

Assets:

What are they?

Why do we learn about them?

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What are 'assets'?

The concept of assets grows out of research conducted by the Search Institute on youth in the United States. Even though this was American research, it is equally applicable to Canada. Instead of focusing on problems, the research identifies assets that are needed in order that young people grow up to be healthy, compassionate, contributing, principled and caring.

Assets as response to our baptismal vows

Assets can be critically helpful as a framework to help congregations respond positively to the vows they take at the time of an infant, child or youth baptism. Congregational members declare that they will support the child and help him/her to grow in faith. To many this seems a simple idea—provide a Sunday school. But, learning about and using assets points out dozens of ways adults can help children learn, grow and mature.

Two categories of assets—External and Internal

The assets identified by the Search Institute were divided into two broad categories—external and internal assets. External assets come primarily from outside the youth—families, other people and institutions. These external assets are like the nest in which young birds are carefully nourished, nurtured and protected until they mature. The internal assets are commitments, attitudes, values and skills that support youth from within. They are like the wings that provide strength and skill to enable growing birds to thrive and fly.

Program idea

In your session meeting or a Christian nurture committee, look over the list of 40 assets on page 5. Thinking specifically of infant baptism, how might these assets be strengthened? Brainstorm an idea for each asset. For instance:

- #1 (Family support): Provide a community-based parenting skills program
- #2 (Positive family communication): Create for each family a set of "Table Talk" questions
- #3 (Other adult relationships): Match a family with a newly baptized baby with a family with a slightly older baptized child for support and encouragement.

Choose at least one to act upon.

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External Assets

1. Family support
2. Positive family communication
3. Other adult relationships
4. Caring neighbourhood
5. Caring school climate
6. Parent involvement in schooling
7. Community values youth
8. Youth as resources
9. Service to others
10. Safety
11. Family boundaries
12. School boundaries
13. Neighbourhood boundaries
14. Adult role models
15. Positive peer influence
16. High expectations
17. Creative activities
18. Youth programs
19. Religious community
20. Time at home

Internal Assets

1. Achievement motivation
2. School engagement
3. Homework
4. Bonding to school
5. Reading for pleasure
6. Caring
7. Equality and social justice
8. Integrity
9. Honesty
10. Responsibility
11. Restraint
12. Planning and decision making
13. Interpersonal competence
14. Cultural competence
15. Resistance skills
16. Peaceful conflict resolution
17. Personal power
18. Self-esteem
19. Sense of purpose
20. Positive view of personal future

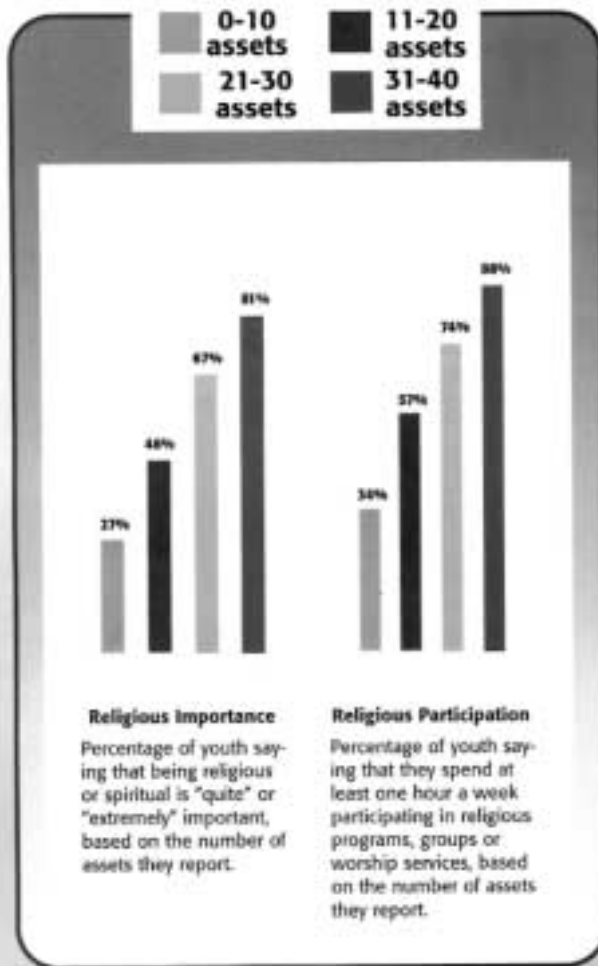
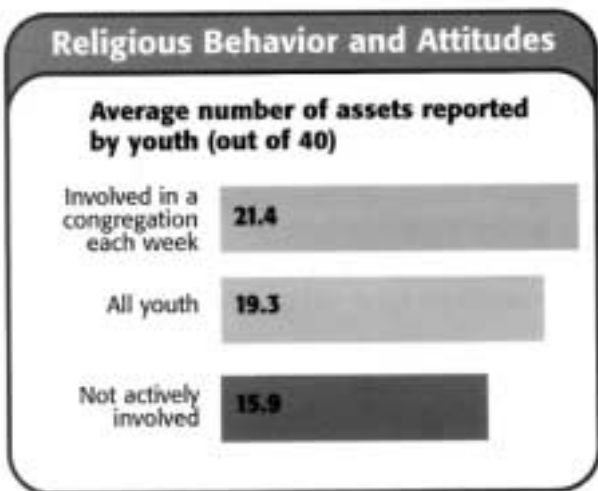
Assets are preventative

