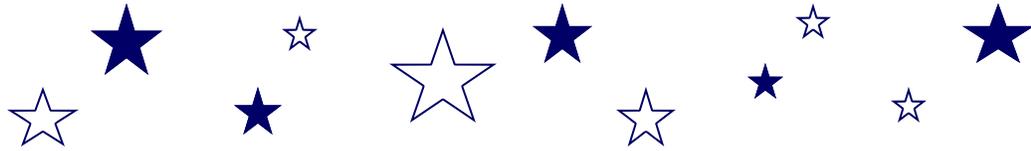




KIDS COUNT in Delaware Issue Brief



Building Assets in Youth

Fall 2013

Our collective future success is dependent on how well today's youth are prepared for a productive adulthood. Preparation includes a focus on the capabilities, strengths, and developmental needs of young people without ignoring their weaknesses or problems. Developmental Assets, developed by The Search Institute, are 40 common sense, positive experiences and qualities that help influence choices young people make, while helping them become caring, responsible, successful adults.

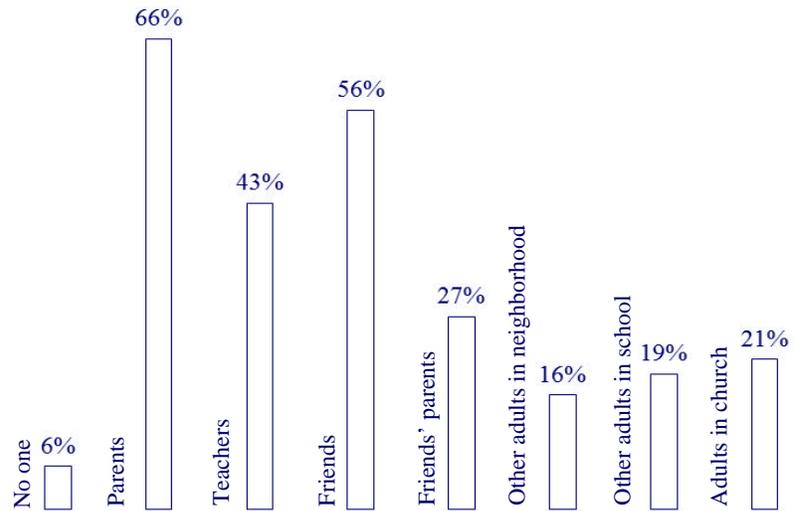
Developmental Assets

Developmental Assets pull from three types of applied research:

- ★ **Positive youth development** which highlights basic processes and dynamics in development important for growing up healthy;
- ★ **Prevention** which highlights protective factors that deter high-risk behaviors; and
- ★ **Resiliency** which identifies factors that increase the ability for young people to recover from adversity.

Support

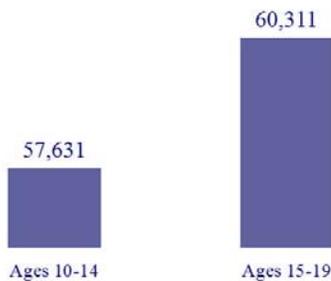
Who gives you a lot of support and encouragement? 8th Graders, Delaware, 2012



Source: 2012 Delaware School Survey, Center for Drug and Alcohol Studies, University of Delaware

Population at a Glance

Young People Aged 10-19, Delaware, 2012

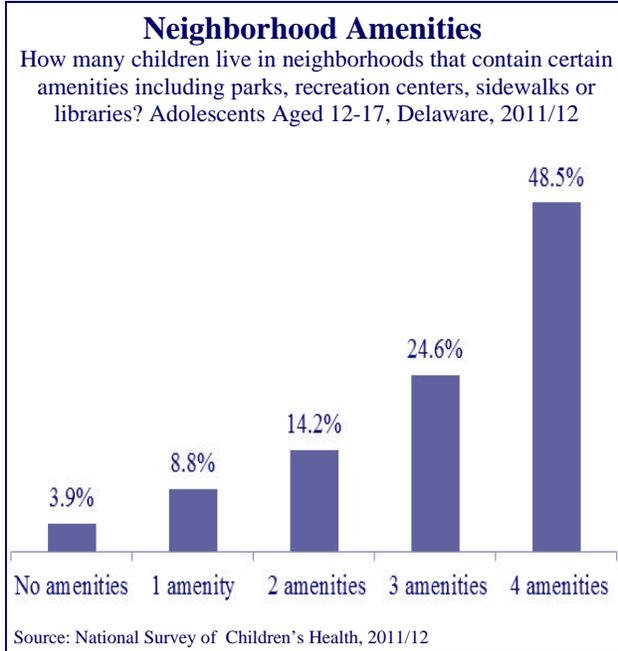


Source: Delaware Population Consortium, Population Projection Series, Version 2012.0

The average young person in the US experiences fewer than half of the 40 assets. In Delaware, The IM40 Young Health Program is a social movement that will enable vulnerable youth age 12-15 to increase their inventory of developmental assets. With the help of caring adults in community asset building programs, the IM40 Movement is a statewide effort to build supports for Delaware's young people. Evidence shows that the more assets a youth reports having, the less likely they are to engage in certain high-risk behaviors. The positive power of assets is also evident across cultural and socioeconomic groups of youth.

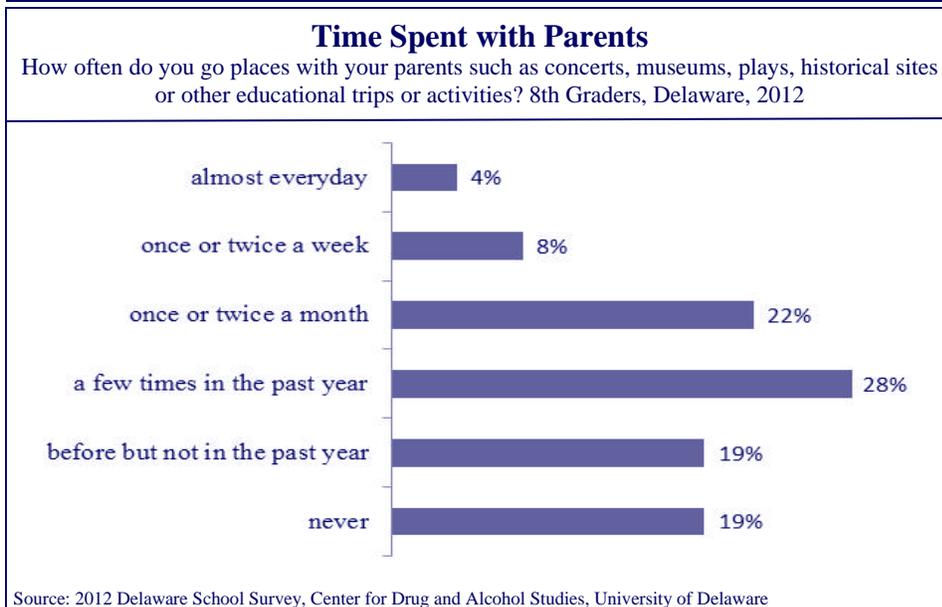


External Asset – Support



Research shows that support, coordinated community connections, and adult accountability are essential for children, especially given the fears, pressures and stresses of the recent economic recession. Young people want relationships with the larger world. They need to know they are valued and they need guidance and support, whether it is academically, socially, or emotionally, from both their family and their community. Due to the unprecedented challenges facing families during this recession, now more than ever, youth need the adults in their lives to help support them in preparing for a positive adulthood – including providing them with a safe place to live and grow, to exposing them to college opportunities. Despite these challenges, youth remain hopeful and determined to achieve their goals. Developing their assets further will only increase their existing potential.

