

## **Wellness Assets**

Happy Spring! Better weather really makes a difference in how we feel, how we think and how we live. It is just so good to see the sun shine and nature awaken. Good weather contributes to overall wellness in our community.

As we continue our very real work in addressing the social and emotional needs of our students, I am sharing a very interesting and thought-provoking study by The Search Institute for your review and consideration. The study, conducted in 1999, collected information on life "traits," which they termed "assets," found to contribute to positive life behaviors and attitudes. The more of these "assets" identified in an individual, the greater the likelihood of the behaviors and experiences associated with social success.

I hope you find this study interesting, and encourage you to discuss it with family and our schools. Enjoy the good weather!

# THE POWER OF ASSETS

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 more than 200,000 students in grades 6–12 reveal that assets are powerful influences on adolescent behavior. Regardless of gender, ethnic heritage, economic situation, or geographic location, these assets both promote positive behaviors and attitudes and help protect young people from many different problem behaviors.

0–10 assets

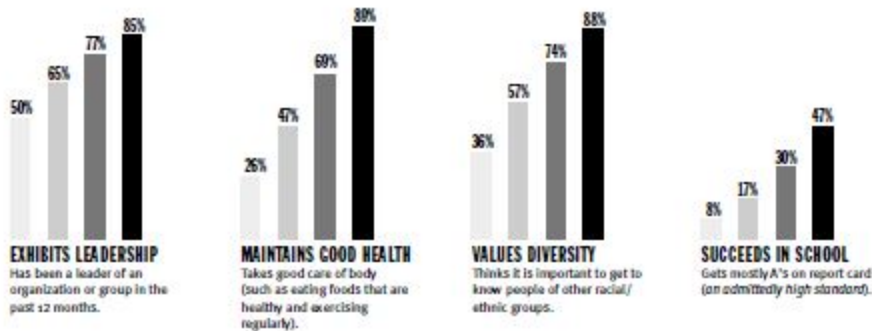
11–20 assets

21–30 assets

31–40 assets

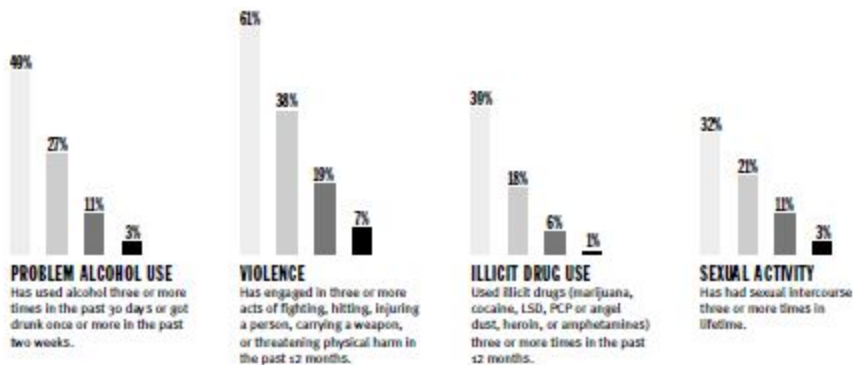
## PROMOTING POSITIVE BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES

Our research shows that the more assets students report having, the more likely they are to also report the following patterns of thriving behavior:



## PROTECTING YOUTH FROM HIGH-RISK BEHAVIORS

Assets not only promote positive behaviors, they also protect young people: The more assets a young person reports having, the less likely he or she is to make harmful or unhealthy choices. (Note that these definitions are set rather high, suggesting ongoing problems, not experimentation.)



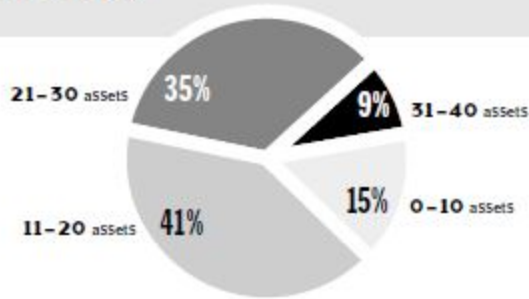
For more information: A Fragile Foundation: The State of Developmental Assets among American Youth; and Developmental Assets: A Synthesis of the Scientific Research on Adolescent Development, both available from Search Institute.

# THE CHALLENGE

The good news is that the assets are powerful and that everyone can build them (we call intentionally trying to help youth develop these strengths *building assets*). The challenge for all of us is that most young people aren't experiencing enough of them.

## THE GAP IN ASSETS AMONG YOUTH

While there is no "magic number" of assets young people should have, our data indicate that 31 is a worthy, though challenging, benchmark for experiencing their positive effects most strongly. Yet, as this chart shows, **only 9 percent of youth have 31 or more assets.** More than half have 20 or fewer assets.



