
A Guide to Identifying and Sharing a Neighborhood's Educational Assets with Young People

Julie Filapek
John McKnight
2018

A publication of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute
at DePaul University



Towards the end of the school year at Columbus Elementary School in Appleton, Wisconsin, Principal R.J. Chesterton sits at his desk and points toward a tall stack of small slips of paper. “Those are all visits to the office to see the school nurse for a headache, a stomachache, a skinned knee.” He pinches his thumb and forefinger together. “About this many,” he says, “are actual headaches, stomachaches and skinned knees. The rest are just kids looking for some attention from a grown up.”

A few months earlier, a door-to-door survey was conducted in the school’s neighborhood that included the question: “In your opinion, how well does Columbus Elementary School serve the neighborhood?” More than sixty percent of respondents said they had no knowledge of the school, nor an opinion about it. A significant number of neighbors also identified in their survey responses that unsupervised youth running around getting into trouble was a neighborhood quality of life issue.

Why are youth running around with nothing constructive to do? Why are children craving adult attention? Why are adult neighbors disconnected from, and perhaps even a bit fearful of, the youth of their community? And why do they have no knowledge of their local school? The answers to those questions run deep into history and culture, touching on questions of work and family life, housing patterns, technology, racial and economic divides, educational policy and practice, child safety anxieties, and generational disconnects.

And yet when one looks at the disjointed equation posed by this one Midwestern school and its neighborhood, an obvious solution emerges: Direct neighbor participation in the education, development and well-being of their neighborhood’s young people.

What follows is a process that outlines how we can enrich the lives of both young people and adults through educational relationships that also strengthen the neighborhood. How might we extend education beyond school walls out into the community, and broaden young people’s learning beyond academic subjects? What might such learning and such adult-child relationships look like? Where, when and how might they be facilitated?

When we take the time to look deeply into our neighborhoods, we find a remarkable abundance of educational assets held by a neighborhood’s residents, associations and institutions. This guide is organized to describe methods for identifying and connecting the knowledge, skills, passions and experiences that neighbors and associational/institutional organizations have to share with young people.

Identifying and Connecting the Educational Assets of Individuals

All neighbors possess knowledge, skills, passions and experiences they might share with young people, and most of them are willing to do so. The following is a list of educational assets that individual residents of several neighborhoods are willing to share:

- Singing
- Bike repair
- Bird identification
- Film history
- Firefighting
- Folk dancing
- Gardening
- Emergency Management Technician skills
- Skateboarding
- Voting process
- Poetry
- Recovering from alcoholism
- Playing the ukulele
- Basic first aid
- Restaurant line cooking
- Woodworking
- Building maintenance
- Bee keeping
- Immigrant experience
- College application process
- Weightlifting
- Managing diabetes
- Basketball skills
- Veteran experiences
- Bowling
- Lawn mowing
- Card games
- Interior design
- Do it yourself crafts
- Couponing
- Collared shirt ironing
- Typing
- Local history
- Self-esteem
- Table etiquette
- Journalism
- Business card design
- Real estate business
- English as a Second Language
- Clothes shopping
- Hair styling
- Spanish language
- Electronic device repair
- Conflict resolution
- Public speaking
- Early childhood development
- Sewing
- Negotiation
- Writing
- Read a credit report
- Breastfeeding for first time moms
- Basic accounting
- How to start a business
- Tenant rights
- Good listening
- Caring for children
- Blogging
- Plumbing
- Tree care
- Time management
- Computer trouble shooting
- Motivating people
- Reading comprehension
- Family history/genealogy
- Starting a camp fire
- Running for government office
- Vegan diet
- History of blues and jazz music
- Journaling
- Being a sibling of someone with special needs
- Packing to move
- Bike safety
- Tie a fishing knot
- Origami
- Sign language
- Self-defense
- Dog training
- Overcome shyness
- Cooking with few ingredients
- How to say “no”

- Folding laundry
- How to manage a checkbook
- Tennis
- Job interviewing
- Welding
- Acting skills
- Designing and walking a labyrinth
- Compound interest
- Managing depression
- Car buying tips
- Architectural design
- Changing the oil in a car
- Yoga/meditation
- Nail care
- Calligraphy
- Living with grief and loss
- Retail marketing
- How to use a smart phone
- Single parenting
- French braiding

