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How to Take an Asset-building Approach

- Focus on the positive.
- Take personal responsibility for making a difference.
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- Mobilize the public as well as all youth-serving organizations in a community.
- View youth as resources.
- Look at youth from a vision-building perspective.
- Cooperate within the community.
- Unleash the caring potential of all residents and organizations so that public resources can be focused on areas of greatest need.
- Hope that change is possible.

Children, Youth & Family *Trendletter*

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Youth Need the Power of Assets

At least three kinds of money managers exist in the world. First are the ones you read about in the personal finance books. They have a steady income and a well-thought-out budget. They balance their checkbook every month; they charge only what they can pay at the end of the month; they start saving for college when the baby arrives; and they think of every major purchase as an investment.

Other money managers don't necessarily have less income or greater expenses on average, but their financial picture is quite different.

Regardless of how much money they make, they live paycheck to paycheck. Bills are paid when their bank balance isn't precariously low and they put little thought into saving for the future.

Third are those money managers who try to make ends meet but don't have the resources they need. They live paycheck to paycheck because they have to; rarely can they pay all their bills on time or save for the future.

Most of us recognize the value of the first approach, but the second and third portray disturbingly accurate analogies of the way our society takes care of our most valuable investment — our children. Instead of doing everything we can to guarantee a good "return on our investment," we spend tremendous amounts of energy trying to recover from the damage done because we didn't invest wisely in our youth. Often we don't have or don't know how to get the resources to help us understand how to build a solid foundation for our youth.

The most powerful approach to raising healthy young people is to invest energy in building assets for and with young people. This approach calls for shifting attention away from fixing problems and giving attention to

constructive activities that promote responsible, compassionate choice.

Research underscores the value of building assets. About 69 U.S. communities conducted a RespecTeen-sponsored survey of 275,000 youth that measured the presence and effect of 30 developmental assets. These include family support, discipline, positive activities, religious involvement, commitment to education, positive values, and social competencies — what young people need to grow up healthy.

The good news is that it doesn't take a lot of money to build these assets; rather, it takes caring and committed people who make children a priority in their families, schools, communities, organizations, and congregations.

Research shows that when young people have enough assets, they are much more likely to lead healthy, positive, productive lives. These young people do not make as many harmful decisions about drugs, violence, and sexual involvement as do youth with fewer assets. They experience greater success in school and volunteer more. Increasing assets for young people doesn't consume everyone's energy. Also, by increasing assets, we can spend less time fixing problems.

Source: Resources for Building Assets in Youth, A Bibliography of Resources: Promoting Positive Youth Development, 1995, Lutheran Brotherhood & Search Institute.

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University Extension

Positive Youth Development Teaching Materials Available on the Web

Access the Positive Youth Development home page (see examples on these two pages) through the Iowa State University Extension web site (*staff only*) or use the following URL.
<http://www.exnet.iastate.edu/Pages/communications/PYD/>

Resources found at the web site (shown at right) include media articles, inserts and flyers, handouts, overheads, and descriptions of books and pamphlets for check out from some youth development field specialists and the Violence Prevention Resource Library (housed at the Iowa Substance Abuse Information Center of the Cedar Rapids Library, 1-800-247-0614).

CYF Trendletter

The CYF Trendletter is a bimonthly newsletter published by the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk subcommittee. Material may be submitted by contacting subcommittee members Beverly Berna, Diana Broshar, Cheryl Clark, Cindy Needles Fletcher, Diane Klemme, Martha McCormick, Dennis Molitor, Lesia Oesterreich, Fran Passmore, Cory Peterson, Sharon Query, Rhonda Rosenboom, Karen Shirer, Pat Swartzlander, Sharon Wastaney, Phyllis Zalenski, or by contacting the editor, Carol Ouverson.



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Positive Youth Development Resources

Contact

Sharon Query
Extension Youth Development Specialist
State Youth & 4-H Office
33 Curtiss
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011
Phone: 515-294-1557
Fax: 515-294-4443
xlquery@exnet.iastate.edu



Media Samples

What's available

Press release, newspaper column, newsletter article, and radio announcement for each of the 30 assets.

