



Asset of the Month

December Asset Category: Social Competencies (Internal Asset)

December Asset: #34. Cultural Competence

In a healthy community a young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.

(43% Of youth surveyed believe that they have this asset in their lives.)

What youth say about Social Competencies: “Be open to the possibilities of people” “Teach acceptance and respect, and we won’t have to learn tolerance.”

Social Competencies – are the skills all people need to navigate successfully through life. Without social competencies, people lack the essential skills they need to live their values, contribute in meaningful ways, get along with others, and be responsible members of society. Learning social competencies is like learning how to play the piano. Rarely does the piano playing sound very good at first. Likewise, to develop basic skills needed for life we need “piano teachers” more than “music critics.” We need suggestions for new methods to try and encouragement to keep going when we make mistakes. We need to be cheered on as we learn to master skills.

- Young people especially need adults and peers who demonstrate, teach, and practice skills with them.
- Young people need adults and peers who watch how they are doing with their skills, give them feedback along the way, and also let them make and learn from their mistakes.
- Celebrate cultural customs and rituals from your own heritage. Share those customs with neighbors, teammates, friends, and classmates by inviting them over for a meal that highlights food from your ethnic heritage.
- **DID YOU KNOW?**

“Culture” is more than the food people eat or the clothing they wear. Culture is part of what forms people’s attitudes, identities, and day-to-day behavior. Culture involves music, language, literature, customs, traditions, religious beliefs, environment, history, and self-image. The different ways people meet their basic needs (for food, clothing, shelter, and companionship) may be based on their culture. Members of a cultural group share experiences that connect them to each other and shape the way they think and live.

Learning about culture helps children appreciate their own heritage while discovering that differences between cultures create an interesting world. When children appreciate other cultures, they’re better able to respect and accept people who are different from themselves.

Parenting Tips & How-to-live the Asset of the Month:

Ages Birth – 5

- Decorate an infant’s home with items from many different cultures.
- Take infants along to events where they’ll meet people of different cultures and backgrounds.
- Surround infants with multicultural toys and books. Talk to infants about the cultures that represent their favorite toys. Say things like, “You really like your toy panda, don’t you? Pandas are rare and live in the bamboo forests of China.”

Ages 6 – 11

- Make music from around the world a part of a child’s environment. Check a children’s bookstore or toy store or visit a local library for some ideas.
- Eat foods from many cultures. Cook these foods at home or visit ethnic restaurants. Talk about food from other cultures that may already be part of the child’s diet. For example, you might say, “Did you know that the first people to grow popcorn were Native Americans?”

- Children may ask questions about why people are different. For example, a child may wonder why another child stutters or uses a wheelchair. Answer these questions as completely as you can. Help children feel more comfortable with people who are different from themselves.

Ages 12 – 18

- The more you know about people of different cultural, racial, and/or ethnic backgrounds, the less you fear. The less you fear, the more willing you are to explore new ideas and meet new people. Curiosity replaces suspicion, and you're not limited by ignorance or prejudice.
- Studies have shown that people who get along with different kinds of people are emotionally and physically healthier – and more successful in their careers – than those who don't.
- Teenagers: Seek out opportunities to mix with people from cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds different from yours. Also, read books and see movies that give you exposure to diverse people, customs, and beliefs.
- **6 Ways to Fight Racism in our School**
 1. Don't put up with it.
 2. Be on the lookout for racist biases.
 3. If you have a conflict with a student of another race, don't immediately assume it's a racial conflict.
 4. Widen your circle of friends.
 5. Talk about your racist feelings with adults you trust, friends, and get them out in the open so you can deal with them for what they are.
 6. Work for positive change.
 - **Family Discussion Topic/Activity:** Google [Teaching Tolerance](#) - for information regarding the HBO film "Prom Night in Mississippi". More links related to this film: teacher's guide to help your students explore the deeper meaning of the film, segregation – then and now, Loving across color lines, Interrupting racism and bigotry, and more. Teaching Tolerance newsletter is also available. Excellent family discussion topic – especially if you are able to view the film as a family first.

* Visit <http://www.familyresourcesheboygan.org>. Learn more about cultural competence and the other 39 assets. This website also lists other great websites for parents, youth group leaders, teachers, etc. with tools, handouts, etc.

*Please forward this information to co-workers, clients, families, and other contacts.

*Please respond with feedback, ideas for upcoming assets of the month, etc. Also contact us if your organization would like a 40-asset presentation or training.

***Next Month's Asset of the Month:** Category: Commitment to Learning #21. Achievement Motivation. If your organization has a potential asset building event or information you would like to share for the January "Asset of the Month" notice please respond by the 20th of December.

The Asset of the Month is a campaign is an effort under the Healthy Community/ Healthy Youth Initiative:

