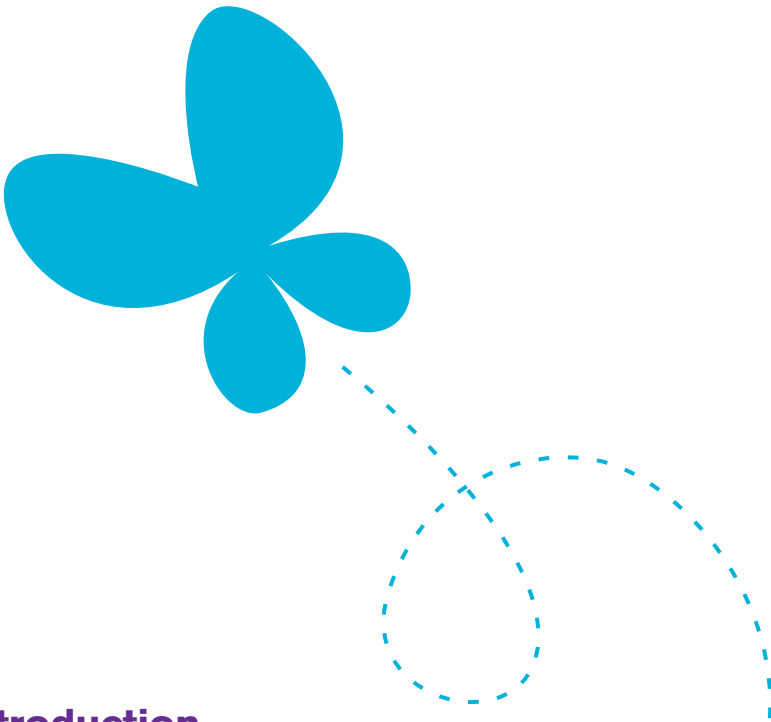




# Youth Speak: How Young People in Greater Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky View Life in Their Community



An Overview of Local Results of the Search Institute® Attitudes & Behaviors Survey

As reported by 6,300 7th & 11th graders in our region November 2007

## Introduction

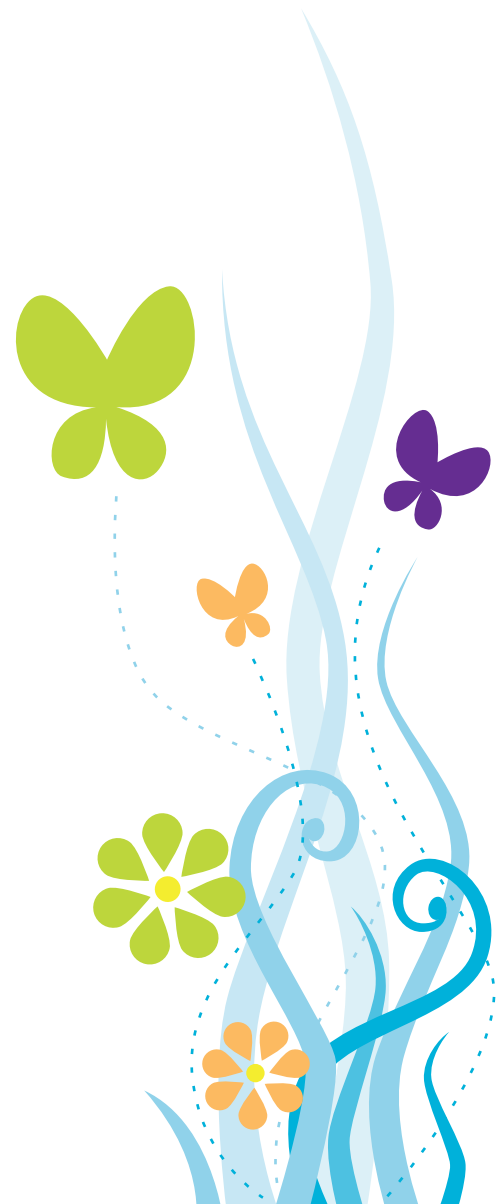
*The Asset Builders Alliance is a coalition of local youth-serving agencies, founded by the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Cincinnati, Boy Scouts — Dan Beard Council, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio — Great Rivers Region, and the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati, and funded by the United Way of Greater Cincinnati. The mission of the Asset Builders Alliance is to mobilize and engage the Greater Cincinnati community around the Developmental Asset research and promote a shift from reacting to children and youth with problems to engaging and developing youth such that they thrive within our communities.*

*Like many people in our communities, we are deeply concerned about a number of trends in our region that affect young people. We decided to administer a survey in which young people gave us their own perspective about what it's like to grow up in this region.*

*We have prepared this report, selecting especially significant data from a longer, very comprehensive report provided by Search Institute®.*

Commissioned by the Asset Builders Alliance for communities in Boone, Kenton, Campbell Counties in Kentucky and Hamilton and Clermont Counties in Ohio.

