



HELPING LITTLE KIDS SUCCEED **ALASKAN STYLE**

Written by and for Alaskans



association of
ALASKA
school boards



HELPING LITTLE KIDS SUCCEED ALASKAN STYLE

Written by and for Alaskans

Based on Search Institute's Youth Developmental Assets Framework®



Originally Published October 2003 by the Association of Alaska School Boards' Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement (Alaska ICE). This book was created to focus on promoting assets for young children, and supporting developmental growth in the early years in life.

The first draft of "Helping Little Kids Succeed" was developed through a partnership with the Alaska Division of Public Health and the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) and communities across Alaska.

Thousands of ideas and examples were generated at community-based workshops across the state. To assure the book was relevant for Alaska Native people, a four-day retreat was held with nine village consultants who provided wisdom, guidance and stories of how children and youth were traditionally raised.

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Under the leadership of AASB the Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement (Alaska ICE) was launched based on the themes of the Helping Little Kids Succeed and Helping Kids Succeed book.

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Dedicated to the people of Alaska, those who were children here long ago and those who will be raising children here seven generations from now.



Special thanks to people from throughout Alaska

who helped prepare this publication, especially:

Local school board members throughout Alaska, for their vision and promotion of asset building as a means to increase student achievement.

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Akiachak	Golovin	Mekoryuk	Seldovia
Akutan	Gustavus	Metlakatla	Seward
Ambler	Haines	Minto	Shaktoolik
Anchorage	Healy	Mt. Village	Shishmaref
Angoon	Holy Cross	Naknek	Sitka
Aniak	Homer	Nanwalek	Skagway
Barrow	Hoonah	Napaskiak	Sleetmute
Beaver	Hooper Bay	Nenana	Soldotna
Bethel	Houston	New Stuyahok	St. Mary's
Bettles	Huslia	Nikiski	St. Michael
Brevig Mission	Hydaberg	Noatak	St. Paul
Chevak	Iguigig	Nome	Stebbins
Chistochena	Juneau	Nondalton	Sutton
Chuathbaluk	Kake	Noorvik	Talkeetna
Chugiak	Kasigluk	North Pole	Tatitlek
Clarks Point	Kenai	Northway	Teller
Copper River	Ketchikan	Nuiqsut	Tenakee
Cordova	Kiana	Old Harbor	Togiak
Craig	King Salmon	Ouzinkie	Tok
Delta Junction	Kipnuk	Palmer	Toksook Bay
Dillingham	Klawock	Petersburg	Tuluksak
Eagle	Klukwan	Pilot Point	Tununak
Eagle River	Kluti-Kaah	Pilot Station	Unalakleet
Elfin Cove	Kodiak	Pt. Alsworth	Unalaksa
Elim	Koliganek	Pt. Graham	Upper Kalskag
Emmonak	Kongiganak	Pt. Hope	Valdez
Fairbanks	Kotlik	Pt. Lay	Wales
False Pass	Kotzebue	Pt. Lions	Wasilla
Ft. Richardson	Koyuk	Rampart	White Mountain
Ft. Yukon	Koyukuk	Ruby	Whittier
Gakona	Kwethluk	Russian Mission	Willow
Galena	Little Diomedea	Sand Point	Wrangell
Gambell	Lower Kalskag	Savoonga	Yakutat
Girdwood	Manakotak	Saxman	
Glennallen	McGrath	Selawik	

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“We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It’s easy to say ‘It’s not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.’ Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes.”

—Fred Rogers (“Mr. Rogers”)



THE POWER OF FIVE

“The Power of Five”

Children start kindergarten when they are five years old. Music is written on a scale of five lines. There are five starters on a basketball team, five animal kingdoms, five fingers on a helping hand, and five points on a star. Humans have five senses. We should eat five fruits and vegetables a day for better health.

Five is also the number of caring adults that every child needs in his or her life. This is called “The Power of Five,”¹.

These five caring adults keep show up in the research as a key protective factor for children — something that helps children become resilient and grow into successful adults.

Caring adults can serve as a protective factor for all children, including children that are the most vulnerable. Caring adults are fundamental to student learning, development and success (Walker & White 1998).

Most children you know can name five adults, but not every child states that they have five adults that they can talk to and feel authentically connected.

The School Climate and Connectedness Survey (SCCS) is a voluntary statewide survey taken by students and staff since 2006, developed by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) in partnership with the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB).

SCCS for grades 3-5 measures positive school climate, how connected students feel to adults and peers, how safe they feel at school and social and emotional learning (SEL). In 2017, 66% of students grades 3-5 responded positively to questions related to caring adults around them.

With support from all adults in kids lives, we can make sure that 100% of kids feel cared for by adults.

SCCS is a good tool to gauge how kids in your community are doing. To find out more about the survey and for next steps to find results for kids in your community and our state, visit: <https://ice.aasb.org/school-climate/>

¹ Murphy et al (2013) Caring adults, important for positive child well being. [Childtrends.org](https://www.childtrends.org/).

So, who are these five caring adults? They are parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, childcare providers, teachers, coaches, neighbors, employers, brothers and sisters, religious leaders, friends' parents — any adult in the child's life. These adults need to have a caring, conscientious relationship with the children under their influence.

When we, as adults, genuinely connect with children, small acts can return big rewards. Simple things like offering a reassuring hug, asking about their new shoes, or sharing a knock-knock joke can let a child know we are interested in their lives and care about them.

As children grow, we find new ways to connect with them. We compliment them on their achievements, we ask them about a new haircut, we play together, or we pick berries, and tell stories. This is how we, as adults, bridge the gap between little kids and us. When we make an effort with children in the early years, we reinforce positive relationships and experiences with adults. Positive connections between youth and adults form a powerful foundation for the future.

Connections... A newborn infant comes into the world with over 100 billion brain cells. Each brain cell is connected to thousands of other brain cells. Every experience this baby has — every sight, sound, touch, taste, or smell — helps to make more connections and “wire” the brain. This wiring sets the stage for everything the child will do or respond to in life.

The positive connections we form with children work in the same way. Every encouraging, caring, or positive interaction we have with a child contributes to a strong web of support. The child's collection of these experiences forms a network that will guide, protect, and inspire him or her into adulthood.

Which adults make up the “Power of Five” for your child?

Who are the children that count you in their “Power of Five”?



Who will use this book?

Parents of all kinds, expectant parents, and family members of parents...

When we use the term “parent” or “parents” throughout this book, we mean birth parents, adoptive parents, foster parents, stepparents, grandparents, and extended family — anyone who is raising, or helping to raise, a child.

- You know your job is the most important job you will ever have.
- You want to create a happy family in which your child can grow.
- You want to broaden the web of support around your child.
- You understand that you are first and most important teacher.

There is no single right way to raise children, both research and common sense guidelines can provide useful advice. The key ideas and simple actions described in this book have been proven to work. They have helped thousands of parents feel more confident, and they have helped thousands of children grow into successful adults.

People who work with young children or families...

As an early childhood educator, childcare provider, teacher, therapist, counselor, or any kind of family services provider:

- You love children and enjoy supporting them and their families; you want to make a difference in kids’ lives.
- You know how many people depend on you and your skills.
- You see many different types of families and parenting styles, and you notice the effects of these differences on children.

Reading the ideas in this book will make you even more aware of the positive impact you can have in the lives of children. This book will help you discover more things you can do to be even more effective in your work with children. It also gives you a powerful tool to share with parents. It is an easy way to strengthen the partnership you have with parents and others in the community.

Spiritual leaders...

As a member of a clergy, a leader in an organized faith community, or a participant in a spiritual congregation of some kind:

- You are committed to serving your community.
- You know that as you strengthen a family's capacity to raise healthy children, you are drawing people closer to their faith.

Research shows that growing up in a faith community helps a child grow into a successful adult. Furthermore, the faith community is well suited to help foster the relationships and opportunities necessary for children to develop in healthy ways. Faith communities bring generations together; they incorporate elements of love, support, service, and commitment to activities both within and beyond their membership. These are crucial elements for helping kids succeed!

People who want to support kids and families...

As a neighbor, a co-worker, an employer, a friend, a citizen:

- You care about kids and want to see them succeed.
- You understand that people other than just parents are important in raising children.
- You may see the value of other relationships in your child's life and want to offer that kind of support to other children.
- Your children may be grown or live with step-families; or perhaps you have no children of your own, but want to offer support to others.

What you read in this book is based on the idea that every one of us has the power to create the building blocks for success within children. This power arises from small actions in the course of our daily lives. All children need people around them who are tuned in to their needs and who actively support them and help them discover their strengths.

Members of an organization or business...

- You are committed to helping children and want your organization to support to them and their families.
- You recognize ways that your business would benefit from stronger families and communities.

Perhaps you notice something about the organization that actually conflicts with helping kids, and want to change it.

You may be involved with prevention activities in your community. Do you see the value of using strength-based approaches to reduce the risky behaviors of some older youth?

Any kind of business or organization can help grow healthy kids in the community. And any organization or business can benefit from having strong, thriving children and adolescents.

Children's "assets" get built mainly through individual action, including modeling. Before making any organization changes, you must make your own life a model of healthy, responsible behavior. That's what this book is about. Chapter 8 has some specific guidelines, suggestions, and examples that may inspire additional thoughts for organizational change.

United in caring

We each have many roles in life. We wear different hats. We mean different things to different people. When it comes to helping kids succeed, however, we must see our role as singular: to find and build connections.

Regardless of what role you have in mind for yourself, here are some suggestions for using this book.

Read the next two chapters completely. They are short and important. They will give you a solid understanding of the "asset approach" to building strong kids.

Pause and celebrate all the ways that you are already helping kids succeed. Then, use the ideas from this book to inspire even more ways to help children be healthy and successful. Given the space of this book, only a few ideas are listed. You have probably read, heard, and maybe even performed many more. Notice that the ideas are organized into categories around roles, but don't feel you have to stick within just one category.

Choose a few specific things that you want to build upon. Where can you strengthen your relationships with young children? What opportunities can you create for children to help them recognize and build on their strengths?

Have fun with this and make it your own. There are even pages where you can write in your own suggestions for helping kids succeed.

After the sections with ideas, you will find "An Asset-Building Toolkit." Just like other tools, the information and resources are meant to assist you in putting these ideas into action. Use the ones that seem to fit the best for you.

Always celebrate your successes and be patient with any shortcomings. From time to time you might re-read the first two chapters of this book and talk with other people using the assets approach. This will help you to stay connected with the main ideas of the book and enable you to make them a regular part of the way you see not just your children, but all children.

Please share the information from this book with others (with appropriate credit to the Association of Alaska School Board's Alaska ICE). Do you want additional books for any parents you work with? Do you want to use this material in a workshop? Use the Alaska ICE website, www.alaskaice.org, for services or to connect with other people who are using these tools. You can also contact someone at the mailing address or phone number posted in the front of this book.

Connecting with tradition

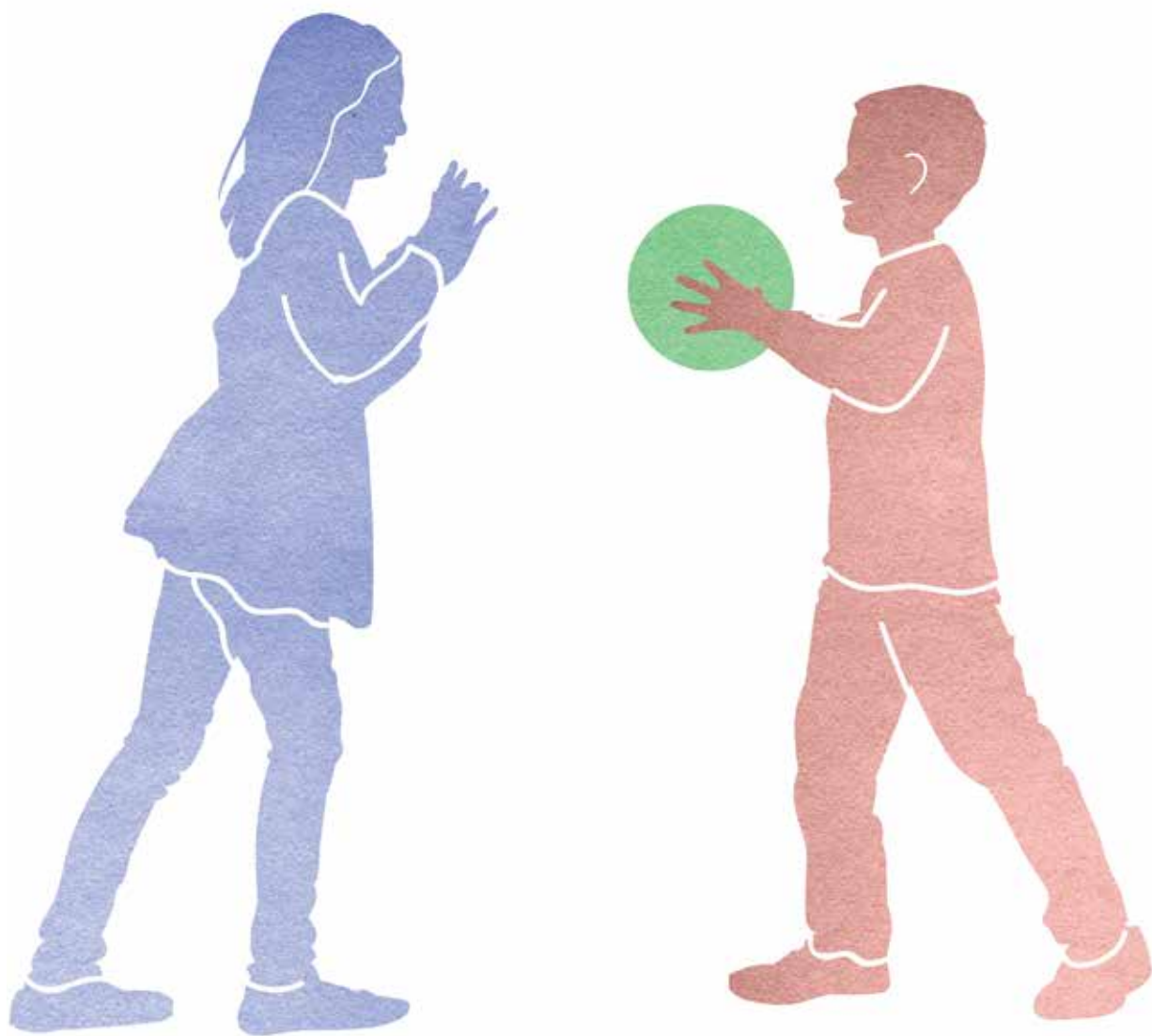
“The wisdom of the Elders has stood the test of time,” says Paul Jumbo of Toksook Bay. Paul is a Yup'ik Eskimo, and people of many cultural traditions have made similar observations. Every culture passes down a rich collection of child-rearing advice and practices.

Could it be that children's needs have not changed over the generations? Could it be that in an ever-changing world we must continuously adapt our ways of meeting their needs? The guidelines and suggestions in this book are based on this belief.

Alaska is home to a diverse mix of people from many different countries, cultures, and customs. A number of people live a lifestyle similar to that of their ancestors. Many Alaska Natives follow traditional values and ways of life; as do some of Alaska's immigrants, such as Russian Old Believers and newer citizens from the Pacific Islands and Asia. Every region in the state has people living a “traditional” lifestyle, and these communities want the best for their children.

If you are from rural Alaska or if you are connected to the traditions of your culture, this book will probably make a lot of sense to you.

The next two chapters describe “the asset approach” to raising children. Does it match your tradition? Many of these ideas are from Alaska Native traditions, but they may be similar to those of other cultures, too. These are just a few of the ways children's needs have been met through the ages. There are plenty more that we haven't been able to mention. The ideas we put forth are offered as support and inspiration to the people raising children through “traditional” ways.



THE ASSET APPROACH TO BUILDING STRONG KIDS

Imagine

Imagine living in a place where all young children...

are cared for by loving families, neighbors, teachers, and caregivers;

are around good role models and are lovingly taught acceptable behavior;

spend time practicing wholesome activities, both inside and outside the home;

are encouraged to safely explore their world;

are shown positive values that guide their actions;

are guided towards making healthy choices and encouraged to get along with other people;

feel safe, strong, and happy about their world and their future;

encounter people who appreciate them and who help them to serve others.

The asset approach is all about people like you making your community richer by nurturing these qualities. This approach is based on the newest studies in resiliency.

Research on resiliency

Resiliency means being able to recover, in a reasonable amount of time, from hardship. It means growing from adverse experiences. A resilient person copes with life's stresses and becomes stronger as a result.

In the early 1950's, Emmy Werner and a team of researchers went to the Hawaiian island of Kauai to learn why some children there thrived, even in difficult situations, while other children in the same situations did not do as well. They followed almost

700 children over the span of 40 years. They found that the kids who succeeded, even against the odds, had "protective factors" which helped them cope with their tough situations. The researchers named this coping ability "resiliency."

In other parts of the world, Norman Garmezy and Michael Rutter were also looking at resiliency. They studied children who were at risk for mental illness and children who grew up poor. They, too, found conditions in place — protective factors — that helped these children to be resilient.

From birth to age 5, children's brains undergo incredible development, and this development is very important to long-term health and success. Although the brain continues to develop and change into adulthood, the first 5 years can build a foundation for future learning, health and life-long success.

Family members are the most important influences on a child's life and development of resilience. When family members connect with children in meaningful ways, they are better prepared to deal with hardships, form social bonds and social and emotional skills- all which are key to success in school and life.

Parents and other caregivers can support healthy brain growth by speaking to, playing with, and caring for their child in ways that develop the skills they will later need in their life. Children learn best when all adults around help build these skills and support each other in these efforts. Nurturing a child by understanding their needs and responding to them together can help to protect children's brains from stress. Reading with children and exposing them to books, stories, and songs helps strengthen children's communication and social skills, which puts them on track for being successful in school and life.

This book gives ideas for how all adults can do this, no matter what role they play in a child's life. There are many other resources that can help! Continue to learn and work together with others so that children in your community are healthy, happy and successful in life and school.

² Benson, P. L., Scales, P. C., Roehlkepartain, E. C., & Leffert, N. (2011). *A Fragile Foundation: The State of Developmental Assets among American Youth* (2nd ed.). Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute.

³ Werner, E. & Smith, R. (2001). *Overcoming the Odds: High Risk Children from Birth to Adulthood*. Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press.

⁴ Rutter, M. (2012). Resilience as a dynamic concept. *Development and Psychopathology*. (24), 335-344. doi:10.1017/S0954579412000028

⁵ CDC (2018). *Early Child Development and Health*.

*For children, protective factors are like the self- righting tendencies of a heavy keel on a boat.
No matter what the seas, calm or stormy, the boat keeps its balance because of its keel.*



What about risk factors?

Factors such as mental illness, neglect, disabilities, poverty, sexual abuse, violence, alcoholism, and other addictions in the household raise a child's risk for the future. These types of experiences are often referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and their prevention is key to helping kids be healthy and happy, and successful in life. Additionally resiliency research shows that we can greatly reduce the negative impact of these factors. Efforts at prevention and intervention not only lower the risks to children, but also create relationships and opportunities for young people. As we get better at growing resiliency in children, we will have fewer people needing direct intervention services.

The asset story

Since 1989, researchers at Search Institute have surveyed hundreds of thousands of kids in communities across the United States and Canada, including Alaska. They have asked the youth detailed questions about their life experiences.

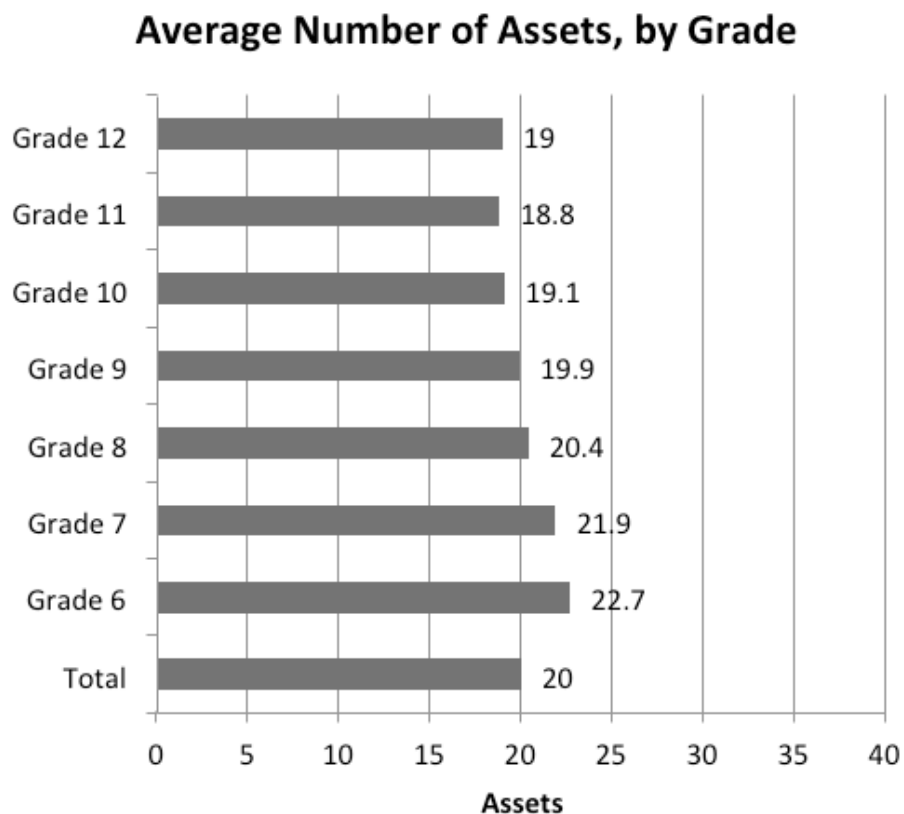
Looking at the responses, researchers found 40 things that are linked to kids who are successful. The same 40 things were found across all cultural and socio-economic groups. They called the 40 things “assets.”