Some of the great fun in creating an educating neighborhood lies in the process of discovering all of the assets available. Below are several examples of tools that might be used to gather information, such as the information above, about the educational assets individuals have to share in their neighborhood. Organized neighborhoods have effectively used asset-discovery tools that range from highly-detailed checklists to broad, open-ended questions. Regardless of the tool used, however, several decades of communities testing asset discovery processes have revealed a few universals:

1. The richest, most useful results are captured not by self-administered surveys, but by neighbors talking to neighbors about what capacities they are willing to share.
2. The inventory is not the goal. Making connections among people is the goal. For this reason, it is important to have a process and people ready to make those connections as soon as asset discovery begins.
3. It is a reasonable assumption that every individual has something of value to contribute to the education of young people. The most amazing gifts sometimes come from the most unexpected people and places. While that does not mean that everyone will choose to share their assets as part of their educating neighborhood, you can count on the fact that there's a rich world of possibilities to draw from. And engaging people who are typically marginalized is well worth a special effort because it leads to inclusiveness.
4. Young people also have educational assets to share. Taking an inventory of what they bring to the table is an equally important part of the process. All of the tools below can be used/modified to guide conversations with young people.

Neighborhoods have used many different places to gather asset information: The most effective are locations where neighbors talk to other neighbors about what they are willing to share. These conversations might take place:

- On front porches
- In neighbor's homes
- At community events
- Over coffee at the local shop
- On street corners and at bus stops
- At community centers
- At food pantries
- In classrooms
- On park benches

In all of these places, and in many others that present themselves in neighborhoods, conversation is the key to gathering the richest information about what people have to share.

In different neighborhoods, residents have developed their own tools to gather the capacity information.

Following are three guided conversation tools that have been used to identify the educational assets that individuals are willing to share with young people.

Individual Educational Asset Discovery Tool: Head, Hands, Heart

Conversation Date: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Email: _____

1. What are your gifts of the head that you could share with children or youth? What do you especially know about (i.e., birds, mathematics, personal finance, neighborhood history)?

Would you be willing to share these gifts with children or youth?

2. What are your gifts of the hands that you could share with children or youth? What do you know how to do well (i.e., baseball, carpentry, cooking, guitar)?

Would you be willing to share these gifts with children or youth?

3. What are your gifts of the heart that you could share with children or youth? What do you especially care about (i.e., politics, environment, veterans, rescue animals)?

Would you be willing to share these gifts with children or youth?

4. What clubs, groups or associations do you/your family belong to or participate in?

Individual Educational Asset Discovery Tool: Gifts, Skills, Knowledge, Passion

Conversation Date: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

1. What natural gifts were you born with (for example: good listener, very organized, nice singing voice)?

Would you be willing to share any of these gifts with children or youth?

2. What are some skills you are good at (for example: knitting, carpentry, cooking, writing)?

Would you be willing to share some of these skills with children or youth?

3. What are some things you know – from school, work, life – that you feel you know well (for example: bird identification, military history, investing in the stock market)?

Would you be willing to share some of this knowledge with children or youth?

4. What are some things you are passionate about (for example: social justice, animal welfare, music)?

Would you be willing to share some of these passions with children or youth?

5. What are some things you would like to learn that a child or youth might teach you?

6. What are some things you are interested in doing to make our neighborhood an even better place to live? Are any of these things that children or youth could help with or lead?

7. What clubs, groups or associations do you/your family belong to or participate in?

Individual Educational Asset Discovery Tool: Detailed Asset List

Conversation Date: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Below is a list of abilities that people have. Please check those you possess. I may ask for more detail: more about your interest in the topic, how and where you learn and do it, how important it is to you. I'm interested in all your knowledge, skills, interests, experiences and passions.

1. Job-Based Knowledge and Skills

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health care | <input type="checkbox"/> Security |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial/Accounting | <input type="checkbox"/> Homemaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Office Management/Skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Information Technology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Construction/Repair | <input type="checkbox"/> Law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing/Design |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child Care | <input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> Supply chain management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Equipment/Machinery | <input type="checkbox"/> Military |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supervision | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sales | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Would you be willing to share any of this knowledge or these skills with children or youth?

2. Hobbies/Interests

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Building/Tinkering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts/Crafts | <input type="checkbox"/> Historical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collecting | <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home Improvement | <input type="checkbox"/> Language/Books |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food | <input type="checkbox"/> Animals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Travel/Adventure | <input type="checkbox"/> Mind/Body |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nature | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Games | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Would you be willing to share any of these interests with children or youth?

