

## Getting it Straight from the Source - An Investigation of Developmental Assets in Yamaguchi Prefecture as seen from the eyes of youth

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When considering youth development, it is common to look at the problems facing the youth at that time, look closely at their negative behaviors and try to find a way to lessen these over time. However, in recent years, the Developmental Assets framework, among others, has been used as a 'strength-based' approach to bring 'a positive, holistic developmental lens to work with children, youth, families, and communities around the world' (Scales et al, 2012). According to Benson et al (2011), the Developmental Assets approach has become one of the most widespread and acknowledged approaches to positive youth development (PYD), and in the United States has become a framework for many national organizations for youth programming, used in more than 600 formal community coalitions, and in over 10,000 schools in just a single year. In recent research funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, it was found that Developmental Assets were significant in building resilience among youth exposed to violence (Jain, S. & Cohen, A.K., 2012).

In their study, Scales, Roehlkepartain, and Fraher show that there is a direct correlation between the number of Developmental Assets which children in Bangladesh, Honduras, Jordan, and Rwanda have acquired and measures of well-being in each country. In other words, the higher levels of Developmental Assets, the better the children's literacy, numeracy, and potential to become a productive member of society. Results from another study (Scales, 2010) also show that Developmental Assets can be used in a global

setting, using data sets from Albania, Bangladesh, Japan, Lebanon and the Philippines to support these conclusions.

### Background of Research in Japan

Since 2002, a research group based mainly at Yamaguchi Prefectural University has been investigating the development of values and behaviors in Japanese children. In what started out as a simple comparison of the situations in three Asian countries (Japan, China and Korea) (Yamaguchi Prefectural University, 2004), it progressively developed into an exploration of more universal values (Iwano & Wilson, 2007) that can be observed across numerous cultures. This line of investigation led us to the United States and Canada in 2007, where we took a look at three different approaches designed to instill or encourage the development of values in children (Iwano & Wilson, 2007). One of these was the Developmental Assets Framework, designed by Search Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A.

After visiting Search Institute and seeing their framework in action, we undertook the task of translating one of their surveys into Japanese in order to investigate the conditions of Japanese youth and the presence or absence of Developmental Assets in their daily lives. We compared this data to the results from the United States in consideration of how to begin work to develop more assets in Japanese youth (Aihara, Wilson, & Iwano, 2010). Having gathered a database of information regarding Developmental Assets from over 14,000 children ages 11 - 17 from

around Japan, we then refocused our efforts towards using this data to develop programs from which a dialog could be started amongst parents, educators, and public officials regarding the state of youth here in Yamaguchi Prefecture. The first series of workshops was held from October, 2010 through February 2011, and consisted of a series of smaller workshops conducted in 4 towns around the prefecture as well as a larger-scale symposium and final report conducted at the annual research conference of the Yamaguchi Family Education Association. In this series of workshops, we focused on parents, educators, and local government authority representatives. We used the results from the Japanese DAP survey, and culled out the responses to find the unique characteristics of children in Yamaguchi, which we then presented to the adults at the workshops before breaking into groups and spending time considering what we could do to improve the assets of children in the prefecture. For the final conference, we developed a concise, easy to read handout describing our results and giving hints to parents, educators and authorities regarding what they could be doing to increase the number of assets in the children around them.

For the second series of workshops, we took our work a step further and arranged a series of workshops focusing on the children themselves. We approached 4 junior high schools around the Prefecture, explaining our purpose and our previous research and seminars, and asked permission to speak with 4 to 6 junior high school students directly, ask them about the Developmental Assets they felt were lacking in their lives and what the adults around them should be doing to enable children to develop even more Assets.

This paper is a report on the two series of workshops based on a summarization of the reports of the workshops submitted to Association members, to explain the contents and administration in detail, and to explore ways to

continue our research into Developmental Assets in Japan.

#### DAP in Japan

As previously discussed in Aihara et al (2010), the Developmental Assets Profile Survey was translated into Japanese and conducted at over 80 elementary, junior high and high schools throughout Japan. From the over 14,000 surveys returned, those from Yamaguchi Prefecture were culled and an analysis was done to find the particular characteristics of Developmental Assets here in Yamaguchi Prefecture. From this analysis, a set of 5 assets were found to be of slightly low for the youth of Yamaguchi Prefecture.

