



TAKE THE TIME
BE THE DIFFERENCE

Take the Time

An Assessment of Our Community's Support for Youth

Youth Asset Survey Executive Summary

Many of the essential things that our young people need in order to thrive are missing from their lives. That's a major conclusion of our survey of over 7,600 students in Washington County. The survey measured the presence of 40 assets — building blocks that all children need to grow up healthy, caring and competent.

Assets include the external support that adults provide for young people such as love, guidance, safety, and structure, as well as young people's inner strengths, such as their values, skills and beliefs. The survey results show that young people need more assets in every part of their lives, but most of all they need more support from adults.

On average, Washington County students have only 20 of the 40 proven assets, leaving them vulnerable to many problems. More than a decade of research by the Search Institute, a respected national research organization, has proven that youth need assets in order to help them succeed. Young people with a strong base of support are less involved in dangerous activities such as skipping school, abusing drugs, or carrying a weapon.

The more assets young people have, the better. As we seek solutions to the problems that many of our young people experience, we need to ask ourselves whether we are doing all that we can to help young people succeed. These survey findings show us that we all can and must do more.

This report provides an unprecedented portrait of the supports existing for our Washington County youth. It tells how many young people have each of the 40 assets that they need to succeed. The survey included 7,642 students in the seventh, ninth, and eleventh grades at Beaverton, Gaston, and Tigard-Tualatin School Districts, at Oregon Episcopal School, and at two independent alternative schools. The survey was conducted in the fall of 2001 by the Washington County Commission on Children and Families, a locally-appointed group of volunteers responsible for making sure that our community looks out for the future of every child.

These findings present each of us with a challenge and an invitation to take action. This report provides valuable information for the community-wide campaign of the Washington County Commission on Children and Families called *Take the Time*. This campaign unites thousands of people of all ages in action, to build the supports youth need in order to thrive. To join this high-energy campaign, or to learn new ideas about how you can take the time, contact the Commission on Children and Families today.



Commission on Children and Families

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External Assets

Support

Young people need support in every part of their lives

1. **Family Support.** Young people have a family that loves and supports them.
2. **Positive Family Communication.** Young people talk things over with their parents and are willing to get and give advice.
3. **Other Adult Relationships.** Young people have at least three other adults in their lives giving them support in addition to their parent(s).
4. **Caring Neighborhood.** Young people have the care and support of people who live nearby.
5. **Caring School Climate.** People at school care about each other and help each other succeed.
6. **Parent Involvement in Schooling.** Parents involve themselves at home and at school in helping their children succeed.

Empowerment

Young people need their community to believe they are important

7. **Community Values Youth.** Young people know they are valued by the adults in their community.
8. **Youth as Resources.** Young people serve useful roles in their school, family and community.
9. **Service to Others.** Young people volunteer one hour or more per week to help others.
10. **Safety.** Young people feel safe in their home, school and neighborhood.

Boundaries and Expectations

Young people need rules for success and help in following them

11. **Family Boundaries.** Families set clear rules and consequences, and know where their children are and what they do.
12. **School Boundaries.** Schools set clear rules and provide consequences for breaking them.
13. **Neighborhood Boundaries.** Neighbors share with parents the responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
14. **Adult Role Models.** Parents and other adults set good examples for young people.
15. **Positive Peer Influence.** Young people have friends who set good examples.
16. **High Expectations.** Parents and teachers push young people to reach their full potential.

Constructive Use of Time

Young people need to invest their time in activities that help them grow

17. **Creative Activities.** Young people are involved in music, theater or other arts at least three hours per week.
18. **Youth Programs.** Young people are involved in sports, clubs or organizations at least three hours per week.
19. **Religious Community.** Young people are involved in spiritual growth.
20. **Time at Home.** Young people have a balance of time at home with their family, structured activities, and hanging out with their friends.

