

What Kids Need to Succeed

Assets: What are they?



“Like a dream catcher. Assets are the supporting threads in a young person’s life that can keep away harm and invite goodness.” *Helping Kids Succeed Alaskan Style (2000 p.1).*

Youth Developmental Assets are the individual qualities and social supports that help children and youth make good decisions and grow to be healthy and successful. Success is defined as becoming a self-sufficient, caring and contribution member of the community. Developmental Assets is a framework that focuses on the positive things that we want for our children/youth, NOT what we don’t want.

The Asset framework provides us with a model of how to build and sustain meaningful relationships with children and youth at home, school, church and in the community. It challenges us to examine the WAY we interact with children and youth in our life. This model asks us to look at our individual actions or practices – are they asset building or do we reinforce what we DON’T want?

Where did the Developmental Asset Idea Come From?

The concepts for Developmental Asset Building are based on extensive research from the Search Institute in Minnesota. Founded in 1957, the Search Institute is a non-profit research organization dedicated to the study of adolescents. Between 1990-1996, the Institute’s researchers conducted a survey of over 500,000 youth across the USA in grades 7 – 12. Out of this research the Search Institute identified **40 Developmental Assets**. They are divided into two types: Internal and External.

Internal Assets

- **Positive Values:** Caring, honesty, responsibility, integrity, restraint, and a sense of equality and social justice.
- **Skills (Social Competencies):** Planning, decision making, communication skills, able to “Say No” and resolve conflict.
- **Committed to Learning:** Motivated, does homework, enjoys reading, cares about school.
- **Positive Identity:** High self-esteem, optimistic about future, feels in control, life has purpose.

External Assets

- **Support:** From family, other adults, neighbourhood, and school.
- **Boundaries & Expectations:** Clear rules, consequences, and high expectation from family, school, neighbourhood, adult role models and positive peer influence.
- **Constructive use of time:** After school activities, creative pursuits, youth programs, religious activities.
- **Empowerment:** Youth given useful roles in community involved in service activities and feel sage and valued by adults.

Anyone can build assets and help a young person succeed. Take a look at the other side of this sheet for inspiration!