The first asset which was found to be low in Yamaguchi youth was self-acceptance. Almost 30% of the youth of Yamaguchi indicated that they almost never felt good about themselves. The second asset whose value was low was the ability to build friendships. Almost 50% of the respondents felt that they were not good at making friends to a certain degree. The third asset was family rules, in the Assets category of Boundaries and Expectations. Over half (54%) of the respondents felt that they either had virtually no clear rules in their family or that the rules they had were only sometimes enforced. Fourth was the respondents' attitudes towards learning. A full 48% of the respondents felt that they only rarely or sometimes felt that they enjoyed learning. Finally, the fifth asset that showed low scores in youth in Yamaguchi Prefecture was community contribution. A full 68% of youth respondents in Yamaguchi answered that they rarely or only sometimes felt that they were contributing to their community to make it a better place.

These five Assets also had low results in the national survey, but they were slightly lower for Yamaguchi Prefecture, and further investigation was done into this at our first series of workshops held in 2010.

Workshop Series 1: Developmental Assets in

### Yamaguchi - a workshop for adults

From the months of October 2010 through February, 2011, a series of 4 workshops and a final presentation regarding the results of the four workshops were conducted using funds from the Children’s Division of the Yamaguchi Prefectural government. During this series of workshops, we discussed the results of the Japanese DAP with the participants, who were all adults working in the local prefectural or city offices, educational administrators or teachers, or PTA members of parents of children in elementary, junior high or high school children. We held discussions in groups to discuss ideas for what was typical of child-raising in Yamaguchi Prefecture, and how adults could work to assure that children could be provided with as many Developmental Assets as possible during their youth.

This series led to the new series of workshops the following year, in which we asked questions directly to the children themselves, in order to investigate their feelings and perceptions regarding Developmental Assets and what they felt adults should be doing regarding their upbringing and education.

### Workshop Series 2: “Straight from the Source: A Workshop with Junior High School Children and Adults”

From October 2011 through February, 2012, a series of workshops was held in the 4 cities in Yamaguchi Prefecture (Hofu, Yamaguchi, Hagi, and Shimonoseki Cities), followed by a final oral report and symposium at the annual conference of the Yamaguchi Family Education Association. The main goal of this series was to talk to junior high school students directly, to understand their perceptions of the Developmental Assets and to

learn what they felt adults should be doing to support them. The series proved to be extremely successful and was highly received at each location and at the annual conference.

### Positive Self-Identity and Feelings Towards the Future

As we can see in Chart 1, almost 30% of the youth of Yamaguchi indicated that they almost never felt good about themselves. Students had such comments as:

- I feel that my family likes me, but I don’t feel much affection from either my friends or the adults at my school (many other students nod)
- I don’t often think about whether I like myself or not
- While I am a very positive thinker, and I think that everything will work out okay, I don’t think that I like myself. I am happy that I was born as myself, but don’t like myself. I only see the bad parts of myself, and thus don’t like myself.
- I don’t think I like myself. I don’t feel I should be so centered on myself that I don’t see others around me, and I shouldn’t put myself before others, so I don’t think that I like myself very much.
- Just the norm... I don’t particularly hate myself, but I don’t like myself either.
- I find everything to be a pain, so I don’t like myself
- I don’t like myself much.
- I think I like myself more that most others do. I am looking forward to my future.
- While I don’t particularly dislike myself, when asked about it, I can only think about things I dislike about myself.
- While I think that I like myself, I don’t want to

Chart 1. Internal Assets – Identity

Asset Category	Item	DAP Score*	Almost Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always	N/A
Identity	I feel in control of my life and future.	16	10%	33%	40%	13%	3%
	I feel good about myself.	11	29%	37%	22%	8%	3%
	I feel good about my future.	16	12%	32%	33%	21%	3%
	I deal with frustration in positive ways.	15	15%	35%	30%	16%	3%
	I overcome challenges in positive ways.	16	8%	39%	37%	13%	3%
	I am developing a sense of purpose in my life.	16	11%	32%	38%	17%	3%

\*Based on 30 point scale

be thought of as strange by others around me, so it's hard to answer that way in this survey. There is no particular part of me that I dislike; I have an idealistic image of myself, but no particular negative image.

