



## Education

### WHA Parent Connection established through Working Together Coalition

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by Denise Koring  
Working Together Coalition member

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The Walker-Hackensack-Akeley Parent Connection is a group of committed parents who want to build strong relationships with other parents so that together, we can build our youth to be healthy, safe and responsible.

The Parent Connection has recently been established through the Working Together Coalition, which is a large group of citizens from the WHA area who are working hard to prevent substance use by our youth through community collaboration.

As our kids mature, we want to make sure that they have the tools to make good choices. As parents, we know that if we join together with other adults and take a united stand, we will feel empowered to "do the right thing" and make choices that keep our kids safe.

Simply knowing that other parents are on the same page helps us to build a network of other parents who are committed to setting healthy boundaries for youth. We can feel comfortable communicating with other parents about what youth are planning to do in their free time, so that we know they are safe. Kind of like the good 'ole days when all parents felt a responsibility to speak up and guide kids in the right direction. When we feel supported by others, it's much easier to say "No" to our youth.

This network will continue to grow and change as our youth move into different developmental stages. The great thing is that we are all in this together. When children are young, there are many opportunities to build relationships with other parents. Once they are in middle and high school, those opportunities change.

We know that parents need one another to support, encourage and have fun together to reduce the stress and worry that we may otherwise face alone.

One of our plans is to create a resource directory of families who are interested in networking with others to build connections with one another. The directory will include contact information so that parents can call or e-mail one another to connect.

This may include coordinating transportation when you see that a neighbor's child is also involved in the same activities as your child; checking in with a parent to make sure they'll be home when your child is there; offering to help out with snacks if another parent is hosting a get-together; or talking to them about planning a fun activity for youth. We also plan to focus on SEARCH Institute's 40 Developmental Assets that are the building blocks that youth need to grow up to be healthy, caring and responsible.

We will be using these 40 assets as we move forward in creating a healthy community and healthy youth.

If you would like to become part of this growing network of involved parents, join us at any time. Our next meeting is Thursday at 4 p.m. at the Village Cafe in Walker. Contact Kelly Felton at (218) 330-8129 or (218) 587-4292 for more information about the WHA Parent Connections.

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