



Engaging Communities to Support Our Youth

TOOLKITS AND EDUCATION FOR SUCCESS



Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) play a significant role in the overall development of children. When children experience one or more ACE, they are more likely to participate in risky behaviors such as smoking, alcohol use, and violence. Preventing ACEs can help children thrive and lower the risk of chronic health conditions such as depression, cancer, suicide, diabetes, and substance use disorder.¹ By addressing ACEs, we as a community, can increase protective factors and provide stable and nurturing environments for children to succeed.

This series will consist of six toolkits released throughout the 2023–2024 school year.

Table of Contents

40 Developmental Assets **2**

Who are Asset Builders? **6**

40 Developmental Assets

The 40 Developmental Assets® Framework was created by the Search Institute, a nonprofit organization in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This comprehensive framework was designed to promote the positive development of young people. These assets serve as building blocks for healthy and successful individuals, empowering them to navigate life's challenges and reach their full potential.



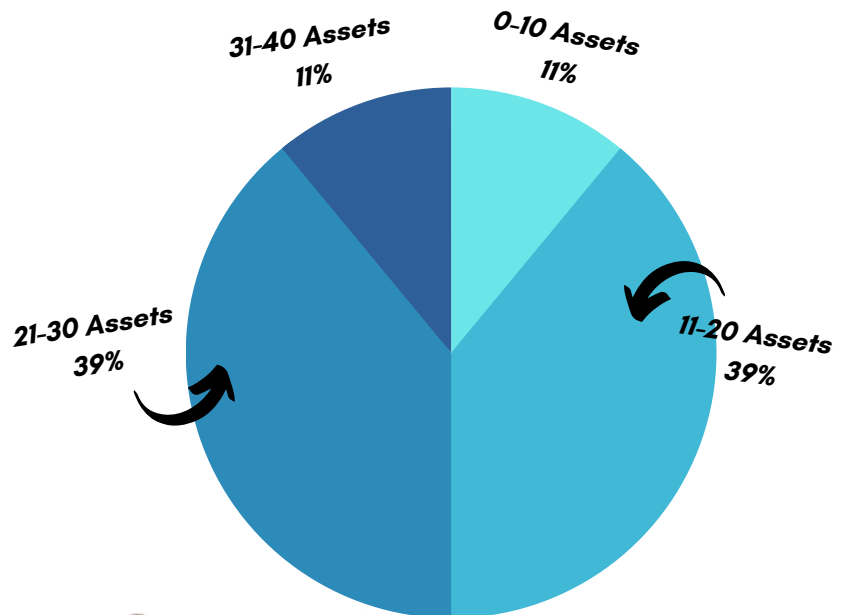
40 Developmental Assets: positive qualities and experiences you have the power to bring to the lives of youth, to help them succeed.

By identifying and nurturing these key elements, individuals, families, schools, and communities can work together to provide the support and opportunities necessary for young people to thrive. The 40 Developmental Assets encompass a wide range of positive supports and strengths that young people need to succeed, all of which foster resilience, character, and well-being in young individuals.

Youth with Different Levels of Assets

Search Institute determined that youth need 31 or more assets to thrive into healthy young adults.

Through research, Search discovered that the average young person has only **20.6 assets.**



What exactly are the 40 "assets"?

The 40 Developmental Assets Framework is built of both external and internal assets. External assets serve as the structures, relationships, and opportunities that we have the power to provide youth. Internal assets serve as the beliefs, values, and skills that youth acquire throughout the asset-building process.

External Assets

The supports, opportunities, and relationships youth need across all sectors of their lives.



Support

Young people need to be surrounded by people who love, care for, appreciate, and accept them.

1. Family Support
2. Positive Family Communication
3. Other Adult relationships
4. Caring Neighborhood
5. Caring School Climate
6. Parent involvement in schooling



Empowerment

Young people need to feel valued and valuable. This happens when youth feel safe and secured.

7. Community values youth
8. Youth as resources
9. Service to others
10. Safety



Boundaries & Expectations

Young people need clear rules, consistent consequences for breaking rules, and encouragement to do their best.

11. Family boundaries
12. School boundaries
13. Neighborhood boundaries
14. Adult role models
15. Positive peer influence
16. High expectations



Constructive Use of Time

Young people need opportunities outside of school to learn and develop new skills and interests with other youth and adults.

17. Creative activities
18. Youth programs
19. Religious community
20. Time at home

Internal Assets

The personal skills, commitments, and values they need to make good choice, take responsibility for their own lives, and be independent and fulfilled.



