

Assets Awareness

You probably already know assets are good things... homes, cars and retirement funds. You may not know about a kind of asset that's even more important than your 401(K), developmental youth assets.



We all want youth to grow into healthy, productive and happy adults. Though there are countless hurdles youth face on the road to success, adults can help youth jump those hurdles by promoting the 40 developmental assets. The Search Institute, a non-profit organization committed to helping youth and communities develop to their fullest potential, created the 40 Developmental Assets Framework for understanding the developmental needs of youth.

What are Developmental Assets?

The Search Institute categorizes the 40 assets into “external” and “internal” groups. External assets are the opportunities and experiences adults provide for youth in homes, schools and communities. They include support, empowerment, boundaries & expectations, and constructive use of time. Internal assets are qualities and characteristics youth have including commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. Developmentally, youth need to practice independence, to be challenged, and to see the link between cause and effect. This can be scary for adults, but it is even scarier for young people! That's exactly why are youth need safe places and positive role models to support them during those experiences.



There are numerous examples of each of the internal and external assets, adding up to a total of 40! Social competency, for example, includes decision making, interpersonal competence, cultural competence, resistance skills, and conflict resolution. For most youth, earning good grades and being the star of the baseball team aren't the only factors that influence happiness or success. Developmental assets ensure that youth have caring people in their lives, opportunities to make meaningful contributions in their communities, creative outlets and strong values.

The Proof is in the Numbers!

The good news: the more assets a youth has, the better. The chart below shows that youth who report 31-40 assets are much more likely to achieve successful and healthy lifestyles. Youth who lack assets are much more likely to engage in risky behaviors. Youth who report under 10 assets are over *ten times more likely* to use drugs or engage in violence.

	0-10 Assets	11-20 Assets	21-30 Assets	31-40 Assets
Exhibits Leadership	48%	66%	78%	87%
Maintains Good Health	27%	48%	69%	88%
Values Diversity	39%	60%	76%	89%
Succeeds in School	9%	19%	34%	54%

Source: www.search-institute.org

You're probably wondering what the bad news is. According to a 2003 Search Institute study, the average teenager reports having *only* 19 assets! We also know that teens gradually report less and less assets as they grow older. The average 6th grader reports 23 assets, while the average 12th grader reports only 17. Wondering what you can do to help promote assets?

Self-Reflect!

Think about your own childhood for a moment. What made it special? What were you involved in? Who were the people that made a difference in your life? How did you overcome challenging situations? How did you learn to make positive choices? Chances are you were able to reach your goals because you were challenged by teachers, were a club leader or team captain, or maybe you volunteered in your community. These experiences, people, and opportunities were all developmental assets! These are the things that are important to today's youth as well. For ideas on how to promote each of the 40 Developmental Assets, be on the look out for the next Assets Awareness article and check out www.search-institute.org



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