



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT™
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



MARCH Asset of the Month: **CREATIVE ACTIVITIES**

Young people spend three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.

This handout is designed to help adults throughout Silicon Valley develop materials and activities to promote the asset of **Creative Activities**. Developmental Assets®, created by Search Institute, are the positive values, relationships, skills, and experiences that help children and teens thrive.

The Importance of Creative Activities

For many young people, creative activities can fulfill what Peter Benson (the late psychologist and CEO/President of Search Institute and pioneer of the Developmental Assets framework) describes as a “spark” — the hidden flames that tap into their true passions, motivate and inspire them to achieve and create, and keep them on a positive path. Youth who have sparks and are surrounded by people who recognize and support their sparks, have higher grades in school, are more socially competent, are more likely to volunteer to help other people, have a greater sense of purpose, and are less likely to experience depression.

Creative activities are one of the most common categories where youth find their sparks. Even if creative activities are not a young person’s life passion, they still provide benefits like fostering creative problem solving, critical thinking, and discipline, and provide opportunities to connect with instructors who are role models and caring adults. In the 2016 Search Institute Developmental Assets Survey, implemented by Project Cornerstone for Santa Clara County schools, **67% of 4th-6th graders and only 24% of 7th-12th graders** reported that they spend three or more hours each week in lessons or practice for music, theater, dance, or other arts. To help raise awareness of their importance, March is *Creative Activities* month in Silicon Valley.

The following discussion topics can help young people recognize the value of creative activities and identify new kinds of creative activities that they might be interested in:

- Think back on the art you have created. Is there a particular piece that you are most proud of? Why?
- Who is your favorite musician? What do you like about their music?
- Creative expression includes a wide variety of forms including painting, dancing, digital media production, singing, sculpting, music, poetry, drawing, fashion design and so much more! What interests you?
- If you could take lessons in anything, what would you want to learn?
- How do the creative activities that you do teach you more about yourself?

This asset, creative activities, can also be linked with Asset #9-Service to Others. Senior citizens, hospital patients, and military veterans (just to name a few) genuinely enjoy it when young people send them handcrafted cards or useful gifts or share a performance such as songs, skits, and music. Remember that getting creative does not have to cost money. Use everyday household supplies to create a masterpiece (e.g., an empty toilet paper roll can be transformed into something amazing), check out your local library or museums for free events, or connect with a friend or neighbor who may have a musical instrument they are no longer using.

Activities

The activities below offer a starting point to help integrate creative arts into everyday activities, and to use creative activities as an opportunity for asset building.

For families

- Help your children identify their creative sparks! Expose them to a variety of creative activities, and find follow-up lessons when they find something they are interested in.
- Mentors and teachers in the creative arts can be another caring adult in their lives.
- Advocate for your school to provide balance for students by serving as a voice for arts programs.

For all adults

- Demonstrate the importance of creative activities to young people. Try to find out about the type of creative activities youth in your circle are involved with and share about the activities you participate in. Do not just share what you created—explain *why* you enjoy your activity and how you feel while you're engaging in it.
- If the young people in your life participate in creative activities, support them! Attend their art shows, performances, recitals, and concerts.

At school or in youth programs

- Ensure that the creative activities you provide consider young people's different interests and skills. For example, some young people who do not enjoy drawing or coloring may prefer opportunities in photography or digital arts.
- Expose youth to a variety of creative processes with a "Give it a try!" attitude. For example, obtain a variety of art supplies and sample projects. Encourage kids to try a process that they have not tried before. Have sample projects and instructions available for kids who do not feel confident or inspired enough to come up with a new idea but be sure to allow kids the opportunity to creatively express themselves.

About the Asset of the Month Toolkit

The Asset of the Month toolkit is designed by YMCA of Silicon Valley Project Cornerstone using Search Institute's research-based Developmental Assets framework. The toolkit highlights 12 Developmental Assets and provides an editable poster (available in English and Spanish) and an overview handout for each asset. To access all 12 months of resources, go to <https://www.ymcasv.org/ymca-project-cornerstone/developmental-assets/asset-month-toolkit>

About Project Cornerstone

Project Cornerstone is an initiative of the YMCA of Silicon Valley with a mission to ensure all youth feel valued, respected, and known so they grow into healthy, caring, and responsible adults. For more information, visit www.projectcornerstone.org or email us at info@projectcornerstone.org.