CHAPTER 5

Promoting Safety and Success in School by Developing Students' Strengths

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INTRODUCTION

In the wake of several sensational school shootings that have riveted the nation in recent years, a great deal of attention has been directed at the level of violence in American schools. One of those shootings occurred in our community in May 1998. Here in Springfield, Oregon, we are all too aware of the traumatic effects a violent incident can have on a school, a school district, and a community.

School violence can include "lesser" forms of intimidation such as name calling, bullying, or harassment and, as we know, can range all the way to assault and murder. Communities have pointed to everything from the popular media to the breakdown of the American family as possible causes of such violence. Many questions have been asked as to what can be done to stop these terrifying tragedies. At Centennial Elementary School in Springfield, Oregon, and at many other schools throughout the country, staff members and parents have focused on ways to work together to create a positive vision for young people that would guide them toward safety and success. Instead of concentrating only on reducing risks and problems, schools are learning ways to cultivate and enhance the qualities in young people that have long-term positive effects on their development and on the social milieu in which they live.

Researchers in education, psychology and other disciplines have explored a number of models that focus on the development of positive attributes in youth. One such model is that developed by the Search Institute of Minneapolis, Minnesota—an independent, nonprofit, nonsectarian organization whose mission is to support the healthy development of children and adolescents. In this chapter, we will use the *Developmental Assets Framework* (Scales & Leffert, 1999) as a basis for illustrating what educators can do to create safe and supportive school environments.

The Developmental Assets Framework, as shown in Table 1, on page 91, is a well-researched, strength-based approach that identifies 40 critical factors that children and

adolescents need to grow up as healthy, responsible, and caring individuals. The model illustrates how families, schools, congregations, neighborhoods, youth organizations, and others in the community all play an important role in shaping young people's lives. We will describe the full model briefly, then illustrate those assets that schools, in particular, can work to develop. The Search Institute has noted that "building developmental assets is consistent with and indeed contributes toward schools' fulfilling their mission: to foster academic achievement and to provide a safe and healthy environment in which that achievement can best occur" (Starkman, Scales, & Roberts, 1999, p.3).

THE DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS MODEL

Developmental assets are "the positive 'building blocks' (i.e., relationships, experiences, values, attitudes, and attributes) that all children and youth need for success. 'Developmental' refers to how the building blocks both emerge from and help shape how children and youth grow and develop. 'Assets' point to the fact that these building blocks are positive, that they give strength to young people" (Starkman et al., 1999, p. 2).

According to Starkman et. al. (1999), the 40 developmental assets fall into two broad categories—external and internal. External assets focus on positive experiences that youth receive from the people and organizations in their lives. They can be categorized as providing young people with (a) support, (b) empowerment, (c) boundaries and expectations, and (d) constructive use of time. Internal assets focus on the internalized qualities that encourage wise judgements, responsible choices, and genuine compassion for others. They cluster into the categories of (a) commitment to learning, (b) positive values, (c) social competencies, and (d) positive identity. These groupings are based on factors that help make young people safe, self-assured, and successful.

To develop strong *external assets,* young people need to experience the following factors:

(a) *support,* in the form of love from their families and respect and caring from others, such as friends, neighbors, and educators. They need family life, social contacts, and organizational experiences that provide positive, supportive environments for them as they grow up.

(b) *empowerment,* which comes from being respected and valued by their community. They need opportunities to contribute in positive ways to the well-being of others. This helps establish a sense of purpose.

(c) *boundaries and expectations,* which communicate what is expected of them and whether activities and behaviors are "in bounds" or "out of bounds."

(d) *constructive use of time,* which includes opportunities for growth and enrichment through creative expression (e.g., arts and music), physical activity (including

TABLE 1

Forty Developmental Assets

External Assets	
Support	Family support Positive family communication Other adult relationships Caring neighborhood Caring school climate Parent involvement in schooling
Empowerment	Community values youth Youth as resources Service to others Safety
Boundaries and Expectations	Family boundaries School boundaries Neighborhood boundaries Adult role models Positive peer influence High expectations
Constructive Use of Time	Creative activities Youth programs Religious community Time at home
Internal Assets	
Commitment to Learning	Achievement motivation School engagement Homework Bonding to school Reading for pleasure
Positive Values	Caring Equality and social justice Integrity Honesty Responsibility Restraint
Social Competencies	Planning and decision making Interpersonal competence Cultural competence Resistance skills Peaceful conflict resolution
Positive Identity	Personal power Self-esteem Sense of purpose Positive view of personal future

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sports), youth programs, congregational involvement, and quality time at home with family members.

To develop strong internal assets, youth need to develop the following characteristics:

(a) *commitment to learning,* a strong belief in the importance of education and an enduring commitment to self-improvement and lifelong learning.

(b) *positive values,* including beliefs and character traits such as honesty, integrity and responsibility. These are qualities that mold their character and guide their choices through life.

(c) *social competencies,* the manners and consideration for others that equip them to make positive choices, to build relationships, and to show tolerance and respect for others.

(d) *positive identity,* a strong sense of their own power, purpose, and worth and the belief that they can make a difference in their own lives and in the lives of others.

When taken together, these external and internal assets can provide a powerful, positive influence on young people's behavior. The more assets young people experience, the more likely they are to engage in positive behaviors such as helping others and succeeding in school. The fewer assets they have, the more likely they are to engage in risk-taking behaviors such as alcohol and other drug use, antisocial behavior, and violence (Scales & Leffert, 1999).

