

THE SHIFT TO A STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH

AT RISK	→	AT PROMISE
Talking about problems		Talking about positives and possibilities
Focusing on troubled and troubling youth		Focusing on all youth
Viewing young people as problems		Seeing youth as resources
Reacting to problems		Being proactive about building strengths and preventing problems
Blaming others		Claiming personal responsibility
Treating youth as objects of programs		Respecting youth as actors in their own development
Relying on professionals		Involving everyone in the lives of young people
Competing priorities		Collaborating
Managing crises		Building a shared vision
Age segregation		Intergenerational community
Individual focus		Environmental focus
Despair		Hope

STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH

In the fields of prevention, education, psychology, social work and others, there has been a shift in philosophy from focusing on deficits and problems to focusing on strengths. This emphasis on strengths does not deny or ignore problems, but instead widens the field of vision to include the individual, family, educational, social and community assets of a situation, person or group.

The Student Assistance Program model employed by The Governor's Prevention Partnership uses a strengths-based approach. This is informed by decades of research examining the factors that build resiliency in young people and help them grow up to be safe, successful and drug-free. An effective Student Assistance Team uses strategies in their action plans that are backed by research and that build on students' strengths in order to meet their needs.

The Governor's Prevention Partnership focuses particularly on three theoretical, research and strengths-based models:

- 1) The Search Institute has delineated **40 Developmental Assets** that help youth grow into healthy, productive adults,
- 2) The **Resiliency** Model indicates the factors that help youth bounce back and manage life challenges, and
- 3) The **Social Development Strategy** lays out the conditions that promote healthy behaviors in youth.

Together, these offer Student Assistance Teams multiple, similar strategies to assist young people in getting back on track.