

The Power of Developmental Assets to Enhance Community Wellness

The Time is Now

May 2011

Youth

- “Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for their elders and love chatter in place of exercise; they no longer rise when elders enter the room; they contradict their parents, chatter before company; gobble up their food and tyrannize their teachers”.

• Socrates, ~469-399BC

Background:

- In March, 2004, following 12 tragic deaths r.t. the prescription drug oxycodone, leaders of Cape Breton (CB) Island assembled to appraise the effects of prescription drug abuse in CB.
- Engaging the community to reduce & control the negative impact of drug abuse was deemed to be the most efficient method to restore community wellness
 - This group became known as the **Community Partnership on Drug Abuse**

Determination of Root Causes of Drug Abuse

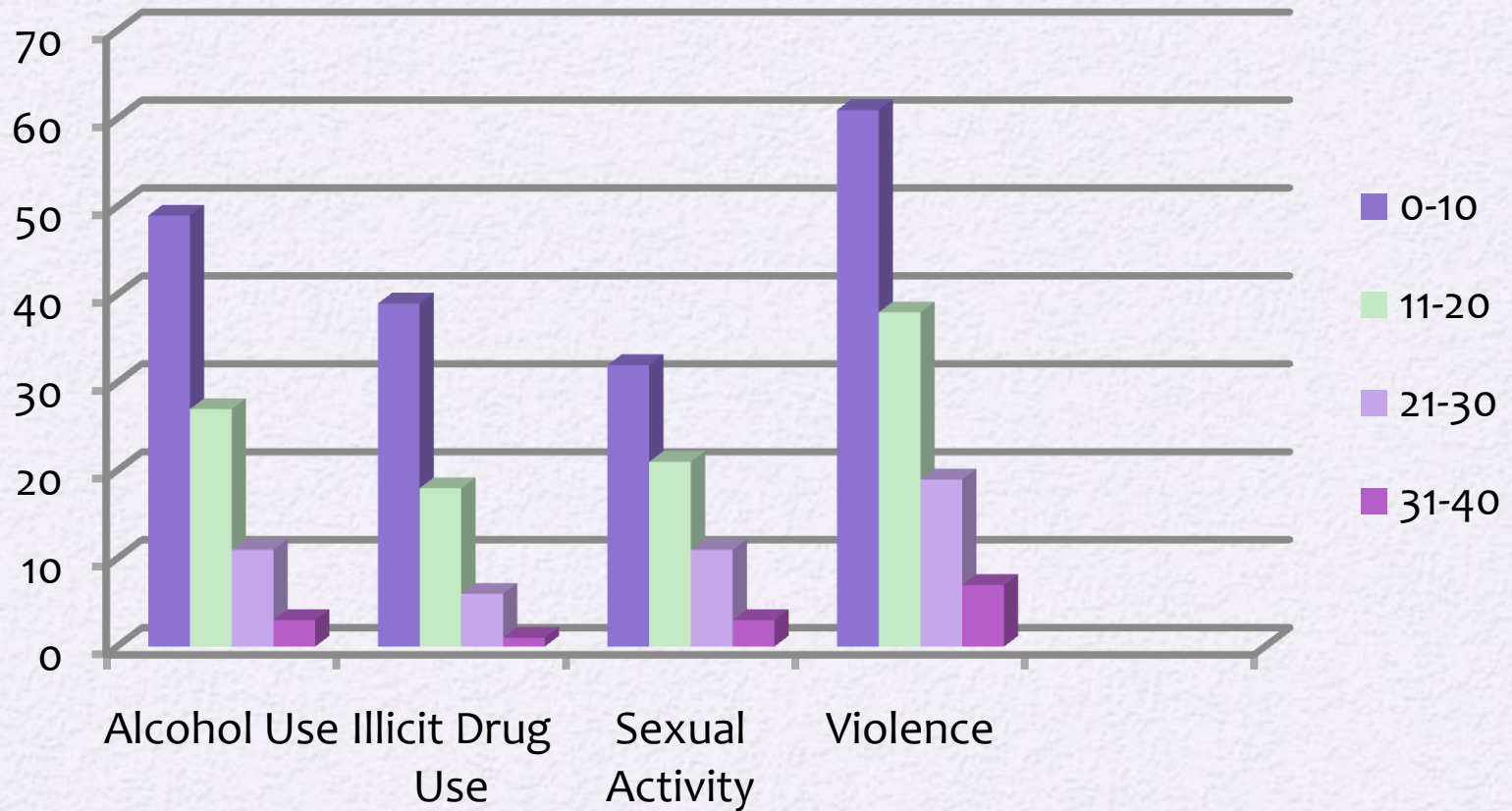
- Examining root causes was a critical preliminary step to develop effective strategies aimed at addressing drug abuse. A critical view of the status of our youth was an obvious first step.
- In Oct 2008 the Search Institute's survey, Profile of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors, was conducted in seven junior & senior high schools within the CB Regional Municipality.
 - n = 1302