Research Behind the Developmental Assets

Since 1989, the Search Institute has surveyed more than 350,000 6th- to 12th-graders across the United States and has conducted numerous informal discussions and focus groups. Through these efforts, the Institute has collected data to suggest that the external and internal assets make a significant difference in the lives of young people. Relations between developmental assets and adolescent behavior have been documented for all types of youth, regardless of age, gender, geographical region, town size, or race/ethnicity (Scales & Leffert, 1999).

The concept of developmental assets grew out of two types of applied research, which the Search Institute combines into one framework:

1. *Prevention research,* which focuses on the identification of protective factors that inhibit high-risk behaviors such as substance abuse, violence, sexual behavior and dropping out of school.

2. *Resiliency research,* which identifies factors that increase young people's ability to rebound in the face of adversity, such as poverty, neglect, abuse of any kind, drug/alcohol use, dangerous environments, or toxic relationships.

The current data on developmental assets are based on a sample of 99,462 6th- to 12th-graders who completed the Search Institute's *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors* survey (Search Institute, 1996) during the 1996–97 school year. The sample includes responses from youth in 213 U.S. communities that surveyed their own students. Ideally, according to the Institute, all youth would possess or experience at least 31 of the 40 assets, allowing them to become strong and resilient people. The results, however, indicated that only 8% of the youth reached this criterion. In addition, fewer than half of the young people surveyed experienced as many as 25 of the 40 assets (Benson, Scales, Leffert, & Roehlkepartain, 1999).

The Search Institute has found that youth with the most assets are least likely to engage in four different patterns of high-risk behavior (alcohol use, illicit drug use, sexual activity, and violence). In addition to protecting youth from negative behaviors, having more assets increases the chances that young people will have positive attitudes and behaviors. Those youth with the most assets were more likely to succeed in school, value diversity, maintain good health, and be able to delay gratification (Scales & Leffert, 1999).

Cultivating Developmental Assets at School

If, as the research suggests, developmental assets are a good thing for young people to have, and if "more assets are better than fewer," how do we cultivate them in our students? At an empirical level, this question harbors a host of research studies. At a practical level, it asks, "What has been tried? What seems promising? What makes good sense?" It is clear to us that there are many strategies educators can employ to build and strengthen students' assets. For nearly 20 years, our day-to-day work in school administration and school psychology, respectively, has been directed, in large part, toward trying to operationalize the details of what it takes to develop the strengths of young people in active, deliberate ways.

In this section, we will illustrate the assets most readily nurtured in school settings and identify ideas for cultivating those assets within the educational environment. The strategies discussed below show some of the ways in which these variables can be developed to create a great learning and social environment for young people—one that promotes their safety and success.

Increasing and Highlighting the External Assets

We discussed earlier in this chapter how the external assets of support, empowerment, clear boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time all contribute to the healthy development of young people. It would be easy to dismiss these assets as

truisms or as factors beyond a school's control. However, some schools are rich in these qualities, while others are asset-poor. This variability is not random, but rather is a result of efforts on the part of educators to create an environment that provides young people with the best chance possible for success. For each of the four categories of external assets, we will highlight concepts and practices we have implemented that can make a positive difference for students.

Support. Strategies that enable students to experience support in schools can include enhancing the school's culture or climate and increasing the involvement of parents or other caring adults in the educational lives of the students. In addition, enabling the parents, through training or structured programs, to be a more powerful presence in their children's lives also increases support. An effective way to coordinate these services has been to provide a central location, such as a family center for volunteers and parents. Adult mentors as well as parent volunteers can be helpful in supporting students. Schools and the larger community can work together to show support for the students.

School culture has been defined as "how we do things here." School climate is "how it feels to be here." A positive valence on both concepts is essential if students are to feel comfortable and to put forth their best effort in school, both socially and academically. School staff members have a tremendous responsibility and great power to assure that the school culture and climate are positive forces for *all* students. For better or worse, staff define "how we do things here," and through their actions, outreach, tolerance, and limits, they establish "how it feels to be here." At Centennial we promote our students as "The greatest kids on planet Earth." A thorough description of the program follows in the section on Empowerment.

Another form of support comes through the direct involvement of parents and other caring adults in the lives of the students. The most common form of this involvement is volunteerism and participation in parent organizations, such as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and booster clubs.

With the increasing demands and shrinking budgets that many schools are experiencing today, there is a growing need for strong volunteer programs in the schools. Many of the roles that volunteers can play in a school can be (and usually are) filled by parents. However, when parents are unable to fill the roles needing to be filled, school staff should consider turning to other family or community members. We have recruited grandparents, aunts and uncles, teenage or adult-age brothers or sisters, senior citizens, public employees, and members of the business community as volunteers for our schools. Often, volunteers feel they get more from the relationship than they give. One 87-year-old volunteer told us, "This is the reason I get up in the morning. No, it's more than that. This is the reason I go on living." When a caring adult sees a youngster's need and steps in to fill it, that act strengthens the school's programs and empowers the young person. Volunteers can be a powerful force for helping young people succeed in school and stay out of trouble.

