

**Hawaii International Conference on Education, January 7-10, 2003**

**TITLE:** "Can you hear me now?": Developmental assets of middle school AVID students

**AUTHORS:** Frankie Denise Powell, Ph.D.  
Edwin D. Bell, Ed.D.

**E-Mail:** [fdpphd@att.net](mailto:fdpphd@att.net)  
[belle@wssu.edu](mailto:belle@wssu.edu)

**ABSTRACT**

This project posits that academic and social success by minority students in the middle school setting is affected by the relationships between minority serving institutions of higher education, the school, and the families of the students. According to Manning (1999), who discusses benchmarks of student-friendly middle schools, such places are characterized in the following ways:

- Students have involved families who usually demonstrate higher levels of motivation and commitment to their education
- Families and school educators deepen their relationship with each other and assist each other in the education of the middle school student
- Families become more involved in the school activities and their child's academic progress families learn more about middle school education

Two hundred six (n = 206) 7<sup>th</sup> grade students responded to the Profiles of Student Life (PSL) survey. The PSL measures four areas of adolescent development: developmental assets, deficits, risky behaviors and high-risk behavior patterns, and thriving indicators. The average number of assets reported by the 206 seventh grade students was 22. Overall, the students report having a little over half of the developmental assets that the PSL measures. Of the 214 students, 15% report having 31-40 assets; 45% report having 21-30 assets; 34% report having 11-20 assets; and 6% report having 0-10 assets.

These self-reported data are the challenge of the family-school-community relationship. Our middle school students say that they are motivated to achieve but they also say that they do not read for pleasure. In addition, while they are motivated to achieve, they are not as overwhelmingly connected to their school. Socially, approximately half of the students report being competent with others, both similar to them and different from them. However, they do not report being competent to resist or peacefully resolve their interactions.

This multi-level involvement provides a good core for building further family-school-community relationships to both discuss and increase activity around closing the minority student achievement gap. Furthermore, given these initial data, the foundation and mechanism for having empirically based discussions around best practices to close the gap are now in place.