

KLA White Paper Project 2000

Youth Survey

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## **KLA Youth Survey 2000**

In September 1999 the HealthQuest Consulting Team from Englewood Colorado completed an extensive assessment of Kosciusko County. The mission of the steering committee for the survey was "Kosciusko County is a caring, healthy, thriving community where people reach their highest quality of life." Included in the report were community demographics and information on social, health, and education issues that are facing the community. Many issues affecting a community have strong social or behavioral components. A strong healthy community must have individuals who are both physically and mentally healthy. (For more details see LifeQuest 1999).

What makes a healthy community for adolescents? A framework for defining the characteristics of a healthy community for adolescents has been developed by the Search Institute. Search has found that by developing certain external and internal assets, a framework is built for a strong foundation for youth to grow into positive, healthy members of the community. The external assets needed in the community are (1) Family support (2) Caring school climate (3) Community values it's youth (4) Neighborhood boundaries (5) Positive peer influence and (6) Creative activities. The internal assets include (1) Achievement motivation (2) Bonding to school (3) Reading for pleasure (4) Honesty (5) Responsibility and (6) Sense of purpose. With the recent statistics that support issues such as suicide, murder, and drug abuse increasing in this age category, families and communities are challenged to take a closer look at their youth. How youth view the issues they are facing is the core of this paper. In order to develop a healthy community for our teens, we must listen to the way they view and describe their community and school. To assist our youth in growing into caring, competent, involved adults, our community must offer a spectrum of services to encourage each teen to grow within his individual boundaries.

In February and March of 2000 six focus groups of students from Tippecanoe Valley, Wawasee, Edgewood, and Lakeview Middle Schools met to discuss the five-question survey. The groups totaled 100 students and range in size from six to 20 youth. The facilitator asked the questions and sought clarification when needed. The following results are a composite of all answers given. Views were sometimes dramatically different in rural areas verses the city of Warsaw. If responses differed, both will be noted.

The groups consisted of both male and female participants. The facilitator established the rules for the group and encouraged all students to participate. The rules included that all answers be accepted and respected. The facilitator would be able to close a discussion that does not focus on the current topic. All participants had an opportunity to comment before the group moves to the next question. Students ranged in age from 13 to 15. All student responses are represented in some manner in the survey results.

## Survey Questions

### 1. How do you view your community? What things do you like? Dislike? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this community?

All groups wanted to clarify community. Most Warsaw students saw their immediate community as the residential area in which they live. Rural students saw their community as the small town closest to their home. All students thought of Warsaw as the extended community. If the view was expressed by rural students only, the results will be marked (rural only).

| Likes/Strengths                                | Dislike/Weaknesses  |
|--|---|
| Close to friends/family/church                 | Little to do  |
| Lakes/Festivals/Sports                         | Must be very good to play sports after 6 <sup>th</sup> grade                    |
| Small town atmosphere (rural only)             | No place to "hang out"  |
| Feel comfortable and safe/know lot's of people | Too few opportunities for peer interaction                                      |
| Able to walk to school and home (rural only)   | Curfew too early  |
| Parks and softball                             | Fast food on east side of town  |
|  | Distance to drive to get to sports practice                                     |
|  | Cannot walk around town without police thinking they are doing something wrong. |
|  | Become more aware of community activities for youth-How do you join?            |
|  | More entertainment for younger teens  |

### 2. What type of leisure activities is available to you? What else would be nice to have?

The youth were very vocal about their need to have opportunities to socialize with their peers. They seemed to enjoy the various recreational summer activities and seemed most upset with the restrictions on school activities. One group of students was concerned because the students who were not allowed to attend the school dances due to discipline were probably the students who needed social interactions the most. They strongly felt that students should have opportunities to interact more often during school. If school systems wish to prevent violence, they need to encourage the "school spirit" not separatism. All students felt that the time allowed students between classes, lunch period, and locker times was too short. Students felt that they were told to be responsible and act like an adult, yet had very little say in school and community activities that are planned for them.

| Activities Available | Additional Activities Needed |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Movies               | Concerts with rock bands     |

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Festivals/Fairs                     | Mall with really cool stores like Old Navy      |
| Tippy Dance Hall                    | Amusement Park                                  |
| Concerts                            | Community Pool                                  |
| Youth/Church/4-H/Sports             | Free day at YMCA                                |
| Boys/Girls Club activities          | Expand activities                               |
| More Intermural sport opportunities | Paintball/video arcade                          |
|                                     | Bike/rollerblade trail                          |
|                                     | Hang out place with snacks                      |
|                                     | Teen center                                     |
|                                     | Bowling in other towns, ice skating rank, golf, |

**3. How safe do you feel in your school and community? How can the community help?**

The rural students felt very safe in their small communities in general. The Warsaw students felt safe in their residential communities but not in downtown Warsaw. In general the students felt that the stepped-up safety measures which have taken place in the past year have contributed to their feelings of insecurity. The students feel that they should have been consulted before the schools decided that changes were needed. Just knowing that certain changes were going to be made and why would promote the sense of security.

