



Applying Educational Research

WiseSkills is a comprehensive positive prevention program that powerfully applies five areas of educational research to help schools create and sustain a *culture of character*. Over many years, research has shown that academic learning and school success involve not simply effective instruction and literacy skills, but developing a schoolwide vision where educators work together with families to regularly *teach, model, and reinforce* critical life skills. Negative behaviors and attitudes such as disrespect, bullying, and apathy negatively impacts academic learning and should be addressed proactively in order to increase instructional time and maintain a positive learning environment. The five areas of research that the **WiseSkills** program applies are:



Schoolwide Character Education

Research has shown that comprehensive character education initiatives, when implemented thoroughly and consistently, can make a positive difference on the climate of a school and on the academic achievement of students. The **WiseSkills** program infuses character education into all aspects of the life of a school in regularly *teaching, modeling, and reinforcing* positive character.



Service/Service-Learning

Many schools have experienced firsthand the powerful effects of involving young people in meaningful service experiences on campus and in their communities. Much research has shown the correlation between service-learning, healthy life choices, and academic success. The **WiseSkills School Component** incorporates service-learning experiences into the K-12 curricula while the **Community Component** involves having school volunteers arrange ongoing service projects with local organizations.



Family Involvement

Years of educational research have consistently found that successful schools provide a variety of opportunities for involving families in the life of the school and in the education of their children. The **WiseSkills Family Component** includes ready-to-use materials to help families build character at home. In addition, the **Community Component** features resources and training to help parent volunteers coordinate engaging community activities that help develop good character in students.



Resiliency

For students who face a variety of risk factors, including *poverty, drug use, and family conflict*, studies have shown that providing critical *protective factors* builds *resiliency* in young people which helps them resist making poor choices. The **WiseSkills** program provides young people with the three primary *protective factors* that promote resiliency: *caring and support, high expectations, and active involvement*.



Developmental Assets

The *Search Institute* in Minneapolis, a pioneer in youth development, has defined 40 *developmental assets* that are critical for young people to become caring and productive adults. Through their research, the Institute has demonstrated that these 40 assets help young people make positive life choices. The **WiseSkills School, Family, and Community** components build 34 of the 40 *developmental assets*.

WiseSkills Resources

149 Josephine Street, Suite B Santa Cruz, CA 95060 1-888-947-3754
www.wiseskills.com info@wiseskills.com

Schoolwide Character Education

Various studies have shown that schoolwide character education initiatives can make a powerful impact on the climate of a school and on the academic achievement of students. Research has shown that schools that focus on developing character have increased overall higher test scores. Two of these studies are mentioned below:

The Relationship between Character Education and Academic Achievement (Jacques S. Benninga et al, 2003).

Among schools that applied for the California Distinguished Schools Award, those that had higher total character education implementation tended to have higher academic scores on academic measures for the year prior to their application, the year of their application, and the subsequent two years. (Journal of Research in Character Education, Volume 1, Number 1 2003)

Leading With Character to Improve Student Achievement (Williams and Taylor, 2004).

The percentage of students scoring 3 or above (on an ascending 1-5 scale) on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test jumped from 45 percent to 78 percent in one year. According to Robert Williams and Rosemarye Taylor: "There is a strong sense of a community of learners [at the school]... This environment has resulted in fewer discipline referrals and increased achievement." (<http://www.charactercounts.org/doing/survey-reports.htm>)

WiseSkills helps schools implement comprehensive character education with an interdisciplinary, teacher-friendly curricula that unites entire schools around important principles of character. The program features a variety of *classroom, schoolwide, family, and community* activities that focus on cultivating good character in young people.

Service/Service-Learning

Many studies have been done evaluating the positive effects of service-learning projects on students. The positive impacts on youth that have been observed include *academic, civic/citizenship, and social/personal*. Four of these studies are described below:

Impacts of Service-Learning on Participating Students (Hofschire, & Billig, 2004).

On the Michigan Educational Assessment Program, 5th-grade service-learning students outperformed their non-participating counterparts on the overall science and social studies scores.

Further Attainment of Academic Standards Through Service-Learning (Santmire, Giraud, & Grosskopf, 1999).

Middle school students who were involved in service-learning showed significantly higher academic gains than the control group after repeated measures of analysis of variance.

Colorado Learn and Serve Program (Kim & Billig, 2003; Klute, Sandel, & Billig, 2002).

Results for these students showed a significant difference in connection to community, connection to school, and civic responsibility participants in service-learning relative to their non-participating peers.

Resilience (Laird and Black, 2002).

Ninth-grade students who participated in service-learning classes had significantly more positive scores on all measures of resilience, and 12th-grade service-learning students maintained a low risk of dropping out compared to their non-participating peers, including those identified as being at high risk initially.

The **WiseSkills** School Component provides educators with ideas for service projects that reinforce each *Character Theme*. The **WiseSkills** Community Component involves volunteers in arranging meaningful projects where students make positive contributions to their school or community. The **WiseSkills** Family Component includes simple ways that families can get involved in service activities in their community.

WiseSkills: Applying Educational Research

✔ Family Involvement

For many years studies have concluded that there is a significant connection between parental involvement in school and student achievement and well-being. Three of these studies are described below:

★ *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement* (Henderson, A. & Mapp, K., 2002). Many studies have found that students with involved parents are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, have better social skills, show good behavior, and graduate and go on to further education.