Suggestions for use

For use in newspapers; newsletters (school, church, 4-H, family, youth organizations); and for radio spots or interviews.

Inserts/ Flyers

Suggestions for use

May be used in acrylic ISUE display; inserts for church, school newsletters; handouts for parent teacher conferences; report card stuffers; flyers for parent fairs; lunch and learn displays, etc.

Assets (Overheads)

Identification number

PYD-8 through PYD-14

Suggestions for use

Use the overheads to explain each asset type.

30 Developmental Assets

Identification number

PYD-15

Suggestions for use

Use as a handout for community groups, teachers, and parents to explain each asset type and to define each asset. Through extensive research, Search Institute has identified 30 of these assets that, when present, help young people grow up healthy, principled, and caring. These assets fit into two broad categories: external and internal assets.

An Asset Checklist

This worksheet is designed for you to determine which assets you experience or lack. Please check whether you believe each statement is true or false. Then compare your responses to those of youth nationally or in your community.

EXTERNAL ASSETS	True	False
Support		
1. I receive lots of love and support from my family.		
2. I see my parent(s) as accessible resources for advice and support.		
3. I have frequent, in-depth conversations with my parent(s).		
4. I have access to adults other than my parents for advice and support.		
5. I have frequent, in-depth conversations with adults other than my parents.		
6. My parent(s) are involved in helping me succeed in school.		
7. My school provides a caring, encouraging environment.		
Boundaries		
8. My parent(s) have set standards for appropriate conduct.		
9. My parent(s) discipline me when I violate a rule.		
10. My parent(s) keep track of where I am going and with whom I will be.		
11. I go out for "fun and recreation" three or fewer nights each week.		
12. My best friends model responsible behavior.		
Structured Time Use		
13. I spend at least three hours each week in music or other arts training or practice.		
14. I spend at least an hour each week in school sports, clubs, or organizations.		
15. I spend at least an hour each week in organizations or clubs outside of school.		
16. I spend at least an hour each week attending religious programs or activities.		
INTERNAL ASSETS	True	False
Educational Commitment		
17. I am motivated to do well in school.		
18. I aspire to continue schooling after high school (e. g. trade school, college).		

Shown here are three examples of teaching materials available at the web site. At **left** is an asset checklist that can be used to think about a particular young person in evaluating which assets he/she might possess. **Below left** is a table that shows how assets reduce the likelihood that youth will be involved in problem behaviors (graphs depicting these figures also are available). **Below** is a breakdown of the 30 developmental assets into external and internal assets. See page four for more on external and internal assets.

Search Institute's 30 Developmental Assets

EXTERNAL ASSETS		
SUPPORT	BOUNDARIES	USE OF STRUCTURED TIME
1. Family support	8. Parental standards	13. Involved in music
2. Parent(s) as social resources	9. Parental discipline	14. Involved in school extracurricular activities
3. Parent communication	10. Parental monitoring	15. Involved in community organizations or activities
4. Other adult resources	11. Time at home	16. Involved in a faith community
5. Other adult communication	12. Positive peer influence	
6. Parental involvement		
7. Positive school climate		

The Power of Developmental Assets

The following table shows that sixth- to 12-grade youth with more assets in their lives are much less likely to be involved in a range of problem behaviors. Furthermore, those with more assets are more likely to engage in positive behavior. Percentages indicate the number of youth who report each behavior based on the number of assets they report.

INTERNAL ASSETS		
EDUCATIONAL COMMITMENT	POSITIVE VALUES	SOCIAL COMPETENCIES
17. Achievement motivation	21. Values helping people	25. Assertiveness skills
18. Educational aspiration	22. Concerned about world hunger	26. Decision-making skills
19. School performance	23. Cares about other people's feelings	27. Friendship-making skills
20. Homework	24. Values sexual restraint	28. Planning skills
		29. Self-esteem
		30. Positive view of personal future

For more information on how to build each asset, see Peter L. Benson, Judy Galbraith, and Pamela Espeland, *What Kids Need to Succeed* (Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, 1994).

