

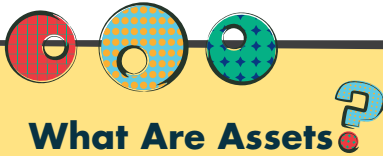


Ideas for Educators

42 Ready-to-Use Newsletters for School Success

27. EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.



What Are Assets?

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

Equality and social justice is one of six positive-values assets.

52% 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.

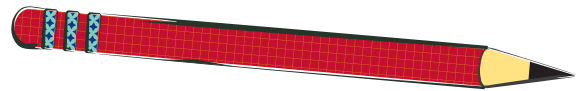
- Emphasize to your students that equality is measured in many ways.
- Remember that social justice can fit into all curricula.
- Work toward or make space for school-wide service projects.
- Start small.

Justice for All

When a school or teacher repeatedly addresses issues of equality and social justice, students learn to place high value on them. And when a district has a cohesive public-service program, students naturally learn to work toward reducing hunger

and poverty. High school students are often especially receptive to issues of justice as they learn to become individuals in a society and strive to find themselves in the world.

Equality and social justice touch every part of our lives and affect everything we do. You can integrate these issues into all kinds of subjects. You can have your students:



- Examine historical responses to hunger and poverty in different cultures.
- Calculate poverty rates and per capita income levels.
- Study the biology of poverty and illnesses related to poor nutrition.
- Study the social and psychological impact of hunger and poverty.
- Study fictional and nonfictional accounts of poverty and hunger.

Tie together their classroom work with some real service work. Find ways that they can be useful in the community, such as volunteering at a food shelf or doing administrative work at a charity, and give them academic credit for it. Think about how

you might model that behavior for them, and try to provide unique and exciting opportunities for them to make a real difference.

Making Your Classroom a Model of Justice

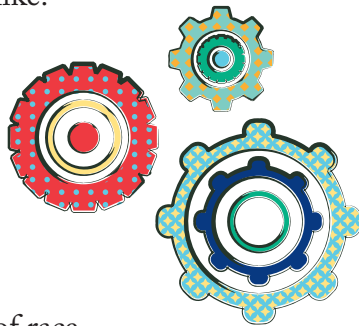
Students learn about equality and social justice by observing the actions of adults. When equality seems shunned or skewed in school, it can be difficult to teach its value.

This week, put adult policies, practices, behaviors, and attitudes under the microscope. Look at the school and its climate, and specifically your classroom, through the eyes of a young person. How do your actions show students what a just and equal society looks like?

Where do those actions need improvement?

In the school:

- ⦿ Are students experiencing consistent practices of equality in terms of race, gender, class, and academic status?
- ⦿ Are students seeing models of behavior from staff that exhibit values of social justice?



- ⦿ Is a democratic process pervasive throughout the school so that decisions affecting people are made collectively?

In your classroom:

- ⦿ Do students in your room show behaviors that value justice?
- ⦿ Do the materials you use allow for discussion and learning about these core values?
- ⦿ Are there projects and activities in your classroom that encourage students to work for equality and justice?

In your own attitudes and behavior:

- ⦿ Are you able to reach a variety of students in your classroom and in your school in a meaningful way?
- ⦿ Do students with varying backgrounds and abilities feel comfortable in their relationships with you?
- ⦿ Do you publicly and vocally advocate for students or staff who are experiencing injustice?

As you can see from these questions, equality and social justice are not just abstract concepts: they're calls to action.