Ideally, young people experience an abundance of support not only from their families, but also from many other people in their community. An asset such as family support provides youth with high levels of love and emotional support, while positive family communication encourages the youth to seek advice and counsel from their parents. Parental involvement in schooling is a great example of the importance of positive, supportive relationships.



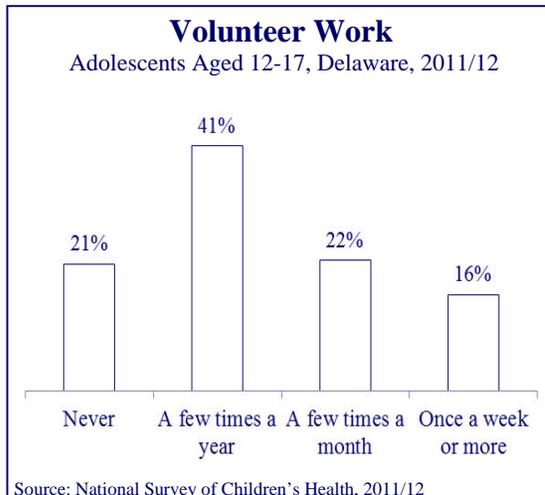
According to the 2012 DE School Survey, 58% of DE 8th graders report that they get along well with their parents most of the time. Additionally, 59% report feeling safe in their neighborhood and 54% feel safe at school.



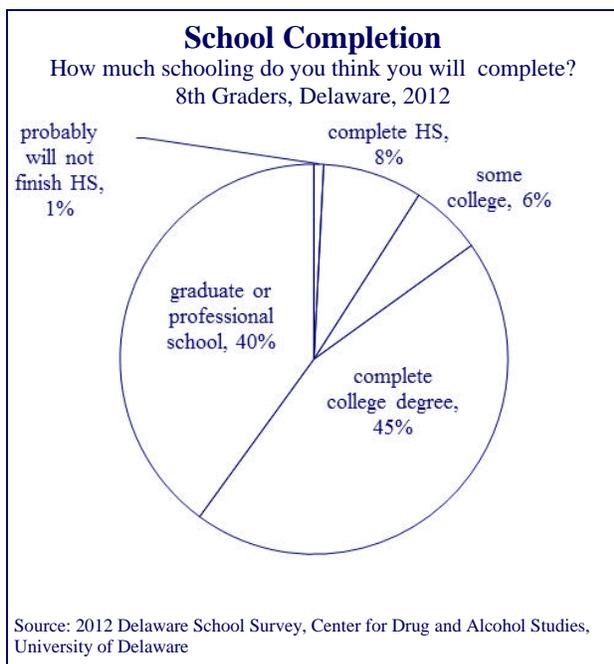


External Asset – Empowerment

Empowerment assets relate to the key developmental need youth have to be valued and valuable. Assets such as safety, in home and in the community, the perception that the community values youth, and youths’ service to others foster environments for effective ways of keeping youth connected. Research shows that youth who volunteer have better outcomes than those who do not volunteer; however, many disadvantaged or disconnected youth never have the opportunity to volunteer. When disconnected youth are connected with high quality volunteer opportunities, they are less likely to engage in risky behaviors such as drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and teen pregnancy.



The most effective communities should engage and utilize adolescents as active participants in program development and community activities. Well-designed service-learning efforts meaningfully build developmental assets, which, in turn, contribute powerfully to positive life outcomes.



The transition to adulthood is not an automatic process. Development is a mix of economic factors, personal decisions, and societal influences. Unfortunately, disconnected youth are especially unprepared to graduate, find employment, learn to handle new independence and make responsible decisions due to fragmented support, unstable resources, abuse or neglect, and family life. Mentoring, service-learning, job shadowing, internships and volunteer opportunities are effective and established ways to keep youth engaged and connected.

