school by doing their assignments well and on time. They do their share of the group project. They go to soccer practice even when it's cold. Parents can teach about commitments by example: Talk with children about the commitments you have made to the family – to provide meals, to keep clothes clean, to care for anyone who is sick. Ask children to make commitments of their own at home. And help them feel the satisfaction that comes from



meeting their commitments.

Get ready on time. Some students start out every morning in a crisis. They can't find their homework. They don't have time to eat breakfast. The shirt they want to wear isn't ironed. Responsible students have learned that being late, or being early, is not something that simply happens to them. It is a choice they make. Teach your child to take five or ten minutes before bedtime to get ready for the next day. Pack the backpack. Make lunch. Lay out clothes. Children will soon see that those

few minutes will make the morning easier... and help him get to school ready to learn.

Developing even a few of these simple habits will make going to school each day a lot easier, and will help your child feel better about himself! And that's what I call success!

New Books in our Parent Resource Lending Library!

The Co-Parenting Survival Guide: Letting Go of Conflict after a Difficult Divorce, by E.Thayer and J.Zimmerman. This book helps divorcing parents learn to navigate the hot spots of hostility and conflict around communication, visitation, extracurricular activities, holidays, and new partners. Teaches co-parenting skills based on love and concern for the children so they can benefit from two parents living separately, but working together.

The Truth About Children and Divorce: Dealing With Emotions So You and Your Children Can Thrive, by R.Emery, PhD.

With a hopeful, yet realistic message, Dr. Emery shows how our powerful emotions and the way we handle them shape how we divorce, and whether our children suffer or thrive in the long run.

Helping Your Kids Cope with Divorce, the Sandcastles Way, by M.G.Neuman. Sympathetic, practical and loving, this book covers all the problems faced by children of divorce, and shows that although there are no simple ways through complicated times, divorce need not be an inevitable blot on children's lives, but an opportunity for them to grow and strengthen bonds with their parents.

HYSB is thrilled to offer

Raising Self-Reliant Children in a Self-Indulgent World *Seven Building Blocks for Developing Capable Young People*

A parenting curriculum by H. Stephen Glenn, Ph.D.

This cornerstone parenting program by H. Stephen Glenn is the foundation upon which many strong families have been built. Also known as Developing Capable People, the class will be taught over two semesters – five sessions in the fall of 2008 and five sessions in the spring of 2009. The course gives parents information to develop a trusting relationship with their children, as well as the skills to implement necessary discipline to help children become responsible adults.

Rather than approach discipline in terms of strictness versus leniency, this program helps parents teach children to become responsible and self-reliant – not through outward controls like fear and intimidation, but through inner controls such as feeling accountable for one's commitments and behavior. These are the character-building values and traits that will serve your child throughout his/her lifetime.

In his book, *"Raising Self-Reliant Children in a Self-Indulgent World"* Dr. Glenn identifies seven building blocks to help children develop into responsible adults. He calls these "The Significant Seven":

Perceptions of Personal Capabilities - "I am capable of facing problems and challenges and gaining strength and wisdom through experience."

Perceptions of Personal Significance - "Who I am and what I have to offer is of value - life has meaning and purpose."

Perceptions of Personal Influence – "I am accountable for my actions and choices and can influence how I live."

Intrapersonal Skills – Skills of self-assessment, self-control, and self-discipline in response to feelings.

Interpersonal Skills – Skills to communicate, cooperate, share, empathize, resolve conflicts, and listen effectively when dealing with people.

Systemic Skills – Sufficient responsibility, adaptability, and flexibility to deal with the systems in which we live. (social, legal, environmental, etc.)

Judgmental Skills – Skills and resources for making decisions and choices based on moral and ethical principles, wisdom, and experience – developing "sound judgment".

The class will meet at Housatonic Valley Regional High School on Wednesday evenings from 6:30 -8:30 pm, on October 8, 15, 29, November 5, 12, 2008. It is proposed to continue February 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25, 2009. There is no charge for the course, and participants are encouraged to attend all ten sessions. Interested parents may wish to purchase the book in advance.

To register, call:

Foothills Adult Education
1-800-300-4781

Housatonic Youth Service Bureau

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860-824-4720

www.hysb.org

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