



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT™  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



## SEPTEMBER Asset of the Month: **PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLING**

*Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young people succeed in school.*

This handout is designed to help adults throughout Silicon Valley develop materials and activities to promote the asset of **Parent Involvement in Schooling**. Developmental Assets®, created by Search Institute, are the positive values, relationships, skills, and experiences that help children and teens thrive.

### **The Importance of Parent Involvement in Schooling**

Research shows that youth whose parents are actively involved in their schooling are more engaged in school. Students are less likely to be delinquent or drop out, and more likely to achieve higher grades and standardized test scores. Studies show that students with lower socio-economic status whose parents are highly involved with their education do about as well as students with higher socio-economic status.

Joyce Epstein of the National Network of Partnership Schools developed a framework for understanding six distinct kinds of parent involvement:

1. *Parenting*: Families establish home environments that support children's learning
2. *Communicating*: Families and schools engage in effective two-way communications about student expectations and progress
3. *Volunteering*: Parents directly support the classroom or school
4. *Learning at home*: Families help students with homework and school-related decision-making and planning
5. *Decision-making*: Parents are involved in school decisions
6. *Community collaboration*: Community services are resources integrated to strengthen schools and families

In the 2016 Search Institute Developmental Assets Survey, implemented by Project Cornerstone for Santa Clara County schools, **only 47% of 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders and 30% of 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders** reported that their parents are involved in their education. Parents whose schedules do not allow for volunteering can still support their children's academic success through parenting, communication, and learning at home. To help raise awareness of this important asset, September is *Parent Involvement in Schooling* month in Silicon Valley. The following discussion topics can help you talk with young people about ways that their parents can be involved with their education:

- What do your parents do to let you know they care about your education? What could they do to be more supportive?
- What information about school is important to share with your family? What kind of information would you prefer not to share?
- What advice would you give a family who is new to your school?
- Some workplaces have a "Shadow Day," where youth follow an employee and learn what their day is like. If you could have a Shadow Day at school where your parents followed you throughout your day, what would you want them to see?

## Activities

The activities below are a starting point to help create greater parent involvement in schooling.

### *For families...*

- Make a point of staying in touch with your children's teachers, even if your kids aren't having problems. Most teachers are glad to communicate with you after school hours by telephone or email.
- Make sure that your kids have a clean and organized location to do their homework and help them establish a regular schedule for schoolwork.
- Instead of asking "How was your day?" ask open-ended questions like "What was the best part of your day?" and "Did any of your classmates do anything funny?"
- Help your children maintain a positive attitude about school. Make sure they know that you will be their advocate to resolve any problems or challenges that they encounter.

### *For school administrators...*

- The benefits of parent engagement apply to children from all backgrounds. Schools should create thoughtful outreach and support strategies that show respect and value for the contributions of all children and families.
- Linguistic and cultural barriers can make it difficult for non-English-speaking parents to be engaged in their children's education. Make sure that families who do not speak English understand that their involvement and participation is welcome and encouraged. Ensure families that an interpreter is present at all school events. Try to make sure that written communications are provided in the parents' language.
- Make sure that faculty are fully aware of the importance of parent involvement for all students. Encourage them to create meaningful chances for parents with diverse backgrounds to participate through programs that value their unique knowledge, background, and skills.

### *For teachers...*

- Make an effort to start two-way communication with all families and let families know that their concerns are important to you.
- If parents volunteer in your classroom, make sure that they are fully prepared for their projects. If they work directly with students, let them know what to do if a child is challenging or uncooperative. Make sure they understand how to provide positive, helpful assistance for mistakes as well as effective praise. You may wish to coach students in advance if they'll be working with a volunteer to make the process smoother for everyone.
- Create homework projects that involve the entire family. Be sure to include all supplies as well as clear, easy-to-understand directions in the primary language spoken at home as well as in English.

### *In youth programs...*

- Make sure that programs are not scheduled at the same time as school events.
- Provide childcare on evenings such as Back-to-School Nights when parents are expected to attend without their children.
- If youth complete their homework while in your program, make sure that parents are aware of any issues where students are struggling. Use every opportunity to remind parents of the importance of monitoring their children's homework.
- Create programs that support parent involvement in their children's education, such as "Family Reading Nights" or "Math Fun Nights."

## Resources

- Project Cornerstone offers parent/caring adult engagement programs for PreK-8<sup>th</sup> students in schools throughout Silicon Valley. Parents/caring adults learn how to build Developmental Assets in their own children as well as other youth by volunteering in classrooms, sharing asset-building stories and lessons, and leading engaging activities and discussions. Materials are available in English and Spanish, and the Spanish-language Los Dichos program opens new doors for Spanish-speaking parents with lessons that focus on Latino heritage and culture. For more information on all programs, contact Project Cornerstone at [info@projectcornerstone.org](mailto:info@projectcornerstone.org).
- Families in Schools is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to involve parents and communities in their children's education to achieve lifelong success. Their web site offers a wealth of resources in English and Spanish to help families, communities, and schools effectively increase parent involvement. For more information, visit <http://www.familiesinschools.org>.
- Joyce Epstein's framework for parent involvement can help administrators, teachers, and parents understand the different ways that families can be involved and provide a starting point for creating effective parent engagement at a school. The framework and links to information about practices, challenges, and results can be found at [http://www.csos.jhu.edu/P2000/nnps\\_model/school/sixtypes.htm](http://www.csos.jhu.edu/P2000/nnps_model/school/sixtypes.htm).

### **About the Asset of the Month Toolkit**

The Asset of the Month toolkit is designed by YMCA of Silicon Valley Project Cornerstone using Search Institute's research-based Developmental Assets framework. The toolkit highlights 12 Developmental Assets and provides an editable poster (available in English and Spanish) and an overview handout for each asset. To access all 12 months of resources, go to <https://www.ymcasv.org/ymca-project-cornerstone/developmental-assets/asset-month-toolkit>

### **About Project Cornerstone**

Project Cornerstone is an initiative of the YMCA of Silicon Valley with a mission to ensure all youth feel valued, respected, and known so they grow into healthy, caring, and responsible adults. For more information, visit [www.projectcornerstone.org](http://www.projectcornerstone.org) or email us at [info@projectcornerstone.org](mailto:info@projectcornerstone.org).