3. Life Experiences

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking risks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Illness | <input type="checkbox"/> Applying to college |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss | <input type="checkbox"/> Starting/owning/running a business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job searching | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious/Spiritual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Helping others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living on one's own | <input type="checkbox"/> Making more with less |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage/relationships | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Migration/living in a new culture | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Would you be willing to share any of these life experiences with children or youth?

4. Passions/Causes

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community/Neighborhood | <input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental | <input type="checkbox"/> Women |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Seniors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual/Religious | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Needs/Disabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Arts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Race/culture | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Would you be willing to share any of these passions with children or youth?

5. What clubs, groups or associations do you/your family belong to or participate in?

Making Connections between Individuals and Young People

Connecting young people to the educational assets individual residents have to share might take place household-to-household, within the context of youth- or adult-serving organizations, faith-based or civic spaces, etc. The following are examples of educational connections between individual residents and young people in several neighborhoods.

- A family opens up their backyard to become a neighborhood community garden where everyone learns together, adults and children, planning the garden, sharing care responsibilities, and troubleshooting together.
- Children who are home alone after school are connected with local seniors who share their special knowledge and who can also be available in case of an emergency.
- A student on the high school basketball team is engaged by the parents of a third grader to teach basketball skills once per week in the summer.
- A group of neighbors form a babysitting cooperative for after school hours, and use their turns as babysitters to work on group projects including building a lemonade stand, sewing a quilt and writing and illustrating picture books.
- A family with a special needs child, feeling isolated from their community, goes door to door to invite their neighbors to participate in a project together to decorate all of the trees in the park at the end of their block for Christmas. Several families come up with home-made ornament ideas and teach everyone else how to make them, starting an annual tradition of trimming trees together. Everyone gets to know each other, and the special needs child and her family are integrated into the community.
- A young couple and two retired neighbors decide to run a youth sports league during the summer for neighborhood children, offering a range of games – softball, volleyball, golf putting, capture the flag – at the local park a few times each month. Parents are invited to participate with their children.
- A prolific baker on the block invites all the children to a tea party on her front porch to teach them table etiquette.
- A neighbor, worried about behaviors he is seeing in local young men, starts talking with them about their interests and abilities. After learning that they are interested in making things, he suggests they create an informal association to make something for their neighborhood. In secret, they build wooden lawn chairs and one weekend night set them all out on front lawns – two per household – all down the street for neighbors to discover the next morning.
- A group of neighbors who enjoy watching films together invite a neighborhood youth filmmaker to show her film at their club, and invite other neighbors to the screening.
- A group of parents create a “Neighborhood Kid Fan Club” to celebrate each child on their block with a summer party to that child’s specifications.
- An annual round robin dinner party on a block invites youths to plan, prepare and host one of the sites.

- A neighborhood Watch group teaches youths how to access and understand neighborhood crime data published by the police department.
- A neighborhood mom's group invites teen mothers to join.
- A neighborhood book club organizes a summer reading challenge for elementary and middle school students.
- A social group of car enthusiasts sponsors a neighborhood soap box derby.
- An informal group of Hmong families who play volleyball weekly in a neighborhood park sets up a second net to teach local kids how to play.
- Adults visiting preschool or daycare programs to play games, model and encourage positive social interactions, and share excitement about what children are learning.
- A professional photographer shares his equipment and knowledge with a Parks & Recreation youth program so they can document their summer activities.
- Neighbors organize themselves to teach their skills and interests in a hands-on way with students in an elementary after-school program.
- A local artist spends a six-month residency with middle-school students to conceive and paint a series of hallway murals.
- A middle school organizes a day for people from all kinds of vocations to come into classrooms to talk and answer questions about about the work they do.
- A group of neighbors who meet once per month to play cribbage invite neighborhood children to come and learn the game.
- An elementary after-school program hires high school students to keep students engaged in active outdoor games.

Identifying and Connecting the Educational Assets of Associations and Institutions

In addition to individual knowledge, local associations and institutions are rich in educational assets that could be shared with young people. Connections can be made between young people and the organization itself, and/or between young people and individual members/staff of those organizations. Not only do young people have much to gain from connecting with a local association or institution, those organizations themselves benefit from the energy, ideas and passions young people could bring to them. The following are lists of assets possessed by associations and institutions in several neighborhoods.

