

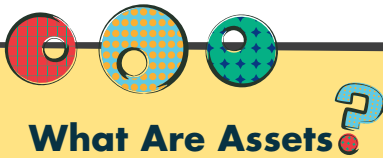


Ideas for Educators

42 Ready-to-Use Newsletters for School Success

37. PERSONAL POWER

Young person feels he or she has control of “things that happen to me.”



What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 values, experiences, and qualities that help kids succeed. **Personal power** is one of four positive-identity assets.

42% 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.

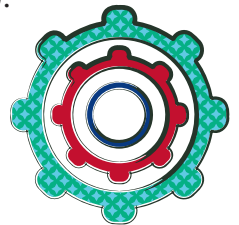
- Stress the idea of personal choice.
- Dismantle the illusion that others are “lucky,” so they get what they want.
- Talk about the power of positive and negative mindsets.

Preparing to Succeed

A distinguishing factor between highly successful students and students for whom success is elusive is the idea of control over their own lives. Those who lead successful lives always report having made the choices necessary to get to where they wanted to be. *They prepared to succeed.* But all too often, a student believes that successful people are “lucky” or have “innate ability” that the student does not possess.

In order to instill the idea of personal power in kids, teachers must first address the issue of choice. Consistently talk about choice and planning. If a student wants to have control over how she does in school, she needs to combine good choices (“I’d better stay home and do my homework”) as well as planning (“I may get sick so I’d better get this project done ahead of time”).

Understanding how choice and planning intersect means that students will begin to see how they can plan for and control unexpected events that might otherwise have made things difficult.



Another important issue to teach is breaking a goal down into manageable steps. Not a single highly successful person, whether in academics, sports, arts, or politics, simply leapt into her present position. All of them had the patience and foresight to take all the baby steps necessary in order to be prepared to succeed. Have your students practice this concept on a small scale (preparing for a test) and then have them repeat it throughout the year. The concept will begin to get ingrained in their minds.

Finally, always be ready to discuss the issue of mindset. Successful people use failure as a teaching tool. They examine what went wrong and how to correct it. They refuse to get bogged down in negative thinking, and although they may have

suffered major setbacks, they were always able to refocus on their goal. Stress the importance of this when you talk about preparing to succeed. When a student feels in control of her world, she is set up for success.

Efficacy and Personal Power

In education, power is often phrased as “efficacy.” It’s a feeling of personal control over your life and the ability to affect the world around you. Efficacy is something you can work on by setting goals for yourself and persisting through the challenges of meeting those goals. Small goals like cleaning off your desk or getting your grading done early are good, but it’s important to stretch yourself a little—to reach for goals that take even more effort.

With that in mind, what is one large goal you can set for yourself this week that is not only

attainable but is also a bit of a stretch? What will it take to experience success? From whom will you need help? Take steps to reach this goal every day or every week until you’ve met it. At the end of this experience, not only will you have accomplished something significant, but you will also have reminded yourself of your strong and developing personal power.