- Just average. There are a lot of things about myself that I dislike.
- There are both things that I like and dislike about myself. I like the fact that I can enjoy the flute and other music.
- Average. But if I had to say one way or the other, I would say that I dislike myself. I tend to focus more on the negative rather than the positive aspects of myself.
- I feel confident about the parts of myself that I like, or the things that I can do well.
- I feel confident about the parts of myself that I like, but tend to feel pessimistically about the things I can't do well.
- The things that I don't like about myself and the things I am not confident about are about the same.
- I make an effort to try things that I don't feel confident about.
- I try to do things, but I wonder if the decision I made was a good one or not, and feel unsure about myself

In regards to the Internal Asset area of Positive Self-Identity, we also talked a bit about students' views of their future and here, too, many students expressed negative feelings regarding their future, saying that their future was controlled by parents, junior high school teachers (who controlled where students could apply for high school entrance exams), and their own academic ability. While a small number of students immediately answered that they felt they could control their future and that they were looking forward to becoming adults, more expressed concern and some wondered if they would have people to talk to about their worries :

- I don't have much confidence in my academic and other abilities

- Even if there is a high school that I really want to go to, and I work really hard at it, my junior high school teachers may decide that I can't apply there due to my test scores, or I may not pass the entrance exam
- It seems like the future is dark, with nothing but work all the time. But even still, if I have chosen a profession I like, I will enjoy myself.
- I think that the future is like baseball.... If I have practiced well and hard enough, the results will be good and I will enjoy myself.
- I am working towards it (my future), and my parents are helping me.
- I am not looking forward to it. I don't want to become an adult.
- I want to become an adult. I want to be able to do whatever I want to as quickly as possible. I want to work.
- I want to stay young, but I also want to work and to experience many things, so I want to become an adult.
- I am having fun now, so I don't really want to become an adult.
- I think that if I just keep working at it now, everything will turn out all right in the end.
- I don't know what I want to do (in the future), but I am not worried about it. But I don't want to die. When I am trying to go to sleep, my mind starts to wander and I think about bad things, and end up not being able to sleep. If I die, I wonder what will happen, and I become afraid.
- I am studying, and I have the immediate goal of getting into high school of my choice (by passing the high school entrance exam), but I don't have a major goal for my future. I am worried, and I have many mixed feelings about my future, but I don't feel negative about it.
- I am worried about getting into a high school (of my choice), but in the distant future, there are many things that I want to do, including work, so I am looking forward to it.
- I sometimes suddenly feel fear about the future. There is nothing definite about it, but I

sometimes suddenly feel unsure, and think “What should I do in the future?”

### Making Friends

The second asset whose value was low was the ability to build friendships (Chart 2). Almost 50% of the respondents in the DAP survey felt that they were not good at making friends to a certain degree. In the workshops, this was one of the last questions we asked the students, and as a result, we weren't able to ask it in some cases. In regards to their difficulty in making new friends, some of the comments were:

- If I just talk normally, we will become friends
- I talk to people I don't really get along with, but in my heart, I try to put some distance between us.
- In our class, we made an effort to have a student with similar interests sit next to (the student). (The student) was interested in the manga “Hokuto no Ken,” so we communicated with them by talking about that and other similar things. Now they talk about things other than “Hokuto no Ken.”
- Everyone in our class this year is positive, and although we form groups, there is interaction between the groups.
- I don't feel it's difficult for me to make new

friends. There is no worry that I will be cast off, so I say that I want. I have many friends.

- If you have similar interests, you can become friends by talking about these interests.
- From the outside, it looks like everyone involved in each school club is getting along with other, but that's not always the case. But even if we don't like someone, we pretend to get along, so we have superficial relationships.
- We play around amongst friends, but sometimes people don't like being teased and it develops into a fight.

### Family Rules

The third asset value that was low was family rules, in the Assets category of Boundaries and Expectations (Chart 3). Over half (54%) of the respondents to the DAP survey felt that they either had virtually no clear rules in their family or that the rules they had were only sometimes enforced.

