

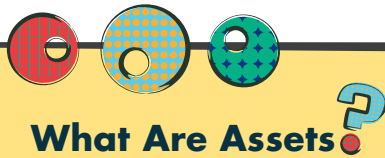


Ideas for Educators

42 Ready-to-Use Newsletters for School Success

36. PEACEFUL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.



What Are Assets?

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

Peaceful conflict resolution is one of five social-competencies assets.

40% 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.

- Teach conflict resolution.
- Practice conflict resolution.
- Reward conflict resolution.

Making Nonviolence a Way of Life

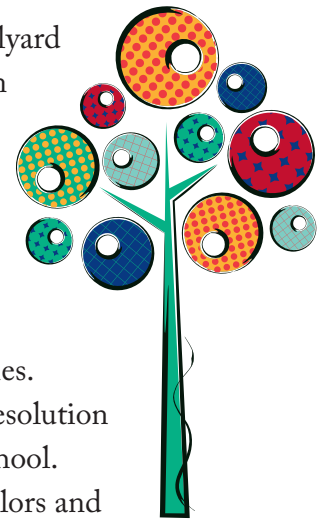
Notice that this asset doesn't say, "Young person *always* resolves conflicts nonviolently." It's unrealistic to suggest that. Instead, we need to teach young people how to seek nonviolent resolutions first. Their immediate reaction to a conflict should be to initially explore every means possible to find a peaceful end to the trouble.

This is always easier said than done, and as teachers we don't need to be adding to our already overstuffed workload. Consider this less a directive

that we need to be schoolyard police, and more a suggestion that children can learn nonviolent solutions to problems.

Consider:

- Looking into programs like PeaceGames.
- Adopting a conflict resolution curriculum at your school.
- Working with counselors and district-wide staff to decide on consistent responses to conflict.
- Making sure this is a systemic approach, not just an individualized approach.



Additionally, we can use literature and history to model successful experiences of nonviolent conflict resolution. Consider not only the classic stories of Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi but also fictional characters that effect powerful change with peaceful means. These stories often capture the imagination and inspire the idea that peace is viable.

Imagine how much easier your job gets when students can solve problems rationally and on their own. This seems like a concept that demands a lot of work up front, but it will pay off.

Long-Term Resolutions

There are two forms of conflict resolution that we're instilling in our young people: short-term reactions to moments of anger and long-term strategizing for solving larger personal conflicts.

Let's assume you're not presently engaged in hallway brawls with fellow teachers, so we're not going to worry about donnybrooks in the staff lounge. That means the sorts of conflicts you're facing tend to be long term and somewhat more "beneath the surface" than what you might see in your students. Yet over time, they can be as taxing and personally destructive as any other overt fight you could engage in.

The truth of peaceful conflict resolution is that while it might be peaceful, it's not easy. To engage in peaceful conflict resolution, you have to use your head, your heart, and all of your maturity and patience. The effort involved might

make you want to avoid conflict altogether. But remember: the energy you put into fixing your conflicts is much less than the energy you're losing to the conflict itself.

With that in mind, pick one conflict this week and begin the process of seeking long-term resolution.

Ask yourself:

- ⦿ What is one lingering conflict that has been sapping your energy?
- ⦿ What is the core reason for the conflict? (e.g., lack of communication)
- ⦿ What are the symptoms of this core reason? (e.g., a particular conversation that led to a misunderstanding)
- ⦿ What are the steps you need to take together to work on the core conflict so that fewer "symptoms" occur?

