

Information Booklet

***Search Institute
Profiles of Student Life:
Attitudes and Behaviors***

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Information Booklet on the Survey
Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors

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Information Booklet on the Survey ***Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors***

PURPOSE OF THIS INFORMATION BOOKLET

The purpose of this booklet is to provide school districts and community members with the information they need to make an informed decision regarding the administration of the survey *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors*. While this booklet is intended to be comprehensive in nature, it may not address every question that is raised in your specific community. For questions not addressed in this booklet, or for additional information or clarification, we encourage you to contact the Search Institute Survey Coordinator assigned to your state by calling 800-888-7828. A Search Institute representative will direct your call to the appropriate Survey Coordinator.

We appreciate your interest in considering the administration of this survey in your community. The survey can be a very special and powerful tool for helping your community understand the lives of your young people and what you, as a community, can do to foster healthy, caring, and responsible adolescents. It is the goal of Search Institute's survey services department to provide the level of information you need to be fully informed about the survey process.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Search Institute

Search Institute is an independent nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide leadership, knowledge, and resources to promote healthy children, youth, and communities.

To accomplish this mission, Search Institute conducts research, develops publications and practical tools, and provides training and technical assistance. The Institute collaborates with others to promote long-term organizational and cultural change that supports the healthy development of all children and adolescents.

The Framework of 40 Developmental Assets

Developmental Assets represent the positive relationships, opportunities, skills, and values that promote the positive development of all children and adolescents.

The Developmental Assets framework grew out of Search Institute's research over the past decade. The theoretical underpinnings of the framework reside in the research pertaining to risk and resiliency, prevention, and health promotion.

The Survey *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors (A&B)*

The survey *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors (A&B)* was created in 1989 and measured 30 Developmental Assets. In 1996, the framework was expanded to 40 Developmental Assets, on the basis of analysis of Search Institute's own aggregate data on more than 250,000 students who took the original

30-asset survey from 1989-1994, additional synthesis of child and adolescent research, as well as conversations with researchers and practitioners. To date, more than one million students in well over 1,000 US communities have completed the A&B survey.

Purpose of the Survey

The survey provides baseline aggregate data on which to develop asset-building strategies and the creation of positive new visions for the youth in your community. The A&B survey provides a portrait of the Developmental Assets, thriving indicators, deficits, and risk behaviors of your 6th- to 12th-grade youth. The survey has become a catalyst for many communities becoming involved in Search Institute's Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth initiative (HC•HY). The HC•HY national effort seeks to motivate and equip individuals, organizations, and their leaders to join together in nurturing caring and responsible children and adolescents.

In addition to its serving as a community mobilization tool for building Developmental Assets, the survey also has been used to:

- Assist state and local educators in monitoring indicators related to student well-being;
- Set priorities and strategies for programs and services;
- Provide a common framework for cross-sector collaboration;
- Provide data for grant writing;
- Provide data for reports to funding agencies; and
- Provide a “youth voice” in organizational and community planning.

What the Survey Is Not Designed To Do

The survey is not designed (and cannot be used) as an assessment of an individual student's level of assets.

The survey is also not designed as a pre-post program evaluation tool. Reasons why the A&B isn't an effective evaluation tool include:

- For simplicity of communication with communities, Developmental Assets are measured dichotomously (that is, students either “have” or “do not have” the asset). While it is possible for changes to occur in the level of assets between the two (or more) survey administrations, the changes likely will not be at a level that can easily be measured by the survey or that will affect the overall percentage of youth reporting a particular asset.
- Students complete the survey anonymously, making pre-post measurement or program evaluation difficult, as student populations likely will change between the two (or more) survey administrations due to absenteeism, youth dropping out of school or programs, or students moving away.
- When measuring the effectiveness of a program, questions about the specific program elements need to be asked. It is unlikely that the items contained in the A&B survey are sufficient for that purpose. In addition, because the survey scanning and report processes are automated, program-specific items cannot be added to the A&B survey.

The Content of the A&B Survey

The survey focuses on four categories of adolescent experiences: (1) Developmental Assets, (2) thriving indicators, (3) deficits, and (4) risk behaviors and high-risk behavior patterns.

Developmental Assets. As noted above, the Developmental Assets represent the positive relationships, opportunities, skills, and values that promote the positive development of all children and adolescents. The

Developmental Assets are grouped into 20 external assets (i.e., health-promoting features of the environment) and 20 internal assets (i.e., a youth's own commitments, values, and competencies).

The 20 external assets are grouped into the four categories of support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. The 20 internal assets are grouped into the four categories of commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity.

The 40 Developmental Assets (listed by the 8 external and internal categories) are:

- **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
- **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, and Positive View of Personal Future.

Thriving Indicators. Healthy adolescent development is not defined solely as the absence of health-compromising behaviors. Healthy development also includes life-enhancing attitudes and behaviors, which, in the A&B survey, are called Thriving Indicators. The indicators examined include: succeeds in school, helps others, values diversity, maintains good health, exhibits leadership, resists danger, delays gratification, and overcomes adversity. Each of these eight indicators is measured by one survey question.

Because we are interested in the protective value and importance of the Developmental Assets, we also gather information on other aspects of young people's lives, e.g., deficits and risk factors.

Deficits. There are five deficits examined by the survey. Deficits are negative influences or realities in young people's lives that make it more difficult for them to develop healthy, caring, and productive ways. Deficits may limit access to external assets, and they also ease the way into high-risk behavioral choices. Deficits are liabilities that in themselves may not do permanent harm, but make harm more likely. Each deficit is measured by one survey question. The five deficits measured by the survey include: drinking parties, alone at home, victim of violence, TV overexposure, and physical abuse.

Risk-Taking Behaviors and High-Risk Behavior Patterns. The A&B survey includes 37 questions about the extent to which students are involved in risk-taking behaviors. These items are combined to report 24 risk-taking behaviors and 10 high-risk behavior patterns. High-risk behavior patterns represent repeated involvement in behaviors that compromise a young person's well being.

The 24 risk-taking behaviors studied in the survey include use of alcohol, tobacco, inhalants, marijuana, other drug use; driving and alcohol, sexual intercourse, anti-social behavior, violence, school truancy, gambling, eating disorder, depression, and attempted suicide.

The 10 high-risk behavior patterns include higher levels of alcohol, tobacco, and other illicit drug use; sexual intercourse, depression/suicide, anti-social behavior, violence, school problems, driving and alcohol, and gambling.

SEARCH INSTITUTE'S SURVEY SERVICE

What's Included in the Survey Service

The survey service includes the following:

- Telephone consultation to help answer questions about a wide range of survey administration issues such as the number of youth that should be surveyed, parental consent, and timing of the survey administration
- A detailed manual to guide you through the administration process
- Student survey forms (you will need one per student)
- Computerized scanning and analysis of completed surveys
- An 80-page report with graphics and explanatory text, including a nine-page Executive Summary
- A sampling of Search Institute resources to help you in your community mobilization efforts

Brief Overview of the Survey Service Process

- Orders for surveys and report processing are placed directly through Search Institute.
- Survey orders are processed by Search Institute and shipped through an outside vendor. Surveys are shipped to the customer within two weeks of receiving a written order.
- Survey administration is conducted by the school and/or organization contracting the survey service.
- Surveys are returned to Search Institute where they are prepared for scanning by an outside vendor.
- Surveys are scanned by the outside vendor. The survey data are sent by modem to Search Institute.
- Search Institute cleans the data and processes the appropriate reports. Survey reports are mailed from Search Institute within 10 weeks of receiving the completed surveys.
- After scanning, survey forms are stored by the vendor for 90 days, after which time they are destroyed. To maintain student confidentiality, survey forms will not be returned to the school or contracting party.

Ordering Procedures

Surveys are shrink-wrapped in packets of 25 and must be ordered in multiples of 25, with a required minimum order of 4 packets (100 surveys). Unopened, reusable packets may be returned for credit, subject to our Return Policy (see below).

Search Institute requires a purchase order (or letterhead request) that includes the number of packets being ordered and the number and types of reports to be processed. **Organizations are invoiced at two points during the survey process.** An invoice for the surveys themselves will be sent at the time of shipment. A second invoice for report processing will follow the completion of the report(s). Surveys and report processing must be purchased together. Surveys are not sold separately.

Surveys are shipped within 10 working days from receipt of order. An additional fee of \$10 plus the actual cost of shipping will be charged for rush order requests.

The initial aggregate report is one that combines all of the data received for a particular study. A subreport refers to subsets of data that make up the aggregate report. For example, a school district study may involve several school buildings. The district-level report would be considered the aggregate report, combining all school building data. School building reports would be considered subreports. All aggregate reports and subreports include the

nine-page Executive Summary. An Executive Summary may be ordered in place of a subreport. All reports (initial aggregate, subreport, and Executive Summary) may be purchased either as an unbound black and white paper copy, or as a PDF file.