Association assets

Formal or informal groups of (unpaid) people who are willing to teach/share their knowledge, skills, passions and experiences with young people include:

- Knitting club
- Rotary Club
- Fourth of July Parade Committee
- Gardening Club
- Senior Center
- Neighborhood watch group
- Mommy & me club
- Neighborhood association
- Commercial business association
- Jogging group
- League of Women Voters
- Food pantry
- Weekly bingo
- Friends of the neighborhood park
- Book club
- Community theatre troupe
- Sierra Club chapter
- Political party
- Parent-Teacher Organization
- College band
- Real estate agents association
- American Legion
- Local builders association
- Car enthusiasts club
- Poetry collective
- Quilters club
- High school key club
- Historical society
- Dog park association
- Emergency medical technicians association
- Farmers market
- Informal neighborhood film club
- Friend group of parents
- Motorcycle club
- Veterans for Peace group
- Informal group of retired teachers
- Bowling league
- Environmental justice group
- Genealogy enthusiasts group
- String chamber ensemble
- Cribbage players
- Canoeing club
- Makers space
- Round robin dinner party group
- National Night Out
- High school chess club

Institution Assets

Local government, nonprofit and for profit organizations with paid staff willing to teach/share with and engage young people include:

- Habitat for Humanity
- Construction company
- Performance auto shop
- Yarn shop
- Hospital
- Mayor's office
- Bank
- Municipal planning department
- Cafe
- Salon
- Yoga studio
- School cafeteria
- Police department
- Rental property owners
- Fitness center
- Asian grocery
- Hardware store
- Parks department
- Music festival
- Sexual assault crisis center
- Bakery
- Garden
- Graphic design company
- Nature center

A conversation with an institutional representative will be necessary to learn what kinds of connections may already be happening with young people, and to imagine what future connections might be made. A guided conversation can identify those opportunities and set the stage for them to be realized.

Following is a tool for undertaking such a conversation with a neighborhood association or institutional representative.

Association/Institution Educational Asset Discovery Tool

Name of organization: _____

Name of representative: _____

Representative's role in organization: _____

Representative's contact info (phone/email): _____

1. What is the purpose of your association/institution?

2. What are the activities of your association/institution?

3. Has your organization been involved in working with youth?

If yes, describe what your organization did/does with youth. How many of your association/institution members/staff have been involved?

4. What special knowledge and/or skills are possessed by your organization's members/staff?

5. Would your organization's members/staff be willing to teach their knowledge or skills to youth?

6. Would your organization be willing to involve youth in its activities?

Making Connections between Young People and Associations and Institutions

Associations and institutions are places where educational connections can happen. The following are examples of educational connections between young people and associations and institutions in several neighborhoods.

Associations

- A knitting club teaches finger knitting to children.
- Rotary Club members teach a youth group how to run a meeting.
- Local college band members offer a Saturday learning event for new, fifth grade band students.
- A voluntary association of emergency medical technicians offers an after-school first aid clinic.
- A motorcycle club offers free rides to kids and their parents around a parking lot.
- A Veterans for Peace group member gives a talk at the local middle school.
- A group of retired teachers volunteer to have their monthly lunch at a local elementary school a few times per year to spend time with kids.
- A master gardeners association starts a school garden.
- An informal group of neighbors who like to jog together offer a week-long track and field “tournament” for neighborhood children.
- A genealogy enthusiasts group offers to work with youth who want to research their family history as part of a school assignment.
- A high school chess club teaches the game to fourth graders.
- An annual music festival hires high school students to design and contribute to social media and other marketing strategies.
- A neighborhood association seeking a mural to cover a graffiti-laden wall creates an opportunity for neighborhood youth interested in art to learn about the neighborhood from the local historical society. With that information, they design and paint the mural to reflect both the past and the future of the neighborhood, with guidance from a professional mural artist/educator.
- A neighborhood association organizes neighbors to teach middle school students how to provide lawn care services. Neighbors teach lawn mowing, hedge trimming, and weeding skills. Other neighbors offer their lawns as practice sites. The association helps the young people market their services in the neighborhood.
- The organizers of a front porch music festival dedicate one porch to youth performers, and seasoned gig musicians also performing at the event provide the young people with tips on pursuing future performance opportunities.
- The Rotary Club creates a special role for youth participants to connect with local business owners and learn about community issues.
- A fourth of July Parade Committee asks youth to be involved in the planning.

