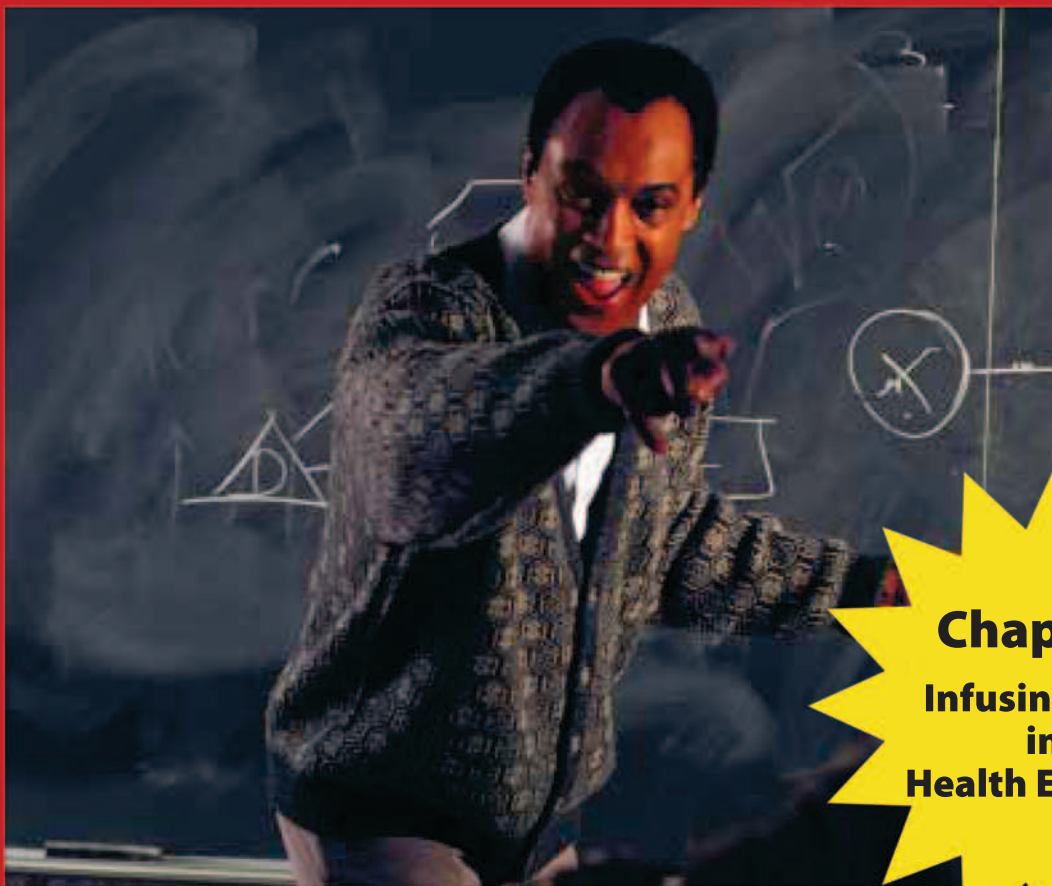


Powerful Teaching

Developmental Assets
in Curriculum and Instruction



Chapter 7:
Infusing Assets
into
Health Education

Edited by Judy Taccogna, Ed.D.

Foreword by John Jay Bonstingl



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A Search Institute Publication

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Chapter 7

Infusing Assets into Health Education





Capitalizing on Strengths and Creating Solutions

LEAPING THE HURDLES IN HEALTH EDUCATION

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I believe that the environment we create, the relationships we nurture, and the opportunities we provide middle and high school youth impact them more than any specific content we teach. During the middle school years, young people begin to wonder about topics that are controversial, such as power, beauty, compassion, and faith. They are fascinated by discussions of sex, gender, and moral and ethical issues.¹ Part of being a promoter of developmental assets is advocating for opportunities for youth to explore such questions and concerns.

The many potential hurdles to leap, the challenges to address, in teaching health education at the middle and high school levels can be daunting. Because of the sensitive nature of the content, health educators often face parental and community concern or opposition, insufficient administrative support, and administrative restrictions. As a health education teacher, you have limited class time and are working with youth who are focused on short-term needs. Two approaches hold promise, however: emphasizing students' strengths and engaging them as advocates.²

Emphasizing the positive, capitalizing on students' strengths, and empowering them to meet challenges successfully—exactly what the developmental assets are about—make the developmental asset framework a natural guide for health education. In an effort to move toward such a paradigm shift in health education, I am excited to provide here several practical ideas that you can incorporate into the classroom, no matter what your topic of the day, week, or month is. You can adapt them for either middle or high school health education classes.

You can enhance standardized health curriculum by intentionally addressing the internal and external assets while you teach. This does not mean abandoning risk-reduction curriculum or programs. Rather, it means shifting your way of thinking to focus on strengths versus deficits and on preparation versus simply being problem free; to concentrate on changing your way of behaving to creating solutions versus identifying problems and to engaging students versus merely disseminating information.³

In addition to the usual risk-reduction and health-promotion goals for health education, my personal objectives for middle and high school health instruction include enhancing developmental assets and promoting thriving indicators in youth. Specifically, those goals include:

1. Providing a caring, supportive, engaging classroom environment;
2. Developing social competencies, positive values, and positive identity;
3. Empowering youth by providing opportunities for exploration and service learning; and
4. Encouraging positive parent-child communication.

Setting a Positive Tone

Although the focus of this book is on curriculum and instruction rather than school environment, a number of instructional strategies (see Chapter 3 on page 54) contribute to achieving my first objective of providing a caring, supportive, engaging classroom environment. Done with building assets in mind, these strategies not only further learning but also contribute to strengthening a young person's assets.

One specific type of activity that helps create a caring and engaging classroom environment for health education, or other content areas, is appropriate for the beginning of the school year. Using icebreakers so that students can become familiar and develop trust with one another and with you sets the stage for success in cooperative learning groups and future discussions about sensitive subject matter. Allowing time for students to get to know each other and you pays dividends later.

Actively involving students in their learning experience early in the year by having them help set learning objectives and classroom boundaries, expectations, and consequences is another effective strategy. It uses them as resources in the process, as well as builds engagement, responsibility, and respect for the outcomes of the activity. One approach to doing this begins with your identifying for them some basic elements of teamwork, followed by your involving them in discussion of the importance of expectations, rules, and consequences.

To engage students personally, ask them to respond in writing to a prompt such as “What rules would help everyone pay attention and do their work in class, feel comfortable and respected in class, and enjoy their day?” Encourage students to describe what would help in light of the fact that this is a health education class. Explain that you will be helping them learn about and deal with sensitive, real-life issues.

Have students discuss their responses in small groups, with each group deciding what rules it would like to see adopted for the class and why. Have groups phrase those rules in positive ways, write them on newsprint with reasons for each, and post them around the room. Since this is a health education class, have them include rules applicable to this unique situation, such as use of correct anatomical terminology and the honoring of confidentiality. After groups present their suggestions for rules, look for similarities on which to base the final set of expectations to post in the room and follow throughout the year.

Use the same group process to determine a system of rewards and consequences, as well as to identify student and teacher responsibilities and ways parents can support both. Based on these determinations, create a compact or agreement that students, teachers, and parents all sign.

Although these processes can take time, they are well worth it in the long run. They clarify everyone's responsibilities, while at the same time empowering students and providing them with an opportunity to learn about the democratic process, community, and self-discipline. Having set the stage for cooperation and respect, you have a foundation to which you can refer as needed during the year.

Setting and maintaining a positive tone in class also involves helping students think beyond problems and risk behaviors. Emphasizing creating solutions and developing assets and protective factors provides a major avenue to making your classroom asset-based. For an activity involving students in looking at strengths and developing solutions, try "Asset Think Tank" (see Handout 7.1 on page 196). You can use this activity to clarify perceptions of any of the assets (especially the external ones) and to find ways to strengthen those assets in peers. Handout 7.1 illustrates a focus on just one asset, caring school climate.

Developing Social Competencies, Positive Values, and Positive Identity

You can consistently nurture the social-competencies assets through health education curricula. The ability to make positive choices (planning and decision making, and resistance skills) and to develop healthy interpersonal relationships (interpersonal competence, cultural competence, and peaceful conflict resolution) are prerequisites to maintaining health-positive attitudes and behaviors. You can present many activities in health in ways that promote the social-competencies assets through modeling, opportunities for self-exploration, relationship building, and active involvement in class activities. Peer education and peer mediation are asset-based approaches to developing social competencies in student leaders and their peers, as well as in younger children.

A variety of health curricula teach life skills explicitly, while others address problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills. For example, one popular conflict-resolution curriculum for secondary students is "We Can Work It Out! Problem Solving through Mediation."⁴ Its objectives are to analyze and solve problems; develop critical thinking, questions, and active listening skills; generate nonviolent options when faced with conflict; find common ground when two people disagree;

Asset Think Tank

Use this activity¹ to clarify perceptions of any of the assets (especially the external) and to find ways to strengthen developmental assets in youth. The example here addresses caring school climate. You can use traditional brainstorming and rating techniques,² or you can take an electronic approach using an electronic meeting system.³

Time Needed

One or more class periods, depending on strategies used and objectives of activity (e.g., determining a caring, positive school climate, mapping project, solution-based report, and presentation).

Health Education Standards⁴

- Standard 4: The student will analyze the influence of culture, media, technology, and other factors on health.
- Standard 7: The student will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.

Lesson/Unit Objectives

- To provide a caring, supportive, engaging classroom environment.
- To empower youth by providing opportunities for exploration and service learning.

Introduction

Introduce topic and activity. Explain the process. If using an electronic approach, be sure students know how to use the equipment and software.

