

external support that teens need. The library and its staff are a natural fit to meeting these developmental needs in teens, but there is a “flip” side where libraries may not be making the effort. Staff or policies might not welcome teens—programs may be absent or teens might not be allowed to volunteer. Ask yourself, “How is my library doing in helping to fulfill Assets 3, 7, 8, 9, 14, and 18?”

INTERNAL ASSETS

Libraries are obvious resources for help with schoolwork and pleasure reading. Book clubs, teen rooms, and materials of teen interest encourage reading and help promote a commitment to learning. Teen volunteer programs build self-esteem, personal responsibility, and a sense of purpose while enhancing planning and decision-making skills. Involvement in library programs requires teens to interact with other people who may be from different backgrounds, age groups, and beliefs. Developmental Assets states that all youth need to develop a commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and a positive identity, and libraries have programs that promote assets in each of these areas. Does your library do everything within its power to help meet teens’ homework needs? Does your library do outreach to your entire community? Are your materials reflective of society’s diversity? Are the teens in your library involved in planning interactive programs? Is your library helping teens to develop these internal assets?

These assets help youth to thrive, and libraries can play a major role in providing external supports and promoting the development of positive internal values and characteristics. If the intrinsic idea is that it truly takes a village to raise a child and provide the necessary exposure to develop the requisite internal and external assets, then the library can be an important part of the village. For additional information, check out the Search Institute Web site (<http://www.search-institute.org>) and its many resources.

RESOURCES

Benson, Peter L., et al. **A Fragile Foundation: The State of Developmental Assets Among American Youth.** Search Institute, 1998. 184p. \$17.95 pb. 978-1-57482-352-3.

Benson, Peter L., et al. **What Teens Need to Succeed: Proven, Practical Ways to Shape Your Own Future.** Free Spirit, 1998. 368p. \$15.95 Trade pb. 978-1-57542-027-1. Illus. VOYA August 1998. 4Q 3P M J S

Scales, Peter C., and Nancy Leffert. **Developmental Assets: A Synthesis of the Scientific Research on Adolescent Development.** Search Institute, 1999. 304p. \$29.95 pb. 978-1-57482-338-7.

Roehlkepartain, Jolene L. **Building Assets Together: 135 Group Activities for Helping Youth Succeed,** Rev. ed. Search Institute, 1997. 128p. \$21.95 pb. 978-1-57482-333-2.

40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents. Search Institute. <http://www.search-institute.org/assets/40AssetsList.pdf>.

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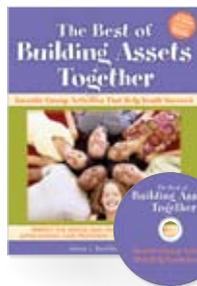
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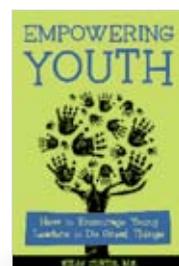
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM SEARCH INSTITUTE PRESS



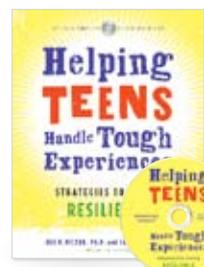
The Best of Building Assets Together

Favorite Group Activities that Help Youth Succeed
by Jolene L. Roehlkepartain



Empowering Youth

How to Encourage Young Leaders to Do Great Things
by Kelly Curtis, M.S.



Helping Teens Handle Tough Experiences

Strategies to Foster Resilience
by Jill R. Nelson, Ph.D. and Sarah Kjos, M.Ed.



Parenting Preteens with a Purpose

Navigating the Middle Years
by Kate Thomsen, M.S., C.A.S.

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Developmental Assets and Libraries

HELPING TO CONSTRUCT THE SUCCESSFUL TEEN



How can the library make a difference in the lives of teens? We organize booktalks, movie sessions, craft programs, and gaming competitions. We pore through book selection lists in search of enticing materials. We set aside rooms to be “youth friendly” oases, and we create clubs to lure in teens. What effect do such efforts have? Are we doing more than merely trying to tempt them into reading? The answer is an emphatic, “Yes!” These efforts have far-reaching consequences when we look at them in light of the 40 Developmental Assets®.

