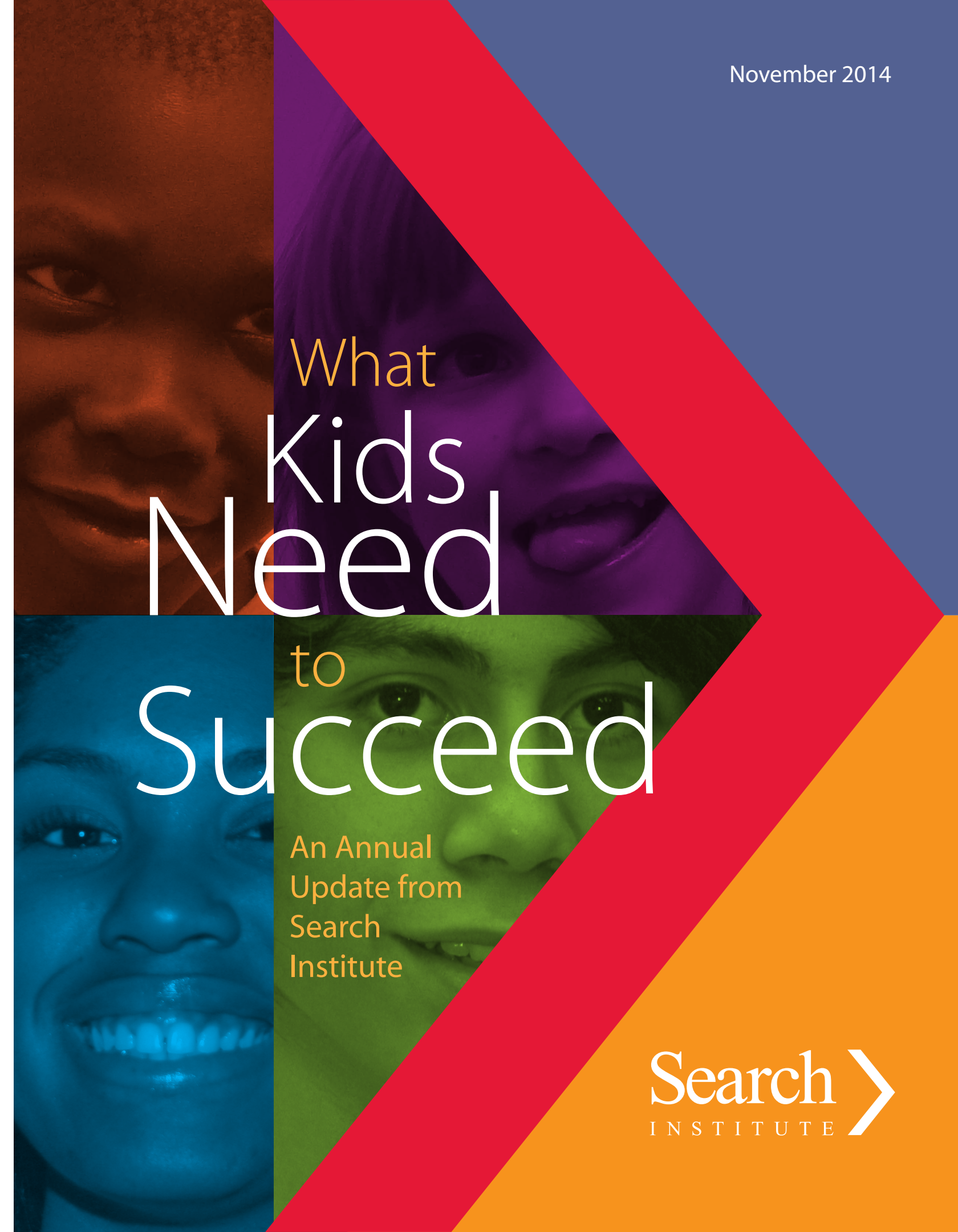


November 2014



# What Kids Need to Succeed

An Annual  
Update from  
Search  
Institute

Search >  
INSTITUTE

# A Message from the President



Since joining this extraordinary nonprofit organization two years ago I have often been asked, *What is Search Institute?* This is a challenging question, because there are two distinct facets of our work. On one hand, we conduct, review, and publish research like a university institute or a think tank. On the other hand, we lead speaking and consulting engagements, conduct workshops, facilitate processes, and publish materials that help educators, youth workers, parents, and others identify and build on young people's strengths. All these efforts are directed at addressing some of the most pressing

challenges facing the fields of education and youth development today. Given those two core competencies, the best answer to *What is Search Institute?* is this: We are an applied research organization that partners with other organizations to discover and implement what kids need to succeed.

You will find examples of both facets of our work—conducting research and helping to implement solutions—throughout this Annual Update. You will read about forthcoming studies on the impact of developmental relationships in young people's lives and on the process through which young people become engaged citizens. You will read about a new resource we are developing to help adolescents persevere through distraction and difficulty to achieve goals in school and beyond. Information is also shared on our new services to help communities integrate youth voice and networked improvement processes into their cradle-to-career collective impact partnerships.

All the efforts described in this report help bridge the divides that limit our capacity to help all young people develop into thriving adults. Those divides include not only the gaping one between research and practice, but also the divides between schools, families, programs, and communities, between racial and cultural groups, between cognitive and noncognitive skills, and between the fields of education and positive youth development. As we build these bridges, we are focused first on meeting the needs of young people who will benefit the most from our work, starting with children who must overcome poverty, discrimination, and other obstacles to realize their full potential.

Thank you for taking a moment to read through this update on what's happening at this unique organization. If ideas or questions arise as you glance through these pages, please share them with me at [kpek@search-institute.org](mailto:kpek@search-institute.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kent Pekel". The script is fluid and cursive.