Many schools have strong parent organizations that conduct special events and carry out projects to create a stronger school community. These organizations provide many

opportunities for parents to become actively involved in their child's school experience. Some educators are concerned that parents will "get in the way" or become easily diverted by "trivial" tasks. However, we have found that if parents and community members are informed about the goals and priorities of the school and given a role to play in them, they will become strong supporters of the vision. Toward this end, we host annual meetings for parents to discuss school goals and work plans. We conduct focus groups with the principal for parents of children at a given grade level to talk about current issues in the learning and development of their children. The principal and PTA president communicate regularly to build the PTA meeting agenda around school priorities. We also issue a quarterly school report card summarizing progress on our school goals and suggesting ways in which parents can help us meet them.

A third method of building support in schools is to offer parent training classes or workshops. One training we have offered which helps parents prevent their young people from getting into trouble is the *Second Step* parent program. The *Second Step* program (Committee for Children, 1997) is a highly rated approach for developing social skills and preventing violence in young people. The parent component *(A Family Guide to Second Step: Parenting Strategies for a Safer Tomorrow)* has been well received for assisting parents to support youth on these goals. Many similar programs exist, but few have substantive evaluation data, as *Second Step* does (Grossman et al., 1997). We offer a *Second Step* parenting series each year in both English and Spanish. This year we are also offering our first parenting series based around the Developmental Assets Model. We recently recruited several parents to attend a luncheon and training session which prepared them to step in as substitute instructional assistants in reading to ensure that lessons could go on when a regular staff member is absent. Other classes are offered as training needs are identified.

A new trend for involving parents in supporting young people's success in school is the development of family centers within schools. Most often found in elementary schools, but beginning to appear in middle schools or at a school district level, family centers offer a variety of means for promoting parent involvement in schools. Our family center provides (1) volunteer recruitment and coordination, (2) child care to enable parents with preschool-age children to volunteer in the classroom of their school-age child, (3) work parties to aid the completion of large projects, (4) materials that parents can check out to help their child with skill development at home, and (5) parent training opportunities on numerous topics. The family center also offers a comfortable place in school (e.g., with coffee and conversation) for parents whose own school experiences might have been less than comfortable, increasing the likelihood that parents will continue the connection to their child's school and the support for their child's success.

While most people agree that parents should be involved in their child's education, the participation of other caring adults can have a powerful effect. This is true in large part, we believe, because these volunteers don't have to be involved, yet they choose to get involved in the life of a young person. When an adult other than a parent demonstrates care and concern for a young person, it carries an added impetus to impress and inspire. Mentors have the power to produce greater commitment and

higher achievement in young people. Mentors can serve as remedial tutors for struggling students, as enrichment enablers for high-achieving students, and as work-place connections for "career-curious" young people. Sometimes, all it takes to make mentors available for students is an invitation to get involved and a bit of time to coordinate their activities. The power of their purpose for being there and the effects of their experience are often sufficient to keep them coming back. And that has the potential to spark greater success in underachieving students.

Schools need the support of the larger community as well. Too often, there is a lack of respect and understanding between students and the rest of the community. Adults in the community look upon young people with suspicion. Young people's appearance is denigrated; their ambition is thought to be lacking; their motives are considered suspect. Furthermore, the school they attend might be considered run-down and unsafe. What is needed is more positive contact between young people and adults in the community who typically have little or no contact with youth. This can be arranged either by sending young people into the community to complete community service projects (e.g., "Good Neighbor Day," "Day of Caring") or by inviting community members into the school ("Back to School Day"). Schools can have community members read to young children, mentor older children, tutor students, serve on a task force, be interviewed by a student, speak to a class, conduct an after-school activity, or perhaps simply have lunch or attend a musical program. Each strategy can help build bridges between students and nonparent adults and can help each party begin to see the goodness and potential in the other.

Schools, in turn, have something to offer the community. Many communities do not have adequate facilities for the activities of community groups. Organizations such as scouts, sports groups, and senior citizens may be without the space they need to fulfill their purposes. That's where schools and young people can help. Many schools make their space available as community centers in the late afternoons and evenings or during summer break. If young people could be given a role in helping to make this possible—such as serving as hosts, providing child care or clean-up services, helping to coach children's sports teams or assist scout groups, there would be benefit for both older and younger students and for the adults involved. Older students benefit from the "power of purpose," younger children from involvement with a positive role model or mentor, and adults benefit from positive contact with young people.

Empowerment. Youth are empowered when young people (a) perceive that adults in the community support, respect, and value them, (b) believe that they are seen as resources rather than as a drain on resources, (c) have opportunities to be involved and to contribute to the greater good, and (d) feel safe in their own neighborhood and community.

Community support can take the form of community members or groups providing time or financial resources to their local schools. It can include community members sponsoring teams or events and attending youth events (games, concerts, plays, etc.) at school. It involves a generous community spirit in the delicate balance between managing tax rates and providing young people with good school facilities and pro-

grams. Community members show they care about youth when they give of their time, talent, and resources to support facilities and educational or recreational programs that benefit young people.

Youth are seen as resources when they are given useful roles in the school and in the community or when they are given a voice and a role to play in significant groups and events. Here in Springfield, youth at several schools wanted to do something to make a positive difference following the shooting at Thurston High School in May 1998. A group of students at Thurston High premiered the play "Bang Bang, You're Dead" to raise awareness among youth about the effects of violence. Others served on a committee to plan a memorial to those killed and injured in the shooting. At Springfield High School, students formed a group called "By Kids 4 Kids" ("BK4K") to address the tendency of youth to withhold information that might be useful to school officials in stopping violence before it happens. (See information below for more details on BK4K.) At Centennial Elementary School, three fifth-graders wrote a "Peace Pledge," which is now recited each day over the school's intercom. Allowing and encouraging young people to play leadership and advocacy roles for topics that are important to them empowers them to make a significant difference in the lives of others.