The more of these assets a young person had, the more likely they were to be healthy, productive, and caring — and the less likely they were to be living troubled lives.

We all play important roles in supporting kids having the assets they need to be successful in the long term. This book gives ideas for how all adults can do this, no matter what role they play in a child's life. There are many other resources that can help! Continue to learn and work together with others so that children in your community are healthy, happy and successful in life and school.

Assets are the key building blocks in children's lives. The more assets children have, the more likely they were to grow up healthy, productive, and caring. And more assets children have, the less likely they were to be living troubled lives. Assets enable kids to grown into strong, capable, and caring adults.

How many assets do children have? The Search Institute found that 6th graders across the nation have an average of 22.7 assets. They also found that the number of assets tends to go down as kids get older, ranging between 18 and 21 assets through the middle school and high school years.



Where on these graphs would you like to see the children of your community?

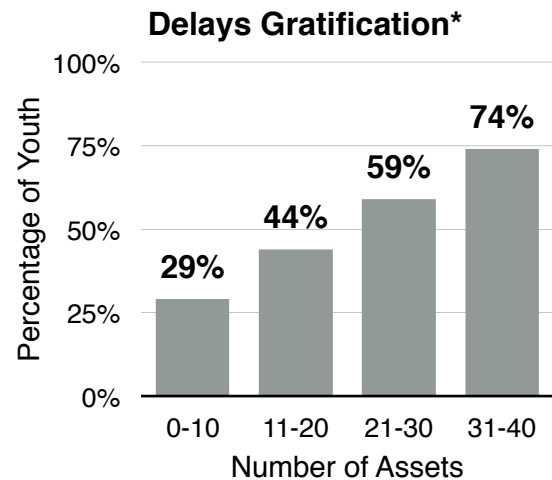
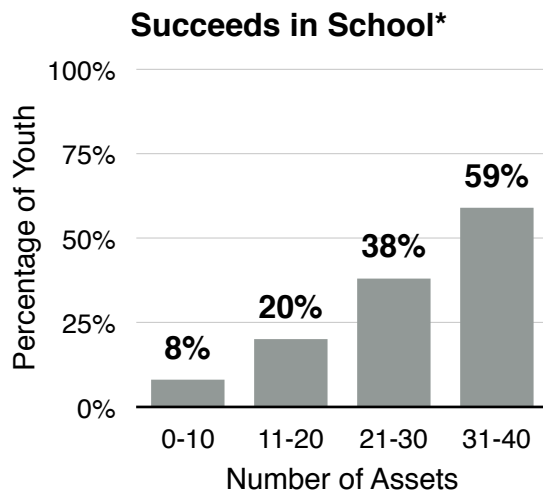
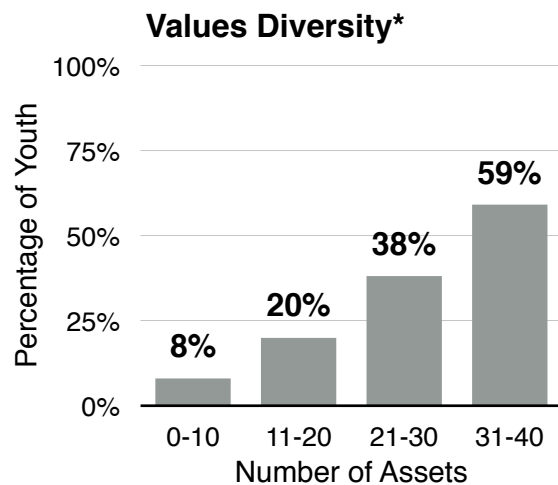
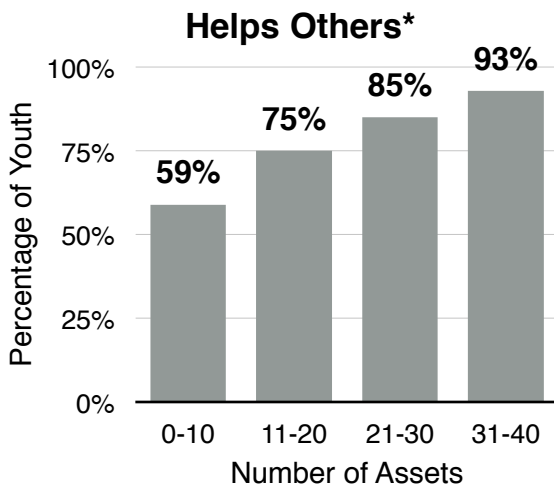
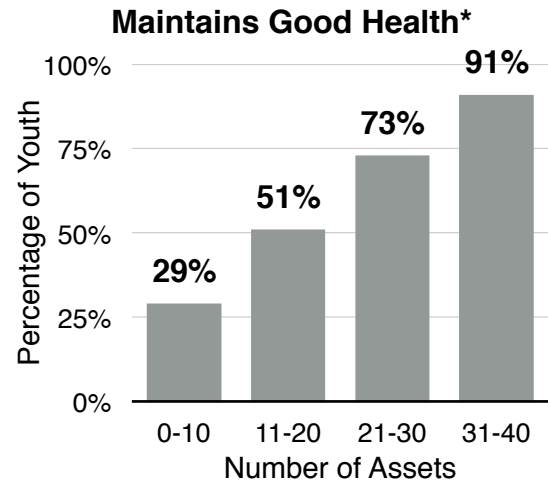
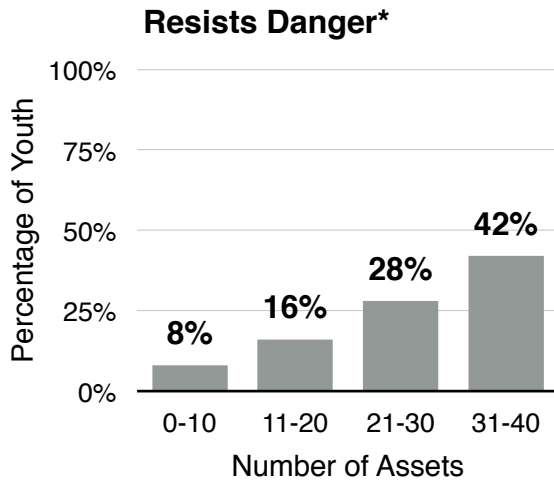
Youth with 31 to 40 assets have an excellent chance to be strong, capable and caring members of our Alaskan family. Only 11% of the kids surveyed have at least 31 assets - a level suggesting they are thriving. But the ideas in this book let us focus on what we want for our children rather than what we don't want. Anyone who wants to make a positive difference in children's lives can immediately begin building assets in even the youngest members of their community.

Studies in early childhood development have found evidence supporting Search Institute's research. The things Search Institute found to be important for teenagers are also extremely important for younger children.

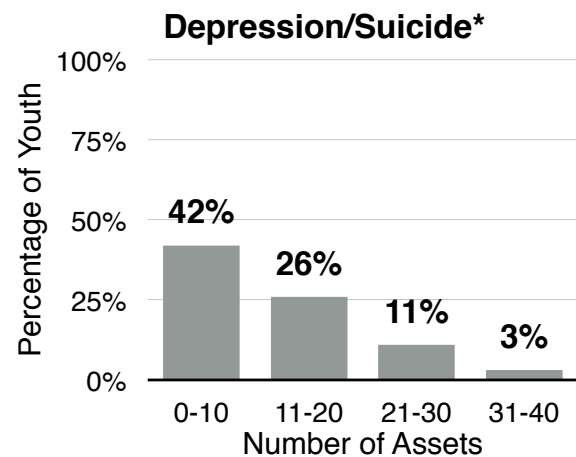
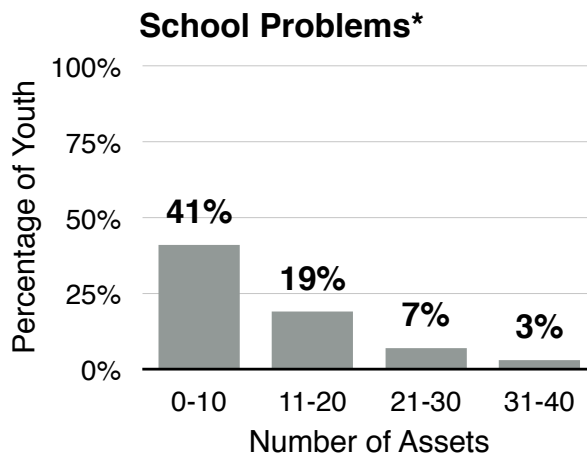
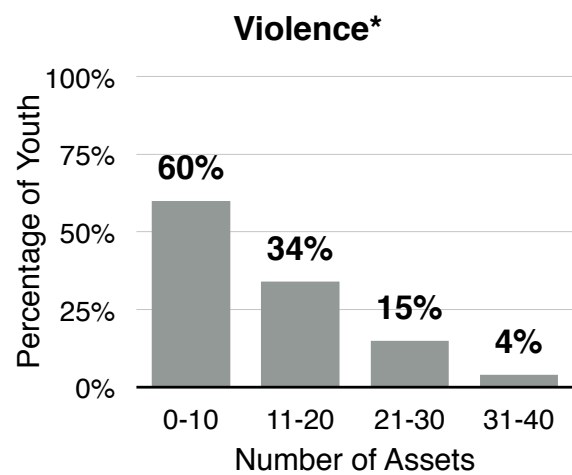
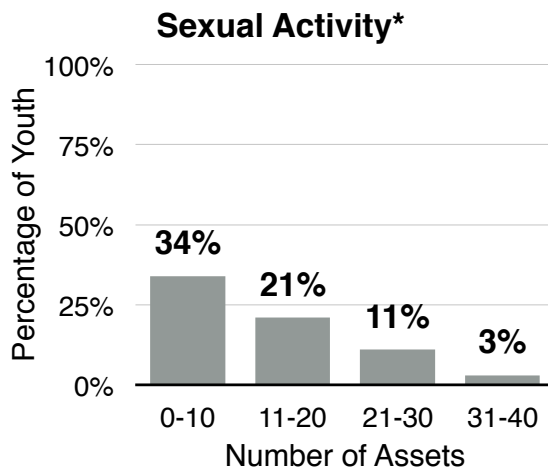
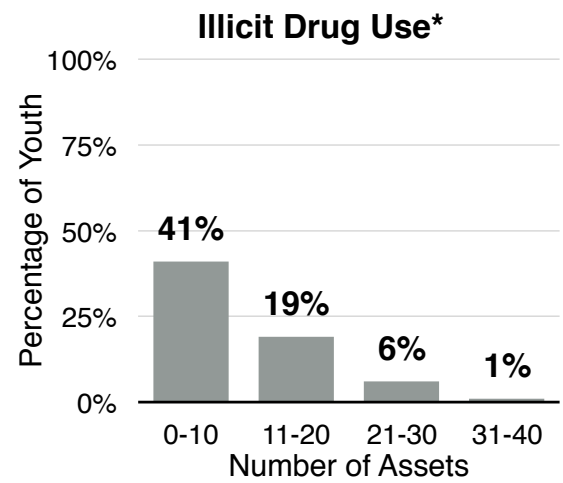
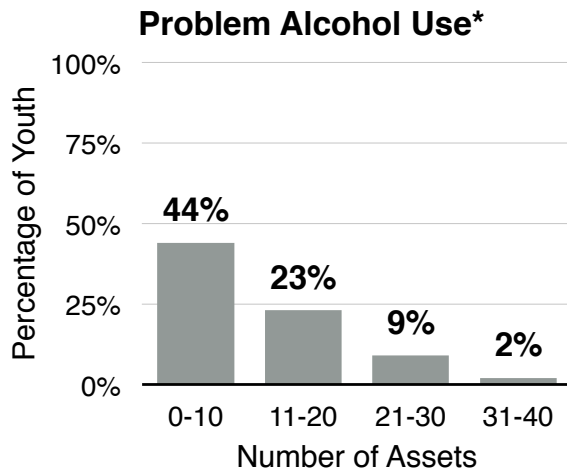
Why? Due to the incredible speed with which a baby's brain develops, the impact we have on our children in the first few years of life is enormous. It's even bigger than any of us could have imagined.

Though asset building is critical in early childhood, it begins even before birth — and continues through high school and beyond.

Assets Promote Healthy Behaviors



Assets Protect Against Unhealthy Behaviors



What are assets?

Like a dream catcher in the Lakota Indian tribal tradition, assets are the supporting threads in a young person's life. These threads can keep away harm and invite goodness. External assets are the structural supports every life needs. They are created and held up by family, friends, and community members. Internal assets are the inner supports that grow within a child and are nurtured by many different people in a child's life.

EXTERNAL ASSETS

Support:

These assets grow when children have people in their lives who love them, care about them, and are present, whether in good times or bad. They create spaces where children feel welcome, cared for, comfortable, and valued. Support assets include:

1. Family support
2. Positive family communication
3. Other adult relationships
4. A caring neighborhood/community
5. A caring out-of-home climate
6. Parental involvement in out-of-home situations

Empowerment:

These assets are about being valued and appreciated, so that children know that they matter to other people. They are about children being able to contribute what they can to others and getting noticed for their efforts.

They are about being safe, because it's hard to feel strong and capable when you're not safe. Empowerment assets include:

7. Children are valued
8. Children are given useful roles
9. Children learn service to others
10. Safety

Boundaries and expectations:

These assets are about children learning the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. They are about rules and consequences; about adults who care enough to set limits and follow through on these limits. They're also about people who inspire children to do their best and to believe in themselves. These assets include:

11. Family boundaries
12. Out-of-home boundaries
13. Neighborhood/Community boundaries
14. Positive adult role models
15. Positive peer interactions and influences
16. Appropriate expectations for growth.

Constructive uses of time:

These assets are about children having positive, interesting, meaningful, and fun activities to do. They are about children being able to discover and develop their talents. They are not about children being overscheduled; all kids need plenty of quality time at home. These assets include:

17. Creative activities
18. Out-of-home activities
19. Religious communities
20. Positive, supervised time at home

INTERNAL ASSETS

A commitment to learning:

These assets are about children learning to love learning! They are about children's curiosity and openness to learning new things and developing the skills that enable life-long learning. They are also about children wanting to do well in school. These assets include:

21. Expectations for achievement and motivation

- 22. Being engaged in learning
- 23. Stimulating activities and “homework”
- 24. Enjoying learning and school
- 25. Reading for pleasure

Positive values:

These assets are about children building a strong inner set of healthy values. They are about children forming beliefs that guide their choices about what they do and say. They are about children honoring and caring for themselves and others. The family is the strongest values influence in young children, and this set of assets involves having a family that values:

- 26. Caring
- 27. Equality and social justice
- 28. Integrity
- 29. Honesty
- 30. Responsibility
- 31. Restraint

Social skills:

These assets are about children gaining everyday skills which enable good relationships, and help them to avoid trouble and perform well in the world. They are about making good choices and getting along with different kinds of people. These assets include:

- 32. Planning and decision-making
- 33. Interpersonal skills
- 34. Cultural competence
- 35. Resistance skills
- 36. Peaceful conflict resolution skills

Positive identity:

These assets are about helping children to see themselves as strong, worthwhile people who possess talents and promise. They are about helping children understand their special place in the world, and helping them to be excited about their future. These assets include:

- 37. Personal power
- 38. Self-esteem
- 39. A sense of purpose
- 40. A positive view of one's personal future

That's it! You can see that these are not new or radical ideas. They are simple, everyday things done by simple, everyday people. They are common sense. However, as an Elder in Kake said, "*Common sense is not so common anymore.*" With changes in our families and society over the last few generations, we must focus on ways to give kids what they need. Asset building doesn't happen as naturally as it once did.

Although children of all ages need assets, certain assets will appear different for children of different ages. For instance, a tiny baby new to the world experiences support and empowerment very differently than does a toddler, preschooler, elementary student, or teenager! The same is true for most other assets, too.

Checklists in the following chapters describe what the assets look like for three age groups: infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. You can use these to see how many assets your kids have or which assets you want to strengthen.

One of the best ways to help your child acquire an aspect as by modeling that aspect in your own life. As your children grow, you will discover more ways to help them directly experience assets.

Has it been a while since you were around little children? Would you find a description of them helpful? Each "assets" chapter includes short profiles of some "typical" Alaskan children.

You can find a list of assets for children ages 6-11 years old at the end of the book. If you have, or are working with, older children, the book "Helping Kids Succeed — Alaskan Style," available from <https://aasb.org/alaska-ice/> (or see the contact information at the beginning of this book), has many ideas for building assets in children ages 12 and older.

Not a program

The asset approach offers practices of ways to connect with young children in school, at home, and in other settings. It is not a program, even though people build assets within effective programs. The asset approach is a way of understanding kids and giving them what they need. It's a way to celebrate and build on what we offer our children. Drawing on what is right about families and kids, the asset approach encourages people to begin connecting with children from the time they're born — or even before. Here are some ways the asset approach is different from other programs:

It's based on relationships. A strong relationship with adults is the most basic ingredient for creating healthy, functional children. Without solid relationships, our efforts to guide children will probably have little impact. Asset building is about creating a set of involved, caring relationships around each and every child.

All children need assets. Children with special needs deserve special attention, but all children need strong support networks. A community-wide effort to help all kids grow up well will benefit the whole community.

Everyone has a role to play. Parents are a child's first and most important teachers. However, children also spend time with many other people who may influence them. Different people have different things to offer children. A combination of assets is important.

The process is ongoing. Every stage of a child's development is important. Each one builds on experiences, both good and bad, from the earlier stages. It's never too early to build assets, and it's never too late. How we build assets changes as a child grows, but the need for external supports and inner strengths lasts throughout his or her life.

No single asset is the answer. The more assets a child has, the more likely it is that child will succeed. The more assets a child has, the more likely they are to grow into healthy adults. Strengthening any asset is good, and the more assets we can strengthen in a child, the better.

Small things count. Every child can experience support in many ways on a daily basis. Simple, everyday actions, such as smiling, holding a hand, or acknowledging a child's presence, are important forms of support. Like grains of sand, these small things collect over time to form a solid foundation for growth.

More Ideas...

Assets and kids with special needs

When we look at the assets a child possesses, we start by acknowledging that all children have strengths, and all children can benefit from having strong relationships and opportunities which will help them discover and build on these strengths.

Children with conditions such as fetal exposure to alcohol (FAS/FASD) or learning disabilities, or who have physical, mental, or emotional difficulties, face unique challenges. The better we understand our kids and the challenges they face, the better we can adjust our asset-building efforts, thus supporting them even more.

“Building Assets in Children with Special Needs,” in the Toolkit section at the end of this book, offers suggestions about how you might use the asset approach with special needs kids.

Youth as asset builders

Children often come into contact with older children. For instance, many young children have older siblings. Early care and education programs may hire teenagers as volunteers or paid staff. Children of different ages often spend time together, especially in small neighborhoods or villages. Youth can be just as effective as adults (and sometimes better) at building assets! Older children who mentor and nurture younger children also benefit from the process.

As you read the ideas throughout this book, look for ways the youth in your life can become involved in meeting the needs of younger children. A little encouragement and supervision from adults can lead to many positive relationships between children of different ages.

“Kyeea”

Kyeea is a terrific friend and housemate. He and Becky enjoy many of the same activities, including hiking, skiing, and backyard barbecues. There’s just one difference: Kyeea has four legs, and Becky has two. Despite this difference, they are great friends and spend a lot of time together.

Becky finds that Kyeea is also great at helping her build assets in neighboring children. Dogs — at least big, gentle, playful dogs like Kyeea — are perfect for bringing out qualities like kindness and responsibility in children.. Dogs also help Becky build relationships. It works like this...

Becky makes a point to be out in the neighborhood with Kyeea. Before long, her neighbors’ kids show up to pet the friendly dog and talk with Becky. Becky squats down and pets Kyeea, too. She smiles as she talks with the children. She reminds the littlest kids about how dogs and other animals need to be treated gently. She asks the bigger kids if they would like to help feed Kyeea.

Yes? Off they go, and for the next ten minutes Becky makes a big deal out of needing the children’s help. They have to get the food into the bowl just right; make sure to put his vitamin into a little chunk of hot dog; make sure he has water; oh, and could someone please brush Kyeea while he waits for his food?

By the time they say good-bye, Becky has managed to learn that Dustin cut his eyebrow on the car door, Maria got a new outfit for her upcoming piano recital (“Can you come to it, Becky? Pleeeeeeease?”), and little Noah slept right through the family’s trip to the ice cream store.

None of these are big actions, yet they show Becky cares about the children. Dustin, Maria, and Noah don’t wonder if they are an important part of Becky’s — and Kyeea’s — life: they know it!



ASSET BUILDING IN ALASKA

Alaska's children

Children and youth make up a large portion of Alaska's population. We call them our "greatest natural resource." However, children depend on adults. They succeed (or struggle) in large part because of adults' actions.

As family members, community members, and educators, we want the best for our kids. We have programs and agencies in place to address children's needs — or, their unmet needs. Issues facing some of our youngest Alaskans include accidents and injuries, SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), family violence, FAS/FASD (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome), poverty, substance abuse, inadequate childcare, adequate preparedness for kindergarten, and isolation from extended family.

People who are involved in providing direct services for our children and families are very valuable. Positive relationships and asset building are at the heart of effective prevention and intervention efforts. Have you ever heard the phrase, "Kids don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care"? In fact, asset building is the "upstream" approach and a key to helping our kids make healthy choices throughout their lives. It focuses on giving all kids what they need.

We are improving as a state, Alaskans are tapping into both intergenerational knowledge and modern research that help each of us to keep kids safe and healthy. The more people build assets in children, the more effective will be our necessary interventions.

It is never too early or too late to start, and there are many resources and practices now available for strengthening families and for promoting healing. Check out the resources section of this book to find out [more](#), and connect with your local resources to get started.

AASB's Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement (Alaska ICE)

People in Alaska have been building assets for a long time. However, they have been calling it asset building since around 1995, when the term was introduced through workshops and by the book "Helping Kids Succeed—Alaskan Style."

Thirteen Alaskan school districts, comprising several dozen communities, surveyed their youth to find out how many assets their kids possessed. The data they recorded is similar to the data from communities outside Alaska. Our kids have about as many assets as the kids in the Lower 48.

