

Invest in Your Child's or Grandchild's Future

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"If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with success unimagined in common hours." Henry David Thoreau

Last week's article was entitled, "What Should I Do with My Life?" (If you missed it or want to see the article again, click on "Dennis' Blog" on my website--see the address below.) Don't you wish you had experienced clarity on what to do with your life when you were a teenager?

This column typically focuses on building future leaders. You probably apply my articles to building the leadership skills of individuals in your organization. I'm fine with that perspective, because that's what I'm typically thinking when I write these essays.

This article is different, however. I still want you to focus on building future leaders. For today, however, I want you to be thinking a little closer to home. My suggestion is that you invest in your children or grandchildren, ages 10-14.

The Gallup organization has made it easy to learn about the natural talents of these boys and girls who are just beginning to consider what they will do with their lives. A simple exploratory assessment has been developed based on 40 years of scientific research. For \$16, you can provide this advantage to a child you influence!

I realize this may sound like an advertisement. I promise that I have no connection with the Gallup organization other than being an extensive user of their research for the past nine years with my clients.

To learn how you can serve your child or grandchild, go to this website: www.strengths-explorer.com. Start by clicking on "Parent" and then "Learn More." You'll find a description of what your \$16 will purchase: a one-time on-line assessment, a personalized report describing the student's top three talent themes with suggested activities to support those themes, a "Youth Workbook" filled with guided activities to further explore each of the three talent themes, and a "Parent Guide" with powerful perspectives on how you can reinforce and support the unique young person you love.

Taking the assessment is relatively easy. It's not timed, so there is no pressure to make quick answers. One statement is shown on the screen at a time. Here are example statements: "It is easy for me to start new tasks." "I hate to be late." "I am a generous, sharing person." "Other people count on me."

For each statement, the student selects the most accurate description from among five options:

- Almost always (or always)
- Often
- Sometimes
- Almost never (or never)
- This question does not make sense to me

In selecting the most relevant option, the student should think about what is characteristically true rather than thinking about what he or she would like the results to be. If you are initiating or supervising this effort, I encourage you to step away from the computer after you've assured yourself that the student understands the process and is functioning well. This eliminates any pressures the student may feel to answer a particular way because you are looking over his or her shoulder!

As soon as the assessment is over, a two-page report is available for printing. The report provides three descriptive characteristics, each followed by a paragraph describing that talent theme. Then for each talent theme, there are five paragraphs suggesting action items that will reinforce that talent theme.

Perhaps the most valuable role you can play follows the assessment. Explore with the student the many suggested activities in the Youth Workbook and the Parent Guide. The heightened awareness of the three talent themes may subside quickly if they are not reinforced. You may think that would be hard for you to do, but the activities are described right there for you. Just initiate the effort in collaboration with your student. If you show some energy, he or she will follow along due to his or her natural interest.

No one can guarantee that this simple process will assure appropriate focus in your student's life. I can say, however, that I sure wish something like this had been available when I was a teenager. You'll enjoy nurturing, supporting, and encouraging your child or grandchild!

Dennis Hooper has finally found his direction in life. It's inspiring and empowering leaders to build future leaders. Contact Dennis by e-mail at dhooper2@juno.com, at 478-988-0237, or through his website at www.buildingfutureleaders.com.