This is a difficult question to ask students directly, and they found it difficult with coming up with rules initially, so we began by asking them about their daily lives, what they do after school, what time they come home, etc. The majority of the students participated in after school club activities, came home from school around 7 p.m. in

Chart 2. Internal Assets – Social Competencies

Asset Category	Item	DAP Score*	Almost Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always	N/A
Social Competencies	I avoid things that are dangerous or unhealthy.	21	4%	19%	34%	39%	3%
	I build friendships with other people.	15	13%	36%	33%	15%	3%
	I express my feelings in proper ways.	19	5%	25%	41%	26%	3%
	I plan ahead and make good choices.	17	5%	35%	44%	13%	3%
	I resist bad influences.	23	3%	12%	32%	49%	3%
	I resolve conflicts without anyone getting hurt.	16	7%	36%	41%	12%	3%
	I accept people who are different from me.	19	5%	25%	44%	22%	3%
	I am sensitive to the need and feelings of others.	19	4%	22%	45%	25%	3%

\*Based on 30 point scale

Chart 3. External Assets – Boundaries & Expectations

Asset Category	Item	DAP Score*	Almost Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always	N/A
Boundaries & Expectations	I have friends who set good examples for me.	24	4%	11%	29%	53%	3%
	I have a school that gives students clear rules.	21	5%	17%	37%	39%	3%
	I have adults who are good role models for me.	20	8%	21%	33%	36%	3%
	I have teachers who urge me to develop and achieve.	19	8%	25%	36%	28%	3%
	I have a family that provides me with clear rules.	14	21%	33%	26%	17%	3%
	I have parent(s) who urge me to do well in school.	19	8%	24%	36%	29%	3%
	I have neighbors who help watch out for me.	17	13%	27%	33%	24%	3%
	I have a school that enforces rules fairly.	17	9%	28%	40%	21%	3%
	I have a family that knows where I am and what I am doing.	18	10%	25%	35%	27%	3%

\*Based on 30 point scale



the summertime (6 p.m. in the winter), ate dinner and took a bath, played games, watched television or used internet for a while to relax, and then either did a little homework or went to bed. The amount of homework that students did was surprisingly small, with only a few students doing 30 minutes to an hour of homework a night. It seems that there is little emphasis on studying at home using specific assignments given out by junior high school teachers, and that students either didn't study outside of school or if they did, most either set study goals for themselves or studied at cram school. A large proportion of students simply went to bed.

On weekends, almost all the students participated in school club activities on Saturdays, or went to cram schools to study, and then slept in or relaxed at home on Sunday mornings before going out with friends in the afternoons. In regards to the time they spend with family members, a large majority of students came from families where both parents worked, or where one of the parents worked and didn't come home until late, and thus did not gather as a family for dinner. Most had 'family time' roughly once a week, either at the dinner table or watching television as a family on weekends, or going out together as a family once a month or so.

While speaking of their family lives, students talked about rules and getting advice from family members:

- There are no specific rules in my family.
- My parents get really mad if I leave lights on.
- In my family, I have to point it out to my Dad when he leaves the lights on.
- When we all sit together as a family for breakfast, someone always says "Ready, Go" and we all say "Itadakimasu" (Japanese greeting used before all meals). It came about naturally because we have a small child in the house.
- We don't have any rules in our house. I don't think there is any need for them. There are only two of us in the house, and I am often

home alone, so I help out with the housework then. I don't cook meals, but I do the laundry.

- If I don't prepare the drinks for meals, I get in trouble. I don't have a set curfew.
- I help with the laundry, and if I don't help with meals, I am told that I won't get to eat.
- In our house, whoever notices first helps with things.
- When my parents tell me to study, they don't really say it that seriously, so I just sit at my desk for 20 or 30 minutes to study, but then go back to doing whatever I want.
- If I have a (baseball) game far away, they (my parents) don't come, but if it's close by, they often come to watch. I would prefer it if she just wouldn't come.
- They don't come (to my games). I don't want them to come.
- My parents even take days off work to come see (my games). Sometimes I am happy about it, and other times I wish they wouldn't come.
- They (my parents) tell me to study. One of the things my parents often say is "Don't watch TV" , because if I have any free time, I am always watching it.
- My parents often see me only when I am relaxing or amusing, so they get the wrong impression. They tell me to "Get busy and study." I want them to be more aware of their timing when they say things like that.
- They (my parents) don't tell me to study very often, but every now and then they say "Get busy and study" or something like that. But they don't say things very strictly. Recently, I have been talking back a lot.
- What they say to me ( "Get busy and study" ) is correct, so I don't talk back to them.
- My parents tell me to help with the housework, but I don't like to cook, and I don't really want to help.
- My parents are always telling me to study. I know I should be doing so, but I just don't, so having them tell me makes me really mad. But they do see me studying sometimes, so I guess

it's okay.