Why do we care how many assets our kids have? Because the more they have, the more likely they are to succeed in school, to be of service, and to show respect for the values and

traditions of others. The more assets they have, the less likely they are to be violent, fail in school, or use alcohol or other drugs. We see Alaska as being better in many ways than the rest of the country. In fact, we know we can be better in how we help our children succeed: we can grow more resilient youth!

Asset building is the “upstream” approach and a key to helping our kids make healthy choices throughout their lives.

Individuals and groups throughout Alaska are using the Search Institute tools, Alaskan resources, and their own talents to connect with kids. We are right now building more resilient young people.

The effort to help create a statewide community of asset builders is called the Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement (Alaska ICE). Alaska ICE was started by the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) and is built upon the grassroots success of the 1998 book, “Helping Kids Succeed — Alaskan Style.”

As the Youth Advocacy/Community Engagement branch of AASB, Alaska ICE complements the AASB mission by giving Alaskans at the local level the information, tools and assistance to work together and engage in the shared responsibility for preparing Alaska’s children and youth for the future.

Across the state, the Alaska ICE team delivers the message of Asset Building and Community Engagement to thousands of Alaskan teachers, students, school board members, parents, community members, coaches, faith community leaders and elders. Working closely with individuals and communities, ICE staff assist in developing sustainable local community engagement efforts guided and maintained by local community members.

Asset building across cultures

Alaska has the privilege of being home to people from a wide variety of cultures. We are blessed with a bounty of diversity. In addition the many Alaska Native families in Alaska we are home to people who speak more than 100 languages. Alaskans come from many origins, with many histories, Alaskans are Filipino, African-American, Russian and Eastern European, Scandinavian, Islanders, Latino, Middle-Eastern, Asian, Samoan, and speak over 100 languages collectively.

While we may have different stories about our relationship with Alaska, each of us have goals and hopes for the children of Alaska. People in every culture want to give their kids a foundation for a successful future.

This book is written for all Alaskans. The ideas have come from people all over Alaska, and represent many different cultural groups. We hope we have honored the diversity of lifestyles, viewpoints, and cultures found in our state.

Assets and rural Alaska

Life in towns or cities within Alaska are quite different from life in a rural village or town, especially one with close ties to traditional ways of life and daily connection to place. The differences are not only on the surface, but each community may have history, stories, spiritual beliefs that shape our values, hopes and dreams, and choices and challenges. Let's see if the asset approach still works.

Research or tradition? One major difference between cultures involves how we know what we know. This book is based on research carefully conducted by research teams over several decades, and across the world. In Alaska Native communities, “the wisdom of the Elders has stood the research test of time,” says Toksook Bay resident Paul Jumbo. Village residents are eager to use the asset approach, too. They say they can see a close connection between it and the traditional values and child-rearing practices that have been in place for generations.

What do kids need? Another cultural difference has to do with what experiences are linked with success in life: are there assets specific to rural Alaskans? Perhaps. Despite this possibility, we decided not to add assets or change the basic concepts of the asset research. Therefore, the research as it applies to other groups remains valid. Instead, we invite people to adapt the list as needed to make it fit well for their cultural group. We will all benefit from these efforts.

Are the assets defined the same everywhere? Partners and community members from rural Alaska saw a few changes needed in the definitions of the assets so they could fit with village life. For instance, “cultural competence” as defined by Search Institute means “having comfort with people of different backgrounds,” but within Alaska Native groups, having pride and comfort in one's own culture is considered important. Comfort with other cultures might fall under the “caring neighborhood and community” or “respect” assets. In this and most other cases, the suggested changes have been incorporated into the lists of assets in order to offer a single set of definitions for all Alaskans.

Do different cultures build assets in different ways? Yes! How people build resiliency is different, according to their background and lifestyle. Participating in Native dancing and singing events like the “Celebration” and “Camai” festivals involves people from infancy through adults, and can build at least twenty assets. Village residents contributed many of the ideas for asset building shared in the following chapters.

We hope this book inspires more thoughts on ways rural Alaskans can make a positive impact on children. We also hope that readers everywhere enjoy learning more about village lifestyles, and deepen their understanding of the needs of all the people of our state.

"A Friendly Store Owner"

Ken owns and operates a store in a village in northwestern Alaska. He began noticing that younger kids would visit the store and seem very shy and scared of him when he'd try to help them. He decided that it isn't a good business practice to have his future customers scared of him: he needs to change something.

Ken figures the best way to change the kids' reaction to him would be to talk to them. Thus, he began talking to the children in his store, even tiny babies. He says hello, gently shaking their hands, and starts a conversation.

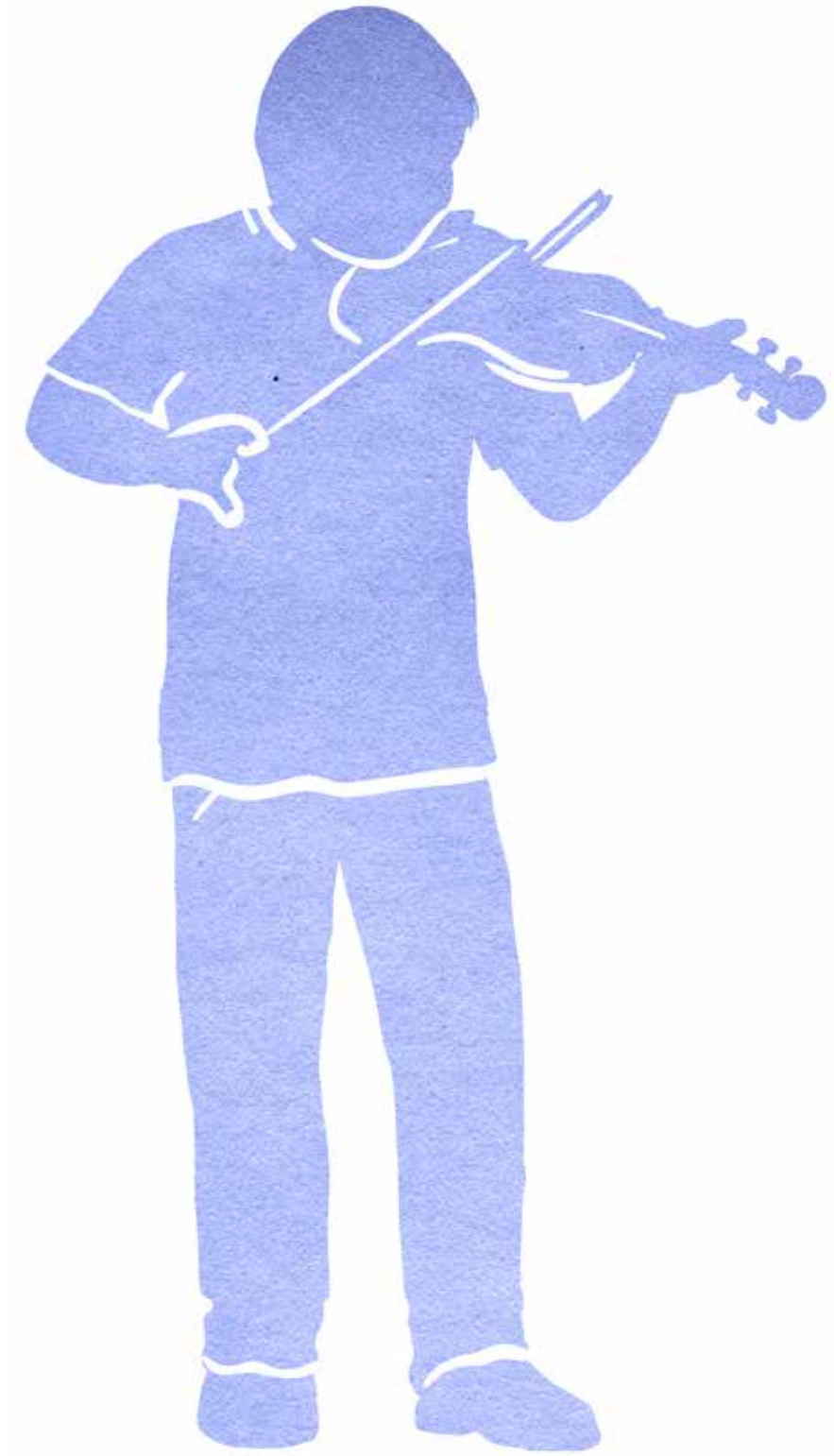
"Hi there little one," he says to the baby packed in her mom's parka. "How you doin' there? Everything goin' okay ridin' around on your mom's back? That's good." It's not baby-talk. Ken uses his regular voice and talks to children as regular human beings. He tries to provoke a smile and some kind of positive response in the short exchange he has with them.

Even the unborn get acknowledgment from Ken.

"Hi, Baby. Growing some good arms and legs? I'm lookin' forward to seeing you when you show up."

As you might imagine, the children are no longer afraid of this store owner. It's not unusual for Ken, who is also the mayor, to be showing visiting dignitaries around the community and to have small children come up and say, "Hello Ken Hughes! How you doin' today?" On a typical day in the store, at least one child as young as 3 years old will come in with a dollar to spend. They — and their parents — know Ken will treat them with fairness and courtesy.

*Was it hard to adopt this new behavior? **Ken says, "No, not at all! It's so much fun and it's so rewarding. You notice positive changes right away."***



BUILDING ASSETS BEFORE BIRTH

Assets before birth?

If you're planning for a baby, can you start building assets before birth?

Absolutely!

Planning for a baby and getting ready to give a child what he or she needs is an important way for parents to help their kids succeed! It doesn't matter if this is the first baby in the family or the youngest of many siblings.

The Baby is connected to Mom. What she eats and drinks, the baby eats and drinks. What she feels, the baby feels. They are one. Thus, one of the most important ways to help an unborn baby succeed is for Mom to stay very healthy. For most women, this means:

- eating healthy foods;
- avoiding alcohol and other drugs;
- getting good rest and exercise;
- making prenatal visits on schedule.

The baby's organs and all its systems are developing. This development will shape the rest of the baby's life. Everything the mother can do to stay healthy — and everything Dad and other family members and friends can do to help her — is vital.

Some of a baby's needs are practical things. A baby needs certain things to be safe, supported, and happy. An example would be, each baby needs separate, safe spaces for when they are resting and when they are awake.

Many of the baby's needs depend upon the people around her being ready to help with her physical and emotional development. Is the baby's older sister ready to be a helpful and loving big sister? Is Dad ready to share hours of his time with his new baby? Are friends ready to give Mom and Dad some much needed rest? Will the baby always have people around her who see her as precious and who know how to care for her?

All these things will help a baby get a good start on growing up! A baby's brain develops very quickly, so healthy development during this time depends on having a good mixture of nutrition, rest, emotional comfort, and appropriate stimulation. If you are prepared to give a baby these gifts from the time he or she is born, you are giving them gifts to last a lifetime. If you are prepared to meet your baby's needs, you are building assets.

"A Special Afternoon"

It was just a normal afternoon, but those days everything felt special. Helen was seven months pregnant with her third child. She had some difficulties with her other pregnancies, and had even lost a child in miscarriage. The pregnancy was early enough that she was still worried. But except for having to go to the regional hospital for routine tests, everything was normal. The baby was growing well and moving around a lot — and Helen was feeling pretty good, too. In just a few weeks she would be leaving her village and going to a pre-maternal home. She was preparing to be away from her family for a month.

Helen's oldest son, Jesse, had gone out to walk with his great-aunt Lucy, who had come over to visit. Lucy came almost every afternoon, just as she had when Helen was pregnant with Jesse and Joe. With Jesse, she made a big deal out of teaching Helen all the things to do and not do when expecting a child. Helen enjoyed listening to the old ways, and actually practiced a lot of the traditions. With Joe and the new baby, Helen knew what to do, but still enjoyed the extra time with Lucy.

When Jesse returned to the house with Lucy, he had his little cousin with him, too. Helen had already hauled water, made stew, and walked to the post office with Joe. She was tired enough to lay down on the couch. While the little ones played around them, Lucy and Helen told stories, and enjoyed their visit.

It was just a normal afternoon, but those days everything felt special.

Ideas for expectant parents

Talk and sing to your baby before it is born. — Pilot Point

Talk with older children about what having a brother or sister will be like. Talk about their feelings. — Kongiganak

Take care of Mom and Baby with regular prenatal care, healthy foods, and rest. — Auke Bay

Prepare a special place for your baby and the baby's things. Think about what the baby will need, and get the necessary supplies. — Mekoryuk

Find other expecting parents to be friends with. — Petersburg

Read books about baby care and feeding now, because you might not have time to once the baby arrives. Ask a public health nurse, pediatrician, or day care provider for their suggestions on good books. — Soldotna

If anyone in the family has problems with addictions or violence, get help now. — Nome

Treat yourself to some special comforts. Have fun. — Valdez

Get a baby carrier that lets you keep your baby close to your body. — Bethel

Ideas for others

Explore the idea of being a big brother or big sister with the older sibling. Help them know what to expect. Inspire them to be a good role model. — Anchorage

Host a baby shower. Invite neighbors and friends to give small gifts you know the family needs. — Cordova

Have books about babies available for reading to older children. — Homer

Make and give a growth chart that includes places for photos of the child at different heights. — Wasilla

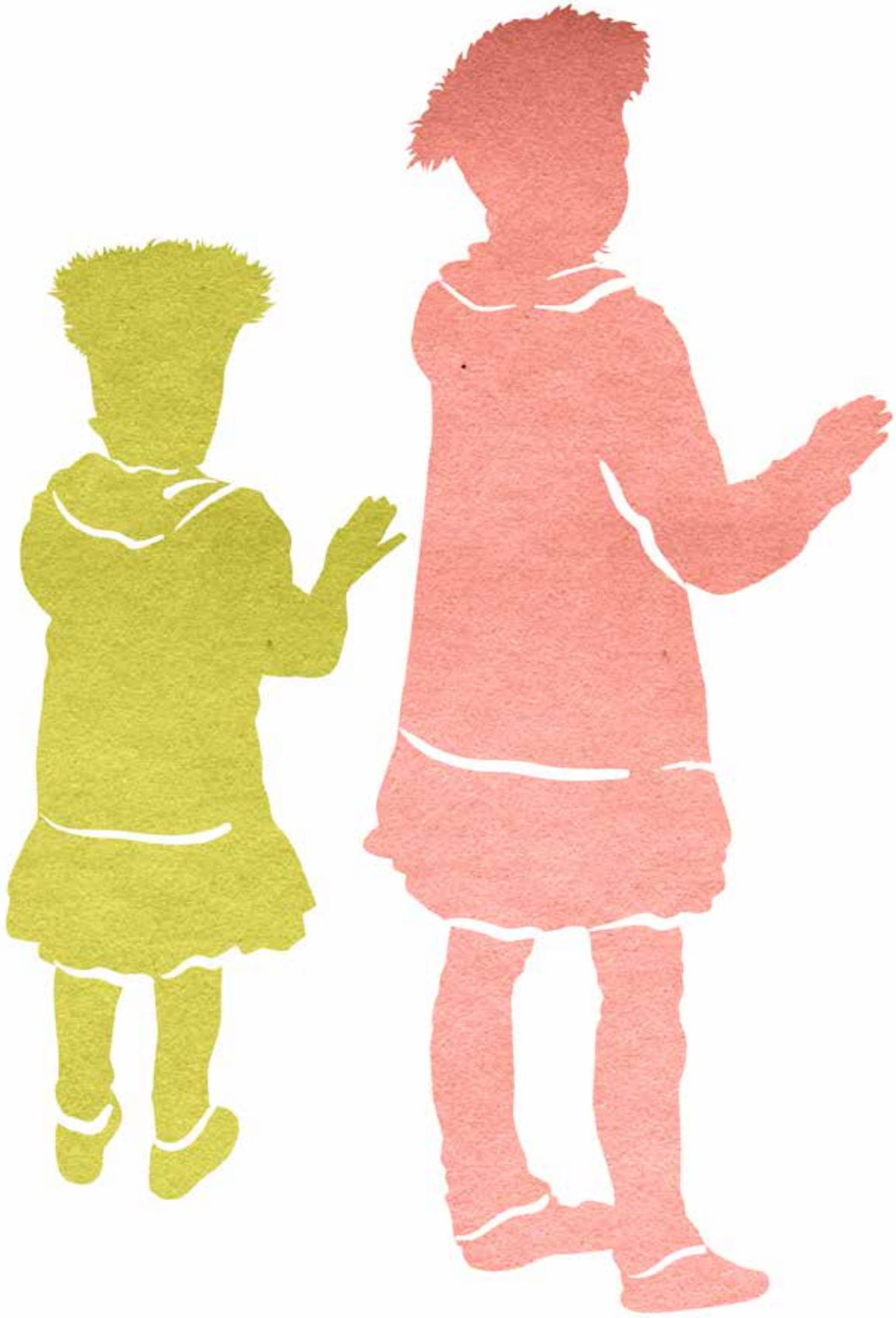
Give a book of coupons for free childcare (by you) that they can redeem whenever needed. — Anchorage

Introduce pregnant women to other people if they are in need of a support group. — Glennallen

Check in with a pregnant friend or neighbor and see if she needs any help. — Ketchikan

Give lots of confidence-building statements to first- time parents-to-be, especially if they are worried. — Sitka

Be supportive and— understanding of pregnant women in the workplace. — Houston



BUILDING ASSETS IN INFANTS

Three Alaskan Infants

Sophie, from the Northwest Arctic region:

Brand new to the world, Sophie sleeps and eats a lot. When awake, she mostly just stares at things, especially the face of whoever is holding her. Sophie doesn't have much muscle strength and can only lift her head with great effort. She cannot move or change positions on her own yet. Her movements are jerky, as she kicks, flails her arms, and squirms. She can squeeze your finger though! And she seems to tense all the muscles in her little body when she cries. Sophie sucks, swallows, makes bubbles on her lips, cries, and makes noises with her voice. Little Sophie does not like loud noises. She likes to be touched, held, looked at, smiled at, talked to, sung to, and given bright and clear objects to follow with her eyes. After two months, she is finally starting to settle into a routine.

Willie, from the Copper River region:

At five months old, Willie can control his movements better every day. He can lift his head, lift himself up on his arms, and can almost roll over and sit up. He is discovering his body parts. Willie studies every- thing around him, and especially likes to watch people. He makes many different facial expressions. He plays with his voice and "talks." Willie likes toys with sounds and he loves listening to music. He grabs and holds things, and he tends to put everything into his mouth. Willie is not as smiley and comfortable around new people or settings compared to other babies; he is slower to warm up to unfamiliar things. He cries when he is afraid, uncomfortable, or frustrated. For Willie, this seems to happen more than with other babies. His mom can often tell what he needs by the type of cry he makes.

Tanya, from the Interior:

Tanya, at 10 months old, is much more mobile now than she was! She crawls, scoots, pulls herself up to stand, and even walks by holding onto things. She notices everything and reacts to what other people do and say. Tanya shows her feelings with her face and voice, including crying and screaming. Everything around Tanya is a toy, including food. She wants to feed herself. She is very verbal and uses words like "ma" and "boo" and "upee." Tanya likes toys, including books, balls, pull-toys, take-apart toys, and dolls. She loves her stuffed husky, "Paws," and her cuddly blanket. Tanya has been fussy when teething and when left with others ("stranger anxiety"), but she gets a lot of comfort and reassurance. Tanya still likes lots of cuddling, holding, soothing, and touching.

Assets-for-Infants Checklist

Adapted with permission from “A Leader’s Guide to What Young Children Need to Succeed” by Jolene L Roehlkepartain and Nancy Leffert, Ph.D., c 2000, published by Search Institute.

Check each statement that you feel is true for an infant in your life. Use the checklist as a guide to show you where the infant is being well supported and where you can build more assets for the infant. Remember, this is a quick and informal way for you to increase your awareness, and enhance your discussion, about assets. It is not intended to be used as a scientific measurement tool.

- ☐ My baby gets a lot of love and support from family members.
- ☐ I communicate with my baby in positive ways. I respond right away and respect his/her needs.
- ☐ I get support from three or more adults, and I ask for help when needed. My baby gets love and comfort from at least one adult other than his/her parents.
- ☐ My baby experiences caring neighbors.
- ☐ My baby is in caring, encouraging surroundings outside the home.
- ☐ I actively communicate my baby’s needs to caretakers and others in situations outside the home.
- ☐ Family members regard my baby as a central part of their family life. Other adults in the community value and appreciate infants.
- ☐ The family involves our baby in family life.
- ☐ I serve others in the community.
- ☐ My baby has a safe setting at home, in out-of-home settings, and in the neighborhood / village. These settings have been childproofed.
- ☐ I am aware of my baby’s preferences and adapt the surroundings and schedules to suit his/her needs. I have begun to set limits as my baby becomes mobile.
- ☐ Childcare settings and other out-of-home places have clear rules and consequences for older infants and consistently give all infants the right type and amount of stimulation and rest.
- ☐ Neighbors feel responsible for the safety and wellbeing of my baby, and they notice and supervise my baby as he/she begins to spend time outside the home.

- ☐ I model positive, responsible behaviors, and other adults in my baby's life do the same.
- ☐ My baby sees siblings and other children interacting in positive ways. My baby can interact with children of different ages.
- ☐ I am realistic in my expectations for my baby's development. I encourage my baby's development without pushing him/her.
- ☐ I offer music, art, or other creative elements of our life with my baby each day.
- ☐ I offer my baby some interesting places to go and things to see outside the home. We keep our baby's needs in mind when attending events.
- ☐ The family regularly attends religious programs or services, keeping the infant's needs in mind.
- ☐ I provide my baby with predictable and enjoyable routines at home, and make sure he/she is well supervised at all times.
- ☐ Family members want to do well at work, school, and in the community and, they show this motivation to my baby.
- ☐ My baby sees family members who are responsive and attentive toward their work, school, the community, and the home.
- ☐ I encourage my baby to explore, and I provide toys that match his/her emerging skills. I am sensitive to the infant's temperament, preferences, and level of development.
- ☐ I enjoy learning, and I am involved in learning activities.
- ☐ I read to my baby every day — and make it fun.
- ☐ I believe in helping others, sharing and cooperation, and show this belief to my baby through my actions.
- ☐ I respect myself and others, value social equality and acceptance, and want to reduce hunger and poverty. My actions match these beliefs.
- ☐ I act on what I believe in, stand up for my beliefs, and communicate and model this behavior for my family.
- ☐ I believe in honesty, and share this belief by telling the truth and acting honestly.
- ☐ I accept and take personal responsibility.