“I volunteer because of the idea of altruism. Volunteering brings out your maturity and makes you realize that there is more to life than just yourself.”
~Delaware Youth

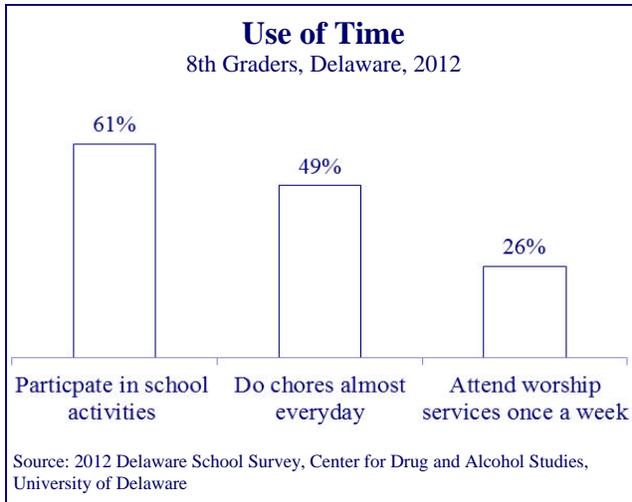


“I volunteer often because it is fun, so you do it more, and because it is always important to use your free time to help others. Not everyone was given the same opportunities as me so I think it is my job to give back.”

~Delaware Youth



External Assets – Boundaries & Expectations; Constructive Use of Time



Boundaries and expectations refer to the need for youth to have clear and enforced boundaries to complement their experience of support and empowerment. More free time coupled with less support and guidance from adults can undermine an adolescent's ability and motivation to take responsibility for their health and behavior choices. Parents can play a critical role in helping their children engage in healthy risk-taking by clearly defining boundaries and supporting constructive uses of time.

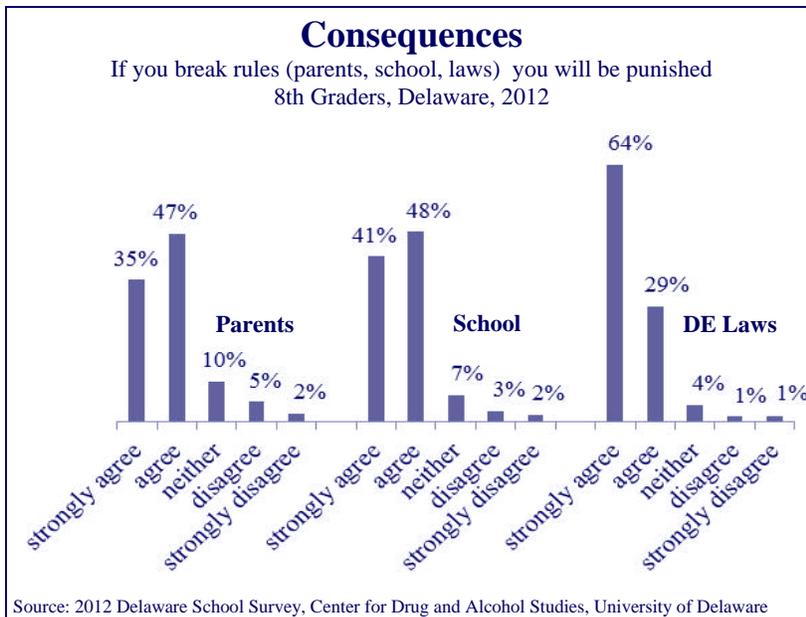
I consider my brother my role model. I feel that I can talk to him about college and girls and ask him for advice because he has already been through all these things so he can relate to me.
~Delaware Youth

70% of DE 8th graders who strongly agreed or agreed that there are consequence for breaking their parents rules also reported they did not consume alcohol in the past year.

Participating in youth programs or religious activities can positively influence identity, goal-directed behavior, emotional growth, social skills, and social capital. Youth participating in programs learn to empower themselves, as well as their peers.