Internal Assets

Commitment to Learning

Young people need to act on the belief that learning is important

21. **Achievement Motivation.** Young people try to do their best in school.
22. **School Engagement.** Young people are enthusiastic about learning and come to school prepared.
23. **Homework.** Young people spend at least one hour per day completing homework.
24. **Bonding to School.** Young people care about their school.
25. **Reading for Pleasure.** Young people enjoy reading on their own for at least three hours per week.

Positive Values

Young people need to be self-directed by strong moral values

26. **Caring.** Young people feel that it is important to help others and make the world a better place.
27. **Equality and Social Justice.** Young people believe in fairness and equality and are committed to social justice.
28. **Integrity.** Young people do what they believe is right.
29. **Honesty.** Young people tell the truth — even when it is not easy.
30. **Responsibility.** Young people are responsible for doing the right thing and owning up to their mistakes.
31. **Restraint.** Young people believe it is important for teenagers to abstain from sex and from using alcohol or other drugs.

Social Competencies

Young people need lots of everyday social skills

32. **Planning and Decision-Making.** Young people are good at planning ahead and thinking about consequences before they act.
33. **Interpersonal Competence.** Young people are good at making and being friends.
34. **Cultural Competence.** Young people know and respect people of different racial and cultural backgrounds.
35. **Resistance Skills.** Young people can effectively say no to the things that might harm them.
36. **Peaceful Conflict Resolution.** Young people can resolve conflicts without violence.

Positive Identity

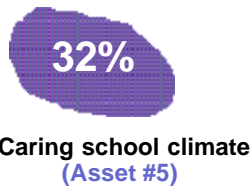
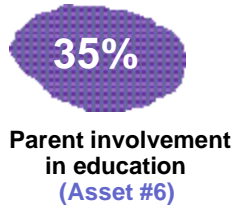
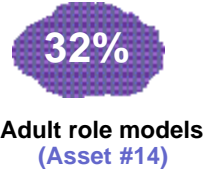
Young people need to feel their strength and purpose guiding them to the future

37. **Personal Power.** Young people believe they have control over the direction of their lives.
38. **Self-Esteem.** Young people feel good about who they are.
39. **Sense of Purpose.** Young people believe their lives have a purpose.
40. **Positive View of Personal Future.** Young people are hopeful and confident about their future.

Issue 1

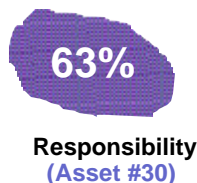
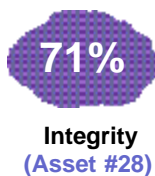
Youth Lack Support They Need From Adults

Young people need more assets in every part of their lives, but most of all, they need more support from adults. Every person, not just parents and teachers, can make a difference. In every school surveyed young people need more assets than they have. The average number of assets youth have are only 20 of the 40 assets. Studies show those students who have between 30 and 40 assets are more likely to thrive. Five of the assets most missing for Washington County youth bring us to a sobering conclusion: young people lack adult support. Three out of four youth sense they are not valued by their community. Fewer than one in three say the adults in their lives set a good example by helping others or refraining from dangerous behaviors. Just over one-third of students polled say that their parents are involved in their education. The message is clear: every adult needs to take the time to provide the support and guidance that children and youth lack.



Issue 2

Young People Have Many Inner Strengths

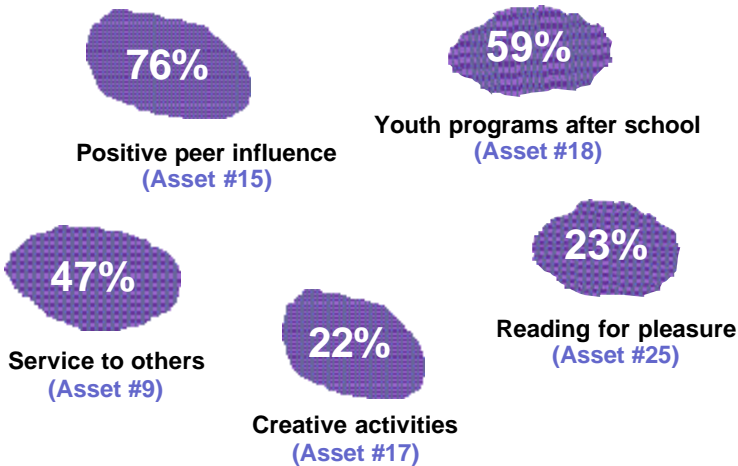
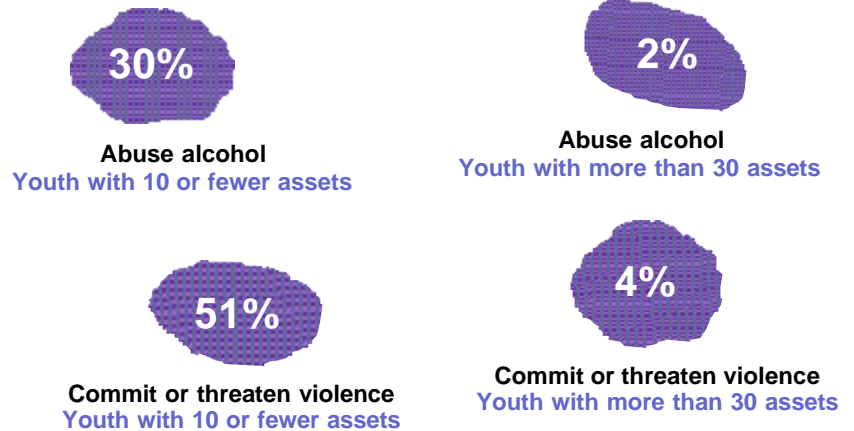


Despite the alarming lack of adult support, there is reason to hope. Most young people have a strong foundation of internal assets — those values, beliefs, skills and goals that can serve as a compass to guide young people’s decisions and actions. Young people’s inner strengths are among their greatest assets. Two-thirds have a strong sense of integrity and honesty. Most surveyed youth are optimistic about their future. These hopes and convictions contradict the popular belief that youth people simply don’t care.

The illustrations show the percentage of students who have each asset. The asset number refers to the asset’s definition in the list on page 2.

Lack of Assets Make Youth Vulnerable

The more assets youth have the less likely they are to engage in risky behavior. Half of our students in Washington County have less than 20 assets, which can have serious consequences for our youth and our community. This survey measured youth involvement in 24 high-risk activities, including alcohol and other drug abuse, skipping school, crime, violence, and becoming sexually active at an early age. Throughout Washington County, young people who have fewer assets (10 or less) are nine times more involved in these high-risk activities than youth who have more than 30 assets.