- ☐ I model good health habits and I provide good food, rest, and playtime for my baby. I model healthy attitudes and beliefs about relationships.
- ☐ I make all safety and care decisions for my baby and model safe behavior. I let my baby make very simple choices as he/she becomes mobile.
- ☐ I model positive and constructive interactions with other people. I accept and respond to my baby's expressions of feelings, and see them as cues to his/her needs.
- ☐ I am knowledgeable and comfortable with my own culture, as well as other people's cultures, races, and ethnic backgrounds, and I model this to my baby.
- ☐ I can resist things when I need to, and show resistance skills in my behavior.
- ☐ I act in nonviolent ways and help my baby develop skills of nonviolence by helping him/her deal with challenges and frustrations.
- ☐ I feel I have control over things that happen in my own life, and I model healthy ways of dealing with challenges and frustrations. I respond to my baby so he/she begins to learn that he/she has influence over immediate surroundings.
- ☐ I give my baby positive feedback, encouragement, and reinforcement about skills he/she is gaining, helping him/her to develop positive self-esteem.
- ☐ My life has purpose and I demonstrate this belief through my actions. My baby is curious about the world around him/her.
- ☐ I am hopeful and positive about my personal future, and I work positive future for my baby.

"The Twins"

Paul and LuKim were exhausted. They were the parents of four-month old twins. Eddie was still not sleeping through the night regularly, and Emma was fussy during the days. Paul, an accountant working out of their home, wondered how long he could go on like this. Between the disrupted sleep and the time he gave to LuKim, the twins, and the household during the day, he had little energy to give his work what it demanded. LuKim, a devoted mom, wanted to play with the twins and take them places. But keeping them fed and clean and soothed left her with little energy for anything else. With no nearby family members to call on for help, Paul and LuKim were overwhelmed. When, and where, would they find the full joy of parenthood under these conditions?

Then, along came Vickie, a woman LuKim worked with at the office. Vickie had no children of her own, but had lots of nieces and nephews growing up around her. She and LuKim became friends. Vickie was both pleased and sorry to learn LuKim was making plans to be a full-time mother.

Vickie saw LuKim a couple of times after the babies were born. But she only got a sense of what was happening in LuKim's life weeks later when she dropped by for a visit one day. LuKim, still a proud and confident person, didn't try to hide her difficulties. She let Vickie know how much she and Paul were struggling.

Vickie saw that they were great parents in a challenging phase of parenting. She offered them what she had: time. Would it be OK with Paul and LuKim if Vickie came by a couple of times a week after work and just played with the twins so they got to know her? At least LuKim and Paul could attend to their household needs away from the babies. Maybe after a while they would feel comfortable enough to have Vickie stay alone with them. LuKim and Paul might be able to plan an evening out together.

So it started. Even though Vickie couldn't get Eddie to sleep better at night, she was there to help Emma through her fussy times. Paul and LuKim got a little more rest, too.

As time went on, the bonds of friendship grew, and Vickie became "Auntie Vee" to the twins. When they started preschool, Vickie was there with them. And when Vickie got her new sled dog puppies, the twins were there to "help" her train them.

The intensity of caring for the twins faded, and everyone adjusted to their new life as a family.

Ideas for family members

Stay informed about different stages of development, so you can better understand and respond to what you see your baby doing. — Anchorage

Allow babies to explore objects safely. Remove dangerous things from their reach. — Bethel

Spend time with other families so your baby gets used to them and becomes comfortable around them. — Unalakleet

Give babies a routine, and add structure to their days. They need to know what to expect. Include activity and rest. — Barrow

Hold your baby when you feed him or her. If you give your baby a bottle, still hold him/her close to you. Make eye contact and talk to your baby, especially during activities such as feeding and diapering. — Bettles

Let babies cry sometimes, as long as there is no physical reason for their upset. It is OK for them to express frustration by crying. — Dillingham

Be a sober, positive parent. (If you have trouble with alcohol, get help.) — Alakanuk

Pick up your baby right away when she/he cries. Try to find out why she/he is crying and make it better. — Elim

Reach out to others for help when you need it. Remember, you need not be perfect or do everything yourself. — Bethel

Have conversations with your baby about what you are doing or thinking. Sing songs, and if you speak another language, sing songs in that language too. — Elfin Cove

Keep a scrapbook or keepsake box for your baby. Even if you don't have time to make it perfect, collect and record the simple little things that document their everyday life and early growth. — Elim

Have colorful mobiles and other visually interesting objects for your baby to look at wherever she/he is. — Homer

Nap when your baby naps so you can get the rest you need to be at your best. — Tok

Rock your baby to sleep. When your baby wakes up, take time to cuddle him/her. — Gulkana

Frequently thank and encourage the people who care for your baby. — Seward

Have sturdy books around. Read and cuddle with your baby every day. — Klawock

Take pictures of your baby and share them with family and friends, especially those who live far away. — Glennallen

Ideas for caregivers outside the home

Plan “home visits” around the families’ schedules. Allow staff to work flexible schedules to do this. — Petersburg

Compliment parents and show your confidence in them. — Haines

Learn and use the proper pronunciation for the baby’s given name, and ask if the baby has a traditional name. — Nome

Have a comfortable place for moms to nurse their infants. — Fairbanks

Encourage parents to visit their children at the childcare center. — Wales

Share things about the day with parents and hear from them about children's lives at home.
— Unalakleet

Have areas that are safe for babies to explore. Have new things for them to explore every day.
— Bethel

Greet each parent by name as they arrive at the childcare center. — Metlakatla

Post the babies' picture and name by the child's cubby so everyone can learn and use their name. — Juneau

Give out "safety bags" to new parents. Include safety plug caps, poison stickers, and other items they can use to childproof their home. — Anchorage

Separate infants from the TV screen, and do interesting things with them. — Hoonah

Organize occasional service projects that families can participate in together. — Kotzebue

Model positive ways of resolving conflicts with parents. — Savoonga

Try to have people of different races and cultures around the childcare center. — Anchorage

Try to have people of different races and cultures around the childcare center. — Anchorage

Listen to parents. Respond as best you can when they are reaching out. — Eagle River

Have a lending library with books for parents to check out. — Nenana

Discover things with babies, like spider webs, apple cores, and feathers. — Palmer

Ideas for faith communities

Tolerate minor disturbances from babies during worship services. If you can, offer moms a place of respect and comfort to sit without worry of disrupting others. — Wrangell

Whenever there is a sponsored activity, include opportunities for people to get to know one another. Don't assume it will happen automatically. — Seward

Take the time to talk with parents and listen to their stories, problems, etc. — Soldotna

Offer childcare by well-trained people during activities sponsored by the faith community.
— Chugiak

Acknowledge and honor parents regularly. — Sleetmute

Offer mentor-parents to members of the faith community who would like them. — Sitka

Include babies in activities sponsored by the faith community. — Hooper Bay

Provide caregivers with clear written guidelines for taking care of infants. Guide older children to have positive interactions with the babies. — Kenai

Maintain a “family closet” to provide for families’ physical needs such as diapers, car seats, clothes, and baby furniture. Help link families with agencies, if needed. — Juneau

Encourage older members of the faith community to spend time in the nursery. — Wasilla

Offer a weekly gathering for moms to pray together, such as “Moms In Touch.” — Elim

Ideas for community members

Invite a family with a baby over to visit. Get to know them. Offer to take care of a neighboring baby so parents can have a night out. — Craig

Are there safety concerns in your neighborhood? Take action to correct them. — Whittier

Stay in touch with the needs of friends and help them out when they need it, so they stay positive around their kids. — Savoonga

Start a stroller club with parents in your neighborhood.—Anchorage

Learn the birth celebrations specific to a culture you are unfamiliar with, such as Filipino, Eskimo, or Jewish. — Bethel

Get a bunch of fathers together and go to the park with their babies. — Haines

Always greet your neighbors, and make eye contact, smile, and talk to the baby. — Yakutat

Give special attention to children with new siblings to offset any feelings of jealousy they may develop. Let them show off their new sibling. — Tok

Respect parents’ and babies’ need for sleep, and limit your phone calls and other disturbances. — Kake

Take an interest in your co-worker when he/she talks about children and family matters. — Barrow

Be understanding of a co-worker who misses work because of a family need. — Ft. Richardson

Celebrate a neighbor's new baby by decorating their yard with balloons and a sign.
— Skagway

When visiting people with babies, accommodate their routines and needs. — Anchorage

Give a new baby a gift of a book and a gift certificate to a book store. — Juneau

More Ideas:

Traditional ways

Keep babies with you when you go to dance, pick berries, fish, or camp... Always keep them with you. — Dillingham

Ask Elders for advice, and follow it. — Yakutat

Give your baby an Eskimo name. — Wales

Speak and sing to your baby in your Native language. — Klukwan

Make traditional toys for your baby to play with. — Bethel

Feed your baby traditional foods. — Galena

Everyone in the family loves and takes care of the baby. — Toksook Bay



BUILDING ASSETS IN TODDLERS

Three Alaskan Toddlers

Jason, from Southeast:

Jason continues to grow and change quickly. His wobbly walking shows why they call him a “toddler.” He is always bumping into things, tripping, and falling down. At times he is very interested in exploring things and at other times he just wants to be held close. Jason has no sense of danger and is always on the move. He cries and fusses when we tell him, “No,” but easily shifts his attention to something new when we distract him. He treats everything as his, and often grabs and pulls at things that don’t belong to him. His favorite place to play is a sandbox, and he loves to take his shoes off in it. Jason gets very fussy when he doesn’t get a full nap. He has a hard time falling asleep at night, and needs to be rocked, but then he sleeps very soundly until morning.

Sara, from South-central:

Sara seems to resist everything. She is very aware of what she wants and has little tolerance for not getting her way. The most common words we hear her say are, “No!” and, “Gimme!” She has a few understandable words, but mostly makes animal sounds and gibberish. She watches her older sisters carefully and sometimes imitates them. She gets very frustrated when she can’t do what they are doing. Playing with other toddlers is hard for Sara, but she seems to enjoy being with other children her age, as long as they don’t have to play together. She uses a tippy cup to drink, and often drops it or throws it down. She is most relaxed when she is cuddled up with her parents, looking at and “reading” books.

Alex, from the Kenai Peninsula:

Alex is into everything! A box, bag, cabinet, drawer, storage bin, backpack, purse... anything around, Alex turns into something to be explored. His little hands can’t always do what he wants them to, but he can certainly hold, grasp, pull, throw, and slap! He still likes to put things in his mouth sometimes. Alex has figured out how to pull a chair to a wall, climb on it, and constantly turn on and off the light switch! Alex enjoys water, especially in the bath, and will play a long time in it if he has toys and someone close by. He does not like to be left alone — ever. Even if he is just playing with his toys, he likes someone in the room. Alex loves to “sing” and be sung to. He goes through dozens of good and bad moods in a day, but usually settles into a nice bedtime routine.

Assets for Toddlers Checklist

Adapted with permission from “A Leaders’ Guide to What Young Children Need to Succeed” by Jolene L Roehlkepartain and Nancy Leffert, Ph.D., c 2000, published by Search Institute.

Check each statement that you feel is true for a toddler in your life. Use the checklist as a guide to show you where the toddler is being well supported and where you can build more assets for the toddler. Remember, this is a quick and informal way for you to increase your awareness of and discussion about assets. It is not intended to be used as a scientific measurement tool.

- ☐ My toddler gets a lot of love and support from family members.
- ☐ I communicate with my toddler in positive ways. I respond to his/her needs in a reasonable amount of time and respect those needs.
- ☐ I get support from three or more adults, and I ask for help when needed. My toddler gets love and comfort from at least one adult other than his/her parents.
- ☐ My toddler experiences caring neighbors.
- ☐ My toddler is in caring, encouraging surroundings outside the home.
- ☐ I help my toddler succeed in situations outside the home. I communicate my toddler’s needs to caretakers outside the home.
- ☐ Family members regard my toddler as a central part of their life and recognize the need to set limits for the toddler. Other adults in the community value and appreciate toddlers.
- ☐ The family involves our toddler in family life.
- ☐ I serve others in the community.
- ☐ My toddler has a safe setting at home, in out-of- home settings, and in the neighborhood/village. These settings have been childproofed.
- ☐ I am aware of my toddler’s preferences and adapt surroundings to suit his/her needs. I set age-appropriate limits for the toddler.
- ☐ Childcare settings and other out-of-home places have clear rules and consequences to protect the toddler and consistently give the right type and amount of activity and rest.

- ☐ Neighbors feel responsible for the safety and wellbeing of my toddler, and they notice and supervise the toddler as he/she begins to spend time outside the home.
- ☐ I model positive, responsible behavior, and other adults in my toddler's life do the same.
- ☐ My toddler sees siblings and other children interacting in positive ways. My toddler can interact with children of different ages.
- ☐ I am realistic in my expectations for my toddler's development. I encourage my toddler's development without pushing him/her.
- ☐ I offer music, art, or other creative elements of our life with our toddler each day.
- ☐ I offer my toddler some interesting places to go and things to do outside the home. The family keeps my toddler's needs in mind when attending events.
- ☐ The family regularly attends religious programs or services, keeping the toddler's needs in mind.
- ☐ I give my toddler predictable and enjoyable routines at home, and make sure he/she is well supervised at all times.
- ☐ Family members want to do well at work, school, and in the community and they show this motivation to my toddler.
- ☐ My toddler sees family members who are responsive and attentive toward their work, school, community, and home.
- ☐ I encourage my toddler to explore, and I provide toys that match his/her emerging skills. I am sensitive to the toddler's temperament, preferences, and level of development.
- ☐ I enjoy learning, and I am involved in learning activities.
- ☐ I read to my toddler in enjoyable ways every day.
- ☐ I believe in helping others, sharing and cooperation, and show this belief to my toddler through my actions.
- ☐ I respect myself and others, value social equality and religious tolerance, and want to reduce hunger and poverty. My actions match these beliefs.
- ☐ I act on what I believe in, stand up for my beliefs, and communicate and model this to my family.

- ☐ I believe in honesty, and share this belief by telling the truth and acting honestly.
- ☐ I accept and take personal responsibility.
- ☐ I model good health habits and I provide good food, rest, and playtime for my toddler. I model healthy attitudes and beliefs about relationships.
- ☐ I make all safety and care decisions for my toddler and model safe behavior. I let my toddler make simple choices.
- ☐ I model positive interactions with other people. I accept and respond to my toddler's use of actions and words to show feelings, and see them as cues to his/her needs.
- ☐ I am knowledgeable and comfortable with my own and other people's culture, race, and ethnic backgrounds, and I model this to my toddler.
- ☐ I can resist things when I need to, and show resistance skills in my behavior. I am not overwhelmed by my toddler's needs.
- ☐ I act in nonviolent ways and help my toddler develop skills of nonviolence by helping him/her deal with challenges and frustrations.
- ☐ I feel I have control over things that happen in my own life, and I model healthy ways of dealing with challenges and frustrations. I respond to my toddler so he/she begins to learn that he/she has influence over immediate surroundings.
- ☐ I give my toddler positive feedback, encouragement, and reinforcement about skills he/she is gaining, helping him/her to develop positive self-esteem.
- ☐ My life has purpose and I demonstrate this belief through my actions. My toddler is curious about the world around him/her.
- ☐ I am hopeful and positive about my personal future, and I work to create a positive future for my toddler.

"Christmas Stockings"

Tina didn't have much money when her boys were small. As an unmarried, twenty-year-old, working student, she was barely scraping by.

Christmas was approaching, and Tina knew she could not afford to buy the boys a lot of nice gifts — in fact she would struggle to afford a single nice gift. She wanted to make the holiday a special time for her children though.

Her step-father was talking about his own childhood traditions one day, and his stories gave Tina an idea. She made each of her sons a simple stocking and bought some very inexpensive items for the children, shopping at second-hand stores and sale counters. A toothbrush, a “pre-owned” matchbox car, a home-made audio cassette tape of her reading their favorite story, a chocolate bar, a bean bag, a special photograph, a toy they thought they had lost, a pair of newly-mended socks, a new gluestick, and some crayons... She had a collection of simple things for each boy. Then, she carefully wrapped each item with scraps of wrapping paper she had saved, knowing that any child delights in having surprise packages to open.

When Christmas arrived, the boys found a single present with their name on it under a modest Christmas tree, and a stocking filled with small wrapped treasures. Tina, and her mom and step-father, read “The Christmas Story” to the children. Then they opened their gifts.

Tina was delighted to see that her sons loved their simple presents. She repeated the tradition the following Christmas, and the next one, and the next. Even when she had a little more money and she was able to afford bigger gifts, she kept the tradition of simple individually wrapped presents in their stocking and a single present under the tree. And they always read “The Christmas Story” together before bounding into their presents.

One Christmas years later, Tina didn’t wrap the presents she bought for the boys’ stockings. She thought they had outgrown simple pleasures. But the boys let her know that they really missed the special touch of the wrapped presents and wanted her to promise that next year they would be back. Of course they will, boys!

Ideas for family members

Put child-proof latches on certain cabinets and drawers with off-limits items, but keep some places open for interested toddlers to explore. — Seldovia

Tell your toddler what IS okay when you have to tell her what is NOT okay. “It’s not okay to kick me, Laura, but here, you can pound this pillow instead.” — Haines

Expect your child to cry and scream sometimes. Let them express their anger, fear or frustration in this way for now. — Barrow

Discuss rules and consequences with your partner and caregivers, so your toddler has consistent discipline. — Gustavus

Keep a predictable daily schedule of activities and rest that your child can depend on. — Ft. Richardson

Be a sober, strong parent. If you feel you can’t do this alone, ask a public health nurse for help. They will know where to refer you. — Ketchikan

Learn ways of disciplining children that do not involve violence, including spanking.
— Akutan

Don't expect toddlers to share. Praise sharing and model sharing, but be patient and understanding when they don't want to share. It will come later. — Craig

Cuddle up and read or look at books with your toddler every day. Read with enthusiasm. Have lots of books around the house. — Tok

Give him choices when you can. Don't give in to tantrums, but give the child a choice up front: "Do you want to wear this sweatshirt or that jacket?" "Do you want to get dressed or eat breakfast first?" — Shaktoolik

Find time to laugh with children every day. Giggle, tell jokes, be goofy. Make everyday activities like baths and getting dressed lively and fun. — Golovin

Eat healthy foods and give healthy foods to your child. Don't give in to a sweet tooth. Explain to him/her that it's up to you to make healthy choices for her until she is old enough to make healthy choices for herself. — Hydaburg

Get to know the different people in your child's life, especially if they are cared for at a center. — Valdez

Have a nice bedtime routine every night. Build in time for talking, reading, cuddling, praying, a back rub, etc. — Wrangell

Have plenty of interesting things for your toddler to do, and avoid the TV. — Huslia

Use a calm voice and simple words when talking to your child, especially when correcting them. Show them appropriate ways to express their feelings. — Kenai

Get help from others when needed. Show your child how adults take care of getting what they need. — Savoonga

ONLY leave your child with mature, caring, responsible people. — Koliganek

Follow rules. If the sign says "No climbing" then don't let your child climb. Tell him everyone has to follow rules. — Metlakatla

Do a chore with your child, like folding laundry. Turn it into a fun learning experience. Talk about what you are doing and let them "help" you. — Houston

Accept each stage of development your toddler is in. Celebrate milestones. — Unalakleet

Set a few safety rules for different situations and repeat the safety rules over and over when your toddler is playing there. — Sitka

Avoid arguing in front of your toddler. If an argument starts, try to model good conflict resolution skills. — White Mountain

Discover things with your child, like puppies, rocks, and rain. — Glennallen

Attend multi-cultural events with your children. Your newspaper may list them. — Eagle

Ideas for caregivers outside the home

Always act in ways you want your children to act. Be a good role model. — Unalakleet

Learn how to use time-outs as rest time and not as punishment. Adults take time-outs when needed, too. — St. Michael

Invite elders to the center to tell stories. — Emmonak

Teach parents about developmental stages and appropriate expectations. — Kotzebue

Create opportunities for adults and children to sing together. — Toksook Bay

Always greet children with a morning greeting and a hug, handshake, or high-five.
— Clarks Point

Build in enough time for clean-up with any project, so kids can have fun and do it at their pace. — Lower Kalskag

Encourage parents in their role of taking care of their children, such as keeping bedtimes or curfews. — Gambell

Plan many different activities to do with children: water play, pretend games, puzzles, outside play, reading. — Hooper Bay

Listen to toddlers. Take the time to interpret what they are saying or showing. — Unalaska

Instead of telling a toddler, “Don’t touch!” put away things that could get hurt or be hurtful to him. — Kake

If a child makes a mess, give her the opportunity to help you clean it up. — Healy

Model patience. For a young child, caring, respect, self control, and equality are all shown through patience. — Minto

Schedule opportunities for parents and teachers to talk with each other. — Klawock

When they are learning new things, help them but don't do the thing for them, e.g., hanging up their coat. — Kipnuk

Avoid taking sides when helping children in a conflict. — Manakotak

Don't force children to eat. Empower them to decide how much food they need to fill up. — Mt. Village

Give children many chances for doing things right and learning new skills. — Russian Mission

Be a resource for parents. Help them as best you can with issues that arise. — Girdwood

Ideas for the faith community

Get books that involve children (pop-ups, buttons, etc.). When you read with a child, enjoy the book with him/her. — St. Mary's

Be accepting of minor disturbances from toddlers during worship services. Remember why the child is there. — Stebbins