The 8 Categories of Developmental Assets

- Support
- Empowerment
- Boundaries and expectations
- Constructive use of time
- Commitment to learning
- Positive Values
- Social Competencies
- Positive Identify

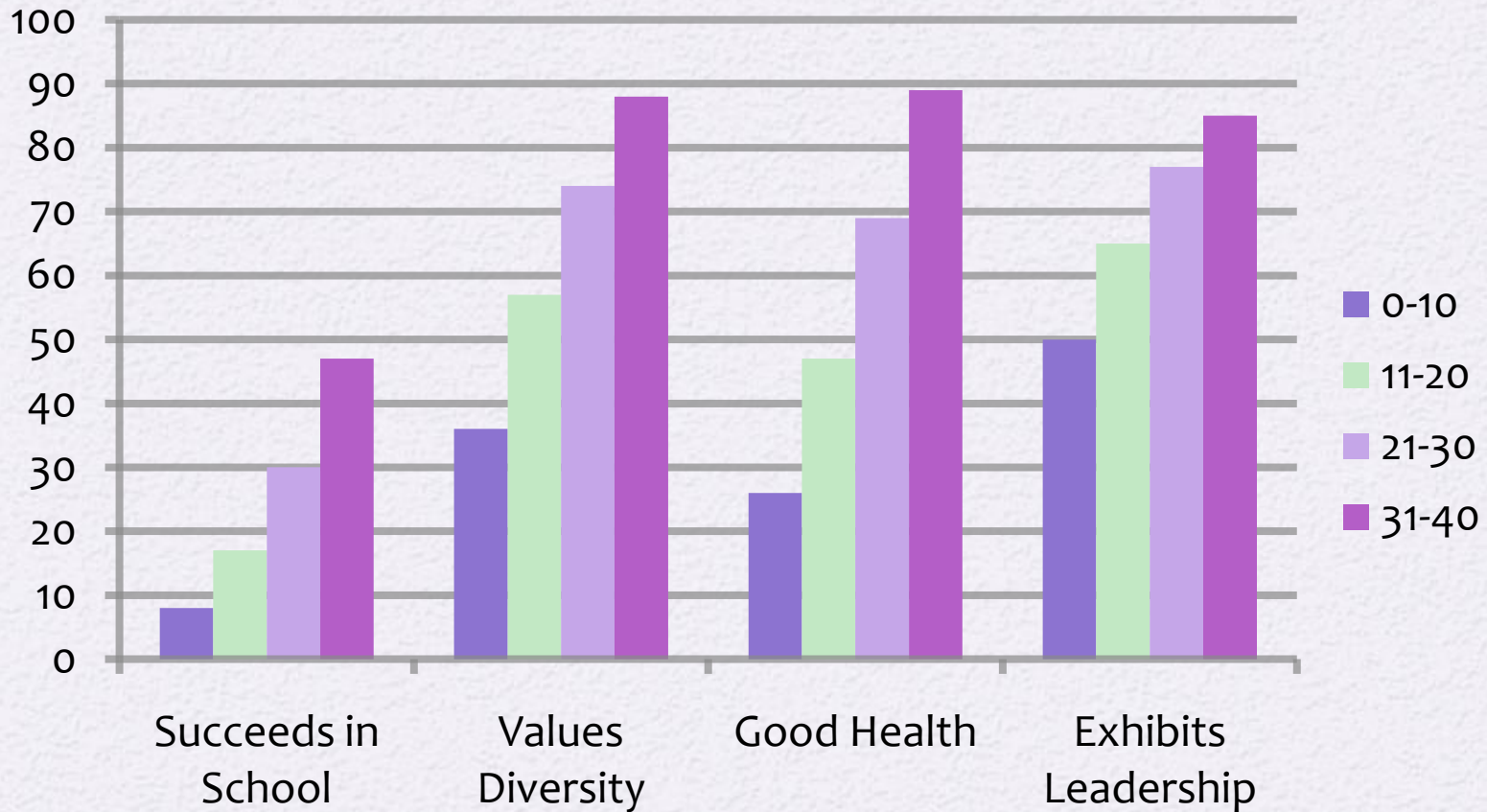
Assets & High Risk Behavior

(Search Institute)



Protective Powers of Assets

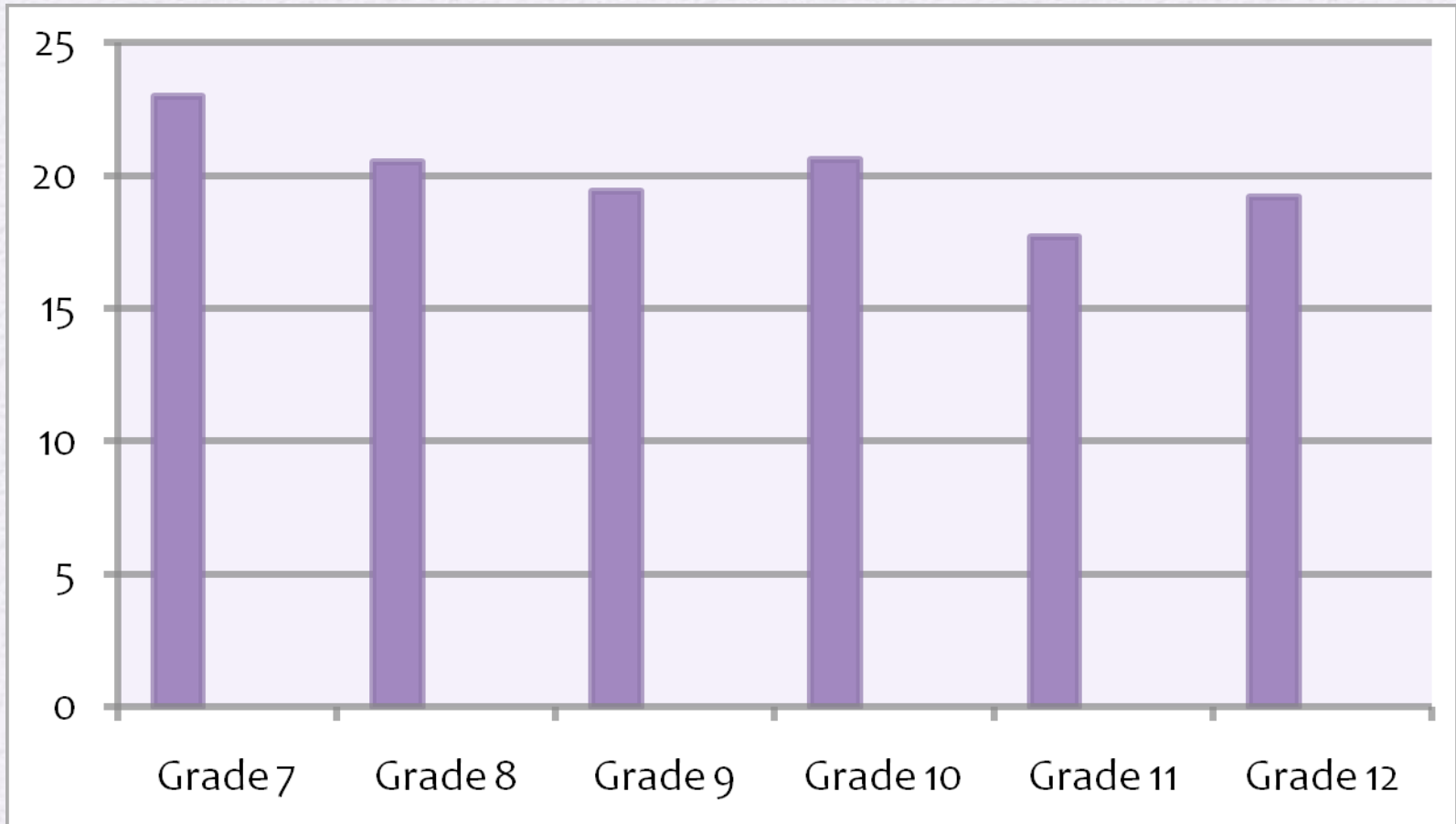
(Search Institute)