Kent Pekel, Ed.D.  
President and CEO

# What Do Kids Need<sup>to</sup> Succeed?

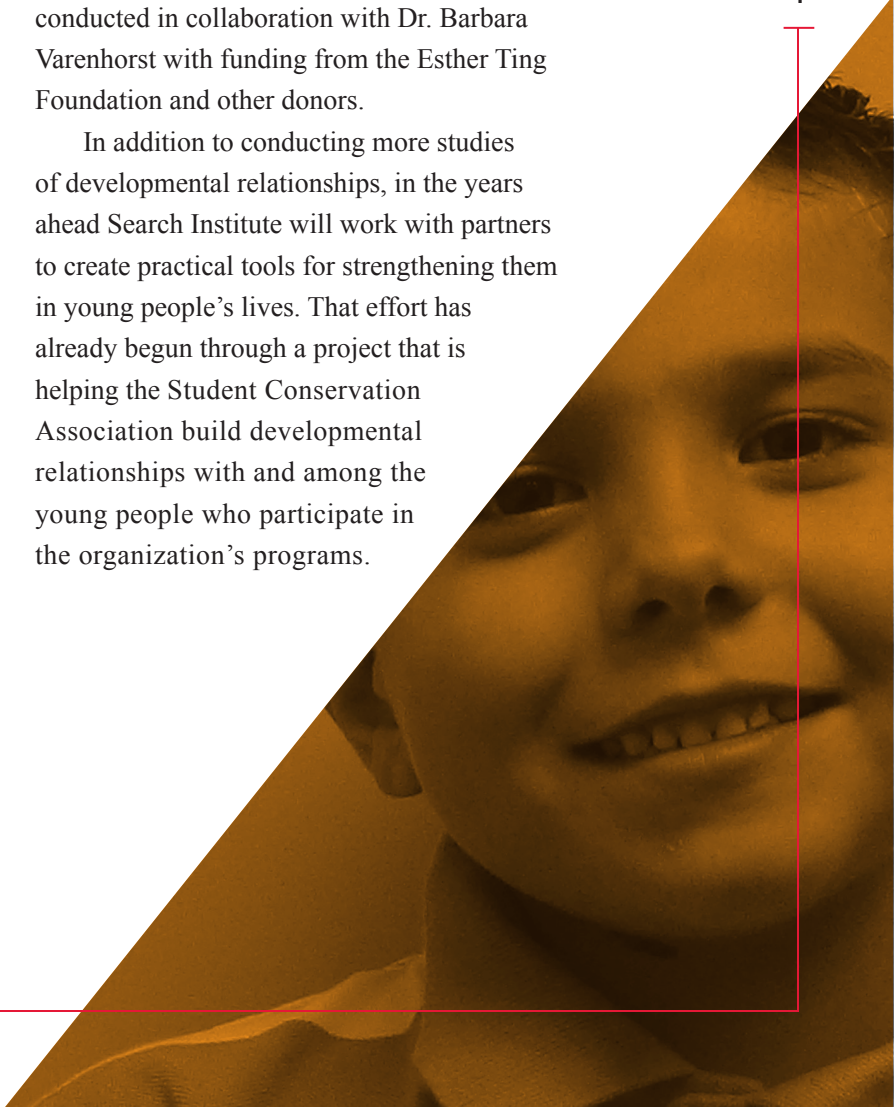
## ► Developmental Relationships

For more than five decades, Search Institute has been a leader and partner for organizations around the world in discovering what kids need to succeed. Search Institute continues to launch new research agendas, which include a major initiative around developmental relationships. Both researchers and practitioners have long embraced the idea that interaction with caring adults is central to young people's development. New research being conducted at Search Institute confirms that conviction, but we are also finding that both *caring* and *adults* are necessary but not sufficient strands in the broader web of relationships that kids need to succeed. In addition to expressing care, young people also need people in their lives who challenge growth, provide support, share power, and expand possibilities. And while relationships with adults can do all of those things in powerful and positive ways, so can close connections with friends, siblings, and other peers.

Search Institute has adopted the term *developmental relationships* to describe the broader conception of relationships that is the focus of our new research and development agenda. Through our work to date, we have identified 20 actions that make a relationship developmental, and we have organized those

actions into a framework that is being examined empirically through a national study that will be released in early 2015. Walt Disney Parks and Resorts is providing funding for the study of developmental relationships in the lives of families with young children. Another ongoing study will provide information and analysis on the character and consequences of developmental relationships among peers. That study is being conducted in collaboration with Dr. Barbara Varenhorst with funding from the Esther Ting Foundation and other donors.

In addition to conducting more studies of developmental relationships, in the years ahead Search Institute will work with partners to create practical tools for strengthening them in young people's lives. That effort has already begun through a project that is helping the Student Conservation Association build developmental relationships with and among the young people who participate in the organization's programs.



# The Developmental Relationships Framework

**Express CARE:** Show that you like me and want the best for me.

- **Listen**—Pay attention when you are with me.
- **Be Warm**—Let me know that you like being with me and express positive feelings toward me.
- **Invest**—Commit time and energy to doing things for and with me.
- **Show Interest**—Make it a priority to understand who I am and what I care about.
- **Be Dependable**—Be someone I can count on and trust.

**CHALLENGE Growth:** Insist that I try to continuously improve.

- **Inspire**—Help me see future possibilities for myself.
- **Expect**—Make it clear that you want me to live up to my potential.
- **Stretch**—Recognize my thoughts and abilities while also pushing me to strengthen them.
- **Limit**—Hold me accountable for appropriate boundaries and rules.

**Provide SUPPORT:** Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.

- **Encourage**—Praise my efforts and achievements.
- **Guide**—Provide practical assistance and feedback to help me learn.

- **Model**—Be an example I can learn from and admire.

- **Advocate**—Stand up for me when I need it.

**Share POWER:** Hear my voice and let me share in making decisions.

- **Respect**—Take me seriously and treat me fairly.
- **Give Voice**—Ask for and listen to my opinions and consider them when you make decisions.
- **Respond**—Understand and adjust to my needs, interests, and abilities.
- **Collaborate**—Work with me to accomplish goals and solve problems.

