

2006-2007 Lower Merion-Narberth Student Support Card

What is the Lower Merion-Narberth Student Support Card?

The Student Support Card does not measure proficiency in reading, writing, or mathematics, nor does it measure SAT scores or Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) scores. Instead, it measures the quality and the quantity of support our young people feel in their lives from their school, family, faith community, other adults, and community. It measures intangible supports, like character and personality traits, that compel each student to make positive, healthy decisions.

The Student Support Card is a tool for teachers, youth program professionals, parents, guardians, neighbors, and public servants. It helps adults consider the kids they come in contact with daily, in the context of what supports youth really need to be successful. The data contained in the Student Support Card is derived from a 156-question survey called the “Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors.” Search Institute, a research organization based in Minneapolis, MN, developed the survey instrument and coined the term “developmental assets.” We added some additional questions to the survey process to get a better understanding of some of the risk factors facing our youth, particularly those related to underage drinking and drug abuse.

The Student Support Card is not a tool to judge what is lacking. Rather, it is a strength-based tool to find out what support does exist, allowing our community to build on that foundation. It is, most importantly, an assessment not only of our youth and their perceptions, but also of our community. It is a clarion call for each of us to get involved in the lives of the youth in our midst. The Student Support Card shows that the more assets and supports a young person has, the more likely he/she is to succeed in school, make wise choices in regards to their mental, emotional, and physical health, and accept the values and beliefs of people from different cultures. In addition, it shows how likely they will be able to remain alcohol and drug-free, and to practice “refusal skills” when faced with dangerous situations.

Why is this important?

The Student Support Card will show the amount of assets our youth have and the relationship and correlation between asset levels and risk behaviors and thriving behaviors. It will show that we all can impact the levels of assets possessed by our youth. For too long, focus has been put upon educational organizations and other professionals to “fix” the problems experienced by many youth. Over the next seven years, our schools will be held to increasing challenging benchmarks mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind Act (by 2014, the law says that ALL students must be proficient in math and reading). Whether or not such a goal is realistic, the only way these benchmarks can be reached is if the rest of us in the community-at-large do our part to ensure that young people are ready for school and are supported in making the right choices. The research is quite clear, and has finally confirmed what we have known all along, KIDS NEED US – ALL OF US. Schools cannot be expected to “go it alone.”

What can you do?

Consider getting involved with the Lower Merion-Narberth Community Coalition. For information on the coalition and its activities, visit www.lmncc.org. You can also simply do your part by intentionally establishing more relationships with those young people in and around your life. Share with them what you learned from the ***Lower Merion-Narberth Student Support Card*** and encourage them to become a partner in our work!