Character Education: How Does it Affect Student Self-Perception of Both Character and Achievement in an Integrated Curriculum?

John M. Schembri
St. John Fisher College

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MS in Mathematics, Science, and Technology Education

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John M. Schembri

St. John Fisher College

GMST

Spring 2003
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Abstract

Over the last few decades, change in communities, families, and education has placed an increasing demand on teachers to supplement societal deficiencies at school with hopes of improving the quality of child and adolescent development. In an effort to address this growing need, educators have revamped their traditional teaching styles to meet the educational needs of all students. This has been accomplished by initiating integrated curriculums that create more inviting, student-centered environments that focus on authentic education. The goal is to teach content through real-world scenarios in hopes to supplement valuable life lessons. This study focused on 48 students in a unique integrated curriculum within Penfield High School, a predominately white middle to upper class suburb of Rochester, New York. It was determined through surveys, one-on-one interviews, focus group feedback, teacher checklists, exit reflections, and field notes that character education in an integrated environment, that focused on specific instructional strategies, improved student self-perception of both character and academic performance.
Chapter 1 – Introduction

Due to my positive educational experience in high school, I went on to college with every intention of returning to Penfield to teach, buy a home, and raise a family. Shortly after college I did just that. I moved home and within half a year my alma mater employed me. Two years after that I married my wife, a Penfield alum, and shortly after that we bought a home in Penfield. Therefore, it is easy to see the vested interest I have in the school system, not only as an employee, but also as a past alumni and future parent. I am excited to see the paradigm shift in education to one that centers on meeting the needs of all students using multiple teaching strategies. Now that I am in my fifth year of teaching, I find myself constantly revising my educational practice so that I can try to meet the needs of all my students. Through the course of this educational evolution, I was chosen to participate in an ongoing investigation into providing alternative education experiences for students at Penfield High School. This idea surfaced in 1997 through an exploratory committee that worked in conjunction with Penfield High School’s Shared Decision-Making Team (A panel of teachers, parents, administrators, and community members that discuss current issues that face the school community and design and implement plans to deal with these issues). After looking closely at alternative methods of scheduling instruction for groups of students that have nontraditional needs and interests, the SDM team focused primarily on the idea of creating separate schools within the school, rather than trying to revamp the entire master schedule. The Alternative Education program (At-Risk) became the first pilot school within a school program in 1998. In 2000 it was fully phased in from grades 9-12. In the 2000-2001 school year, 13 additional pilot efforts (paired courses, for example Earth Science and English 9) were
created. In the spring of 2001, work began on the School of Connections. This was a pilot program that targeted all interested tenth grade students, and in the fall of 2001 the School of Connections was implemented. I am currently in the second year of the School of Connections. The S.O.C is an integrated curriculum between Living Environment (Biology), English, and Global History. Our vision seeks to help students understand the bridges that exist among the traditionally separated disciplines of Science, English, and Global History in order to broaden their vision. Through exploring these links, students can investigate the patterns and relationships that exist in the world and in turn, view learning as an authentic, interesting, lifelong component of life. Connecting the curriculums of Science, English, and Global History also provides students who do not feel satisfied by traditional educational environments with an alternative. By focusing on organic connections between disciplines, fostering teamwork and cooperation, and offering opportunities to accept academic and adventure-based challenges, while demonstrating appropriate behaviors, the School of Connections provides a real academic choice for students.

One of the many unique aspects of the program (School of Connections) is that all three of the teachers involved (Liza Bellaire, R. Steven Custis, and myself, John Schembri) share the same students and our classes run back to back. This allows for a wide range of flexibility in an otherwise inflexible master schedule. We have the ability to run a normal daily schedule when it is desired or the next day we could block all three periods and run a collective group initiative or class activity together for 130 minutes. This flexibility enables us to get to know individual students much better than the typical high school teacher that only has contact with their students for 40 minutes a day. It also provides an
environment that students feel safe in and have a sense of belonging. Due to this unique relationship, character education is a major component of the program. The School of Connections is centered on five cornerstones and behaviors that students agree to display. These Cornerstones are listed below:

**The Five Cornerstones of the School of Connections:**

1. **Respect:** Teachers and students will respect themselves, other adults and students, and their surroundings. To respect means to treat other people and property with consideration, propriety, and concern.

2. **Responsibility:** Teachers and students will take responsibility for their own actions, and accept the consequences for any instances where they may not exhibit responsible behavior. Being responsible means demonstrating the capacity to perceive the difference between right and wrong and being accountable for one's actions.

3. **Cooperation:** Teachers and students will demonstrate an ability to work with others toward accomplishing a goal.

4. **Strong Work Ethic:** Teachers and students will be diligent and use effort toward producing quality work.

5. **Self-Reliance:** Teachers and students will demonstrate an ability to rely on their own judgments and abilities.
Necessary Behaviors to be Exhibited:

- **Be safe.** Emotional and physical safety enables teachers and students to be confident and take risks to achieve success.

- **Be present.** Teachers and students are expected to be present in class both physically and mentally.

- **Speak your truth.** Teachers and students are expected to be honest with others in the class. When disagreements arise, teachers and students should demonstrate an ability to share their perceptions and to take steps to resolve the conflict. In order to resolve conflicts appropriately, teachers and students must:
  - Accept themselves
  - Accept others and their differences
  - Forgive others

- **Be open to outcomes.** Teachers and students will set goals for themselves and for the class, and will support each other in working toward attaining those goals. On the way to accomplishing these goals, teachers and students will attempt to learn from challenges and obstacles while keeping an open mind.

With the changing face of education, family structure, extra-curricular activities, and other demands placed on student's time, kids come to school with a warped sense of respect, responsibilities, ethics, and integrity that interfere with the learning process. I feel for these reasons that students should be exposed to character education in school to supplement lessons that traditionally would have come from the home. Our program tries to meet this need by addressing some important behavioral characteristics found in
successful students with the hope of improving the quality of students that are produced at Penfield High School, not only educational, but also socially.

In 1958, Dr. Merton Strommen founded the Search Institute, in an effort to research the healthy development of young people. The research initially focused on youth in religious settings and has expanded to focus on children and youth in all settings. In 1990, the institute published a framework of 40 developmental assets that young people need in order to grow up to be healthy, caring, and responsible adults. Surveys conducted by the institute on more than one million 6th-12th grade students in communities across the country consistently show that the students that display a higher percentage of these 40 assets make healthier life choices and avoid high risk behaviors (Search Institute, 2002, History section, para. 1). In the beginning of the year we administered the same asset survey to students that were enrolled in the School of Connections. The survey consists of 40 questions that center on two major types of assets, internal and external assets (see Appendix A). The Search Institute defines external assets as “positive experiences that young people receive from people and institutions in their lives”. External assets are further subdivided in four categories Support, Empowerment, Boundaries and Expectations, and Constructive Use of Time (Search Institute, 2002, Developmental asset overview section). Internal assets are those that “guide choices and create a sense of centeredness, purpose, and focus”. Internal assets are also broken down into four categories, Commitment to learning, Positive Values, Social Competencies and Positive Identity Time (Search Institute, 2002, Developmental asset overview section). Before the survey was administered, the students were told not to put their names on the surveys. After they were completed the preliminary results of the survey were compiled
and analyzed. The S.O.C. team determined that we wanted to tackle three major assets that were particularly disturbing and that I felt I could appropriately address during instruction. The results of the survey showed that only 44% of the students thought that the school provided a caring and nurturing environment, 52% of the students didn’t care about the school, and 44% believed it was important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or drugs (see Appendix J). The first asset is an external asset that focuses on the category of support and the last two are internal assets that focus on a commitment to learning and positive values. These are the three assets that were targeted in this study.

In addition to character education, the School of Connections is best known for its integrated curriculum. We have based our integration around five conceptual themes that tie the course together and allow us to integrate content when appropriate. This type of integration is also known as thematic or interdisciplinary integration. Thematic integration cuts through traditional curricular boundaries, weave together subjects and skills that are found naturally in life, and provide students with opportunities to use multiple intelligence’s in practical ways (Armstrong, 62). Interdisciplinary integration centers on the connections that exist across disciplines through an inquiry lens. Interdisciplinary integration is found in the middle of a continuum between guided integration (Multi-disciplinary approach) to more of an open-ended approach to integration (Trans-disciplinary Approach)(Drake, 46). As a team, it was decided, that in order for our program to maintain some departmental consistency and to retrofit the program into the current system of scheduling and testing, it would be essential for the program to focus on conceptual integration, while making a conscious effort to interject
holistic integration when organic connections existed. We felt that integrating to merely integrate would be a disservice to the students, ourselves, the program, but also the concept of integration. After we mapped our separate curriculums we chose to break up the year into 5 major conceptual themes that were the focal points of each content area (Change, Order vs. Chaos, Interdependence, Systems, and Need). From each concept an essential question was generated that would be the central focus of each of the five instructional units. Individual classes would have content presented in a manner that shows the connections between content, the concept, and the essential question. At the end of each unit a high stakes summative assessment will be given that forces students to critically think about the connections that exists between the courses content from each of the subject areas.

This program has provided new professional challenges for me. I am constantly trying new ways to present class content. However, teaching required content is only one aspect of the School of Connection, and the teaching profession as a whole. In past years, the reputation of Penfield High School has gone from an elite school district that produces a high caliber of students to one that is not so revered. The purpose of this study was to determine if the School of Connections unique atmosphere, along with instruction strategies that targeted specific asset deficits could improve both the personal character and performance perceptions of student's involved.
Chapter 2 – Review of the Literature

Introduction:

In order to meet the needs of students in a changing society, schools have invested large amounts of time, money, and energy into developing new instructional strategies or modifying old practices to meet these evolving educational demands. A wide spectrum of educational options is at the disposal of students that ranges from integrated subjects to schools within schools. However, changes in educational strategies are not the only area of concern when addressing student success. Changes in society have had a dramatic affect on the typical nuclear family. With both parents working, an increase in single parent homes, and more rigorous social, educational, and extracurricular lifestyles, students are missing out on an essential aspect of their educational experience. This deficit is in the area of character development. This type of development once was reserved, as a job for parents, is now becoming an important job requirement for educators. Studies have shown that those students that posses more character traits are more successful in school and life. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the literature that has previously been published surrounding instructional strategies that can be used to enhance character education. It will describe types of integration and the atmosphere that integrated curriculums provide in addressing asset education. This chapter will discuss the historical importance of the 40 Developmental Assets, a breakdown of asset categories, and evidence of asset importance in proper adolescent development.
Integration:

Curriculum integration is not a new technique, however, due to restructuring that is taking place in schools its importance and value is reemerging. There are various types of integration that tend to be grouped based on the level of thinking the particular type of integration provides for its students. The literature shows that similar types of integration are given different names depending on the researcher’s perception. For example, one researcher identifies three types of integration: Thematic Integration, Knowledge Integration, and Learner Initiated Integration (Burton, 2001). While another author identifies her three types of integration as Multi-disciplinary, Interdisciplinary (Erickson, 2001), and Trans-disciplinary Integration (Drake, 1993). Despite small differences in terminology and criteria that would create common language that would transcend specific areas of study, both authors agree that the benefits of integrated curriculums are vital in the proper education of children. Integrated curriculums reflect real world situations, force students to think at a higher level than traditional curriculums (Drake, 1993) (Burton, 2001) and increases motivation to learn (Ellis, 2001). Integrated curriculums also provide environments that offer ten characteristics of a discipline of knowledge (Burton, 2001). These attributes are listed below.

1. Community of people with shared interests, values, and goals
2. Expression of the human imagination
3. Domain in the intellectual life
4. Tradition with its own history of events and ideas
5. Mode of inquiry
6. Conceptual structure
7. Specialized language or set of symbols
8. Heritage of literature and a communication network
9. Evaluative stance with an implicit view of human beings and their place in the world
10. Instructive community with its own ways of drawing new members into the group

The behaviors are essential in fostering the 40 developmental assets.

Unfortunately it is difficult to support integrated curricula with empirical data. Due to the unique nature of the curriculum design it creates multiple variables that are difficult to isolate in order to collect quantitative data on its effectiveness (Ellis, 2001). Due to this difficulty it is hard to find any research that focuses on integration as a whole, rather it will focus on components of the process, which may make a stronger argument against integration. Despite its scarcity, Gordon Vars conducted a collective study on past research, his results identified more than 100 separate studies that showed students in integrated curriculums perform "as well" and "often better" than peers enrolled in conventional programs (Ellis, 2001).

**Thematic Integration:**

The thematic approach focuses on searching for a common theme that is present in all subject areas involved. Instruction is then focused on identifying knowledge and skills that will help students understand the theme (Burton, 2001). These themes cut through conventional curricular boundaries, weave together content and skills, to provide students with opportunities to apply this information in a practical way. (Armstrong, 1994). This type of integration creates the most appropriate environment for learning based on brain research. The brain will resist information that is fragmented, meaningless, and presented separately. Therefore, when it is connected to other disciplines it will be easier to internalize (Ellis, 2001).
Knowledge Integration:

This high level type of integration is achieved when interactive and connective relationships are established between the knowledge and the skills of multiple disciplines. Due to this requirement, Knowledge Integration can only be attempted when natural organic connections are evident between the knowledge in separate disciplines (Burton, 2001).

Learner Initiated Integration:

According to Leon Burton, this is the highest level of integration. This type of integration is thought to employ higher level thinking skills throughout life. This type of integration can only be achieved when students see the connections independent of formal instruction (Burton, 2001). Therefore, lessons should be designed to guide students to integrate new ideas with old ideas.

Multi-disciplinary Integration:

The scope of this type of integration is having separate disciplines tackling the same theme to increase relevance. This type of integration maintains the strength of the separate discipline, however it encourages students to find the links between the separate subject areas to give the content more relevance (Drake, 1993) (Erickson, 2001). This type of integration is similar to Burton, Armstrong, and Ellis’s ideas surrounding Thematic Integration.

Interdisciplinary Integration:

This type of integration involves a variety of disciplines sharing a common conceptual focus. By focusing on a concept, theme, or problem, a deeper understanding of material can be achieved (Erickson, 2001). However, the author advises that this type of integration is more difficult to initiate at the secondary level due to the traditional
• The loss of consistency in socialization. In the past children would continually hear reinforcing messages about values from multiple places that helped parents articulate and model appropriate behaviors. This may be due to the fact that there is much more diversity in the present society. With diverse people, come diverse opinions, which can cloud the judgment of developing youth (Benson, 1997).

• The modern creation of disconnection. The years of adolescence are a time of ambiguity for modern day youth. They have been put into adult roles, however, they are not asked to participate in adult community life. This has created an “in between” period of development that if not monitored correctly can lead to high-risk behaviors. This period of time needs to be filled by community involvement (Benson, 1997).

• The proliferation of developmental deficits. These are negative influences in young peoples lives that makes it more difficult for them to develop into healthy, caring, and productive citizens. Based on the Search Institutes study of 460 school districts these 10 deficits where linked to high-risk behaviors (Benson, 1997).

  1. Poverty.
  2. Time alone at home.
  3. Physical and sexual abuse.
  4. TV overexposure
  5. Hedonistic values
  6. Attending drinking parties
  7. Stress
  8. Parental addiction
  9. Social isolation
develop values that dictate behaviors. This category of asset includes the following asset types: commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. Appendix B shows how individual assets are grouped into these eight types of assets (Benson, 1997).

From this information a study was conducted on over one million 6th to 12th grade youth in communities across the United States to show that young people who experience more of these assets are more likely to make healthy life choices and avoid high-risk behaviors (Search Institute, 2002, Mission section, para. 2). The results showed that the more assets that a child exhibited the less likely they were to engage in high-risk behaviors (see Appendix C)(Benson and Galbraith, 1998).

**General Asset Instruction:**

**General Asset Building**

The focus of building on general asset education is to initiate soft and non-threatening transitional behaviors into the classroom so that students are not abruptly inundated with this concept. This is important so students don’t reject the program based on their unfamiliarity with the concept. These general measures can be taken in order to try to enhance the awareness of asset education. The following instructional strategies were suggested from the Search Institute’s text, *Pass It On* (1999), to build general assets in the classroom.