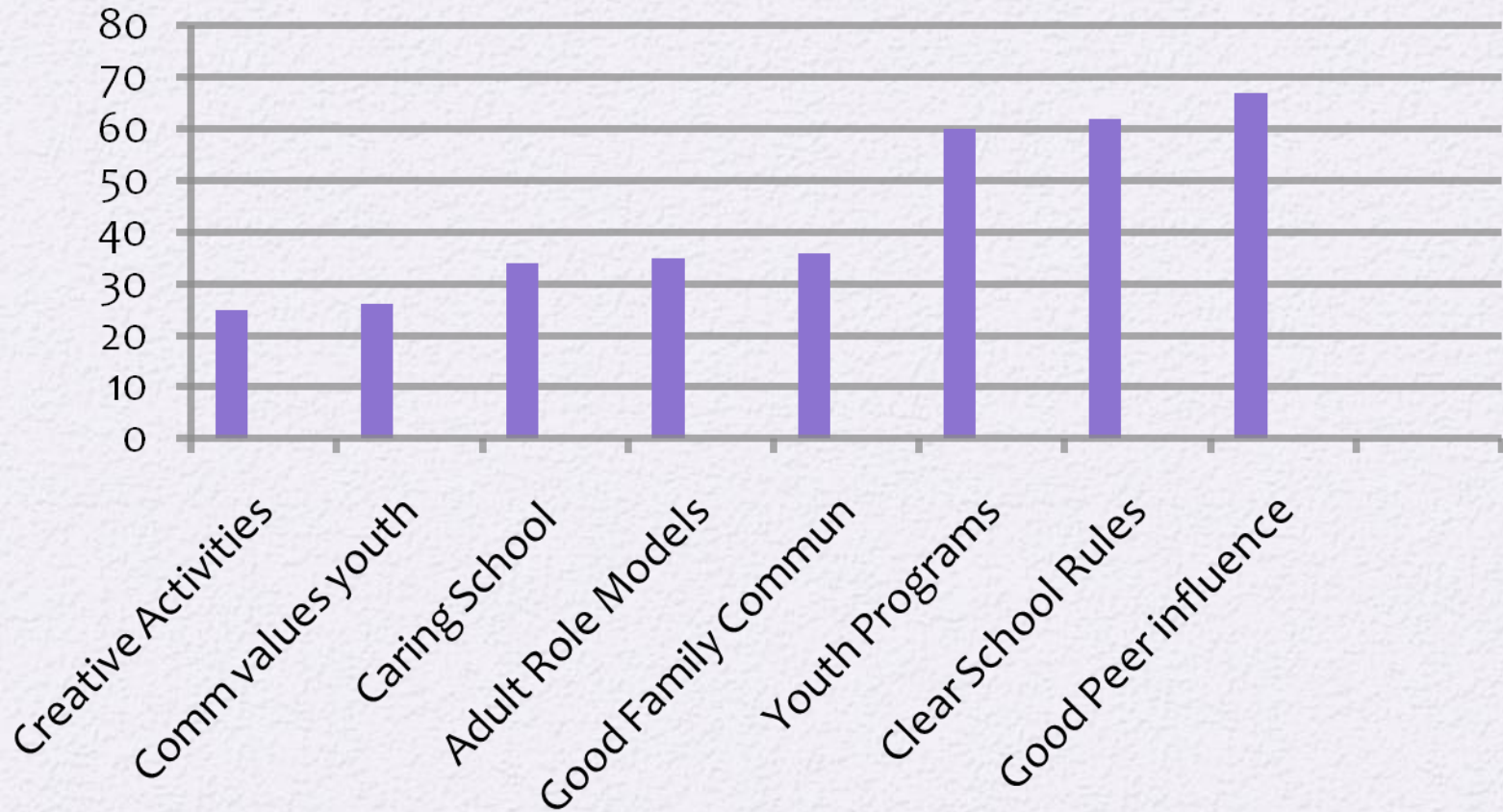
Examining Cape Breton Youth

- The Search Institute survey, Profile of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors (140 closed-ended questions)