Commitment to Learn

Young people need a sense of the lasting importance of learning and a belief in their own abilities

- 21. Achievement motivation**
- 22. School Engagement**
- 23. Homework**
- 24. Bonding to school**
- 25. Reading for pleasure**



Positive Values

Young people need to develop strong guiding values or principles to help them make healthy life choices

- 26. Caring**
- 27. Equality and social justice**
- 28. Integrity**
- 29. Honesty**
- 30. Responsibility**
- 31. Restraint**



Social Competencies

Young people need the skills to interact effectively with others, to make difficult decisions, and to cope with new situations

- 32. Planning and decision-making**
- 33. Interpersonal competence**
- 34. Cultural competence**
- 35. Resistance skills**
- 36. Peaceful conflict resolution**



Positive Identity

Young people need to believe in their own self-worth and to feel that they have control over the things that happen to them.

- 37. Personal power**
- 38. Self-esteem**
- 39. Sense of purpose**
- 40. Positive view of personal future**



The following pages, 6 - 15, are directly derived from Search Institute's Pass It On! Ready-to-Use Handouts for Asset Builders book. For more information visit searchinstitute.org.


Source: Developmental Assets are positive factors within young people, families, communities, schools, and other settings that research has found to be important in promoting the healthy development of young people. From Pass It On! Ready-to-Use Handouts for Asset Builders, Second Edition by Search Institute®; 612-376-8955; 800-888-7828; www.search-institute.org. This handout may be reproduced for educational, noncommercial uses only (with this copyright line). All rights reserved.

Who are Asset Builders?

Asset Builders

Our community is filled with people like you who want to help youth succeed. Each and every one of us has the power to provide youth with the tools, resources, and support they need to flourish into successful young adults. While there are easy things adults can do such as smiling at a young person, or learning their name, there are also things we can do within our line of work and everyday roles as part of a family and the community.

A commitment to asset building should become a top priority for every individual, every organization, and every community. Search Institute has identified six principles that can help shape our asset building efforts:



On average, youth experience only about 20.6 out of the 40 assets

Principles of Asset Building

1 All children and young people 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 young people who are in crisis and high risk situations, the central challenge is to generate the kind of attention that will help *all* young people.

2 Relationships are key.

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

3 Everyone can build assets.

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

4 Building assets is an on going 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 throughout childhood and adolescence and into adulthood. Young people need their assets nurtured every day during every year of their childhood and adolescence.

5 Asset building requires consistent messages.

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

6 Duplication and repetition are good and important.

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

Adults

All adults can help young people thrive by building their Developmental Assets. It doesn't necessarily take a lot of time or energy. Whether you know of a specific young person in your life, or just want to connect with youth in the community, asset building is an easy way to help.



Support efforts to create or expand opportunities for children and youth to participate in teams, clubs, and organizations.

See young people as resources rather than as problems.

Learn the names of youth and greet them by name.

Build at least one informal, ongoing, caring relationship with a child or adolescent.

Support local efforts to provide safe spaces for young people to meet and spend time together.

Take time to play or talk with young people who live near you or work with you.

"Kids say parents are the biggest influence in their lives - more than peers".

Brown & Kumpfer, 2021

Parents and Guardians

Research shows that a more effective approach to raising healthy, competent kids is to concentrate on building **Developmental Assets**. These assets form the foundation young people need to make healthy choices and to succeed in life. The more assets your kids have, the stronger this foundation will be. There are probably lots of asset-building things you already do for your children—even if you don't call them that.

Regularly do things with your child, including projects around the house, recreational activities, and service projects. Take turns planning activities to do together as a family.

Recognize that children need more than just financial support. They also need emotional and intellectual support.

Nurture your own assets by spending time with people who care about you and are supportive. You'll take better care of your children if you take better care for yourself.

Eat at least one meal together as a family everyday.

Talk about your values and priorities, and live in a way that is consistent with them.



Siblings

Having brothers and sisters can make life very interesting. Sometimes you probably fight or disagree. Other times you might be best friends. Brothers and sisters can also make life pretty good. Whether you love being together or drive each other crazy, you and your siblings can be important asset builders for each other. Here are some things to try:

Get to know your brothers and sisters better. Even though you may live together, you may not know each other well. Find out what you have in common and how you are different.

Don't tease your siblings. Even if it's just for fun, it might make them sad. Try to laugh *with* each other instead of *at* each other.

Show your support for each other. For example, if one of your brothers or sisters plays a sport, go to a game once in a while.

Do something fun together! Tell jokes, read to each other, eat Popsicles, make a snow sculpture, play a board game, create a family play, build a tree house or fort, or go swimming.

Thank your siblings when they do nice things for you.