Positive role models are also important in the development of positive behavior. Adolescents who are connected with positive role models have better attitudes toward school, improvement in quality of peer and adult relationships, increased self-control and improved relations with parents. Positive youth development is a strength-based way to understand how youth influence and are influenced by environments in which they live.

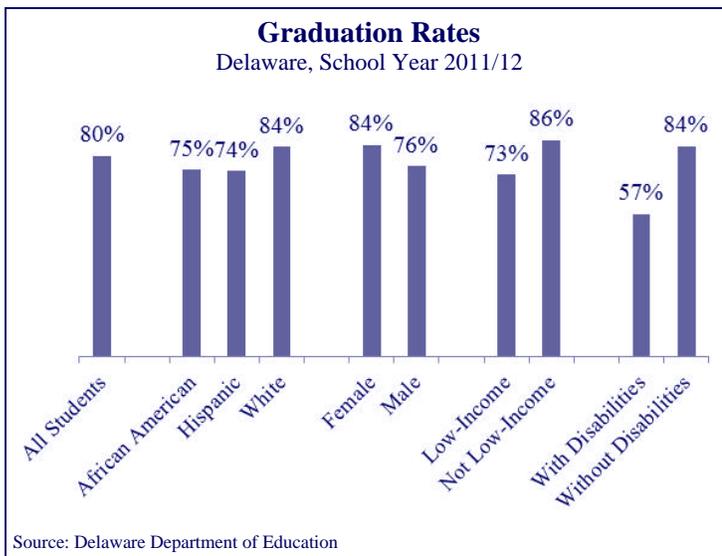
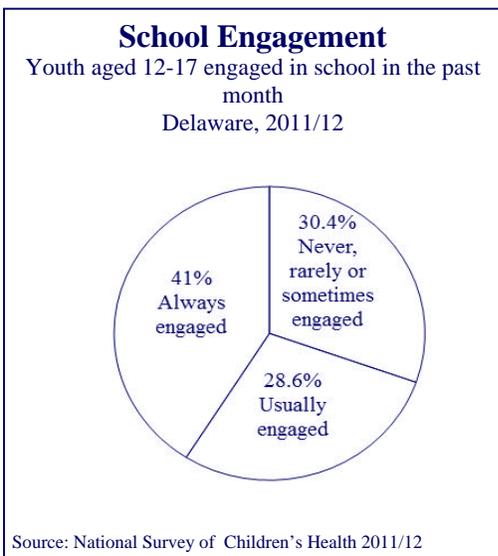


Community is at the heart of the success of asset development because youth are directly shaped by their peers, youth programs, religious congregations, neighborhoods, schools and families. Community shapes the views of the child as well as their developmental assets. When successful, community reduces high-risk behaviors and promotes health, well-being and thriving.



Internal Assets – Commitment to Learning

Education plays a primary role in equipping young people with the skills, knowledge and experiences for achievement. A child’s early academic success may indicate a higher skill level and could influence the later work and salary a child is capable of achieving. Research shows that achievement motivation and school engagement directly contribute to an adolescent’s success in school across all racial-ethnic groups. These developmental assets strengthen an adolescent’s commitment to learning by actively encouraging them to do well in school and to continue to succeed for themselves and their future. In order to achieve at higher levels, youth need constant support from their parents. Parents who provide literacy materials, hold high expectations, and emphasize effort over ability will positively impact their children’s performance.



Internal assets are a set of individual qualities values, skills & self-perceptions that help youth become effectively self-regulating, which promote positive outcomes & behavior.

A “Student Success Plan (SSP)” is developed and updated annually by the student, the student’s advisor, at least one other staff member and the student’s parent/guardian, which identifies courses needed to prepare for work or college as well as support services necessary for high school graduation. Central to SSP is an interactive website that students can use to learn about careers and schools, set goals and develop a plan for academics, activities or other experiences they’ll need during high school.