Brainstorming

Challenge students to brainstorm about topics. Use prompts, such as “Imagine a school that is positive and caring. Please list characteristics that describe what such a school would look and be like.” Encourage students to accept and record all ideas without concern for practicality, popularity, or other issues. Allow about 10 minutes for brainstorming.

Categorizing

To illustrate patterns that emerge in brainstorming, use a strategy to group ideas logically. Electronic software such as the SuperGrouper Tool⁵ provides additional tools for categorization.

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Ranking

After grouping ideas by category, have students rank each category from “very important” to “not important at all.” Identify the top 10 to 20 categories; then vote to determine the top 3 to 5 categories important to a positive and caring school climate.

Expanding and Elaborating

To extend students’ thinking about the top 3 to 5 categories, ask them to elaborate ways to further develop the category or to implement their ideas to strengthen asset building in their school environment.

Prioritizing

Have students rank each of the expanded categories. Combine their rankings to determine the best and most important category on which to focus.

Taking Action

To provide students the opportunity to respond to and present their concerns proactively or produce a tangible final product, consider these projects:

- Students report on what a caring, positive school climate looks like.
- Students create an action plan from their ideas.
- Students map how well their school addresses their perceptions of a caring, positive school climate.
- Students write a report outlining solutions to their concerns and present it to the school principal, staff, or school board.

Notes

1. This activity incorporates ideas from Teen Think Tanks of America, Inc; see the Web site accessed November 15, 2002: www.teenthinktanks.org; and from GroupSystems.com; see the Web site accessed November 15, 2002: www.GroupSystems.com.
2. See Web site accessed November 15, 2002: www.youthlearn.org/learning/planning/brainstorm.asp.
3. See Web site accessed November 15, 2002: www.GroupSystems.com.
4. Joint Committee on National Health Education Standards. (1995). *National health education standards: Achieving health literacy*. Available from the American School Health Association (P.O. Box 708, 7263 State Route 43, Kent, OH 44240); the Association for the Advancement of Health Education (1900 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22901); or the American Cancer Society (800-ACS-2345).
5. For the SuperGrouper Tool, see the Web site accessed November 15, 2002: www.pulaskiacademy.org/technology/kidspir2sd.htm.

and manage conflicts. Built-in asset richness! The program also includes a special event known as Mediation Showcases, designed for students to demonstrate and celebrate their conflict-management skills.

Character education is another example of a program that promotes developing social competency assets as well as positive values and service to others by building key values and character traits that youth need as they develop into healthy adults. You can enhance the asset richness of character education, no matter which specific program you use, by involving students actively in partnerships between school, home, and the greater community. You can incorporate and emphasize elements of whatever character program you choose throughout the school day, by integrating those elements into curriculum discipline policies and enforcement as much as experiential learning. This includes the overall school environment, together with consistent and positive adult role modeling.

Look for and incorporate the following key elements when selecting curricula and instructional approaches to promote the social-competencies assets:

- An emphasis on building attitudes and values, versus focusing on acquiring knowledge only or jumping from learning information directly to practicing skills;
- A comprehensive approach that touches on a variety of issues rather than only one—curricula that apply skills, such as resisting peer pressure across many risk behaviors (substance abuse, early sexual involvement, and others);
- Active involvement of youth in planning and implementing lessons;
- Use of a variety of activities and strategies to communicate content and build skills, versus lecture-based delivery of information;
- Opportunities for students to practice skills beyond the lessons, such as in classroom and school discipline approaches; and
- A parent education and support component.

In addition, you as a teacher can play a significant role in helping adolescents build cultural competence. One simple way to do this is to build respect for different cultures and explore cultural beliefs. You can easily create class rituals around birthdays to encourage sharing of traditions, norms, and beliefs from a variety of cultures and families. Encourage students to be creative by bringing in a sample of food or presenting the birthday student with some small token representing the culture. The activity obviously also fosters the positive environment I advocate in my first objective.

Empowering Youth through Exploration and Service Learning

Service learning is rich with asset-building opportunities, as Search Institute's *An Asset Builder's Guide to Service-Learning* illustrates.⁵ Students can be involved in selecting these opportunities and providing input into making sure they are meaningful, using health education standards to help guide choices. One good example

is spending time with the elderly and gaining an understanding of changes that occur as we age.

Another is focusing on the advertising that routinely bombards us all but is aimed at young people in particular. The medium is fascinating to students, and having them develop marketing campaigns promoting assets and healthy behaviors addresses important elements of the health standards: understanding the effects of advertising strategies.

Engaging marketing projects can include developing radio or television public service announcements as service-learning projects,⁶ including those about building assets. Start with inquiry-based learning in which students seek out information about the assets, healthy behavior, and marketing techniques. Find ways to showcase their work to parents, school, and the community, including submitting video clips to local media and Web sites to a resource, such as the ThinkQuest Internet Challenge.⁷

Providing inquiry-based opportunities to explore and challenge the perceived norms and pop culture is also engaging for students and supports instruction about environmental factors that affect health. Providing dilemmas to resolve, such as controversial or complex issues or policies, requires students to explore psychological, social, and economic points of view. Their interactions while solving the problems give them experience in understanding complexity, taking other perspectives, and creating solutions incorporating ideas from many people that meet a variety of needs. (See Chapter 3, page 70, for a description of the asset-rich instructional strategy called *academic controversy* that you could use here.) Such activities are rich in opportunities to build the positive-values, positive-identity, and social-competencies assets of my second objective, as well.

