



Parents Make A Difference!

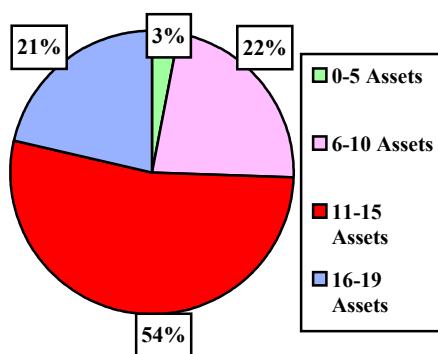
Teens and Assets

August 2003

Positive youth assets are factors that help protect a teen from engaging in risky behavior and promote positive development. Based on responses from the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS), a majority of southwest Wisconsin teens report high levels of each of the 19 positive youth development assets that were part of the survey.

Over one-half of southwest Wisconsin teens report between 11-15 Positive Youth Development Assets of the 19 included in the survey and 21% report 16 –19 assets. Less than 4% of teens report 5 or fewer assets.

Youth reporting positive youth development assets



However, almost twice as many females (27%) as males (15%) report the presence of 16 or more assets. It also appears that the number of assets tends to decline with age. Survey results indicate that 75% of 7th-9th graders report over 11 assets, but less than 70% of 10th-12th graders report the same number.

The chart below identifies the 19 assets that were part of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey. There are differences between males and females on most indicators of positive youth development. Males report higher levels of family love and support, self-esteem, extracurricular activities, and positive communication with their fathers. Females report higher levels on almost all other indicators.

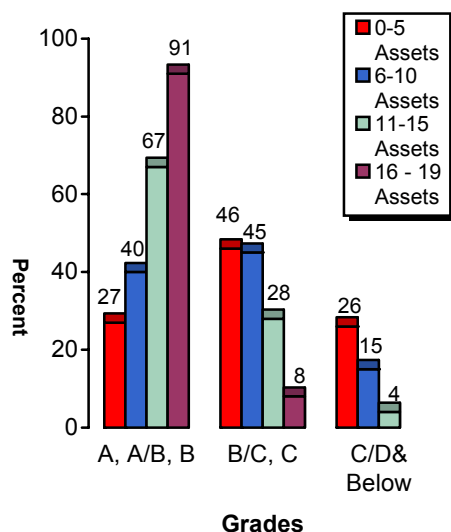
Percent of Southwest Wisconsin Youth Reporting the Presence of Each Indicator of Positive Youth Development

	Male	Female	All Teens
Feels it is important to help others	95%	98%	97%
Feels safe in the community	92%	93%	92%
Has family love and support	90%	88%	89%
Reports high self-esteem	91%	86%	89%
Has parents who are interested in school and progress	87%	87%	87%
Has teachers with high expectations	78%	82%	80%
Spends at least 1 hour per week in extracurricular activities	78%	77%	77%
Has teachers who respect and listen to them	73%	82%	76%
Has parents who enforce rules	71%	75%	73%
Feels respected by adults in community	69%	74%	72%
Has parents who monitor behavior	62%	74%	68%
Reports earning As, A/Bs, and Bs	56%	74%	65%
Reports positive communication with mother	61%	67%	64%
Enjoys going to school	53%	68%	61%
Believes school rules are fair	58%	63%	60%
Spends 1 hour per week in activities out of school	50%	64%	57%
Eats three evening meals per week with family	55%	51%	53%
Spends 5 hours per week on homework	43%	63%	53%
Reports positive communication with father	52%	48%	50%

Why Are Assets Important?

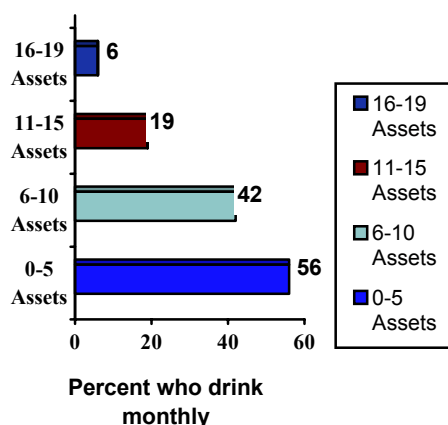
Research by the Search Institute and other youth development professionals documents the impact of assets on teen behavior. Generally, teens with more assets have better school success, more positive mental health, higher self-esteem, a decrease in delinquency, and greater peer acceptance. SYWS results support this research. For instance, 91% of teens reporting 16 to 19 assets receive As, A/Bs, and Bs and less than 1% of teens reporting 16 to 19 assets get C/Ds and below. In contrast, 72% of teens with 0 to 5 assets report receiving B/Cs or lower.

Average Grades in Relation to Number of Assets



Assets also seem to protect teens from risky behaviors. Ninety-five percent of the teens who report possessing 16-19 assets and 85% of teens with 11-15 assets do not smoke. In contrast, 41% of teens reporting 0-5 assets and 66% of teens reporting 6-10 assets do not smoke. Similar trends are seen with alcohol use.

Alcohol Use in Relation to Number of Assets:



These developmental assets also impact a teen's self-esteem. Sixty-two percent of teens reporting 16-19 assets report having very high self-esteem and only 1% report having moderately low or very low self-esteem. For teens reporting 0-5 assets, only 13% report very high self-esteem while 48% report very low or moderately low self-esteem.

Asset Building Ideas for Parents

Research shows that an effective approach to raising healthy, competent kids is to concentrate on building assets. These assets form the foundation young people need to make healthy choices and to succeed in life. Here are some ways to be intentional about asset building:

Regularly do things with your child, including projects around the house, recreational activities and service projects.

Eat at least one meal together as a family every day.

Negotiate family rules and consequences for breaking those rules.

Talk about your values and priorities and live in a way that is consistent with them.

Give your children lots of support and approval while also challenging them to take responsibility and gain independence.

Don't wait for problems to arise before talking to your children's teachers. Keep in regular contact with them about how your children are doing.

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Assets form the foundation young people need to make healthy choices and succeed in life. The more assets youth have, the stronger this foundation will be. Parents can make a difference for their children, but they are not alone. Other asset builders in children's lives include coaches, childcare providers, religious education teachers, 4-H club leaders, teachers and neighbors. Communities can work together to build assets and help young people grow up to be healthy, caring, responsible and successful adults.

"Parents Make a Difference" is a product of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS), a program of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, local school districts and UW-Platteville. This series is adapted from the UW-Extension "Whose Kids?...Our Kids!" series written by S. Small, M. Huser, K. Hintz and D. Doll-Yogerst. This issue was written by Deb Ivey, UW-Extension Iowa County and edited by Ruth Schriefer, UW-Extension Iowa County, Christina Kenney, UW-Extension Grant County, and Tom Schmitz, UW-Extension Grant and Lafayette County. Thanks are extended to the 5,704 7th to 12th graders from southwest Wisconsin who participated in the 2001 SWYS survey. Contact UW-Extension for further information, or by phone Grant County (608) 723-2125; Lafayette County (608) 776-4820; and Iowa County (608) 935-0391 or on the web at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/grant/tap/parentresources.html>