The SSP program has great promise because it empowers students to take charge of their futures. While encouraging them to think, dream and imagine, it also gives them the tools and support needed to make their dreams a reality.

How frequently have you used your Student Success Plan?

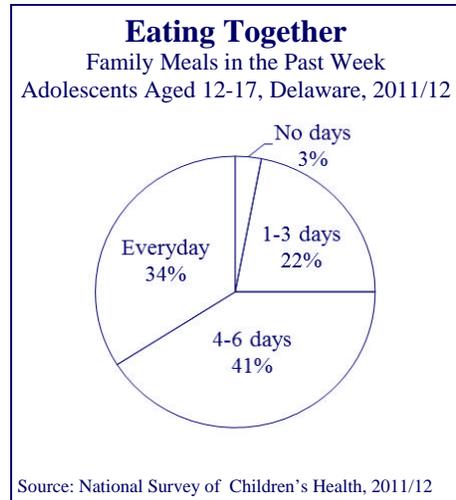
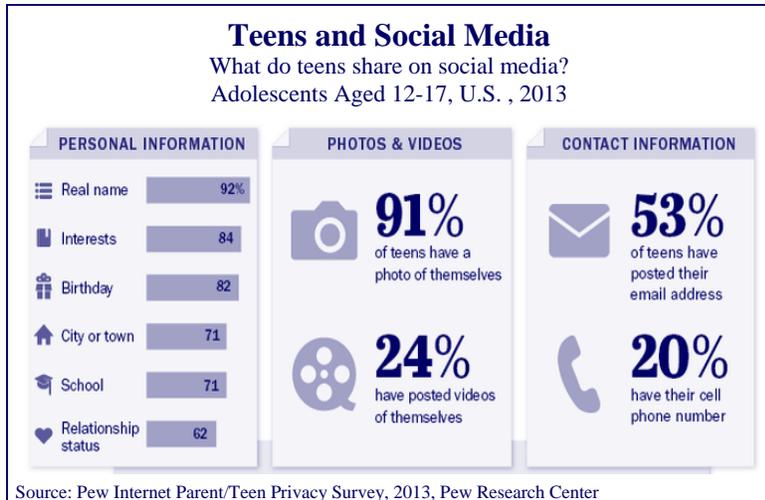
8th Graders, Delaware, 2012



Source: 2012 Delaware School Survey, Center for Drug and Alcohol Studies, University of Delaware



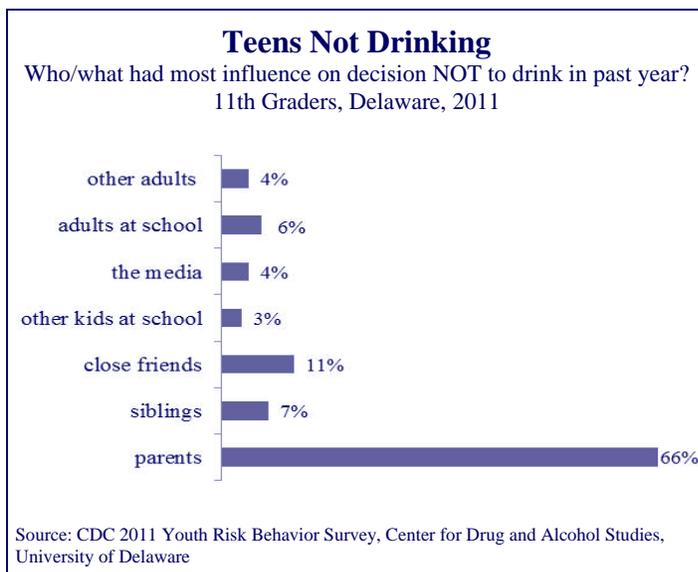
Internal Assets – Positive Values



Positive values are important “internal compasses” that guide young people’s priorities and choices. Protective factors, or assets, can offset the presence of risk factors in a community and therefore reduce the likelihood that youth will engage in substance abuse, violent activities or other risky behaviors.