Survey and Report Costs

<u>Survey Costs (purchased in packets of 25)</u>	<u>Cost per Packet</u>
4-199 packets (100-4,975 surveys)	\$55.00
200-599 packets (5,000-14,975 surveys)	\$52.50
600 or more packets (15,000 or more surveys)...	\$50.00
 Standard Shipping and Handling	\$25 per survey shipment
Rush Order Requests	\$35 (plus actual cost of shipping)

Report Costs

Initial aggregate report (paper or PDF) \$700
 (paper and PDF)..... \$850
 This report combines data for all students participating in the survey (e.g., a school district report).

Subreport (paper or PDF) \$500
 (paper and PDF)..... \$650
 This report is based on a subset of data included in the aggregate report (e.g., a school building report).

Executive Summary (paper or PDF) \$100
 (paper and PDF)..... \$150
 The Executive Summary is included in all aggregate and subreports and does not need to be ordered separately.
 An Executive Summary may be purchased in place of a subreport (e.g., for a school building within a school district), but may not be purchased in place of the initial aggregate report.

Return Policy

All returned survey packets are subject to a \$1.25 per packet restocking fee. All returns must be in their original, shrink-wrapped packaging and unopened to be issued credit.

A \$50 restocking fee will be charged for orders that are cancelled after surveys have been shipped to the customer. The \$1.25 per-packet fee will be charged in addition to the \$50 restocking fee.

What’s Included in the A&B Report

The A&B report (titled *Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth*) is 80 pages in length and includes the following:

Part I: Introduction. An overview of the Developmental Assets framework, a description of how your study was conducted, and suggestions for using the report findings.

Part II: Portrait of Developmental Assets. Analysis of the levels of external assets, internal assets, and deficits as reported by your students. Data are presented by total sample, gender, and grade.

Part III: Portrait of Risk-Taking Behaviors and Thriving Indicators. Analysis of the levels of 24 risk-taking behaviors, 10 high-risk behavior patterns, and 8 thriving indicators as reported by your students. Data are presented by total sample, gender, and grade.

Part IV: The Power of Developmental Assets. Analysis of the relationship of 24 risk-taking behaviors, 10 high-risk behavior patterns, and 8 thriving indicators by four categories of asset levels: 0-10 assets, 11-20

assets, 21-30 assets, and 31-40 assets. Also included are the average number of 24 risk-taking behaviors and the average number of eight thriving indicators by these four asset levels.

Part V: From Awareness to Action. Concluding remarks about the opportunities communities have for enhancing the positive development of youth, the importance of fostering Developmental Assets, and steps for taking action.

Appendices.

- A list of all survey items with response option percentages by total group, gender, and grade
- A list detailing which survey questions are used to measure each of the 40 Developmental Assets, deficits, risk-taking behaviors and high risk behavior patterns, and thriving indicators (“item mapping”)
- A bibliography of the theory and research undergirding Search Institute’s framework of Developmental Assets
- A partial listing of Search Institute’s asset-promoting print and video resources

Executive Summary. The Executive Summary provides a nine-page overview of the report, including the overall percentage of youth reporting each of the 40 assets, the average number of assets by total sample and by grade, the percentage of youth reporting four levels of assets (i.e., 0-10 assets, 11-20 assets, 21-30 assets, and 31-40 assets), the average number of risk-taking behaviors by asset level, and the average number of thriving indicators by asset level. The Executive Summary can easily be duplicated for mass distribution to community residents and leaders. It can also be used as a guide/outline for presenting the survey results.

QUESTIONS ABOUT SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

How long does the survey process take?

Enlisting Support. The amount of time needed to gain broad-based support and/or consensus for administering the survey varies by community. Enabling community members to hear the experiences of a significant number of youth is a key contribution the school district can make toward creating a supportive environment in which youth can thrive. In order to play that role well, school districts will find it helpful to engage several community representatives—including parents and youth—to help plan the administration process. (For more information, see *Reaching Beyond the School Community*, page 8.)

Ordering Materials. Search Institute will send the surveys and administration materials within two weeks of receiving your written order.

Survey Administration. The survey contains 156 questions and takes approximately 50 minutes to administer. Students in the upper grade levels may complete the survey in less time; students in lower grades may need more than 50 minutes. Consider the reading level of your students and allow more time for those who may need it, e.g., students for whom English is a second language. When more than one school building is involved in a study, Search Institute recommends that data be collected across all sites within a two-week time period. [Reading level analyses conducted on the survey indicate that the Flesch Reading Ease Score is 74.7 (Easy) and the Flesch-Kincaid grade level is 5.2.]