Involving teens in youth mapping⁸ is an empowering way to address health standards related to gaining knowledge of health resources: youth search out and map resources and opportunities in their school or community to build awareness of current health resources for them as well as resources they may need access to after high school graduation. Mapping in health education may include locating healthy food venues, arenas for physical or recreational activity, or counseling support; describing elements of school climate; and identifying opportunities for constructive use of time in and out of school.

Have students outline community or school strengths and needs, and present their recommendations to the school or district administration or others. To extend the project, have students develop a Web site or school or community hotline of information, resources, and opportunities for teens.⁹ Sharing a positive report about local supports—the resources available—along with helpful recommendations about unmet needs sends messages to the larger community that youth can have a productive role in identifying resources, connecting with adults, and working with them to improve the quality of life in an entire community. A powerful example of using youth as resources!

A number of other curricula, projects, and activities empower youth as they learn. One example is *Generation Fit* by the American Cancer Society.¹⁰ *Genera-*

tion Fit is a set of enrichment activities that gives young people ages 11–18 the opportunity to act on an issue related to nutrition and physical activity in their schools and communities. For example, one activity is surveying the food preferences of peers, selecting healthy and tasty recipes based on these preferences, and working with the principal and food service personnel to include the new choices in the school lunch program. Such activities build personal and social skills, while addressing policy and environmental issues in the health curriculum standards. Students learn through participation in such meaningful community service and advocacy activities.

Encouraging Positive Parent-Child Communication

Welcoming parents into your classroom is a sound first step in encouraging a solid partnership. Getting to know parents' interests, skills, and professions, and finding opportunities to use them as resources in your classroom, recognizes their expertise and engages them in the learning. For example, parents who have educational and professional backgrounds related to specific health topics (such as nutritionists), or who have personal stories (such as their commitment to health), can share information and inspire as role models as well.

Inviting parents to observe student presentations and class discussions when appropriate also reinforces engaging them in school. Involving parents in classroom projects helps them build relationships and become informed themselves about health topics they often do not know a lot about. For example, in the case of an inquiry-based research project that includes a core team with various roles, parents who serve as part of the core team become co-learners with youth—a strong asset-building strategy for increasing the number of relationships with other adults and positive adult role models.

Assigning homework that requires students and parents to work together is also a strong way to generate better understandings of health concepts. The activity “Let’s Talk It Over!” (see Handout 7.2 on page 200) provides an excellent model for helping students engage with their parents on a health topic. To prepare students, develop in class a fact sheet on media literacy, and create guidelines for positive parent-child communication to send home with the assignment. Then provide time after all students have completed the activity for students to share and synthesize what they have learned. Families play an important role in a student’s understanding of health-related concepts, issues, and decision making; involving parents in the actual learning of health content can increase knowledge and understanding of both parents and children as well as enhance communication between them.

Leaping the Hurdles

Generating better understandings of health concepts means emphasizing young people’s strengths and engaging them as advocates. Involving youth as catalysts for change is more likely to lead to solutions that are meaningful and enduring. Advo-

Let's Talk It Over!

Interactive Homework Assignment

Student: _____ Parent(s): _____

Date Assigned: _____ Date Due: _____

(Allow a minimum of one week.)

Dear Family Partner:

We are learning media literacy—how to interpret and evaluate health-related messages from the media (TV, magazines, movies, newspapers, the Internet) in health education class. This activity¹ will assist you in helping build analysis skills in your teen. The students have put together a fact sheet and guidelines for discussion to assist you with this activity. I hope you and your child enjoy this activity!

Please note the assigned due date above.

Sincerely, _____

Health Education Standards²

- Standard 4: The student will analyze the influence of culture, media, technology, and other factors on health.
- Standard 5: The student will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health.

Lesson/Unit Objectives

- To develop social competence, positive values, and positive identity.
- To encourage positive parent-child communication.

Look It Over

- Review the media literacy fact sheet.
- Review the parent-child communication guidelines.

Watch and Discuss the Videos

A. Parent and Youth INDIVIDUALLY

1. Record a music video of your choice (from MTV, VH-1, BETA, etc.).
2. Watch the video with the sound off. Write down images and messages you see.
3. Get the lyrics to the song from the Web site (accessed November 15, 2002): www.songlyricsource.com. Read the lyrics.
4. Watch the video with the sound on. Answer on paper: Does the video send the same images and messages with the lyrics as without sound? Why or why not?

