

## The Asset Approach: Giving Kids What They Need to Succeed Ways Library Programs and Services Can Assist in Developing a Framework for Youth

The Search Institute in Minneapolis, MN, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the well being of children and adolescents through research, publications, and training ([www.search-institute.com](http://www.search-institute.com)). Since 1990, The Search Institute has identified 40 building blocks of healthy development for young people called **developmental assets** that will help youth to succeed in school and to grow up physically healthy, caring, and responsible.

These assets have been determined through The Search Institute's research and surveys of youth behavior and attitudes. Increasingly, youth-serving United Way agencies are using these surveys to show their programs' impact on their young clients. The goal is to have a measurable increase in the number of assets a child has. Rather than focusing on just "at-risk kids," the asset approach is an inclusive way to reach a community's children.

In a report, "Community Programs to Promote Youth Development" (released November 2001), research analyzed by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine found consistent, compelling evidence that specific factors in community programs help adolescent development. Strengthening these developmental assets is essential in all communities. Everyone plays a role: the schools, religious institutions, parents, friends, neighbors, senior citizens, health professionals, businesses, and community programs, including public libraries.

### External Assets



Support



Empowerment



Boundaries and Expectations



Constructive Use of Time

### Internal Assets



Commitment to Learning



Positive Values







Social Competencies



Positive Identity





Handout developed by Lisa C. Wemett, Webster (NY) Public Library

Presented by Kimberly Bolan, Library Consultant and author of *Teen Spaces: The Step-by-Step Library Makeover* (ALA Editions, 2003)  
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Key Elements that contribute to adolescents' development	Library Implications	Examples of Corresponding Assets
<b>External Assets:</b> the positive experiences and support a young person receives from formal and informal connections to others in the community.		
 <b>Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ from family and community (supportive relationships with other adults, neighbors, school)</li> <li>▪ the ways young people experience love, affirmation, and acceptance</li> </ul>	provide an atmosphere of both physical and psychological safety and support: a safe place where all are welcome and “you can be yourself” e.g., provide mentoring for students (staff or volunteer); a dedicated and appealing space for teens to use; approachable reference staff to meet adolescents' needs	#2 Positive family communication #3 Other adult relationships #4 Caring neighborhood
 <b>Empowerment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the need to be valued and feel valuable</li> <li>▪ the way youth are perceived in the community</li> <li>▪ opportunities to contribute meaningfully to society and build skills</li> </ul>	with opportunities for youth involvement, show young adults they can make a difference--influencing library collections, programs, and policies e.g., young adult advisory board, Junior Friends of the Library, teen liaison to Board of Trustees, community service and volunteer opportunities	#7 Community values youth #8 Youth as resources #9 Service to others
 <b>Boundaries and Expectations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ clear and enforced boundaries in family, school, and neighborhood</li> <li>▪ consistent messages about appropriate behavior</li> </ul>	set acceptable limits of behavior within a standardized patron behavior policy that is not “lookist” or “ageist” i.e. clear and firm rules	#13 Neighborhood boundaries # 15 Positive peer influence #16 High expectations
 <b>Constructive Use of Time</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ rich array of structured opportunities through school, community organizations, or religious institutions</li> </ul>	offer programs that will engage students in a productive activity or a recreational outlet; collaborative efforts between community groups, parents, and schools e.g., arts and crafts programs, after-school recreational programs, book discussions	#17 Creative activities #18 Youth programs

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<b>Internal Assets:</b> those qualities within youth, nurtured by community and family, that contribute to their own development		
 <p><b>Commitment to Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ developing an internal intellectual curiosity</li> <li>▪ the skills to learn from experience</li> </ul>	<p>show that learning can be fun and not just geared to school assignments e.g., outreach services, after-hours services, Web-based services; promote library to their peers; information literacy skills</p>	<p># 21 Achievement motivation # 22 School engagement #23 Homework #25 Reading for pleasure</p>
 <p><b>Positive Values</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ internal compasses to guide priorities and choices</li> <li>▪ opportunities to belong</li> </ul>	<p>provide an environment for caring, self-acceptance, and acceptance of differences in others; positive social norms</p>	<p>#26 Caring #27 Equality and social justice #30 Responsibility</p>
 <p><b>Social Competencies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ personal skills to negotiate choice</li> <li>▪ laying a foundation for independence</li> </ul>	<p>encourage socially acceptable behavior--listening to others' opinions, developing one's own value system e.g., broad-based, diverse collections to satisfy teens' interests</p>	<p>#32 Planning and decision-making #33 Interpersonal competence #36 Peaceful conflict resolution</p>
 <p><b>Positive Identity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ personal view of sense of power, purpose, and self-worth</li> <li>▪ sense of initiative and determination</li> </ul>	<p>demonstrate that an individual can contribute to community through meaningful volunteer work e.g., peer homework assistance, service/learning activities such as teen storytellers</p>	<p>#37 Personal power #38 Self-esteem #39 Sense of purpose</p>

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