Grandparents

Being a grandparent means different things to different people. Many children are being raised by their grandparents or spend a great deal of time with them. Other grandparents live in different states or countries than their grandchildren and rarely, if ever, see them. Whether you see your grandchildren daily or just once in awhile, you can do many things to help nurture their assets. Here are some ideas for building assets for your grandchildren:

Expose your grandchildren to cultural, religious, and family rituals.

Spend some individual time with each grandchild. Frequently tell them how special they are and how much you love them.

Attend school and community events that your grandchildren are involved in.

Avoid making comparisons among your grandchildren. Enjoy what is unique about each one.

If your grandchildren live far away, try to see them on a regular basis. Also think of creative ways to stay connected with them at other times. Call them often, mail them notes, send e-mail messages, or tape record yourself reading them stories.





Coaches

Coaches teach young people not only the rules and strategy of games but important lessons about life as well. You can help young people develop confidence and self-esteem, help them learn to resolve conflicts peacefully, teach them ways to take care of their health and well-being, and help them develop skills for communicating with others.

Focus on helping players get better, not be the best. It will reduce players' fear of failure and give them permission to try new things and stretch their skills.

Catch kids doing things right. Be quick to praise a player's efforts. The best feedback is immediate and positive.

Insist that all team members treat one another with respect. Then model, monitor, and encourage respect. Have a zero-tolerance policy for teasing that hurts someone's feelings.

Develop leadership skills in young athletes by giving them opportunities to lead practice drills and develop a team code of conduct.

Set goals both for individuals and for the team. Include young people in setting these goals.

Neighbors

A neighborhood is more than a place where people sleep or grab a bite to eat. A neighborhood can and should be an important community in which people of all ages feel cared for and secure. Two of the 40 Developmental Assets (**4: Caring Neighborhood** and **13: Neighborhood Boundaries**) focus specifically on the important role neighbors have in building assets. Here are ideas on how neighbors can build these and other assets.

Figure out what you can provide for young people in your neighborhood. Can you set up a basketball hoop? Can you offer some space for a neighborhood garden? Can you give one hour of your time on weekends to play softball with young people who live near you?

Take time to play or just be with the young people on your block or in your building. Encourage them to talk and then listen to what they have to say.

Learn the names of kids who live around you. Find out what interests them.

Pay attention whenever you see a young person. Take time to smile and say hello. If you have a few moments, ask a few questions and express your interest in her or him. Do this while you're walking, waiting for a bus, or waiting in line at the grocery store.



School Administration

The challenge of asset building in schools is to give each student not only a support person but an entire support system. While school structures and systems vary, administrators can use their influence and position to transform schools into environments that are rich with asset-building occurrences and relationships. In addition to the five Commitment-to-Learning assets (21-25), four assets (5: Caring School Climate; 12: School Boundaries; 14: Adult Role Models; and 16: High Expectations) show the connection between an educational system and the health and well-being of young people.



Provide professional development for staff members in asset building.

Dedicate a few minutes at each staff meeting to share asset-building stories, information, strategies, and ideas.

Include asset building in your school's mission and goals.

Make extracurricular activities like theater, sports, clubs, and academic teams a priority.

Train teachers and other staff in asset building and use the assets as part of performance planning and evaluation.

School Counselor and Social Worker

You come in contact with many students every day. While you won't be able to develop a relationship with each of them, there are things that are unique about your role that make you a key asset builder in your school. You can link students with other resources in the school or the community, you can be an adult in the school whom young people can talk to when they need extra support or advice, and you can provide students with information that can help them take care of themselves well and plan for the future.

Post the list of assets in your office or work area.

Build your own assets; you'll be better able to deal with your students if you take care of yourself.

When discussing specific students with other staff, focus as much on their personal strengths as on challenges. If you believe in students, others will start to believe in them as well.

Ask your supervisor if you can attend professional development opportunities related to asset building.

When dealing with students who are struggling, work as many sincere compliments into the conversation as possible (even if it's just one).



Teacher

To teach is to touch a life forever. Teachers have the potential to be powerful asset builders. In addition to the Commitment-to-Learning assets (21-25), five other assets (3: Other Adult Relationships; 5: Caring School Climate; 8: Youth as Resources; 12: School Boundaries; and 14: Adult Role Models) focus on the important role of a teacher.



Post the list of assets in your classroom.

Greet students by name when you see them.

Meet with other teachers and brainstorm ways to help students succeed. A school in Wisconsin set up DATES (Developing Assets to Encourage Success) meetings that are designed to help students who are struggling academically.