- I don't like being told to study, but if they didn't tell me to do so sometimes, I probably never would.
- My family eats breakfast together in the mornings, so we have the chance to talk there, but we don't go out together.
- We are together for dinner on weekends pretty often.
- I eat alone often.
- We haven't gone out together as a family since I became a third-year junior high school student (six months earlier). Before then, we usually went out shopping as a family somewhere in the city.
- There are only two of us in my family, so we don't go out together that often, but sometimes we'll go and see a movie together or something. I used to go out with my grandmother fairly often when I was younger, but I haven't done so recently. We don't spend any one particular time together, but sometimes we spend time together and talk about various things.
- We don't really go out as a family together much, but if my dad turns on the television, we all sort of drift together and have some family time then pretty often. It is also sort of a family rule that we eat dinner together.

#### Attitude towards Learning

Fourth was the respondents' attitudes towards learning (Chart 4). A full 48% of the respondents to the DAP survey felt that they only rarely or sometimes felt that they enjoyed learning.

Students felt that they didn't enjoy learning because they felt it was a required thing, thus they felt irritated when parents told them to study,

and they didn't do much out-of-school review of schoolwork, even though they felt the pressure of up-coming high school entrance examinations. When we asked them what types of things made them enjoy learning, many students mentioned activities that could be categorized as Active Learning, or Experiential Learning - things like learning to cook, physical education classes, and going on field trips to various factories and other workplaces.

Students felt that if they were studying a subject that was interesting to them, they could concentrate more completely and enjoy learning more. They also mentioned that earning high marks on tests and/or competing with classmates was effective in motivating them to study more and enjoy their successes.

- For me, getting homework made me feel like I didn't want to study. Forcing me to do something makes me not want to do it.
- I do my homework because it is assigned. If I didn't have any homework to do, I would probably not do anything. But homework is still a pain to do.
- I think it's better to have homework. If I try to study, I can't concentrate at home, and end up watching TV.
- I want to become a nurse, so I want to study about nursing and about English and other languages.
- I want to go to various workplaces and experience different kinds of work. For example, I want to go to factories and experience the work that they do there.
- I think it would be good if we had a period of time where we could just study the subject that we like.

Chart 4. Internal Assets - Positive attitude towards Learning

Asset Category	Item	DAP Score*	Almost Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always	N/A
Learning	I enjoy reading or being read to.	17	15%	26%	27%	29%	3%
	I care about school.	18	6%	26%	44%	21%	3%
	I do my homework.	21	7%	19%	34%	38%	3%
	I enjoy learning.	15	12%	36%	34%	15%	3%
	I am actively engaged in learning new things.	17	6%	31%	43%	17%	3%
	I am encouraged to try things that might be good for me.	18	7%	28%	39%	23%	3%
	I am eager to do well in school and other activities.	16	9%	36%	36%	16%	3%

\*Based on 30 point scale

- I don't like learning, but I know that I must, so I study.
  - I enjoy learning if I can understand it, but if I can't understand, I just fall asleep. I just figure that I should sleep, clear my head that way, and start studying again the next day.
  - (Learning) is like exercise for the head. I like thinking about and discovering things for myself.
  - I like physical education. I like doing experiments, so I like science.
  - As a first-year junior high school student, I didn't go to cram school and my study habits were very haphazard, but when I got bad midterm test scores at the beginning of my third year, for some reason that I don't really understand, my 'switch' turned on and I joined a cram school and started studying. As I really started to understand the contents of what I was learning, it became really fun, and now I am studying like I never had before. Until now, it wasn't fun because I didn't understand it, but now that I understand it, learning is fun.
  - The feeling of having completed something... I joined a cram school and my grades went up, so I have a feeling of satisfaction. I haven't fulfilled my goal yet, so I still want to continue to try hard.
  - When I see my test results and I have done well, I am happy. With a national achievement test, I want to score higher than other high-level students.
  - If it's something I am interested in or a subject that I like, I enjoy learning, but if not, I don't enjoy it.
  - I only like physical education, because I like to move as much as possible.
  - I like science and art... I like really concentrating and drawing pictures or making block prints, and when it's fun I can really concentrate well. That's what's fun. I have always liked science. I enjoy doing experiments and observing chemical reactions. I don't like astrology very much.
  - Science, Social Studies, and Civics are the subjects I enjoy. Finding out how money moves around is interesting. I don't read the newspaper much, but I watch the news fairly regularly.
  - There are times when learning is fun, but I don't really like the classes we have at school.
  - My feelings about learning are just normal - I don't particularly like it or dislike it. I see a lot of science in my daily life, but I don't really understand where the things we learn in math can be used in our lives.
  - Because I have been studying since I was an elementary student, it just feels like a mindless task, and I think I will grow tired of it.
  - I enjoy being physically active, so I like Physical Education and Music, and other classes like that. Not only do I enjoy the classes, but I want to be better than the other students, so I practice, and I enjoy seeing the results of my efforts.
  - I like English and Japanese. I like the long reading passages in English Language classes, and the when I read stories in the Japanese classes, I feel like I am in the story, which I like. When I can solve a language point in English, I feel happy. Because I like these subjects better than others, my grades in them are better.
  - I don't like the 5 basic academic subjects, but I like Physical Education. I like to be physically active, so I am a member of the soft tennis club. We placed in a recent competition as a team.
  - I am interested in trying various sports as a personal hobby.
- When asked their feelings about reading books, the majority of the students felt favorably about it. While a few didn't read at all, or only read manga (comics), the majority read at least occasionally at home, and virtually every group mentioned the reading time that was built into the school schedule at regular intervals in each school. It was interesting to note that at the schools which had regular reading times every day, a