The students said they no longer feel truly safe anywhere. The number of youth who have died in car accidents, school shootings, and from illness in our community has contributed to this feeling. Students often feel they are expected to take care of themselves in school bully situations and need friends to support them. They feel that teachers and parents are often too busy to really care about these issues, so they try to minimize the danger.

The students suggested several solutions to the problems of safety.

- A. A stop light by the High School and better road systems would help reduce the number of traffic accidents.
- B. Better relationships with the police. Dare officers help, but the others seem to only interact in a negative manner with youth.
- C. Issues of cultural diversity were more prevalent in Warsaw.
- D. Students should have more input into making regulations for school safety.
- E. The extreme focus on safety has helped create an atmosphere of distrust and fear.
- F. Discipline is needed in the school, but if students had a more active role in creating the rules they would also have a more active part in monitoring the rules.

Students feel that it is no longer possible to feel totally "safe" in school where the hallways are so closely monitored, the visits to the lockers are strictly limited, and the

teachers act as if every student is out to do someone harm. The behavior that seems to make the students feel less safe is individuals who do not fit the norm. They may speak a different language, dress in a different manner, or use intimidation.

| Safety Issues in Schools                                      | Safety Issues in Community  |
|---|---|
| Peer's view of their behavior (nerd, gay, dumb, being a baby) | Police never say positive things to youth-except DARE officers. Not every youth is out to make trouble. |
| Boy's saying remarks to girls                                 | Bicycle bandit and length of time to apprehend  |
| Food-rumor of bad food wonder if it will make them ill        | Groups of older males hanging out in downtown Warsaw  |
| Lack of seatbelts on buses                                    | People tossing things from cars as they pass  |
| Lack of privacy in bathrooms                                  | Teenage drivers exceeding speed limits  |

#### 4. What additional resources would help you reach your educational goals?

The students were very interested in this topic and had some very good ideas. In the Valley Middle School, the lack of computer access seemed to be the main item of concern. Being able to have access to a computer each day would make a very positive difference in getting their work completed as requested. Warsaw would like to have a study hall with access to a computer and someone to help with the homework; even if this required a lengthened school day. Wawasee students really liked their school and felt that the school did an excellent job of supporting students who would pursue help. They felt that the help was limited if the student was considered a "goof off" and no one really took the time to find ways of helping him. They would like to see programs that help the students with math.

| Current Resources             | Additional Resources Needed  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Wawasee Tutor Helpline        | Need additional hours  |
| Warsaw teachers help          | Someone to call if parents cannot help so they can receive answers and know how to do work               |
| Library open                  | Extended hours and open Sunday afternoon   |
| School classes                | Credit for classes in community—lifesaving class at YMCA/Summer sports camps/craft classes as art credit |
| Lax attitude toward education | Teachers who care if students learn  |
| Gym                           | Life skills gym for heavy students   |
| Choose all classes for H.S.   | Classes to help choose vocation for future , help student determine interest                             |
| Classes                       | Opportunities to see what "real jobs are available in community"   |
|                               | Fewer number of students in classes  |

**5. What health/nutritional barriers are preventing you from becoming more involved in educational/sports activities?**

The answers varied a great deal on this subject. The most alarming factor was the discussion by many girls of eating disorders. Most of the girls in every group stated that they did not eat on a regular schedule. They often skipped meals, especially breakfast. They felt they had to watch their caloric intake very carefully. The person who most influenced their attitude toward their weight was their mother. They felt that her struggle and comments made them aware of the importance of a thin body image. They often tried to keep their weight under control through exercise and skipping meals.

| <b>Barriers to good health for youth</b>  |
|---|
| Time allowed for lunch after getting meal most students have 10-15 minutes to eat |
| Someone to talk to about personal issues outside their home                       |
| Peer pressure   |
| Transportation to sports practice so more youth in rural areas could participate. |
| Need to carry books for all classes all day – back problems                       |
| People making fun of others so they stop trying to exercise or play in a sport    |

In considering how our community might address these problems we must take a look at what resources need to be strengthened. To what extent is the community providing the creative activities that strengthen the family, develop values, establish loving boundaries, and build a sense of honesty and responsibility in all youth in our community? To build a truly healthy community all citizens both young and old must have his/her needs respected.



