

Connect!

LEARNING ACTIVITIES TO STRENGTHEN ASSETS

II



Bonding to School

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Introduction

THE CONNECT! II LEARNING ACTIVITIES TO STRENGTHEN ASSETS

Curriculum is centered around strengthening the “Developmental Assets” of Youth. These 40 “Developmental Assets” as identified by the Search Institute of Minneapolis have proven to be crucial building blocks that youth and families need in order to succeed in life.

Throughout the country, organizations and schools recognize that these assets can be built and strengthened in our youth with the quiet revolution termed “mentoring.” A mentor is defined as a “wise and trusted friend; or someone that shows the way.”

In the 1997 Summit on America’s Future, leaders from all across the country hailed mentoring as one of the necessary solutions to help ensure a stable future for America’s youth. They were supported by research proving that mentoring works. Goals were set to find and enlist 2,000,000 mentors by the year 2000. That goal has been met!

Volunteer mentors come with a variety of education and experience. Asking mentors to work in a structured program to build or strengthen “Developmental Assets” in youth without prior training, raises serious concerns.

In order for meaningful interaction to occur between mentors and youth, a basic asset-related curriculum was needed. **CONNECT! II...** was developed out of this necessity. **CONNECT! II...** is a supplement of activities that apply to additional developmental assets from The Search Institute.

CONNECT! II... is designed to give meaningful interaction during the time mentors spend with their youth. It is designed to be flexible enough to be conducted informally on a one-on-one basis, or with a small group of mentors and mentees, or it can also be used during family trainings or family activity nights. The activities are designed to help the youth develop life-long competencies based on the “Developmental Assets” model.

From the volunteer/mentor perspective, **CONNECT! I** and **II...** provide readily available materials and activities that can be prepared and used quickly. **CONNECT! I** and **II...** will help mentors effectively meet the individual needs of each youth.

Using This Book: To The Mentor

Each of the units/chapters in this curriculum is dedicated to one of the “40 Developmental Assets” as identified by the Search Institute. The Individual units or chapters are designed to: 1) identify the asset or quality that you would like to work on with your youth, 2) give specific instructions for fun, active learning activities, and 3) follow up with concrete discussion questions that will help the youth achieve higher level thinking and processing skills. Each unit is self-contained. Activities can be printed off for to be used individually by one or several sets of mentors and their youth.

Goal And Objective Page

Following the title page is a goal and objective page. This page lists the asset or quality, followed by the goal the youth is expected to meet if successfully achieving that quality. Each goal is broken into three concrete objectives for you and your youth to work on. To the right of each objective is a list of activities that can be completed by you and your youth.

Activity Page

The activity pages are written so that at a quick glance, you can see:

1. Topic of the activity
2. Whether the activity is better as a one-on-one or as a whole group activity
3. Time required to complete the activity
4. Necessary materials
5. How to set up the activity
6. Detailed directions to conduct the activity
7. Discussion topics to focus and reinforce the purpose of the activity
8. Specific questions to guide the youth’s thinking and processing

Checklist Page

Following each set of activity pages, is a Checklist page. After completing the activities, use this page to evaluate the progress your youth is making on a particular asset. Mentally answer the questions. If the youth is not ready to move on to the next objective, additional activity and resource suggestions are included.

Handouts

At the end of each set of activities are related activity sheets or handouts. Make as many copies of this material as you need.

BONDING TO SCHOOL ASSET #24

GOAL: The youth will care about his/her school.

OBJECTIVES

The youth will:

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Identify positive aspects of school.	Activity 1 Positive Perceptions 6
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Gain appreciation for school experiences.	Activity 1 Senior Moments 9
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Be an advocate for the school, supporting the positive aspects.	Activity 1 It's in Your Hands 12
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Positive Perceptions

GOAL: The youth will care about his/her school.

Objective

The youth will identify positive aspects of school.

Materials

- Paper and pencil

Activity (1-2 hours)

- We spend a great deal of our time in school. Therefore, it is important for us to focus on the positive aspects of our individual schools. Your attitude is a direct result of your frame of mind.
- We are going to identify the positive aspects of our schools. One way to do this is by taking a survey. What questions would we need to ask parents, students, teachers, and principals? Brainstorm and record on a piece of paper. From your ideas, develop a survey. Distribute your survey and compile the data. Organize the data into a chart or graph.