- Post a list of assets in the classroom.
- Devote a bulletin board to asset building messages.
- Get involved in the districts asset building initiative.
- Orient all volunteers and supporting staff to the asset model.
• Plan asset-building learning activities.

• Put an asset-building message on the classroom computers screen saver.

Providing Support to Students:

Caring environment

In an effort to make students feel that the school or the teachers genuinely cares and encourage their academic and personal development. Teachers that model the following behaviors have been shown to improve student's perception of the school's emotional investment to their education (Pass it On, 1999).

• Greeting students by name whenever you see them.

• Send a letter to parents about the idea of asset building, provide asset-building resources in the letter, and use assets to initiate class discussions.

• Meet with S.O.C team members to determine ways to help students succeed that are struggling academically.

Building a Commitment to Learning:

Bonding to School

Research has shows that students that are more involved with extracurricular activities and have more attachment to the school are less likely to take part in high-risk behaviors. Ways that schools can foster a commitment to learning can be demonstrated during the instructional unit by incorporating the following activities (Pass it On, 1999).

• Discuss how assets of characters from stories, history lessons, or current events have shaped their destinies.

• Use a quote of the day that has an asset focus.

• Using assets in the design of instruction.
• Introduce students to web sites that have asset-building themes.

• Read biographies of people, that have set goals and achieved these goals.

**Building Positive Values:**

*Restraint*

Teachers can build positive values during instruction by asking students to reflect on the following scenarios during the research process (Pass it On, 1999).

• Ask the students to gather information about their heroes, famous or not, then have small-group or class discussions about what values these heroes seem to have and how those values guide who they are and what they did or do.

• Create a list of shared values and talk about what it takes to uphold these values. Set boundaries and expectations based on these values (see Appendix B, Asset #26-31).

**Summary:**

The articles reviewed give a background to the unique environment and scope of this study. In order for participants to understand the methodology it is important that they gain the background on integrated curriculums, current high-risk behaviors, and developmental assets. It is interesting to see the variation in the literature surrounding integration. It seems as though it would be helpful for educators to agree on common terminology associated with types of integration. It is difficult enough to initiate integrated programs due to a resistance or fear of change by fellow colleagues. It may help to eliminate this fear by creating a consistent language among the educational community. Asset education is cutting edge research. With the results of the Search Institutes findings being only five years old it will be interesting to see more data on the effects that implementation of asset programs have on schools and communities.
Furthermore, it will be interesting to see a critique of the suggested instructional techniques to target specific types of assets to determine their effectiveness. In the future it may be worth researching the effectiveness of the implementation process to determine whether or not peer influence was a barrier to program acceptance.
Chapter 3 – Research Methodology

Overview:

During the course of my research on the effects that asset education, in an integrated curriculum, has on student self perception of character and achievement, I relied on two other teachers that were vital pieces of the program. Collectively, Steve Custis (English 10), Liza Bellaire (Global History) and I have designed an integrated curriculum between English, Global History, and The Living Environment. This program has come to be known as the School of Connections. During the course of the study, it was essential to design instruction in conjunction with the two of them in order to collect appropriate data to complete the research. I also solicited the help of guidance counselors and the districts drug/alcohol counselors in order to produce a professional opinion surrounding particular students. This allowed me to classify them into potential risk groups. I also worked in concert with members of the districts Assets Team (Kathy Cummins and Angela Tota,) to gain insight and direction in the development of asset based instruction, implementation, and assessment. My goal was to determine if asset education can be incorporated effectively into the teaching process to improve student self-perception. I manipulated my pedagogy to incorporate the 40 developmental assets that were generated by the Search Institute. More specifically, I focused on three assets that were determined to be asset deficits due to results that were compiled from a student asset survey (see Appendix A). We selected the assets that we felt were both character deficits and ones that the School of Connections could appropriately address through specially designed instruction. These identified assets are a Caring School Climate, Bonding to the School, and Restraint. I hoped to determine if the unique environment of the School of Connections and specific teaching strategies that are designed to build on
the three specific assets above could result in improvements in student self-perception of both character and performance. I focused my attention on addressing three underlying questions in order to gain new insight regarding the effect of character education on student perception: Did the unique structure of the School of Connections provide a more effective environment for character education than the traditional classroom? Did character education influence student perception regarding its importance/connection to academic success? Did character education impact the students’ metacognitive perception of the importance of the three target assets?

Setting:

This study was conducted at Penfield High School in the town of Penfield. Penfield has a population of 34,645 people (Census, 2000, Geographic area: Penfield town) and is a suburb of Monroe County, located in the City of Rochester. The Greater Rochester Area is ranked as the 55th largest metropolitan area in the United States; it encompasses 6 counties and has an estimated 1,079,073 inhabitants (Census, 2000, Geographic area: Penfield town). Penfield is considered a predominantly white (93.5%) middle to upper class suburban community. Approximately 63.5% of the students live in homes with both parents (Census, 2000, Geographic area: Penfield town). Penfield High School has approximately 1582 students in grades 9-12, with access to 800 faculty or staff members. The average class size for student enrolled at Penfield High School is between 21-25 students. The Penfield School district has a total annual budget of approximately $55,656,394 (Penfield, 2002, Statistics section). Our integrated program, the School of Connections, has 48 students that are enrolled in the program under their own free will. The course is closed at 48 students due to contract and lab safety issues.
The program was initially designed to meet the needs of the middle-achieving student, while allowing them the opportunity to achieve an honors designation by maintaining a B average and completing the appropriate differentiated assignments when available during the course of the year. Despite the goal of the program we currently have 12 students that have special needs (either an IEP or a 504 plan).

The School of Connections (S.O.C) is an integrated curriculum involving the Living Environment (Biology), English, and Global History. Our vision seeks to help students understand the bridges that exist among the traditionally separated disciplines of Science, English, and Global History in order to broaden their vision. Through exploring these links, students can investigate the patterns and relationships that exist in the world and in turn, view learning as an authentic, interesting, lifelong component of life. Connecting the curriculums of Science, English, and Global History also provides students who do not feel satisfied by traditional educational environments with an alternative. By focusing on organic connections between disciplines, fostering teamwork and cooperation, and offering opportunities to accept academic and adventure-based challenges, while demonstrating appropriate behaviors, the School of Connections provides a real academic choice for students. The school day is separated into nine forty-minute periods that have five-minute passing times in between periods. Our program, The School of Connections has been placed into the master schedule during periods 3-5, with 6th period serving as a lab session on days 2 and 4. This allows the program to follow the traditional scheduled times, but also allows the flexibility to block all three periods and run a collective group initiative or class activity together for 130 minutes. For example, as you can see in the Figure 3.1, we could simply follow the normal 40-
minute cycle everyday. Otherwise on any day, at any time, during periods 3-5, we could get together in a large group instruction area or go on a local field trip without disrupting the normal schedule. This allows students to participate in unique learning opportunities without missing other classes.

(Figure 3.1)

Sample Schedule for S.O.C Integrated Curriculum based on a 9 period, 5 day cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
<th>Day 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Study Hall</td>
<td>Study Hall</td>
<td>Study Hall</td>
<td>Study Hall</td>
<td>Study Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>S.O.C</td>
<td>S.O.C</td>
<td>S.O.C</td>
<td>S.O.C</td>
<td>S.O.C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>S.O.C</td>
<td>S.O.C</td>
<td>S.O.C</td>
<td>S.O.C</td>
<td>S.O.C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>S.O.C</td>
<td>S.O.C</td>
<td>S.O.C</td>
<td>S.O.C</td>
<td>S.O.C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>P.E.</td>
<td>S.O.C</td>
<td>P.E.</td>
<td>S.O.C</td>
<td>P.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>Elective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The S.O.C. team has a common planning period day 1, 3, and 5 during period 6. This planning time is designed to run opposite the student lab sessions on days 2 and 4. During this planning time we follow a daily agenda so that we can appropriately meet all the needs of the program. This time will allow us to collaborate three times a week in order to monitor the progress of this research. Two of the district asset team members are
parents of high school students and have spent an abundant amount of time developing and implementing the 40 developmental assets into the learning environment for high school students. They periodically meet with administrators, faculty, students, and other team members to discuss ways in which asset education can be incorporated into the educational experience at Penfield High School. Their most recent order of business centered on administering a survey to the student body. This survey prioritized what they feel would be the top 3 changes they would like to see made around the school.

**Asset instruction:**

**Introduction:**

During the course of this study it was essential to teach and model asset-building behaviors. After collaborating with Kathy Cummins, the district's asset coordinator, I was exposed to ideas and resources that would allow me to institute asset-building activities into the unit instruction. General asset building and each of the three targeted assets *Caring School Climate, Bonding to School, and Restraint*, was incorporated by focusing on the following activities or behaviors during the course of the unit.

**General Asset Building:**

The focus of building on general asset education was to initiate soft and non-threatening transitional behaviors into the classroom so that students were not abruptly inundated with this concept. This was important so that student’s did not reject the study simply due to their lack of comfort with asset education. These general measures were taken in order to try to enhance the awareness of asset education and to initiate the process without producing a resistance to the study. On November 20, 2002, I attended my first district asset team meeting to become more involved in the schools asset program. On January 29, 2003 I initiated a slow change in the atmosphere of the
classroom. I began by posting over 50 different asset-building messages on the board on pieces of colored paper. I also converted the front of the lab demonstration desk into a place where student work could be displayed. During a meeting with the district asset coordinators I was able to obtain a laminated list of the 40 developmental assets that the Search Institute has published to display on the front bulletin board. I also met with and oriented the S.O.C team and all volunteers and supporting staff to the project and distributed the Youth Risk Assessment for them to complete and return by March 1st. Finally, I was able to complete our first asset-building learning activities centering on Restraint that was initiated during our S.O.C Day (Pass It On, 1999). On February 3rd, I began to take pictures of each student using a digital camera and I created a border around the bulletin board with all my students' pictures. The board has a section that allows students to list coming events (birthdays, concerts, games, etc.) that are relevant to their lives. I also began to display the Most Improved Students of the Week from each section of students that were in the school of connections. The three teachers nominated various students each week and out of those nominated we chose out of a hat to see who was selected as the MIP student of the week. Those students selected were photographed and their picture was posted on the board for the remainder of the week. I also tried to make the room more comfortable by allowing students to listen to music that they chose during cooperative activities and labs. Mr. Custis was able to convert a section of his English classroom into a student section where students could post work, information about upcoming events, and posters that display their interests. It was equipped with a table and some comfortable chairs. Mrs. Bellaire initiated a Global game
that had students competing for class participation points to lighten the classroom atmosphere.

**Caring School Climate:**

The results of the pre-survey showed that only 44% of the students thought that the school provided a caring and nurturing environment. During the instructional unit an effort was made to make students feel that the School of Connections and the teachers genuinely care by offering encouragement for their academic and personal development. In an effort to support student's perception, surrounding this targeted asset meetings were held with the School of Connections teachers every morning at 7:00. These meetings began on January 29th to explain the behaviors that they should have demonstrated over the research period. These behaviors included greeting students by name whenever they saw them, using assets to initiate class discussions whenever it was possible, and periodically meeting with S.O.C team members to determine ways to help students succeed that were struggling academically (Pass It On, 1999). Teachers were given a checklist and a reflection sheet to gauge whether they felt that they were actively demonstrating these behaviors on a daily basis (see Appendix D).

**Bonding to School:**

The pre-asset survey from the S.O.C showed that 52% of the students didn’t care about the school (see Appendix J). Research has shown that students who are more involved with extracurricular activities and have more attachment to the school are less likely to take part in high-risk behaviors (Benson and Galbraith, 1998). Therefore, one of the goals of this study was to attempt to increase student attachment to the school. Starting on February 3 2003, I posted an asset building message of the day that centered on building toward one of the three targeted developmental asset deficits that was most
closely related to the current events/issues in the classroom at that time. These quotes were taken directly from the town asset coordinator files and the following two publications. *How to be an Up Person in a Down World* by Honor Books Inc. and *Quotable Quotes* by Reader’s Digest. I also made a conscious effort to write more positive referrals (see Appendix E) to school administrators and initiated more positive contacts to parents. Students created cards with personal and group messages in English class and presented them collectively to myself after I returned from a bereavement leave after the death of my father.

**Restraint:**

Results from our pre-survey showed that 44% of the students believed it was important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or drugs (see Appendix J). We addressed this during instruction by asking students to conduct research in the library that focused on the long term physiological, social, and psychological affects that abuse of tobacco, sex, drugs and alcohol will have on the body, as well as your personal life. Students were introduced to the concept of developmental assets and were given a brief background on the district initiative, history of assets and the connection between the lesson and course content. Students were given two days to research and write a 3 page persuasive letter, double spaced, convincing a fellow student, to not use tobacco, drugs, alcohol, or engage in premarital sex (see Appendix I). The essay was supported by appropriate data that showed the affects on body systems and social risks that accompany this behavior (*Pass It On*, 1999).
Data Sources:

- Youth Risk Assessment Survey
- Interview Questions/Tapes
- Focus Group Questions/Tapes
- S.O.C Team Daily Checklist
- Student Papers
- Team Exit Reflection
- Pre-Survey
- Post Survey Results
- Field Notes

Sequence of Events/Data Collection:

Youth Risk Assessment Survey:

Research has shown that students who demonstrate high-risk behaviors possess fewer developmental assets than those students that do not engage in these behaviors (Benson and Galbraith, 1998). In order to make sure that targeted students from specific risk groups within the School of Connections, it was essential to identify students into one of three risk groups. Using this information, I developed a youth risk assessment survey (see Appendix G) that was approved by the S.O.C team members and Ted Amen, Penfield’s Drug and Alcohol counselor, as a document that they felt would adequately group students into potential risk groups. This survey was designed for a select group of faculty and staff; by using the Youth Risk Survey (see Appendix H) that was administered at Penfield High School in 2001 to determine what high-risk behaviors the Penfield student body engaged in. Appropriate assistant principals, guidance counselors,
drug/alcohol counselors, and other faculty members within the School of Connections, were given a month to complete the survey. The results were analyzed to determine what risk group students within the S.O.C were classified. Student surveys were collected from all appropriate faculty and staff. The total points accumulated by each individual survey were averaged. This average number was then used to classify students from the School of Connections in three distinct risk groups. Those students that fell into the Low Risk Group accumulated an average point total between 22-30 points; those students falling into the Moderate Risk Group accumulated between 31-39 total points, and those students that totaled 40-48 points were then classified into the High Risk Group. The groups were determined by standardizing my population. The lowest point total observed was 22 and the highest was 46. I then took the difference between the two scores which was 24 and divided that number by three to represent the three risk groups. Since the survey has twenty questions, with each question being assigned anywhere from one to three points, the total possible point range was between 20 and 60 points. Taking into account that very few individuals will be found at the extreme ends of the scale, an 8-point range was determined for each risk group based on the results of the survey. Depending on the student's score on the survey, this point total was then referenced with the key to determine which group that they were classified into (see Appendix F). Two students from the high and two from the low group were then selected to participate in two private interview sessions, one prior to and one after the research period, to insure that proper representation from each end of the risk spectrum was established. Based on the results of the survey, I chose students that I felt demonstrated the highest amount of risk from the High Risk Group and those that I felt presented the least amount of risk.
from the Low Risk Group, that in my perception are representative of the average high school tenth grader.

**Interviews:**

Based on the results of the Youth Risk Assessment. Two specifically targeted students from the high and low risk groups were asked to participate in two separate interviews. The initial interview took place during the first week in March, after school or during free periods, before the instructional unit began. The second round of interviews occurred during the week of April 7th marking the end of the unit. Questions during the interview were geared toward establishing student self-perception surrounding the three-targeted assets. Student interviews were recorded on videotape for accuracy.

Specific observational notes were taken when necessary, noting student behavior, participation, sincerity, and suggestions.

**Interview Questions:**

**Caring School Climate**

1. Do you feel that Penfield High School provides an overall caring and encouraging environment for its students? If so what were some examples that you can think of that would support your opinion?

2. What are some ways you think that the Penfield High School could improve or do a better job improving overall student perception in this area?

3. Do you feel that the Penfield High School provides an overall caring and encouraging environment for you individually/personally? If so what were some examples that you can think of that would support your opinion?