Report compiled by: Lawra J. Baumann, Ph.D.



# Why Did We Choose the Attitudes & Behaviors Survey?

This survey is **not** intended to generate yet another study of negativity to be shelved away in the offices of social service agencies or local government. The Alliance partners sought to conduct this regional snapshot of 7th and 11th graders to create a baseline of key areas in which the **entire region — parents and policy-makers, mentors and mayors, educators and entrepreneurs, faith-based and fun-based providers alike** — coalesce around a common understanding of practical ways to support the positive development of our kids.

We wanted to understand what factors have the most positive impact on the healthy development of a child, and to identify potential gaps in that positive influence. We found such a framework in Search Institute's® research-based national model — the 40 Developmental Assets®. Search Institute created the **Attitudes and Behaviors Survey®** as a tool for communities to assess the asset development of youth. The survey has already been administered to over two million young people in the United States.

As with any complex social challenge, there is no quick fix for nurturing the well-being of youth. Happy, healthy and socially adept children are nurtured over time, by many people and influences found at home, and in every setting where we find our youth.

*The model is simple: the greater the number of the 40 assets a child develops, the less likely he or she is to engage in risk-taking behaviors, and the more likely he or she is to exhibit indicators of success in academics, health, community service and relationship building.*

The *Attitudes and Behaviors* survey gives us the information we need, in order to understand the settings in which our young people are growing up, and what all of us can do to help them grow up healthy, caring, competent, and responsible.

## What are the Assets?

Search Institute's® framework of Developmental Assets provides a way to assess the health and well-being of middle and high school age youth. The assets represent a common core of developmental building blocks crucial for all youth, regardless of community size, region of the country, gender, family economics, or race/ethnicity. This survey summarizes the extent to which youth in our region report that they experience these assets and how the assets relate to their behavior.

**There are two major types of assets, as defined by Search Institute®** (See Figure 1):

- **External Assets** are positive developmental experiences that surround youth with support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and opportunities for constructive use of time.
- **Internal Assets** are a young person's own commitments, values, and competencies. They are grouped in categories of educational commitment, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. Community is also important to the development of all of the assets.

Figure 1: 40 Developmental Assets		
External Assets		
Asset Type	Asset Name	Definition
Support	1. Family support	Family life provides high levels of love and support.
	2. Positive family communication	Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s).
	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	Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.
Empowerment	7. Community values youth	Young person perceives that adults in the community value 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 or more hours per week.
	10. Safety	Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.
Boundaries & Expectations	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	Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
	15. Positive peer influence	Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
	16. High expectations	Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.
Constructive Use of Time	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.
Internal Assets		
Asset Type	Asset Name	Definition
Commitment to Learning	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.
Positive Values	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 accepts and takes personal responsibility.
Social Competencies	31. Restraint	Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
	32. Planning and decision making	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/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 non-violently.
Positive Identity	37. Personal power	Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
	38. Self-esteem	Young person reports having a 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 her or his personal future.

# Who Did We Survey?

The Asset Builders Alliance, in cooperation with local school districts, surveyed over 6,300 young people in Greater Cincinnati (Hamilton and Clermont Counties) and Northern Kentucky (Boone, Campbell and Kenton Counties) in the Fall of 2007.

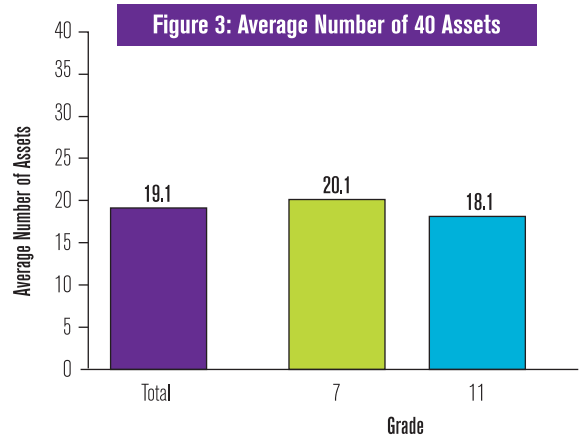
**Figure 2: Who Was Surveyed**

		Number of Youth	Percent of Total
<b>Total Sample</b>		<b>6302</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Gender*</b>	Male	2965	48
	Female	3266	52
<b>Grade*</b>	7	3369	54
	11	2925	46
<b>Race/Ethnicity*</b>	American Indian	161	3
	Asian/Pacific Islander	69	1
	Black/African American	1055	17
	Hispanic	142	2
	White	4349	70
	Multi-racial	470	8

\*Numbers may not sum to "Total Sample" due to missing information.

