



MARCH Asset of the Month: Creative Activities

Young people spend three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.

This document is designed to help adults throughout Silicon Valley develop materials and activities to promote the asset of creative activities.

Newsletter Content

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The Importance of Creative Activities

For many young people, creative activities can fulfill what Peter Benson describes as a “spark”—the hidden flames that tap their true passions, motivate and inspire them to achieve and create, and keep them on a positive path. Youth who have sparks, and are surrounded by people who recognize and support their sparks, have higher grades in school, are more socially competent, are more likely to volunteer to help other people, have a greater sense of purpose, and are less likely to experience depression.

Creative activities are one of the most common categories where youth find their sparks. Even if creative activities not a young person’s life passion, they still provide benefits like fostering creative problem solving, critical thinking, and discipline, and provide opportunities to connect with instructors who are role models and caring adults. Unfortunately, most youth in Santa Clara County don’t participate in creative activities. In Project Cornerstone’s 2004 survey, **63% of 4th-6th graders and only 23% of 7th-12th graders** reported that they spend three or more hours each week in lessons or practice for music, theater, dance, or other arts. To help raise awareness of their importance, March is Creative Activities month in Silicon Valley.

The following discussion topics can help young people recognize the value of creative activities and identify new kinds of creative activities that they might be interested in:

- Think back on the art you’ve created. Is there a particular piece that you’re most proud of? Why?
- Who is your favorite musician? What do you like about their music?
- If you could be a professional artist, what would you be—painter, dancer, singer, actor, sculptor, craftsperson, or writer? Why?
- If you could take lessons in anything, what would you learn?
- How do the creative activities that you do teach you more about yourself?

By the way, creative activities can be directly linked with Asset #9—Service to Others. Senior citizens, hospital patients, and military troops (just to name a few) truly enjoy it when young people send them cards or useful handmade gifts, or perform their skits and music.

This article was provided courtesy of Project Cornerstone’s Asset-a-Month program. For more information, visit www.projectcornerstone.org.

Activities

The following suggestions offer ways to integrate creative arts into everyday activities, and to use creative activities as an opportunity for asset building.

For families

- Help your children identify their creative sparks! Expose them to a variety of creative activities, and find follow-up lessons when they find something they're interested in.
- Help your child understand that their mentors in creative activities are caring adults in their lives.
- Advocate for your school to provide balance for students by serving as a voice for arts programs.

For all adults

- Demonstrate the importance of creative activities to young people. Make an effort to find out about the creative activities of the youth in your circle, and share the creative activities in which you participate. Don't just share what you've created—explain *why* you enjoy your activity and how you feel while you're engaging in it.
- If the young people in your life participate in creative activities, support them! Attend their art shows, performances, recitals, and concerts.

At school or in youth programs

- Make an effort to ensure that the creative activities you provide take into account young people's different interests and skills. For example, some young people who do not enjoy drawing or coloring may prefer opportunities in photography or digital arts.
- Help kids get exposed to a variety of creative processes through a "Give It a Try!" For an art "Give It a Try," obtain a variety of art supplies and sample projects. Encourage kids to try a process that they haven't tried before. Have sample projects and instructions available for kids who don't feel confident or inspired enough to come with a new idea, but be sure to allow kids who have another idea about what they want to make.

APRIL Asset of the Month: Service to Others!

If you or your organization can share ideas for positive, creative activities for young people, please contact Elissa Miller at (408) 351-6425 or by email at Elissa@projectcornerstone.org.

About the Asset-a-Month Program

The Silicon Valley Asset-a-Month program is an initiative of the Project Cornerstone public policy team, which contains representatives from local governments, agencies, and youth-serving organizations. The goals of the Asset-a-Month program are to help align adults throughout our diverse community in their efforts to promote positive youth development by fostering developmental assets. For more information about the Silicon Valley Asset-a-Month program, contact Anne Ehresman, Project Cornerstone's Executive Director, at (408) 351-6424 or Anne@projectcornerstone.org.