- Aggregate findings indicated the level of assets possessed by CB youth
 - 20.5 out of a possible 40 assets.
 - 18 assets out of 40 is an established norm

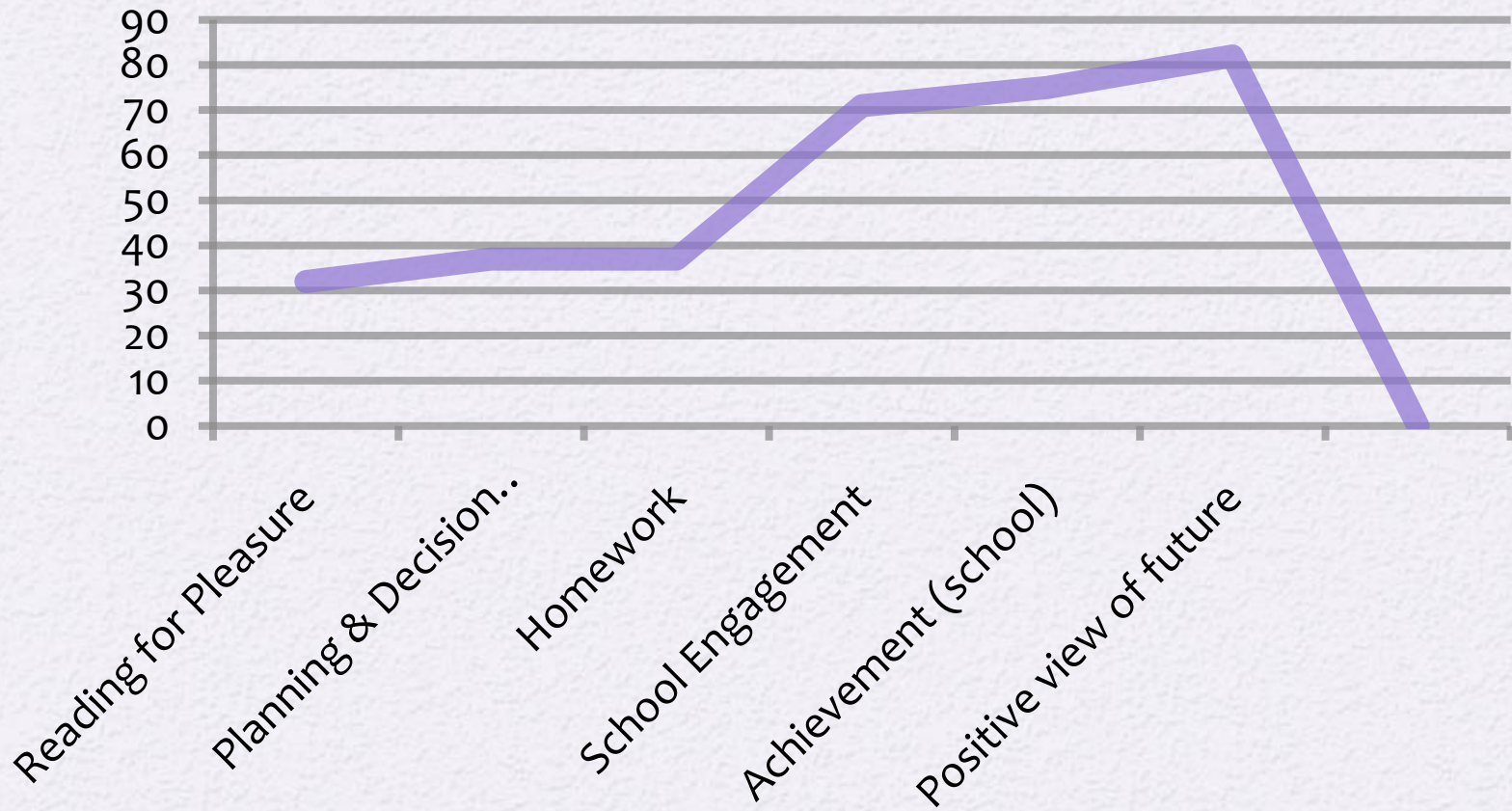
Examining Cape Breton Youth (% Assets)



