

Resource Guide

Strengths-Based Education

"The view that you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life." - Dweck, 2008

Strengths-based education is a learner-centered approach to teaching that helps students identify, articulate and apply individual skills relevant to their learning needs. Based on research from social work, positive psychology and business, a strengths-based approach can help build student confidence, encourage efficacious behaviors, and support life-long learning pursuits.

Lopez and Louis (2009) identify five principles of strengths-based education that can help educators create learning experiences that support student engagement, well-being, retention, and job readiness. Consider each of the following principles and see how they can support your own teaching or advising.

- **Measure student strengths:** Survey students with questions that can help them identify their own strengths (Schreiner, 2013). Facilitate a class discussion based on students' experience with the survey or conduct individual meetings to discuss students' interpretation of results.
- **Create individualized learning opportunities:** Design personalized learning experiences where students can act on their strengths by providing several options for how learning can be demonstrated and assessed.
- **Help students network with strength supporters:** Provide mentorship opportunities or create cohort-based class collaboratives that provides peer support and feedback.
- **Provide opportunities where students can develop and integrate new strengths:** Help students build capacity for new strengths by creating opportunities for them to explore / practice developing behaviors. Help students make a connection between their strengths, personal goals, and areas of development so that they build confidence, autonomy, and sense of relatedness.
- **Advise for strengths development:** Help students consider their own responsibility in building their strengths through deliberate practice and engagement. Advise students on how they may formulate new strategies or access previously unassessed resources in order to develop their strengths. Conduct one on one consultations or one-minute reflection papers to allow students to conceptualize their strengths.

Resources

Dweck, C. S. (2008). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House Digital, Inc.

Lopez, S. J., & Louis, M. C. (2009). The principles of strengths-based education. *Journal of College and Character*, 10(4).

Spiteri, D. (2016). *Multiculturalism, higher education and intercultural communication: developing strengths-based narratives for teaching and learning*. Springer.

Schreiner, L. A. (2013). Strengths-based advising. *Academic advising approaches: Strategies that teach students to make the most of college*, 105-120.

For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center at ctl@slu.edu.