What are Developmental Assets? In 1989, the Lutheran Brotherhood began looking for ways to counter the rising incidences of teen drug and alcohol use, dropout rates, pregnancy, and delinquency. They wanted to determine what resources teens need in order to develop into successful, well-adjusted adults. Their focus was not on why youth fail but on identifying the resources that allow them to prevail. The Brotherhood commissioned the nonprofit Search Institute to conduct the research. The Search Institute focuses on providing leadership, knowledge, and resources to promote the development of healthy teens and communities. After surveying more than 500,000 sixth through twelfth graders across the country over a period of several years, the Search Institute® identified a list of “positive relationships, opportunities, competencies, values, and self-perceptions that youth need to succeed.” They categorized these fundamental resources into twenty external and twenty internal assets (see list on next page).

External assets are resources imposed upon youth through family and society, such as family or neighborhood support, positive adult role models, youth programs, and a safe environment. These assets provide the supportive cornerstones of a young person’s existence, enabling him to develop positively. Internal assets are values or competencies that youth have internalized, such as achievement motivation, honesty, integrity, and self-esteem. The research revealed that the more of these basic resources youth possess or have access to, the less apt they are to become involved in dangerous and self-destructive actions and the more likely they are to be successful. Conversely youth with fewer assets are more prone to engage in risky or violent behavior and are less likely to succeed in school and other relationships. Furthermore these correlations occur across all economic, geographic, racial, religious, ethnic, and gender lines. The study revealed that all youth, regardless of their economic or social background, need a combination of these external and internal assets or resources to succeed, yet far too many youth lack this foundation.

The logic behind these commonsense ideas seems obvious almost to the point of absurdity. Of course a young person who has the positive support of her family, school, and neighborhood, who is guided by clear rules and expectations, and who spends his time in affirming and constructive

activities has a greater opportunity to be successful and to develop good character traits and a favorable self-identity. The research, however, revealed that only 8 percent of youth surveyed experience thirty-one to forty of these assets. The majority of youth participate in between eleven and twenty-nine of these resources, and 20 percent of youth surveyed claim to have ten or fewer of these assets in their lives.

So what are the findings’ implications for libraries? What role can the library play in helping teens prevail by building assets? The intrinsic idea here is that it takes a village to raise a child. The success of this program depends upon youth having access to assets in all categories, both internal and external. Family Support, for example, is very important but, by itself, is not sufficient to help youth develop to their full potential. Libraries are in an excellent position to be major contributors to these assets, and most libraries already implement many activities. Yet we can do even more by deliberately striving to develop these assets. Through these conscious efforts, we can make a significant and positive impact on teens with our resources, our programs, and especially our presence and our interactions.

EXTERNAL ASSETS

Young people need positive adult role models outside the family, and libraries are in an excellent position to provide them. Librarians are adults to whom teens can go for help with school assignments, reading suggestions, book discussions, and more. Teen activities such as reading and anime clubs, tutoring sessions, gaming competitions, computer workshops, movies, and craft programs connect library staff with youth in a fun, constructive, and supportive environment. Our teen librarian sponsors a year-round drive to collect “gently-used” prom dresses that are recycled at low or no cost to area teens who otherwise could not afford them. Library programs that use teen volunteers give youth a sense of empowerment and a realization that they are both valued and useful to others. These activities also support and encourage teens through high expectations, constructive use of their time, and a sense of ownership. In addition, they connect teens with positive adult role models, and this connection is a significant contribution to the

The 40 Developmental Assets® for Grades 6–12

Assets Change Lives—How Many Do Your Kids Have?



Search Institute® is an independent, nonprofit, nonsectarian organization committed to helping create healthy communities for every young person. Because we believe that “all kids are our kids,” we create books and other materials that welcome and respect people of all races, ethnicity, cultures, genders, religions, economic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and abilities. Our Mission: To provide leadership, knowledge, and resources to promote healthy children, youth, and communities.

The EXTERNAL Assets

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.