

Ideas for Educators

42 Ready-to-Use Newsletters for School Success

33. INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCE

Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.



What Are Assets?

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

Interpersonal competence is one of five social-competencies assets.

45% 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.

- Remember that humans are infinitely malleable.
- Model what interpersonal competence really means.
- Seek genuine interactions with kids.
- Work to build a staff that exhibits this asset.

Teaching the Basics

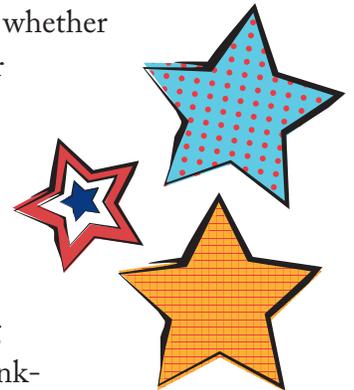
It's easy to assume that because we usually work with children after their early formative years, there is very little we can do to help them learn interpersonal skills. We think, "If they didn't already learn this at home, they won't learn it here" and "We're

supposed to be teaching them *math* here, not how to be warm and fuzzy." But the thing is, we *can* help them become empathetic friends with others, and we are *not* just teaching them math.

The easiest way to begin is by modeling interpersonal competence yourself. Decide what this looks like in students and start acting that way. Empathetic, kind behavior is infectious, and you will soon see students small and large exercising kindness toward others.

Continue your quiet revolution by using teachable moments, whether it's in a literature class or in casual conversations with kids. When gossip or negative opinions are expressed about someone, try to guide the student making the statements toward thinking of the other person's perspective. Gently remind him that the other person might be acting out of insecurity or need some guidance to be good.

Remind yourself constantly that this is going to help your classroom run more efficiently and dramatically improve the quality of your day.



Working Side-by-Side

Most of what you experience in your work life is out of your control. You don't control school policies, or students' home lives, or the attitudes of your colleagues, or just about anything else that might affect you on any given day of teaching. That's the reality of teaching. But there is one thing you can always control: yourself.

Think about these qualities in your own work life:

- Do you approach teaching in a collegial or a competitive mindset?
- What kinds of relationships do you have with colleagues and students?
- How would your colleagues describe your demeanor toward others?

The term "coworker" often implies little more than someone who works in the same place. But in teaching, the word means something very different. In a school, a coworker is not just someone

who is in your building; a coworker is someone with whom you work in conjunction with and in support of. In very real ways, you are working *with* your colleagues, not just *beside*.

Here are some important questions around that idea:

- Can you make someone else's work easier by changing your behavior?
- Do you have a work relationship that is taking too much energy away from you instead of giving you energy?

This week, be especially mindful of how you control yourself and your behaviors. If you do that, nothing else will be out of control.

