

Helping Santa Clara County Children to Thrive by Building Developmental Assets

Overview: Developmental assets are the experiences, values, relationships and opportunities that all children and youth need to thrive. They are the building blocks of healthy development. As young people experience more assets, they make more positive healthy choices. To achieve the first goal of the Children's Agenda - Children are physically, socially and emotionally healthy - we need to work to increase the number of youth who have 31 or more of the 41 developmental assets and are in the "thriving zone."

Kids in Common and the Santa Clara County Children's Agenda:

The goal of the Santa Clara County Children's Agenda is to improve the lives of children by focusing on improving ten indicators of child well-being. The Children's Agenda is a focused, integrated initiative that engages all segments of our community and provides a common vision for our community's children. It forces us, as a community, to move from data to action and to be accountable for how our children are faring. By working together with common goals, we are acting intentionally rather than reactively to current demands and problems. We can identify the "levers" that may have the most impact at improving the outcome. These outcomes will guide our work and will compel us to ask, "**Is it good for children?**"

The Children's Agenda is being led by Kids in Common, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, that advocates for policies, partnerships and investments that improve children's lives in Santa Clara County. Children need a strong public voice – a voice that promotes and protects their best interests. Kids in Common is that voice and challenges leaders and decision-makers in our community to act on behalf of children. Our Vision: All children in our community thrive. www.kidsincommon.org

What Are Developmental Assets and Why Do They Matter?

Developmental assets are a measurable set of values and experiences that help young people become healthy, caring, responsible adults. Research has shown that the more developmental assets that young people possess, the more likely they are to avoid risky behavior. Building assets in young people promotes positive behaviors, prevents negative behaviors and helps young people bounce back from hard times.

How Are Developmental Assets Measured?

In Fall 2004, Project Cornerstone surveyed nearly 14,000 fourth through twelfth graders in 95 schools across Santa Clara County in order to assess the developmental asset levels of our youth and to learn about their experiences growing up in our community. For youth to be considered in the "thriving zone," they need to have at least 31 of the 41 developmental assets.

How Are We Doing?

- Only 38% of 4-6th graders and 8% of middle and high schoolers have 31 or more assets and are in the "thriving zone".
- There is a significant decline in asset levels and community support as children grow into teenagers. While 62% of 4-6th graders experience a caring school climate, only 25% of middle and high-schoolers report caring school climates.
- 91% of 4-6th graders feel that their parents and teachers have high expectations for them. Only 46% of middle and high schoolers do.
- Only 18% of middle and high schoolers and 35% of 4-6th graders feel that the community values children and youth.
- Only 26% of middle and high schoolers feel that they have opportunities for useful roles in the community. 55% of 4-6th graders feel that they have opportunities for useful roles in the community.

Source: Project Cornerstone Developmental Assets: 2004 Survey Results Executive Summary. www.projectcornerstone.org/html/assets/2004_survey_ES.htm

Developmental assets were identified by the Search Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Project Cornerstone identified the 41st Asset – Positive Cultural Identity. The survey instrument used to measure our youth's asset levels was developed by the Search Institute.

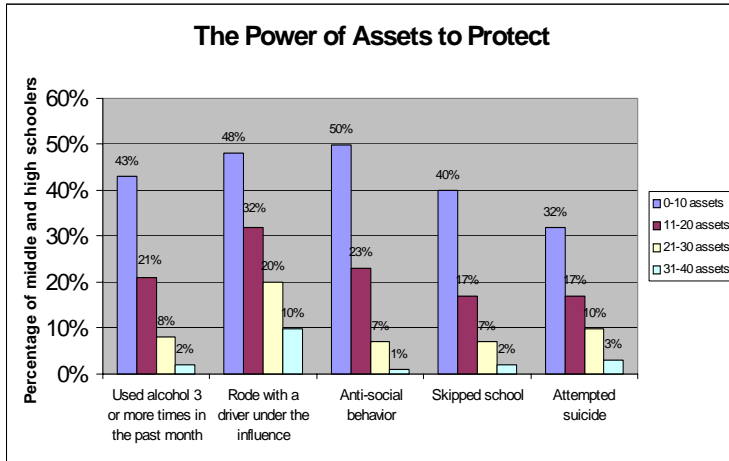
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The Forty-One Developmental Assets:

1. **Family Support** – Family life provides high levels of love and support.
2. **Positive Family Communication** – Young person and parents communicate positively and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.
3. **Other Adult Relationships** – Young person receives support from three or more non-parent adults.
4. **Caring Neighborhood** – Young person experiences caring neighbors.
5. **Caring School Climate** – School provides a caring, encouraging, environment.
6. **Parent Involvement in Schooling** – Parents are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.
7. **Community Values Children & Youth** – Young person perceives that adults in the community value children and youth.
8. **Youth as Resources** – Young people are given useful roles in the community.
9. **Service to others** – Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
10. **Safety** – Young person feels safe at home, school and in the neighborhood.
11. **Family Boundaries** – Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
12. **School Boundaries** – School provides clear rules and consequences.
13. **Neighborhood Boundaries** – Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
14. **Adult Role Models** – Parents and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
15. **Positive Peer Influence** – Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
16. **High Expectations** – Both parents and teachers encourage the young person to do well.
17. **Creative Activities** – Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater or other arts.
18. **Youth Programs** – Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs or organizations at school and/or in the community.
19. **Religious Community** – Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
20. **Time at Home** – Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.
21. **Achievement Motivation** – Young person is motivated to do well in school.
22. **School Engagement** – Young person is actively engaged in learning.
23. **Homework** – Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
24. **Bonding to School** – Young person cares about her or his school.
25. **Reading for Pleasure** – Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.
26. **Caring** – Young person places high value on helping other people.
27. **Equality and Social Justice** – Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
28. **Integrity** – Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
29. **Honesty** – Young person "tells the truth, even when it is not easy."
30. **Responsibility** – Young person believes, accepts and takes personal responsibility.
31. **Healthy Lifestyles** – Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
32. **Planning and Decisionmaking** - Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
33. **Interpersonal Competence** – Young person has empathy, sensitivity and friendship skills.
34. **Cultural Competence** – Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds.
35. **Resistance Skills** – Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations
36. **Peaceful Conflict Resolution** – Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.
37. **Personal Power** – Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
38. **Self – Esteem** – Young person reports having high self-esteem.
39. **Sense of Purpose** – Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
40. **Positive View of Personal Future** – Young person is optimistic about his/her personal future.
41. **Positive Cultural Identity** – Young person feels proud of her/his cultural background.

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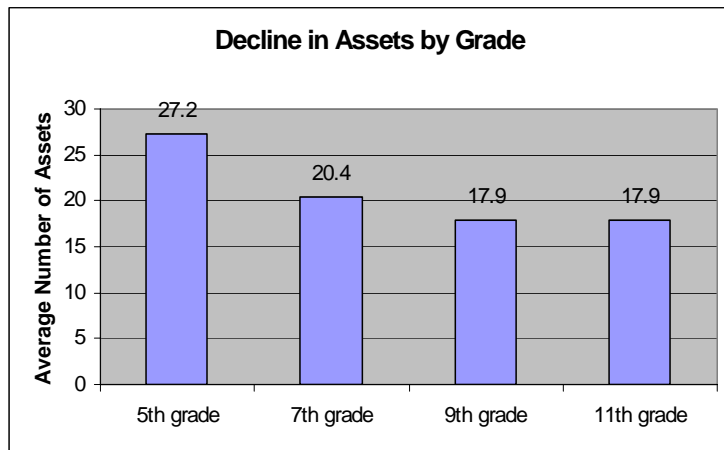
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This chart demonstrates how developmental assets have the power to protect. Children with fewer developmental assets are more likely to engage in risky or negative behaviors.