Restraint and Responsibility are internal assets that promote positive values in youth. To have a positive impact on the lives of Delaware adolescents, adults can foster relationships that provide support, guide and value youth.

Youth are increasingly engaged in high-risk behaviors regarding their sexuality, physical health, and mental health. Youth who regularly use or abuse alcohol are more likely to experience major depression and mental illness, engage in unplanned and unprotected sex, have been victims of violence and drop out of school. Another emerging trend among adolescents is “sexting” or sending explicit images of themselves to others via text message or email. Because texting allows for a false sense of autonomy, it is easy for teens to overlook the personal, social, and societal consequences of their actions.



My parents are positive role models in my life because they act like parents; they have leverage over me and have strict rules, but they only want the best for me.

~Delaware Youth

Resilience means being able to bounce back from difficult times and cope well with challenges. Factors that promote resilience among adolescents include having caring relationships with adults, an easygoing disposition, cognitive skills, confidence, and strong internal values.

~Child Trends

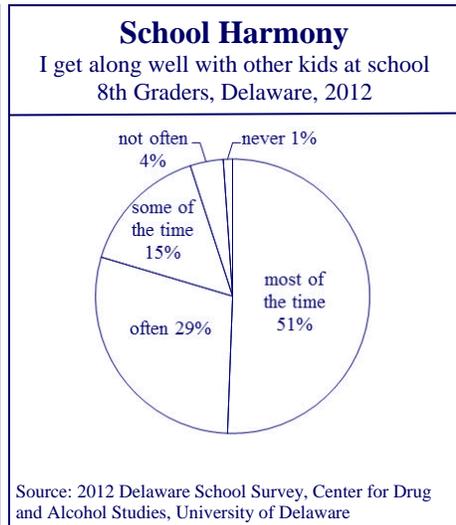
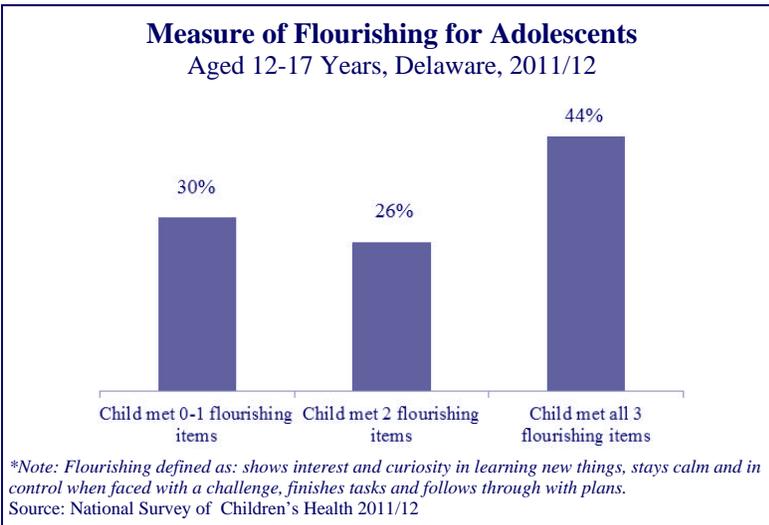
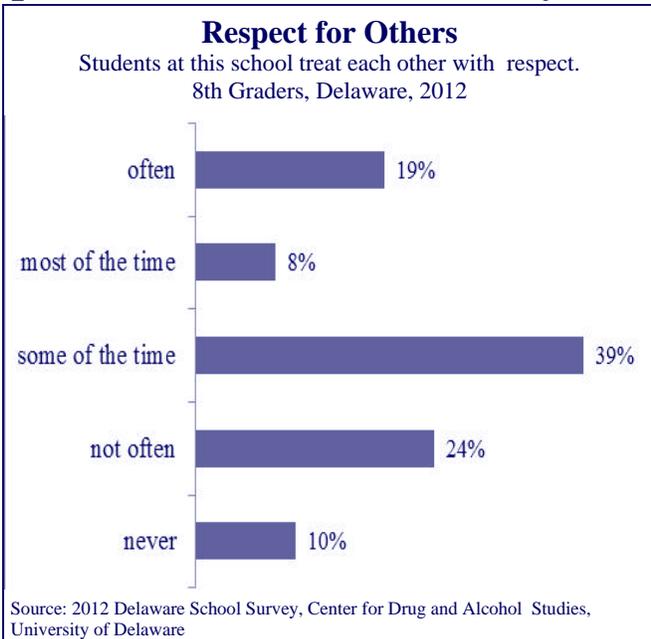


