

# Developmental Asset Categories: Students

Search Institute, a nonprofit research organization focusing on positive youth development, has identified a framework of 40 Developmental Assets for youth; this framework describes the positive qualities, experiences, and opportunities that all young people need. These assets fall into **eight categories**:

### EXTERNAL ASSETS

(the external structures, relationships, and activities that create a positive environment):

#### Support

Young people need to be surrounded by people who love, care for, appreciate, and accept them. They need to know that they belong and that they are not alone.

#### Empowerment

Young people need to feel valued and valuable. They need to feel safe, to believe that they are liked and respected, and to have opportunities to make meaningful contributions within the hierarchies that surround them.

#### Boundaries and Expectations

Young people need the positive influence of peers and adults who encourage them to be and do their best. They need clear rules about appropriate behavior, and consistent, reasonable consequences for inappropriate behaviors.

#### Constructive Use of Time

Young people need opportunities—outside of school—to learn and develop new skills and interests, and to spend enjoyable time interacting with other youth and adults.

### INTERNAL ASSETS

(the values, skills, and beliefs necessary to fully engage with other people and function well in the world):

#### Commitment to Learning

Young people need a variety of learning experiences, including the desire for academic success, a sense of the lasting importance of learning, and a belief in their own abilities.

#### Positive Values

Young people need to develop strong guiding values or principles, including caring for others, having high standards for personal character, and believing in protecting their own well-being.

#### Social Competencies

Young people need to develop the skills to interact effectively with others, to make difficult decisions and choices, and to cope with new situations.

#### Positive Identity

Young people need to believe in their own self-worth, to feel that they have control over the things that happen to them, and to have a sense of purpose in life as well as a positive view of the future.

# About Developmental Assets®

Thinking Inside The Box...

## The Developmental Assets Framework

At the heart of the institute's work is the framework of 40 Developmental Assets, which are positive experiences, relationships, opportunities, and personal qualities that young people need to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. Created in the 1990s, the framework is grounded in research on child and adolescent development, risk prevention, and resiliency. Assets are easy to build! Asset building is about relationships—anyone can do it. You can make a difference and help a young person succeed!

## The Importance of Assets

Search Institute's research shows that the more assets young people have, the less likely they are to engage in risky behaviors. In addition, these common themes about the importance of assets have emerged from numerous findings:

- **Assets promote academic success.**
- **Assets divert youth from risky behaviors and increase civic engagement.**
- **Assets give young people the strengths they need to make positive choices in life.**
- **Across the United States—in big cities and small towns—most young people now experience fewer than half of the 40 Developmental Assets.**

## Building Assets in your Community

We've included some resources in this packet to help you and your community get started with intentional asset building. Some of the basics are:

- **Learn** more about the 40 Developmental Assets and the communities that have already built successful initiatives. Search Institute's Web site is a great source for information about published resources, trainings, and events: [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)
- **Share** the message of asset building. Talk to PTA groups, civic organizations, neighbors, congregation members, realtors, businesses, student clubs—anyone interested in the youth in your community.
- **Gather** together a group of people, including young people, who are willing to go deeper with assets. Develop a vision of what your community would look like if Developmental Assets were being nurtured throughout the community.

# The Power of Assets

## Research Findings

On one level, the 40 Developmental Assets represent common wisdom about the kinds of positive experiences and characteristics that young people need and deserve. But their value extends further. Surveys of almost 150,000 students in grades 6–12 reveal that assets are powerful influences on adolescent behavior. Regardless of gender, ethnic heritage, economic situation, or geographic location, assets both promote positive behaviors and attitudes and help protect young people from many different problem behaviors.

To illustrate, these graphs show that young people with more assets are less likely to engage in patterns of high-risk behavior and more likely to report having positive attitudes and behaviors.



# The 40 Developmental Assets® for Grades 6–12

Assets Change Lives—How Many Do Your Kids Have?

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## support



- 1 Family support** • Family life provides high levels of love and support.
- 2 Positive family communication** • Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s).
- 3 Other adult relationships** • Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
- 4 Caring neighborhood** • Young person experiences caring neighbors.
- 5 Caring school climate** • School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
- 6 Parent involvement in schooling** • Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.

## empowerment



- 7 Community values youth** • Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
- 8 Youth as resources** • Young people are given useful roles in the community.
- 9 Service to others** • Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
- 10 Safety** • Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.

## boundaries & expectations



- 11 Family boundaries** • Family has clear rules and consequences, and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
- 12 School boundaries** • School provides clear rules and consequences.
- 13 Neighborhood boundaries** • Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
- 14 Adult role models** • Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
- 15 Positive peer influence** • Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
- 16 High expectations** • Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

## constructive use of time



- 17 Creative activities** • Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
- 18 Youth programs** • Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.
- 19 Religious community** • Young person spends one hour or more per week in activities in a religious institution.
- 20 Time at home** • Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

## The INTERNAL Assets

### commitment to learning



- 21 Achievement motivation** • Young person is motivated to do well in school.
- 22 School engagement** • Young person is actively engaged in learning.
- 23 Homework** • Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
- 24 Bonding to school** • Young person cares about her or his school.
- 25 Reading for pleasure** • Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

### positive values



- 26 Caring** • Young person places high value on helping other people.
- 27 Equality and social justice** • Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
- 28 Integrity** • Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
- 29 Honesty** • Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
- 30 Responsibility** • Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
- 31 Restraint** • Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

### social competencies



- 32 Planning and decision making** • Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
- 33 Interpersonal competence** • Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
- 34 Cultural competence** • Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- 35 Resistance skills** • Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
- 36 Peaceful conflict resolution** • Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

### positive identity



- 37 Personal power** • Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
- 38 Self-esteem** • Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
- 39 Sense of purpose** • Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
- 40 Positive view of personal future** • Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.