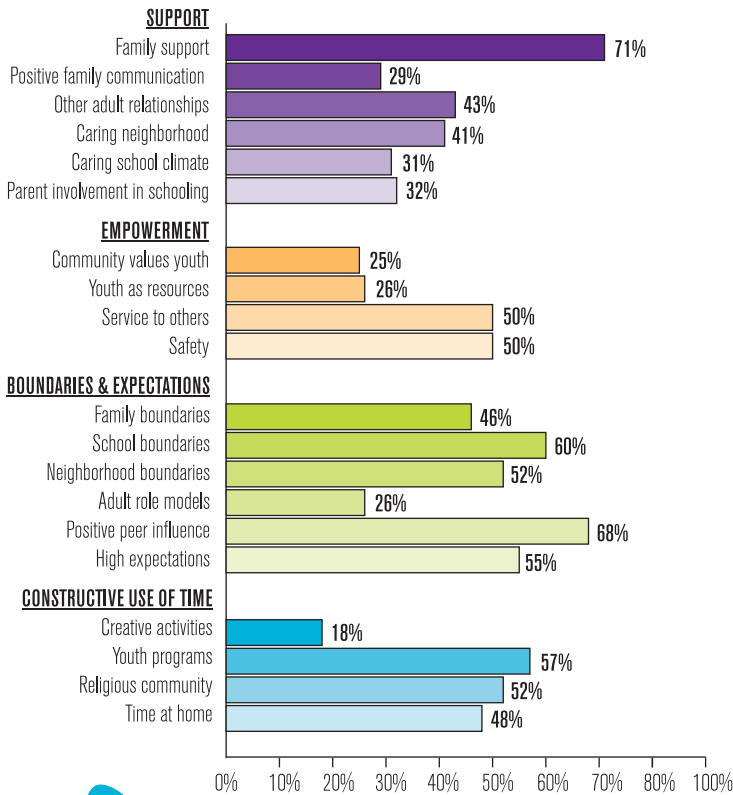
# How Did Our Kids Stack Up?

Our regional sample of over 6,300 young people averaged **19.1 assets** with 7th graders reporting slightly more assets than reported by the 11th grade sample.

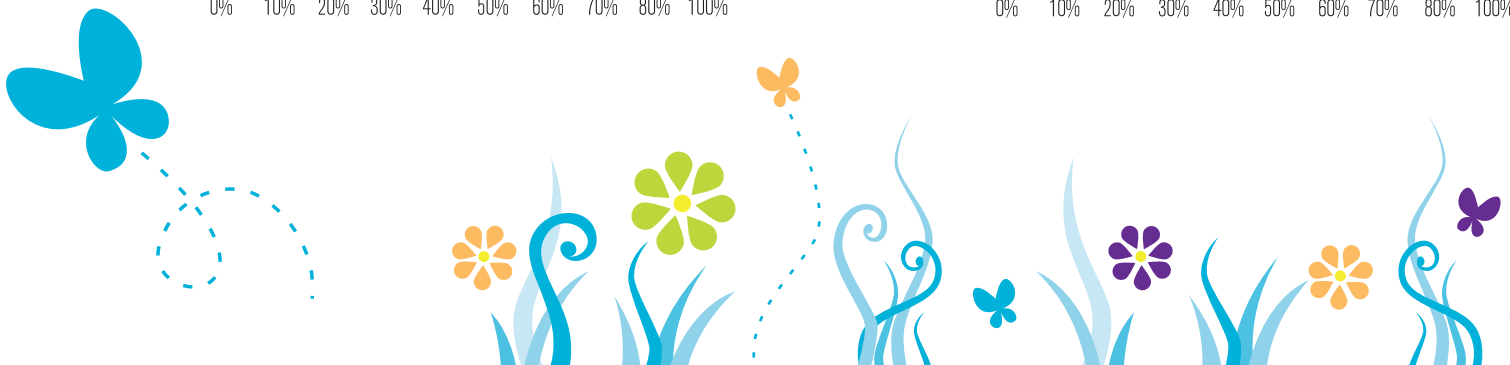
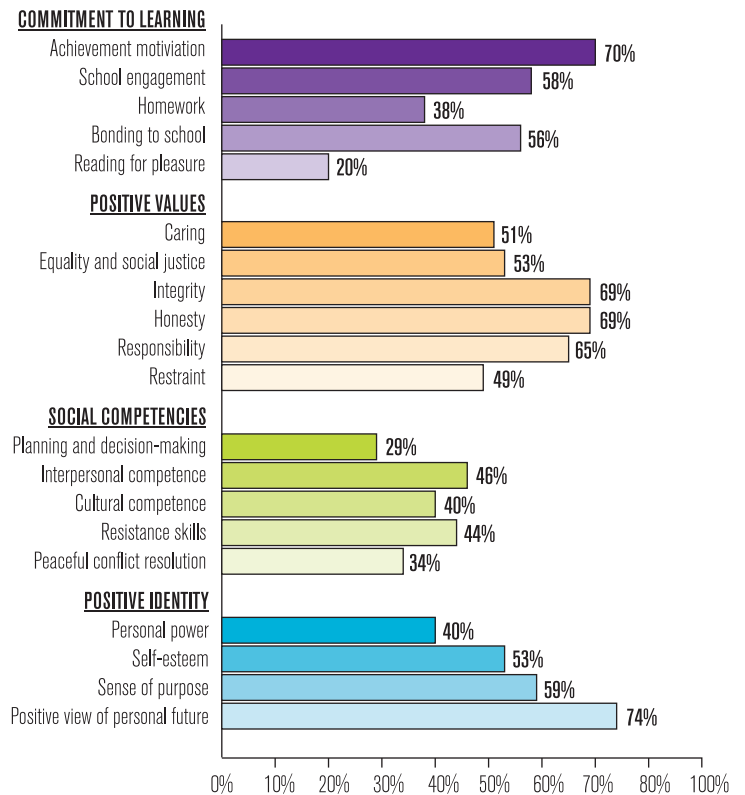