# 40 Developmental Assets for Elementary-Age Children

Search Institute has identified a framework of 40 developmental assets for children ages 6 to 11 that blends Search Institute's research on developmental assets for 12- to 18-year-olds with the extensive literature in child development. For more information, see *Starting Out Right: Developmental Assets for Children* (published by Search Institute in 1997).

|                 | CATEGORY                  | ASSET NAME AND DEFINITION  |
|-----------------|---------------------------|--|
| EXTERNAL ASSETS | Support                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Family support</b>—Family life provides high levels of love and support.</li> <li>2. <b>Positive family communication</b>—Parent(s) and child communicate positively. Child is willing to seek parent(s) advice and counsel.</li> <li>3. <b>Other adult relationships</b>—Child receives support from nonparent adults.</li> <li>4. <b>Caring neighborhood</b>—Child experiences caring neighbors.</li> <li>5. <b>Caring school climate</b>—School provides a caring, encouraging environment.</li> <li>6. <b>Parent involvement in schooling</b>—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping child succeed in school.</li> </ol>  |
|                 | Empowerment               | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. <b>Community values children</b>—Children feel that the community values and appreciates children.</li> <li>8. <b>Children given useful roles</b>—Child is included in family decisions and is given useful roles at home and in the community.</li> <li>9. <b>Service to others</b>—Child and parent(s) serve others and the community.</li> <li>10. <b>Safety</b>—Child is safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.</li> </ol>  |
|                 | Boundaries & Expectations | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. <b>Family boundaries</b>—Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the child's whereabouts.</li> <li>12. <b>School boundaries</b>—School provides clear rules and consequences.</li> <li>13. <b>Neighborhood boundaries</b>—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring the child's behavior.</li> <li>14. <b>Adult role models</b>—Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.</li> <li>15. <b>Positive peer interactions</b>—Child plays with children who model responsible behavior.</li> <li>16. <b>Expectations for growth</b>—Adults have realistic expectations of development at this age. Parent(s), caregivers, and other adults encourage child to achieve and develop his or her unique talents.</li> </ol> |
|                 | Constructive Use of Time  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>17. <b>Creative activities</b>—Child participates in music, arts, or drama three or more hours each week through home and out-of-home activities.</li> <li>18. <b>Child programs</b>—Child spends one hour or more per week in extracurricular school or structured community programs.</li> <li>19. <b>Religious community</b>—Family attends religious programs or services for at least one hour once a week.</li> <li>20. <b>Positive, supervised time at home</b>—Child spends most evenings and weekends at home with parent(s) in predictable and enjoyable routines.</li> </ol>   |
| INTERNAL ASSETS | Commitment to Learning    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21. <b>Achievement motivation</b>—Child is motivated to do well in school.</li> <li>22. <b>School engagement</b>—Child is responsive, attentive, and actively engaged in learning.</li> <li>23. <b>Homework</b>—Child does homework when it is assigned.</li> <li>24. <b>Bonding to school</b>—Child cares about her or his school.</li> <li>25. <b>Reading for pleasure</b>—Child and a caring adult read together for at least 30 minutes a day. Child also enjoys reading without an adult's involvement.</li> </ol>   |
|                 | Positive Values           | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>26. <b>Caring</b>—Child is encouraged to help other people and to share her or his possessions.</li> <li>27. <b>Equality and social justice</b>—Child begins to show interest in making the community a better place.</li> <li>28. <b>Integrity</b>—Child begins to act on convictions and stand up for her or his beliefs.</li> <li>29. <b>Honesty</b>—Child begins to value honesty and act accordingly.</li> <li>30. <b>Responsibility</b>—Child begins to accept and take personal responsibility for age-appropriate tasks.</li> <li>31. <b>Healthy lifestyle and sexual attitudes</b>—Child begins to value good health habits. Child learns healthy sexual attitudes and beliefs and to respect others.</li> </ol>                                     |
|                 | Social Competencies       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>32. <b>Planning and decision making</b>—Child learns beginning skills of how to plan ahead and makes decisions at an appropriate developmental level.</li> <li>33. <b>Interpersonal competence</b>—Child interacts with adults and children and can make friends. Child expresses and articulates feelings in appropriate ways and empathizes with others.</li> <li>34. <b>Cultural competence</b>—Child has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.</li> <li>35. <b>Resistance skills</b>—Child begins to develop the ability to resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.</li> <li>36. <b>Peaceful conflict resolution</b>—Child attempts to resolve conflict nonviolently.</li> </ol>          |
|                 | Positive Identity         | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>37. <b>Personal power</b>—Child begins to feel he or she has control over "things that happen to me." Child begins to manage life's frustrations and challenges in ways that have positive results for the child and others.</li> <li>38. <b>Self-esteem</b>—Child reports having a high self-esteem.</li> <li>39. <b>Sense of purpose</b>—Child reports that "my life has a purpose."</li> <li>40. <b>Positive view of personal future</b>—Child is optimistic about her or his personal future.</li> </ol>  |