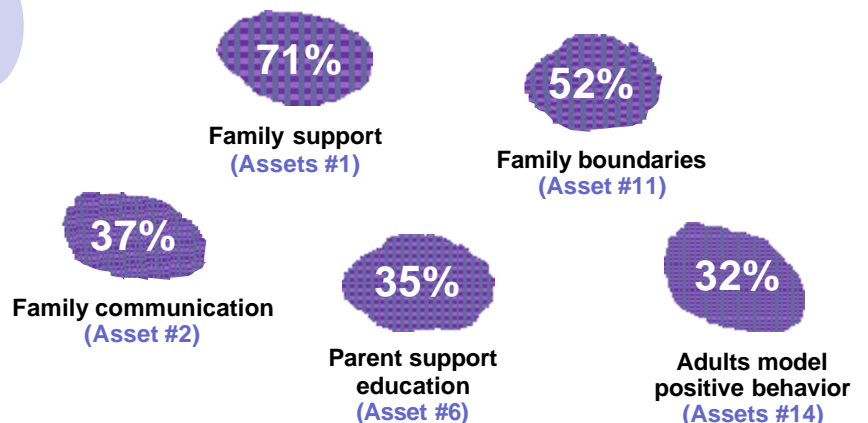


Choices Matter

Adult support is vital to youth. But as young people mature they learn to be more responsible for making their own choices. How youth spend their time, and who they spend it with, directly influences their safety and success. The majority of youth surveyed value their friendships with peers. Spending time with friends who are a positive influence is an important factor in youth success and resisting risky behaviors. Nearly half of Washington County youth volunteer at least one hour per week in their community, and fifty-nine percent choose to spend their time in after-school activities that support their growth, such as sports or youth clubs and programs. Few Washington County youth have creative outlets, with only one in four finding time to read for pleasure. Fewer still are involved in music and the arts on a regular basis. This may show a lack of interest, or it may reflect the fact that school and community choices are limited for our aspiring young artists.

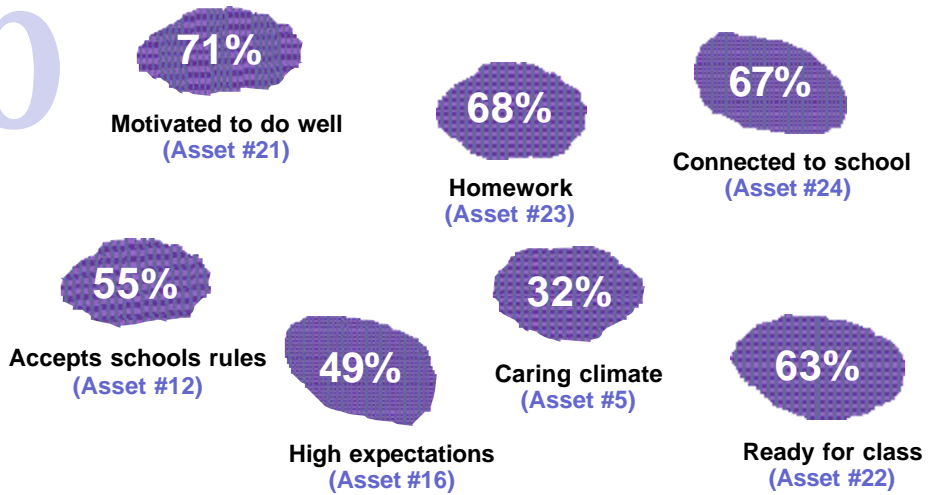
Parents Matter

Parents set the foundation for their children's success by offering support and guidance. Seventy-one percent of youth surveyed say they receive love and support from their parents, but twenty-nine percent do not receive enough support. Although many young people have caring families, only one-third say they experience positive family communications, such as talking to their parents about the serious issues they face. Only a third say their parents are significantly involved in their education by attending school meetings, helping with homework, and talking about school. Half of our youth report that their parents do not provide enough structure, by setting clear rules and providing consequences for breaking them.