Although the survey reports on all of the 40 assets, there is value in drilling down to the top five and bottom five assets identified by our youth, for this is where we discover the uniqueness of youth in our region. Based on their self-reports, our asset-building strategies will emerge.

**Figure 4: Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 20 External Assets**



**Figure 5: Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 20 Internal Assets**



## What Else Did We Learn From the Survey?

The asset foundation of a young person can be negatively impacted by risk-taking behavior and developmental deficits. Deficits are negative influences, each of which can interfere with the development of assets, thus easing the way into risky behavioral choices. The figure below reports the percentages of local youth engaged in deficit activities.

**Figure 6: Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 5 Deficits, by Gender and Grade**

Deficit	Definition	% Total Sample	% Gender		% Grade	
			M	F	7	11
<b>Alone at Home</b>	Two hours or more per school day	46	44	47	37	56
<b>TV Overexposure</b>	Watches TV or videos three or more hours per school day	34	35	32	34	33
<b>Physical Abuse</b>	Reports one or more incidents, "have you ever been physically harmed (that is, where someone caused you to have a scar, black and blue marks, welts, bleeding, or a broken bone) by someone in your family or someone living with you?"	29	28	30	29	29
<b>Victim of Violence</b>	Reports one or more incidents, "how many times in the last 2 years have you been the victim of physical violence where someone caused you physical pain or injury?"	28	32	25	29	27
<b>Drinking Parties</b>	Reports attending one or more parties in the last year "where other kids your age were drinking."	38	37	38	17	62

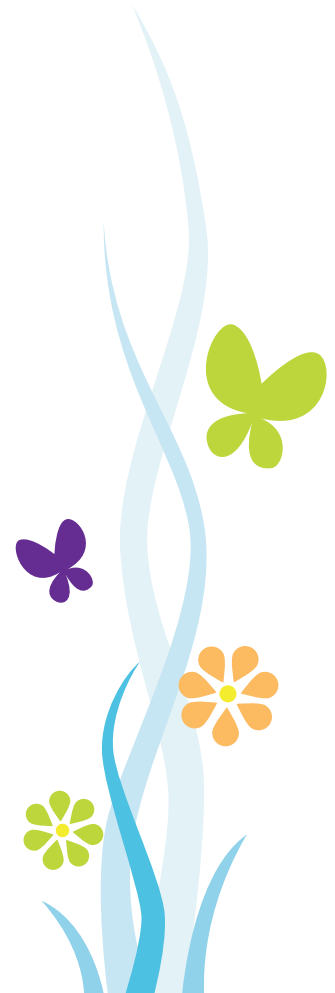
*Each of these deficits is a cause for concern. For example, time alone at home: the U.S. Department of Justice has reported that the most dangerous hours for young people are the afterschool hours of 3-8 pm<sup>3</sup>, when other juvenile crime rises, youth are victimized more often and there is greater opportunity for sexual activity. Other deficits to take note of include the increased frequency of 11th graders involved in drinking parties, and that well over one-fourth of our youth report physical abuse at home to the point of injury.*

The survey also questioned participants about the frequency of involvement in 24 risk-taking behaviors.

**Figure 7: Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 24 Risk-Taking Behaviors, by Gender and Grade**

Category	Risk-Taking Behavior Definition	% Total Sample	% Gender		% Grade	
			M	F	7	11
<b>Alcohol</b>	Used alcohol once or more in the last 30 days	21	21	21	10	33
	Got drunk once or more in the last two weeks	15	15	15	9	22
<b>Tobacco</b>	Smoked cigarettes once or more in the last 30 days	13	12	13	6	20
	Used smokeless tobacco once or more in the last 12 months	6	11	2	3	10
<b>Inhalants</b>	Sniffed or inhaled substances to get high once or more in the last 12 months	8	8	8	10	6
<b>Marijuana</b>	Used marijuana once or more in the last 12 months	16	17	16	5	29
<b>Other Drug Use</b>	Used other illicit drugs once or more in the last 12 months*	6	6	5	3	9
<b>Driving and Alcohol</b>	Drove after drinking once or more in the last 12 months	5	6	4	2	9
	Rode (once or more in the last 12 months) with a driver who had been drinking	30	28	31	30	30
<b>Sexual Intercourse</b>	Had sexual intercourse one or more times	31	33	28	13	53
<b>Anti-Social Behavior</b>	Shoplifted once or more in the last 12 months	25	28	23	21	30
	Committed vandalism once or more in the last 12 months	20	26	14	19	20
	Got into trouble with police once or more in the last 12 months	25	31	19	24	26
<b>Violence</b>	Hit someone once or more in the last 12 months	42	50	34	46	37
	Physically hurt someone once or more in the last 12 months	19	26	13	21	17
	Used a weapon to get something from a person once or more in the last 12 months	5	7	3	5	5
	Been in a group fight once or more in the last 12 months	23	29	19	27	20
	Carried a weapon for protection once or more in the last 12 months	16	23	9	17	15
	Threatened physical harm to someone once or more in the last 12 months	33	38	29	29	39
<b>School Truancy</b>	Skipped school once or more in the last four weeks	18	18	18	17	19
<b>Gambling</b>	Gambled once or more in the last 12 months	27	38	17	24	29
<b>Eating Disorder</b>	Has engaged in bulimic or anorexic behavior	17	14	19	16	17
<b>Depression</b>	Felt sad or depressed most or all of the time in the last month	17	12	21	16	18
<b>Attempted Suicide</b>	Has attempted suicide one or more times	15	10	18	14	15

\*Includes cocaine, LSD, PCP or angel dust, heroin, and amphetamines

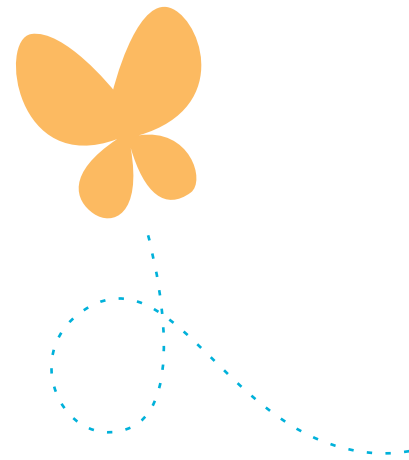


Looking closely at the breakdown of these results, there are troubling trends among our children. Drinking, drug use, and sexual activity escalate between 7th and 11th grades. Girls report greater frequency of dealing with issues of depression and/or attempted suicide. Involvement in violence is a consistent and troubling trend among the two grades, and involves males to a greater extent than females.

The flip side of the coin, however, reveals that despite these worrisome trends, our youth report high incidences of certain thriving indicators, such as overcoming adversity, and offering help to others. (See Figure 8). However, all of the responses tell us that there is still important work to be done regarding the overall developmental health of our young people.

**Figure 8: Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 8 Thriving Indicators, by Gender and Grade**

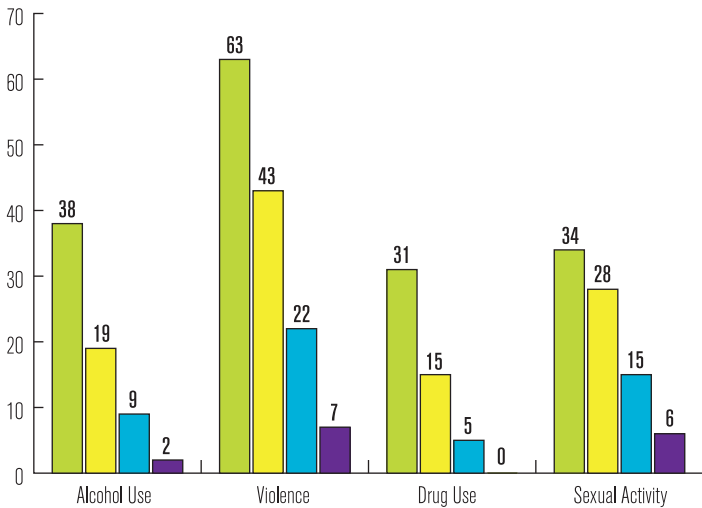
Thriving Indicator	Definition	% Total Sample	% Gender		% Grade	
			M	F	7	11
<b>Succeeds in School</b>	Gets mostly As on report card	21	19	24	23	19
<b>Helps Others</b>	Helps friends or neighbors one or more hours per week	81	78	85	82	81
<b>Values Diversity</b>	Places high importance on getting to know people of other racial/ethnic groups	60	54	65	63	56
<b>Maintains Good Health</b>	Pays attention to healthy nutrition and exercise	57	56	58	62	51
<b>Exhibits Leadership</b>	Has been a leader of a group or organization in the last 12 months	69	68	69	68	70
<b>Resists Danger</b>	Avoids doing things that are dangerous	24	18	30	27	22
<b>Delays Gratification</b>	Saves money for something special rather than spending it all right away	46	49	43	46	46
<b>Overcomes Adversity</b>	Does not give up when things get difficult	72	73	70	70	74