B. Parent and Youth INDIVIDUALLY

1. Switch videos and lyrics. (Parent gives lyrics and video he or she taped to youth; youth gives lyrics and video he or she taped to parent.)
2. Follow numbered steps 2–4 in section A above.

C. Parent and Youth TOGETHER

1. Watch one of the videos together.
2. Share and discuss how each of you responded when you watched the video alone. Carefully listen to one another and consider both perspectives. What do you agree on (even if stated somewhat differently)? Disagree on?
3. Watch the second video together and do step 2 for this video.

Record Perspectives

Student: Fill in the name of the videos and key words describing perspectives.

Name of Video	Parent Perspective	Student Perspective
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Conclusions

Student: Answer the following questions, using complete sentences, on a separate piece of paper.

1. What did you and your parent agree on?
2. What did you and your parent disagree on?
3. What did you learn from this activity?
4. What did your parent learn from this activity? (Ask.)
5. Did you find this activity useful? Why or why not?

Home to School Communication

Dear Family Partner:

Please give me your reactions to this activity.

Enter a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 for each statement to reflect your opinion.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Unsure, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

- _____ The assignment directions were clear.
- _____ My son/daughter and I enjoyed this activity.
- _____ This assignment helped me know what my son/daughter is learning in health education.
- _____ This assignment helped me communicate with my son/daughter.

Other Comments:

Parent's Signature: _____

Notes

1. This activity incorporates ideas from media educator Mary Byrne Hoffman as referenced in the 2001 newsletter *Families Are Talking: SIECUS Report Supplement*, 1(2); see the Web site accessed November 15, 2002: www.siecus.org/pubs/pubs0004.html; and from TIPS (Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork) from the National Network of Partnership Schools; see the Web site accessed November 15, 2002: www.cso.s.jhu.edu/p2000/tips/TIPSmain.htm.
2. Joint Committee on National Health Education Standards. (1995). *National health education standards: Achieving health literacy*. Available from the American School Health Association (P.O. Box 708, 7263 State Route 43, Kent, OH 44240); the Association for the Advancement of Health Education (1900 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22901); or the American Cancer Society (800-ACS-2345).

cacy activities give youth an immediate goal to work toward, while addressing interpersonal needs. They help clarify values, as well as specific factors, such as environmental policies, that contribute to good health in both the short and long term. They also open opportunities for youth and adult partnerships and build greater cross-generational communication skills and understanding.

The asset framework challenges us to unleash the power of adolescents to be active learners and connected community citizens. Adolescents are potentially excited learners who have a strong sense of exploration and discovery, a capacity to see the needs of others, and a desire to make positive contributions to their community. Young adolescents need to know that they are competent, normal, lovable, and loving.¹¹ Older adolescents need to discover their inner selves, strengths, and spirits, and be optimistic about their roles and future.

I believe the ideas I've presented here provide the environment and opportunities to increase the likelihood that adolescents are going to thrive in positive ways and succeed in school and life. The strategies are designed to maximize adolescents' energies and optimism. They challenge youth to be discoverers of knowledge and critical thinkers, to explore themselves and the world around them, and to develop social competencies. If implemented in a caring, supportive environment, these strategies help ensure that youth view themselves as competent, normal, loveable, loving, and connected.

And, as for you, the teacher, the experiences will be exhilarating, meaningful, and rewarding.

Notes

1. Scales, Peter C. (1996). *Boxed In and Bored: How Middle Schools Continue to Fail Young Adolescents—and What Good Middle Schools Do Right*. Minneapolis: Search Institute, 18–27, 29–30.
2. Good resources about youth advocacy development are Advocates for Youth; Web site accessed November 15, 2002: www.advocatesforyouth.org/teens; and the Academy for Educational Development; Web site accessed November 15, 2002: www.aed.org/youth_projects.html.
3. Benson, Peter L., Scales, Peter C., Leffert, Nancy, and Roehlkepartain, Eugene C. (1999). *A Fragile Foundation: The State of Developmental Assets among American Youth*. Minneapolis: Search Institute.
4. *We Can Work It Out! Problem-Solving through Mediation*; Web site accessed November 15, 2002: www.streelaw.org/wcw10.html.
5. Roehlkepartain, Eugene C., Bright, Thomas, and Margolis-Rupp, Beth. (2000). *An Asset Builder's Guide to Service-Learning*. Minneapolis: Search Institute.
6. See the Public Service Announcement Project Menu at the Web site accessed November 15, 2002: www.pecentral.org/lessonideas/health/psaprojectmenu.html; and the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research; Web site accessed November 15, 2002: www.aed.org/youth_empower.html. Other interactive activities on the Internet (all Web site accessed November 15, 2002) include Healthfinder: www.healthfinder.gov; Awesome Library for Teens: www.awesomelibrary.org/students.html; Educational Web Adventures: www.eduweb.com; Interactive Food Finder: [www.olen.com/food](http://www olen.com/food); the Food and Nutrition Information Center: www.nal.usda.gov/fnic; and the Federal Citizen Information Center: www.pueblo.gsa.gov.
7. See the Web site accessed November 15, 2002: www.thinkquest.org.