High schools and middle schools often give students a visible presence and meaningful roles to play by allowing them to spend a part of their day working in the office or cafeteria or assisting various staff members throughout the school. One middle school in our district runs a catering business in the community. Elementary schools can also find meaningful roles for students. We also have students greet visitors at school events, shelve books in the school library, recycle paper around the school, and read to and tutor younger children. A nearby elementary school has a cookie business, supplying treats for meetings around town. All of these roles can help empower students by demonstrating to them that their time and abilities are worthwhile and meaningful.

Many schools have student councils, which provide leadership experience to those who serve. However, the numbers of students who serve are often small, and schools must find ways to involve more students in lending input or playing a role in the operation of their school or the activities of their community. Student-run radio or television stations or publications, student forums, surveys, polls and elections, and student seats on the school board or city council or their subcommittees can provide a meaningful voice or a substantive role for students in the school or community.

Many high schools now require students to perform community service as a condition of graduation. Many colleges value community service when awarding scholarships. Even elementary school students are not too young to do something kind or helpful for others. These programs recognize that community service helps students develop positive values, strong character, and a sense of commitment that goes beyond one's self. Spring clean-up projects and "days of caring" give students a sample of the good feelings that come from performing community service. An ongoing service commitment, such as sustained service to a person, program, or agency, helps students begin to see service to others as a way of life.

Empowerment also comes from feeling safe and secure in school, in order to learn effectively. Schools create good learning and social environments for young people by creating safe schools. They also have a role to play in creating a sense of safety in the neighborhood and the larger community. These efforts require partnerships to prevent violence. School officials and "parents on patrol" on the school grounds or in the hallways can provide highly visible supervision before and after school and during break periods. It is even better if these supervisors are committed to interacting positively with youth as they supervise. Greeting students and calling them by name helps students feel welcome and at ease at school. Keeping a close watch over student interactions and stepping in at the first sign of conflict helps prevent larger problems from developing. For example, at Whiteaker Middle School in Keizer, Oregon, the "Mom Squad" members walk the halls of the school on a regular basis. The squad is an accepted and welcomed part of the school. The parents (some dads, but mostly moms) make themselves available to answer student questions, provide directions, prevent fights, and help at different times in the school day (Oregon Department of Education, 2000). Schools can increase people's feeling of safety by providing secure campuses with a single entry through the office, using school resource officers in middle schools and high schools, and using walkie-talkies and other communications devices to alert key staff to concerns. All of these ideas facilitate student safety.

Promoting school safety and preventing school violence is the mission of a relatively new organization called the Ribbon of Promise. The day after the shooting at Thurston High School in May 1998, community leaders created Ribbon of Promise to find a way to end school violence. Shortly after its creation, students at Springfield High School formed a spin-off group, the aforementioned "By Kids 4 Kids" (or "BK4K"), under the premise that adults cannot end school violence on their own; the effort has to involve students. The students asserted that in the culture of most schools, students do not tell adults all they know about "who did what" or "who is talking about what." To impact school violence, students must break this "code of silence" and let adults know when they have information about potential violence. We have evidence that this climate is changing in Springfield. Recently, in several schools, students have reported potentially dangerous situations to adults and these were handled efficiently. In time, the students at Springfield High hope to help start "BK4K" chapters in other high schools around the country. Founders hope that these high school leaders will influence middle school and elementary school students to also "break the code of silence" and help stop violent behavior in their schools as well.

Boundaries and expectations. Both families and schools must set clear boundaries and high expectations for young people's conduct. To assist families, educators must communicate with them about their child's behavior at school.

The school is an important partner with parents in setting guidelines for young people' conduct and in providing feedback when a youngster strays from those limits. At Centennial we notify parents in a timely manner about their child's conduct infractions at school, and advise parents to counsel their youngster constructively, rather than punish him or her harshly. This helps extend the educative and formative aspects of

discipline into the home. Similarly, schools that notify parents of their child's achievements at school give parents the wonderful gift of being able to praise and celebrate the youth's success.

School boundaries are established through clear rules and consequences. These are typically set through schoolwide behavior plans and communicated to students by actively teaching the desired behaviors. Young people feel safer at school when the school culture includes the well-being and consideration of others as highly visible elements. Program developers have created effective schoolwide prevention and intervention programs in recent years that have moved the discipline of behavior management from "craft knowledge" in the repertoire of the classroom teacher to systematic, schoolwide practice involving the entire school.

One example is the Effective Behavior Support program (Sugai, 1998) developed at the University of Oregon and now in use in Springfield and in dozens of schools across the country. (See Chapters 12 and 13.) Guidelines for success, which are actively taught in class, posted throughout the school, and reviewed over the intercom or at school assemblies, define a positive culture within the school. Expectations articulated for each distinct setting in the school (classrooms, hallways, cafeteria, social areas, restrooms, etc.) are explicitly taught at the beginning of the year, then reviewed as necessary. All staff in the school are trained and empowered to follow through on these standards. Schools that provide quick, fair sanctions for violating the expectations and that provide positive feedback or extra privileges for complying with them generally prove to be safe, calm learning environments.

Another determinant of healthy youth development is positive peer influence. When a young person's friends model responsible behavior, she or he is much more likely to stay on the straight and narrow path. Educators can help cultivate positive peer influence. They can do so through seating arrangements, assignment of project partners, placement in cooperative work groups, formation of teams in physical education activities, the dynamics of class meetings, and in many other ways. This is not to say that schools should determine who a youngster's friends will be, but when coupled with the skill-development components of a program such as *Second Step,* the structure of schoolwide behavior management programs, and the parameters defined by school culture and climate, schools can have a significant positive influence on peer contacts and relations.

Perhaps the most important messages parents and schools deliver are those that communicate high expectations and belief in the young person's innate goodness and ability to do well. At Centennial School, the "Greatest Kids Campaign" delivers positive messages to kids through banners, birthday cards, award certificates, and even a school song. "I believe in you." "You have what it takes." "You can do it." These messages, though brief, are powerful words to a young person, especially when coming from a parent, teacher, or other respected adult. They communicate trust, which a young person does not want to betray, and confidence, which he or she wants to show is well-placed. Whether the challenge is trying something new or taking an advanced class, trying out for a part in a play or a spot on a team, or simply getting up

and getting to school on time, these words help a young person believe that success is possible. Parents and educators must communicate their belief in their children's or students' abilities, then encourage them along the way. This simple act can unleash and spark the fulfillment of human potential.

Constructive use of time. One of the recommendations of the 1997 Presidential Youth Summit was that communities provide young people with "safe places and structured activities" to help fill their time and keep them out of trouble. Similarly, the developmental assets model cites the importance of youth using their time constructively in the arts, scouts, sports, or other interest or service groups.

Youth whose parents can afford to enroll them in private lessons or structured group activities benefit from lesson time and supplemental practice time, as well as from having a peer group with a common interest. Yet many families cannot afford this expense. It is for these young people that schools and other community agencies must provide alternatives to "hanging out." Schools can collaborate with other community agencies to provide such activities, and they can extend their programs into after-school hours and summer months.

An important role schools play is to cultivate the creative and artistic dimensions of their students' lives. Often the resources for doing so are limited, but schools can collaborate with community agencies to provide such opportunities. Schools often have the space, but not the personnel to promote participation in the arts. Community individuals or organizations often have the talent, but not the space. When each party contributes to a collaborative effort, young people are the beneficiaries, receiving opportunities where none existed previously. This partnership can open up opportunities for young people to take piano lessons, play in a band or orchestra, take the stage to act, sing, or dance, or to develop their interest and potential in the visual arts.

In recent years, more schools have started or collaborated in providing after-school or summer programs for young people. Such opportunities include both academic and recreational activities. Several schools in our community now offer after-school homework clubs or subject-specific programs to build basic skills (e.g., "Power Reading," Author's Club, Math Club) or explore topics of special interest (e.g., science camp, computer club). Youth recreation programs have long been provided at Springfield school sites in cooperation with such organizations as park and recreation districts, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO), Babe Ruth Leagues, Boys & Girls Clubs. These programs play an important role in providing young people with "safe places and structured activities" in which to participate during times when they are out of school, while their parents are still at work.

External assets, while essential for developing positive young people, are only half of the story. It is the internal assets that form the heart of the model and contain the ingredients for forming moral character.

Building and Enhancing Internal Assets

Internal assets are those qualities that serve as an "inner compass" to guide the young person in making wise judgments and responsible choices and to show genuine caring and concern for others. These qualities can be categorized as (a) commitment to learning, (b) positive values, (c) social competencies, and (d) positive identity. These groupings are based on what helps make young people safe, self-assured, and successful.

Commitment to learning. Young people who have a high commitment to learning have achievement motivation. Doing well is important to them. They receive and do homework, and they read independently, beyond what is assigned as homework. They feel like they have an ownership stake in their school and its activities.

Where does achievement motivation come from? What leads a young person to want to do well in school? One source is the expectations that important people in the student's life hold for him or her. Following closely is the recognition that comes from doing well. Student self-direction, in the form of goal-setting and feedback, can also play a significant role in students' success.

If schools set high, but attainable, expectations for achievement, they will increase motivation to learn for many of their students. Expectations coupled with enthusiasm—and with the academic support that enables students to succeed—can help students focus on their role in achieving success. For those students who struggle to succeed, schools can create an "academic safety net" through such programs as after school homework clubs, reading development programs, and older student or adult tutors. Our school offers homework clubs in both English and Spanish. Our "Power Reading Club" is a fluency development activity offered during the school day and after school. Our literacy lab and classwide peer tutoring programs (see Chapter 24) offer supplemental support as students develop critical reading skills.

Many schools use some form of recognition for success to motivate students to do well in school. Honor rolls, awards assemblies, announcements and public posting of successes are just some of the simple but motivating ways in which schools can recognize students for their efforts and achievements. To avoid creating an "academic elite" whose members get all the recognition, it is important that schools also recognize students who are making a strong effort or showing good progress in their academic endeavors—or in other outcomes valued by the school, such as attendance, character, or community service. At Centennial, our "Triple Crown" winners are recognized for simultaneous success in attendance, character, and effort, and anyone can be a winner.

A simple tool for motivating students to succeed in school—one that has greater potential than use in schools—is the use of self-directed goal setting and feedback (see Chapter 17). Goals, when set realistically, and feedback, especially when it is either public in nature or linked to incentives, can be an inexpensive yet effective means of motivating students to work closer to their potential.

