

Search

INSTITUTE

In all our efforts to ensure that young people succeed, it's easy to overlook the most important factor: relationships.

Building a relationship with a young person can help them discover who they are, why they matter, and how they can make a difference in the world.

Relationships help young people stay on track and achieve goals in school and beyond. They can change the trajectory of their lives. We can see the power of relationships through Search Institute's research going back to the 1970s. And our ongoing research continues to back this up.

Every effort to help young people succeed—whether it takes place in the home, at school, in a youth program, or in the community—depends on relationships. Despite that fact, many organizations that serve young people do not make relationships an explicit focus of their work. They have not, for example, defined the types of relationships they seek to build with and among kids. They don't collect data on relationships, and they don't consciously and continually develop and test practical ways to improve relationships.

Search Institute's new strategy focuses on helping both individuals and organizations take a more intentional and inclusive approach to relationships. At the heart of that work is the new *Developmental Relationships Framework*, which identifies key elements of relationships that help to put young people on the path to becoming thriving and contributing adults.



Discovering
What Kids Need
To Succeed.

ANNUAL UPDATE 2016

THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS

Search Institute is helping a diverse array of youth-serving organizations strengthen relationships in their work with young people across the United States and around the world. For example:

We are working with Save the Children to provide support to young people who live in rural areas in Egypt, Ethiopia, Uganda, Malawi and Burkina Faso. 40,000 youth who do not attend school are developing skills for success in their local economies through Developmental Assets®.

In our home state of Minnesota, we are working with Youthprise to build high-quality evidence of the power of relationships, aspirations, and other supports for putting young people who have disconnected from school and work on a path to success.

We have helped BestPrep redesign and develop a performance measurement system for an e-mentoring program. It connects 9th grade students in urban high schools to mentors in local corporations and businesses.

We are probing the roles peer relationships play in development by examining peer programs in diverse schools from New York to California as part of our partnership with Dr. Barbara Varenhorst, one of the pioneers of the peer-helping movement.

More than 23,000 educators, youth workers, and other leaders learned about Search Institute's work through 180 workshops and presentations across the United States and internationally in 2015-16.

We have helped the Student Conservation Association develop measures of conservation leadership and 21st century skills. Our studies showed the program improved a range of competencies needed in school, higher education, the workplace, and other environments.

In addition to these and other important improvement partnerships, Search Institute has created and is piloting two new resources for improving youth outcomes through

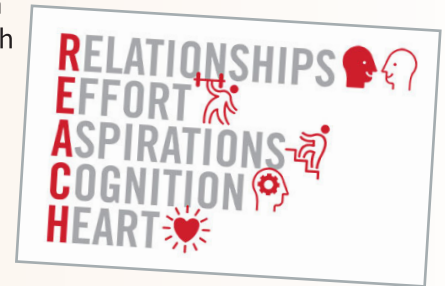
developmental relationships. The *REACH Framework* increases academic motivation at school by strengthening teacher-student relationships. *Keep Connected* helps young people thrive by strengthening relationships at home.

Relationships In Schools

A decade ago, a seminal study by the National Research Council showed that between 40-60% of US high school students are disengaged from learning. Other studies cite similar deficits in motivation. Fortunately, a growing body of research indicates that there is a lot we can do to about that. Over the past three years, Search Institute has synthesized that research into the *REACH Framework*, which encompasses five factors that studies have shown influence students' motivation to learn: Relationships, Effort, Aspirations, Cognition, and Heart. We have also developed practical approaches and activities that help schools build on students' strengths in each area of the framework.

In addition, the *REACH Survey* measures students' development and experiences in each area of the *REACH Framework*.

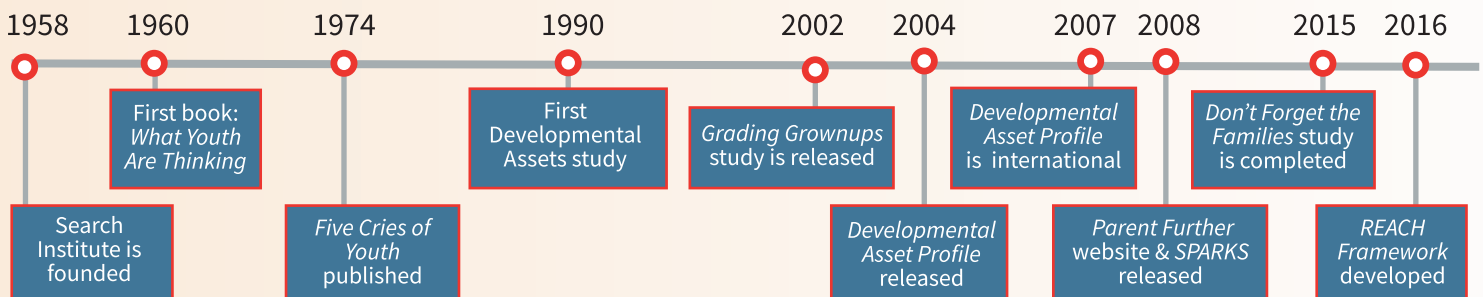
All of these resources have been brought together to create the *REACH Process*, a strategy for strengthening student motivation. It's now being implemented and tested in a diverse group of twelve middle schools. Findings from those prototyping projects will be used to further improve the *REACH* resources as they are offered to schools throughout the country in the years ahead.

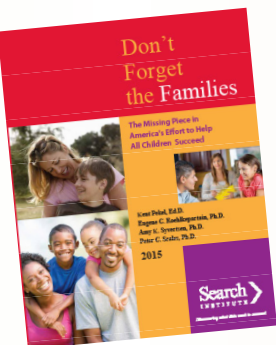


Relationships In Families

Strong relationships in families are catalytic for positive development. Most people recognize that in early childhood. But we sometimes forget the importance of

A LONG HISTORY OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE





those relationships as children grow to become teenagers.

Through *Keep Connected*, which will be launched in early 2017, Search Institute is creating a new resource for schools and other organizations to support families in building and strengthening relationships with children as they enter the middle school years. The

resource is currently in the second year of piloting in five diverse settings across the United States.

Keep Connected operationalizes some of the key findings of *Don't Forget the Families*, a major study of more than 1,000 families that Search Institute released in 2015. Traditional family engagement efforts focus on how families support the goals of schools and programs. *Keep Connected* shifts the focus to how schools and programs can support strong relationships within diverse families. It also bridges the transitions of middle school at a time when traditional approaches to family engagement can lose traction.

Keep Connected creates opportunities for parents and young adolescents to explore five key elements of developmental relationships: Express Care, Challenge Growth, Provide Support, Share Power, and Expand Possibilities. Local facilitators work with groups of parents and youth separately before coming together as families

to explore, adjust, and commit to positive relationship building practices formulated for this phase of growing up.

Initial evaluation results suggest that participating in *Keep Connected* helps families reinvest in their relationships during the critical transition into adolescence. Families felt more empowered and connected as they approached the teen years together.

Research and More

In addition to this diverse portfolio of applied research projects, Search Institute also continues to conduct rigorous scholarly research. The results of our studies appear regularly in peer-reviewed academic journals and recent funding for new research has come from the National Science Foundation, the Spencer Foundation, and other sources.

As Search Institute prepares to turn sixty in 2018, the organization is working in new ways to bridge the worlds of research and practice to surround young people with the developmental relationships they need to thrive. And more than ever before, Search Institute is working to provide research-based resources and support to the young people, families, and communities who need them the most.

Won't you help us in our efforts? Visit www.search-institute.org/donate to make a contribution.



Studies of the Developmental Assets® have been conducted around the world.

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2015 Expenses