8. For information on youth mapping, see the Web site accessed November 15, 2002: www.aed.org/youth_development.html.
9. Youthlink is a good example of a youth-created resource site; see the Web site accessed November 15, 2002: www.yl-va.org/v2/aboutus.html.
10. For more information, contact the American Cancer Society at 800-ACS-2345 or see the Web site accessed November 15, 2002: www.cancer.org.
11. Scales, *Boxed In and Bored*.

Other Resources (Related to My Objectives)

PROVIDING A CARING AND SUPPORTIVE AND ENGAGING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Starkman, Neal, Scales, Peter C., and Roberts, Clay. (1999). *Great Places to Learn: How Asset-Building Schools Help Students Succeed*. Minneapolis: Search Institute.

DEVELOPING SOCIAL COMPETENCIES, POSITIVE VALUES AND POSITIVE IDENTITY

Freedom Writers with Gruwell, Erin. (1999). *The Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them*. New York: Broadway Books.

EMPOWERING YOUTH

Stuecker, Ric, with Rutherford, Suze. (2001). *Reviving the Wonder: 76 Activities That Touch the Inner Spirit of Youth*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

ENCOURAGING POSITIVE PARENT-CHILD COMMUNICATION

National PTA. (2000). *Building Successful Partnerships: A Guide for Developing Parent and Family Involvement Programs*. Bloomington, IN: National Education Service.

Powerful Strategies for Bullying Prevention

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Dee Lindenberg discusses how asset building is connected with violence prevention—one of the major contemporary thrusts of schools and districts. Her summary of the major arenas needing focus to reduce or prevent bullying in a school reflects recent research. She shows how you can use these arenas as a way to view the components of local antibullying efforts through the asset lens to increase the likelihood of their success.

Elementary children who push, shove, tease, and taunt other children are more likely, as adults, to be convicted of crimes; have alcohol/drug problems; abuse their spouses; lack significant educational, social, or professional achievements; and parent children who push, shove, tease, and taunt other children. Not only does bullying risk the well-being and success of those students who engage in aggressive behavior, it also creates a pervasive climate of anxiety and fear that the entire school community feels, touching the lives of those targeted by bullying as well as those bystanders who witness their peers being emotionally or physically harassed. To whatever degree a school tolerates such aggression and bullying, so, too, will students' feelings of safety decrease—and their learning.

Closely mirroring the 40 assets framework are several school-based strategies that effectively address bullying. Identified by Dan Olweus in longitudinal studies,¹ these asset-promoting strategies serve as “countervailing forces” to the “aggression-generating factors” that promote aggressive attitudes and behaviors in children. Olweus describes these countervailing forces as the daily “attitudes, routines, and behaviors” within a school that prevent and control bullying behavior. In showing how the assets align with these strategies, I categorize them in five major components.

Positive School Climate

Students who bully tend to come from family systems where there's a lack of warmth, positive time, and attention. Such an environment is the opposite of a positive school climate that is warm, supportive, and provides students with opportunities for involvement in a variety of enriching activities, including regular class meetings.

In line with many of the benefits the asset framework promotes, Olweus underscores the importance of class meetings. In such meetings, students engage in activities designed to build relationships and a sense of community (e.g., non-competitive games, service-learning projects, art and physical activities) and to prompt discussion of bullying prevention (characteristics of bullying, ways to help, the difference between telling and tattling, skill building, stories/drama projects with related themes).

Additional asset-building strategies that contribute to a caring school climate are adult role modeling of respectful communication skills and consistent use of positive feedback that is behaviorally specific. Not only will students who bully benefit from a positive school climate, all students will profit from increased feelings of caring and connection to their school.

Clear and Fair Limits and Consequences

Students who bully are likely to have grown up in families with confusing and often violent norms with regard to limits and consequences for misbehavior: a high level of aggression is tolerated, clear limits are lacking, and consequences are unpredictable and punitive. Disciplinary strategies are often power-based, relying upon physical punishment and violent emotional outbursts.

To counteract in school these aggression-generating norms learned at home, it is important to clearly communicate school rules and consequences that are fair, and consistently apply them without hostility, again a very asset-rich strategy. A discipline rubric that starts with mild consequences and gradually escalates can be a useful tool.

Prosocial/Coping Skills

Social skills and coping skills are key predictors of who will bully, who will be bullied, and who will be able to effectively prevent or intervene in bullying incidents. Both students who bully and students who are targets of bullying have inadequate social and coping skills, including a host of distorted perceptions and beliefs (e.g., “It’s not my fault!” or “I’m stupid!”).

To create a caring, bully-free school environment, all students need to have skills that enable them to work together and get along with each other, another emphasis in the asset framework. You can teach effective social skills through class curricula, small skill-building groups, and “teachable moments” that arise throughout the year.