- A neighborhood association establishes a youth-led committee to take on projects of their choice.
- A local chapter of the League of Women Voters invites youths to get involved with voter registration efforts.
- “Friends of” the neighborhood park hold a youth summit to identify priorities and organize youth activities to improve the park.
- A community theatre group invites a young person to learn about and assist with lighting and set design.
- An environmental group requests that a youth with visual art skills attend a community forum on river water quality and create a drawing that captures all of the dreams people have for a healthy river.
- A Parent-Teacher Organization invites high school students to come back to their elementary school to design and lead a school event.
- American Legion members invite a middle school band to perform at a Memorial Day service.
- A local poet’s group creates an open-mic poetry event for high school students and provides one-on-one feedback sessions.
- A quilter’s club partners with a church youth group to make a prayer quilt together for a grieving family.
- The local historical society invites and trains high school students to help with primary research, interviewing residents who lived through a local natural disaster.
- The local conservation club helps a high school student do field research on water quality for a school project.
- A bowling league organizes an intergenerational team tournament.
- An environmental justice group trains youths to make presentations about asthma and air pollution.
- A string chamber ensemble invites strong youth musicians to perform with them in concert.
- A canoeing club invites families with young children who live nearby the boat launch to ride along and learn about canoeing.
- A local makers space opens the doors to teen inventors twice per month.
- Youths are invited to take charge of children’s activities at a neighborhood National Night out celebration.

Institutions

- A church Bingo game invites teenagers to participate as guest callers.
- The Boys & Girls Club organizes an afternoon walking tour to nearby businesses including a book store, yarn shop and candy store. At each location students learn something about how the business works “behind the scenes”.

- Students at a vocational high school form a credit union using skills they have learned from a local credit union's staff. Anyone from the school or community can invest, and upper classmen teach incoming freshmen how to keep the business running.
- A local food pantry asks for help from youth in designing a new logo.
- Construction firm staff teach young people how to use graph paper and architectural rulers to design a building.
- The owner of a yarn shop offers a free month-long knitting workshop for neighborhood middle schoolers.
- Bank employees share the power of compound interest with elementary students through a marshmallow game in math class.
- A municipal community planning department engages youths in focus groups to inform comprehensive planning, and invites a team of youths to participate in data analysis.
- A neighborhood café owner meets with a group of youth entrepreneurs to answer questions about starting a business.
- A salon volunteers to teach skin care to adolescents.
- A yoga studio offers trauma-informed yoga practice for youths in a residential facility.
- Middle school cafeteria staff invite seventh graders to plan a menu and quantities within a budget for one week of school lunches.
- A rental property owner teaches graduating high school students about their tenant rights and responsibilities.
- A garden center sponsors, and staff supports, middle schoolers to install a butterfly garden at their school.
- A graphic design company works one-on-one with high school entrepreneurs to create a logo and business card.
- Neighborhood teenagers are hired to work at an understaffed library.
- A municipal Parks Department creates a youth Advisory Council which learns from Parks staff how to raise and manage funds for youth projects, publish a youth-focused newsletter, design and plant gardens, and organize activities for younger children.
- Experienced students enrolled in a literacy program are trained to become teachers for students just entering the program.
- A group of middle-schoolers who started a recycling program in their school help their old elementary school do the same.
- A group of small retail businesses work together to create a labor pool of neighborhood teenagers to call upon for part-time, seasonal and on-call work.
- A senior center invites youths to teach smart phone skills.
- A commercial business association invites neighborhood teens offering services (babysitting, lawn care, pet care, etc.) to be part of the local business directory and attend meetings.
- A local political party creates internships for youth to learn about and participate in campaign work.

- A real estate agents professional group invites ten high school students to shadow ten real estate agents for a day, and attend one of their group lunch events to learn about the profession.
- A Habitat for Humanity chapter enlists teens to do physical inventories of housing stock in target neighborhoods.
- A performance auto shop invites teens with mechanical ability to intern for the summer.
- A local hospital invites teens to job shadow.
- A mayor's office creates a high school internship in Communications and Policy.
- A police department offers ride-alongs to high school students interested in a career in law enforcement.
- A fitness center offers a once/month teen night with personal trainers to help develop personal exercise routines.
- An ethnic grocery offers a food tasting event and kid-friendly recipes for local parents with young children.
- A hardware store offers a tool library and club for youths working on do-it-yourself projects.
- A sexual assault crisis center creates internship positions, educates and supports high school students who want to tackle toxic masculinity in their schools.
- A bakery invites a preschool class to make bread and learn how commercial baking equipment works.
- A nature center supports a "youth crew" that works with staff to design and lead environmental projects.
- The local farmers' market engages high school students in inventorying weekly crops offered by vendors, visiting other area farmers' markets for comparison, and recommending new kinds of vendors to strengthen the market in future years.