Whenever there is an opportunity to play with children, play with them and give them your attention. — Palmer

Tell children often how precious they are and how much you love them. — Haines

Compliment parents and communicate your confidence in them. — Upper Kalskag

Talk to toddlers about things that are important to them, such as their pets, shoes, food. Be their friend. — Dillingham

Include young children in story time or summer reading clubs, giving them a structured activity for fun and learning. — Iguigig

Network with other social service agencies to provide things for families in need. — Juneau

Celebrate every time a little kid says, "I did it!" — Teller

Help adult members of the faith community become acquainted with each other and involved in children's lives. — Soldotna

Include tips for building assets regularly in talks and discussions that take place in the faith community. — Anchorage

Always give thought to the needs of toddlers when planning any event. — Chevak

Establish a mentor parent program that provides an experienced and confident parent to help another parent. — Tok

Learn the names of all the children in the faith community, and call them by name
— Big Lake

Ask a toddler lots of questions, when reading, riding in a boat, walking, etc. “What do you see?” “Who is that?” “Where is the -----?” — Kotlik

Celebrate and praise the positive things a child does. Don’t make a big deal out of the mistakes. — False Pass

Ideas for community members

Start a conversation with a toddler: “What’s that? What are you eating? Show me your shoes!” — Tok

Be watchful of kids playing, and look out for their safety. — Kwethluk

Be aware of your behavior around little children, and model good behavior.
— White Mountain

Catch children being good: “Thank you for waiting your turn!” — Ft. Yukon

Learn some finger-play songs and show them to a toddler when you have a chance. — Aniak

Get down to children’s eye level whenever you interact with them. — Barrow

Have something for toddlers to do when they come to your home. — Sitka

Help take care of the little children at group gatherings, whether or not you have children of your own. — Ouzinkie

Notice them. Just pay attention to them. — Golovin

Let them “read” a book to you, even if they are just pretending. — Hoonah

Offer assistance to a neighbor with a baby or toddler. Let them get to know you and learn that you can be counted on. — McGrath

Support efforts to make your community safer for children. — Ketchikan

Traditional ways

Celebrate birthdays with traditional celebrations. Invite Elders. — Gambell

Give your child things so he can copy what you do. For instance, if you drum for Eskimo dancing, give your child a little drum of his own to use. — Shishmaref

Talk in your Native tongue to your child and encourage others to do the same.
— Akutan

Share stories of when you were a child. — Hoonah

Show respect to all Elders. — Golovin

Use both their English and Native names with love and encourage them to do the same.
— Tuluksak

Make kuspuks and parkas for them. — Elim

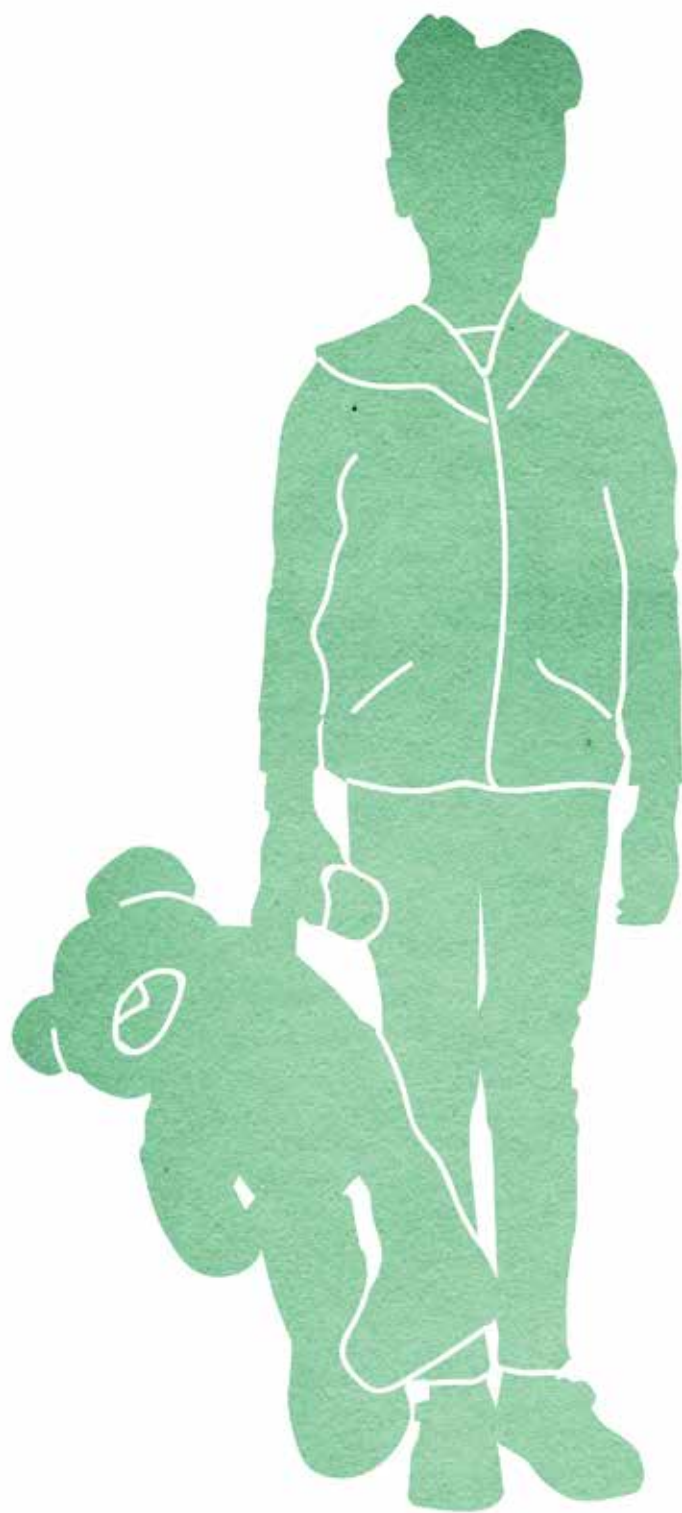
Tell children where their grandparents and great- grandparents come from. Help them see the connection to their place and to their family. — Chevak

Praise a child doing something good. Compliment him/her and tell them they are valuable.
— St. Paul

Tell children to always be honest; that honest people are always admired and respected.
— Holy Cross

Take children on trips to visit other family members. — Napaskiak

Have little children around when you are carving, sewing, beading, drumming, etc. Even when they are too young to learn, they should be around you. — Ouzinkie



BUILDING ASSETS IN PRESCHOOLERS

Three Alaskan preschoolers

Anna, a three-year-old from the North Slope:

Anna is quiet, and usually has a hard time leaving her mom. In her bilingual home, she speaks English and her native language, so her speech is not as developed as her peers. She often gets words mixed up or makes up her own words for things. She enjoys doing things with her hands, like drawing, playing with play-dough, finger-painting, and “cooking.” Anna loves to play pretend games alone or with others, especially grown-ups. She knows some alphabet letters and pretends to read. She knows some nursery rhyme songs. People consider Anna shy, but she is very happy and interactive with people she knows well. Her “best friends” are her teddy bear and doll. Her taste for foods is very narrow, but her mom is firm about eating healthy foods.

Tess, a four-year-old from the Aleutian Islands:

Tess is a chatterbox and asks lots of questions. She laughs and sings and loves to “perform” for other people. Tess can do a lot of things with her body, include running, jumping, climbing, catching a ball, and balancing for a few seconds on one foot. She seems to constantly seek attention. She can be bossy when playing with children her age, but she shares and takes turns better than when she was younger. When problems arise, she runs to a grown-up for help. She loves to imitate older children and seems to pick up everything they say and do. Tess likes to please people, and often does what is asked of her. She gets very upset when she is reprimanded. She stays very busy during the day, but still needs to take afternoon naps to stay happy through the evening.

David, a five-year-old from Southwest:

David goes everywhere, and fast. He runs, creeps, slides, rolls, and dances all over. He loves to play with balls, trucks, and anything that resembles a ball or truck. If other children are around, that’s okay, but he seems to like to play by himself just as well. David acts out a lot, and is more likely to show his feelings than to talk about them. He is quick to cry when frustrated. He doesn’t yet have much self-control, but he can do the right thing when he is shown. His attention span is about 10-15 minutes for an activity, and he can use simple tools like spoons, paint brushes, and plastic tools. He is starting to count things, and knows lots of opposites, like up/down, in/out, and front/back. He can follow simple directions, but only one or two at a time. David likes to look at books and listen to “talking” books, and he still likes to snuggle up with a grown-up, but he has to be in the right mood.

Assets for Preschoolers Checklist

Adapted with permission from “A Leader’s Guide to What Young Children Need to Succeed” by Jolene L Roehlkepartain and Nancy Leffert, Ph.D., c 2000, published by Search Institute.

Check each statement that you feel is true for a preschooler in your life. Use the checklist as a guide to show you where the preschooler is being well supported and where you can build more assets for the preschooler. Remember, this is a quick and informal way for you to increase your awareness and discussion about assets. It is not intended to be used as a scientific measuring tool.

- ☐ My preschooler gets a lot of love and support from family members.
- ☐ My preschooler and I communicate positively. My child seeks me out for help with difficult tasks or situations.
- ☐ My preschooler gets support from at least one adult other than his/her parents. I have support from people outside the home.
- ☐ My preschooler experiences caring neighbors. 5. My preschooler is in caring, encouraging surroundings outside the home.
- ☐ I help my preschooler succeed in situations outside the home. I communicate his/her needs to caretakers outside the home.
- ☐ I value and appreciate preschoolers, and other adults in the community value them, too.
- ☐ I create ways my preschooler can help out, and I gradually include him/her in age-appropriate tasks.
- ☐ Our family works together to serve others in the community.
- ☐ My preschooler has a safe setting at home, in out-of-home settings, and in the neighborhood/village. These settings have been childproofed.
- ☐ Our family has clear rules and consequences, monitors all children, models good behavior, and sets limits.
- ☐ Childcare settings and other out-of-home settings have clear rules and consequences to protect my preschooler, and consistently gives the right type and amount of activity and rest.
- ☐ Neighbors feel responsible for the safety and wellbeing of my preschooler, and they notice and supervise my preschooler as he/she begins to spend time outside the home.

- ☐ I model positive, responsible behavior, and other adults in my preschooler's life do the same.
- ☐ I encourage my preschooler to play with other children in safe, well-supervised settings.
- ☐ I am realistic in my expectations for my preschooler's development. I encourage my preschooler to develop his/her talents, and other adults do the same.
- ☐ My preschooler participates in music, art, dramatic plays, or other creative activities each day.
- ☐ My preschooler interacts in stimulating ways with children outside the family. The family keeps my preschooler's needs in mind when attending events.
- ☐ Our family regularly attends religious programs or services, keeping the preschooler's needs in mind.
- ☐ A mature and responsible person supervises my preschooler at all times. He/she spends most evenings and weekends at home with parents in predictable, enjoyable routines.
- ☐ I share my expectations for my preschooler to do well at work, school, and in the community. Other adults do the same.
- ☐ My preschooler sees family members who are responsive and attentive toward their work, school, the community, and the home.
- ☐ I encourage my preschooler to explore, and I provide toys that match his/her emerging skills. I am sensitive to the preschooler's temperament, preferences, and level of development.
- ☐ I enjoy learning, and engage my preschooler in learning activities. Other adults do the same.
- ☐ An adults reads to my preschooler for at least 30 minutes over the course of the day, encouraging my child to participate.
- ☐ I encourage my preschooler to show sympathy for someone who is distressed, and to begin to share, cooperate, and help others.
- ☐ I respect myself and others, value social equality and religious tolerance, and want to reduce hunger and poverty. My actions match these beliefs.
- ☐ I act on what I believe in, stand up for my beliefs, and communicate and model this in my family.

- ☐ My preschooler is learning the difference between telling the truth and lying.
- ☐ My preschooler is learning that actions affect other people.
- ☐ I model, monitor, and teach the importance of good health habits. Other adults do the same. My preschooler is beginning to learn safe and healthy sexual attitudes and beliefs as well as respect for others.
- ☐ My preschooler is beginning to make simple choices, solve simple problems, and make simple plans, as he/she is able.
- ☐ My preschooler interacts with other children and adults. My child expresses feelings and is learning to put these feelings into words. I model and teach empathy, and other adults do the same.
- ☐ My preschooler has opportunities to learn about and grow comfortable with his/her own and other people's culture, race, and ethnic backgrounds.
- ☐ My preschooler is taught to resist participating in wrong or dangerous activities.
- ☐ I model positive ways to resolve conflicts, and other adults do the same. My preschooler is taught and is beginning to practice positive, nonviolent ways to deal with challenges and frustrations.
- ☐ I feel I have control over things that happen in my own life, and I model healthy ways of dealing with challenges and frustrations. I respond to my preschooler so he/she begins to learn that he/she has influence over immediate surroundings.
- ☐ I give my preschooler positive feedback, encouragement, and reinforcement about skills he/she is gaining, helping him/her to develop positive self-esteem.
- ☐ My life has purpose and I demonstrate this belief through my actions. My preschooler is curious and explores the world around him/her.
- ☐ I am hopeful and positive about my personal future, and I work to create a positive future for my preschooler.

Betty's Snowmen

Nancy teaches preschool to a dozen children twice a week in a space borrowed from a neighborhood church. She knows the value of having kids and older people connect, and she seeks out neighbors who might be open to having a relationship with her kids.

Nancy meets Betty, who is elderly and not very mobile. She is a long-retired teacher, and loves to have the children come to visit her. Throughout the year, Nancy's kids trot over to Betty's for a visit. Nancy asks a lot of questions at first, modeling for her kids how to make conversation with an older person. Betty's little dog offers a good focus for their conversations. The children always bring Betty a little treat from the preschool — a muffin made with berries picked in Betty's back yard, or a wreath for the holidays. "She always showers her appreciation on the kids," says Nancy. "And their little gifts and artwork are always displayed in her house."

Betty has a maple tree in her front yard, a rare site in this southeast Alaska town. One autumn day, as the children are collecting the colorful leaves, she tells them she would especially like it if they could come back after a snowfall to build a snowman in her yard. A few weeks later, as Nancy finishes reading a story about snow to the children at the school, they remember Betty's request.

Looking outside, they notice that there is enough snow on the ground to build a snowman. They talk about what they will need, then go about collecting a hat from the dress-up corner, some stones, and some carrots. And then they're off to Betty's.

Betty was in bed, but when she looked out her windows, she saw a bunch of excited children and grown-ups creating a delightful trio of snow-friends to cheer her up. And as Betty ate her meals from her wheelchair at the kitchen table, she saw another snowman twinkling a smile at her from outside her kitchen window.

The snowmen are long gone now. And Betty left this world the following summer. But the memories of that day, and of all the enriching visits with a dear old lady, will remain in the hearts of those preschoolers and their teacher the rest of their lives

Building SUPPORT assets in preschoolers

Support assets are about children having people in their lives who love them, care about them, and are there for them in good times and in bad. They're about having places where children feel welcome, cared for, comfortable, and valued. These are the main support assets: family support, positive family communication, other adult relationships, a caring neighborhood or village, a caring out-of-home climate, and parental involvement in out-of-home situations.

Ideas for family members...

Reassure your child when he/she is fearful. Tell them often and whenever they need to hear it that they are safe and loved. — Kake

Show pictures of family members who don't live nearby. Talk about them too. — Nome

Spend some time in your child's day care or school, and then talk with them about it when you are together. — Wasilla

Tell your preschooler things you like about her/him and how precious she/he is to you.
— Brevig Mission

Turn off the TV and play or talk together as a family each day. — Nenana

Learn the names of your child's friends. Take an interest in them. — Dillingham

Make time to listen. Give him/her your undivided attention. — Saxman

Be quick to praise and slow to criticize. Use the "Five-to-One Rule." For every negative comment or exchange, give your child five positive ones. — Anchorage

Give your children a lot of hugs and physical affection. Let them hold your hand or snuggle up to you whenever they want. — Cordova

Have a "pet phrase" for your child and repeat it many times a day. "I love you more than all the stars in the sky!" — Bethel

Get on the floor and play with them, even if it's just for a few minutes a day. — Sand Point

Always make sure there is a responsible, caring adult around your child. — Pilot Station

Ideas for caregivers outside the home

Ask children questions about how topics relate to their family, feelings, and experiences.
— Galena

Hold regular class meetings (short ones) mostly for children to exchange compliments with each other. Show them how to do this at the beginning. — Seward

Always consider how the child sees and experiences things before judging why she does something. — Gambell

Make time to communicate with parents. If you need to, call them at home, especially to report something positive. — Unalakleet

REALLY talk and REALLY listen to the children.— Anchorage

Notice specific things you like about each child. Tell them what you like. — Sitka

Help parents and family members to get to know each other. Don't assume it happens automatically. — Homer

Be as light-hearted, positive, and playful as you can. Keep a sense of humor. — Sutton

Ideas for the faith community

Visit people with small children. Share yourself. Find a way to be of service. — Shishmaref

When a child has something to say, be attentive. Talk about what they want to talk about. — Saxman

Learn children's names and use their names when you talk to them. — Barrow

Keep a strong link with community organizations working to improve the community for children and families. — Ketchikan

Nurture relationships with people of a variety of races, backgrounds, and cultures. Make the faith community truly welcoming to all. — Anchorage

Create ongoing opportunities for members of the faith community to get to know each other. It may not happen easily for everyone. — Kenai

Ideas for any community member

Attend a program or performance that your neighbor's or friend's child is in. — Eagle River

Make conversations with small children in your world. Get down to a child's eye level whenever you interact with them. — Teller

Offer to take care of a little one if his parents have to go somewhere without good childcare. — Kotzebue

Often send post cards, letters, and photos to the little kids in your life who live far away. — Noorvik

Stay in touch with the needs of friends and help them, so they are better able to give their children what they need. — Willow

More Ideas...

Traditional ways

Extended family members and adults in the community have definite roles in the raising and education of each child. — Juneau

Older children should be role models for younger siblings. — Pilot Station

Village tribal councils sponsor activities that involve and support the families. — Savoonga

Celebrate birthdays with traditional celebrations. Invite Elders. — Gambell

Thank children when they do anything helpful and notice out loud their positive behavior.
— Hoonah

Speak the Native language. — Bethel

Time With “Gram”

Five-year old Linda is heading out to visit her grand- mother. It’s something she does every day because her mother insists on it. “We’re bringing back our traditional culture. In that culture, it’s important for a child to visit an Elder,” says Linda’s mom, Delores. “It starts out as an obligation, but after a while it’s just something you do.”

There’s more involved than just going to see the Elder. Delores explains to Linda that such visits keep the Elder from getting lonely and the children get to hear about their culture.

Linda and her grandmother may go berry picking or collect grass, but they don’t necessarily do anything special together. The time they spend together becomes special just because they are together.. Sometimes, Linda may choose to spend the night but usually she spends a few hours helping do chores or a project, or even just relaxing, with her “Gram.”

Children need a good safe spot to vent their feelings of frustration, and that’s one of the things a regular visit with Gram offers Linda, her siblings, and cousins. “They figure things out with their grandma, and they feel better about it,” observes Delores. Older people have a better perspective about some things, and just have a different way of talking with children.



Building EMPOWERMENT assets in preschoolers

Empowerment assets are about being valued and appreciated. Children need to know that they matter to other people. These assets are about children being able to contribute what they can to others and getting noticed for their efforts. They are about being safe, because it's hard to feel strong and capable when you're not safe. The main the empowerment assets are a community valuing children and keeping them safe, and children being given useful roles and serving others.

Ideas for family members

Do things with your child when you go places like the playground, park, or pool.

— Cordova

Use simple words when correcting behavior. Tell them exactly what to do differently so they can do it the next time. Avoid spanking. — Elim

Ask for your child's permission before you tell a story that might embarrass him/her.

— Point Hope

Have tasks for them, like helping you fold laundry, pick up toys, or work in the garden.

— Juneau

Give children choices, for instance: "Do you want blueberries in your pancakes?" "Which wrapping paper shall we use for this present?" — Wasilla

Help children implement their own solutions to problems, and congratulate them when they figure something out. — Cordova

Collect money for a worthwhile cause in a penny jar. When the jar is full, let your child help you deliver the money. — Ketchikan

Bake cookies together and share them with people. — Unalakleet

Teach your children to always have a big friend or grown-up with them when they go out to play. — Aniak

Childproof your house and other areas where your child spends time. Remove things that could be dangerous to them. — Nome

Set clear rules for safety. Repeat them lovingly, firmly, and often. — Anchorage

If there is any violence in the home, get help. Don't allow your child to grow up in a home with violence. — Metlakatla

Help your child learn when and how to say “No” and to trust his/her instincts.
— Toksook Bay

Ideas for caregivers outside the home

Sell children’s artwork as a means of raising money for something the children are excited about getting or doing. — Wasilla

Teach children how to clean up, and involve them in all clean-up activities, with encouragement and compliments when finished. — Hoonah

Give every child a task of service to perform for others, such as serving snacks, or taking care of an animal. Recognize the importance of their task. — Haines

Involve children in problem solving. “What do you think we can/should do about this?” Listen to their reply. Make it a conversation. — Juneau

Teach personal safety to children, and help them practice all the skills they need for staying safe. — Barrow

Send thank-you notes home with children for little things they did that were helpful; then parents can acknowledge their helpfulness too. — Palmer

Organize service projects that families can participate in together. — North Pole

Ideas for the faith community

Involve young children in worship services in small but meaningful ways. — Tok

Establish clear written guidelines for the care and protection of children, and make sure all who are involved in the care and education of children are trained. — Anchorage

Be attentive to the needs of young children in all events you sponsor. — Bethel

Organize families to participate together in service projects throughout the community.
— Wasilla

Publicly recognize the service offered by members of the faith community, including the youngest members. — Valdez

Speak about the importance of serving others as it relates to your religious beliefs.
— Soldotna

Teach the difference between enforcing family rules and abuse. Never condone or ignore abuse within families. — Wrangell

More Ideas...