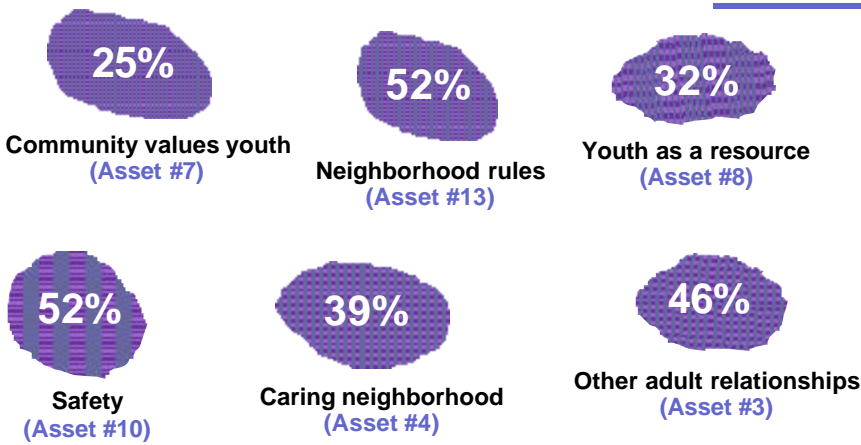


Schools Matter

Schools have enormous influence on young people. In addition to supporting academic achievement, schools are a place where youth develop social skills, cultivate positive values, and build self-confidence. Most students viewed school as important. Seventy-one percent are motivated to do their best. Two-thirds complete one or more hours of homework on school days. But less than half of students surveyed are held to high expectations by teachers and parents. The other fifty percent are frequently bored and often come to school without their books or homework. For most students, school could be a more caring place. Only one student in three feels that the people at school — both students and adults — care about each other.



The Community Matters



Young people need to know community values them. Adults outside of school and home also touch the lives of children. Neighbors, coaches, and extended family members and friends send messages that make youth either feel valued or unwanted. Three out of four youth say that adults don't value them or listen to what they say. Only a third say they are included in the decision-making process about their school or neighborhood. Thirty-nine percent say their neighbors care about them, and only half of our young people say they know at least three other adults besides their parents who give them support.



The illustrations show the percentage of students who have each asset. The asset number refers to the asset's definition in the list on page 2.

We Can All Do More to Support Youth's Success

Through years of everyday experiences children form the values, skills and beliefs that help them to meet the challenges of adolescence. Parents, teachers, neighbors and relatives can help young people develop these inner strengths by the examples they set. The data below show that we have made more progress in some areas than others. Many young people have a strong moral foundation, but fewer have developed important social skills, or have a healthy sense of self. Youth need opportunities to learn how to get along with others and how to make wise choices. We must also examine the way that adults' attitudes about young people damage the way they feel about themselves. Adults can and must nurture the hope and strengths of young people by providing needed caring and guidance. All 40 of these essential assets can be built in our homes, neighborhoods, and communities through well-chosen daily actions such as a caring question or an offer of help. The direction is clear — we must take the time to translate our caring into action.

Here are some ideas to get you started. As you can see, these are simple everyday things that we can all do.

What Families Can Do

Sometimes it's hard for parents to accept that children grow up and form their own beliefs and opinions. Families often find it challenging to keep the lines of communication open. Teens say their parents lecture them instead of just listening to their concerns. Melanie Osacho, a senior at Beaverton High School, has found a way to bridge that gap. Each week the family heads down to the basement for a meeting, where everyone gets a chance to have the spotlight. After a few sessions they realized they'd found a fun and positive way to stay "connected".

What Faith Communities Can Do

Inspiration to take action can be right in your back yard. Church leaders from Tualatin United Methodist Church formed a partnership with the local library and YMCA to provide a summer reading and activity program for children and youth of the apartment complex next door. Craft tables and comfy reading spaces filled the church play area, creating an inviting space for kids and family members to enjoy. Pastor Wes Taylor wants families to know that his church is watching out for the "neighbor kids", too.

What Seniors Can Do

Simply listening to young people can contribute a great deal to their development. Retired resident, Marilyn Read, knows what that means as a SMART (Start Making A Reader Today) volunteer at Tualatin Elementary School where she listens to kids read during their lunch hour. More than reading happens during these visits, as kids share their ideas and dreams. Marilyn shows kids that adults care about them in the community.

What Schools Can Do

Older student volunteers in middle and high schools in the Tigard-Tualatin School District partner up with incoming students in the fall and remain their buddies throughout the year to help them get accustomed to school life and feel connected. This idea has really worked because young people share the responsibility with teachers and staff to create a welcoming school climate.

What Organizations Can Do

In Sherwood, city officials chose to "hire" the high school home economics class instead of a professional catering service for a community meeting. Students learned valuable skills about coordinating and carrying out an event, and the community saw youth contributing in a positive way. And the food was pretty good, too!

For more ideas and assistance, call 503-846-2979.