4. What are some ways you think that Penfield High School could improve your personal perception in this area?
5. Do you feel that the School of Connections provides an overall caring and encouraging environment for all of its students? If so what were some examples that you can think of that would support your opinion?

6. What are some ways you think that the School of Connections could improve overall student perception to those students enrolled in S.O.C surrounding this question?

7. Do you feel that the School of Connections provides an overall caring and encouraging environment for you individually and personally? If so, what were some examples that you can think of that would support your opinion?

8. What are some ways you think that the S.O.C teachers could do to make you feel more comfortable and valued?

9. Do you think that my class or I provide an overall caring and encouraging environment to the students? Explain your answer and give suggestions for improvement.

10. Do you think that my class or I provide an overall caring and encouraging environment you? Explain your answer and give suggestions for improvement.

_Bonding to School_

1. Do you think that most students' care about Penfield High School? Why?

2. To what degree do you think that the student body cares about the school?

   Provide examples or proof.

3. What are some ways that the school could get students to care more about the school?
4. Do you think that Penfield students have school spirit?

5. How do you think this compares to neighboring districts? Why? Explain your answer.

6. What are some ways the school could improve school spirit?

7. Do you care about this program? (School of Connections) Why? Explain your answer.

8. What are some things we could do as S. O.C teachers to get you to care more about the program?


10. What are some things I could do to get you to care more about class?

Restraint

1. Do you believe it is important for kids your age to not engage in sexual activity or to not use drugs and alcohol? Explain your answer.

2. What are some risk or consequences associated with sex, tobacco, drugs, and alcohol use? (Ex: Jail Time, Conviction Record, Parenting, Disease, etc.)

3. Do you know what percent of students that use tobacco end up using drugs and alcohol?

4. Do you know anyone that has died, gone to jail, or left school due to a sex, drug, alcohol or tobacco related incident?

5. Do you believe using sex, tobacco, drugs, or alcohol is widespread within the school? All? None?
6. Do you believe using sex, tobacco, drugs, or alcohol is widespread within the School of Connections? All? None?

7. What are some ways that the School, S.O.C teachers, and/or I can encourage students to not engage in these behaviors?

**Focus Groups:**

I initiated two Focus Groups to discuss personal perspectives that address the three targeted assets *Caring School Climate, Bonding to School, and Restraint*. I created two specific groups of 4 students, one high risk and one low risk group, from the remaining School of Connection students. My selection criteria was based on choosing students that I felt would be honest, open, and willing to share their perspectives about assets, while falling into the appropriate risk group. We met two separate times during the instructional unit, one before the instruction began and once after it was over. I videotaped the conversations to insure accuracy. Focus group information was confidential and the questions that were asked were the same questions as the private interviews with the following additional questions:

- Do students know what assets are?
- Do students know how many assets are found in “successful” teens?
- Student personal perceptions surrounding the targeted asset.
- Do they feel that assets are important to their lives?
- Do they think that this school overall has Many, Average, or Few assets in the “average student”
- Do they feel that the instruction has changed their initial perception of the targeted asset?
• What could one do to improve on assets?

**Student Essays:**

Student persuasive letters, from their assignment on restraint (see Appendix I), were analyzed and compared to interviews responses to determine if their initial perspectives changed over the course of the research period.

**SOC Team Checklist:**

Teachers within the School of Connections rated their participation in the study on a daily basis. The teachers used the attached checklist (see Appendix D) to rate on a scale from 1-5, with one representing no participation and 5 representing excellent participation. The results were used to analyze the effectiveness of the asset instruction.

**Team Exit Reflection:**

The team of teachers filled out a written exit reflection to assess whether they felt that a significant improvement has been made in student self-perception over the last instructional unit. They sighted specific examples from class to support their thoughts (see Appendix K).

**Pre-Survey vs. Post Survey Results:**

The Asset Checklist (see Appendix A) was re-administered and the initial results taken in September were compared to those taken in April to determine if student self-perception improved during the course of the year. The results can be observed in Appendix J.

**Field Notes:**

Detailed notes were recorded when necessary and compiled during the analysis of surveys, interviews, focus groups, and any meetings or dialogue between faculty, and staff members.
**Timeline:** (November 20th 2002 – April 11th 2003)

**November 20th**
- I attended my first district asset team meeting.

**January 29th**
- Posted a list of assets in the classroom and posted an asset-building message on the classroom computers screen saver.
- I converted the front of the lab demonstration desk into a place where student work could be displayed.
- I distributed the Youth Risk Assessments Questionnaire that was administered to the School of Connections teachers, appropriate school guidance counselors, appropriate assistant principals, and the districts drug and alcohol counselor (Ted Amen), that focused on determining whether the students fell into a high, medium, or low risk group. I requested the surveys to be returned no later than March 1st.
- I met with SOC team to explain the behaviors that they should demonstrate over the research period and handed out checklists. Teachers were given a daily checklist and a reflection sheet to gauge whether they felt that they were actively demonstrating asset building behaviors on a daily basis.
- Finalized our asset-building learning activity that was initiated during our S.O.C Day.

**February 3rd**
- I used the front bulletin board to display asset-building messages that focused on the three-targeted assets and I began to display the Most Improved Students of the Week.
March 1st – 7th

- I collected the youth risk surveys from the appropriate school personnel and analyzed it to select and construct Focus Groups and determined the private interview subjects.
- I began the initial interviews with the selected students, 2 from the identified high-risk group and 2 from the low risk group. I videotaped the conversations for accuracy and took appropriate notes.
- I initiated focus groups, one high-risk group and one low risk group. I videotaped the conversations for accuracy and took appropriate notes.
- Begin instruction of content that focused on addressing the first character deficits that was identified by the Asset Checklist Survey, Lack of a Caring School Climate, and teachers demonstrated the appropriate aforementioned behaviors.

March 17th – 19th

- S.O.C Day. Whole group instruction of content that focused on addressing the second character deficit that was identified by the Asset Checklist Survey, Bonding to School. Students worked collectively to create individual and group poster for myself in response to my father’s sudden death on March 15th. The exercise helped bring students closer together and help them create a new bond with the School of Connections.

March 25th

- Finished instruction of content that focused on addressing the last character deficit that was identified by the Asset Checklist Survey, Restraint. Students conducted research and wrote a 3 page persuasive letter that would convince a friend why they should not engage in the use of tobacco, drugs, alcohol, or premarital sex.
April 1st

* I collected an Exit Reflection Sheet from the School of Connections Team to determine if they had any feedback or observed a noticeable change in behavior or self-perception in any of the students involved in the School of Connections.

April 7th - 11th

* Re-interviewed the same 2 students from each of the identified high-risk group and the low risk group.
* Finished Focus Group Discussion about self-perception and targeted assets with two groups of 4 students in high and low risk groups.

April 11th

* Re-administered the Asset Checklist and compared results from September to the new results.

April 14th - April 18th

* I wrote chapters 4 and 5 of the thesis.

April 21st - April 25th

* Revisions

Saturday April 26th Research Symposium
Chapter 4 - Data Collection:

Chapter 4 will include data that will support the theory that character education within an integrated curriculum has a significant affect on student perception. This is in regards to both academic performance and metacognition of three targeted assets addressed during this study. The course content that was covered during the research period within the school of connections included the following topics. Human physiology in the Living Environment class, the rise of fascism, the Russian revolution, and the factors leading to World War I and II in Global History class, and the novel Animal Farm along with the writing process was the contextual focus in English class. However, throughout the research period the underlying focus of teachers within the School of Connections was character education, whenever it was possible and appropriate. Each day student’s were exposed to, either directly or indirectly, behaviors, visuals, activities, environmental cues, or assignments that had asset building messages embedded into them. In this chapter, I will be comparing and contrasting data from three different data sources (individual-student and focus-group interviews, student essays, and pre and post survey results) to determine if a reportable change in student perception had occurred over the course of the research period. Furthermore, I used S.O.C. team checklists, exit reflections, and other notes to see if the research method played a significant role in the acquired results. During this study three underlying questions were addressed in order to determine the value of the research:

Research Questions:

1. Has the unique structure of the School of Connections provided a more effective environment for character education than the traditional classroom?
2. Has character education influenced student perception regarding its importance/connection to academic success?

3. Does character education impact the students' metacognitive perception of the importance of the three target assets?

The following section will report data collected during the research period that will be used to develop conclusions to the underlying research questions.

**Student Interviews and Focus Groups:**

**Question #1:**

Has the unique structure of the school of connections provided a more effective environment for character education than the traditional classroom?

*High Risk Students Interviews:*

Tom

Tom seemed to be the student that was the most profoundly affected over the course of the research period. Tom is a very well liked and influential person among his peers. It was apparent in his answers to the aforementioned questions that improvement was shown in every targeted area.

Tom agreed that the School of Connections versus a traditional setting provided a more effective environment for character education. This was shown when comparing his responses between his pre and post interviews. During our initial interview, Tom displayed concern that the school, overall tries to provide a caring environment for the students. However, he felt that the Tardy Restricted Study Hall and the way in which some security guards treat students contradicts the effort to provide a nurturing environment. He supported this with the following comment, “I think the security guards are a problem for a lot of people to the point where they don’t want to come to
school. If they would just stop worrying about hassling kids, and were nice and showed that they actually cared about the kids they would get a better response out of the kids.” He also added, “Some students think they can’t catch a break, so they are convinced that there is no reason to try, so they absolutely hate the school and drop out to get their GED’s, 75% hate the school or don’t care about it”. When we discussed how other teachers outside the school of connections approached students he commented, “The teachers shouldn’t get aggravated with the fact that you didn’t understand the first time, they should help until you understand, that’s their job.” When I asked him how school of connections teachers were different he said, “You talk and communicate to try to do the best that you can do for the students”. He also said, “you give us bonus labs so that kids that are behind on lab hours can succeed. You actually try to give opportunities so that we can do well. Most teachers will not give out optional things.”

After the research period I observed an even more convincing improvement in his perception. During our post interview I asked him if the environment of any of his classes where better suited for character education. Tom commented, “Not other than you and Mr. Custis’s classes. When I asked him to elaborate on why he felt that way he responded “We are together in the S.O.C classes, so I think the closeness of the group makes it more effective than other classes maybe.” Later in the interview he added “I was in a conversation with other student’s that were making fun of the school of connections and I stood up for the program and told them they don’t know what they are talking about”. This was a powerful statement. It has been my experience that students will tend to speak their mind about a topic in a group of people that share the same views. However, for him to make a comment to people that don’t share the same views may
suggest that he is passionate about his feelings, that the School of Connections provides a unique environment for character education that his traditional classes do not.

Summer

Summer seemed to be the student that resisted character education the most during the course of the research period. Summer is well-liked by her peers, however, it is obvious that she cares deeply about being popular and she will act and do things to make sure she is accepted. It was apparent in her answers to the aforementioned questions that improvement was shown in every targeted area, despite her initial resistance. Summer agreed that the school of connections versus a traditional classroom setting provided a more effective environment for character education. This was support during the initial interview. She explained how the school tries to provide an encouraging environment by having a “learning center and counselors that help you when you have troubles”. She continued by expressing her satisfaction with the structure of the School of Connections because it “creates consistency so that it isn’t as hard to keep expectations clear”. She also expressed how the School of Connections provides approachable teachers that are willing to listen to student problems by saying, “Mr. Custis allows my friend Emily and I to come in during free periods to talk if she or I have a problem”. She continued by commenting how “I wish I had it the next two years with the same teachers, I just think it is a good program over all. I continued to probe deeper to see how she felt about science and she said it was important, ” because I need it to graduate, science has always been difficult for me”. During my initial observation it seems clear that Summer was simply trying to appease me by giving me safe answers. I
don't feel that she was telling me her true feelings, however, I am not sure if she has ever taken the time to really think about how she feels due to her need for others to like her.

During the post interview, I could see a deeper attachment to the School of Connections than I observed during the previous interview. This was supported by her answer to a question regarding how effective she thought other classes could be in providing asset education. She replied, "I can’t answer that because I don’t like any of my other classes other than school of connections and if I don’t like a class I won’t do good in it". When I asked for an example of something from class that would support her feeling she commented, "Student of the week, I haven’t won yet, but it’s nice to get some rewards for your progress". She also enjoyed and requested "more assignments like the letter to a friend, they make school more engaging and enjoyable". All these statements support her changing view of the importance that our integrated curriculum was more influential than traditional classroom settings, in regard to character education.

**Low Risk Students Interviews:**

**Jen**

Jen is an energetic, outgoing, fun loving teenager. Many students gravitate toward her due to her high energy level. She is open and honest and I have noticed in the past that she was willing to speak her mind in classroom decisions that she didn’t necessarily agree with. During our first interview, she felt that she already enjoyed the atmosphere of her School of Connections classes more than her traditional classes. This was her perception even before the research period. That was supported in the following statements, "Even if we do goofy team building activities, you feel comfortable around everyone. If we can do that during team building activities, it helps us when we are in a learning situation". She also shared, "... my parents asked if I wanted to switch out I said
no I would do it again next year if I could. I really like it, it is like a break in the day. It is a release time during the day because you know everyone”. These statements provide evidence that the school of connections provides a more relaxed learning environment, which may provide for more effective asset education.

The second round of interviews demonstrated more evidence to support my theory that an integrated curriculum provides a more appropriate atmosphere for character education. Jen supported this theory with the following comments, “I think the whole idea of making it more of a family is essential to character education, outside the S.O.C you don’t see that anymore. I think we should expand the School of Connections to all of the 5 core classes. The more people involved the better”. When I asked why she felt it was more feasible within the School of Connections she commented, “I think the School of Connections makes it is easier because we are closer, it makes us more comfortable and more willing to talk about things with the teachers”. These statements clarify any initial doubt that she feels the School of Connections provides a more appropriate arena for character education.

Matt

Matt is an extremely unique young man. He is very opinionated and is not afraid to stand up for what he believes in. He aspires to become a minister and he openly and freely discusses his career goals with members of the class. One of the reasons I selected him was that I think that out of all the kids in the School of Connections, I believe Matt probably posses more of the 40 developmental assets than anyone else. During the course of the initial interview, his perception of whether or not the School of Connections provided a more appropriate environment for character education was apparent. Matt
supported this with the following statement, “I think this program is the most caring one
in school. The teachers have gotten to know me, my career goals and try to produce all
different learning activities to meet the needs of all students. I care deeply about it, but I
did think it was weird at first”. These statements show that even before the research
began, he felt that the School of Connections was already providing a more appropriate
vehicle for character education that other traditional classes were not able to accomplish.

During the follow up interview, he did report noticing a change in the program. He replied, “You have changed, you have lightened up and you tell more jokes,” and he
also said, “I have noticed a difference in the last two months of the way S.O.C teachers
have been treating students and it has resulted in students being more involved”. When I
asked him to provide an example he responded, “Brandon is not falling asleep in his
classes anymore.” When I asked if character education could be as affective in classes
outside the School of Connections he replied, “No, I think there isn’t a lot you can do in
just 40 minutes a day. If you did it in every class it would be too repetitive. The S.O.C
allows for a safety bubble in the middle of the day and it is more organized, caring, safe
environment and my perception of this environment affects my motivation. I participate
more in S.O.C than any other class.” All these statements provide strong evidence to
support my theory that the School of Connections provides a better environment for asset
education.

High Risk Focus Groups:

A group of 4 students from the remaining high-risk category where selected to
partake in a similar discussion regarding asset instruction. The following statements
provide further evidence that other high-risk students within the School of Connections
believe that the program provides a better learning environment for character education than a traditional classroom setting does.

When students where asked directly their opinion about other classes outside the School of Connections one student responded, “Not only does S.O.C provide an ideal environment, I don’t even remember school before I transferred into the program”.