We want students to feel connected to their school and to be actively engaged in learning, but what does it take to achieve this? Perhaps the single most significant thing

schools can do to help students become successful is to provide great teaching (see Chapters 10, 21, 22, and 23). The school administrator plays a key role here through active supervision and effective staff development. High-quality instruction, especially when it connects students with issues of genuine interest to them, will engage students' learning and help them unlock the mysteries of science, see the intrigue of math, behold the fascination of literature, and discover their voice as writers.

Commitment to learning is also developed through meaningful homework. Schools that expect students to do things at home that are related to their schoolwork are more likely to produce more successful students. Perhaps the single most important type of work younger students can do outside of school is reading (Stanovich, 1986). Out-of-school reading is important for older students as well. Homework need not duplicate the activities that students do in class. It can be tied more to the applications of a particular subject to the "real world" than might be possible in the classroom. It can also integrate goals from two different subjects or address higher-level thinking—questions that require time, thought, and writing—things for which there is not always sufficient time in a time-constrained school schedule.

Commitment to learning can be enhanced further when students engage in independent reading. Schools can do much to promote independent reading by their students. They can communicate to parents the importance of having their children read. They can coordinate programs such as "TV Turn-off Week," in which people of all ages can be encouraged to turn off the television and open up a good book. They can promote reading, especially in the summer, by forming a partnership with a local public library to give kids more exposure to libraries and books. Schools can create motivation to read with reading incentive programs or by having students set reading goals and monitor their progress. They can also encourage family reading through events such as Family Reading Night at school. Such an event might include guest readers from the community, a storyteller, computer-based reading activities, a book fair and/or a book giveaway. We have used local "civic celebrities" (police officers, firefighters, a TV weather forecaster), well-known college athletes, and international students from an area university as guest readers at our Family Reading Nights.

We want kids to care about their school. This can best be accomplished by paying close attention to the culture and climate of the school. To be most effective, a school must cultivate both culture and climate. When a school culture is made to be inclusive and empowering, school climate is high, students thrive, and they feel bonded to the school. When any part of "the way things are done" diminishes students—either intentionally or unintentionally—school climate is chilled, and bonding is eroded. Schools attending to the other variables addressed in this chapter will achieve a strong culture and a positive climate. In such an environment, students will feel more connected to the school, will be less likely to get into trouble and will be more likely to succeed.

Positive values. A second category of internal assets addresses the qualities that define who students really are—the values and ethics by which they live and the character traits they demonstrate in their daily actions.

Since the early years of the 20th century, Oregon has had a law on the books requiring schools to teach character to their students. For many years in the latter half of the 20th century, promoting character was discouraged—or even resisted—by our culture. Concerns centered around whose values were to be taught, usurping the role of the family, and whether the character traits being promoted were really religion in disguise. In the last several years (seemingly since the rash of school shootings began), it has once again become "okay," or even deemed urgent, that we promote positive values and good character in schools. Several organizations offer published programs or other support for teaching character, such as Character Counts and the Character Education Partnership. Some schools have initiated grass-roots campaigns to promote character.

At Centennial Elementary School, a fifth-grade class took on the challenge of leading the schoolwide character campaign. They identified 36 common character traits and defined each of them in children's language, made posters for each trait in English and Spanish, and then hung them throughout the school. They posted them on the school's two outdoor reader boards and announced a character word of the week and its definition over the school's intercom every day. Teachers have been discussing these traits with their students, and students have talked about how they might apply the traits at school. Staff members watch for instances of students living out the traits, and they often acknowledge students' display of the traits with a certificate to the student at the school's monthly awards assemblies. We have also developed "character cards," similar to sports trading cards, which we distribute to students as collectibles. In these ways, the school is working toward embedding the traits of good character into the culture of the school.

Social competencies. Schools are social organizations. As such, there is much that can get in the way of their primary mission of educating young people. Thus, it is important for school staff to be concerned with the social competencies of their students. Schools can address students' social competencies in the areas of interpersonal competence, cultural competence, resistance skills, and peaceful conflict resolution.

One of the most highly rated programs for actively teaching the essential social competencies of empathy, problem solving, and anger management is the Second Step program (Committee for Children, 1997). In a large-scale comparison of numerous social skills programs, Second Step emerged with high ratings and earned a strong recommendation for its effectiveness and ease of use (Grossman et al., 1997). In as little time as 20-30 minutes per week, Second Step can help children learn peaceful alternatives to fighting over their differences.

Another highly effective program for helping very young antisocial children learn to be successful in school is the First Step to Success program (Kavanagh et al., 1997). Hill Walker and his associates at the University of Oregon's Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior (IVDB) have demonstrated that by intervening with antisocial behavior in kindergarten or first-grade youngsters, school staff can divert them from a path of disruption and failure to one of cooperation and success. We have seen very positive results as a result of using the First Step to Success program at Centennial Elementary. This program is described in detail in Chapter 8.

Class meetings (Nelsen, Lott, & Glenn, 1993) or morning meetings (Kriete, 1999) offer another way in which schools can develop social competencies. They are a natural and effective means for building a sense of community and mutual support within a class, for teaching social skills among class members, for solving problems arising among class members, and for planning class events. Teachers who hold regular class meetings report that their students show enhanced social skills and improved problem-solving abilities. (See Chapters 16 and 20 for a discussion of social skills instruction in schools.)

