

The Relationship between Current Educational Issues and Building Developmental Assets®

Current Educational Issue	Connection to Building Developmental Assets
<p>Accountability and test scores (the pressure on schools to raise standardized achievement test scores)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The more students experience Developmental Assets, the more their grades improve. ◆ Various assets are associated with higher achievement scores and with greater levels of other personal traits and environmental conditions that lead to higher performance, such as family support, high expectations, bonding to school, and greater effort.
<p>Closing the achievement gap (between White, African American, Asian, Native American, and Hispanic students; and between poor and more affluent students)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Higher levels of assets seem to exert an even more powerful effect on vulnerable youth who are already at higher risk of lower achievement and other negative experiences. ◆ The top assets predicting school success are the same across all racial/ethnic groups. ◆ When schools use practices such as interdisciplinary curricula, team teaching, advisor-advisee guidance, heterogeneous grouping rather than tracking, community service, and service-learning, grades and achievement test scores among underachieving and higher-achieving youth become more similar—because under-achievers do better, not because high achievers do worse.
<p>Connecting school with real-world needs (preparing students for work and contribution to civil society)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Developmental Assets framework of pro-social orientation is associated with higher grades as well as a higher likelihood of future volunteering, voting, working on a political campaign, and demonstrating for a cause. ◆ Assets are associated with greater caring about others' welfare, greater commitment to doing schoolwork, and other positive outcomes. ◆ Asset building promotes the school success and sustained adult contacts envisioned in various work-readiness blueprints.
<p>School-based management (emphasizing local school building authority for educational decisions and significantly involving teachers and other staff leaders with principals in the decision-making process)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Developmental Assets framework reinforces the notion of those closest to students having strengthened hands in school decision making. ◆ In schools in which staff have a strong <i>collective</i> responsibility for student success, students learn more, and learning is more equitably distributed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What makes the difference in these schools is a commitment to building strong, caring relationships among staff, among staff and students, and among school, family, and community—the kinds of relationships that are the foundation of the Developmental Assets framework.
<p>“Back to basics” (cutbacks in arts, health, and “extra”-curricular activities)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Youth Programs is one of the assets that most strongly predict school success. ◆ School Engagement—which is highly related to doing well in school and other measures of adolescent health—is itself highly affected by opportunities students have for meaningful roles at school, which can be enhanced by high-quality after-school programs. ◆ Students with more participation in organized cocurricular activities such as sports, clubs, and lessons in high school had less alcohol and other drug use at age 25 and greater school achievement over those years, including higher levels of GPA, high school graduation, college attendance, and college graduation. ◆ Students’ participation in arts and music—expressed by the Creative Activities asset—can have positive effects on school achievement. ◆ Health education is associated with important outcomes and is specifically the discipline in which students gain the most experience with the assets in the Social-Competencies category.
<p>Schools’ role in community partnerships (connections between schools and community)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The simultaneous attention to multiple parts of young people’s worlds is supported by the breadth of the Developmental Assets framework and its attention to family, school, peer, and community influences on children and youth, as well as its specific addressing of strategies such as youth programs and service-learning.
<p>Safe and drug-free schools and communities, school violence, bullying (reducing students’ involvement with violence and drugs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ As assets go up, experiencing or committing violence goes down, as does problem use of alcohol and other drugs. ◆ Students in schools that enforce clear values, rules, and expectations, and that are perceived by students as caring schools, experience less violence. ◆ The emphasis on prosocial behavior and improving the relationship environment of a school means that the Developmental Assets approach can do much to change the climate to reduce bullying and promote better academic outcomes. ◆ The assets explicitly include a focus on reinforcing students’ values against drinking alcohol or having sexual intercourse while still a teenager, and developing effective, nonviolent conflict resolution skills.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ School districts receiving or pursuing funding under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act may use data associating Developmental Assets with reduced risk behaviors to demonstrate that building assets “shows promise” as an effort to reduce drug use and violence.
<p>“Values education,” “moral education,” “character education” (schools and morality)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ The asset framework names six values often emphasized in values education, moral education, or character education programs: Caring, Equality and Social Justice, Integrity, Honesty, Responsibility, and Restraint.◆ Positive norms and values are implied throughout the 40-asset framework, for example, in Cultural Competence (youth <i>should</i> respect the experiences, values, and beliefs of people who are of a different race or culture from their own), in Caring School Climate (students <i>should</i> care about each other), and in High Expectations (teachers <i>should</i> push students to be the best they can be).