Positive Bystander Involvement

Most students in a school are usually neither bullies nor targets—they are bystanders. Sometimes bystanders ignore a bullying incident; sometimes they act as cheerleaders, chanting or clapping on the sidelines; and sometimes they join in

the bullying. All of these reactions give the message “It’s okay to bully!” to the student who’s harassing another student. In whatever form it is given, that message serves as a powerful aggression-generating factor.

To counteract bullying, we need to enlist the support and active involvement of bystanders by teaching them what bullying is, how to recognize it, and what they can do to help when they see it happening. Equally important and asset consistent, we need to teach bystanders that they can help prevent bullying by reaching out in friendship so that no one is alone and isolated, or an easy target.

Strong Parent Partnerships

Not only can parents benefit from schools helping them understand the causes of bullying and effective strategies to prevent it, but schools and students also have much to gain from closer parent-school partnerships, just as in asset building. We need the support of parents to have maximum impact in our efforts to prevent bullying, both when working with individual students and when needing financial or other support from the larger community.

Ultimately, it’s the students who benefit most from a team approach, with both parents and educators providing a consistent message and ongoing support for behavioral change. Many strategies can help build strong partnerships: awareness sessions, parent groups, and conscious relationship-building efforts that include frequent communication regarding students’ positive behavior as well as problem behaviors.

Just as there is no single asset to meet all our students’ needs for positive youth development, there is no single strategy to prevent bullying. Bullying prevention involves your taking a comprehensive approach based upon relationships, consistent and redundant messages, and learning opportunities for all students. It’s a systems change that, at its core, is an ongoing asset-building process.

Notes

1. Olweus, Dan. (1994). *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Kids Are the Core

KARLA MCCOMB, M.S.

Director, Diversity and Prevention Services (grades Pre-K–12)

Clark County School District

Las Vegas, Nevada

Clark County Schools, the sixth-largest school district in the United States, illustrates one way to infuse asset building into a comprehensive K–5 drug abuse and violence prevention curriculum. In correlation with its elementary curriculum guidelines, the Curriculum Essentials Framework (CEF), the district also integrates the prevention and asset messages into a variety of subject areas in addition to health (language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, art, music, and physical education). You see these CEF elements cross-referenced in the sample lesson here.

SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

Clark County School District
Las Vegas, Nevada

Students: 244,684

Grades: Pre-K–12

Gender:

Male	51.4%
Female	48.6%

Race and Ethnicity:

Black/African American	13.8%
Hispanic/Latino	30.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	7.1%
American Indian	0.8%
White/Caucasian	47.7%

Socioeconomics:

Free/Reduced Lunch (grades 1–8)	40.0%
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Included in our elementary “Kids Are the Core” prevention curriculum are three promising practices in the fields of substance abuse and violence prevention—asset development, along with mentoring and normative education¹—that appear to prevent or reduce (or both) substance abuse, violence, and disruptive behavior among youth. We expect that our teachers and counselors using the teacher’s guide, which includes background on all three practices, will incorporate these practices in their teaching of the core lessons—and in all of their work with students.

Over the past three decades, the substance abuse and violence prevention field has moved from the generally ineffective scare tactics of the 1970s, through risk and protective factor-focused models in the 1980s, to resiliency programs in the 1990s. As we enter the new century, the asset-building paradigm offers a new way to look at preventing problems through developing healthy, capable young people. We recommend that other communities join us in implementing a two-pronged approach to prevention: one that focuses on reducing risks for young people, while at the same time building assets or protective factors.

We provide for teachers and counselors Search Institute’s list of 40 developmental assets tailored for use with elementary school children.² We also star the assets that our “Kids Are the Core” health curriculum specifically addresses:

- 5. Caring School Climate;
- 12. School Boundaries;
- 15. Positive Peer Influence;
- 24. Bonding to School;
- 35. Resistance Skills; and
- 36. Peaceful Conflict Resolution.

A group of experienced teachers who had been trained in using the assets did a page-by-page correlation to our CEF. While some lessons in the teacher's guide explicitly include asset language, others do not (for an example of a lesson on resistance and refusal skills for 4th graders, see Handout 7.3A: Resistance/Refusal Skills and Handout 7.3B: I Make a Difference Daily Log on pages 208–209). However, the guide flags all content that relates to building one or more assets with the corresponding asset or assets, making it easy for a teacher or counselor to use the asset language while teaching the lessons.

Notes

1. By normative education, we mean a conscious effort to change the perceived group position on an issue. In some cases, the aim is to truly change what is acceptable behavior in an area such as violence or drug use. The goal may also be to bring what students think more in line with reality so that students know what is expected of them.
2. See Appendix A.2: 40 Developmental Assets for Elementary-Age Children (Ages 6–11, English).

Resistance/Refusal Skills

Grade 4 Resistance/Refusal Skills

Title: I Make a Difference!

Curriculum Essentials Framework Correlation: Language Arts 4.2/Social Studies 4.9–4.12

Outcome/Objective: Students will recognize their own power to influence others as positive peer role models.