Plan asset-building learning activities as part of the curriculum (for example, service learning projects, social skills training, or setting aside time to read for pleasure).

Provide asset-building resources for parents.

Meet with other teachers and brainstorm ways to help students succeed. A school in Wisconsin set up DATES (Developing Assets to Encourage Success) meetings that are designed to help students who are struggling academically.

Use "strength interviews" with students to help them identify their assets and their sources of support.

Choose a quote of the day with an asset focus and ask students to talk about it.

"A teacher takes a hand, opens a mind, and touches a heart"

Anne Sullivan

School Bus Driver

Transporting children and youth from place to place is a big responsibility in terms of Safety (asset 10) and the Boundaries-and-Expectations assets (11-16). You also can make the experience a positive time for yourself and our passengers by focusing on asset building.



Post the list of assets on your bus.

Make the atmosphere on the bus supportive and fun within safety limits. Talk with the kids, play music that is appropriate for young people, tell them jokes.

Be clear from the first time students ride your bus about the behavior you expect from them. Know what consequences you can enforce and who you can go to for support.

Get to know the names of the young people who ride on your bus. Greet them when they get on and off the bus.


Talk with other drivers about creative solutions to problems and how to make buses places to build assets.

Law Enforcement

Police officers play a unique role in our society because they're entrusted with considerable power to uphold the law while also creating a presence of safety. Becoming an asset-building police officer can add a new dimension to the job, a dimension that often is over looked.

Build relationships with people in the community. Become a visible presence in the neighborhoods where you work. Attend events such as neighborhood block parties or school plays to get to know the people.

Learn as much as you can about the community you work in. Identify areas of strength and safety besides areas of crime. Consider doing asset analysis in addition to doing crime analysis.



Volunteer to visit a school to talk about safety. Emphasize how safe the community is instead of how dangerous it is. Talk about the type of calls you get the most. Young people often think that police officers are constantly having high-speed chases and arresting murderers. Let them know about the other roles you play in the community.

Juvenile Justice Workers

Juvenile justice workers know too well what happens when young people lack the developmental foundation they need. "Asset building works for kids in the system," said one advocate for an approach to juvenile justice that focuses on rebuilding that foundation in the kids who need it most. He believes that people who work with juvenile offenders need to ask themselves one key question: "How do we rebuild assets in these kids who didn't get them along the way so they can come back and be productive members of society?"

Focus on strengths. In building case plans, assess the young people's and families' strengths as well as their needs. Everyone has some assets, but juvenile justice systems tend to focus on deficits instead. It is empowering to both youth and families to point out strengths and to identify concrete things that can be done to build on those strengths.

Relationships are key. Programs and services by themselves don't change behaviors. Research shows that kids need strong bonds with caring adults. As a reminder of this, post the list of Developmental Assets on your office door and do at least one asset-building thing for each youth or family you work with each day.

Train community members in how to interact and build positive relationships in asset-building ways with youth offenders as well as other young people they deal with.

Working with others in the community, help offenders discover opportunities to experience success, build their skills and competencies, and increase their confidence.

Work with others to identify, reduce, or eliminate factors in your community that put youth at risk for delinquency, school dropout, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and violence

Health-Care Providers

While most of your interactions with patients are probably brief and episodic, you can make the most of those times by building assets for your young patients and for the children of your adult patients. You'll probably enjoy it, and adults and young people alike will leave your office feeling good about themselves, about you, and about your organization. You'll also be helping young people thrive and be well; the more assets they have, the more likely they are to lead healthy lifestyles and avoid risky behaviors.



Learn the names of your patients. Ask them what they prefer to be called, note that in their charts, and then use those names throughout your visits.

Turn your waiting room into an asset-building area. Have toys and books for younger children, magazines for older children, and notebooks for teens and adults that include information about asset-building. If your community has an asset-building initiative, include information about it in the notebook.

Collaborate with schools and youth serving organizations to provide health care/healthy lifestyle information to young people.

Consider how you can be an asset builder not only in the office but also after hours. In what ways do you enjoy connecting with children and youth? What interactions and activities fit best with your schedule? What unique skills or interests can you share with a young person?