Search Institute's research found that the 40 assets powerfully protect young people from a wide variety of risky behaviours, including premature sexual activity, anti-social behaviour and violence, alcohol and other drug use, and more. (See handout, p. 6.)

Photocopy this page and share with committees, parents, teachers, youth. Build a youth program around the positive behaviours, p. 5.

FAITH AND ASSETS

What kind of children and teenagers do we as church leaders seek to nurture through our ministries? In addition to the positive impact on young people's overall well being, emerging research shows very positive links between young people's asset levels and their faith commitment.



1. Religious youth typically report having more developmental assets than those who are not religious. In this sample of young people, those who participate in activities in a religious institution at least one hour per week have, on average, five more assets than those who don't participate. It's likely that some of these additional assets are cultivated or strengthened through their involvement in the congregation.

2. Young people who report having more developmental assets are more likely to say that faith or spirituality is important. Among young people who experience only 1 to 10 of the assets, 27 percent say that being religious or spiritual is important. Eighty-one percent of those who experience 31 to 40 of the assets believe that being religious or spiritual is "quite" or "extremely" important.

3. The more assets young people experience, the more likely they will be active in their church. For many children and teenagers, experiencing higher levels of assets seems to go hand in hand with being active in a congregation. There are a number of good reasons to believe that faith commitment cultivates a number of assets including positive peer influence, community involvement, leadership roles, and restraint.

4. Part of the power of faith and church involvement may be a result of the combination of other developmental assets that are nurtured. Emerging research suggests that, by themselves, the importance of faith and religious involvement have relatively little direct or unique impact on young people's thriving or risky behaviors. What seems to make a difference is that they experience a combination of many other assets as part of the faith community and their own faith commitment. In other words, part of the potential power of churches and other faith institutions comes through the many developmental assets that are already being nurtured through their ministries with young people.

For many, asset building is a starting point for relating to and nurturing children and teenagers. As an effective tool in youth ministry, the starting point for asset building and relating to young people is their faith commitment. This distinction allows Christians to shift their thinking from youth as problems to youth as resources because children are already recognized as gifts from God. As God created us as whole people in body, mind, and spirit, we seek to nurture all areas of a young person's life. Having more assets will help young people be healthier. Nurturing faith helps build more assets. The two certainly are intertwined.

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Assets give a framework

Most congregations build assets, even though they may never think of what they do in those terms. The asset-building concept provides a framework for understanding what they are doing and how members can be intentional about building assets in a child's life.

Assets are shared

Building a children's/youth program on a consciousness of assets provides a common ground on which diverse families and generations can start working together toward shared values and commitments.

Assets are hopeful

If we base our philosophy on problem-centred approaches, it does not take long to drain energy and burn out. Because asset building focuses on young people's strengths, sees youth as resources and focuses on positive possibilities, this approach gives energy and a vision that sustains efforts.

Assets are effective

People want to do things that they believe will make a difference. It is easy for people to see how asset building can lead to healthier families, churches and communities.

Assets are manageable

One person or one group can begin immediately. Building the 40 assets can be seen as 40 goals or priorities. Start with one. Each one makes a difference.

Assets empower

Everyone has a role to play. Positive youth development becomes the responsibility of all members. The youth take a more active role in the congregation and the adults take delight in watching them mature.

Program idea

If you are a Christian nurture committee or a Christian education committee, look over the list of 40 assets. Choose one or two on which you would like to focus for the coming year. Suppose you picked #3—Other adult relationships. Brainstorm all the ways that you could promote this asset in your regular programs. Then brainstorm some new ways that this asset might be introduced into your congregation.

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How would your congregation look differently if you actively used asset building?

What may be happening now

- Program is made up of unrelated activities without a clear mission or purpose.
- It's often unclear what the congregation needs to do that will make a difference in youth's lives.
- The focus is primarily on youth-to-youth relationships.
- Children and youth in the congregation are the responsibility of the youth leader, volunteers, and parents.
- Parents are only superficially involved in the youth program (providing refreshments or being informed.)
- Energy is consumed by reacting to problems after they occur.
- The focus is almost exclusively on running the congregation's own youth program
- The youth worker is primarily a program leader, planner, and mentor for youth in the congregation.