Report Processing. Completed surveys are returned to Search Institute for processing. Reports are mailed approximately 10 weeks from the time Search Institute receives all surveys for your study. If your study involves use of the survey across multiple sites, Search Institute needs to receive data from all sites before survey processing can begin. If subreports are to be provided for each site, surveys must be separated and identified by each site.

How do I select which students to survey?

The A&B survey may be administered to students in grades 6 through 12. For smaller schools or school districts, you will want to survey all students in each participating grade. For studies involving large school districts, counties, or states, you may want to consider drawing a sample.

You may use one of the following methods for selecting participants:

- Survey all students in grades 6 through 12
- Survey all students in selected grades (e.g., 6, 8, 10, 12)
- Draw a random sample of classrooms
- Draw a random sample of students using an enrollment roster

Which method is most suitable for your community will depend on a number of factors such as the size of your student population, the number of school buildings involved, the type of report(s) needed, and which method will provide the easiest administration procedures. Contact your Search Institute Survey Coordinator for guidance on determining the number of students needed for a representative sample.

Are there issues related to sample size that need to be considered?

Search Institute requires a minimum order of 100 surveys (four packets). However, to maintain student confidentiality, there must be a minimum of 30 students per grade and gender in order for Search Institute to report data by these subgroups. When sample sizes are small, grade data will be combined to achieve the 30-student minimum. Gender data will not be reported if there are fewer than 30 students in either gender category. Please note that this is not to suggest that 100 students or 30 students per grade level is an adequate sample size. For information about selecting an adequate sample size, please contact a Search Institute Survey Service Coordinator.

Because of the minimum requirements for reporting data, a total sample size of fewer than 100 students means there will probably be missing data throughout the aggregate (80-page) report.

For subgroups of 50-100 students, an Executive Summary may be purchased instead of the 80-page subreport. No report will be prepared on groups of fewer than 50 students. At least one aggregate report (\$700) must be purchased in order to purchase an Executive Summary as an alternative to purchasing an 80-page subreport (e.g., an individual school building within a school district study.)

Please note that to ensure data quality, a computerized check is made on all surveys to look for inconsistency in survey responses, number of survey items not answered, etc. Surveys that do not meet the quality checks are eliminated from the dataset. Your report is based on the surveys that remain in the dataset after these quality checks have been made. The percentage of surveys eliminated from a dataset is typically about 5 to 8 percent of the total number of surveys received. This percentage tends to be higher among larger urban districts. If the total sample size for the aggregate report is fewer than 50 students, Search Institute will not run the report. The contracting organization will be responsible for the cost of the surveys even though no report is run. To protect the confidentiality of students, completed survey forms will not be returned to the school or contracting agency.

Who coordinates the survey process within the community?

It is important for the organization contracting the survey study to select one on-site survey coordinator who will be the contact person for Search Institute's survey staff. Your community's on-site coordinator (in collaboration with your survey task force and/or school district) will:

- Select the grade levels to be surveyed
- Determine appropriate parental consent procedures on the basis of relevant federal or state laws and school district policies (e.g., use of passive vs. active parental consent)
- Schedule the survey administration date
- Ensure appropriate communication to staff, students, parents, and community members

- Notify survey administrators of date and procedures
- Ensure delivery of blank surveys to appropriate school buildings and/or classrooms, and clarify instructions
- Collect completed surveys, complete the survey administration form, and ship them to Search Institute
- Distribute copies of the report(s)

Your on-site survey coordinator may be someone from a school, an organization sponsoring the survey, or a community volunteer. In those cases where the survey is being conducted as part of a large community effort the survey coordinator may be assisted and/or guided by others involved in the survey planning process.

Who administers the survey?

For each classroom chosen to participate in the survey, the on-site survey coordinator needs to designate a survey administrator. Most often survey administrators are classroom teachers or school counselors. You may also use volunteers or other school personnel, but they should be comfortable in a classroom setting and able to maintain a serious atmosphere during survey administration.

When should the survey be administered?

Several factors will influence when the survey administration should take place, including the length of time required for approval by key decision makers, amount of time needed for parental consent, and the school calendar. Choose a time (1) that is not immediately following summer vacation or a major holiday period, (2) when the greatest percentage of students will be in school (not on a field trip or involved in a special program), (3) when it is most convenient for teachers to have the survey done in their classrooms, and (4) when it does not interfere with or conflict with other surveys being conducted with the same population.