Organizations that Employ Young People

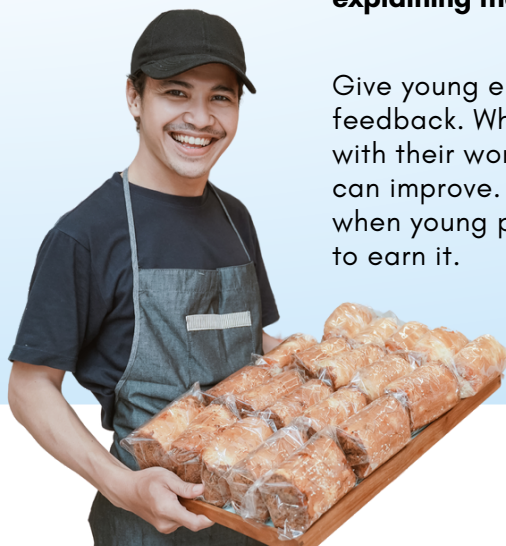
Bring out the best in the young people who work with you by doing things to build assets. Building assets in the youth you employ not only gives them essential skills but also makes them well-rounded, competent people. You benefit by having healthy; competent workers. Here are some ways to build assets in your employees:

Teach young people skills you need them to perform by modeling and explaining these skills.

Give young employees a lot of feedback. When you are not satisfied with their work, let them know how they can improve. Be sincere in your praise when young people have worked hard to earn it.

Provide adequate support for employees. This includes orientation, training, supervision, criticism, and praise. For many young people, the job with your organization is their first work experience. Many do not know what to expect. Give them the big picture about what your organization does as well as the details of their jobs.

Acknowledge major accomplishments and milestones in young employees' lives, such as graduation, or academic or sports achievements.



Libraries

Libraries and those who work in them can do more than nurture asset 25: Reading for Pleasure. In fact, libraries have tremendous potential to make a difference in the lives of young people. By giving young people access to books, computers, classes, and caring adults, libraries can open up a world of asset-building possibilities. Here are some ideas for what libraries can do to build assets:



Work with educators who are book lovers to develop asset-building reading programs and services.

Train librarians, support staff, and volunteers to understand their role as asset builders.

Create book groups where people can come together to discuss books. Offer groups for children, teenagers, adults, and intergenerational groups.

Hold community workshops on how to choose asset-building books, videos, and other materials.

Create displays that promote asset-building in general or your community's specific asset-building initiative. Post the list of assets in high-traffic areas of the library.

Faith-Based Organizations

All communities of faith are in a unique position to not only nurture and support the faith and spiritual development of young people but also to build Developmental Assets. Faith communities have the potential for intergenerational relationships; they provide opportunities for youth to grow and understand themselves; they reach and work with parents; and they have a public presence with the potential for leadership, advocacy, and service. Here are some asset-building tips for faith-based organizations:

Integrate asset building into your gatherings in ways that fit with the specifics of your faith tradition. Create experiences for entire families. Think about how to include children and youth.

Provide opportunities for young people to volunteer in the community. Afterward, discuss the experience from your faith perspective.

Help shape young people's personal identity by helping them internalize their faith and discover their own sense of purpose.

Provide responsible, meaningful roles for youth. These could include being teaching assistants for young children, volunteering for child care, and pledging financial support from their allowances and part-time jobs, as well as worship activities, such as handing out bulletins, serving as readers, and being involved in music or other aspects of your faith tradition's gatherings.





End Notes

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/aces/index.html>



The Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit agency in Newton, NJ. Our mission, since 1973, has been to promote hope, health, and recovery among all people by creating an environment that is safe and free from the effects of substance use and addiction. The Center provides substance use prevention, evaluation, counseling, and recovery support services to Sussex County children, teens, adults, and families regardless of cultural background, socioeconomic status, age, gender, or sexual orientation. Visit centerforprevention.org to learn more.



The Office of Resilience was created in June 2020, led by an executive on loan which is funded by the New Jersey ACEs Collaborative, an alliance of three NJ philanthropic organizations, the Burke Foundation, The Nicholson Foundation and the Turrell Fund, in partnership with the NJ Department of Children and Families. The purpose of the office is to host, coordinate and facilitate statewide initiatives related to raising awareness of and creating opportunities to eradicate Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, through grassroots and community-led efforts, technical assistance, and strategic support for organizations already pursuing this work.



CUMAC's mission is to fight hunger, and its root causes through a holistic, trauma-informed approach that provides fresh and healthy groceries and basic necessities to low- and moderate-income individuals and families who need them. CUMAC's and its Trauma-Informed Community Building (TICB) strategy aims to combat inequitable systems that perpetuate hunger and poverty by providing individuals and families with the power they need to secure vital resources, including jobs, housing, food, healthcare, and other supportive services. By providing resources and referrals to supportive services for our guests through sustainable community partnerships, CUMAC decreases barriers to accessing services, and the amount of toxic stress guests face. Reducing toxic stress in combination with supportive services is a vital part of our restorative process that builds on the existing resiliency of guests, decreases the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and breaks the cycle of poverty.