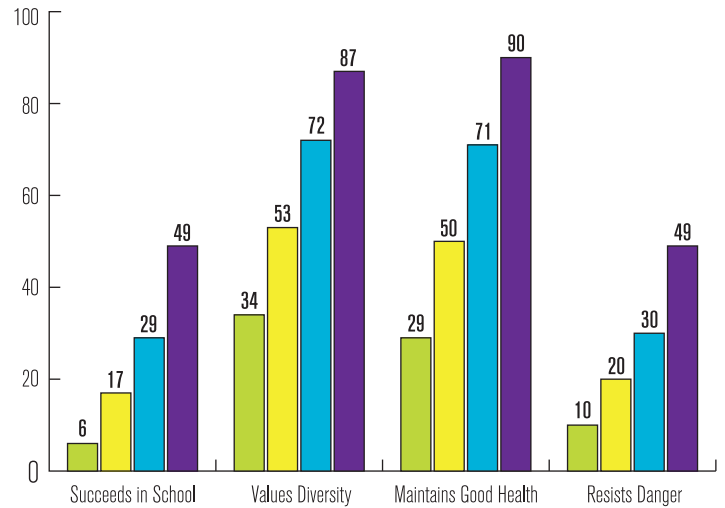
## So What Does It All Mean?

Fortunately, the choices young people make about how to act, what to do, and who to be are not made simply by chance. Their decisions are made based on a web of external and internal influences, including Developmental Assets. Search Institute’s® studies have consistently shown that young people who experience more of the assets engage in fewer risk-taking behaviors, and are more likely to report thriving indicators. In other words, the more assets a young person experiences, the more likely she or he will choose a healthy lifestyle. This has been shown to be true regardless of age, race, gender, economic situation, or region of the country. Again, the logic is simple. Young people with fewer developmental assets tend to report higher levels of involvement in risk-taking behaviors. (The Power of Assets to Protect, Figure 9) The same holds true for the Thriving Indicators — in this case, the more assets, the more thriving behaviors the youth report. (The Power of Assets to Promote, Figure 10)