**Expand POSSIBILITIES:** Expand my horizons and connect me to opportunities.

- **Explore**—Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places.
- **Connect**—Introduce me to people who can help me grow.
- **Navigate**—Help me work through barriers that could stop me from achieving my goals.





# What Do Kids Need to Succeed?

## ► Developmental Assets

In 1989, former Search Institute President and CEO Peter Benson and his colleagues began conducting and sharing research on the Developmental Assets®, the 40 internal strengths and external supports that help young people grow up to become thriving adults. Over the past quarter century, Search Institute's Developmental Assets have become one of the most widely used frameworks for youth development in the world. Data collected from Search Institute surveys of more than 5 million children and youth from all backgrounds have consistently demonstrated that the more Developmental Assets young people acquire, the better their chances of succeeding in school and becoming happy, healthy, and contributing members of their communities and society.

Today Search Institute continues to study and strengthen Developmental Assets in an array of settings across the United States. For

example, Search Institute is providing staff training, technical assistance, and evaluation support to help the Salvation Army build assets and document impact on young people who participate in its youth programs, starting with a focus on the Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Centers. More broadly, each year Search Institute provides workshops, survey services, publications, and other technical support to thousands of individuals and organizations across the United States that seek to build upon young people's assets rather than focus on their deficits and problems.

Search Institute is working with partners to use the Developmental Assets framework to improve the lives of young people across the developing world. World Vision International, for example, is utilizing the assets framework, Search Institute surveys, and technical assistance to shape their programs in about forty countries. Through that long-term partnership, a version of the *Developmental Assets Profile* (DAP) survey has been created and used to assess and respond to the needs of children in some of the world's most

## Assessment Matters

The **primary tool** through which Search Institute's international work is being conducted is the **Developmental Assets Profile (DAP)** survey, which has been translated into more than 20 languages and used in 35 data collections involving more than 23,000 children, youth, and young adults in 25 countries other than the United States.



This map illustrates countries outside of the United States where the Developmental Assets Profile is being used to collect data on young people.

dire crisis situations. To date, the Emergency DAP has helped World Vision staff and researchers from Columbia University evaluate and provide services to Somali refugees in Ethiopia; Syrian refugees in Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon; and young people displaced by the typhoon that devastated regions of the Philippines in 2013.

In 2011-2012, Search Institute worked with Education Development Center, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and Save the Children to study the link between Developmental Assets and international youth policy priorities among youth in Bangladesh, Honduras, Jordan, and Rwanda. In every country, the level of young people's assets was significantly correlated with those key policy priorities, adding to the evidence that the Developmental Assets framework is relevant across cultures and contexts. Through another international partnership with Save the Children Canada and the MasterCard Foundation, Search Institute is studying the relationship between changes in young people's levels of Developmental Assets and their readiness for success in the workplace in five developing African nations: Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Uganda.