When I asked these students to explain why they felt this way about the program, they responded with the following statements, “You talk to us like we are humans and asked us real questions not just information”. “The atmosphere of the room is brighter and more welcoming”. “I don’t think it would work in other classes, but it works here because we are so close knit”. “School of Connections is a family and it wouldn’t mean as much if it was in every class”. When I probed deeper to see why character education was less effective in traditional classroom settings the students replied, “In some classes it may work depending on the activity. It would be overkill if we did it every period”; “Outside of the school of connections you don’t have the relationships with the teachers. Science is just science class”, and “When I am in other classes outside of S.O.C classes, I am not comfortable enough to participate”. A student finished by commenting, “I would definitely advocate for the program and I would argue that it is better than other traditional classes”. All of these comments provide additional support to suggest that the unique environment of the School of Connections is better suited for character education than traditional classrooms.

Low Risk Focus Group

A group of 4 students from the remaining low-risk category where selected to partake in a similar discussion regarding asset instruction. The following statements provide further evidence that other low risk students within the School of Connections
believe that the program also provides a better learning environment for character
education than a traditional setting does.

When students were asked directly their opinion about other classes outside the
School of Connections, one student responded, “No, only S.O.C provides an ideal
environment for asset education”. When I asked students to explain why they felt this
way about the program they responded with the following statements, “I think it has to do
with your teachers and the relationship you have with them”. Another student added, “I
think it also has to do with your teacher and the personal connections that you make”.
While I was waiting for their response, one student made the following comment that
may provide some inconsistency in the data, she said, “Younger teachers connect to me
better”. This may imply that the environment of the School of Connections is only better
suited for character education due to the relatively young age of the three teachers
involved in the program. When I probed deeper to see why character education was less
effective in traditional settings a student replied, “The School of Connections teachers go
the extra mile to show how they care”. Another student made the following statement, “I
would never have tried honors classes within my other classes and I think that since we
have a choice and teachers push you, it helps me connect to the program more”. Finally,
another student added, “I think it would work in other classes, I just don’t see other
teachers making an effort”. These comments began to suggest that teacher’s effort might
be the difference between the S.O.C and the traditional classes, opposed to its unique
environment. One comment also suggested that the student saw a distinct change in their
perception of me during the research period. The following statement supported this, “I
think you do a really good job, during the reproduction unit I feel really comfortable
asking you anything and I can’t say that was true five weeks ago”. A student finished by
commenting, “I hate science however, this year since I have a really good teacher and I like it a lot more”.

Question #2:

Has character education influenced student perception regarding its importance/connection to academic success?

High Risk Students Interviews:

Tom

Tom believed that character education was essential in his recent academic success. He supported this by saying, “school for me is hard, and when you improve, and your teachers recognize that you are improving, it makes it worth the effort”. He also commented, “before my worst day of the week was Sunday and I dreaded school. Now that I am doing better I don’t have to worry about going to school or when report cards are coming home. I can relax a little and you appreciate things more and I feel a lot more comfortable and you do better. “ These statements support the idea that the current character education has improved his perception of his academic success. This perception was supported by my observations over the research period. I noticed his attitude and participation in class changed dramatically. He was more alert, he actively participated in class on a daily basis, and he was a leader in class discussion. This was also observed in the other school of connection classes. It became so apparent he was awarded the Most Improved Student of the Week for March 17th. This is determined collectively by the three teachers involved in the school of connections. Therefore, his improvement was noticed not only in the Living Environment class, but also in his English and Global History classes as well. Tom believed his recent success in School of Connection class’s also had an impact on his performance in other classes. This was
supported by his comment that asset education "has affected the atmosphere of class, kids are actually trying harder. To some kids, the Most Improved Student of the Week is a big deal and they are really trying to get recognition. Some students really get excited about the recognition" and "my perception about everything has changed. My success has changed my outlook. Now I see that if I work hard all the time it will pay off".

Improvement was also noted in his academic achievement. In the living environment he went from an F to a B+ in five weeks, however, it is difficult to determine if it was solely due to character education. However, regardless of his letter grade, this information supports my theory that asset education will improve student perception of their academic performance.

**Summer**

During the initial interview with Summer, she didn’t provide any evidence supporting or opposing the value of character education. This is probably due to her unfamiliarity with the asset initiative within the school district. Despite having many asset building messages in the middle school and now the high school, Summer, it was clear that she had no idea what asset education was or what it was all about. During the initial interview with Summer, she stated that she cared about living environment class "because I need it to graduate, but science has always been difficult for me". This statement shows that she really doesn't have a deep appreciation for the class and her past experiences in science have made her shut down and it is currently affecting her progress. Her main emphasis is to just try to get through so she can graduate. This theory was supported in my daily observations of her participation and effort. She really didn’t seem to open up and embrace content specific exercises or the asset building activities that
were going on in the School of Connections. This was noted until we did a lesson on the importance of displaying restraint from engaging in high risk behaviors such as tobacco, drug, alcohol use, and premarital sex (see Appendix I).

During the second interview it became clear that asset education did have an impact on her academic performance. She commented that her, “interest plays a role in my motivation” and the “more interested and engaged I am the better I do” during our discussions she also said the Most Improved Student of the Week made her want to do better. She felt that the asset lesson in regard to restraint was “engaging and enjoyable”. She requested more asset assignments in the future because she “learned a lot”. She also recalled, “global history student of the week is good in Mrs. Bellaire’s class. This makes class more interesting and makes you more engaged and makes you want to do better”.

When I asked why she felt that character education improved her perception of academic performance she said, “using personal accounts and other people’s experiences makes it more valuable”. Furthermore, her grade improved over the five week period from an F to a C-, which shows that not only has her perception changed, in some way her academic achievement has improved as well.

Low Risk Students Interviews:

Jen

Jen believed that character education was essential in her recent academic success. During her initial interview she stated, “Once I start learning about something I want to know everything. So when I understand something I get passionate about it”. Providing a means for her to both understand and become excited about a topic is the only way to satisfy her thirst for knowledge.
In the second interview she stated, "I think everybody loves the teachers in the School of Connections, and that you guys communicate and are flexible on due dates if too many things are due at the same time". This flexibility is an important means for motivating her. She also commented that, "The Most Improved Student of the Week has been great and it gets people participating more in class and creates a competition in class, it also gives you a reason to work hard. I think it has affected my effort and motivation. I have also seen test scores improving for everyone in Global History". Our observations of her progress and participation in class supported this. She was awarded the Most Improved Student of the Week for March 10th and she was a leader in the pig dissection during my class. She would circulate around the room and help other groups on dissection day. Improvement has also been observed in her academic achievement, however, it is difficult to determine if it was solely due to character education or other influencing factors. However, there is enough evidence to support an improved perception of her academic achievement.

Matt

By evaluating both the pre and post interviews results, it was clear that Matt believed character education did contributed to his academic success (see Appendix J). This was supported by the following comments, "I like the kids in class and they like me, we are in three periods together and the chemistry plays a role in my success". He also stated, "I think that we have raised the bar academically but not in regards to character. However, when kids get to choose what they want to research, and they have the freedom to look on their own to explore a behavior, it becomes more engaging".
**High Risk Focus Groups:**

The high-risk focus group supported the theory that character education influenced their perception of academic success. This was supported by the following comments from the group that focus on establishing an environment that promotes learning. "Some teachers don't react well with students, if you don't have a good relationship you can't learn from them". "Your relationship with your teacher and how you present the material affects how well you do in class, teacher student relationships are essential for learning". "Yeah, you guys are too cool, you joke around and create a more laid back atmosphere. I think that it is very comfortable; and it makes you more apt to interact or participate". When I asked the question, has your academic performance improved, one student replied, "Our academic performance has improved, If your more comfortable and it relates more to you and you will want to learn it because it is more relevant to my life". When I asked why they thought their academic performance was improving they provided the following answer, "Student of the week makes you feel more like home because everyone likes to be recognized. It made me try to work harder you want to be up there" and "I am now happy to come to biology and I think that translates into better grades". These comments would suggest that character education has indeed influenced their perception of academic success, however, based on the last comment, "Content plays a role in my interest level", another variable other than character education has been identified. However, the theory was also supported by the academic improvement of every student involved in the focus group during the past five weeks.
Low Risk Focus Group:

The low risk focus group supported the theory that character education influenced their perception of academic success. The low risk group provided more straightforward examples to support this theory. It was apparent in the following comments from the group that focuses on establishing an environment that promotes learning. One student replied, “I enjoyed doing activities that try to get people to trust others. This year that has happened with me and I have been much more successful”. This shows a direct correlation between asset building and her perception of success. Another student commented, “I like how the teachers communicate and the environment, closeness and comfort level in the class plays a role in our success. The people with you all day make me more comfortable and if you are not comfortable you will not do well. Last year I was not comfortable in any class and I did poorly in all my classes, it made it not fun”. This student has identified the need of essential assets in her learning environment in order for her to be successful. When I asked if they could provide me examples of class activities that helped produce this environment they responded, “The Most Improved Student of the Week award has motivated me more” and “In Mrs. Bellaire’s class, the global student of the week has caused more people to participate”. When I asked for students to explain why MIP student of the week provide this perception, one young lady replied, “Recognition makes me feel more valued as a student”. All the aforementioned comments strongly support the theory that character education has influenced student perception of academic achievement. This was also supported by the academic improvement of every student involved in the focus group over the last five weeks.
**Question #3:**

Does character education impact the students’ metacognitive perception of the importance of the three target assets?

**High Risk Students Interviews:**

**Tom**

During the research period a significant change in Tom's thinking could be observed by comparing pre and post interview responses. During the initial interview he had feelings of resentment surrounding the way in which faculty and staff don’t give kids the benefit of the doubt and that they don’t respect what they are saying. He also felt that, “sex is a personal issue. If you have a girlfriend or if you want to engage in sex it is not a big deal. If you are in a relationship it is fine. I think people need to experiment in some ways in order to learn about life”. He then continued to list some of the dangers that were associated with high-risk behaviors, for example, “If you have a kid in high school your life will never be the same. You have to provide for the kid before yourself, drop out to get a job to support that kid. Alcoholism runs in my family, my cousin just got out of rehab. My grandpa died of liver cancer. He had an ultimatum, the doctor said he had to stop drinking or he would die and he chose to drink and he died. I also know people that have been expelled for drugs.” This was very strange. I was sitting with a student that truly didn't identify with the dangers associated with high risk behaviors regardless of the fact that he could list many of the side effects of high-risk behaviors, but said that people need to experiment in order to learn about life. This suggested despite knowing the side effects, he was not concerned or he wasn’t thinking that he could be effected. This idea was also supported by a comment he made during class when we
initially handed out the asset essay assignment on restraint (see Appendix I). He asked if he had to write about these issues if he didn't agree that they are a big deal.

During the second interview he said the poster assignment helped "bring the School of Connections together and see sides of people you never would have seen other wise". He also shared the following statement, "I can relax a little and you appreciate things more and I feel a lot more comfortable. Since I am doing better my whole perception has changed". His thoughts have changed dramatically since the beginning of the research period. He now feels that "I learned a lot about different diseases that I didn't know. I will admit it, you sometimes don't think about it until you're in that situation. When I started the letter to a friend, my perspective changed from something I didn't initially agree with in regards to sex. It has helped me understand the truth and has allowed me to be more willing to discuss it with my friends. I didn't realize how easy it was to get some of these diseases I thought you really had to be careless". When we discussed the class environment he commented, "In the beginning of the year I felt I was being treated like a kid. As time went on it has gotten a lot better and I understand why as teachers you would do that." He continued by saying, "I didn't experience assets until we began to work with them. I see what we are doing with it I can see the value in it that I didn't see before. My entire outlook on school has changed. I will not let peer pressure affect my decisions." All of his comments in his second interview show that his thinking has changed over the research period. This is also supported by the responses he made in his asset essay (see Appendix I).
Summer

During the research period, a significant change in Summer's thinking could also be observed by comparing pre and post interview responses. During the initial interview she supported high-risk behaviors with the following comment, "It is O.K. for student's to engage in high-risk behaviors if they are in a good relationship or in college and want to experiment". When I inquired about the consequences associated with such behaviors she replied "Getting pregnant, addictions, suicide, dropping out. My grandma died of lung cancer, one of my friends was suspended for drug use". Even though she was able to list many of the negative side effects of such behaviors, she said that her biggest concern was "It is bad because it goes on your permanent record for colleges". Clearly it was observed that she thought that these consequences couldn't happen to her despite her ability to identify them.

I observed a noticeable change in her perception based on her comments during the second interview and the remarks that she made in response to her assignment on restraint (see Appendix I). When I asked her how I could get her to care more about biology class she said, "I think that I would have to take advantage of after school opportunities and free periods". This suggests that she needed to make a conscious decision for herself to do better and the only thing that I could do was support her when she decided to make those decisions. She commented during her post interview that she was surprised about all of the affects that drugs have on the body. Furthermore, according to her post survey results, she perceived that 50% of School of Connections students feel it is important to abstain from high risk behaviors compared to the class average of 44% before the research period (see Appendix J). Based on my observations,
her metacognition surrounding the school of connections dramatically changed over the research period in regards to two of the three targeted assets: a caring school climate and bonding to the school. However, I don’t feel she was impacted significantly enough to make a difference in regards to restraint. I do, however, think she will think about the affects of these activities in the future due her response to a question regarding what surprised her the most during the lesson on restraint, she comment “Drugs and the affects on the body. I think it has made me think about my action before I take part in them”. Regardless, I feel the pressure from her peer group is still too much for her to abstain from partaking in these high-risk behaviors. This may be linked to her own insecurities.

*Low Risk Students Interviews:*

**Jen**

During our first interview, she felt that the school for the most part provided a caring and encouraging environment for students. She sighted that the acquisition of security guards “makes us feel safe. Even if some people think they are a hassle”. However, she did indicate that teachers could create a more comfortable learning environment by “relaxing the atmosphere of the class to reduce anxiety, or paint the walls of the room, to make it more of our own”. She also suggested engaging in more team building activities because, “you feel comfortable around everyone. If we can do that during team building activities it helps us when we are in a learning situations”. She continued to comment on creating a more student-centered atmosphere for learning. She felt, “if school provided situations for kids to make the school more of their own, like more comfortable chairs” or “give us choices and let us talk during group activities as long as we are doing the activity, …keep things fun” than it would effect their performance. In regards to restraint, it became obvious to me, that Jen may not have
been accurately placed into the appropriate risk group. Based on her answers, it seemed to me that her responses were more typical of a student that was in the high-risk group. She stated that “personally I don’t think the drinking age should have changed to 21, I don’t think it is bad to go and experiment with things as long as you have an open relationship with adults so that you feel comfortable talking to them about it”. This somewhat surprised me due to the fact that she was able to identify and provide personal examples of high-risk behaviors in her life. She supported this by stating the following: “Some consequences are getting arrested, grounded, sick, pregnant, alcohol poisoning, which could lead to doing things you wouldn’t have done if you weren’t under the influence, and not knowing what happened to you. Also, if you have a baby you would have to get a full time baby sitter and you couldn’t go away to school. My friend had a baby and she can’t party and have fun anymore because she has a baby. I also have relatives that got lung cancer from smoking and others that were hospitalized for alcohol poisoning”. If I could recall all these negative examples of how high risk behaviors affect your life, I think it would be difficult to have such a laid back opinion. Then she commented that she thought, “drinking and drugs go together about 100% of kids have done it at least once”. I feel that this perception is high for a student in the low risk group. It also suggested that if she felt all kids that drank also did drugs and that it is all right to experiment, then she must feel that it is fine for her to drink and do drugs. Based on her initial interview, Jen, without knowing, seems to have a dire need to bond to her teachers and to create classrooms that are more relaxed. Her responses to questions above would support my thinking that school may create a certain level of anxiety for her and before learning can take place, she needs to feel comfortable.
This theory was supported by her thoughts during the second interview. She stated, "when your father passed away we talked about it and made cards and we all pulled together like a big family." She said that this type of activity made her realize that "We have been able to lean on each other during tough times which has made us more comfortable talking to you and asking you any question without being embarrassed".

