

SPECIAL BRIEF

Community Context and Action Strategies Toward Building Developmental Assets®

CONTEXT Social science research shows, and most people realize, that influences such as caring families, discipline, educational commitments, social skills, and other assets are important for healthy development toward adulthood. However, 21st century American society lacks pervasive, cooperative, cross-cultural efforts to help young people experience those assets. Thus, it is not surprising that our Albuquerque youth show troubling rates of alcohol and other drug use, violence, and other health and safety concerns — as do youth from virtually every other U.S. community. Local leaders understand that the healthy development of Albuquerque youth is a community-wide responsibility. Therefore, in June 2006, an historic Community Schools Partnership was formalized among the City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, APS, and the Albuquerque Business Education Compact. As the collaborative efforts of Partnership agencies develop, Albuquerque youth and families will benefit in a wealth of healthy ways.

In the fall of 2005, APS engaged in a survey to help identify our successful programs and to generate information to guide our program development. Additionally, federal and state agencies routinely request data from school districts about student behaviors, attitudes and experiences. To comply with such requests, APS selected the “Profiles of Student Life Survey” for biennial administration. In addition to gathering data about contemporary adolescence, the unique value of the survey lies in its identification of 40 Developmental Assets®. The assets are concrete, common-sense qualities and positive experiences that are essential to raising successful young people. Most young people in the United States experience too few of the 40 assets. Sixty-four percent of Albuquerque youth have half or fewer Developmental Assets (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Levels of Assets 2005

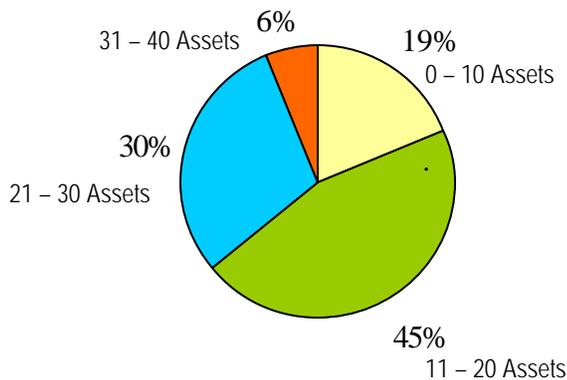
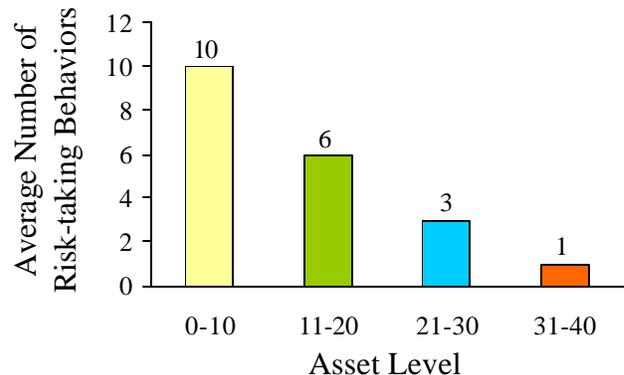


Figure 2

Assets and Risk Taking Behaviors



Research consistently shows that the more assets young people have, the less likely they are to engage in risk-taking behaviors. Figure 2 illustrates the strong relationship between the average number of risk-taking behaviors and asset level for our youth.

ACTION STRATEGIES Although there have been advances in prevention programs designed to reduce risk-taking behaviors, it is clear that prevention initiatives are necessary – but not sufficient to substantially reduce those behaviors among adolescents (2005, Benson, et al). A comprehensive approach is needed – one that accents healthy development and requires action by all residents in our community. Dozens of U.S. cities employ coordinated initiatives, such as “Healthy Communities, Healthy Youth,” with express intent of building youth Developmental Assets. There are five action strategies communities use for asset-building initiatives.

1 Engage Adults - Engage adults from all walks of life to develop sustained, strength-building relationships with children and adolescents, both within families and in neighborhoods.



2 Mobilize Young People - Mobilize young people to use their power as asset builders and change agents.

3 Activate Sectors - Activate all sectors of the community - such as schools, congregations, youth, businesses, and human services organizations - to create an asset-building culture and to contribute fully to young people’s healthy development and citizenship.

4 Invigorate Programs - Invigorate, expand, and enhance programs to become more asset rich and to be available to and accessed by all - children, youth, adults and seniors.

5 Influence Civic Decisions - Influence decision makers and opinion leaders to leverage financial, media, and policy resources in support of this positive transformation of communities and society.

APS INITIATIVES In 2005, APS embarked upon the Community Schools initiative. The action, lead by school board members, promotes collaborative partnerships with schools, neighborhoods, businesses and human service agencies to build a healthier community.

- Health / Mental Health Services. HMHS includes assets in its departmental guiding principals. HMHS links with community agencies to help families better cope with their problems and to help build youth assets.
- Schools and Community Partnerships. The comprehensive, multigenerational, neighborhood aspects of community partnership programs provide an array of opportunities for purposeful adult involvement and positive role modeling with our youth.
 - Community Schools initiatives, such as the Southwest High School Design Team, foster meaningful alliances among diverse community groups. These coalitions are fundamental in developing and sustaining active, safe, cohesive neighborhoods.
- APS Community Leadership. APS will continue as a leader in partnering with Albuquerque business, municipal and faith-based initiatives to increase youth Developmental Assets.

More information is available in companion APS reports (www.rda.aps.edu) and from Search Institute and their web site: www.search-institute.org.

BOARD OF EDUCATION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY September 2006

TOPIC	2005 APS RESULTS FROM SEARCH INSTITUTE'S "PROFILES OF STUDENT LIFE: ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR SURVEY" THAT IDENTIFIES 40 DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS®
APS STRATEGIC DIRECTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality, Safe Learning and Working Environments
BACKGROUND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCLB Title IV, Title V, and funding grantors request information about student behaviors and attitudes that is obtained only by survey. • APS chose Search Institute's scientific survey to standardize district data collection about adolescent attitudes, behaviors and life experiences. • The survey "Profiles of Student Life" identifies 40 Developmental Assets - concrete, common sense qualities and positive experiences essential to raising successful young people. • The survey is administered biennially. • 9,013 middle-, high- and alternative school students returned valid surveys (approximately 20% of APS secondary students).
HOW ARE WE DOING?	<p>Most Albuquerque youth are deficient in Developmental Assets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36% have more than half of the 40 Developmental Assets • 19% report the community values youth • 25% report having positive adult role models • 71% report moral integrity • 70% have a family life providing high levels of love and support • 69% have a positive view of personal future • 62% are motivated to do well in school
HOW DO WE COMPARE?	<p>Remarkable changes in Albuquerque youth over 10 years from 1995 to 2005:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percent of youth with more than half of the 40 assets declined 5% • Positive adult role models fell 17% (1995 = 42%) • Sense of purpose fell 27% (2005=54%) • 26% report a caring, encouraging school climate, virtually unchanged from previous years • Service to others increased 11% (2005 = 43%)
FOR MORE INFORMATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District and school reports from Search Institute are available from RDA
HOW DO WE USE THIS INFORMATION?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use community schools concept to foster public dialogue to raise awareness of the importance of youth assets and to specify simple ways the community can increase assets • APS departments use survey results to complete grant applications. • Safe and Quality Learning Environments goal team will target interventions for ongoing support of youth asset improvement