Ideas for any community member

Vote. Learn about the candidates and issues important to your family and then help choose the people who will help create the future you want for children. — Ketchikan

“Hire” a group of small children to help you harvest your garden in the fall. Pay them with a treat you can enjoy together, like an ice cream bar. — Dillingham

Be watchful of kids playing, and look out for their safety. — Kwethluk

Support women trying to leave a violent home situation. — Palmer

Do you know a child with a special collection of something? Let him show you his special collection. — Anchorage

Let a child decide an activity you do together. — Anchorage

Model safety: always wear your seat-belt, bike helmet, life jacket, etc. Reinforce how important this is to young children. — Kodiak

Traditional ways

Children should help adults with tasks: washing dishes, stacking wood, making akutaq. Then they tell each other stories while they share it. — Bethel

Involve children in Native dancing from the time they are little. — Juneau

Include small children when you gather and prepare Native foods and disperse food to the Elders and people in need. — Saxman

Grandfathers teach their grand-kids to follow the beliefs and customs of the culture, and to work along- side others in the community. — Toksook Bay

More Ideas...

The Golden Egg

Four-year old Sam and his family are off to the annual Easter Egg Hunt, a big event in this small community. Thousands of plastic eggs are hidden for eager young hunters, and a few dozen of them are wrapped in foil. These are “Golden Eggs” that can be traded for special prizes.

Sam wants a Golden Egg so much! As he gathers up colored eggs, his desire for a golden egg grows even more intense. But other smaller kids find them. More aggressive kids snatch them away from others. Sam resists the urge to knock people down. He just keeps on hunting, his excitement turning into disappointment as he goes.

Then something shifts within Sam. He realizes he feels as bad for the other kids who haven't found a special egg as he does for himself! His parents ask him if he has any ideas about ways to help the kids that are feeling bad. Right away, Sam goes to his house and gets a wad of play money from his own Easter basket. He returns to the community hunt and starts giving out giant paper "money" to anyone who does not have a Golden Egg. "Not everyone can get a Golden Egg," he said, "but at least they can get another prize."

Sam's mom, Janet, glows with pride. Not only did Sam find a healthy way to deal with his own feelings, but he showed a great capacity to help others too. "We need to let kids find and implement their own solutions to situations sometimes," she says.

What were some things that may have led to Sam's healthy reaction? "Well, we spend a lot of time listening to Sam," Janet shares. "And we talk a lot and ask kids questions — about their feelings and about other kids' feelings. They learn how to identify their feelings and express themselves and let others do the same. A lot of people don't acknowledge little kids — they just issue rules and expect kids to follow them. In our house, we talk about stuff. Kids don't just automatically learn things—you need to guide them."

Building BOUNDARIES-AND-EXPECTATIONS assets in preschoolers

Boundaries and expectations assets are about children learning what acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. They are about rules and consequences: about adults who care enough to set limits and follow through. They're also about people who inspire children to do their best and to believe in themselves. These assets include: family boundaries, out-of-home boundaries, neighborhood/village boundaries, positive adult role models, positive peer interactions and influences, and appropriate expectations for growth.

Ideas for family members...

Always act in ways you want your children to act. Be a good role model. — Manakotak

Closely supervise young children when they are with peers, and help them learn rules involved when playing with others. — Anchorage

Develop rules of sharing to model fairness around the house, such as using a timer to share a computer or during game time. — Elim

Discuss rules, consequences, and discipline practices with your spouse and other caregivers, so your children get consistent messages about expectations. — Fairbanks

Look for ways young children can spend time with older kids and teens that are good role models. — Chevak

If a teacher or childcare provider disciplines your child, support the teacher and don't make excuses for your child. — Copper Center

Learn how to use time-outs as rest time and not as punishment. Adults take time-outs too, when needed. — St. Michael

Make sure children have a regular bedtime, even in the summer when older kids might be out playing very late. — Togiak

Talk to children about the rules and expected behavior at different places that they spend time: home, preschool, places of worship, friends' houses, grandparents' house, etc.
— Savoonga

Tell your children exactly what you expect, such as "I expect you to talk to me with your calm voice." — Wasilla

Avoid pushing them beyond their limits. Give them adequate rest. Give them food. Adjust your expectations according to their ability to give. — Nenana

Ideas for caregivers outside the home

Always tell a child what you want her/him to do along with what you don't want. For instance, "It's not okay to wipe your hands on your shirt, Sam, but here is a napkin."
— Golovin

If you can, let children feel the natural consequences of their actions, then give them support. Example: "Jessie, honey, you didn't choose to wear your boots and now your shoes and feet are wet. When we go in, I'll show you where to put your shoes and socks to dry."
— Haines

Talk to children often about your expectations for them at school. Be firm, clear, and positive. — Savoonga

Play with them, and "steer" them to good behavior by your own modeling, light-hearted reminders and casual problem solving. — Wasilla

When you must reprimand a child, be clear that it is the behavior that is not okay, not the child himself. Say, "It's not okay to shove, Ben," instead of, "Bad boy!" — Healy

Notice and mention rules and rule-following issues as they arise in stories or other lesson material. Point out often the benefits of following rules and the problems of breaking rules in your normal conversations with kids. — Nikiski

Spend time discussing discipline among staff members, and make sure everyone is consistent with their expectations and enforcement of the rules. — Sutton

Ideas for the faith community

Help older children to be good role models for the younger kids, and recognize the efforts of everyone to be good role models. — Anchorage

Help parents who need help with rule-setting. Make it comfortable for parents to ask for help with these matters. — Eagle River

Integrate lessons about following rules into the stories you tell. Explore with children how following the rules benefits them, as you understand it within your faith. — Soldotna

Set high standards for behavior and character traits among the people working with children. — Craig

Help even young children set simple goals for good behavior. Teach them how to work on their goals, and monitor their progress. Give them ways to monitor their progress with their family, too. — Chugiak

Be realistic and reassuring with children who struggle with behavior. Encourage their efforts, even if they continue to “fail.” — Kotzebue

Ideas for community members

Allow children to be messy. It’s part of their nature. — Wales

Be constantly aware of your actions around children and remember you are always teaching children with your own behavior. — Juneau

“Catch children being good,” and call them on it. — Nome

Help a child who is being picked on. Stop the bullying and then teach them how to be assertive, tolerant, and respectful. — Gambell

Be a mentor for a child, especially one who lacks positive role models. — Fairbanks

Support substance abuse efforts in the community. By helping adults overcome their addictions, you are helping them become better role models for others. — Kodiak

Inform parents when you see a child showing especially good behavior or behavior that concerns you. — Shishmaref

Become a positive influence in the lives of older youth, and help them be positive role models for younger children. — Anchorage

More Ideas...

Traditional ways

Tell stories about past and present village residents, real and imagined, and tie in the lessons about rules and consequences. — Savoonga

Share stories about honored role models. — Wales

Grandfathers teach the grandchildren to follow the beliefs and customs of the culture. Protocol is very important to a Native child. With that comes very clear boundaries of what is acceptable and what is not. — Juneau

Send your children to an Elder when they misbehave. Let the Elder tell them a story that will help them learn the right thing to do. — Hoonah

Work with the traditional council to decide the rules for children in the village. Discuss ways to help enforce rules that everyone agrees on. — Elim

In the naming ceremony, you are given a verbal gift and a vision for your future. You are expected to live up to the qualities of the person you were named after. — Kluti-Kaah

"Andy"

Andy is normally a sweet and amusing child. He generally delights the caregivers at his childcare center. He gets along well with other children and joyfully participates in activities. He especially likes dress-up and dramatic activities.

So when the child care center's director, Linda, noticed Andy withdrawn at times and aggressive at others, she was puzzled. When his behavior continued into the next week, she and the other staff decided to talk to his mother about their concerns.

Eve told them that she had noticed some of the same disturbing behaviors in Andy. She was eight months pregnant, and wondered if Andy could be feeling jealous or perhaps just concerned about his place in the family.

Eve's information explained a lot. Linda offered some insights for Eve based on her years of experience with children. Over a cup of coffee in Linda's private office, they explored options for helping Andy with his feelings.

They decided to see if Andy's dad would be able to spend more time with Andy, to give him more attention for a while and reassure him of his love.

“Yes,” he said he could try. He talked to his manager at work about perhaps adjusting his hours so he could go to Andy’s childcare center a few hours a week. He worked it out so he would start early and extend his lunch break on Tuesdays and Thursdays. He started eating lunch and playing with the kids at the center.

Andy loved having his dad there. His aggressive behavior continued for a while, but his dad’s presence was a big help. Within a month, Andy was nearly back to his “old” self.

Andy’s dad no longer felt an urgent need to be on hand, but enjoyed his time at the center so much that he made the arrangement permanent. His circle of friends grew ten-fold, even if most of them were less than four feet tall.

Building CONSTRUCTIVE-USE-OF-TIME assets in preschoolers

Constructive-use-of-time assets are about children having positive, interesting, meaningful, and fun things to do. They are about children being able to discover and develop their talents. They are also about not being over scheduled with activities, and having plenty of quality time at home. These assets include: creative activities, out-of-home activities, religious communities, and positive supervised time at home.

Ideas for family members

Challenge yourself: for every half-hour your child spends with a TV or computer, spend at least a half-hour making, creating, building, acting, or reading something with him. Avoid using the TV or computer as a baby-sitter. — Juneau

Have lots of books and reading material around the house. — Kake

Get or make simple musical instruments and have them available for children. Have lots of music around everywhere and listen to it with your children. — Dillingham

Have talent shows just for fun. Let your kids and their friends perform — and you be the audience. — Wasilla

Keep handy a list or file of ideas for spur-of-the- moment activities for doing with young children. Examples: pair up socks, do an exercise video together, count loose change, measure yourself. — Girdwood

Thank the Creator every day. Be prayerful with your children. Bring spiritual beliefs into your everyday conversation. — Toksook Bay

Sign up to learn something new and share your experiences with your children. — Unalaska

Support the community or school library to have books and story time hours for very young children. — Little Diomedea

Take books, games, or other simple, quiet activities to restaurants so your child has something positive to do while waiting. — Juneau

Give simple home-made gifts for special people. Talk about why gifts from the heart are so special. — Gambell

Give creative games, crafts, or other activities as gifts to your children. — Iguigig

Watch your child at play. Notice how they use their hands or show creativity. Build on the positive traits you see. — Hoonah

Attend worship services and children's classes with your faith community. Read or tell stories from the history of your faith. — Stebbins

Ideas for caregivers outside the home

Create opportunities for adults and children to do creative activities together. Model good interactions to help parents, if needed. — Kongiganak

Invite artists, musicians, and other creative people you know to share a short lesson or perform for children. — Cordova

Notice and encourage any type of creativity a child shows. Give them enough time. Don't criticize their work. — Brevig Mission

Share with parents ideas of things parents and children can do together. — Barrow

Support performing arts groups and projects in the community that include or involve children. — Juneau

Read a story book to the children at least once a day. Read with lots of expression. — Houston

Take children on field trips to places in the community. — Nenana

Offer regular children's talks for families through your faith group, with experienced teachers modeling ways of talking about spiritual issues with children. — Tok

Make your building available to community groups conducting family-friendly programs or activities. — Kenai

Acknowledge to parents the importance of arts and creative activities as it relates to the spiritual values of your faith. — Anchorage

Include creative arts in the lessons offered to children. — Ketchikan

Ideas for the faith community

Trade or loan games and things for families to do together. — Barrow

Make the faith community family-friendly in every way you can. At every gathering have appropriate activities for children of different ages. — King Salmon

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Include creative arts in the lessons offered to children. — Ketchikan

Ideas for community members

Attend a program or performance that a child you know invites you to. — Juneau

Support community sports for young children. Keep the emphasis on fun and sportsmanship, not competition. — Wasilla

If you have a skill, like carving or beading, share it. Start a class for small children. — Minto

Support programs that offer creative activities for children. Give money. Attend performances. Speak positively about the programs to others. — Anchorage

"Adopt" a child you know who could benefit from getting involved in activities but whose parents are not able or willing to help. Offer transportation or other assistance. — Fairbanks

Step up to the plate when an adult leader is needed to help with a worthwhile program for kids. Don't expect someone else will do it. — Kotzebue

Be supportive of the young people you know who are involved with their church or faith group. Show interest in their spiritual growth. — King Salmon

Traditional ways

Teach them to Native dance! Sing Native songs! Teach them Native arts and crafts!
— Dillingham

Arrange for them to spend time with extended family members. — Kipnuk

Go on hikes, explore, or gather food. Let children explore and learn on their own and with others. — Tuluksak

Help children see the power of the Creator in the beauty of the land, sky, and water.
— Pt. Alsworth

When the Elders were young, they often had more responsibilities and chores to do, like chopping wood, carrying water, gathering greens, drying meat, and picking berries. But they also made their own fun. They created games for themselves. They invented things to do.
— Kasigluk

We used to spend hours telling stories with the story knife (yaagui) to whoever would listen.
— Togiak

More Ideas:

Less is More

The alarm goes off next to Joan. She gives herself fifteen minutes of listening to the radio before getting out of bed and starting her day. She enjoys this quiet time of day. Her morning starts with her “spiritual centering,” as she calls it, and then a cup of coffee with the calendar in front of her to plan the day.

Joan has not always begun her day so nicely. She used to get up and immediately wake her son up to finish his homework before school; prepare breakfast for her husband and younger kids; and then grab a shower before shuttling Josh to school, Kim to gymnastics, and Luke to his play group. Then she had to fit in whatever errands, housework, volunteering, and meal preparations she could before everyone returned home. At least four evenings every week, someone in the family had an evening event: a piano lesson, a meeting, or something else.

Joan and Steve saw what was happening in the family and didn’t like it. The activities were great, but there were too many of them. They had lost the “down time” for reading as a family, taking walks, playing games, and just having conversation. The pace of life gradually got out of hand.

So they made some hard choices. Six-year-old Josh chose basketball over indoor soccer. Kim kept gymnastics but let her dance class go. Joan continued the “Moms and Tots” swimming but dropped out of the playgroup. And Steve switched from evening to morning workouts. They continued their weekly worship services but said, “No,” to a few more requests for volunteer work.

The result: sanity. Josh gets his homework done in the evening and is less rushed in the morning. Everyone enjoys more family time, and things seem a little more orderly. Life is still busy, but also a lot happier. Joan still needs a daily calendar, but at least has time to give some thought to how she wants to fill it.



Building COMMITMENT-TO-LEARNING assets in preschoolers

Commitment—to-learning assets are about children learning to love learning! They are about children's curiosity and openness — to learning new things and developing the skills that go along with life-long learning. They are also about children wanting to do well in school. These are the commitment-to-learning assets: achievement expectations and motivations; children being engaged in learning; stimulating activities and homework; enjoyment of learning; and bonding to school, and reading for pleasure.

Ideas for family members

Always speak positively about school and education, even if your own experience was not positive. If you have concerns, only discuss them when your child isn't around you.

— Talkeetna

Ask your child, "What did you do in preschool today?" and then listen to them while they tell you. — Yakutat

Check the newspaper for child-oriented events happening, and go to them with your child. — Anchorage

Give your child a lot of time to learn new skills, such as hanging up her coat or remembering to bring home her backpack. — Anchorage

Keep expanding the tasks and activities your child does as she is able, such as helping put up fish, cooking, sewing. Always challenge her abilities and encourage her efforts. — Juneau

Have key phrases or learning mottos that you repeat a lot around your children to reinforce an idea, such as, "Working hard is being smart!" — Wasilla

Take books everywhere you go... in the car, on the airplane, to fish camp, the dentist's office... every- where you go have books. — Aniak

Set simple goals for a few things your child can work on. Then monitor his progress and reward his success. Make the reward something you share, like marshmallows at a campfire, and don't always make it something you buy.

—Nome

Ideas for caregivers outside the home

Do a lot of nature activities and crafts with children, exchanging ideas and information with them as you do. — Koyukuk

"Follow the child," which means tune in to what the child is interested in and find ways for them to explore his/her interests and discover new ones. — Juneau

Bring Elders and others with history in to tell stories about the places in and around the community. — Minto

Let children read to you, even if they are just pretending to read. — Golovin

Take an interest in your child's schoolwork and help her with homework.
— Togiak

Take risks from time to time; try new things and show your children it's good always to be learning something new. — St. Mary's

Read, read, read, read, read to children! — Kodiak

Ideas for caregivers outside the home

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Go on field trips: to the airport, the clinic or dentist's office, the post office, the grocery store, or the beach. — Bethel

Hold a parent/child reading circle. — Shishmaref

Plan adequate time for learning activities, so children are not rushed. Repeat concepts and ask them questions about what they are learning. — Kwethluk

Use a lot of different teaching methods; know that children learn in different ways: watching, listening, doing, creating, copying, explaining, etc. — Palmer

Acknowledge excellent work and good student behavior. — Metlakatla

Have lots of “guests” come to talk about their work and how they got involved in it.
— Juneau

Ideas for the faith community

Plan learning activities that are interesting and fun for children of different age groups.
— Eagle River

Recognize in a public way children's learning accomplishments inside and outside of the faith community. — Wrangell

Involve teenagers in teaching young children. — North Pole

Open your facility to educational activities happening in the community: study halls, tutoring, special events, and classes. Help older children and adults be successful with their studies. — McGrath

Talk to children, youth, and adults about what they are learning in school or at work. Show interest. — Anchorage

Reward children for attending school and doing the best they can. — Talkeetna

Talk about school and education in a very positive way. — Anchorage

Participate in and promote events like "Kill Your TV and Read Day" and "Read Across America." — Ketchikan

Ideas for community members

Ask children what they want to be when they grow up and show encouragement and enthusiasm for their choices. — Cordova

Always ask children about things they are learning: colors, animals, foods, numbers, and letters. Interact with them. — Craig

Support a community learning center for parents to pursue their careers or interests. — Galena

Support the community or school library; request them to have books for very young children and to offer a weekly story time. — Little Diomedé

More Ideas...

Volunteer at the library or anyplace where young children spend time. Read to them or supervise older children reading to younger children. — Palmer

Tutor an older youth who is struggling in school. This can be very powerful role modeling (both by you and the youth) for younger children. — Ouzinkie

Traditional ways

Give your child things so he can copy what you do. For instance, if you drum for Native dancing, give your child a little drum to use too. — Shishmaref

Children are taught to listen. “This is your time to listen so that some day when you are asked to teach, you will have something to say.” — Angoon

Young children are shown in a positive manner the proper way to do something and later the adult watches them do it. — Ambler

Children growing up with their culture and traditions take pride in being who they are by also seeing the pride in their parents and other community members. — Noatak

Tell children the stories of their culture. — Mekoryuk

Have Elders hold traditional ceremonies. — Pilot Station

Jack's Birthday Present

Jack is a typical little boy. He loves his toy trucks, and enjoys playing at the river whenever anyone will take him. He never wants to stop what he is doing and lie down for a nap, though. Unfortunately, without a nap, Jack is cranky by dinnertime. His family then has to put up with his fussiness until bedtime. It is a problem no one has yet figured out how to solve.

Today is Jack's birthday. He is four years old. His birthday present is coming on a plane: his grandmother. As it turns out, she has a birthday present for the whole family.

This is a regular summer visit from Nana. She sleeps in Jack's room, and he has a special bed for himself on the floor next to his grandmother. This year, everyone is a little nervous that the arrangement might disrupt Jack's sleep more than usual, making him even fussier.

When Nana arrives, everyone is there to greet her. They then go home and she unpacks her things. A birthday dinner follows, with cake, ice cream, and presents. Nana has a small, flat box wrapped up for Jack. She explains with a smile that she just didn't have much room in her suitcase for presents and this would have to do.

Jack opens the box and unfolds the paper inside. No one but Jack recognizes the images on the paper. The “drawing” shows him sitting on Nana's lap reading a book. He drew it for her last year after they went to the library together. Nana explains that her present for Jack was a trip to the library together whenever he wants to go.

Jack seems a little disappointed in the gift and goes on to open other, more attractive packages.

The next day after lunch, Nana asks Jack if he wants to go to the library. Off they go. She helps him get his very own library card and they have a nice time reading. After he checks out several books, they go home. Jack seems a little cranky, but doesn't want to nap. So Nana suggests he just sit on his special bed and look at the library books. That sounds good to Jack. A little later, when Jack's mom checks on him, he is sound asleep—a nap! The rest of the afternoon and evening Jack was as active as ever, but happy!

A visit to the library (or the living room bookshelf) after lunch, and Jack “just looking at books” on his special bed becomes a new daily routine. It also becomes the secret for extending Jack’s nap-taking—and making the evening more enjoyable for everyone.

Building POSITIVE-VALUES assets in preschoolers

These assets are about children building a strong inner set of healthy values. They are about children forming beliefs that guide their choices about what they do and say. They are about children honoring and caring for themselves and others. The family is the strongest influence on values in young children, and these assets include families that show the values of caring, equality and social justice, integrity, responsibility, and living a healthy lifestyle.