larger proportion of students participating in the workshop series seemed to enjoy reading more than students from schools which only had reading times once a week or so.

### Social Participation

Finally, the fifth asset that showed up as somewhat low in youth in Yamaguchi Prefecture was community contribution. As one item in the Internal Asset group of Positive Values, a full 68% of youth respondents in Yamaguchi answered that they rarely or only sometimes felt that they were contributing to their community to make it a better place (Chart 5).

While nearly all the participants in the various workshops spoke of having volunteered as an elementary school student or junior high school student, most of the activities in which students participated were done as a school, not by individual decision, and although students expressed a desire to help individually in their neighborhood, there was no outlet for them. They expressed interest in continued participation in Kodomo Kai, neighborhood children's groups, but on a different level, more as a 'junior leader' than as member with the elementary school-aged children from the neighborhood.

- (I) almost never (participate in neighborhood activities)
- Since I became a junior high school student, I haven't participated
- If invited to the local sports day festival, I go.
- There is a neighborhood cleaning day, and I participate in that (3 students)
- I see neighbors picking up trash or participating

in cleaning activities and I want to help. I sometimes see them on the way home from school, but I don't have time, and I don't now how to ask them if I can help

- (In my area) there are a lot of elderly people, and many of them live alone, so I wish there was something I could do to help them out.
- As an elementary school student, on Respect for the Aged Day in my community, we always used to have a get-together with the elderly in the community, and on Tanabata (in July), we would take them decorated tanabata ornaments, but since I became a junior high school student, I no longer have these sorts of opportunities. When I was an elementary school student, the people in the community used to greet me, but since I have become a junior high school student, they no longer do so.
- I want to play traditional games and do traditional activities in the Kodomo-Kai. I am no longer invited to their activities. It would be fun to make bamboo flying tops with them, or make something there.
- I want to participate in a Karuta (card game) competition there.
- I was invited by friends, and participated in community activities.
- (If I participate), I can get something.
- My parents made me (participate). Also, I have to participate as a member of my school club, so either way I have to participate.
- In my community, there was an activity helping the elderly, and I participated with my parents, but in the end they gave us a lot of sweets and I felt like I had put them to a lot of trouble.

Chart 5. Internal Assets - Positive Values

Asset Category	Item	DAP Score*	Almost Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always	N/A
Positive Values	I stand up for what I believe in.	17	4%	38%	42%	13%	3%
	I stay away from tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.	26	6%	6%	13%	72%	3%
	I think it is important to help other people.	25	1%	8%	32%	55%	3%
	I take responsibility for what I do.	18	5%	31%	44%	17%	3%
	I tell the truth even when it is not easy.	15	11%	40%	32%	14%	3%
	I am helping to make my community a better place.	10	34%	34%	19%	9%	3%
	I am developing good health habits.	17	9%	31%	37%	20%	3%
	I am encouraged to help others.	17	9%	31%	38%	20%	3%
	I am trying to help solve social problems.	12	23%	41%	24%	8%	3%
	I am developing respect for other people.	16	7%	34%	43%	13%	3%
I am serving others in my community.	10	33%	39%	18%	6%	3%	