THINGS TO CONSIDER DURING YOUR SURVEY PLANNING PROCESS

Reaching Beyond the School Community

Involving Others in the Planning and Dissemination Stages. One of the fundamental premises of the Developmental Assets framework is that *everyone* is an asset builder. The responsibility for promoting the healthy development of our young people resides with each of us as individuals as well as within our community organizations. The information provided by youth through this survey can enhance asset-building opportunities in many parts of the community such as youth-serving organizations, parent groups, congregations, law enforcement, and local businesses.

Enabling community members to hear the experiences of a significant number of youth is a key contribution the school district can make toward creating a supportive environment in which youth can thrive. In order to play that role well, school districts may find it helpful to engage several community representatives—including parents and youth—to help plan the administration process. Steps to consider when you are seeking community involvement include:

- Enlist broad-based community support and co-sponsorship from other sectors of the community
- Communicate early and thoroughly about the nature and purpose of the survey
 - Create a formal communication plan to ensure broad knowledge about the nature and purpose of the survey and its importance to the community
 - Provide information about the content of the survey (see The Content of the A&B Survey, page 2)
 - Have a copy of the survey available at each school for parent review
 - Create a plan for involving media in a positive, proactive way

- Involve other (non school) representatives in the preplanning stages. The benefits of doing so include:
 - Providing individuals with an opportunity to raise issues early in the process
 - Resolving any potential concerns early
 - Encouraging others to be advocates of the survey in their organizations or groups
- Involve other (non school) representatives in the process of examining and sharing survey results so that they may become more proactive joint planners with the school district.

Collecting survey data is the beginning--not the end--of the process. The data provide an opportunity for a full community conversation about how schools, youth organizations, faith groups, government and citizens (both adults and youth) can work together to make a difference in the lives of youth.

The Role of Youth in the Survey Process. The value of youth involvement in your survey process and information sharing cannot be overstated. Youth involvement at all levels of the process can shift the tone from youth as “sources of data” to “knowledge generators” and provides a means for giving them a stronger voice in their school and community. Students can be involved through the entire survey process including planning, administration, dissemination, and action implementation. For example, youth can:

- Present or co-present the reasons for using the survey to the school board or other relevant decision makers
- Convey the assets message as well as the intent and purpose of the survey to their fellow students
- Assist the classroom survey administrators
- Present or co-present survey results at a town meeting, school assembly, local service groups, etc.
- Serve on an ongoing planning and implementation task force

Parent Consent

There are three basic methods for informing parents about the survey:

- General parent notification, such as an article placed in a school newsletter.
- Passive consent, in which a letter is sent to the parents, and parents must complete a form and return it to the school if they do not want their child to complete the survey. Consent is assumed if no such request is made.
- Active consent, in which parents must return a signed permission slip for their child to complete the survey. Consent cannot be assumed if no form is returned.

Whether active parental consent is required depends upon relevant federal, state, and/or local laws or regulations. It is important that you know your school district’s parental consent requirements. In addition, Search Institute recommends you seek legal counsel regarding relevant federal, state, or local parental consent requirements.

Search Institute recommends that the following information be shared with parents:

- Why the survey is being conducted
- Where and when parents can review a copy of the survey
- Whom parents may contact if they have questions
- How and when the survey will be administered
- Grade levels to be surveyed
- Anonymity of survey participants
- In what format the findings will be reported (i.e., in aggregate form only, not by individual students)
- How the findings will be shared with the community at large
- Students’ grades will not be affected by their participation or nonparticipation
- Students are instructed at the time of the survey administration that their participation in the survey is voluntary and that they may skip items if they so choose.
- What nonparticipating students will do during survey administration time (e.g., they will assemble in a study hall or remain in the classroom to study)

Most of this information is determined by your on-site survey coordinator, or your survey task force, in collaboration with your school district. Other information is included in the sample passive and active parental consent letters provided in Search Institute's A&B Administration Manual.

Student Consent

Students also have the right to refuse participation. Information regarding the voluntary nature of a student's participation is included in the classroom administration instructions and in the sample parental consent letters provided in the A&B Administration Manual.

Common Issues Regarding the Survey

Age Appropriateness. The content of the survey is supported by an extensive literature review of over 800 scientific articles and reports on adolescent development, risk and resiliency factors, and prevention. The items contained in the survey (including risk behavior items) represent a wide range of experiences facing our nation's youth—even those in 6th grade.

