

Six Principles of Asset Building

Search Institute'sSM 40 Developmental AssetsTM are concrete, positive, common-sense experiences and qualities essential to the health of young people. These assets have the power to influence the choices that young people make and to help them become loving, caring, responsible adults. These six principles are foundational for the work of building assets in children and youth.

1. All young people need assets.

Research by Search Institute and others shows that the 40 Developmental Assets are important for all youth. This is true for both boys and girls of any age, race, ethnicity, type of community, and socioeconomic level. And while it is crucial to pay special attention to those youth who have the least (economically or emotionally), nearly all young people need more assets than they have.

2. Relationships are key.

Most of the Developmental Assets are built primarily through positive relationships. Caring relationships between adults and young people, young people and their peers, and teenagers and children all are important. Congregations provide settings where lasting and caring relationships can form.

3. Everyone can build assets.

Each adult and young person has the responsibility and capacity to build assets. There are many opportunities to form relationships and build assets through the ongoing activities and programs of congregations and community organizations.

4. Asset building is an ongoing process.

Building assets starts when a child is born and continues through high school and beyond. The power of assets grows as the positive experiences from earlier years are strengthened and built upon as young people mature.

5. Young people need consistent messages.

A common message about what is important for children and youth needs to be repeated by all groups in the community. Young people need their families, congregations, schools, community organizations and business, and the media to reinforce and support each other in guiding young people. Young people need a consistent message about their value in the community, what is expected of them, and what the community values as important.

6. Repetition is important.

Young people need to experience the positive messages and opportunities of asset building in all areas of their lives. Ideally, the positive experiences and opportunities in their homes are repeated and reinforced in their congregations and in their schools. Additional reinforcement comes through informal relationships with neighbors, extended family members, peers, and other community residents.