**Figure 9: The Power of Assets to Protect**

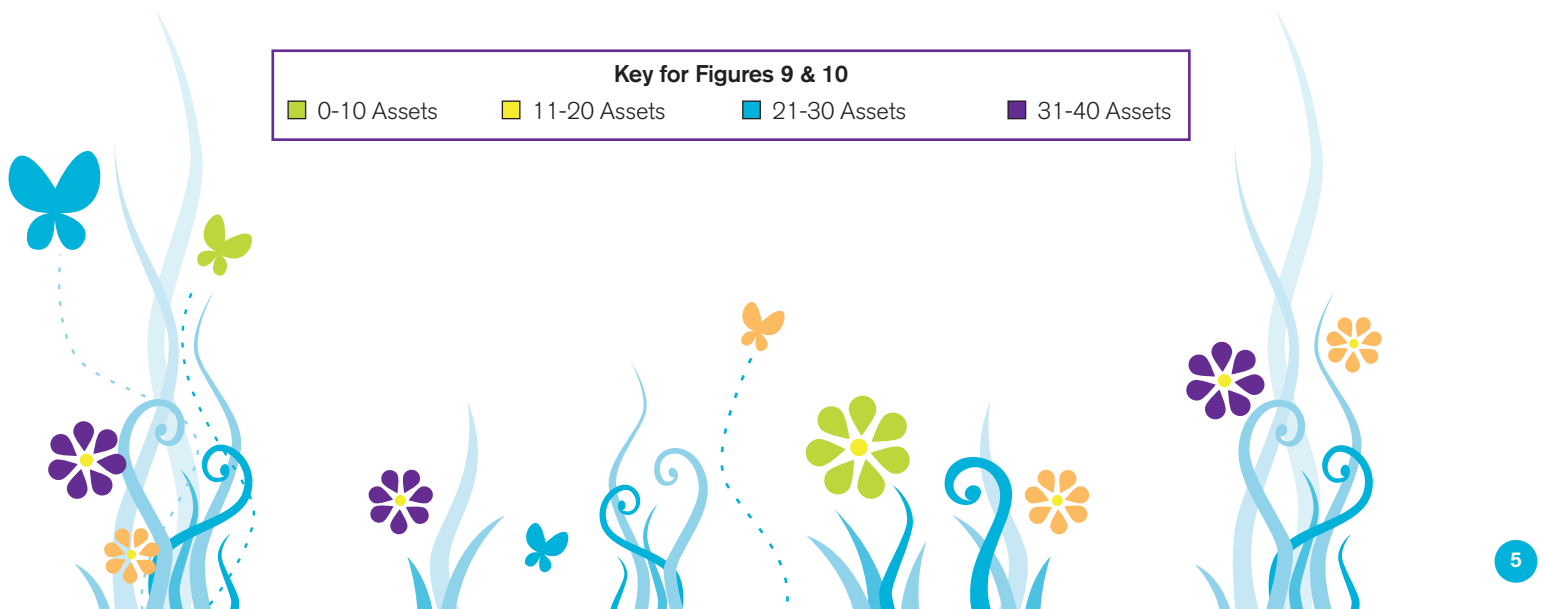


**Figure 10: The Power of Assets to Promote**

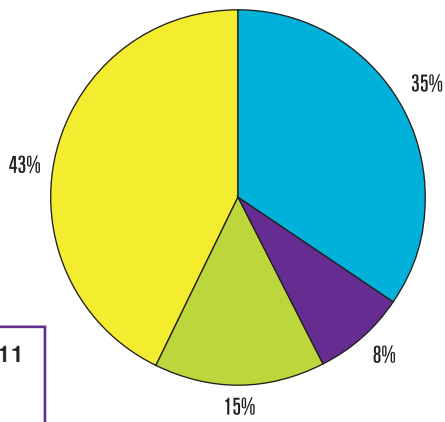


**Key for Figures 9 & 10**

- 0-10 Assets
- 11-20 Assets
- 21-30 Assets
- 31-40 Assets



**Figure 11: The Challenge for Our Community**



**Key for Figure 11**

- 0-10 Assets
- 11-20 Assets
- 21-30 Assets
- 31-40 Assets

## Is There an Action Plan?

Ideally, a community should strive to ensure that all youth experience **31 or more** of the 40 Development Assets. Figure 11 reflects the 40 assets, broken down into four quartiles, and the percent of our survey sample that falls into each quartile as reported by the respondents. Our snapshot of the region revealed that **only 8%** of the students surveyed report 31 or more of the assets. Had our study included youth who have dropped out of school, the picture of assets would likely have been even more somber.

*There is an abundance of research that details the deficits found in our communities and the ramifications those deficits have on our region's vitality and sustainability. What this survey, as well as all those before it suggest, is the need to build our capacity to be communities in which caring, connectedness, and a shared purpose are commonplace, and a commitment to children dominates our public life.*

## What Can I Do? I'm Just One Person!

In our region (Hamilton, Clermont, Butler, Warren Counties in Ohio and Boone, Kenton, Campbell, Grant Counties in Kentucky) there are nearly 400,000 children under the age of 19.<sup>4</sup> The asset development of these children is not just an "inner city" or "at risk" population challenge. The healthy development of each of these children cuts across geography, race and socio-economic class, and is dependent on **every** adult a young person interacts with.

One person truly can have an impact on a child. Refer back to the assets described in this report — so many of the assets are easy to nurture. If you are a neighbor, a member of a congregation, a volunteer, a parent, aunt, or grandfather you have asset-building power. Within the community, there are innumerable, visible ways for business owners, elected officials, teachers, and community leaders to "walk the talk" — to articulate the importance and value of young people participating in community life. Learning one's role and responsibility as a contributing member of the community starts when our kids are respected and valued as kids today. We can help our children know what it means to grow into self-sufficient, productive and civically engaged adults by being positive adult role models who are willing to listen and help youth put those values into practice. Adults are needed individually and in groups to stand shoulder to shoulder with our children to make the community one in which we all serve and we all thrive.

**The most important thing each of us can do, moving forward, is to embrace these six Search Institute® principles, and remind others that:**

1. All young people need assets.
2. Everyone can build assets.
3. It is an ongoing process.
4. Strong and positive relationships are key.
5. Positive and consistent messages reinforce what is important.
6. Redundancy of positive messages and by different people reinforces support for our children.<sup>5</sup>



Additionally, you can become involved with the Asset Builders Alliance. Your one voice can be transformed into a collective voice of people throughout our region who recognize the pressing importance of asset development. Together we can promote the value of creating and sustaining a deliberative strategy to integrate asset development into everyday life for everyone, and most importantly, for every child.