## The Progression of Developmental Assets from Infancy to Adolescence (Birth to age 18)

| Asset Type                         | Infants and Toddlers<br>(Birth to age 2)     | Preschoolers<br>(Ages 3 to 5)   | Elementary-Age Children<br>(Ages 6 to 11) | Adolescents<br>(Ages 12 to 18) |
|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| <b>E X T E R N A L A S S E T S</b> |  |                                 |   |                                |
| <b>Support</b>                     |  |                                 |   |                                |
| 1.                                 | Family support                               |                                 |   |                                |
| 2.                                 | Positive family communication                |                                 |   |                                |
| 3.                                 | Other adult resources                        | Other adult relationships       |   |                                |
| 4.                                 | Caring neighborhood                          |                                 |   |                                |
| 5.                                 | Caring out-of-home climate                   | Caring school climate           |   |                                |
| 6.                                 | Parent involvement in out-of-home situations | Parent involvement in schooling |   |                                |
| <b>Empowerment</b>                 |  |                                 |   |                                |
| 7.                                 | Children valued                              |                                 | Community values children                 | Community values youth         |
| 8.                                 | Children have roles in family life           | Children given useful roles     |   | Youth as resources             |
| 9.                                 | Service to others                            |                                 |   |                                |
| 10.                                | Safety                                       |                                 |   |                                |
| <b>Boundaries and Expectations</b> |  |                                 |   |                                |
| 11.                                | Family boundaries                            |                                 |   |                                |
| 12.                                | Out-of-home boundaries                       |                                 | School boundaries                         |                                |
| 13.                                | Neighborhood boundaries                      |                                 |   |                                |
| 14.                                | Adult role models                            |                                 |   |                                |
| 15.                                | Positive peer observation                    | Positive peer interactions      |   | Positive peer influence        |
| 16.                                | Expectations for growth                      |                                 |   | High expectations              |
| <b>Constructive Use of Time</b>    |  |                                 |   |                                |
| 17.                                | Creative activities                          |                                 |   |                                |
| 18.                                | Out-of-home activities                       |                                 | Child programs                            | Youth programs                 |
| 19.                                | Religious community                          |                                 |   |                                |
| 20.                                | Positive, supervised time at home            |                                 |   | Time at home                   |

Continued

**NOTE:** The complete report, *Starting Out Right*, includes definitions of each individual asset for each age group.

## The Progression of Developmental Assets from Infancy to Adolescence, Continued

| Asset Type                         | Infants and Toddlers<br>(Birth to age 2)             | Preschoolers<br>(Ages 3 to 5)         | Elementary-Age Children<br>(Ages 6 to 11) | Adolescents<br>(Ages 12 to 18) |
|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| <b>I N T E R N A L A S S E T S</b> |  |                                       |   |                                |
| <b>Commitment to Learning</b>      |  |                                       |   |                                |
| 21.                                | Achievement expectation                              |                                       | Achievement motivation                    |                                |
| 22.                                | Engagement expectation                               |                                       | School engagement                         |                                |
| 23.                                | Stimulating activity                                 |                                       | Homework                                  |                                |
| 24.                                | Enjoyment of learning                                |                                       | Bonding to school                         |                                |
| 25.                                | Reading for pleasure                                 |                                       |   |                                |
| <b>Positive Values</b>             |  |                                       |   |                                |
| 26.                                | Family values caring                                 |                                       | Caring                                    |                                |
| 27.                                | Family values equality and social justice            |                                       | Equality and social justice               |                                |
| 28.                                | Family values integrity                              |                                       | Integrity                                 |                                |
| 29.                                | Family values honesty                                |                                       | Honesty                                   |                                |
| 30.                                | Family values responsibility                         |                                       | Responsibility                            |                                |
| 31.                                | Family values healthy lifestyle and sexual attitudes |                                       | Healthy lifestyle and sexual attitudes    | Restraint                      |
| <b>Social Competencies</b>         |  |                                       |   |                                |
| 32.                                | Planning and decision-making observation             | Planning and decision-making practice | Planning and decision-making              |                                |
| 33.                                | Interpersonal observation                            | Interpersonal interactions            | Interpersonal competence                  |                                |
| 34.                                | Cultural observation                                 | Cultural interactions                 | Cultural competence                       |                                |
| 35.                                | Resistance observation                               | Resistance practice                   | Resistance skills                         |                                |
| 36.                                | Peaceful conflict resolution observation             | Peaceful conflict resolution practice | Peaceful conflict resolution              |                                |
| <b>Positive Identity</b>           |  |                                       |   |                                |
| 37.                                | Family has personal power                            |                                       | Personal power                            |                                |
| 38.                                | Family models high self-esteem                       |                                       | Self-esteem                               |                                |
| 39.                                | Family has a sense of purpose                        |                                       | Sense of purpose                          |                                |
| 40.                                | Family has a positive view of the future             |                                       | Positive view of personal future          |                                |

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