CB Youth (Ext Assets)



CB Youth (Int Assets)



Examining Cape Breton Adults

- In 2010, 569 community members were surveyed re: needs of their community & ideas to promote community wellness (focus groups & surveys)
 - 84.5% felt that risky behavior by youth is problematic
 - 91.7 felt the community at large is concerned about risky behavior by youth
 - 84.2% expressed an interest in learning more about community improvement initiatives
- A presentation of the survey findings was provided to all 569 members

The Strength of Communities Cannot be Understated!

- Making positive relationships in the community will enhance neighbourhood prosperity and help develop a sense of pride and connection creating an asset-rich community.
- Who Matters?
 - You matter
 - Organizations matter
 - Communities matter

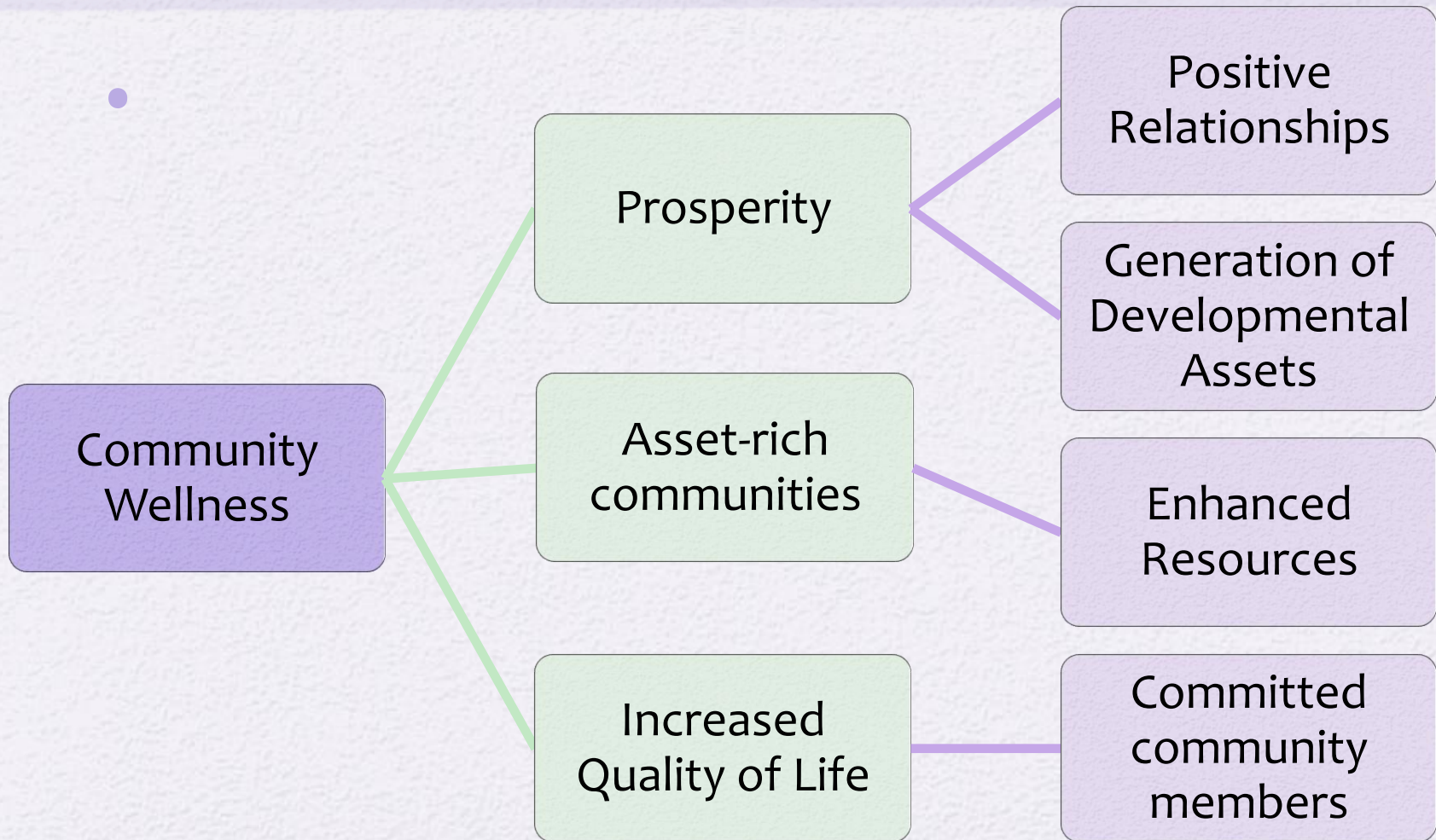
Asset Headquarters (AH)

- A community initiative is currently underway to empower the community and to enhance the developmental assets of our youth.
- Everyone has skills, abilities & strengths that can foster the strengths of youth & the community (McKay, 2010).
 - AH will be implemented in 8 communities in CB.
 - AH will promote ownership in the community
 - Build awareness
 - Create safe, open-minded places
 - Promote intergenerational dialogue

Asset Headquarters (cont)

- A coordinator will facilitate the process
- Four facilitators (educated re: the Asset dev philosophy) will facilitate the activities of the 8 headquarters
- Teams of 12-15 “asset agents” will work together at each of the 8 sites (volunteers and facilitators)
- Meetings would be held at least once/week (evening)
- **Sustainability** is a key component of this project

Influence – Impact - Outcomes



Thank You

Questions

References:

McKay, M. (2007, June). *Youth voices report: Project rationale, objectives and summit proceedings*. Report written for the Community Partners on Drug Abuse

McKay, M. (2010, April). *Asset development strategy report: Review of recent data and possible resulting actions*. Report written for the Developmental Assets Ad-hoc Committee

Search Institute (2008). *Profile of student life: Attitudes and behaviors*. Retrieved from <http://www.search-institute.org/>