★ *Advances in Reading/Language Research, Vol. 5. Literacy Through Family, Community and School Interaction* (Epstein, J.L. Effects on Student Achievement of Teacher Practices of Parent Involvement, 1991). The benefits of parent involvement for students include more positive attitudes toward school, higher achievement in reading, and high quality and more grade-appropriate work.

★ *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement* (Henderson, A. & Mapp, K., 2002). Simple programs such as weekly homework assignments in which students engage their parents are linked to improved grades for elementary and middle school students.

The *WiseSkills* Family Component involves families in character-building through ready-to-use newsletters and activity pages that provide ideas for simple, 10-15 minute interactive home activities. As part of the *Community Component*, a group of parents are trained and equipped to arrange career speakers and ongoing service projects.

✔ Resiliency

Resiliency is the ability to make positive choices in spite of negative conditions and pressures. While some children become powerfully impacted by negative conditions and environments—including family difficulties, high-crime/drug communities, and other challenges—many are able to “bounce back” in spite of these circumstances. The goal of this research, then, is to discover what factors helps those children “bounce back,” i., become *resilient*.

Research has shown that young people who face various types of “risk factors”—including parental drug use, mobility, poverty, family conflict, academic failure, negative peer pressure, and other factors—become more resilient to making negative choices when they are provided with one or more “protective factors.” The 3 primary *protective factors* are:

- **Caring and Support**
Adults who demonstrate interest in, and concern for, the needs of young people.
- **High Expectations**
Communication of challenging and attainable expectations, both academic and behavioral.
- **Active Involvement**
Opportunities for meaningful participation and contributions.

These protective factors serve to “protect,” or reduce, the impact of negative experiences on young people. (www.nwrel.org)

The chart below lists the 3 *protective factors* and how each *WiseSkills* component provides each of these critical factors.

<i>WiseSkills</i> & the Protective Factors that Build Resiliency			
Protective Factor	<i>WiseSkills</i> School Component	<i>WiseSkills</i> Family Component	<i>WiseSkills</i> Community Component
Caring & Support	Class lessons & schoolwide activities build a safe and positive school climate.	Home activities help build supportive families and cultivate good character.	Regular service projects develop caring and empathy in students.
High Expectations	Class lessons & schoolwide activities send positive messages and establish high standards for behavior.	Home activities promote positive behavioral expectations for children.	Speakers are positive role models who inspire students to set and reach high expectations.
Active Involvement	Service-learning project ideas are provided for each <i>Character Theme</i> . Also includes materials to train peer mediators.	Family Wisdom includes ideas for how families can get involved in service projects together.	Service projects actively involve students in meeting the needs of others.

WiseSkills®: Applying Educational Research

Developmental Assets

There are a variety of critical resources young people need to be successful. The *Search Institute* has identified 40 *developmental assets*--both external and internal--that help young people become productive adults. Assets include *family support, school boundaries, adult role models, integrity, honesty, sense of purpose, and conflict resolution*. In 2003, the *Search Institute* surveyed 150,000 6th-12th graders in over 200 communities across the United States. Youth were asked questions about the assets they felt they had, and then the surveys were correlated with different behaviors. Their research demonstrated that young people who have fewer of these assets are more likely to make negative choices, while those having more assets are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors. (www.search-institute.org)

As shown in the chart on the right, the three *WiseSkills* components for **School, Family, and Community** build 34 of the 40 *developmental assets* identified by the *Search Institute*.

For more information about *WiseSkills*, or to request a **FREE 30-day preview**, contact:

WiseSkills Resources
 149 Josephine Street, Suite B
 Santa Cruz, CA 95060
 1-888-947-3754
 831-426-8920
www.wiseskills.com
info@wiseskills.com



<i>WiseSkills & 40 Developmental Assets</i>			
Developmental Asset	School Component	Family Component	Community Component
Support			
1. Family Support		•	
2. Family Communication		•	
3. Other Adult Relationships			
4. Caring Neighborhood			
5. Caring School Climate	•		
6. Parent Involvement	•	•	•
Empowerment			
7. Community Values Youth			•
8. Youth as Resources			•
9. Service to Others	•		•
10. Safety	•	•	
Boundaries & Expectations			
11. Family Boundaries		•	
12. School Boundaries	•		
13. Neighborhood Boundaries			
14. Adult Role Models			•
15. Positive Peer Influence	•		
16. High Expectations	•	•	•
Constructive Use of Time			
17. Creative Activities	•	•	
18. Youth Programs			
19. Religious Community			
20. Time at Home		•	
Commitment to Learning			
21. Achievement Motivation	•	•	
22. School Engagement	•	•	
23. Homework (1 hour/day)	•	•	
24. Bonding to School	•	•	
25. Reading for Pleasure			
Positive Values			
26. Caring	•	•	•
27. Equality & Social Justice	•	•	•
28. Integrity	•	•	•
29. Honesty	•	•	•
30. Responsibility	•	•	•
31. Restraint	•	•	•
Social Competencies			
32. Planning & Decision-Making	•	•	
33. Interpersonal Competence	•	•	
34. Cultural Competence	•	•	•
35. Resistance Skills	•	•	
36. Peaceful Conflict Resolution	•	•	
Positive Identity			
37. Personal Power	•	•	•
38. Self-Esteem	•	•	•
39. Sense of Purpose	•	•	•
40. Positive View of Future	•	•	•