

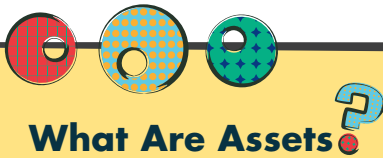


Ideas for Educators

42 Ready-to-Use Newsletters for School Success

21. ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION

Young person is motivated to do well in school.



What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 values, experiences, and qualities that help kids succeed.

Achievement motivation is one of five commitment-to-learning assets.

65% of youth surveyed have this asset in their lives.*

*Based on Search Institute surveys of 148,189 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States in 2003.

- Think of all the ways we can define success in school.
- Encourage students to find a passion.
- Try to make the learning environment as welcoming as possible.
- Make learning applicable to life.

Actually, You Are Going to Need to Know This

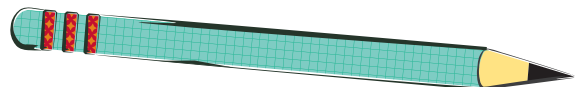
One of the most profound teachable moments I ever experienced was when I brought a flyer to school that had distracting and obvious grammatical errors and poor sentence structure. I photocopied it and handed it out to each student. We spent a few minutes reading through it, and I had

the students identify all the things wrong with the flyer. Then I explained to them that this was a real flyer, sent to everyone in our neighborhood, and asked the kids if they'd hire the person who wrote it. The answer was unanimously no. Suddenly, learning grammar became much more important when the students realized it could cost them a job and a livelihood.

Young people are motivated to do well in school when they realize that the process of learning will help them throughout their lives. We may never convince students that reading Shakespeare, graphing quadratic functions, calculating velocity, or knowing the political causes of the War of 1812 is *important*, but we can be successful in motivating students when we explicitly point out the larger goal, so they understand *why* they are being asked to learn these things.

To that end:

- Make learning engaging and fun by providing a variety of activities.
- Be encouraging.
- Be clear with students about the expected outcome so they understand why they must do it.



- ⦿ Empathize with them when things are tough.
- ⦿ Be aware of different learning styles, and create activities that make it easier for them to learn the material.

Remember: your goal is to encourage them to enjoy learning. When they do, they can achieve anything.

A Little Motivation Goes a Long Way

As you think about the role motivation plays in your work life, consider these questions:

- ⦿ What motivates you to be a better teacher?
- ⦿ What professional goals help you stay committed to the field of education?
- ⦿ How do your goals inform your daily practice, behaviors, and attitudes?

The problem with goals, of course, is that we tend to state them too broadly. Instead of “I will work out twice this week,” we say things like “I will be healthier this year.” Given such wide parameters as a “healthy year,” it’s almost impossible to know whether you’re making any progress at all.

Teaching is easy to put into such broad terms. You can enter a new school year and think, “I’m going to be a better teacher this year.” Or, “This week I won’t be as stressed out as I was last week.” But what, in a tangible sense, do those goals even mean? How would you even begin to achieve such lofty goals?

Break down your goals into concrete steps. For example, what daily steps would you have to take

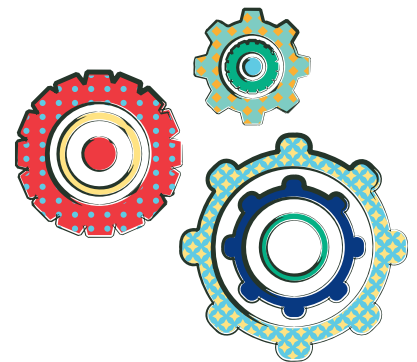
to achieve the goal “I will be less stressed this week than I was last week”? They might go something like this:

This week I will . . .

- ⦿ Not turn on my computer at home.
- ⦿ Exercise three times.
- ⦿ Read a book instead of watching TV two nights.

This week, set one lofty goal for yourself and then break it down into three to five components that would lead to success. Get in the habit of doing this, and suddenly achievement becomes a way of being and thinking.

Lofty goal for the week:



Steps to achieve goal:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.