Internal Assets – Social Competencies and Positive Identity

Positive social skills and positive identity are critical for healthy social development. Social competencies reflect important personal skills young people need to negotiate choices and options they face. These skills lay a foundation for the development of independence and competence as young adults.

Youth with positive social skills are more likely to have high self-esteem, have positive relationships with peers, and achieve in school. Exhibiting the asset of positive social behavior means that youth are interpersonally and culturally competent.

Programs that promote social skills can help increase the likelihood of positive outcomes for adolescents, and reduce negative or aggressive social behaviors, such as bullying, fighting and delinquency.



What Works? Program Strategies That Promote Positive Social Skills

- ★ **Setting:** Employ community-based programs with vulnerable populations or school-based programs
- ★ **Population:** Involve parents for children in middle childhood; involve peers for children in middle childhood and adolescence
- ★ **Delivery Method:** Employ instruction strategies and integrate instructional technologies
- ★ **Staff Selection:** Use teachers as intervention facilitators; Inclusion of paraprofessionals
- ★ **Content:** Teach problem-solving skills; target multiple skill sets; incentivize programs that target aggressive behaviors



All young people need assets. While it is crucial to pay special attention to youth who have the least resources (economically and/or emotionally), all children and adolescents will benefit from having even more assets than they now have.

Everyone can build assets. All adults, youth, and children can play a role in developing assets by spreading positive messages to and about young people across the community.

Building assets is an ongoing process. Asset development starts when a child is born, and continues through high school and beyond.

Relationships are crucial. A key to asset development is strong relationships between adults and young people, between young people and their peers, and between teenagers and younger children.

Send consistent messages. Asset building requires consistent, positive messages about what is important.

Repeat the message. Young people need to hear the same positive messages and feel support from many different people.

LIVE UNITED



United Way of Delaware

UWDE.org

*Special thanks to the
United Way of Delaware
for making this Issue Brief possible.*

Put Data Into Action:

Ways to Make KIDS COUNT in Delaware

Listen to a child ★ Ask your local schools how you can become a tutor ★ Eat meals as a family ★ Thank the media when they focus on positive children's issues in your community ★ Read a



book to a child ★ Model responsible behavior ★ Hire a teen ★ Ask a child how to solve the problem ★ Show love to a child who is not your own ★ Thank a teacher ★ Set consistent limits ★ Register and vote ★ Praise a

yourself available ★ Create

opportunities to laugh and have fun with children

★ Learn more about disabilities affecting children

★ Work for family-friendly policies in your workplace

★ Get to know your child's friends and their parents

★ Let your child volunteer

★ Teach children nonviolent ways to resolve conflict

★ Be an Asset Champion. Visit IM40.org to learn how



BE INVOLVED. IM40.ORG

*One of fifty-three similar projects throughout the U.S. and its territories funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, **KIDS COUNT in Delaware** is housed in the Center for Community Research and Service at the University of Delaware and led by a board of committed and concerned child and family advocates from the public and private sectors. **KIDS COUNT in Delaware** is especially indebted to the support of the University of Delaware and the State of Delaware.*

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