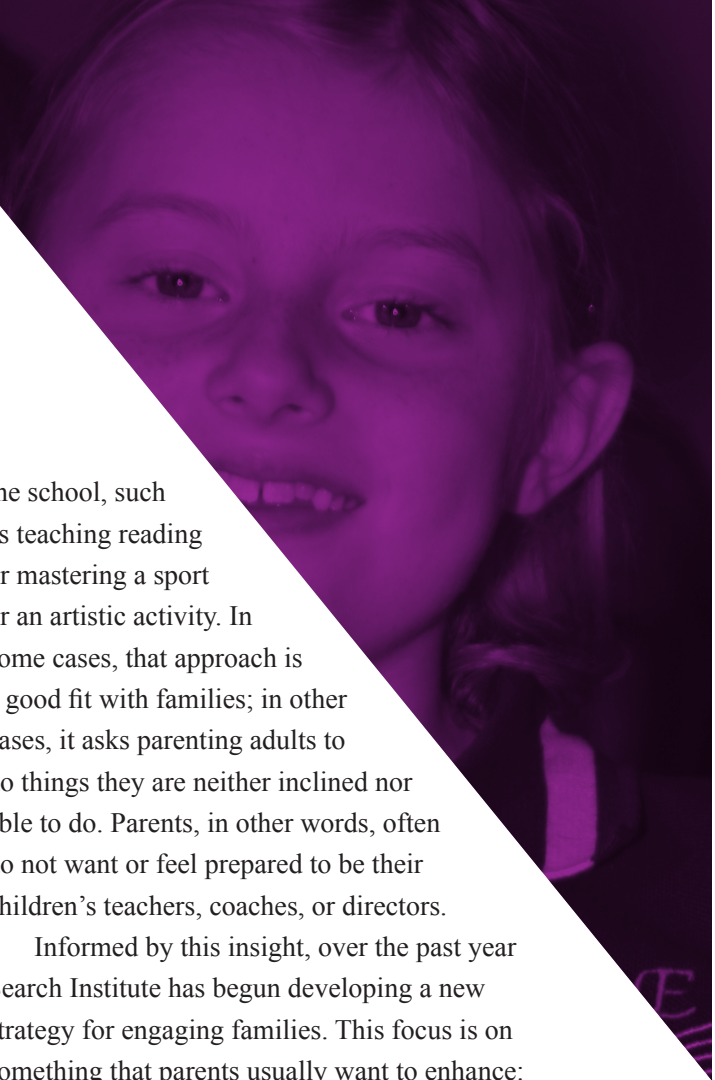
## What Do Kids Need to Succeed?

### ► Strong Family Relationships

While the extraordinary influence that families have on young people's development is widely acknowledged, most initiatives that seek to promote educational success and positive youth development lack a serious strategy for engaging parents and other family members. When programs *do* have a family component, it often focuses on asking families to reinforce the goals of the program or

the school, such as teaching reading or mastering a sport or an artistic activity. In some cases, that approach is a good fit with families; in other cases, it asks parenting adults to do things they are neither inclined nor able to do. Parents, in other words, often do not want or feel prepared to be their children's teachers, coaches, or directors.

Informed by this insight, over the past year Search Institute has begun developing a new strategy for engaging families. This focus is on something that parents usually want to enhance: the quality of their relationships with their children and other family members. This new strategy will be launched in early 2015 with the complete redesign of Search Institute's ParentFurther web site, which is supported by a grant from Altria Group. Parents and other family members who visit the site will take quizzes that help them understand the state of relationships within their families. The site will use data from those surveys to suggest practical steps that families can take to build developmental relationships. The new site will also feature resources that help families solve problems that can damage family relationships and harm young people's development, such as the use of alcohol and tobacco and low motivation to succeed in school. A series of day-long workshops for parents and organizations that seek to engage families has been created to promote and support the resources of the new ParentFurther.



## What Do Kids Need to Succeed?

### ► Extraordinary Education

In early 2015, Search Institute will conclude its successful implementation of a highly competitive federal Investing in Innovation (i3) grant to develop and evaluate the *Building Assets, Reducing Risks* (BARR) program, which restructures the critical ninth grade year of high school to strengthen relationships, enhance motivation, and intervene early when problems begin to develop. The five-year project has entailed expanding the program in the high school where it was developed (St. Louis Park, Minnesota) and replicating it in two low-performing high schools in Maine and one in California. A randomized control trial conducted throughout the project has shown statistically significant results in regard to credits earned and achievement scores. Funding for the BARR project is provided by the U. S. Department of Education, Best Buy, the Cargill Foundation, the Curtis L. Carlson Family Foundation, the Minneapolis Foundation, the Otto Bremer Foundation, the Rural School and Community Trust, the Target Corporation, and individual contributors.