Schools must also develop cultural competence in their students. It is important that people have knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. To lay the groundwork for young people of all backgrounds to get along well at school, staff members must establish respect as a core value of the school. More important than saying that students must respect each other is the modeling that staff members do in their interactions with colleagues and students and the extent to which they bring the concept to life in the daily interactions within the school. Many schools incorporate the Golden Rule into their basic beliefs. Our school does so through its "Guidelines for Success": "Be H.O.T. (Here on Time), Keep Your Cool, Do Your Best, Live 'The Rule' ('Treat other people as you want them to treat you.')." These statements are posted throughout the building, announced via the intercom, and ceremoniously recited at school assemblies. Once this norm is established, we use the language of the guidelines when resolving a problem that has occurred between students. In fact, the students themselves often initiate this language when working out their differences.

Some schools have established their buildings and grounds as "racism-free," "discrimination-free," or "harassment-free" zones. Typically, this is done by involving students and other members of the school community in writing a pledge or statement of intent regarding how students and staff will treat others of different backgrounds at the school. This statement is posted, announced, recited, and woven into the fabric of the school culture. Often, special events (e.g., Martin Luther King Day celebration, Women's History Month, Native American History Month, Grandparents Day, Handicap Awareness Day) are held to highlight and reinforce the school's commitment to welcoming people of all backgrounds into the school community.

Yet another social competency in the realm of schools is resistance skills, the ability to resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. Schools wanting to develop students' resistance to negative influences often adopt a resistance education program, such as the D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) Program, which helps students develop the knowledge and skills to say no to drugs and violence. The D.A.R.E. program uses specially trained police officers to teach students about the effects of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs on the human body and build student skills to resist peer pressure to use these substances or to commit acts of violence related to their use. A variety of other programs use similar approaches to transmit the knowledge and skills needed to resist peer pressure. (See Chapter 26.)

Finally, it is imperative that young people learn peaceful conflict resolution. Because of the danger in the alternative, young people must learn the value of peace and must seek to resolve conflicts nonviolently.

Following school shootings in Springfield, Oregon, and Littleton, Colorado, fifth-grade students at our school decided to take matters into their own hands. They had had enough of school violence and wanted to do something to promote peace. Without any prompting from adults, students in one fifth-grade class wrote a "peace pledge," and a girl in another class created a "peace post" for the school courtyard. The "Peace Pledge" has become a central part of the school culture and is recited over the intercom by a different student each day—always in English, and periodically also in Spanish. It is also recited by the collective student body at assemblies and is posted throughout the school in both English and Spanish. The "Peace Post" is a 4 x 4" wooden post, 36" tall with a decorative top. It is painted blue, with the word "peace" painted on each of the four sides in a different language—English, Spanish, Japanese, and Hebrew. It has become a visible symbol of the school's commitment to peaceful problem solving and peaceful interaction among all members of the school community.

In the years since the Peace Project began, one student created a peace flag, and a scout troop built benches and completed landscaping around the Peace Post to create a "Peace Plaza" where students can sit to talk out problems. Recently, students with a peace project of their own at a middle school in a nearby community learned about our peace education efforts and formed a peace partnership between their school, our school, and the local middle school, which our "founders" now attend. Through their website, they hope to spread the message of peace to other schools near and far. At Centennial, the "Peace Project," the "Guidelines for Success," and a problem-solving process based on the Second Step program are taught as a common language and as common procedures—and they are observed as core elements of the school culture.

Conflict resolution programs. As noted above, many schools use specially developed programs to teach students how to resolve conflicts peacefully. One of the most effective of these is the Second Step program. (See description above.)

Positive identity. Perhaps above all else, we want young people to see themselves as positive people—to feel that they are worthwhile human beings who have a helpful role to play in the great drama of life. Schools can help develop positive self-esteem and a sense of purpose in their students.

School staff can do a great deal to build students' self-esteem. One of the most important things they can do is to structure learning to help students achieve academic success. Success produces confidence and raises self-esteem. In addition, staff can affirm students frequently. Centennial's ongoing "Greatest Kids" campaign reminds students in many ways and on many occasions that they are "some of the greatest kids on planet Earth." Through banners hung in highly visible places, and in announcements over the intercom and in conversations held with students, this idea is reinforced. Birthday cards and award certificates given to students repeat this message, as do invitations sent to parents informing them that their child will be receiving an award at the next assembly. The message helps to create a climate in which students come to believe that they can be successful in school.

Young people also need to feel that they have a positive purpose in life, that they have some measure of control in achieving their perceived purpose, and that they have some cognitive tools for achieving that purpose.

Schools are in the business of empowerment. By its nature, education is about empowering people to know or do something they did not know or could not do previously. Reading, writing, and problem solving are obvious examples, but schools must also help young people discover their interests, talents, and aptitudes and determine how best to pursue them. School staff can help young people discern their purpose by exposing them to various vocations and models and providing them with opportunities to explore those possibilities through such means as mentoring, interviews, and job shadowing. They can show students how to imagine a positive and realistic vision for the future by identifying options and weighing the pluses and minuses of each. They can teach the cognitive tools of goal setting, action planning, and goal review via traditional vocational counseling or career awareness classes, through a group support format with peers or by an individual reflective journal-keeping process. All are likely to lead to an increased awareness on the part of the student about what she or he wants to pursue and how to go about it. The key to making the process work is to empower *all* students to view themselves as capable, to have a positive purpose and some personal power to pursue it, and to see the future as having positive possibilities for them.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we reviewed the concept of developmental assets. We identified those assets that most readily lend themselves to development in school settings and offered many illustrations of how school leaders and support staff can cultivate the formation of developmental assets.