Contexts for Educational Asset Connections

The possibilities for connecting neighbors intergenerationally around education are wide-ranging. With the right conditions, such connections can happen:

- one-on-one or household-to-household
- in the context of an institution or voluntary association that serves adults or the general public (e.g., corporation or small business, government entity, assisted living facility, library, social services program, interest-based club, neighborhood association, professional association, service club)
- within the structure of a school, after-school program or other institution-based youth program

Each of these contexts, and each individual expression of these contexts, presents unique opportunities for educational connections, and also unique logistical challenges.

Educational Connections made One-on-One or Household-to-Household

Some of the greatest opportunity for creativity and flexibility exists where educational connections can be made wholly outside of organizational contexts. Families must know and trust the adults or older children who are spending time with their children in an informal unsupervised way, or families might participate in educational connections together, but once the hurdle of trust has been overcome, the sky is the limit on what is possible.

Educational Connections within Adult- or General Population-Serving Associations/Institutions

There are significant benefits to connecting youth with adults in community contexts, beyond the walls of youth-serving organizations, and those benefits accrue both for the youth and for the organizations welcoming them. Young people benefit from learning and doing with adults in an adult world, gaining self-confidence, a richer perspective on their community, and a clearer vision of their own futures as adults in community. And the organizations benefit from incorporating the fresh ideas and energy that make youth excellent additions to a cause or project.

Educational Connections within Youth-serving Associations/Institutions

The obvious benefit of creating opportunities for connection within youth programs is that often this is where young people are found. These days, so much of children's time is spent in formal programs including before-, during-, and after-school programs, and interest-based lessons and activities. Such programs are often open to developing community partners in their mission to help young people grow and learn. Their own staff may not have the capacity to undertake the logistics of making such connections happen, but they can host and make space available for them in their programming schedules. Where a partnership can be developed with a school, after-school or other youth-focused program, adults can interact with youth in a socially-accepted safe environment.

The Educating Neighborhood

Imagine a neighborhood rich in educational connections among children, youth and adults. What trajectory for those children? The Search Institute, over the course of decades, conducted extensive research that culminated in a list of 40 Developmental Assets necessary for children to thrive. Caring, supportive neighbors and a community that values young people figure prominently on this list. Children will not thrive as they otherwise might if their adult connections are limited to their family and people paid to spend time with them. And they cannot learn all that they need to know at school only. Neighbors, associations and institutions

have the potential to offer young people a great abundance of both connection and learning that can enrich and even transform their lives.

And what trajectory for the neighborhood as a whole? Imagine associations and institutions – neighborhood organizations, knitting groups, political organizations, libraries, animal shelters – infused with the energy and ideas of young people? Imagine young people who are learning how run a meeting, knit, register voters, run a story time for preschoolers, care for stray animals? Imagine blocks of families who all know and learn from one another? What would a community like that look like, feel like, make possible for everyone who lives there?

Additional Tools for Creating an Educating Neighborhood

For additional guides to facilitate a teaching/learning neighborhood, see the following ABCD Institute publications and community resources.

- *An Educating Neighborhood: How Neighbors Create “A Village that Raises Their Children”* at <https://resources.depaul.edu/abcd-institute/publications/publications-by-topic/Documents/AnEducatingNeighborhoodv.5.pdf>. Description of how a whole neighborhood can become a teaching/learning place.
- *New Community Tools for Improving Child Health: A Pediatrician’s Guide to Local Associations* at <https://resources.depaul.edu/abcd-institute/publications/publications-by-topic/Documents/Pediatricians.pdf>. Includes many examples of how various neighborhoods gathered information regarding the local associations.
- *A Guide to Capacity Inventories: Mobilizing the Community Skills of Local Residents* at <https://resources.depaul.edu/abcd-institute/publications/Documents/Workbooks/CapacityInventories.pdf>. A collection of many neighborhood tools for identifying the capacities of local residents.
- To find information about for-profit institutions in your local area, contact your local chamber of commerce.
- For information about nonprofit institutions, contact your local United Way agency.