## What Do Kids Need to Succeed?

### ► Developmental Communities

In a developmental community, *all* young people are surrounded by people who express care, challenge growth, provide support, share power, and expand possibilities. In such a community, the axiom that “it takes a village to raise a child” is more than a slogan. Adults put the educational, personal, and social development of young people above other priorities, and they work together on behalf of kids across the boundaries that often divide cultures, organizations, sectors, and communities.

Search Institute brings decades of expertise in community mobilization and data-driven decision making to its work with several collaboratives across the country. A hallmark of Search Institute’s approach to achieving collective impact is capturing the perspectives of young people and integrating their ideas and opinions into community-wide improvement efforts. For example, in a large, predominantly rural area of Northern Minnesota that encompasses seven school districts, Search Institute is facilitating the design and implementation of a data collection and reporting system; this project uses student perceptions of community support (obtained through survey data) to bring youth voice to the region’s ambitious Itasca Area Initiative for Student Success. Search Institute staff members are also working with local leaders to facilitate the creation of learning networks across the collaborative in ongoing efforts to identify and replicate practices that work. Search Institute’s participation in the Itasca Area project is being supported by a grant from the Blandin Foundation.

# What Do Kids Need to Succeed?

## ► Character Skills

In 1996, psychologist Laurence Steinberg drew the following conclusion from his decade-long study of American teenagers:

**The achievement problem we face in this country is not due to a drop in the intelligence or basic intellectual capability of our children, but to a widespread decline in children's interest in education and in their motivation to achieve in the classroom; it is a problem of attitude and effort, not ability.**

In the years since Steinberg's study, scholars and educators have found further evidence that many young people lack the motivation and capacity to complete challenging tasks and achieve goals inside and outside of school. Fortunately, a growing body of research demonstrates that when schools and families act intentionally to influence motivation and persistence, it is possible to significantly increase both. Unfortunately, many schools, programs, and family-serving organizations are either unaware of this powerful new research or lack practical strategies for integrating it into their work with young people.

In order to help bridge the gap between the worlds of research and practice, Search Institute has created a new resource called the Perseverance Process, which was introduced in workshops around the country in the summer and fall of 2014.

## STICK TO IT: A Process to Help Young People Persevere



**S**park: Help young people find and nurture their *sparks*—the activities and interests that motivate them most.



**T**asks: Assign *tasks* that are challenging but doable.



**I**ntelligence: Teach young people that *intelligence* and other abilities can increase with effort.



**C**ommunity: Assist young people in finding their place in a *community* that values education and hard work.



**K**indness: Show *kindness* and do other things that tell young people you care about them.



**T**hinking: Teach young people to use *thinking about thinking* (or metacognition) to manage the way they learn.



**O**bstacles: Guide young people through a process that helps them remove *obstacles* on the road to their goals.



**I**ncentives: Use a mix of *incentives* that encourage young people to work hard without an immediate reward.



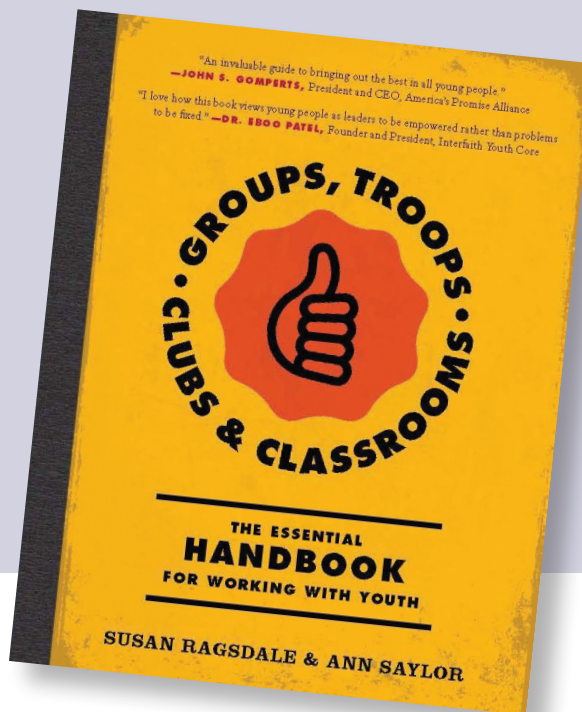
**T**ransitions: Increase support for young people during times of *transition*.