The words of an ancient Chinese proverb still speak to those who are in a position to be asset builders for the young people of their community:

> If there is compassion in the heart, there will be love in the home.
> If there is love in the home, there will be wholeness in the community.
> If there is wholeness in the community, there will be harmony in the nation.
> And if there is harmony in the nation, there will be peace in the world.

It is extremely important that school leaders, such as administrators, school support staff, such as counselors and psychologists—and family members—work to help build developmental assets in young people. It matters less *what* they do, but it matters a great deal that they do something. Their leadership positions and their specialized knowledge and skills can have a powerful, positive impact on the safety and success of their students, on the climate of the school, and ultimately on the livability of the community.

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RESOURCES

For more information on the Developmental Assets Framework or the work of the Search Institute, write to 700 South Third Street, Suite 210, Minneapolis, MN 55415-1138, call (612) 376-8955 or 1-800-888-7828 or see *www.search-institute.org*.

For more information about the Second Step Program or the work of the Committee for Children, write to 2203 Airport Way South, Suite 500, Seattle, WA 98134-2027, phone 1-800-634-4449, or see *www.cfchildren.org*.

For information on the National Resource Center for Safe Schools, write to the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory at 101 SW Main Street, Suite 500, Portland, OR 97204 or see *www.nwrel.org*.

Information about the Ribbon of Promise can be found on the Web at *www.ribbonofpromise.org* or you can contact staff at 150 Seventh Street, Springfield, OR 97477. To reach them by phone, call (541) 726-0512. Their fax number is (541) 726-0393.

For more information about the work of the Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior (IVDB) at the University of Oregon, see *www.darkwing.uoregon.edu/~ivdb*. IVDB staff may also be reached at 1265 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1265 or at (541) 346-3592 (phone); (541) 346-2594 (fax).

APPENDIX A

The Role of Administrators, Psychologists, and Counselors in Building Developmental Assets in School Communities

Here are 10 ways that administrators and other school support staff can promote developmental assets for young people in a school setting.

1. ***Adult support.*** Be a source of support. Young people benefit from the support of three or more nonparent adults. Administrators, psychologists, counselors, and other school support staff can mentor young people, read to children, or just be someone to "check in" with at school.

2. ***Parent involvement.*** Assist parents in developing their parenting skills. Competent and caring young people have parents who are actively involved in helping them succeed in school. Some parents need assistance in learning ways to encourage, discipline, and motivate their child. School staff can provide or support parent-training opportunities within their school.

3. ***Safety.*** Start or join a school safety team. In order for students to be successful they must feel safe at school. Principals, psychologists, counselors, and others can be valuable assets to a team that develops policies and procedures related to school safety.

4. ***School boundaries.*** Be a member of a schoolwide climate team. Competent, healthy students need a school environment that provides clear rules and consequences for both positive and negative behaviors. Psychologists and counselors are trained in schoolwide and individual management/motivation techniques.

5. ***School engagement.*** Work with teachers and students to ensure that all young people are actively engaged in learning. School psychologists and school counselors are important members of student support teams. They can assess the level of student engagement in the classroom and work with school staff to design academic and behavior supports for needy students.

6. ***Homework.*** Assist families and teachers with what to do when students fall behind in their homework. Many educators believe that adolescents are more likely to learn self-discipline, gain added practice, and succeed in school when they are assigned complete homework regularly. Counselors and psychologists can help develop daily or weekly monitoring systems, assess student strengths and weaknesses, and support families through the homework years.

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7. ***Positive values.*** Be a role model and instructor in positive values. Healthy and caring young people show integrity, honesty, responsibility, and restraint in their daily lives. Counselors and psychologists can provide classroom or small group lessons that reinforce these values.

8. ***Planning and decision making.*** Teach students how to make decisions and choices. Competent young people know how to plan ahead and make choices. Model and instruct responsible decision making in daily interactions with students.

9. ***Resistance skills.*** Support school programs that teach young people resistance skills. Healthy adolescents are able to resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. Counselors and psychologists can support classroom or individual programs that teach these skills.

10. ***Peaceful conflict resolution.*** Be a mediator. Competent young people seek nonviolent ways to resolve conflict. Teach students the skills of negotiation, mediation, problem solving, and seeking alternative solutions to violence in their daily lives.

APPENDIX B

Ten Things Kids Can Do to Stop Violence

(This reproducible fact sheet was provided by the Connecticut Clearinghouse, a program of Wheeler Clinic, Inc., which is funded by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Found in *Peaceful Schools,* October 1998.

1. Settle arguments with words, not fists or weapons. Don't stand around and form an audience when others are arguing. A group makes a good target for violence.

2. Learn safe routes for walking in the neighborhood, and know good places to seek help.

3. Report any crimes or suspicious actions to the police, school authorities, and parents.

4. Don't open the door to anyone you don't know and trust.

5. Never go anywhere with someone you don't know and trust.

6. If someone tries to abuse you, say no, get away, and tell a trusted adult. Trust feelings, and if you sense danger, get away fast. Remember: Violence is not the victim's fault.

7. Don't use alcohol or other drugs, and stay away from places and people associated with them.

8. Stick with friends who are also against violence and drugs, and stay away from known trouble spots.

9. Get involved to make school safer and better. Hold rallies, counsel peers, settle disputes peacefully. If there's no program, help start one.

10. Help younger children learn to avoid being crime victims. Set a good example, and volunteer to help with community efforts to stop crime and prevent violence.