An asset-building approach with children and youth

- The framework helps to integrate diverse activities into a mission with positive outcomes.
- Assets give concrete things the congregation can do to make a lasting difference for youth.
- The focus broadens to building inter-generational community.
- Everyone in the congregation recognizes her or his responsibility for children and youth—and her or his power to build assets.
- Parents are active partners in the youth program, through family activities and parent education.
- Energy is put into nurturing skills and values that help to avoid problems before they start.
- Congregations become committed to cooperating with others in the community
- The youth work also serves as a networker and voice for youth in the community.

Assets are central to the Christian message of health and wholeness (shalom)

It is possible to link scripture to all the 40 assets. Here are a few suggestions.

Prescription for a Healthy Church, Jolene and Eugene Roehlkepartain, Group, 2000, p. 20

Use these scripture passages as a Bible study at committee meetings or devotions at youth meeting.

Asset	Old Testament	New Testament
1. Family support	Deut 6: 1-9	1 Tim 3:2-4
2. Positive family communication	Prov 15:1-4	Eph 4:15-16; 6:4
3. Other adult relationship	2 Kings 2	2 Tim 1:1-14
4. Caring neighbourhood	Lev 19:18, 33-34	Mk 12:31-33
5. Caring school climate	Ezek 34:11-15	Mk 9:37
6. Parent involvement in schooling	Prov 22:6	Lk 2:41-52
7. Community values children and youth	Jer 1:5-8	Mt 19:13-15
8. Youth as resources	1 Sam 16	1 Tim 4:12
9. Service to others	Gen 41:41-43	Rom 12:9-13
10. Safety	Ps 12: 6-8	1 Pet 1:3-7
11. Family boundaries	Ex 20:12; Prov 29:17	Heb 12: 5-13; Eph 6:1-4
12. School boundaries	Ps 7:7-8	Titus 3:1-2
13. Neighbourhood boundaries	Lev 19:15-18	Eph 4:25-28
14. Adult role models	1 Sam 3	Heb 11; 13:7
15. Positive peer influence	1 Sam 20	Phil 17
16. High expectations	Ex 3-4	2 Thess 3: 6-13
17. Creative activities	Ps 148-150	Eph 5:19-20
18. Youth programs	Eccl 3:1-8	Acts 17:22-34
19. Religious community	Isa 35	Rom 12:4-8
20. Time at home	Ruth 1:16-18	Lk 15:11-32
21. Achievement motivation	Neh 2:11-18	Heb 12:1-2
22. School engagement	Ex 31:1-5	Col 3:23-24
23. Homework	Ezra 7:8-10	John 7:14-16
24. Bonding to school	Ps 27:11	Rom 13:1-3
25. Reading for pleasure	Jer 36:1-10	Acts 15:22-35
26. Caring	2 Kings 5:1-3; 7-15	Luke 10:25-37
27. Equality and social justice	Amos 5:24	Matt 25:34-36
28. Integrity	Micah 6:8	2 Thess 2:13-17
29. Honesty	Prov 16:13; 24:26	Luke 3:12-13
30. Responsibility	Ezek 18:1-9	Luke 16:1-13
31. Restraint	Num 25:1-5	1 Thess 4:3
32. Planning and decision making	Isa 1:1-5	Luke 14:28-33
33. Interpersonal skills	Prov 18:16	1 Tim 6:18
34. Cultural competence	Isa 11:1-10	Rom 15: 4-13
35. Resistance skills	Prov 28:4-5	1 Cor 10:13
36. Peaceful conflict resolution	Isa 2:1-5	Matt 5:9
37. Personal power	1 Kings 17:7-16	Rom 12:1-8
38. Self-esteem	Ps 139:13	John 8:31-36
39. Sense of purpose	Isa 43:1-7	2 Tim 4:5-11
40. Positive view of personal future	Jer 29:11-12	Luke 6:20-31

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Want to learn more about assets?

Borrow these videos from the national church library (800-619-7301).

- *40 Assets: Start Over, Starting Now* (An overview of the power of the 40 assets)
- *Assets Happening Here* (Produced by teens for teens; focuses on real life)
- *A Foundation for Success* (Congregations Building Assets in Youth)

Check out the Search Institute Website at www.search-institute.org.

Scrapbooking in Churches— Engaging History

Have you ever asked...

What did we do for our Sunday school concert last year?

Where did we hold our church picnic that time when it poured rain?

When did the Stitch-in-Time Club present the new banners to the church?

With the advent of the hobby of "Scrapbooking"—look in any craft, hobby or stationary store—there are new opportunities for creative and imaginative ways to store historical moments of your congregational life. Ask "scrapbookers" if they will do this for your congregation, then purchase some materials, and store the finished products in your church library or a meeting room where all can enjoy.