Ideas for family members

Avoid backbiting and bad-mouthing anyone. Focus on the positive qualities in other people when you talk about them in the presence of your child. — Unalaska

Talk about respect, caring, etc. in your regular, everyday conversations with children. Notice when other people are showing a positive quality and point it out to your child.
— St. Michael

Be very selective about what young children view on TV. Only let them view healthy child-oriented programs. If older TV watchers are in the house, set strict rules about what they may watch when young children are around. — Bethel

Model the qualities and values you want to teach! They will do as you do, not as you say.
— Anchorage

Avoid doing things for your kids if they can do it themselves, even if doing it for them might be quicker or easier. — Pt. Lions

Using the book “The Family Virtues Guide,” choose a different virtue (or value) and discuss it for a few minutes each night before bed. Ask questions such as, what is honesty? Why is it important? How do we show it? What’s something you did today that showed it? Children want to know how to be good, and will listen to simple explanations and examples.
— Wrangell

Give your child ways to help others, like helping an Elder or disabled person, or donating their books or toys to other children in the community. Volunteer with your family at community events, always with a positive attitude. — Wrangell

Don’t lie to your kids, even about little things. Never trick them. Build trust so /she feels safe to tell the truth. — Whittier

Have toys, coloring books, puzzle pictures, etc. that show positive values and qualities, not negative or disrespectful images. — Koyuk

Tell real stories about your childhood and how you learned honesty, respect, equality, etc.
— Juneau

Have children help with easy household chores, like picking up toys. Don't expect her/him to do it on her own, but have her help with the task. — Wales

Ideas for caregivers outside the home

If a child lies, respond by talking about the importance of honesty and how proud you will be whenever he/she is honest, even about doing something wrong. Thank him for telling the truth when it comes out. Don't scold or punish him/her too much, and tell him/her next time you hope it's easier for them to tell the truth. — Gambell

Teach children they can trust what you say: always follow through on promises. This includes discipline! Never threaten them with a consequence and then do not follow through. — Iguigig

Tell and read legends and stories about positive values. — Elim

Help children learn how to share a thought or opinion respectfully. Give them words to say and have them repeat it. — Palmer

Stop a child bullying another and then teach the children how to be tolerant, respectful, and assertive. — Haines

Be a responsible teacher or caregiver. Be a good role model of all values, all the time.
— Anchorage

Every day, recognize positive values shown by children in class. Hold a short class meeting to let children notice and acknowledge values that they saw demonstrated by their classmates. — Fairbanks

Ideas for the faith community

Use stories from your faith that illustrate positive values. — Shaktoolik

Share with children references to values from the sacred writings. — Anchorage

Have opportunities for children and families to be involved in a project of caring or social justice. — Tok

Make the faith community truly welcoming to people of all different backgrounds and belief systems. — Dillingham

Give children age-appropriate roles and responsibilities with carrying out the activities of the faith community. — Chugiak

Ideas for community members

Always tell the truth to peers and children. Keep your promises, especially those made to children. — Anchorage

Point out to children examples of right and wrong in everyday activities and conversations. — Glennallen

Set an example with your own behavior, especially when around children. Stay drug-free and limit your drinking of alcohol. — Sitka

Don't make jokes that are disrespectful or stereotype others, especially when children are present. — Angoon

Encourage a child who is struggling with honesty or respect. Support them and give them another chance. Tell them you believe in them and to keep trying. — Port Graham

Support efforts in the community that help older youth deal with issues of sex and drinking. These older youth are powerful role models for younger children. — Chevak

When you play games with children, help them play by the rules. — Shishmaref

Traditional ways

Have children present at a seal party. A young hunter brings home the first seal he kills to his mother. She prepares to celebrate her son's first successful seal hunt. This signals a boy's achievement of manhood and advises others that he is now ready to take on new responsibilities. — Toksook Bay

Teach children that promises are sacred. That they should not make a promise that they will not keep. They should never be pressured into a promise, as promises come from inside. — Togiak

Tell stories of how family members cared for one another in the old days. — Hoonah

Include small children in the grieving ceremonies. Many values are shown in the grieving ceremonies. The community mourns together, and we tell stories of the deceased person's values. — Kluti-Kaah

When a child misbehaves, send him to his grand- parent, who will teach him what he needs to know. — Huslia

Little Mike's Big Feelings

Mike has a hard time with anger. It wells up in him and any little thing can trigger an explosion.

Friends are an issue for Mike. He wants a friend, a best friend, and he wants to pick his best friend. Bobby is Mike's friend for a few days at preschool. He plays with Mike, sits by him, and shares snacks with him. But when Bobby goes to play with some other kids, Mike blows up. He swipes Bobby's papers off his table and stomps up to him.

Erin, his teacher, who has witnessed countless outbursts from Mike, senses what is ahead. She takes a moment to calm herself, then dashes over to the boys. "Mike," she says. "You are angry, and it's okay to use words to show your anger, but it's not okay to use your body to hurt someone else or to hurt things. Now, use your words. How are you feeling right now?"

"I'm angry! Bobby won't play with me!"

"Now let's let Bobby use his words to say what he is feeling. Bobby?"

"Well, I just want to play with Chris today."

"Bobby, do you see that Mike's feelings are hurt. What do you want to say about that?"

"I'm not trying to hurt Mike's feelings. Maybe I'll play with Mike tomorrow."

"Mike, do you understand that Bobby isn't doing this to hurt you? He is just choosing to play with someone different right now. How do you feel about that?"

"Okay, I guess."

Erin, relieved that violence had been avoided, realizes that Mike needs more from her, however. She leads Mike outside the classroom and continues the conversation. He is still angry, and she lets him vent. She helps him find the words for his feelings, and eventually invites him to think about what happened from Bobby's point of view.

And she listens to him just like she has trained herself to do with all the kids. Erin explains, "It's really important to give them a chance to express themselves. They can only hear you when their own feelings are not so intense. We need to take the time, help them find solutions to their problems, and allow them to feel satisfied at working through the bad things that happen. Their feelings are real and we need to honor them."

Building SOCIAL-SKILLS assets in preschoolers

These assets are about children gaining everyday skills to have good relationships, avoid trouble, and perform well in the world. They are about making good choices and getting along with all kinds of people. These assets include planning and decision making, interpersonal skills, cultural competence, resistance skills, and peaceful conflict resolution.

Ideas for family members

When you go on an outing, be prepared with things you and your child will need. — Beaver

Help your child set simple goals, and follow up with encouraging him/her and asking about his/her progress with their goal. — Sand Point

Play with your children. Many opportunities for teaching social skills happen during play. — Anchorage

Teach children specific do's and don'ts for birthday parties. Go through what good birthday party behavior looks like before each party. Ask them afterward about how they did and what they saw in other kids. — Skagway

Avoid arguing in front of children. If an argument starts, try to model your own good conflict resolution skills. — Port Graham

Read stories that support tolerance and acceptance of people with different backgrounds. — Soldotna

Say “No” to your children when needed! Don’t give in when they try to get you to do something you don’t want to do. Model good resistance skills. — Anchorage

Attend multicultural events with your child. Participate fully and help your child be interested in other people and cultures. — Chugiak

Only allow children to view healthy, child-oriented programs on TV or video. — Tenakee

Give your child time to figure out a solution to a problem, and praise her/him when she solves a problem, even though it may take a while. — Hoonah

Model how to make up after a conflict: “I’m sorry I got angry, Sam. Can we just sit together here for a minute until we both feel calmer?” — Ketchikan

Help your child notice what he/she likes and doesn’t like in other people. Talk about what makes a good friend. — Rampart

Model self-calming. Give yourself a short time-out before dealing with someone when you are angry. — Old Harbor

More Ideas for caregivers outside the home

“Think out loud” with children when making a decision. For instance, decide together what clothes to wear outside on a rainy day. — Anchorage

Help children know what to say in a conflict. Give them exact words until they are able to do this themselves. Example: “Kate, tell Cody, ‘I feel angry when you take my clay because it’s my clay and I was using it. I want you to give it back.’” — Willow

Include lessons and activities around the cultural groups represented in the child’s preschool, such as those in Tanana Chiefs Head Start curriculum. — Healy

Be selective about rewarding behavior with treats. Let kids learn that sometimes we do things just because it is the right thing to do, and the good feeling we get inside is reward enough. — Klawock

Invite Elders to school to tell stories. — St. Paul

Ideas for the faith community

Provide an environment of love and acceptance. Treat everyone with dignity and sensitivity. — Selawik

Give children opportunities to participate in planning things. — Teller

Seek ways to do meaningful things with individuals and groups from other races, ethnic groups, and religions. — Valdez

Teach children about ways their faith can help them when they have a need to resist something. — Akutan

Talk to children about peace, unity, and conflict resolution. Teach them how these ideas relate to your faith. — Kenai

When teaching kids about social skills, give them time to practice the skills and give them feedback about their efforts. Be encouraging as they practice. — Juneau

Ideas for community members

Never curse, and try to have a positive attitude toward other people at all times. — St. Michael

Support all efforts in the community that build unity and relationships among groups.
— Fairbanks

Invite a child in your neighborhood to do a project with you, such as planting a garden or making a dog house. Involve them in the planning and doing. — Tatitlek

Share stories of when you were a child. Talk about your background, your experiences, and your most valuable lessons. — Hoonah

Be a good friend and neighbor. Show respect for others in all your interactions. For instance, always be polite to the checker and people in line at the store. — Metlakatla

Let kids see you say, “No,” to things. If appropriate, let them know why you resisted or where you get your strength to resist. — Anchorage

Get involved in community efforts to address conflict and violence. Continue to strengthen your own conflict resolution skills. — Wasilla

Traditional ways

Teach them to Native Dance! — Dillingham

Never hit a child to discipline them. — Teller

Teach the traditional values of our culture. It includes cooperation, sharing, and unity. Our culture depends on people working things out without violence. — Aniak

Tell stories. Let the Elders tell about how they had to be strong and resist things. They have many stories about what happens when a person doesn’t resist the pressure to do something.
— Sleetmute

Birthdays enhance our social skills. People learn the subtle art of interacting, being positive, laughing and learning hope from the words of the hopeful people around them.
— Shishmaref

When you take kids sledding, teach them to respect other kids’ feelings. This helps them develop a sensitivity for the feelings and needs of others. — Nenana

Teach subsistence skills. Children learn that resistance is an important part of being a successful hunter and providing things for the community. — Lower Kalskag

Native Dancing

Five-year old Margaret doesn't yet know all the days of the week, but she knows Thursdays because that is when her family goes Native dancing. Her mom made her a kuspuk that she uses just for dancing. She doesn't have fans yet, but sometimes, someone at the hall will give her some to use.

She likes everything about dancing. She likes seeing her aunties and uncles, and cousins and everyone else. She likes the drumming and singing in Eskimo. She speaks mostly English at home, but many people speak Eskimo at dancing, and she is learning it, too. Margaret likes to watch the big kids and likes it when people bring treats to eat. But mostly, Margaret just loves to dance. She likes to imagine herself being big and dancing all the dances at the celebrations.

One Thursday, her mom is taking a nap, and her dad and brothers are out hunting; her older sisters are at the gym. Margaret cannot tell time yet, but she thinks it is getting close to the time to go dancing because they had already eaten dinner. What can she do?

Margaret thinks she is big enough to walk to the community hall all by herself, but her mom told her she had to have a big kid or grown-up with her. So she walks next door to see if Jimmy or Liz can take her.

Yes, Jimmy and Liz are home, but they won't take her to Native dance ... because it is Wednesday! Instead, they sit down with popcorn and watch a Native dancing video together.

Building POSITIVE-IDENTITY assets in preschoolers

These assets are about helping children to see themselves as strong, worthwhile people with talents and promise. They are about helping children understand their special place in the world, and to be excited about their future. These assets include personal power, self-esteem, a sense of purpose, and a positive view of one's personal future.

Ideas for family members

Teach children to talk positively about themselves: things they can say to themselves to help them feel good, try harder, forgive, etc. — Ruby

Take turns nurturing something good in other family members at gathering times such as family dinners or bedtime. — Wrangell

Give young children a lot of time to express something to you. Don't ignore them or cut them off, even if they are taking a long time. — Cordova

Teach your children about God and the universe, as you understand them in your faith tradition. Teach your children to pray. — Yakutat

Learn about the different phases of your child's development so you can have realistic expectations for him/her. Be their cheerleader every step of the way. — Kwethluk

Use referential speaking: make positive comments about your child to others when you know the child will hear you. For example, you are talking on the phone and say, "You wouldn't believe how much more patient Daniel is these days!" Even if the statement isn't quite true, it will help your child believe in himself. — Sitka

Involve children in problem-solving and planning for the future. Ask, "What do you think we should do?" — Port Graham

Discuss your day with each other. Make it more than just a report of what happened. Ask questions that help children look at the events in their lives with greater depth. — Juneau

Be patient with a child's efforts to change a negative behavior or to form a good habit. Think of your own efforts to change. It's hard! — Anchorage

Always end the day in positive, warm, loving ways. — Kiana

Allow your child to think through an idea, with your encouragement. Don't be negative. If their idea fails, offer your love and support. — Haines

Learn to be happy. If your children are around positive people, they will learn to be positive. — Kodiak

Ideas for caregivers outside the home

Ask children what they want to be when they grow up and encourage them to follow this dream. — Minto

Have a positive attitude in your own life. Try to be upbeat in whatever you do. — Brevig Mission

Include Native language and culture instruction as part of the preschool program. — Klukwan

Push them when they need a push, using comments like, "I'm not going to let you quit, because I know you can do this if you practice, and I want to help you succeed." — Wasilla

Sing upbeat songs with positive and encouraging messages. — Bethel

Have family pictures in the preschool. Make "family books" on home visits. — Homer

Create a climate of encouragement throughout the preschool or childcare center. — Haines

Ideas for the faith community

Offer families simple prayers they can teach their children. — Anchorage

Make the learning environment in the faith community safe and appropriate for little children. Give children unconditional love and excellent role modeling. — Barrow

Maintain a positive and hopeful atmosphere in all activities and interactions. — Palmer

Make self-esteem a topic of focus, especially for groups of parents. Offer workshops or inspirational speakers about this basic need. — Bethel

Celebrate the talents and contributions of all youth. Recognize their gifts and speak about their potential. — Kenai

Help everyone understand their future in terms of fulfilling the promise of their faith. — Nome

Praise children's effort and process, not necessarily the result, e.g., putting their coat on, learning their colors, sitting still. — New Stuyahok

Ideas for community members

Really listen to children. Give them your full attention. — New Stuyahok

Ask children what they think about things. Let them know you value their judgment. Ask for their help with a (simple) problem. Show them that you use their advice. — Chevak

Tell children about your heroes. Examples are: Anne Frank, Martin Luther King, Helen Keller, or Magic Johnson. — Seldovia

Recognize and praise the achievements and promises of children in the community. — Craig

Give all young people many chances to share their own hopes and dreams with others. Give them encouragement and help them overcome obstacles. — Barrow

Share your own goals with children, and invite them to share theirs, with you. — Emmonak

Show total optimism about kids' futures! Refuse to put a lid on any child's future. — Ketchikan

Traditional ways

The naming ceremony. Carrying on the name and the best traits of the person who died. This gives the child who has received the name a sense of identity, because life goes on and the name is carried on. — Elim

My grandma used to say, “You will always be young of heart and never stop learning. While your body may grow old, your mind will stay young.” By remembering these thoughts, we keep a positive perspective of the future. — Shishmaref

Listen to stories about families, clans, and traditions. — Gakona

Dads, spend time with kids, especially sons and nephews without fathers. Uncles are a great source of self-esteem for boys. — Elim

Native corporations or tribal councils could gather and document the local history and genealogy. — Ambler

Strengthen community identity. Everyone knows each other. We look out for each other. We help each other. We share food. The community raises children, not just immediate family. — Gambell

Jodie's Masks

Gena truly enjoys challenges, and those having to do with children are her specialty. As a foster mom, she has encountered a wide variety of children with different needs. When someone presents a difficulty, it's just a puzzle to be solved for Gena.

Jodie offers just such a puzzle. Jodie is a dear child going through life with autism, diabetes, and Tourette's Syndrome. She has great difficulty expressing herself in appropriate ways. Jodie has learned that if she reacts in a big way to things, she will get a big response from people. Her outbursts are all too regular.

Gena talks with Jodie's preschool teachers about ways to help Jodie gain greater control over her feelings and her behavior. They devise a plan, one that they think will help Jodie — and themselves — to better communicate.

They set up another activity center in the preschool. It is a table with bins filled with all kinds of art supplies: paper, markers, yarn, clay, paint, glue... the works. It is Jodie's special center.

They explain to Jodie, “When your feelings get so big that they are about to burst out of you, go right to this table and make a mask that shows your feelings. When you are finished with the mask, come and show it to me and then you can share it with everyone.” Jodie can use anything she wants, and can take as long as she wants, but she has to be quiet while at the mask center.

Jodie takes to the center very well, and makes several masks as soon as she is introduced to it. Preschool activities run much smoother because Jodie is at the activity center instead of disrupting others several times a day.

The first masks are elaborate, and Jodie enjoys sharing them with her classmates. However, after a while the masks become simpler as she takes less time doing them. Sometimes, she even chooses not to share the mask with others. Eventually, she grows tired of the activity center; when she starts into a dramatic outburst of some kind and is directed to the mask center, she simply says, “No. I’m okay.”

Gena and the teachers are pleased. Jodie has experienced her own personal power and gained a more positive image of herself. Her relationships with everyone in the preschool and at home have also improved as a result.

ORGANIZATIONS AND BUSINESSES BUILDING ASSETS

Questions to Ask

Any kind of business or organization can help grow healthy kids in the community. And any organization or business will benefit from having strong, caring children and youth.

The main questions that people in an asset-based business or organization might ask are:

- Do our mission, goals, and values reflect a real commitment to children and families, even if we are not directly tied to services for families?
- Do our policies, systems, and structure encourage healthy relationships within and around families? How can we make it easier for people inside the organization to create positive relationships and opportunities with and for the children in their lives? Do we encourage inter-generational activities?
- What can we offer other individuals and groups in the community to help family-strengthening efforts outside our organization? What services, skills, and/or funds can we give to be partners in a community-wide youth development effort?

Where to start?

We strongly encourage people to first bring the asset approach into their own personal lives before bringing it into an organization.

Alaska ICE has resources, including people, who are available to help businesses and organizations go further with their asset-building efforts. The link to these resources is www.alaskaice.org.

Five easy ways organizations can encourage asset building

(from Search Institute's "Healthy Communities—Healthy Youth Toolkit"):

1. Present the asset-building concept to employees, constituents, or members in newsletters, workshops, or other forums.
2. Feature an asset of the week and give employees ideas on how to build that asset on and off the job.
3. Use organizational newsletters, press releases, or events to recognize employees, constituents, or members who make special efforts to build assets for children in the community.
4. Share practical ideas for how individuals can build assets, such as creating and distributing The ABC's of Building Assets.
5. Provide meaningful opportunities for young people to contribute to others in and through your organizations.

State of Alaska Early Learning Guidelines

As you work with kids ages 0-5 you may ask yourself the following questions:

- How do you know if your program or activities are building the right assets for kids 0-5?
- How do you assess the skills kids have or should have at a certain age?
- What are ways to link my program activities to the skills kids should have?

There are resources that can help!

In partnership with early learning programs and organizations, the State of Alaska developed the Early Learning Guidelines .

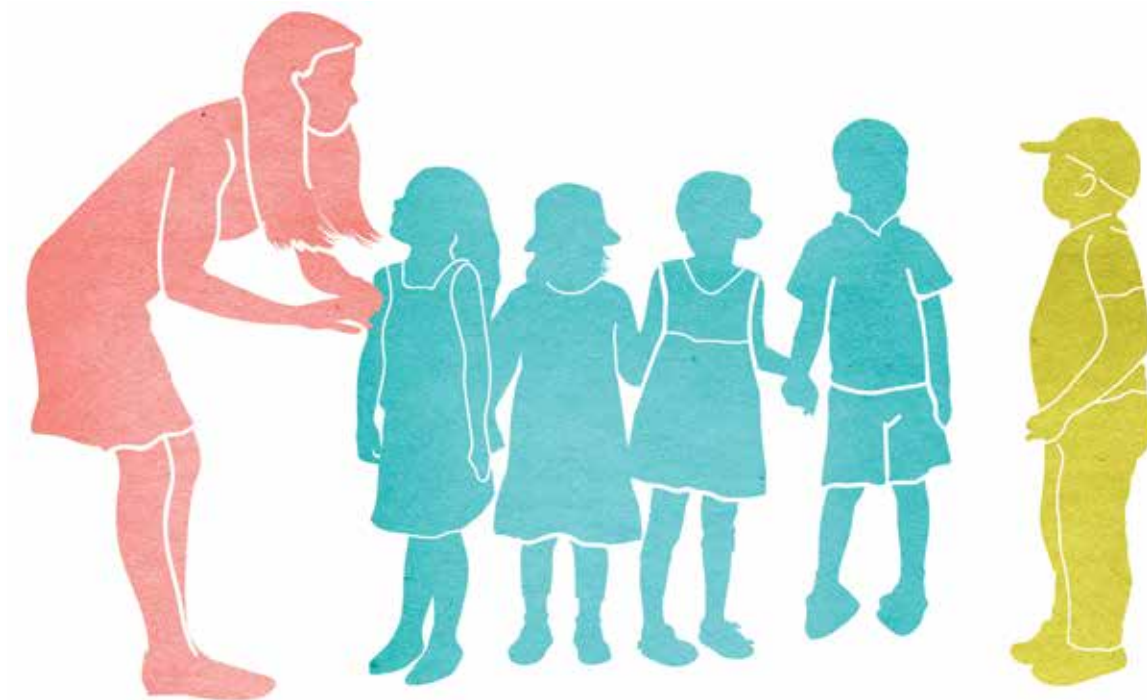
The Early Learning Guidelines lay out what Alaska children birth to 5 should know, understand, and be able to do by the time they enter kindergarten. They are also the foundation for the Alaska Developmental Profile, the kindergarten entry assessment.

The Early Learning Guidelines were developed in such a way that they are:

- Are appropriate for each age group (e.g., infants, toddlers, and preschoolers); for English learners; and for children with disabilities or developmental delays;
- Cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness; and
- Are universally designed and developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate.

To access these guidelines please visit:

<https://education.alaska.gov/publications/earlylearningguidelines.pdf>



Real life examples

Throughout Alaska, all kinds of businesses and organizations are using assets to support children and families in their communities. Some businesses help their employees learn about assets and use the approach in their families. Others have taken specific asset-building actions. Below are just a few examples of what some Alaskan organizations have done.

The Alaska Native Knowledge Network has published “Guidelines for Nurturing Culturally Healthy Youth” and other materials that illustrate asset-building principles.

Bering Strait School District has a long-term commitment and plan in place to promote the principles and practices of asset building.

Covenant House Alaska’s Passage House Program gives each young mother an assets book and conducts a group for mothers and staff to discuss asset building and positive youth development.