When I asked her to cite an example in class that would support that she replied the "unit on sexual reproduction". She continued by saying, "Character education is valuable, and makes you realize that there are things in life that can be much worse and that complaining about things don't change it. So suck it up and actually with the pig, it made me learn more. Surprisingly, during the second interview it seemed apparent that real life stories from peers and those that she obtained through research had an influence on her initial perception. This assignment was powerful for Jen because she had the choice to pick something that she was interested in and that related to her. Based on research she "tries not to drink coffee anymore". This was based on the side affects that she learned about and was experiencing based on her regular use of caffeine. I could not ask for a better result from this assignment. It is encouraging that a student would research something independently about themselves and stop using a stimulant based on the results of the assignment. When I asked her why she felt her perception has changed she replied, "because the more you think about things the more you become aware of it going on". This was supported not only by her interview response, but also within her student essay for the assignment on restraint (see Appendix I). Her last statement was profound.

It directly showed that by taking the time to initiate character education, it would result in a higher level of student awareness in regards to high-risk behaviors. Interestingly
enough, her response to the post survey remained low. She believes that it is not important to refrain from high-risk behaviors (see Appendix J). This shows that her thinking has changed, however, her perceptions of the risks associated with these types of behaviors were inconclusive.

**Matt**

During the initial interview he felt that I should “try to be more low key in my attitude” to create a more caring classroom environment. However, in the same breath he said that some teachers that are too laid back will lose the respect of the students. When we discussed bonding to the school, Matt stated, “I feel only 10% of students care about the school”. He also commented that he really didn’t care about my class because “it is a difficult class and I don’t think it will be important for my future goals of being a pastor”. He then went on to say that “Yeah I like the kids in the school of connections and they like me and the chemistry plays a role in my success”. Based on his comments from the initial interview, I feel that Matt doesn’t really feel that the school provides a caring and encouraging environment. However, it also doesn’t seem to bother him much. His goals of being a pastor may overshadow any attempts of making him feel more attached to the school or the School of Connections. Although, his comment regarding the chemistry of the class seem to show that there may be a possibility of creating an environment that will make him more engaged.

When we discussed restraint in the second interview, it was obvious that Matt simply did not engage in these types of high risk behaviors, however, he did make a rather profound statement in regards to high-risk behaviors. He said, “I think 100% of students that smoke will also engage in other high risk behaviors”. When I inquired why
he thought it was so high, he said that it is a "behavioral decision, if you make the
decision to use one you will make the same decision to use others". This was supported
by his responses to an assignment that focused on restraint (see Appendix I). However,
this contradicted his pre and post perceptions that were determined by comparing his
comments from the initial interview when he stated, "25% of students engage in high risk
behaviors". That was much lower than his exit percentage of 50% that was found on his
post survey results (see Appendix J).

Based on his response to the second interview, you can see that his perception
changed and was supported by all three data sources in regards to the following assets: a
caring school climate and bonding to the school. Matt said that our classroom
atmosphere has changed because, "you have lightened up and tell more jokes". This has
helped provide a more caring environment for student learning. He also said, "S.O.C
allows for a safety bubble in the middle of the day and it is more organized, caring, safe
environment and my perception of this environment affects my motivation. I participate
more in SOC than any other class" and he finished this segment by saying "having kids
choose what they wanted to research and they could look on their own to explore a
behavior they are maybe thinking about engaging in is very motivating". All these
statements would suggest that during the course of the research period, his perception
surrounding the environment and his bonding to the School of Connections and its affect
on his learning has been influenced. He then made the following comment "I think that
we have raised the bar academically but not in regards to character. I do think I have
noticed a difference in the last two months of the way S.O.C teachers have been treating
students and it has resulted in students being more involved." Based on this statement I
can conclude that his perception has changed in regards to student academic performance. However, he is still not sure if it impacts the character of the students involved. When we shifted gears to discuss restraint, it was difficult to determine if this unit had any influence on Matt. However, based on what I already know about Matt this wasn't a surprise. If you don't engage in high-risk behaviors, I would think a lesson focusing on restraint would have little to no impact on your thinking. Although, I was wrong. Matt continued to explain that it made some of his friend's think twice about taking part in high-risk behaviors. He explained that the lesson was assigned the same time as the sophomore semi-formal dance. He said, “before the formal some kids were thinking about going to a party and they decided not to go” he felt that “it made students think twice about engaging in a behavior. I know a few kids it had an impact on”. This was an interesting observation from someone that doesn't engage in high-risk activities, actually seeing the affect that character education had on his friend's decisions. Therefore, when he stated earlier that he felt that it only impacted them academically and didn't alter their character I would have to disagree with that statement. His observation shows that the students made a conscious decision to not engage in a high-risk behavior that they might have before the assignment was given. Could other unforeseen factors have played a role, such as not getting a ride to the party? Possibly, however, Matt is not the type to tell me something because he thinks that is what I want to hear. Therefore, you can see that a change has occurred in his thinking. Metacognitively he hasn't identified with the change in his thinking, therefore, it has not impacted his self-perception in this area.
High Risk Focus Groups:

It was clear that the high-risk group began to evaluate their thinking due to the asset education experienced over the last five weeks. During the initial interview they were able to identify or tell stories of many consequences related to high-risk behaviors. The following comments support the previous statement, “If you get pregnant no one will want to be with you and you can’t go to college”. “I’m scared to catch something”. “If you’re lucky your parents will let you get an abortion”. “You will get a name for yourself”. “My sister has a kid, she is not a mother at all, I take care of him and you can’t do anything and if she ever had any goals they are over now”. “My brother used to take me to the city and he would hang out at a corner. When I was young I thought I was cool cause I was hang out with my bro. When I got a little older I saw that he was dealing drugs and we had to run from the cops and his friend hurt himself and asked for help and he just left him. I asked him why he didn’t help his friend and he said you have to look out for yourself. From that point on I knew that one day he would leave me hanging and I stopped hanging out with him”. Despite being able to identify with these consequences, it was obvious during my observations that this did not affect the choices that they made in regards to high-risk behaviors.

After the research period it was apparent that their thinking has changed, however, not strongly enough to affect their actions. This was supported by the following comments, “When we made the cards we all spent a whole period connecting and talking about what to write and draw on the cards. You were able to see what was truly inside people and it made you think differently about them. It brings you closer to them”. This does show evidence that thinking has changed, however, it didn’t have an affect on their behaviors, for example, it didn’t affect the people they hung out with. This
theory was also supported by additional comments made when I questioned the effectiveness of the lesson on restraint. The following is a list of comments that were made: “The assignment has made me think twice about engaging in activities”. “We were talking on-line about the affects that alcohol on the body”. “It becomes part of you and it makes you relate to real situations that may have happened to you or someone you know”. “It didn’t stop us from engaging in the high risk activities, but I thought twice about it. I now am able to make a more informed decision and think about the consequences”. Again, these comments support the theory that students thinking has changed in regards to the importance of character education in making life decisions, however, not significantly enough to influence behavior. This was also supported based on the results of the post asset surveys (see Appendix J). In the surveys, the students in the high-risk group showed a significant improvement in perception in regard to all three targeted assets.

Low Risk Focus Group:

It was clear that the low-risk group began to evaluate their thinking due to the asset education experienced over the last five weeks. During the initial interview they were able to identify or tell stories of many consequences related to high-risk behaviors. The following comments support the previous statement. “I know a girl that had an abortion”. “Peer pressure is really intimidating and it makes you act one way and it is not really who you are it is just an act at school”. “My Uncle had to go to Jail for DWI”. “My cousin is young and has 4 kids, she had to leave school and get her GED and works at a gas station”. “I have a friend who is really involved in drugs and had to leave school”. “I know a twin that had a sister that left school with a kid and people take it out on her”. Despite being able to identify with these consequences, it was obvious during
my observations that the low risk kids did not engage in many high-risk behaviors. Therefore, it was difficult to determine improvement based on the research.

Regardless of the infrequency or lack of engagement in high-risk behaviors, it was apparent that their thinking has changed during the research period in all three targeted assets areas. This was supported by the following comments. "I think it has impacted my learning, it makes me want to learn and it makes learning fun". "For some reason before you started the MIP Student board, it seemed as though you weren’t as affiliated with the S.O.C and now I have seen a change and it brought things together". "If teachers show they care it will affect kids when they go home and influence other aspects of their life, it will have a trickle down affect, especially if their parents don’t really show they care”. “I didn’t realize about a million girls get pregnant a year and most are due to accidents”. “I thought the statistics surrounding drinking were surprising, you hear kids in school talk about getting wasted and they do it so casually however, they don’t realize the long term effects it has on the body”. “Rochester is number 4 on the top 20 list for gonorrhea, that kind of makes you grossed out”. “It makes you think twice”. All of these comments support the theory that character education has improved student thinking within the low risk group for all three of the targeted assets. The low risk group made some additional comments that where interesting. They felt that the assignment not only made them think about their actions, but it made them think about the consequences associated with their friends actions. This was understandable, if they didn’t engage in high-risk behaviors, they applied their learning to the closest person to them. This was supported by the following comments, “I think it was really good for the high-risk students. I think that some of the behaviors these kids take part in they will think twice about engaging in the future”, “It absolutely made me think twice about everything and
when I hear all my friends sitting and talking about these things and they don’t even care.
It has made me think twice about my friend’s decisions”, “I hope that it makes people
think twice”, and “It made me think twice and feel bad for those students that don’t have
teachers that drive that point home”. This was also support based on the results of the
post asset surveys (see Appendix J). In the surveys the students in the low risk group
showed a significant improvement in perception in regard to all three targeted assets.

**Pre and Post Survey Results:**

When I compared the results of the pre-asset checklist administered in the
beginning of the year, to the results of the post-asset checklist that was administered after
the research period, it was apparent that a significant improvement was observed for the
three targeted assets in the whole school of connections (see Appendix J). There were
between an 11 and 12 percentage point increase in each individual asset area. These
results would support the theory that character education within an integrated curriculum
will improve student perception of both character and academic performance.

**S.O.C. Teacher Checklist:**

When I analyzed the results of the teacher checklist, I determined that on a scale
of 1-5 with 5 representing ideal behaviors and instructional strategies that enhance asset
building, and 1 representing a lack of participation, the School of Connections teachers
produced an average of 2.96 (see Appendix L). This is an important observation because
it shows that despite a below average attempt collectively by the School of Connections
teachers, that student progress was still observed. So difficulties that were identified that
limited participation was “finding ways to incorporate asset number 24 (bonding to the
school) and asset number 31 (restraint) into lesson planning”. “Breaks and snow days
during the research period disrupted the consistency of the instruction”. The sudden
death of my father caused my focus to stray toward the end of the research period.

**S.O.C Teacher Exit Reflection:**

The exit reflection produced by the School of Connections teachers further supported the theory that character education within an integrated curriculum will improve student perception of both character and academic performance (see Appendix K). Liza Bellaire made the following statements regarding the instructional unit focusing on character education, “It was a challenge addressing assets when teachers have a detailed and state-evaluated course, however, I found that assets are necessary and invaluable”. An example from her class was her focus on one particular student from class that had the perception that she did not like him. She commented, “I made an effort to take an interest in his daily life and compliment him when appropriate. In less than a week, his attitude and demeanor completely changed, he began to participate more in class. I could definitely see where asset building had made a positive change “. Steve Custis also supported the research question by saying, “I have had the most success with focusing on greeting as many kids at the door as possible and addressing them by their name. Most of the students demonstrated their sense of being valued with a big smile and more frequent contributions to class. I have seen three students emerge from their reclusive ways”. All of these statements support the theory that character education with an integrated curriculum changes student perception.
Chapter 5 - Conclusions

This chapter will focus on the conclusions that I have drawn as a result of my research question. Character Education: How Does it Affect Student Self-Perception of Both Character and Achievement in an Integrated Curriculum? In doing so, I will address three underlying questions that were the central focus of the research, in order to gain insight into answering the research question. Furthermore, I will identify insight gained through the study and discuss how the importance of my findings relates to the literature. Finally, I will make recommendations for future research.

1. Did the unique structure of the school of connections provide a more effective environment for character education than the traditional classroom?

According to the results there was a considerable amount of data to show that the unique environment of the School of Connections provided a more suitable arena for character education than a traditional classroom setting. Student and teacher responses provided a wealth of evidence to show how traditional settings neglect or are unable to provide certain fundamental needs that are the foundation of creating classrooms that foster character education. Students believed that the School of Connections provided a “welcoming”, “organized”, “interesting”, “caring”, and most importantly “a relaxed teacher/student relationship” that is absent in traditional classes. This was shown by an average of a 12.2 percentage point increase in the pre-survey versus the post-survey results that focused on asset #5 (Does the school provide a caring and encouraging environment?). All of the students within the School of Connections completed this (see Appendix J). Teacher reflections also supported this conclusion (see Appendix K). In Liza’s reflection she stated, “I feel that it was a challenge to address assets in a forty-minute class period”. This provided further evidence that traditional classroom settings
do not provide the appropriate logistics to support appropriate character education. The Most Improved Student of the Week also helped create a comfortable environment. One student commented, “it’s like your refrigerator at home”. This also shows that in the student’s eyes, the classroom environment is as comfortable as home.

2. *Did character education influence student perception regarding its importance/connection to academic success?*

As a result of this study, I was able to determine that character education was able to improve student perception of academic success. Furthermore, it also showed significant improvement in the actual academic performance of most of the students involved in the study. During discussions with students, they explained how “recognition”, “climate”, “improved teacher/student relationship”, and “rewards” had a large influence on their perception of success. They felt that the Most Improved Student of the Week (MIP), provided more interest in class and gave them a “reason to work harder”. In addition they also noted, “everyone likes to be recognized and that if your teacher notices that you are working hard then it makes it worth while”. Providing a nurturing environment, showing your students that you are human, and providing extrinsic rewards for exemplary behavior is a vital component in fostering an improvement in student self perception of academic success. Teacher reflections also supported the conclusions. Steve Custis, observed a remarkable improvement in the academic performance in the students that received the M.I.P. Student of the Week during the research period. He commented, “Most of the students that have received the award have continued to succeed and improve academically, and all of them have contributed more in class and seem more at ease”.
3. Did character education impact the students' metacognitive perception of the importance of the three target assets?

There was a significant amount of data produced during this study that supported an improvement in student thinking regarding the three targeted assets. One student responded with his personal reflection of the character unit. He stated, “I didn’t experience assets until we began to work with them, I can see the value in it that I did not see before, my entire outlook has changed”. Another student added, “Character education is valuable, it makes you realize that there are things in life that can be much worse and that complaining about things don’t change it. Once I realized this it made me able to learn more”. Overall, student perception based on pre and post survey analysis showed that student perception improved between 11 and 12 percentage points for each of the targeted assets over the research period.

Restraint: During conversations with students, despite their abilities to initially identify a plethora of consequences associated with engagement in high-risk behaviors, many of the students were unable to truly identify with these consequences until after the research period. In some cases it was difficult to determine if they ever truly identified with them at all. However, it was apparent that they at least were aware of them and it made the students “think twice about engaging in them”. This was supported by a student who gave up her coffee habit due to the lesson that she learned during her essay on restraint (see Appendix I). She commented, “It made me more aware of what was going on”. This example shows how her awareness has influenced her actions. Another student observed friends abstaining from high-risk behaviors due to what they learned from the asset lesson. He replied, “before the formal, some kids were thinking about going to a
party and they decided not to go, it made them think twice about their actions”. This is another example of perception, influencing behavior. It was also interesting to see the concern that the low risk students had for the behaviors that some of their high-risk friends engaged in. This really showed the impact that character education on their perception. When it transcends your own metacognition and makes you start thinking about what other people are thinking, it provides proof that self-reflection is taking place. Even the high-risk kids that admitted that they still engaged in high-risk behaviors showed evidence of self-reflection. The following comment provides evidence to support this claim. One student commented, “It didn’t stop us from engaging in these activities, but it made us talk about it on-line and it allowed me to make a more informed decision and think about the consequences”.

**Bonding to the School:** Due to the sudden death of my father, Steve Custis initiated an asset-building lesson in which the students made sympathy cards for myself. The students had to work together as a class to decide on a common card. Students felt that this lesson helped “bring everyone together”. This was due to exchanging words and feelings with each other. Students felt that they were able to see sides of people that they normally would not see and they now looked at them in a different light. Another student commented that he felt, “I am more attached to the School of Connections now than I was five weeks ago”. He added, “If teachers are more connected, it makes the students more connected”.