## As a Community, What Can We Do?

There is no single model for how a community launches and sustains an asset-building initiative. However, Search Institute® has identified certain essentials needed to promote asset development.

First, it requires a team of people — representing all socializing systems and voices in the community, including youth — to gather information, plan, and take the lead in mobilizing the region's asset-building capacity. The Asset Builders Alliance will work to invigorate this process, by convening information sessions, offering Search Institute® training and stimulating the growth of networks that support asset building locally.

### Many communities across the country have benefitted from the following Search strategies and suggestions to promote asset development:

- 1. Establish long term goals and perspective** — Striving to increase the average number of assets among our kids to 31 cannot be rushed or done with one single idea or program.
- 2. Mobilize the public** — All residents of the region — including children and youth — need to hear about the power of asset development.
- 3. Think intergenerationally** — Seek opportunities to connect old and young, adults and youth, teenagers and children to tap into asset-building power.
- 4. Expand the reach of family education** — All parents and guardians need multiple opportunities to learn about, remember, and build Developmental Assets, and all sectors of the community can work together to provide these opportunities.
- 5. Support and expand current asset-building efforts** — We may not all use the same vocabulary but many people, places and programs build assets.
- 6. Strengthen socializing systems** — Much asset-building occurs in daily, informal interactions in neighborhoods, schools, religious institutions and workplaces.
- 7. Empower youth to contribute** — In all settings where youth are involved, it should be commonplace to seek their input and advice, to make decisions with them, and to treat them as responsible, competent allies in all asset-building efforts.
- 8. Elevate the importance of service** — Service to others both solidifies caring values and provides opportunities for building the assets of social competencies, empowerment and positive identity.
- 9. Provide places to grow** — Too many youth are disengaged or have no access to the kinds of teams, clubs, organizations and programs that provide safe and active places to develop asset strength.
- 10. Advocate for quality opportunities for young people** — Whether we have children or not, we all have a responsibility to advocate and allocate necessary resources for the highest quality schools, pre- and afterschool care, and other youth programs throughout the region. Everyone should be challenged to contribute their time and talent as volunteers in youth programs, and employers should encourage employees to volunteer on behalf of children and youth.
- 11. Begin the public dialogue** — Begin the conversation about assets and children. Engage others, in congregations, in your neighborhood, at the dinner table. There is a shared set of values and boundaries — unknown at this point to all of us — which every community and its people can articulate and uphold.<sup>6</sup>

*We all know what our children deserve. Let others know that you too are intentional and passionate about nurturing the positive and healthy development of our children. Invest in our future — invest in the assets of our children.*

## Footnotes

1 Coolidge, Sharon. (April 6, 2008) "What Justice for Teenagers?", The Cincinnati Enquirer, p. B1;B3.

2 "Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-being in Rich Countries" (2007): <http://www.unicef.org/media/files/ChildPovertyReport.pdf>.

3 Snyder, H. & Sickmund, M. (1999) *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, p. 65.

4 2000 U.S. Census Data

5 Search Institute (February 2008). "Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth", Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky Region Report for Asset Builders Alliance, Cincinnati, OH, p. 33.

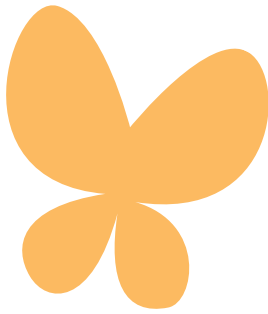
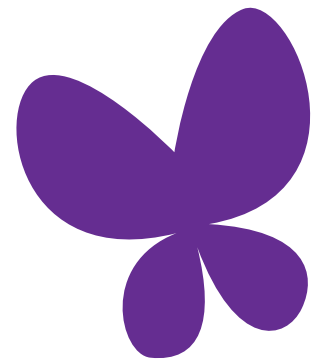
6 Ibid, pp. 34-35.



The Asset Builders Alliance thanks UNIFI, a member company of Union Central Life Insurance Company for its pro bono printing of this report.

**To learn more about Search Institute**

Search Institute  
The Banks Building  
615 First Avenue N.E., Suite 125  
Minneapolis, MN 55413  
1-800-888-7828



**For more information about the Asset Builders Alliance or the  
Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky Region Report, contact:**

**Leigh Ann Luttrell, Executive Director**

The Asset Builders Alliance

1105 Elm Street • Cincinnati, OH 45202

**Office:** 513.362.2038 • **Fax:** 513.651.3540

**Email:** [LLuttrell@cincinnatiymca.org](mailto:LLuttrell@cincinnatiymca.org)

**Or Visit the Asset Builders Website:** [www.ouraba.org](http://www.ouraba.org)