PATTERNS OF HIGH-RISK BEHAVIOR		PERCENT WHO REPORT EACH				
CATEGORY	DEFINITION	TOTAL	0-10 ASSETS	11-20 ASSETS	21-25 ASSETS	26-30 ASSETS
Alcohol	Six or more uses in past month or got drunk once or more in past two weeks	22%	44%	23%	9%	3%
Tobacco	Smokes one or more cigarettes every day or uses smokeless tobacco regularly	16%	35%	16%	4%	1%
Illicit Drugs	Six or more uses in the past year	9%	22%	9%	2%	1%
Sexuality	Sexual intercourse, two or more times	32%	51%	34%	17%	7%
Depression/ Suicide	Frequently depressed and/or has attempted suicide	23%	42%	24%	11%	5%
Anti-Social Behavior/ Violence	Two or more acts in the past year	28%	51%	28%	13%	6%
School Problems	Skipped school two or more days in the past month and/or wants to drop out	13%	30%	12%	4%	1%
Vehicle Recklessness	Drinks and drives, rides with drinking driver, or non-use of seat belts	54%	78%	57%	35%	19%
PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIORS		PERCENT WHO REPORT EACH				
Volunteer Service	Volunteers one or more hours per week	37%	15%	34%	57%	75%
Success in School	Gets mostly A's in school	18%	5%	13%	28%	51%



Youth Need Both External and Internal Assets

■ External Assets

Youth need to be surrounded by three categories of positive developmental experiences provided by families and communities, including informal interactions with caring adults and peers.

1. **Support** refers to a range of ways we communicate love, affirmation, and acceptance to young people. These actions include both demonstrative forms of verbal and physical approval and symbolic gestures that young people matter — listening to, paying attention to, talking with, showing interest in. Ideally, young people experience an abundance of this kind of support not only in their families, but also from many people (peers and adults) across many settings.

2. Support needs to be balanced with consistent attention to **boundaries** — clear messages about what standards are in bounds — respect for people and property — and what standards are out-of-bounds — violent resolution of conflict, chemical use. These clear, consistent messages need to come from several sources — parents, peers, teachers, neighbors, the media, coaches, and religious leaders. Also, established boundaries need to be enforced with appropriate discipline.

3. With less support and fewer boundaries, it becomes more important for youth to have **structured time use**. Ideally, this occurs in settings that connect youth to principled, caring adults who nurture skills and creativity through activities, lessons, and/or supervision. One major characteristic of a healthy community for youth is a wide array of structured activities (both formal and informal) for children as young as seven or eight and for adolescents in both middle and high school years. Community organizations, extracurricular school activities, and faith communities can promote assets through programming. In

addition, they become a constructive alternative to the idle time now common for many youth. Such “hanging out” time — while not always unproductive or dangerous — increases the probability of negative peer influence and over-exposure to television.

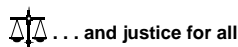
■ Internal Assets

A community’s responsibility for its young people does not end with providing external assets. An equal commitment is needed to nurture the kinds of learning, values, and skills that produce competent, principled young people and adults. Internal assets also can be grouped into three categories.

1. A commitment to **education** is vital in our ever-changing society. Curiosity, the ability to internalize new knowledge, and the discipline of education are important for healthy development. Yet educational aspirations seem to be diminishing among too many youth.

2. Though all sectors of society pay lip service to **positive values**, they are rarely articulated. A result, we often neglect being intentional about nurturing them in our youth. Positive values — such as achievement motivation, school performance, and educational aspiration — are important “internal compasses” that guide youth.

3. Finally, the asset framework is completed by six **social competencies**. These personal skills and life perspectives are crucial for negotiating through a maze of difficult choices that confront all youth. Promoting internal assets ought to become a renewed commitment in community life. And — as is the case with external assets — internal assets emerge best when neighborhoods, towns, and cities have a shared commitment to rewarding academic commitment, modeling shared values, and building competencies.



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