**Caring Environment:** It was apparent during conversations with students that teachers within the school of connections could not do anything more to promote a more caring and encouraging environment. I was surprised to hear comments that suggest that
students need a desire to perform well in order to succeed. This was especially apparent in the group of high-risk students. They shared that the only thing I could do, was to provide the support and the environment for them to take advantage of that environment.

**Importance to the Theory Base:**

This research has provided some interesting findings that support current research in the field and new insights between the findings and the existing literature.

**Integration:**

During the literature review it was suggested that integrated programs reflect real world situations, motivate students to learn, and force students to think at a higher level than traditional curriculums. This was supported through my research and through the School of Connections. The School of Connections provides more authentic learning situations during summative assessments. Motivation to learn was reinforced by creating a caring environment during the research period that made students more comfortable.

The research showed that the creation of this environment had a direct correlation to student perception of academic success. However, this observation creates a discrepancy between the research and the data, posing the following questions: Does the unique nature of the school of connections foster this environment on its own? Was the unique atmosphere produced due to specifically designed asset instruction? Do integrated curriculums unintentionally have asset instruction embedded into them? The research and the nature of the School of Connections also supported the theory that integrated curriculums force students to think at a higher level. Within the School of Connections, higher level thinking skills are embedded into the learning experiences. However, due to application of asset instruction, students were able to reach one of the highest levels of
learning that was not apparent in the School of Connections prior to the research period, which was metacognition. Therefore, it can be concluded that students within an integrated program that are exposed to asset education, can reach a higher level of thinking, being able to integrate programs on their own.

**High Risk Behaviors:**

Evidence gained through the research showed students that were classified in the high risk group, based on the results compiled from the youth risk survey (see Appendix G), did indeed display behavior patterns and opinions that were consistent with the current literature.

**Asset Instruction:**

The literature provided many examples of how to target specific assets during instruction. The research provided additional evidence that by exposing students each day to behaviors, visuals, activities, environmental cues, or assignments that had asset building messages embedded into them, students would gain a better understanding of the importance of assets in their proper development. During my research, I targeted the following assets: caring school climate, bonding to the school, and restraint. The data showed that asset instruction enhanced student perception in all three areas.

**Insights:**

During the course of this research, I came across some additional questions that peaked my interest. Many students commented on the importance of the teacher and student relationship and its significance to their academic success. She stated, “I think my success has to do with my relationship with the teachers, I would never have tried honors classes outside the school of connections”. This made me think of the following
questions. Did asset education effect student perceptions of their teacher? Did asset instruction change the way that I was perceived by the students? Did asset instruction create a behavioral change in me? All of these questions could be explored in future studies.

I also was interested in the role that asset education played in student interest and motivation. Many students agreed that by building a more caring environment and having a closer attachment to the School of Connections, it resulted in an increased interest and engagement in class activities. Could asset education increase student interest and motivation? Many students agreed that it did, for example, Summer felt that, “interest plays a role in my motivation, the more interested I am, the better I do”. Jen agreed with this idea, she said, “The M.I.P Student of the Week has been great, I think it has effected my effort and motivation”. This creates the following questions: To what degree does character education effect student motivation? How can asset education be used to stimulate student interest and motivation?

Another question that came up during this process was the following. What role personality played in the research? I think that since I purposely selected outgoing kids, it impacted my results. If I chose all introverts would the research have produced the same results? Did the course content during the research period play a role in the significant improvement that was observed in every area? Students tend to participate and express a higher level of interest during the human physiology unit due to the pig dissection and its relevance to their lives. Would I have collected the same results if I did the research during plant systematic? In the future I may want to have two groups within the school of connections, one exposed to character education and one serving as a
control to rule out the impact that content might have on student perception. All of these questions provide a wealth of opportunities for future research into the value of character education. However, this research alone suggests that it has a significant role in student self-perception and therefore we may need to take Dr. Benson's advice and create a societal paradigm shift that would include a course in high school that focuses entirely on the forty developmental assets.
Appendices

Appendix A  Asset Checklist
Appendix B  List of the 40 Developmental Assets
Appendix C  Results of Search Institutes Asset Research (Risk Groups)
Appendix D  School of Connections Daily Teacher Checklist
Appendix E  Positive Referral
Appendix F  Youth Risk Survey Assessment Sheet
Appendix G  Youth Risk Survey
Appendix H  2001 Penfield Youth Risk Survey
Appendix I  Asset Lesson (Restraint)
Appendix J  Pre and Post Asset Checklist Results
Appendix K  School of Connections Teacher Exit Reflections
Appendix L  Completed School of Connections Daily Teacher Checklist
Appendix A: Asset Checklist

An Asset Checklist

Many people find it helpful to use a simple checklist to reflect on the assets young people experience. This checklist simplifies the asset list to help prompt conversation in families, organizations, and communities. **NOTE:** This checklist is not intended nor appropriate as a scientific or accurate measurement of developmental assets.

1. I receive high levels of love and support from family members.
2. I can go to my parent(s) or guardian(s) for advice and support and have frequent, in-depth conversations with them.
3. I know some nonparent adults I can go to for advice and support.
4. My neighbors encourage and support me.
5. My school provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. My parent(s) or guardian(s) help me succeed in school.
7. I feel valued by adults in my community.
8. I am given useful roles in my community.
9. I serve in the community one hour or more each week.
10. I feel safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.
11. My family sets standards for appropriate conduct and monitors my whereabouts.
12. My school has clear rules and consequences for behavior.
13. Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring my behavior.
14. Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
15. My best friends model responsible behavior.
16. My parent(s)/guardian(s) and teachers encourage me to do well.
17. I spend three hours or more each week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
18. I spend three hours or more each week in school or community sports, clubs, or organizations.
19. I spend one hour or more each week in religious services or participating in spiritual activities.
20. I go out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights each week.
21. I want to do well in school.
22. I am actively engaged in learning.
23. I do an hour or more of homework each school day.
24. I care about my school.
25. I read for pleasure three or more hours each week.
26. I believe it is really important to help other people.
27. I want to help promote equality and reduce world poverty and hunger.
28. I can stand up for what I believe.
29. I tell the truth even when it's not easy.
30. I can accept and take personal responsibility.
31. I believe it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
32. I am good at planning ahead and making decisions.
33. I am good at making and keeping friends.
34. I know and am comfortable with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
35. I can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
36. I try to resolve conflict nonviolently.
37. I believe I have control over many things that happen to me.
38. I feel good about myself.
39. I believe my life has a purpose.
40. I am optimistic about my future.
Appendix B: List of the 40 Developmental Assets

40 Developmental Assets

Search Institute has identified the following building blocks of healthy development that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. Percentages of young people who experience each asset represent the average of 6th- to 12th-grade youth surveyed in 243 towns and cities in the United States.

**Asset Type** | **Asset Name and Definition**
--- | ---
**External Assets** | **Definition**
Support | 1. Family support—Family life provides high levels of love and support. 64%
2. Positive family communication—Young person and her or his parents communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents. 20%
3. Other adult relationships—Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults. 41%
4. Caring neighborhood—Young person experiences caring neighbors. 10%
5. Caring school climate—School provides a caring, encouraging environment. 24%
6. Parent involvement in schooling—Parents are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school. 29%
Empowerment | 7. Community values youth—Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth. 20%
8. Youth as resources—Young people are given useful roles in the community. 24%
9. Service to others—Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week. 50%
10. Safety—Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood. 33%
Boundaries and Expectations | 11. Family boundaries—Family has clear rules and consequences that monitor the young person’s whereabouts. 18%
12. School boundaries—School provides clear rules and consequences. 16%
13. Neighborhood boundaries—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people’s behavior. 46%
Constructive Use of Time | 14. Adult role models—Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior. 27%
15. Positive peer influence—Young person’s best friend model responsible behavior. 60%
16. High expectations—Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well. 11%
17. Creative activities—Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts. 19%
18. Youth programs—Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community. 59%
19. Religious community—Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution. 63%
20. Time at home—Young person is out with friends “with nothing special to do” two or fewer nights per week. 50%
Commitment to Learning | 21. Achievement motivation—Young person is motivated to do well in school. 63%
22. School engagement—Young person is actively engaged in learning. 64%
23. Homework—Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day. 43%
24. Bonding to school—Young person cares about her or his school. 51%
25. Reading for pleasure—Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week. 24%
Positive Values | 26. Caring—Young person places high value on helping other people. 18%
27. Equality and social justice—Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty. 15%
28. Integrity—Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs. 63%
29. Honesty—Young person “tells the truth even when it is not easy.” 63%
30. Responsibility—Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility. 60%
31. Restraint—Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs. 42%
Social Competencies | 32. Planning and decision making—Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices. 20%
33. Interpersonal competence—Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills. 43%
34. Cultural competence—Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds. 35%
35. Resistance skills—Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. 37%
Positive Identity | 36. Peaceful conflict resolution—Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently. 44%
37. Personal power—Young person feels he or she has control over “things that happen to me.” 45%
38. Self-esteem—Young person reports having a high self-esteem. 47%
39. Sense of purpose—Young person reports that “my life has a purpose.” 55%
40. Positive view of personal future—Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future. 70%
Appendix C: Results of the Search Institute Research (Risk Groups)

More assets mean fewer problem behaviors
More assets mean more positive behaviors

- **Scholar Problems**: 43% in 0-10, 19% in 11-20, 7% in 21-30, 6% in 31-40 assets.

- **Depression/Suicide**: 40% in 0-10, 25% in 11-20, 12% in 21-30, 6% in 31-40 assets.

- **Helps Others**: 52% in 0-10, 33% in 11-20, 26% in 21-30, 21% in 31-40 assets.

- **Maintains Good Health**: 55% in 0-10, 40% in 11-20, 28% in 21-30, 20% in 31-40 assets.

- **Values Diversity**: 24% in 0-10, 33% in 11-20, 21% in 21-30, 20% in 31-40 assets.

- **Resists Danger**: 5% in 0-10, 15% in 11-20, 50% in 21-30, 45% in 31-40 assets.

- **Success in School**: 13% in 0-10, 15% in 11-20, 12% in 21-30, 23% in 31-40 assets.

- **Delays Gratification**: 21% in 0-10, 40% in 11-20, 52% in 21-30, 27% in 31-40 assets.

*Has skipped school two or more days in the last 30 days.*
SOC Team Daily Checklist

On a scale from 1-5 with 5 being ideal and 1 being horrible, how do you think you demonstrated behaviors and instruction that enhance asset building?

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Appendix E: Positive Referral

Positive Referral

____________________ recognizes __________________ for:

Teacher  Student Name

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__________________________________________________________________________

Teacher Signature: ____________________________

Administrator Comments: ______________________

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Administrator Signature: ________________________

Student’s Administrator: ________________  Course: ________________
Student’s Counselor: ________________  Date: ________________
Grade: __________
Appendix F: Youth Risk Survey Assessment

Youth Risk Assessment Survey Analysis:

The total points accumulated by each individual survey were averaged. This average number was then used to classify students from the School of Connections in three distinct risk groups. Those students falling into the Low Risk Group would accumulate an average point total between 22-30 points; those students falling into the Moderate Risk Group would accumulate between 31-39 total points, and those students totaling 40-48 points would then be classified into the High Risk Group. The groups were determined by standardizing my population. The lowest point total observed was 22 and the highest was 46. I then took the difference between the two scores which was 24 and divided that number by three to represent the three risk groups. Since the survey has twenty questions, with each question being assigned anywhere from one to three points, the total possible point range is between 20 and 60 points. Taking into account that very few individuals will be found at the extreme ends of the scale, an 8-point range was determined for each risk group based on the results of the survey. Depending on the student’s score on the survey, this point total was then referenced with the key to determine which group that they were classified into. Two students from the high and two from the low group were then selected to participate in two private interview sessions, one prior to and one after the research period, to insure that proper representation from each end of the risk spectrum was established. From the results of the survey I chose students that I felt demonstrated the highest amount of risk from the High Risk Group and those that I felt presented the least amount of risk from the Low Risk Group, that in my perception are representative of the average high school tenth grader.
# Appendix G: Youth Risk Survey

**Name:**

| 1. | What do you think the chances are that this individual is academically weak? | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. | What do you think the chances are that this individual would fail to complete homework assignments on a semi-regular to regular basis? | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. | What do you think the chances are that this individual feels the school does not provide a caring and encouraging environment? | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. | What do you think the chances are that this individual does not care about the school? | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. | What do you think the chances are that this individual does not use appropriate safety equipment (helmet, seat belt, etc.) when riding in a car, motorcycle, bike, skateboard, etc. | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. | What do you think the chances are that this individual has tried or used tobacco products, drugs, or alcohol? | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. | What do you think the chances are that this individual has tried or used hard drugs? (Crack, Cocaine, Ecstasy, LSD, PCP, etc.) | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. | What do you think the chances are that this individual uses tobacco products, drugs, or alcohol on a regular basis? | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. | What do you think the chances are that this individual has tried to purchase tobacco products, drugs, or alcohol? | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. | What do you think the chances are that this individual has operated a car under the influence or has accompanied someone driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol? | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. | What do you think the chances are of this individual carrying a weapon? | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. | What do you think the chances are of this individual carrying a weapon to school? | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. | What do you think the chances are of this individual engaging in a physical fight? | 3 | 2 | 1 |
14. What do you think the chances are of this individual hitting, slapping, or physically hurting a friend or a boyfriend/girlfriend?

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15. What do you think the chances are of this individual engaging in sexual intercourse?

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16. What do you think the chances are that this individual has felt depressed or lonely for two consecutive weeks or longer?

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17. What do you think the chances are that this individual has ever contemplated suicide?

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18. What do you think the chances are that this individual has a poor self-image?

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19. What do you think the chances are that this individual has a poor diet and/or a poor exercise routine?

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20. What do you think the chances are that this individual does not take part in clubs, athletic teams or other school related activities?

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Generated from PHS 2001 Youth Risk Survey
Appendix H: 2001 Penfield Youth Risk Survey

2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

1. How old are you?
   A. 12 years old or younger
   B. 13 years old
   C. 14 years old
   D. 15 years old
   E. 16 years old
   F. 17 years old
   G. 18 years old or older

2. What is your sex?
   A. Female
   B. Male

3. In what grade are you?
   A. 9th grade
   B. 10th grade
   C. 11th grade
   D. 12th grade
   E. Ungraded or other grade

4. How do you describe yourself? (Select one or more responses)
   A. American Indian or Alaska Native
   B. Asian
   C. Black or African American
   D. Hispanic or Latino
   E. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   F. White

5. During the past 12 months, how would you describe your grades in school?
   A. Mostly A’s
   B. Mostly B’s
   C. Mostly C’s
   D. Mostly D’s
   E. Mostly F’s
   F. None of these grades
   G. Not sure
THE NEXT FIVE QUESTIONS ASK ABOUT PERSONAL SAFETY

6. When you rode a motorcycle during the past 12 months, how often did you wear a helmet?
   A. I did not ride a motorcycle during the past 12 months.
   B. Never wore a helmet
   C. Rarely wore a helmet
   D. Sometimes wore a helmet
   E. Most of the time wore a helmet
   F. Always wore a helmet

7. When you rode a bicycle during the past 12 months, how often did you wear a helmet?
   A. I did not ride a bicycle during the past 12 months.
   B. Never wore a helmet
   C. Rarely wore a helmet
   D. Sometimes wore a helmet
   E. Most of the time wore a helmet
   F. Always wore a helmet

8. How often do you wear a seat belt when riding in a car driven by someone else?
   A. Never
   B. Rarely
   C. Sometimes
   D. Most of the time
   E. Always

9. During the past 30 days, how many times did you rise in a car or other vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol?
   A. 0 times
   B. 1 time
   C. 2 or 3 times
   D. 4 or 5 times
   E. 6 or more times

10. During the past 30 days, how many times did you drive a car or other vehicle when you had been drinking alcohol?
    A. 0 times
    B. 1 time
    C. 2 or 3 times
    D. 4 or 5 times
    E. 6 or more times
THE NEXT 10 QUESTIONS ASK ABOUT VIOLENCE-RELATED BEHAVIOR

11. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club?

   A. 0 days  
   B. 1 day  
   C. 2 or 3 days  
   D. 4 or 5 days  
   E. 6 or more days

12. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a gun?