Search Institute includes risk behavior items not only to provide a community with information on the extent to which its youth are involved in these behaviors but also to demonstrate to communities the strong relationship between Developmental Assets and risk-taking behaviors and how the asset-building approach may be an important protective strategy with regard to many high-risk behaviors. The power of the assets has been found consistently across all the communities that have used the survey—the more assets a young person reports the less likely he or she is to report involvement in these risk-taking behaviors.

Some adults may express concern that youth who are not already engaging in certain risk-taking behaviors will get the idea to do so by reading these questions. There are no research studies that show this to be the case.

If conducting a survey that contains questions about risk-taking behaviors is not a common practice of the school district, it is important that the district, in collaboration with members of the community, be in dialogue months ahead of the anticipated survey administration. The importance of this dialogue is to introduce the Developmental Assets framework, the inverse relationship of Developmental Assets and risk-taking behaviors and the positive relationship of assets and thriving indicators, and how the survey information can be used to support the community's efforts to promote the positive development of its youth.

If the district has a policy or set of protocols about conducting surveys, it is important to assess this survey in the context of those policies/protocols, and then assure district staff, school board, and parents that it is a "fit" with school district's agenda.

Survey Modifications. On occasion a community or school has requested permission to eliminate certain items from the survey. Because both the survey scanning and report processing methods use automated procedures, requests to modify the survey or report cannot be accommodated. Search Institute cannot process any surveys in which items have been covered in any way. In addition, students may not be instructed to skip specific questions as this also interferes with the scoring processes for the report. If survey items are eliminated in any way or if students are instructed to skip specific items, the organization contracting the survey service will still be responsible for paying for the surveys even though no reports will be processed.

If There Are Concerns Expressed about Conducting the Survey. The best approach to gaining support for use of the survey is to become knowledgeable about, and to share information on, the Developmental Assets framework and the way in which it can help focus a community's efforts around positive youth development. In some cases concerns have been eliminated by adjusting the grade levels to be surveyed, for example not including grade 6 in the survey administration process.

Search Institute has a number of resources pertaining to the Developmental Assets framework and its Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth initiative, including print and video resources, training and speakers. For more information, visit Search Institute’s website at www.search-institute.org.

DATA QUALITY

Reliability and Validity

Reliability refers to the degree to which something is measured consistently over time.

Validity is the degree to which a procedure measures what it is intending to measure.

Many of the items used in this survey have an extensive history of use in Search Institute’s work. Some items have been developed in other studies. For example, many of the items addressing alcohol and other drug use are from the study entitled *Monitoring the Future* (conducted by the Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan). Some items were developed through a process of pilot testing, pre-testing, and question revision.

As with most studies dealing with anonymous self-reported data, there is no direct, objective validation of the items used. However, a considerable amount of evidence strongly indicates that self-report questions produce largely valid data.

Steps Taken to Improve Data Quality

Over its 40 years of doing survey work, Search Institute has built into its computer programs ways of eliminating surveys that seem invalid. A&B surveys are eliminated from a dataset when (1) 40 or more questions are not answered, (2) the surveys contain disparate information on similar items, (3) there are excessively unrealistic responses to key items, (4) there are inconsistencies within time frames, and (5) a grade level other than those intending to be surveyed is marked. One item is included as an intentional way of assessing student honesty. The percentage of surveys that are eliminated from data analysis consistently holds at about 5 to 8 percent. This percentage tends to be somewhat higher in large urban school districts.

In very rare cases it may be the judgment of Search Institute that the quality of the data is such that a report should not be released. Search Institute will discuss the implications of data quality with the contracting agency before a final decision is made.

Comparing A&B Results to “National Data”

Search Institute has an aggregate dataset representing 99,462 public school students in grades 6 through 12. These students are from roughly 213 towns and cities in 25 states. These data were gathered through independent community studies across the 1996-97 school year. Caution should be used in comparing your community’s data to this aggregate dataset, as the dataset is not based on a nationally representative sample. While a community may choose to use these data as a barometer of how similar or different its youth are compared to the youth represented in this larger sample, Search Institute strongly recommends that each community set its own goals based on where it wants its young people to be rather than where its young people are in relation to this aggregate data.

Consistency of Survey Results across Communities

Although trends and patterns in young people's experiences of Developmental Assets are consistent across communities, details of each community are unique. For example, Search Institute consistently finds that, on average, youth have fewer than half of the 40 assets. Individual community data differ, however, on the degree to which each asset is being experienced by youth. Knowing which individual assets are being experienced and which are not can help focus a community's efforts around asset building and positive youth development.

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For more information, contact Search Institute's Survey Service department at 800-888-7828.

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