\*Based on 30 point scale

- I have a particular role (for helping). If there is a particular mom that needs help, I will go and help them. There are many adults whom I respect.
- (In my community), we share dishes of food or fruit, and I participate in the cleaning activities.
- Since I was a child, I have been living in the same mansion, and we have a lot of activities there. We eat together, or if someone goes on a vacation, others will keep an eye on the apartment.
- I enjoy participating in community activities
- While I am pretty close to my neighbors right around my house, I have little contact with the rest of the community, just exchanging greetings, etc.
- I don't participate in community volunteer activities lately because I can't wake up in the morning
- I wish they would increase the amount of greenery in my community. As a child, I played outside a lot, but in recent years, the number of houses has greatly increased, and it seems like there is nothing left to do but play (video/computer) games.
- I go to local festivals with my friends. Without being told by my school, if there is something in the community, we all invite each other and go together.
- Every summer, all the kids in the community carry a mikoshi in the local festival. The third-year junior high school kids are in charge of the younger kids.
- Unless my school tells me I have to, I don't participate in local activities.
- Other than exchanging greetings, I don't really interact with the people in my neighborhood.
- The people in my neighborhood ask me about my future plans about high school or if school is fun, or ask how old I am, etc.
- It seems like they are concerned for me. If they say something to me, I answer them.
- There is a summer festival, and all the elementary and junior high school kids have to

play the taiko (Japanese drums), so I participate.

- People (in the community) say hello or welcome me home from school.
- They ask me things about school.
- They are concerned for me. Sometimes they ask me if I am planning to go to high school, or what I am planning to do.

#### Current Research Activities

Through the series of workshops conducted in 4 cities throughout Yamaguchi Prefecture, and from the final symposium conducted with junior high school students at the annual conference of the Yamaguchi Family Education Association, we made good progress in allowing the voices of the youth of Yamaguchi to be heard. Adult participants in the workshops and the symposium had many favorable comments about the gatherings, saying that it was the first time that they had heard directly from children themselves, that the workshops were a major step forward in working towards creating a youth-adult discussion geared towards making society more aware of the needs of the youth today.

At the present time, these researchers are working on developing and implementing a Japanese version of Search Institute's Attitudes and Behaviors Survey in order to investigate more deeply the relationship between Developmental Assets and high-risk as well as positive behaviors specific to Japanese youth using a Kaken grant from the Japanese government (Grant-in-aid for Scientific Research (C), Research No.23531077).

In addition, the next step in taking the Developmental Assets out into the community is to use the DAP Focus Group Discussion Guide (Search Institute, 2011) to have more controlled discussions with youth regarding Developmental Assets. This time, the discussion will not focus on the individual participants' personal opinions and experiences, nor will it focus on the specific assets that were found to be lacking, as were explained in detail in this article.

Instead, this focus group will ask youth to focus

on the ideal setting for raising children, what they feel is necessary for raising children in today's complex society. Some of the questions that will be asked in the Focus Group Discussions are as follows:

- Describe the attitudes, skills, values, competencies that you would see develop on the inside of a successful young person (one who grows to his/her full potential). What qualities are inside a young person who lives a good and happy life?
- We would like to generate examples of external changes or positive developments. From your own experience, what do others see in a successful young person? What does a family, school, or the broader community see in them? How do they relate to a successful young person?
- Please spend some time talking about what supports and opportunities family, school, and the broader community can and should provide to nurture and grow successful children and youth.

Through this series of workshops, we were able to begin a dialog between adults and children in Yamaguchi Prefecture on a wider level than has been done before. While children might have open and earnest talks with their parents and school teachers or administrators, their voices do not travel very far, and their sense of empowerment stays at the level of 'someone's child' or 'someone's student'. By allowing them to speak with adults from a wider arena, the children truly feel the concern of the adults all around them, and they recognize their role as a vital member of today's society.

As we experienced, the children have a great desire to have their voices heard. At every workshop, although the children were shy at first, they gained their voices during the course of the workshop, and by the end, some had become quite vocal and were even telling adults what they considered were the problems with the adults

around them. Japanese youth are often stereotyped as shy, quiet or introverted, but we learned that they can be quite vocal and assertive when they feel strongly about something and they are given the opportunity to express themselves from an equal standpoint.

While these workshops involved only a small number of participants and did not reveal any statistically supportable data, they have shown the dire need for the involvement of children in the process of raising children to be functional adults on the administrative and policy-making levels of house, school, community and even local government authority committees. We would like to continue with this research until we can see that happen, not just here in Yamaguchi but all over Japan.

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