   A. 0 days  
   B. 1 day  
   C. 2 or 3 days  
   D. 4 or 5 days  
   E. 6 or more days

13. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a weapon such as a gun, knife or club on school property?

   A. 0 days  
   B. 1 day  
   C. 2 or 3 days  
   D. 4 or 5 days  
   E. 6 or more days

14. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you not go to school because you felt you would be unsafe at school or on your way to and from school?

   A. 0 days  
   B. 1 day  
   C. 2 or 3 days  
   D. 4 or 5 days  
   E. 6 or more days

15. During the past 12 months, how many times has someone threatened or injured you with a weapon such as a gun, knife or club on school property?

   A. 0 times  
   B. 1 time  
   C. 2 or 3 times  
   D. 4 or 5 times  
   E. 6 or 7 times
16. During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight?

A. 0 times
B. 1 time
C. 2 or 3 times
D. 4 or 5 times
E. 6 or 7 times
F. 8 or 9 times
G. 10 or 11 times
H. 12 or more times

17. During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight in which you were injured and had to be treated by a doctor or nurse?

A. 0 times
B. 1 time
C. 2 or 3 times
D. 4 or 5 times
E. 6 or more times

18. During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight on school property?

A. 0 times
B. 1 time
C. 2 or 3 times
D. 4 or 5 times
E. 6 or 7 times
F. 8 or 9 times
G. 10 or 11 times
H. 12 or more times

19. During the past 12 months, did your boyfriend or girlfriend ever hit, slap or physically hurt you on purpose?

A. Yes
B. No

20. Have you ever been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when you did not want to?

A. Yes
THE NEXT 5 QUESTIONS ASK ABOUT SAD FEELINGS AND ATTEMPTED SUICIDE. SOMETIMES PEOPLE MAY FEEL SO DEPRESSED ABOUT THE FUTURE THAT THEY MAY CONSIDER ATTEMPTING SUICIDE. THAT IS, TAKING SOME ACTION TO END THEIR OWN LIFE.

21. During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?

A. Yes
B. No

22. During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide?

A. Yes
B. No

23. During the past 12 months did you make a plan about how you would attempt suicide?

A. Yes
B. No

24. During the past 12 months, how many times did you actually attempt suicide?

A. 0 times
B. 1 time
C. 2 or 3 times
D. 4 or 5 times
E. 6 or more times

25. If you attempted suicide during the past 12 months, did any attempt result in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse?

A. I did not attempt suicide during the past 12 months
B. Yes
C. No

THE NEXT 12 QUESTIONS ASK ABOUT TOBACCO USE

26. Have you ever tried cigarette smoking, even one or two puffs?

A. Yes
B. No
27. How old were you when you smoked a whole cigarette for the first time?

A. I have never smoked a whole cigarette
B. 8 years old or younger
C. 9 or 10 years old
D. 11 or 12 years old
E. 13 or 14 years old
F. 15 or 16 years old
G. 17 years old or older

28. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you smoke cigarettes?

A. 0 days
B. 1 or 2 days
C. 3 to 5 days
D. 6 to 9 days
E. 10 to 19 days
F. 20 to 29 days
G. All 30 days

29. During the past 30 days, on the days you smoked, how many cigarettes did you smoke per day?

A. I did not smoke cigarettes during the past 30 days
B. Less than 1 cigarette per day
C. 1 cigarette per day
D. 2 to 5 cigarettes per day
E. 6 to 10 cigarettes per day
F. 11 to 20 cigarettes per day
G. More than 20 cigarettes per day

30. During the past 30 days, how did you usually get your own cigarettes? (Select only one response)

A. I did not smoke cigarettes during the past 30 days
B. I bought them in a store such as a convenience store, supermarket, discount store or gas station
C. I bought them from a vending machine
D. I gave someone else money to buy them for me
E. I borrowed (or bummed) them from someone else
F. A person 18 years old or older gave them to me
G. I took them from a store or family member
H. I got them some other way

31. When you bought or tried to buy cigarettes in a story in the past 30 days, were you ever asked to show proof of age?
A. I did not try to buy cigarettes in a store in the past 30 days  
B. Yes, I was asked to show proof of age  
C. No, I was not asked to show proof of age  

32. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you smoke cigarettes on school property?  
   A. 0 days  
   B. 1 or 2 days  
   C. 3 to 5 days  
   D. 6 to 9 days  
   E. 10 to 19 days  
   F. 20 to 29 days  
   G. All 30 days  

33. Have you ever smoked cigarettes daily, that is, at least one cigarette every day for 30 days?  
   A. I have never smoked cigarettes  
   B. Yes  
   C. No  

34. During the past 12 months, did you every try to quit smoking cigarettes?  
   A. I did not smoke during the past 12 months  
   B. Yes  
   C. No  

35. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use chewing tobacco, snuff or dip such as Redman, Levi Garrett, Beechnut, Skoal, Skoal Bandits or Copenhagen?  
   A. 0 days  
   B. 1 or 2 days  
   C. 3 to 5 days  
   D. 6 to 9 days  
   E. 10 to 19 days  
   F. 20 to 29 days  
   G. All 30 days  

36. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use chewing tobacco, snuff or dip on school property?  
   A. 0 days  
   B. 1 or 2 days  
   C. 3 to 5 days
37. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you smoke cigars, cigarillos or little cigars?

A. 0 days  
B. 1 or 2 days  
C. 3 to 5 days  
D. 6 to 9 days  
E. 10 to 19 days  
F. 20 to 29 days  
G. All 30 days

THE NEXT 5 QUESTIONS ASK ABOUT DRINKING ALCOHOL. THIS INCLUDES DRINKING BEER, WINE, WINE COOLERS AND LIQUOR SUCH AS RUM, GIN, VODKA OR WHISKEY. FOR THESE QUESTIONS, DRINKING ALCOHOL DOES NOT INCLUDE DRINKING A FEW SIPS OF WINE FOR RELIGIOUS PURPOSES.

38. During your life, on how many days have you had at least one drink of alcohol?

A. 0 days  
B. 1 or 2 days  
C. 3 to 5 days  
D. 6 to 9 days  
E. 10 to 19 days  
F. 20 to 29 days  
G. All 30 days

39. How old were you when you had your first drink of alcohol other than a few sips?

A. I have never smoked a whole cigarette  
B. 8 years old or younger  
C. 9 or 10 years old  
D. 11 or 12 years old  
E. 13 or 14 years old  
F. 15 or 16 years old  
G. 17 years old or older

40. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you have at least one drink of alcohol?

A. 0 days
41. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you have 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row, that is, within a couple of hours?

A. 0 days  
B. 1 day  
C. 2 days  
D. 3 to 5 days  
E. 6 to 9 days  
F. 10 to 19 days  
G. 20 or more days

42. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you have at least one drink of alcohol on school property?

A. 0 days  
B. 1 or 2 days  
C. 3 to 5 days  
D. 6 to 9 days  
E. 10 to 19 days  
F. 20 to 29 days  
G. All 30 days

THE NEXT 4 QUESTIONS ASK ABOUT MARIJUANA USE. MARIJUANA ALSO IS CALLED GRASS OR POT.

43. During your life, how many times have you used marijuana?

A. 0 times  
B. 1 or 2 times  
C. 3 to 9 times  
D. 10 to 19 times  
E. 20 to 39 times  
F. 40 to 99 times  
G. 100 or more times

44. How old were you when you tried marijuana for the first time?

A. I have never tried marijuana  
B. 8 years old or younger
C. 9 or 10 years old
D. 11 or 12 years old
E. 13 or 14 years old
F. 15 or 16 years old
G. 17 years old or older

45. During the past 30 days, how many times did you use marijuana?
   A. 0 times
   B. 1 or 2 times
   C. 3 to 9 times
   D. 10 to 19 times
   E. 20 to 39 times
   F. 40 or more times

46. During the past 30 days, how many times did you use marijuana on school property?
   A. 0 times
   B. 1 or 2 times
   C. 3 to 9 times
   D. 10 to 19 times
   E. 20 to 39 times
   F. 40 or more times

THE NEXT 9 QUESTIONS ASK ABOUT OTHER DRUGS

47. During your life, how many times have you used any form of cocaine, including powder, crack or freebase?
   A. 0 times
   B. 1 or 2 times
   C. 3 to 9 times
   D. 10 to 19 times
   E. 20 to 39 times
   F. 40 or more times

48. During the past 30 days, how many times did you use any form of cocaine, including powder, crack or freebase?
   A. 0 times
   B. 1 or 2 times
   C. 3 to 9 times
   D. 10 to 19 times
   E. 20 to 39 times
   F. 40 or more times
49. During your life, how many times have you sniffed glue, breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaled any paints or sprays to get high?

A. 0 times  
B. 1 or 2 times  
C. 3 to 9 times  
D. 10 to 19 times  
E. 20 to 39 times  
F. 40 or more times

50. During the past 30 days, how many times have you sniffed glue, breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaled any paints or sprays to get high?

A. 0 times  
B. 1 or 2 times  
C. 3 to 9 times  
D. 10 to 19 times  
E. 20 to 39 times  
F. 40 or more times

51. During your life, how many times have you used heroin (also called smack, junk or China White)?

A. 0 times  
B. 1 or 2 times  
C. 3 to 9 times  
D. 10 to 19 times  
E. 20 to 39 times  
F. 40 or more times

52. During your life, how many times have you used methamphetamines (also called speed, crystal, crank or ice)?

A. 0 times  
B. 1 or 2 times  
C. 3 to 9 times  
D. 10 to 19 times  
E. 20 to 39 times  
F. 40 or more times

53. During your life, how many times have you taken steroid pills or shots without a doctor's prescription?

A. 0 times  
B. 1 or 2 times  
C. 3 to 9 times
54. During your life, how many times have you used a needle to inject any illegal drug into your body?
   A. 0 times
   B. 1 time
   C. 2 or more times

55. During the past 12 months, has anyone offered, sold or given you an illegal drug on school property?
   A. Yes
   B. No

**THE NEXT 8 QUESTIONS ASK ABOUT SEXUAL BEHAVIOR**

56. Have you ever had sexual intercourse?
   A. Yes
   B. No

57. How old were you when you had sexual intercourse for the first time?
   A. I have never had sexual intercourse
   B. 11 years old or younger
   C. 12 years old
   D. 13 years old
   E. 14 years old
   F. 15 years old
   G. 16 years old
   H. 17 years old or older

58. During your life, with how many people have you had sexual intercourse?
   A. I have never had sexual intercourse
   B. 1 person
   C. 2 people
   D. 3 people
   E. 4 people
   F. 5 people
   G. 6 or more people

59. During the past 3 months, with how many people did you have sexual intercourse?
A. I have never had sexual intercourse
B. I have had sexual intercourse, but not during the past 3 months
C. 1 person
D. 2 people
E. 3 people
F. 4 people
G. 5 people
H. 6 or more people

60. Did you drink alcohol or use drugs before you had sexual intercourse the last time?
   A. I have never had sexual intercourse
   B. Yes
   C. No

61. The last time you had sexual intercourse, did you or your partner use a condom?
   A. I have never had sexual intercourse
   B. Yes
   C. No

62. The last time you had sexual intercourse, what one method did you or your partner use to prevent pregnancy? (Select only one response)
   A. I have never had sexual intercourse
   B. No method was used to prevent pregnancy
   C. Birth control pills
   D. Condoms
   E. Depo-Provera (injectable birth control)
   F. Withdrawal
   G. Some other method
   H. Not sure

63. How many times have you been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant?
   A. 0 times
   B. 1 time
   C. 2 or more times
   D. Not sure

THE NEXT 7 QUESTIONS ASK ABOUT BODY WEIGHT

64. How do you describe your weight?
   A. Very underweight
B. Slightly underweight
C. About the right weight
D. Slightly overweight
E. Very overweight

65. Which of the following are you trying to do about your weight?

A. Lose weight
B. Gain weight
C. Stay the same weight
D. I am trying not to do anything about my weight

66. During the past 30 days, did you exercise to lose weight or keep from gaining weight?

A. Yes
B. No

67. During the past 30 days, did you eat less food, fewer calories or foods low in fat to lose weight or keep from gaining weight?

A. Yes
B. No

68. During the past 30 days, did you go without eating for 24 hours or more (also called fasting) to lose weight or keep from gaining weight?

A. Yes
B. No

69. During the past 30 days, did you take any diet pills, powders or liquids without a doctor's advice to lose weight or keep from gaining weight? (Do not include meal replacement products such as Slim Fast)

A. Yes
B. No

70. During the past 30 days, did you vomit or take laxatives to lose weight or keep from gaining weight?

A. Yes
B. No

THE NEXT 7 QUESTIONS ASK ABOUT FOOD YOU ATE OR DRANK DURING THE PAST 7 DAYS. THINK ABOUT ALL THE MEALS AND SNACKS YOU HAD FROM THE TIME YOU GOT UP UNTIL YOU WENT TO BED. BE SURE
71. During the past 7 days, how many times did you drink 100% fruit juices such as orange juice, apple juice or grape juice? (Do not count punch, Kool-Aid, sports drinks, or other fruit-flavored drinks)

A. I did not drink 100% fruit juice during the past 7 days
B. 1 to 3 times during the past 7 days
C. 4 to 6 times during the past 7 days
D. 1 time per day
E. 2 times per day
F. 3 times per day
G. 4 or more times per day

72. During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat fruit? (Do not count fruit juice)

A. I did not eat fruit during the past 7 days
B. 1 to 3 times during the past 7 days
C. 4 to 6 times during the past 7 days
D. 1 time per day
E. 2 times per day
F. 3 times per day
G. 4 or more times per day

73. During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat green salad?

A. I did not eat green salad during the past 7 days
B. 1 to 3 times during the past 7 days
C. 4 to 6 times during the past 7 days
D. 1 time per day
E. 2 times per day
F. 3 times per day
G. 4 or more times per day

74. During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat potatoes? (Do not count french fries, fried potatoes or potato chips.)

A. I did not eat potatoes during the past 7 days
B. 1 to 3 times during the past 7 days
C. 4 to 6 times during the past 7 days
D. 1 time per day
E. 2 times per day
F. 3 times per day
G. 4 or more times per day
75. During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat carrots?

A. I did not eat carrots during the past 7 days
B. 1 to 3 times during the past 7 days
C. 4 to 6 times during the past 7 days
D. 1 time per day
E. 2 times per day
F. 3 times per day
G. 4 or more times per day

76. During the past 7 days, how many times did you eat other vegetables? (Do not count green salad, potatoes or carrots)

A. I did not eat other vegetables during the past 7 days
B. 1 to 3 times during the past 7 days
C. 4 to 6 times during the past 7 days
D. 1 time per day
E. 2 times per day
F. 3 times per day
G. 4 or more times per day

77. During the past 7 days, how many glasses of milk did you drink? (Include the milk you drank in a glass or cup, from a carton, or with cereal. Count the half pint of milk served at school as equal to one glass.)

A. I did not drink milk during the past 7 days
B. 1 to 3 glasses during the past 7 days
C. 4 to 6 glasses during the past 7 days
D. 1 glass per day
E. 2 glasses per day
F. 3 glasses per day
G. 4 or more glasses per day

THE NEXT 8 QUESTIONS ASK ABOUT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

78. On how many of the past 7 days did you exercise or participate in physical activity for at least 20 minutes that made you sweat and breathe hard, such as basketball, soccer, running, swimming laps, fast bicycling, fast dancing or similar aerobic activities?

A. 0 days
B. 1 day
C. 2 days
D. 3 days
E. 4 days
F. 5 days
G. 6 days
79. On how many of the past 7 days did you participate in physical activity for at least 30 minutes that did not make you sweat or breathe hard, such as fast walking, slow bicycling, skating, pushing a lawn mower or mopping floors?

A. 0 days
B. 1 day
C. 2 days
D. 3 days
E. 4 days
F. 5 days
G. 6 days
H. 7 days

80. On how many of the past 7 days did you do exercises to strengthen or tone your muscles such as push-ups, sit-ups or weight lifting?

