

Principles of Asset Building

As a nation, we are not doing enough to nurture the developmental assets of our children and youth. In fact, most young people surveyed by Search Institute experience only about 18 of the 40 assets. Thus, a commitment to asset building should become a top priority for every individual, every organization, and every community across the nation. Search Institute has identified six principles that can help shape our asset-building efforts.

All children and youth need assets.

Research shows that all young people, regardless of gender, age, family composition, race, or ethnicity, can benefit from having more assets. While we must continue to pay special attention to children and youth who are in crisis and those who are at risk, the central challenge is to generate the kind of attention that will help *all* young people.

Relationships are key.

Building assets calls upon every single person to build both formal and informal relationships with young people that are positive and caring.

Everyone can build assets.

In an asset-building community, everyone works at developing caring relationships with young people.

Building Assets is an ongoing process.

Asset building begins before birth or adoption, by equipping parents-to-be with skills and knowledge to care for a baby or child. And asset building continues through childhood and adolescence and into adulthood. Young people need their assets nurtured every day during every year of their childhood and adolescence.

Asset building requires consistent messages.

For asset building to be woven into the fabric of community life, it needs to be reinforced everywhere. That means in homes, schools, congregations, places of employment, clubs. Everywhere.

Duplication and repetition are good and important.

Young people need as many asset-building exercises as possible.

The Developmental Assets are 40 opportunities, skills, relationships, values, and self-perceptions that all young people need to succeed. From *Pass It On! Ready-to-Use Handouts for Asset Builders*, copyright © 1999 by Search Institute, 700 South Third Street, Suite 210, Minneapolis, MN 55415; 612-376-8955; 800-888-7828; www.search-institute.org. This handout may be reproduced for educational, noncommercial use only (with this copyright line). All rights reserved.