Activity: *Note to the teacher—Before beginning this lesson, make student copies of “I Make a Difference Daily Log” (Handout 7.3B).*

- Ask students to think back to when they were in 1st grade and remember how they felt about 4th and 5th graders. Use these suggested questions for discussion:
 - Were you afraid of the 4th and 5th graders? Why or why not?
 - Did you have any 4th- or 5th-grade friends?
 - Did the 4th and 5th graders ever talk to you?
 - Do you remember thinking that the 4th and 5th graders were cool?
 - Was there an older student that you wanted to be like? What was he or she like?
 - Do you think the 4th and 5th graders knew that you were watching them?
 - Do you think 1st graders are watching you now?
- In small groups, have students brainstorm a list of ideas, actions, words, and/or projects that they could do to positively influence younger kids (e.g., say “Good morning” to a group of 1st graders every day, help a 1st grader in the cafeteria, read to a 1st grader).
- Have students share their ideas with the whole class. Record the ideas on chart paper and post it in the classroom.
- Ask the students to make a commitment to be a positive peer role model at school. Have them record their efforts and successes on the “I Make a Difference Daily Log.”
- Help students to design a whole class peer role model program. Ideas include:
 - One-on-one reading with primary students;
 - Schoolwide recycling project;
 - Skits about healthy choices performed for younger students;

- Reading of “Quote of the Day” during morning announcements; or
- Assisting primary classes during hands-on science lessons.

Reinforcement/Follow-Up: _____

Resources:
 Student copies of “I Make a Difference Daily Log”

Teaching Tips/Background Information: _____

Content-Related Vocabulary: _____

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I Make a Difference Daily Log

Name: _____

Date: _____

Today, I was a positive peer role model! This is what I did: _____

Date: _____

Today, I was a positive peer role model! This is what I did: _____

Date: _____

Today, I was a positive peer role model! This is what I did: _____

Date: _____

Today, I was a positive peer role model! This is what I did: _____

Leaders of Tomorrow

MAKING HEALTH-POSITIVE CHOICES

GEORGIA TEPPERT, M.ED.

Assistant Principal (grades 10–12)

Greater Latrobe Senior High School

Latrobe, Pennsylvania

Georgia Teppert and a number of students created a club to practice skills learned in their health classes. Although not originally organized around the asset framework, the Leaders of Tomorrow Club illustrates how locally developed student activities support curriculum in the classroom as well as promote the development of assets in youth, and how staff recognize and enhance the asset-building qualities of what they are already doing.

SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

Greater Latrobe Senior High School
Latrobe, Pennsylvania

Students: 988

Grades: 10–12

Gender:

Male	53.0%
Female	47.0%

Race and Ethnicity:

Black/African American	0.3%
Hispanic/Latino	0.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.9%
White/Caucasian	98.0%

Socioeconomics:

Free/Reduced Lunch	20.0%
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To reinforce skills in the health curriculum—skills of making good decisions about a variety of pressures and issues, of refusing to participate in risky behaviors, and of resolving conflicts peacefully—a group of juniors and seniors helped form our Leaders of Tomorrow Club. The students were also interested in sharing the message about how to make good decisions and lead healthy lifestyles to enhance self-esteem, self-respect, and respect for others.

While our school formerly had a club that focused on drug education, the students in that club and I thought it was very important to maintain a school group that promoted drug- and alcohol-free lifestyles, along with positive decision making. To actively involve students in the decision-making processes throughout their community, we also decided to form a student advisory council.

During the first meetings with this group of 50 students, we developed together these objectives for the club:

1. To deliver messages to youth in the community regarding self-esteem, decision making, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and peer relationships;
2. To create an awareness of drug use and abuse in society today and to strive to live an alcohol-, tobacco-, and other drug-free life;
3. To develop personal integrity and learn to make wise decisions that lead to success;
4. To practice self-respect and respect for others;
5. To create an awareness of the importance of home and family;
6. To emphasize acceptance of individual responsibility as the basis of personal success and community improvement; and
7. To help my fellow “leaders.”

Meeting at least once each week, the club provides a great opportunity for students to practice a variety of skills as well as to model what is taught in our health curriculum. They plan presentations on decision making, refusal skills, self-esteem, conflict resolution, and drug and alcohol issues, incorporating lessons from health in using good communication skills. The students then perform those presentations for elementary children in the district.

Other club projects include fund-raisers, such as T-shirt sales, and anti-drinking and driving campaigns. These events raise money to help defray costs for materials and prizes needed during the presentations to elementary schools. The students also donate money raised to charities, as well as volunteer for a local children's cancer support network.

The Leaders of Tomorrow Club supports many of the external assets as well as provides a forum for students to develop them as they put content and skills they have learned in the classroom into action. The health teacher, in fact, encourages students to put the concepts into practice by participating in the club. Club activities also address the internal assets of being involved in a youth program and providing service to others. Members meet annually to review progress the club has made in promoting assets and to plan ways to improve asset-building opportunities.