## AVERAGE NUMBER OF ASSETS BY GENDER, GRADE, AND GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Search Institute's researchers have found that, **on average, young people report having 19.3 assets.** It may be tempting (and seem comforting) to think that your youth are different because of where they live, the schools they attend, their gender or ethnicity, and so on. But our research shows that young people from all walks of life have too few assets.

The chart here illustrates the overall consistency in levels of assets among boys and girls, younger youth and older youth, and young people living in urban, out of urban, and rural areas.

Overall, the average number of assets students report experiencing does not vary much by race or ethnicity. We are currently conducting analyses to learn how patterns of experience with specific assets may vary by race, ethnicity, and other demographic categories.

### GENDER



### GRADE











### GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION



0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 assets

## DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS

This chart shows eight areas of human development and groups the 40 developmental assets by these categories. The percentages of young people who report experiencing each asset were gathered from the administration of the *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors* survey in 318 communities and 33 states.

asset type	asset name and definition		
EXTERNAL ASSETS	<b>SUPPORT</b> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>FAMILY SUPPORT</b> — Family life provides high levels of love and support. 70%</li> <li><b>POSITIVE FAMILY COMMUNICATION</b> — Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s). 30%</li> <li><b>OTHER ADULT RELATIONSHIPS</b> — Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults. 45%</li> <li><b>CARING NEIGHBORHOOD</b> — Young person experiences caring neighbors. 40%</li> <li><b>CARING SCHOOL CLIMATE</b> — School provides a caring, encouraging environment. 29%</li> <li><b>PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLING</b> — Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school. 34%</li> </ol>	
	<b>EMPOWERMENT</b> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>COMMUNITY VALUES YOUTH</b> — Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth. 25%</li> <li><b>YOUTH AS RESOURCES</b> — Young people are given useful roles in the community. 28%</li> <li><b>SERVICE TO OTHERS</b> — Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week. 51%</li> <li><b>SAFETY</b> — Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood. 51%</li> </ol>	
	<b>BOUNDARIES &amp; EXPECTATIONS</b> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>FAMILY BOUNDARIES</b> — Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts. 48%</li> <li><b>SCHOOL BOUNDARIES</b> — School provides clear rules and consequences. 53%</li> <li><b>NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARIES</b> — Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior. 49%</li> <li><b>ADULT ROLE MODELS</b> — Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior. 30%</li> <li><b>POSITIVE PEER INFLUENCE</b> — Young person's best friends model responsible behavior. 65%</li> <li><b>HIGH EXPECTATIONS</b> — Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well. 49%</li> </ol>	
	<b>CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME</b> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>CREATIVE ACTIVITIES</b> — Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts. 20%</li> <li><b>YOUTH PROGRAMS</b> — Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community. 58%</li> <li><b>RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY</b> — Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution. 63%</li> <li><b>TIME AT HOME</b> — Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week. 52%</li> </ol>	
	INTERNAL ASSETS	<b>COMMITMENT TO LEARNING</b> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION</b> — Young person is motivated to do well in school. 67%</li> <li><b>SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT</b> — Young person is actively engaged in learning. 61%</li> <li><b>HOMEWORK</b> — Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day. 53%</li> <li><b>BONDING TO SCHOOL</b> — Young person cares about her or his school. 54%</li> <li><b>READING FOR PLEASURE</b> — Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week. 23%</li> </ol>
		<b>POSITIVE VALUES</b> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>CARING</b> — Young person places high value on helping other people. 50%</li> <li><b>EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE</b> — Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty. 52%</li> <li><b>INTEGRITY</b> — Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs. 68%</li> <li><b>HONESTY</b> — Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy." 67%</li> <li><b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> — Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility. 63%</li> <li><b>RESTRAINT</b> — Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs. 47%</li> </ol>
		<b>SOCIAL COMPETENCIES</b> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING</b> — Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices. 30%</li> <li><b>INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCE</b> — Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills. 47%</li> <li><b>CULTURAL COMPETENCE</b> — Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds. 42%</li> <li><b>RESISTANCE SKILLS</b> — Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. 42%</li> <li><b>PEACEFUL CONFLICT RESOLUTION</b> — Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently. 45%</li> </ol>
		<b>POSITIVE IDENTITY</b> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>PERSONAL POWER</b> — Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me." 44%</li> <li><b>SELF-ESTEEM</b> — Young person reports having a high self-esteem. 52%</li> <li><b>SENSE OF PURPOSE</b> — Young person reports that "my life has a purpose." 59%</li> <li><b>POSITIVE VIEW OF PERSONAL FUTURE</b> — Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future. 74%</li> </ol>

This chart may be reproduced for educational, noncommercial uses only. Download this and information on assets for younger children at [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org). Copyright © 2002 Search Institute, 800-888-8228. Data are from 1999–2000 school year surveys of 217,277 students grades 6–12 in public and private U.S. schools.