



Ideas for Educators

42 Ready-to-Use Newsletters for School Success

22. SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

Young person is actively engaged in learning.



What Are Assets?

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

School engagement is one of five commitment-to-learning assets.

55% 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.

- Connect skills with real-life applications.
- Appeal to students on all levels of learning: create flexible assignments that address all learning styles.
- Acknowledge that students do not have to be passionate about what they are learning, but they must understand the value of what they are learning.
- Make space for students to bring their passions into the classroom.

Getting Engaged

With the Internet giving access to a world of information, it's easy for students to feel as though they

could get whatever they needed from the computer. So why do they need to come to school?

They need to come to school so they can learn how to process, internalize, criticize, and synthesize the information they are given.

It's not that they must simply memorize historical dates—it's that dates are essential to linking historical events together. It's not that they learn to love intransitive verbs—it's that good grammar sends a powerful message of intelligence to others. It's not that adults spend their time calculating volumes of solids—it's that an understanding of algebraic number operations is essential for good business (and home decorating: just try figuring out how much paint you'll need when you don't understand surface area). When students understand that they are learning valuable skills, not just "useless junk," they will perform far better and with far greater engagement.

Students are, after all, human beings, and humans are particularly adept at retaining what is important and rejecting what is not valuable to their daily lives. When we remember this simple fact



and apply it to our lesson plans, we find ourselves teaching engaged, involved students.

A Lasting Engagement

To help define your own engagement to your school and your profession, reflect on these questions:

- ⦿ How much do you enjoy your time with students?
- ⦿ To what degree do you feel your teaching makes a difference in the lives of students?
- ⦿ How connected do you feel to other educators in your school?
- ⦿ How much do you still enjoy learning?

Engagement requires your whole head, heart, and body. Your head is open so you are able to listen as well as speak and learn as well as teach. Your heart is open so you are able to think before acting



and always remember that you're in the business of people. Your body is engaged so you are healthy enough to sustain the energy of good teaching and to be present and active with your students and colleagues.

This week:

- ⦿ Identify one specific thing you want to learn.
- ⦿ Identify one person you want to connect with.
- ⦿ Identify one thing you'll do to increase your physical health.