A. 0 days
B. 1 day
C. 2 days
D. 3 days
E. 4 days
F. 5 days
G. 6 days
H. 7 days

81. On an average school day, how many hours do you watch TV?

A. I do not watch TV on an average school day
B. Less than 1 hour per day
C. 1 hour per day
D. 2 hours per day
E. 3 hours per day
F. 4 hours per day
G. 5 or more hours per day

82. In an average week when you are in school, on how many days do you go to physical education (PE) classes?

A. 0 days
B. 1 day
C. 2 days
D. 3 days
E. 4 days
F. 5 days
83. During an average physical education (PE) class, how many minutes do you spend actually exercising or playing sports?

A. I do not take PE  
B. Less than 10 minutes  
C. 10 to 20 minutes  
D. 21 to 30 minutes  
E. 31 to 40 minutes  
F. 41 to 50 minutes  
G. 51 to 60 minutes  
H. More than 60 minutes

84. During the past 12 months, on how many sports teams did you play? (Include any teams run by your school or community groups.)

A. 0 teams  
B. 1 team  
C. 2 teams  
D. 3 or more teams

85. During the past 12 months, how many times were you injured while exercising, playing sports, or being physically active and had to be treated by a doctor or nurse?

A. 0 times  
B. 1 time  
C. 2 times  
D. 3 times  
E. 4 times  
F. 5 or more times

THE NEXT QUESTION ASKS ABOUT AIDS EDUCATION

86. Have you ever been taught about AIDS or HIV infection in school?

A. Yes  
B. No  
C. Not sure

THE NEXT 7 QUESTIONS ASK ABOUT HEALTH AND DENTAL CARE

87. When was the last time you saw a doctor or health care provider for a check-up or physical exam when you were not sick or injured?

A. During the past 12 months  
B. Between 12 and 24 months ago
88. During your last check-up, did your doctor or health care provider discuss ways to prevent pregnancy, AIDS, or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?

A. Yes
B. No
C. Not sure

89. During your last check-up, did your doctor or health care provider discuss ways to avoid alcohol use?

A. Yes
B. No
C. Not sure

90. During your last check-up, did your doctor or health care provider discuss ways to avoid tobacco use?

A. Yes
B. No
C. Not sure

91. When was the last time you saw a dentist for a check-up, exam, teeth cleaning, or other dental work?

A. During the past 12 months
B. Between 12 and 24 months ago
C. More than 24 months ago
D. Never
E. Not sure

92. During your life, how many times have you taken herbal or other "natural" products, either to make you feel better, or to help you perform better at sports or in school?

A. 0 times
B. 1 or 2 times
C. 3 to 5 times
D. 6 to 10 times
E. 11 or more times

93. During your life, how many times have you used any other type of illegal drug, such as LSD, PCP, ecstasy or mushrooms?
THE NEXT 2 QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT YOUR HEIGHT. HEIGHT IS USUALLY EXPRESSED IN FEET AND INCHES. FOR EXAMPLE, SOMEONE MAY BE 5'7". USING THE TABLE BELOW, WE CAN CONVERT THIS HEIGHT OF 5'7" TO INCHES, 67".

How tall are you without your shoes? Find your height on the table and convert it to inches. Then answer questions 94 and 95.

(Table is not in web site version)

94. What is the first number of your height in inches? (Example: If your height is 67 inches, the first number would be 6.)

A. 1  
B. 2  
C. 3  
D. 4  
E. 5  
F. 6  
G. 7  
H. 8  

95. What is the second number of your height in inches? (Example: If your height is 67 inches, the second number would be 7.)

A. 0  
B. 1  
C. 2  
D. 3  
E. 4  
F. 5  
G. 6  
H. 7  
I. 8  
J. 9  

THE NEXT 3 QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT YOUR WEIGHT. HOW MUCH DO YOU WEIGH IN POUNDS? YOUR WEIGHT SHOULD HAVE 3 NUMBERS. IF YOU WEIGH LESS THAN 100, THE FIRST NUMBER WOULD BE 0.
96. What is the first number of your weight? (Example: If you weigh 100, the first number would be 1. If you weight 99, the first number would be 0.)
   A. 0
   B. 1
   C. 2
   D. 3
   E. 4

97. What is the second number of your weight? (Example: If you weigh 120, the second number would be 2.)
   A. 0
   B. 1
   C. 2
   D. 3
   E. 4
   F. 5
   G. 6
   H. 7
   I. 8
   J. 9

98. What is the third number of your weight? (Example: If you weigh 120, the third number would be 0.)
   A. 0
   B. 1
   C. 2
   D. 3
   E. 4
   F. 5
   G. 6
   H. 7
   I. 8
   J. 9
Appendix I: Asset Lesson (Restraint)

**Developmental Assets**

**Introduction:**

In 1958, Dr. Merton Strommen founded the Search Institute, in an effort to research the healthy development of young people. The research initially focused on youth in religious settings and has expanded to focus on children and youth in all settings. In 1990, the institute published a framework of 40 developmental assets that young people need in order to grow up to be healthy, caring, and responsible adults. Surveys conducted by the institute on more than one million 6th-12th grade students in communities across the country consistently show that the students that display a higher percentage of these 40 assets make healthier life choices and avoid high risk behaviors (Search-Institute.org).

In the beginning of the year, we administered the same asset survey to students that were enrolled in the School of Connections. The survey consists of 40 questions that center on two major types of assets, internal and external assets (See Figure 1.1). **External assets** are defined by the Search Institute as “positive experiences that young people receive from people and institutions in their lives”. External assets are further subdivided in four categories Support, Empowerment, Boundaries and Expectations, and Constructive use of time (Search-Institute.org). **Internal assets** are those that “guide choices and create a sense of centeredness, purpose, and focus”. Internal assets are also broken down into four categories, Commitment to learning, Positive Values, Social Competencies and Positive Identity (Search-Institute.org). The results of the survey showed that only 44% of the of the students thought that the school provided a caring and nurturing environment, 52% of the students didn’t care about the school, and 44% believed it was important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or drugs. The first asset is an external asset that focuses on the category of support and the last two are internal assets that focus on a commitment to learning and positive values.

**High Risk Behaviors**

Analysis of data from the National Survey of Children, reports that half of all ten-seventeen-year-olds are at a high risk of undermining their chances for a healthy life because of substance abuse; unsafe sex or teenage pregnancy; and school failure and
delinquency, crime, or violence (Benson, 1997). The survey measured student involvement in one or more of the following high risk behavior patterns:

- Three or more uses of alcohol in the previous month or drinking to the point of intoxication one or more times in the past two weeks
- Daily tobacco use
- Three or more uses of illegal drugs in the past year
- Sexual intercourse three or more times
- Three or more incidents of anti-social behavior in the past year (Ex: shoplifting)
- Three or more acts of violence in a year
- Frequent depression or attempted suicide
- Repeated absence from school

The results showed that 64% of all young people are at risk in one or more of these areas (Benson, 1997). It is also disturbing to see that these rates have been increasing the last few decades.

**Cause of High Risk Behavior**

Dr. Peter Benson believes that the reason we are seeing a drastic increase in high-risk behavior is not due to one issue alone, it lies at the core of how our society treats its children and adolescents. Dr. Benson identifies five realities that contribute to the current state of our youth (Benson, 1997). These five deficits are identified and described below:

- **Decline in family support.** Due to high divorce rates, competition for job security in a struggling economy, and the pursuit of material or individual fulfillment the commitment to families and our children has taken a back seat (Benson, 1997).
- **Rupture in community support for young people.** In the past it was not uncommon to see communities taking part in child development. Neighbors would look out for youth. Somewhere along the line our society has lost the view that children are a treasure to one that views children as a burden (Benson, 1997).
- **The loss of consistency in socialization.** In the past children would continually hear reinforcing messages about values from multiple places that helped articulate and model appropriate behaviors. This may be due to the fact that there is much more
diversity in the present society. With diverse people, comes diverse opinions which can cloud the judgment of developing youth (Benson, 1997).

- The modern creation of disconnection. The years of adolescence are a time of ambiguity for modern day youth. They have been put into adult roles, however, they are not asked to participate in community life. This has created an "in between" period of development that needs to be filled by community involvement (Benson, 1997).

- The proliferation of developmental deficits. These are negative influences in young people's lives that make it more difficult for them to develop into healthy, caring, and productive citizens. Based on the Search Institutes study of 460 school districts these 10 deficits where linked to high-risk behaviors (Benson, 1997).

1. Poverty.
2. Time alone at home.
3. Physical and sexual abuse.
4. TV overexposure
5. Hedonistic values
6. Attending drinking parties
7. Stress
8. Parental addiction
9. Social isolation
10. Negative peer pressure

Societal Paradigm Shift
In order to change the negative trend that is seen in our youth of today, we must focus on fine-tuning and reshaping programs and services (Covey, 1990) People have begun to question the adequacy of the deficit-centered paradigm and have looked for alternative approaches (Benson, 1997). The Search Institutes 40 Developmental Assets provides communities with an alternative to dysfunctional systems, in hopes to ignite a positive, community wide approach to raising children (Benson, 1997).
Written Assignment

Restraint

Results from our survey also showed that 44% of the students believed it was important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or drugs (Therefore 66% of you believe it o.k.). Students will conduct research in the library that will focus on the long term physiological, social, and psychological affects that abuse of tobacco, sex, drugs and alcohol will have on the body, as well as your personal life. Students will research this topic and write a 3 page, typed, double spaced, persuasive essay convincing me, a fellow student, to not use tobacco, drugs, alcohol and engage in sexual intercourse. The essay must be supported by appropriate data that shows the affects on body systems and the social and emotional risks that accompany this behavior (Search Institute, 1999).
Appendix J: Pre and Post Asset Checklist Results

SOC Pre Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset #</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Average %</td>
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Asset #5 Caring School Climate
Asset #24 Bonding to the School
Asset #31 Restraint
<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Average%</td>
<td>58.17</td>
<td>60.56</td>
<td>55.31</td>
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Asset #5 Caring School Climate
Asset #24 Bonding to the School
Asset #31 Restraint
# SOC Post Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Groups</th>
<th>Asset #</th>
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<td>Low Risk Average</td>
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<td>80</td>
<td>68.75</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Risk Average</td>
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<td>78.75</td>
<td>81.25</td>
<td>58.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Risk Group</th>
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<td>Student #40</td>
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<td>40</td>
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<td>Average %</td>
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<td>68.75</td>
<td>60</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Risk Group</th>
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<th>90</th>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average %</td>
<td></td>
<td>78.75</td>
<td>81.25</td>
<td>58.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXIT REFLECTION: ASSET BUILDING
Liza Bellaire

My experience with asset building was interesting and challenging. I felt that it was a challenge to make sure that I was addressing assets in a forty-minute class period, especially when teachers have a detailed and state-evaluated curriculum to cover. However, after implicitly addressing various assets, I found that they are necessary and invaluable.

One asset that I honed in on in particular was “caring school climate- school provides a caring, encouraging environment.” I tried to show students that I care by waiting for them outside the classroom and welcoming them into the class. Once in the class I tried to compliment a student or ask the student how their weekend was. There was one student in particular who thought that I did not “like” him. This was shown on his facial expression and through other classmates’ perception. I made an effort to touch base with him every day to ask him how things were going, and to pay him a compliment. In less than a week, his countenance completely changed. He began to smile when he walked into the classroom, and participate more in class. I could definitely see where asset building had made a positive change.

Another example of asset building that I employed in the classroom was implementing a “Global History Student of the Week.” This rewards students for participation and excellence in Global History. I have found that this has raised the level of competitiveness in the class, and also participation. Students are excited to win prizes such as +5 on a test, homework pass, teach a class, even lunch with myself! It also recognizes students for excellent performance, which contributes to the fact that school provides a caring, encouraging environment.

Overall, I have found that working with asset building has been an invaluable experience not only for myself, but for my students. It is something that I will continue to use and build upon in the years to come.
During the first five weeks of the third quarter I noticed some changes in students' behaviors and attitudes in the School of Connections. Some of these changes stemmed directly from the focus on asset building that was led by Mr. Schembri. Overall, the daily emphasis on fostering the development of student assets helped to create a more cohesive sense of community and renewed enthusiasm for achievement.

Mr. Schembri's student of the week program stands out as the effort that created the most concrete and meaningful asset building. Most students who received the award have continued to succeed and improve academically and all of them have contributed more in class and seemed more at ease. Students who have not received the award have shared with me that this is a goal they have set for themselves in the fourth marking period.

Of my own efforts at asset building, I have had the most success with focusing on greeting as many students as possible at the door and using their names. Although some students did not respond positively to this attention, most demonstrated their sense of being valued with a big smile and more frequent contributions to the classroom. In particular I have seen three students emerge from their reclusive ways and begin to take charge in class.
SOC Team Daily Checklist

On a scale from 1-5 with 5 being ideal and 1 being horrible, how do you think you demonstrated behaviors and instruction that enhance asset building.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Feedback/Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-Feb</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Made more of an effort to make eye-contact with students and thereby increase engagement and also made small talk, say them name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Feb</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Still continue to make eye-contact but less personal due to the fact that I did a team teaching lecture to whole class of 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Feb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>A student looked like he had something in his eye so I asked him if he was okay or needed to go to the nurse who wrote, I don't know if I did this or not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-Feb</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Had to deal with individual conflict with 2 students, met with their spec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-Feb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Snow Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Feb</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Had to speed through material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-Feb</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Have test made time for asset building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Feb</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-Feb</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Feb</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-Feb</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-Feb</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-Feb</td>
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<td>19-Feb</td>
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<td>21-Feb</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>Feedback/Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-Feb</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>The winter break really helped me to recharge! I was engaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-Feb</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Greasing going well. Student of the week a treat. Students constantly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-Feb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kind of lost it today... kids/sons had to motivate at times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-Feb</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>I tried to be a little better today, mostly failed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-Feb</td>
<td></td>
<td>DIDN'T DO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Mar</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Mar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Mar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Mar</td>
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</table>
### SOC Team Daily Checklist

On a scale from 1-5 with 5 being ideal and 1 being horrible, how do you think you demonstrated behaviors and instruction that enhance asset building.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Feedback/Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-Feb</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Feb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>only greeted a few students, talked at a few students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Feb</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>greeted more students by name, spoke more calmly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-Feb</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>greeted many students, engaged many in discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-Feb</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>greeted well but called poles out in front of class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Feb</td>
<td></td>
<td>Didn't do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-Feb</td>
<td></td>
<td>Snow day!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Feb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>I found it very hard to greet kids ... had to come back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-Feb</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>We had to make a switch to do a jumped agit on Y and X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-Feb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-Feb</td>
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<tr>
<td>20-Feb</td>
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<tr>
<td>21-Feb</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>Feedback/ Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-Feb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Asked about students who had flight delayed or canceled with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-Feb</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Student of the week: Most improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-Feb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-Feb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>28-Feb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Mar</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;Student of the week&quot; - Most improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Mar</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Mar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Mar</td>
<td>2</td>
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My biggest challenge is, with the curriculum I teach, how to incorporate "Bonding to school" and "Restraint." "Caring School Climate" seems more controllable, as I can establish this climate as the teacher.
## SOC Team Daily Checklist

On a scale from 1-5 with 5 being ideal and 1 being horrible, how do you think you demonstrated behaviors and instruction that enhance asset building.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Feedback/Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-Feb</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>It was difficult to remember to use asset messages. Student noticed changes in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Feb</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>A.P. students wondered why they didn't have Most Improved Student of the Year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Feb</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Most Improved Students wanted to know if their picture was going up if they were selected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-Feb</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Student (&quot;summer&quot;) asked if she could make a sign because she didn't like the one I made.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-Feb</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Student tried to convince me why they deserved MIP student b/c effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Feb</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Absent AEO Training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-Feb</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Snow Day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Feb</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>With a few days off it is easy to slip back into old habits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-Feb</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17-Feb</td>
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<td>Winter Break.</td>
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**John Schombri**
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<th>Feedback/ Comments</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>24-Feb</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>It was difficult getting back in the groove after break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-Feb</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>26-Feb</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-Feb</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>We had a test today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-Feb</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Mar</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>I was having a bad day. Dad's been in and out of hospital, however, I am trying not to let it get me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Mar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Mar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Mar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


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