Source: Project Cornerstone Developmental Assets: 2004 Survey Results Executive Summary, page 2.

www.projectcornerstone.org/html/assets/2004_survey_ES.htm



This chart demonstrates how developmental assets decline as youth get older.

Source: Project Cornerstone Developmental Assets: 2004 Survey Results Executive Summary, page 2.

www.projectcornerstone.org/html/assets/2004_survey_ES.htm

The Challenge: Increasing the Developmental Assets of Santa Clara County Children and Youth

The portrait of developmental assets in Santa Clara County mirrors the pattern found in communities across the nation. Too often youth:

- receive too little support through sustained and positive intergenerational relationships;
- lack opportunities for leadership and involvement;
- disengage from youth-serving programs in the community;
- experience inconsistent or unarticulated boundaries;
- feel disconnected from their community; and
- miss the formation of social competencies and positive values.

Project Cornerstone is a growing collaborative in Santa Clara County dedicated to engaging our entire community in the critical task of connecting youth and adults. Project Cornerstone's mission is to train and mobilize adults throughout Santa Clara County to intentionally work to develop healthy, caring, and responsible children and youth. This is achieved through programs that strengthen families, neighborhoods, communities and schools and by ensuring that young people's needs are addressed in public policy.

The goal of Project Cornerstone is to build a community where:

1. Parents and other adults embrace, model and promote asset building with all children and youth.
2. Children and youth embrace, model and promote asset building with their peers and in partnership with adults.
3. Organizations and systems in the community adopt, integrate and promote the assets approach.

For more information on increasing developmental assets of youth in our community, go to www.projectcornerstone.org.

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Building Developmental Assets in Santa Clara County:

Project Cornerstone is building a community where all adults support children and youth so they can thrive. Every person, business, organization, school, faith group, and government agency has a role. Some ways that you can help build assets are:

All adults and youth can learn about asset building by attending a training session, reading about asset building, talking with others who know about assets and surrounding yourself with reminders about the importance of assets, such as the list of the 41 developmental assets and photos of young people in your life. **Commit to at least one intentional act of asset building everyday.**

Do you work in a youth-serving organization or agency? Is your organization asset-rich? Evaluate your organization and find ideas on how to become asset rich by using tools available at: www.projectcornerstone.org/html/organizations/becomingassetrich.htm .

If you work in a school or a school district, you can work on improving your school climate through the Project Cornerstone School Partnerships Program. Contact Linda Silvius at Linda@projectcornerstone.org.

If you lead a government agency or are a policy maker, adopt the assets approach and use it to guide all policies and programs that impact children and youth. Partner with other organizations to create child-friendly places and safe places for teens to gather.

If you are an organization that funds youth programs, ask potential grantees to be intentional about asset building and describe how developmental assets are incorporated into their work as part of the grant-making process.

Businesses can develop family-friendly policies that allow employees to be actively involved in the lives of their children or to build relationships with other young people in the community. Develop internships and employment opportunities for teens at your workplace.

If you are a new parent or work with young children, learn about supporting asset development in children 0 – 5 by going to: http://www.first5kids.org/parents/first_year/developmental_assets

Everyone can help children and teens feel valued, respected and known by saying hello, asking about their day, smiling, and seeing the best in them.

Kids in Common advocates for policies, partnerships and investments that improve children's lives in Santa Clara County. Children need a strong public voice – a voice that promotes and protects their best interests. Kids in Common is that voice and challenges leaders and decision-makers in our community to act on behalf of children.

As the only organization that focuses on systemic change to improve children's lives in Santa Clara County, we convene agencies that care about children's well-being. We advocate for effective investment and policies for children and support the mobilization of public and private resources to meet those needs. We inform decision makers on best practices and champion local implementation. Kids in Common is steadfast in speaking and acting on behalf of children and brings a uniquely qualified perspective that is grounded in research and data. Our work is driven by the question, "Is it good for our children?" The foundation of our work is the Santa Clara County Children's Agenda.



For the most current data on how Santa Clara County children are faring, go to:

www.kidsdata.org