Head Start programs throughout Alaska began working on resiliency and protective factors in the early 1990’s. This work provided the foundation for the widespread use of the assets approach with young children all over the state. Tlingit/Haida Head Start offers asset trainings. They produced a set of two videos that describe culturally relevant, strength-based parenting strategies.

The **Igiugig Tribal Council** sponsors family fun and community service projects, including a family bingo game. The program coordinator uses the asset approach to guide many program decisions.

The **Juneau Rotary Club** created a basket of goods, including a copy of “Helping Kids Succeed—Alaskan Style,” for new families at Bartlett Hospital.

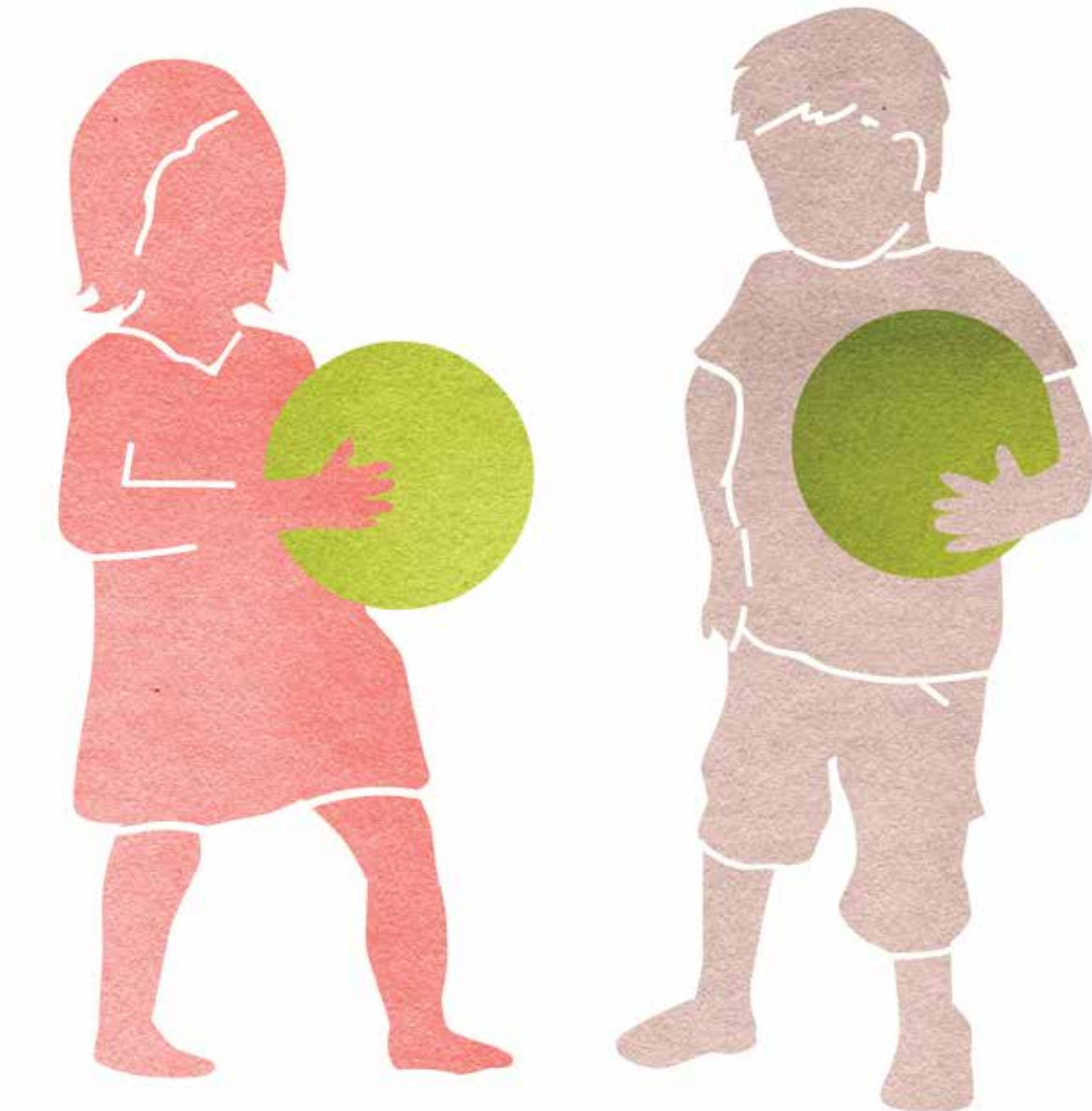
Public health nurses throughout the state talk to parents about assets during child exams, and display information about the asset approach in the patient waiting and exam rooms. To find one nearest your family check out:

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/HealthPlanning/Pages/SafetyNetDirectory.aspx>

Sealaska Heritage in Juneau, sponsors Baby Raven Reads, an award-winning program that promotes early-literacy, language development and school readiness for Alaska Native families with children up to age 5.

Tlingit/Haida Head Start offers asset trainings. They produced a set of two videos that describe culturally relevant, strength-based parenting strategies.

thread works with and supports thousands of Alaska's families and early educators by providing resources like teaching materials and books, family friendly events and high quality training for early educators. thread has resources and activities for parents, as well as a lending library for parents and early childhood educators. <https://www.threadalaska.org>



REFERENCE MATERIALS: YOUR ASSET BUILDING TOOL KIT

Tips for Building Assets in Children with Special Needs

Adapted with permission from “A Leader’s Guide to What Young Children Need to Succeed” by Jolene L Roehlkepartain and Nancy Leffert, Ph.D., c 2000, published by Search Institute.

The asset approach stresses the importance of looking at the whole child. Building assets can help bring out the best in all children, including those with special needs. Here are some ideas for building assets in children with learning disabilities or other special needs.

- Make your expectations match individual needs and circumstances — not too high but also not too low.
- Help children figure out and express their needs and feelings. For example, they may feel frustrated easily with certain tasks, like making a sandwich or getting dressed, and may need extra help.
- Consider adding more structure and guidance. Set up and stick to definite routines, organize their spaces carefully, and help them break down large tasks into smaller ones.
- Give children lots of positive feedback about what they are doing well. This will help them focus on success rather than on failure.
- Help children find ways to feel good about their progress. Help adults adjust their expectations and better understand children with special needs.
- Help children see that they are more than their academic performance. To be a good friend, have an interesting hobby, share a sense of humor, and be willing to try new things.
- Notice children’s actions. Inappropriate behavior may be rooted in frustration, discomfort, sadness, anger, or confusion.
- Set clear boundaries about what is acceptable for other people to say and do around children with special needs. All children need people who stand up for them and who model assertiveness skills, showing them how to treat others and how to stand up for themselves.
- Help them not to withdraw from peers because of feeling different. Help them get along with their peers although they may “feel different.” Give them opportunities to be with

children who will accept them for who they are and to be involved in activities where they can shine.

- Help children learn to understand their own needs and to make them known. This will help them feel like they have the power to influence their own experiences.
- Be persistent and positive. Help children learn strategies to compensate for learning differences. Assure them that, for most children, learning gets easier as they get older.
- Discover their strengths and build on them. All children have strengths!

Books for Young Children: Some Tips

Snuggling up and reading with a child probably builds thirty assets, especially if you do it every day! Many books for children have asset-building themes, making them especially valuable.

What makes a good children's book? Below are some tips, adapted from NAEYC-SEA (National Association for the Education of Young Children--Southeast).

Books for Babies

Babies use all of their senses to learn. Good books for babies are books that:

- Show familiar objects
- Have simple, colorful pictures
- Have few words per page
- Are plastic, cloth, or cardboard
- Use words that rhyme
- Have things to touch or smell

Books for Toddlers

Toddlers are starting to use language to learn about the world. Good books for toddlers are books that:

- Name or label objects
- Have numbers, shapes, colors, or alphabet letters

- Repeat words or phrases
- Use rhymes
- Tell simple stories about children their age
- Have colorful pictures that match the words

Books for Preschoolers

Preschool children are curious, imaginative, and need reassurance about their world. Good books for preschoolers are ones that:

- Repeat words or follow a pattern
- Have easy-to-understand, predictable plots
- Have stories that are reassuring
- Will make them laugh
- Illustrate songs

Where can you get help in selecting children's books?

You can find someone to help find books at your public library, a school library, or a school district office. They will be especially helpful in finding books with themes or features relevant to Alaskans, or focused on specific asset-building topics. For people who like to use the internet, here are some sites that have categorical listings and/or descriptions of children's books.

www.ala.org

The American Library Association site. If you click on the ALSC logo you can search for “notable children's books” and get links to many recommended lists of books and recordings.

www.amazon.com

You don't have to buy books from here. You can search for children's books at this site, and will be given several recommended reading lists once you launch your search. Perhaps your library has the books you want.

www.readingrockets.org

A great site with tips and information on teaching kids to read, plus book lists of suggested reading for children.

www.nsta.org

The National Science Teachers Association provides guidelines of how to select reading that links to particular skills and outcomes or to your child's interests.

www.skokie.lib.il.us

The public library in Skokie, Illinois, maintains this site for children's book lists, for parents to sign up and receive online resources, including animated books, along with general information for parents and caregivers about involving kids in reading.



Toys for Young Children: Some Tips

Young children do not need special or elaborate toys. Some of the best toys are things you have around the house — including your own body! Singing, talking, and hand and body games are all wonderful ways to “play.” Turning regular household activities into playful learning experiences for a young child builds many assets! The lists below include ideas from early childhood specialists for things that help your young child develop.

Young infants

“Toys” for young infants may include mainly things to look at, especially things with simple shapes and patterns, light and dark colors, or faces. Moving things that the baby can track with his/her eyes, such as mobiles, are good. Soft, small, very light fabric toys are good, too, especially when they can be grasped. A blanket is turned into a toy when you play peek-a-boo or hide things under it. Your own voice talking or singing is a valuable toy!

Older infants

- A mirror (safely mounted or otherwise child-safe)
- Simple push toys
- Fabric or small cardboard books
- Rattles
- Household items like plastic containers and sponges (clean)
- Small stuffed animals that the child can grasp (without buttons, whiskers, or things that can come off)
- Puppets operated by adults
- Simple, soft dolls
- Jumbo plastic beads strung or popped together
- Soft, large balls
- Music

Toddlers

- Push/pull toys, especially if they make sound or movements, or are filled with objects
- Wagon or doll carriage or cart

- Riding toys designed for toddlers
- Simple, low-to-the-ground climbing and gym equipment
- Boxes or tunnels for crawling into
- Large interlocking blocks, and wood or plastic “Bricks”
- Simple wood or cardboard puzzles with knobs
- Small or large balls that make sounds or vibrate
- Nesting and stacking toys
- Jack-in-the-box type toys
- Shape sorters and large-peg pegboards
- Activity toys with knobs, keys, dials, lids, etc. Bath toys
- Household items like funnels, colanders, pans, spatulas, ladles, etc.
- Plastic child-size garden tools or other tools
- Toy kitchen or work bench sets
- Dress-up clothes, hats, accessories (for male and female role play)
- Puppets: finger puppets, puppets that fit a toddler’s hand, puppets operated by adults
- Music and dance tapes and CDs

Preschoolers

- Anything from the list for toddlers that are slightly more complex, and:
- Fun learning and craft kits
- Beginner games like Candyland, or Chutes & Ladders
- To-Do books, with buttons, zippers, etc.
- Learning books, with concepts like over, under, front, and back
- Magnetic alphabet letters, numbers, and shapes

Games for Young Children and You

Adapted from “Theraplay” by Ann Gernbeng and Phyllis Booth (Jossey- Bass, San Francisco, 2001) by Southeast Alaska’s Blanket of Wellness Children’s Mental Health Project

Sticky Nose: Put a sticker on your nose or stick a cotton ball on your nose with lotion and have the child blow it off or pull it off.

Bean Bags: Place a bean bag on your head and drop it into the child’s lap, or have the child catch it in their hands by tilting your head. You may use a small stuffed animal for this game, or a funny hat. Begin to take turns.

Pretzels: Dangle a pretzel on your finger tip and have the child see how many bites it takes before it falls off. The more bites before it falls the better.

Lotion: Gently rub lotion on the child’s hands, arms, legs or feet as you sing a personalized song.

Cotton Ball Hockey: You and the child lie on the floor or sit at a table opposite each other. Blow cotton balls back and forth, trying to get them over the table edge or past the other person.

Silhouettes: Have the child lie on a piece of newspaper on the floor while you draw around him. Talk to the child as you draw; let him know where/what you are drawing. If he is an older toddler, he can color it in later.

Measuring: Measure the child’s height and width (from fingertip to fingertip of the outstretched arms, and from head to toe). See which one is longer. Measure the length of their step, the width of their smile, and how high they can jump (as they increase in physical skill). If you use fruit tape, the child can eat it after.

Paint Prints: Rub nontoxic paint on a child’s hands or feet and make prints on paper. After the prints are done, gently wash, dry, and lotion the child’s hands and/or feet.

Bubble Tennis: Blow bubbles up in the air. Choose one bubble and you and the child blow it back and forth until it pops.

Blow You Over: The adult sits on the floor against a big pillow facing the child, holding hands. The child blows very hard until the adult falls against the pillow. Sometimes the adult pops back up.

Blanket Swing: Lay a blanket over some big pillows on the floor. Have the child lie on the blanket. Adults gather the blanket up at each end and gently rock the child while singing a personalized lullaby. When you gently put the child down, snuggle up and keep singing. Note: Be sure to lay the child so that you are facing her as you swing.

Sing Anything: You don't have to be a talented singer to sing with children. The songs are for communicating, not for "entertainment." The child responds to your positive interaction, not how well you perform. Make up songs with standard tunes using the child's name.

"Tummy" Time: Spend time on the floor facing your baby. Sometimes you may be attempting to enhance developmental skills. It is a wonderful time to enhance your bond with your baby.

Mirror Time: You and baby look at each other in the mirror. Exaggerate your facial expressions and interactions.

Checklist for Quality Child Care

Source: Child Care Connection, Inc., Anchorage, Alaska

How will I recognize quality care?

- ☐ A respectful, loving relationship between caregiver and child.
- ☐ A pleasant, cheerful and inviting environment.
- ☐ Positive guidance or discipline techniques are used. Caregivers understand the way children learn and develop.
- ☐ The environment is safe and clean, and children are supervised at all times.
- ☐ Caregivers understand that parents are their children's best teachers.

Basic Information

- ☐ Hours are suitable
- ☐ Fees are affordable
- ☐ Meals and snacks are nutritious
- ☐ Group size and age groupings are acceptable

The Staff

- ☐ Have appropriate training and experience.
- ☐ Have been with the program for at least one year. If a family childcare home, the provider is committed for at least one year.
- ☐ Show respect for children and adults.
- ☐ Treat all children as individuals.
- ☐ Offer children affection and comfort
- ☐ Positive discipline techniques are used. Corporal punishment is not used
- ☐ References are available.

The Place

- ☐ Toys, books, games, and activities are plentiful, age appropriate, and in good condition.
- ☐ Different kinds of spaces are available for quiet play, active play, and outdoor play.
- ☐ There is a flexible daily schedule.
- ☐ Television viewing is limited and appropriate. Children can get things for themselves.
- ☐ The setting is bright, happy, and reasonably neat. Caregivers use good safety and hygiene practices.
- ☐ Infants and toddlers are encouraged to crawl and walk instead of being in a playpen.

Parental Involvement

- ☐ Parents are involved in decision-making. Parents participate in some activities.
- ☐ Parents can always visit unannounced during hours of operation.
- ☐ Parents are given systematic feedback of their child's day.

Asset-Building Materials for Adults

Many great materials about growing strong, healthy children are available from many sources! The lists below include a small selection that deals with the asset approach or resiliency, especially those with Alaska-specific information, and especially as they relate to young children.

Websites

www.alaskaice.org

Your link to a world of resources, stories, ideas, and facts about asset building for Alaskans.

www.search-institute.org

Practical research and resources that benefit children and youth. Your main link to asset-building materials outside Alaska.

www.aeyc-sea.org

Website for the Association for the Education of Young Children, Southeast Alaska (AEYC). Offers information and links to many other resources for early childhood education and development.

www.bestbeginningsalaska.org

Best Beginnings is a public-private partnership that mobilizes people and resources to ensure all Alaska children begin school ready to succeed. Since its beginning in September 2006, Best Beginnings has consistently carried out our mission by investing funds, resources, time, and energy in growing readers, building strong families, and engaging community.

www.arisepartnership.org

ARISE Kindergarten Preparedness – Suggestions for parent-child activities for all families provided regularly through Facebook and on their website; activities are based on goals of the Alaska Developmental Profile.

www.threadalaska.org

thread works with and supports thousands of Alaska's families and early educators by providing resources like teaching materials and books, family friendly events and high quality training for early educators. thread has a free child care referral service to help parents all over the state find child care and early learning programs.

<http://www.zerotothree.org>

Zero to Three, this is a good comprehensive site for information on children age 0-3. They explain early childhood development (subject areas include "key issues for the first three

years of life and how they affect a child's life long development", "recent brain research," and "ages and stages"). It also features resources for parents and caregivers (information on books, videos, magazines, TV programs and internet sites), expert advice on parenting questions, and information on community action and public empowerment campaigns for promoting children's healthy environments.

Videos

Watch these video clips from Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child about how early experiences affect brain and body development.

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/three-core-concepts-in-early-development/>

A wide range of short videos with national experts on a variety of parenting topics.

<https://www.kidsinthehouse.com/playlist>

"Parent's Journal" covers issues of concern to parents of prenatal, infant, and toddler-aged children. *"Family Feathers"* explores a variety of issues for parents of preschool aged children

For more information contact
Central Council Tlingit & Haida Head Start,
9095 Glacier Hwy, Juneau, AK 99801
Or call (907) 463-7127 or
1-(800)-344-1432 ext. 7127.

Assets for Children Ages 6-11

External Assets

Support

1. **Family support** – Family life provides lots of love and support
2. **Positive family communication** – Parent(s) and child communicate positively. The child is willing to seek parental advice and counsel.
3. **Other adult resources** – The child receives support from non-parent adults.
4. **Caring neighborhood/village** – The child experiences caring neighbors.
5. **Caring school climate** – School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. **Parental involvement in schooling** – Parent(s) are actively involved in helping the child succeed in school.

Empowerment

7. **Community values children** – The child feels that the community values and appreciates children.
8. **Children given useful roles** – The child is included in family decisions and is given useful roles at home and in the community.
9. **Service to others** – The child and parent(s) serve others and the community.
10. **Safety** – The child is safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood/village.

Boundaries and Expectations

11. **Family boundaries** – The family has clear rules and consequences, and monitors the child's whereabouts.
12. **School boundaries** – School provides clear rules and consequences.
13. **Neighborhood/village boundaries** – Neighbors/villagers take responsibility for monitoring the child's behavior.
14. **Adult role models** – Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
15. **Positive peer interactions** – The child plays with children who model responsible behavior.
16. **Expectations for growth** – Adults have realistic expectations of development at this age. Parent(s), caregivers, and other adults encourage the child to achieve and develop his or her unique talents.

Constructive Use of Time

17. **Creative activities** – The child participates in music, arts, or drama three or more hours each week through home and out-of-home activities.
18. **Child programs** – The child spends one hour or more per week in extracurricular school activities or structured community programs.
19. **Religious community** – The family attends religious programs or services at least one hour per week.

20. **Positive, supervised time at home** – The child spends most evenings and weekends at home with parent(s) in predictable and enjoyable routines.

Internal Assets

Commitment to Learning

21. **Achievement expectation** – The child is motivated to do well in school.
22. **School engagement** – The child is responsive, attentive, and actively engaged in learning
23. **Homework** – The child does homework when it is assigned.
24. **Bonding to school** – The child cares about her or his school.
25. **Reading for pleasure** – The child and a caring adult read together for at least 30 minutes a day. The child also enjoys reading without an adult's involvement.

Positive Values

26. **Caring** – The child is encouraged to help other people and to share his/her possessions.
27. **Equality and social justice** – The child begins to show interest in making the community a better place.
28. **Integrity** – The child begins to act on convictions and stand up for her/his beliefs.
29. **Honesty** – The child begins to value honesty and act accordingly.
30. **Responsibility** – The child begins to accept and take personal responsibility for age-appropriate tasks.
31. **Healthy lifestyle and sexual attitudes** – The child begins to value good health habits. The child learns healthy sexual attitudes and beliefs, and learns to respect others.

Social Skills

32. **Planning and decision making** – The child learns the first skills of how to plan ahead and makes decisions at an appropriate developmental level.

33. **Interpersonal competence** – The child interacts with adults and children, and can make friends. The child expresses and articulates feelings in appropriate ways and empathizes with others.
34. **Cultural competence** – The child has knowledge of, and comfort with, people of different cultural, racial, or ethnic backgrounds.
35. **Resistance skills** – The child begins to develop the ability to resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
36. **Peaceful conflict resolution** – The child attempts to resolve conflicts nonviolently.

Positive Identity

37. **Personal power** – The child begins to feel he or she has control over “things that happen to me.” The child begins to manage life’s frustrations and challenges in ways that have positive results for the child and others.
38. **Self-esteem** – The child reports having a high self-esteem.
39. **Sense of purpose** – The child reports that “my life has a purpose.”
40. **Positive view of personal future** – The child is optimistic about her/his personal future.

The ABC’s of Building Assets in Young Children

Simple ways to give babies and young children what they need

- Allow mistakes.
- Be a good role model. Color with them.
- Display their art work.
- Establish routines.
- Feed them healthy foods.
- Give them undivided attention.
- Hold, hug, snuggle, and cuddle them.

- Involve them in your tasks.
- Joke around together.
- Kiss them good-night.
- Listen to them.
- Make animal noises with them.
- Notice their moods and respect their choices.
- Obey the rules around you.
- Turn “Off” the TV, and cell phone
- Play peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake.
- Question them about their interests.
- Read books together.
- Send a birthday card.
- Tell them stories.
- Use a calm voice for disciplining.
- Vote with children in mind.
- Write them love notes
- Exercise together.
- Yes! Say Yes more often, take healthy risks
- Zeal! Be passionate