# New Publication from Search Institute

***Groups, Troops, Clubs, & Classrooms: The Essential Handbook for Working with Youth,***  
**by Susan Ragsdale and Ann Saylor**

This inspiring guide for teachers, volunteers, group leaders, youth counselors, coaches, and anyone who works with young people features strategies for activating and sustaining young people's innate strengths and skills. Numerous games, activities, ice breakers, and quizzes are included to keep adults and young people engaged and motivated.



The process distills the research on motivation and persistence into a set of strategies (all of which are supported by practical tools and techniques) that are captured in the acronym ***STICK TO IT***.

“...when schools and families act intentionally to influence motivation and persistence, it is possible to increase both.”

Search Institute is also working to study and strengthen character skills through the Roots of Engaged Citizenship Project, which seeks to understand how young people grow into civically-minded adults who contribute to their communities and participate in solving social issues. The study is being conducted in collaboration with

researchers at the University of Rochester and West Virginia University and is funded by the John Templeton Foundation. The project is testing the idea that good citizenship is rooted in three key elements: character strengths (generosity and responsibility), developmental competencies (emotion regulation and effective decision-making), and supportive contexts (school, family, peer group, and community settings). Of particular interest is understanding how these elements intersect similarly and differently in elementary-, middle school-, and high school-aged youth.

## ► 2013 Financial Results

The year of 2013 was a transitional time for Search Institute. In 2012, the organization realized a significant deficit as it restructured to address major financial challenges and prepared to implement a new strategy and business model. Those efforts laid the groundwork for the small

operating surplus that Search Institute realized in 2013. Further financial and organizational improvements are currently being implemented that will lay the foundation for growth and increased impact in 2014 and beyond. Complete, audited financial statements are available upon request.

### Financial Position 12/31/2013

#### Assets

Cash & Equivalents	1,104,490
Receivables, net	506,318
Inventories, net	261,541
Property & Equipment, net	17,478
Prepaid Expenses and Other Assets	133,511

**Total Assets** **2,023,338**

#### Liabilities

Accounts Payable	215,549
Accruals	136,449
Deferred Revenue	261,033
Other Liabilities	62,953

**Total Liabilities** **675,984**

#### Net Assets

Unrestricted Net Assets	
Beginning of year	170,831
Current year net income	41,421
Temporarily Restricted	1,110,013
Permanently Restricted	25,089

**Total Net Assets** **1,347,354**

**Total Liabilities & Net Assets** **2,023,338**

### 2013

#### Operating Support and Revenue

Grants & Contracts	3,310,937	68%
Curriculum Sales and Training	1,310,202	27%
Contributions	107,366	2%
Royalties	13,263	<1%
Other	125,253	3%

**Total Support and Revenue** **4,867,021** **100%**

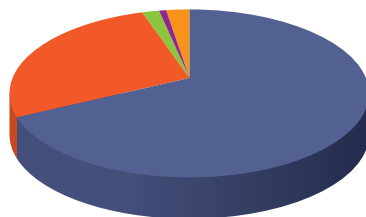
#### Operating Expense

Program Services	4,164,179	86%
Management and General	653,155	14%
Fundraising	8,266	<1%

**Total Expense** **4,825,600** **100%**

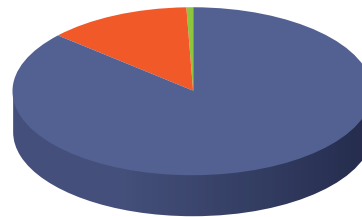
**Net Income** **41,421**

### Sources of Operating Support and Revenue



■ Grants & Contracts      ■ Royalties  
■ Curriculum Sales and Training      ■ Other  
■ Contributions

### Use of Funds—Operating Expenditures



■ Program Services  
■ Management and General  
■ Fundraising

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