



Developmental Assets: A Framework for Enriching Service-Learning

Source: Eugene C. Roehlkepartain and Peter C. Scales, Ph.D., Search Institute, November 2007

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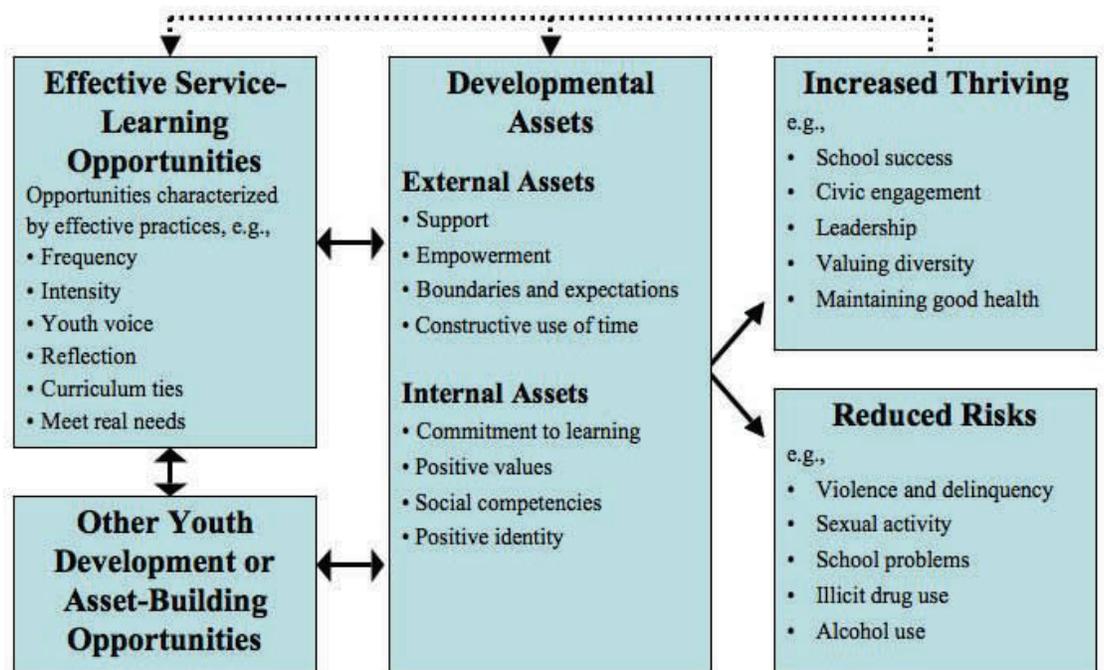
You can strengthen service-learning and improve developmental outcomes for young people by intentionally integrating positive youth development (PYD) principles and practices with service-learning. This brief introduces one framework for PYD, known as Developmental Assets, as a tool for enriching service-learning.

What Are Developmental Assets?

A widely used framework for PYD is Developmental Assets. Created by Search Institute, the Developmental Assets are relationships, opportunities, skills, values, and commitments children and adolescents need to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. The research-based framework is organized into two types of assets (Table 1). External assets refer to the support and opportunities that are provided by family, friends, organizations, and communities. The internal assets focus on the capacities, skills, and values that young people need to internalize as part of developing their character, identity, and life skills.

The more assets young people experience, the *less* likely they are to engage in a variety of high-risk behaviors and the *more* likely they are to engage in thriving behaviors. For example, youth with high asset levels (31 – 40) are 15 times less likely to use alcohol than those with 0 – 10 assets. These kinds of relationships hold true across all groups of youth studied, including those from many racial-ethnic backgrounds, communities of all sizes, and different socioeconomic backgrounds.

How Service-Learning Can Strengthen Assets



Well-designed service-learning efforts can do a lot to do a lot to build Developmental Assets, which, in turn, contribute powerfully to positive life outcomes (Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). For example, one study found that low-income students who did service and had lengthier participation in service-learning had more Commitment to Learning assets and better school attendance and grades than low-income students who did not participate, significantly reducing the achievement gap between affluent and low-income students (Scales, Roehlkepartain, Neal, Kielsmeier, & Benson, 2006). The following diagram shows how increasing Developmental Assets can serve as an intermediate outcome of service-learning, since extensive research already shows the strong link between assets and long-term outcomes of reduced risks (such as substance use, violence, and sexual activity) and increased thriving (or positive long-term outcomes that indicate optimal development, such as valuing diversity, being civically engaged, succeeding in school, and becoming a leader).

It is important to note that the above diagram is not a formal or complete logic model. Rather, it simply begins to illustrate the potential relationship—as well as the dynamic interplay between assets, service-learning, and other youth development opportunities. (Hence the two-way arrows.) In the same way that we often talk about a “downward spiral” of risks that are all too common among some young people, positive youth development suggests and “upward spiral” of positive opportunities, with each reinforcing and adding value to the others. As positive outcomes increase, young people are more likely to engage in positive activities, and the process continues (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004).

Enriching Service-Learning with Intentional Asset Building

Linking asset building (or positive youth development) with service-learning enhances both strategies. Service-learning becomes a resource for youth development and asset building becomes a goal that enriches service-learning efforts. Asset building can be infused throughout the service-learning process. Here are examples of starting points:

- Reflect on your own experiences. Where have some of the assets been important in your own life? How have they made a difference? What kinds of experiences have you had that, in retrospect, built assets for you?
- Focus on the relationships in your network or program. Ensure that youth and adults who participate have intentional time to form lasting relationships.
- Use the asset framework to assess what you’re already doing. Use the asset framework to develop future activities.
- Link with others who are doing asset building (or could be resources for asset building).
- Think of Developmental Assets as intermediate outcomes of service-learning efforts.

For a more detailed discussion, including references and documentation, see the complete online fact sheet at

http://www.servicelearning.org/instant_info/fact_sheets/cb_facts/developmental_assets/expanded.php

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http://www.servicelearning.org/instant_info/fact_sheets/cb_facts/developmental_assets/index.php

Display 1
Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets

External Assets	Internal Assets
<p>Support</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family support 2. Positive family communication 3. Other adult relationships* 4. Caring neighborhood 5. Caring school climate* 6. Parent involvement in schooling* <p>Empowerment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Community values youth* 8. Youth as resources* 9. SERVICE TO OTHERS 10. Safety <p>Boundaries and Expectations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Family boundaries 12. School boundaries 13. Neighborhood boundaries 14. Adult role models* 15. Positive peer influence* 16. High expectations* <p>Constructive Use of Time</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Creative activities 18. Youth programs* 19. Religious community* 20. Time at home 	<p>Commitment to Learning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Achievement motivation* 22. School engagement* 23. Homework 24. Bonding to school* 25. Reading for pleasure <p>Positive Values</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 26. Caring* 27. Equality and social justice* 28. Integrity 29. Honesty 30. Responsibility 31. Restraint <p>Social Competencies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 32. Planning and decision making* 33. Interpersonal competence* 34. Cultural competence* 35. Resistance skills 36. Peaceful conflict resolution <p>Positive Identity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 37. Personal power* 38. Self-esteem 39. Sense of purpose* 40. Positive view of personal future*

* The Developmental Assets that, from a theoretical perspective, could most easily be enhanced through effective service-learning experiences in different settings. Other assets could be intentionally addressed through the specific service or learning goals and strategies of the service-learning experience.

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