

ASSET-BUILDING IDEAS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS

Chances are good that one reason you agreed to teach a religious education class is that you care a lot about young people and want to see them thrive. Your commitment to young people and your involvement in their lives can have a big impact on their developmental assets as well as on their spiritual growth. Here are some things you can do to help build their assets:

- **Show each young person in your class or group that you care about her or him.**
Greet each one personally. Notice when they are absent. Say hi to them outside of the religious education hours.
- **Create a climate in which young people's opinions and experiences are valued and respected.**
- **Let children and youth help choose** and adapt the curriculum you use.
- **Connect classroom learning with service to others.** Have your class play with or read books to children in the nursery. Have your class prepare and teach a class to younger children about peaceful conflict resolution.
- **Be clear about how you expect the young people in your class or group to behave.**
Set and enforce clear and fair ground rules. Teach young people the boundaries on behaviors that are integral to the life of a believer in your faith tradition.
- **Create meaningful activities for young people that help them stretch and grow,**
not just fill up the time you have together. You can start by involving them in planning and leadership.
- **Make lessons interesting, engaging, and relevant to young people's lives.** Be creative not only with the content but also with the format. Do some hands-on activities or games that teach and are fun. Take the young people on a short field trip during your time together.
- **Give young people opportunities to learn, practice, and teach social competencies.** Role-play different ways to respond to situations. Tie in a passage from a sacred text to a specific social competency asset, such as Asset 33 (Interpersonal Competence), which is about friendship and treating others well.
- **Help shape young people's personal identity** by helping them internalize their faith and discover their own sense of purpose.
- **Find other teachers who are interested in asset building.** Meet together on a regular basis to share ideas, discuss problems and possibilities, and celebrate what's working in your classroom.
- **Nurture your own development as a teacher and a person of faith.** Build on the strength of the assets you have.