Discuss

- The glass is either half empty or half full. Explain how this saying relates to your survey.
- Compare the similarities/differences in the responses between the different groups of individuals surveyed (e.g., parents and students).

Ask

- What was the most popular response reflected in your survey?
- Did the results of your survey reflect your personal opinions of school?
- Did the survey make you aware of anything you hadn't considered?

“Rap” It Up

GOAL: The youth will care about his/her school.

Objective

The youth will identify positive aspects of school.

Materials

- Paper and pencil
- Optional: Percussion noise makers, music

Activity (45 minutes)

- If you have completed Activity 1, review the positive aspects of school that were identified as a result of your survey. If not, brainstorm positive aspects of your school from your own point of view.
- Now the fun begins! Write a rap, cheer, or jingle that highlights the positive aspects of your school. Be creative. Incorporate rhythm, noise makers, or music if desired. Perform!

Discuss

- Discuss the importance of focusing on the positives.
- After you focus on the positives for a length of time, explain the impact this has on your attitude and outlook.

Ask

- What positive aspects were common to all performances?
- If you sang this every morning when you got up, what effect would this have on your day?
- What unique ideas used in other performances appealed to you?

Bonding to School

GOAL: The youth will care about his/her school.

After completing activities 1 and 2, is the youth ready to move on?

1. Did the youth develop a survey questionnaire?	YES	NO
2. Has the youth created and implemented the survey?	YES	NO
3. Did the youth compile the data received from the survey?	YES	NO
4. Did the youth identify positive aspects of his/her school?	YES	NO
5. Was the youth able to successfully create and perform a rap, cheer, or jingle?	YES	NO

If you answered “yes” to at least 4 of the 5 questions, you are ready to move on to the follow-up questions. Otherwise, continue with the activities listed below.

More Activities

- Develop a brochure for new families moving into the area to publicize the positive aspects of your school. Advertise well. Format and content are critical factors in making the choice of where to attend school.
- Create a banner for your school that depicts its positive aspects. Display it in the foyer.

Follow-Up Questions

- Why do schools have school songs, mottos, and mascots?
- Why do people have different perspectives about their school?
- What school-sponsored activities promote school spirit?
- How does your attitude affect your ability to bond to school?

Additional Resources

- <http://www.readingrockets.org>

Senior Moments

GOAL: The youth will care about his/her school.

Objective

The youth will gain appreciation for school experiences.

Materials

- Paper and pencil

Activity (1 hour)

- Senior citizens should be highly respected for their wisdom and experience. Most senior citizens enjoy talking about the “Olden Days.”
- Interview a few senior citizens. Ask each of them to focus on their school days: class subjects, activities, class size, grade levels, discipline, supplies, homework, dress code, transportation, extra-curricular activities, report card, and parent support.

Discuss

- Compare and contrast your school experiences with theirs.
- Share some information that you learned that is extremely different from your experiences.

Ask

- How are teaching styles different now than many years ago?
- What are some changes in education for which you are grateful?
Are there any changes you wish had never happened?
- If you had a choice to go to school in the past or the present, which would you choose? Why?

Surfin' Beyond the USA

GOAL: The youth will care about his/her school.

Objective

The youth will gain appreciation for school experiences.

Materials

- Computer with Internet access
- Printer

Activity (1 hour)

- Education can be very different in other countries. Becoming aware of differences may help us develop a deeper appreciation for our own school experiences.
- Choose a few countries in which you would like to learn more about the education system. Use the Internet to explore the countries you have chosen. Focus on: structure, daily and yearly time frame, grade levels, subjects, extra-curricular activities, boys-vs.-girls, teachers, discipline, testing, cost, and occupations.

Discuss

- Compare and contrast your education system with the other countries researched.
- Discuss why you think countries have implemented different educational practices?

Ask

- Given a choice, where would you rather attend school?
- What are some of the major differences you found?
- Are there any educational practices you think are better than our country's? Are there any you would like our country to adopt? Explain.

Bonding to School

GOAL: The youth will care about his/her school.

After completing activities 1 and 2, is the youth ready to move on?

1. Did the youth interview senior citizens?	YES	NO
2. Was a wide variety of information obtained from the youth's interview?	YES	NO
3. Does the youth realize the changes that have occurred in education?	YES	NO
4. Did the youth learn about education in other countries?	YES	NO
5. Can the youth identify positive aspects of their own school system versus those of other countries?	YES	NO

If you answered "yes" to at least 4 of the 5 questions, you are ready to move on to the follow-up questions. Otherwise, continue with the activities listed below.

More Activities

- Plan a school activity to promote school spirit that could be implemented during Homecoming/Spirit Week. Be sure to get the principal's approval.

Follow-Up Questions

- Why is it sometimes easier to focus on negative aspects of school?
- Why do you think the changes in education have occurred over the years?
- What do you think education will be like in 20 years? Identify the positive aspects.

Additional Resources

- Matilda, video 1996.

It's In Your Hands

GOAL: The youth will care about his/her school.

Objective

The youth will be an advocate for the school, supporting the positive aspects.

Materials

- Paper and pencil

Activity (45 minutes)

- Imagine that after you returned from Christmas vacation, your principal informed the student body that the school will be closing at the end of the year because of budget cuts (deteriorating structure and decline in enrollment). The students, parents and community are devastated.

An emergency meeting is called by the PTA. The school gym is filled with concerned citizens. The PTA President informed the public that a special board meeting is to be held next Tuesday to voice concerns. The input from the public may have an impact on the final decision.

Pretend that you have been chosen to present to the board. Therefore, it is your/your team's responsibility to prepare a persuasive speech to defend and save your school. Words of advice: know your facts, state them with confidence, and include the positive aspects of your school to support your position. When you are prepared, give your speech to the board. Good luck!

Discuss

- Explain the key points that you believe swayed the board to keep the school.
- Your opinion or point of view can have an effect on others. Elaborate.

Ask

- How does your attitude about school affect your friends?
- Why is it important to be an advocate?
- Sometimes we don't appreciate things until we (almost) lose them. Why is this?

Read All About It

GOAL: The youth will care about his/her school.

Objective

The youth will be an advocate for the school, supporting the positive aspects.

Materials

- Paper and pencil
- Computer (optional)

Activity (45 minutes)

- Write a newspaper article to advocate the positive aspects of your school. Include perspectives from a variety of community members (e.g., students, parents, school board, businessmen, and politicians). Highlight weekly and monthly activities as well as the school's overall mission and vision. Publish it in your school or local newspaper.

Discuss

- Explain the importance of providing a variety of perspectives in your article.
- Discuss how the mission and vision of the school plays a part in developing positive school aspects.

Ask

- Were any of the students' perspectives different from your own? If so, explain.
- What are some points that you definitely wanted to include in your article?
- Why is it important to communicate positive aspects within the school as well as throughout the community?

Bonding to School

GOAL: The youth will care about his/her school.

After completing activities 1 and 2, is the youth ready to move on?

1. Did the youth prepare a persuasive speech to save their school?	YES	NO
2. Did their speech include facts to support their position?	YES	NO
3. Did the youth gain a deeper appreciation for their school?	YES	NO
4. Does the youth realize the power of being an advocate for something in which they believe?	YES	NO
5. Does the youth understand the importance of communicating positive aspects?	YES	NO

If you answered “yes” to at least 4 of the 5 questions, you are ready to move on to the follow-up questions. Otherwise, continue with the activities listed below.

More Activities

- Read your school’s mission statement. Interpret its focus and meaning.
- Find articles relating to education in the editorial section of your local newspaper. If they have a negative tone, what information would be helpful in order for them to change their viewpoint?

Follow-Up Questions

- How has your involvement in the previous activities affected your outlook toward your school?
- What are some other advocate roles you could take within your school?

Additional Resources

- Get Off My Brain: A Survival Guide for Lazy Students by Randall McCutcheon (Free Spirit Publishing Inc., 1998)



Utah's Youth and Families with Promise Program (YFP) is designed to address youth problems through early intervention with at-risk youth, ages 10-14, and their families. YFP is a mentoring program designed to reduce and prevent delinquent behavior. The program addresses three goals:

- 1) improve academic performance
- 2) increase interpersonal competence
- 3) strengthen family bonds.



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