

60 in 60! Creating Moments That Matter: 60 Seconds or 60 Minutes!

Tips and Tools for Teaching and Student Success With Strengths

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The following 60 strengths teaching and learning strategies can be done in 60 seconds or 60 minutes. Each strategy provides an opportunity for you and your students to use strengths every day and to create “Moments That Matter” around strengths in the classroom.

These strengths teaching and learning strategies are organized as opportunities for engagement, creative applications, assessments, and recognition. Have fun. Add your own favorites and share them with us!

ENGAGEMENT:

- 1. Front Porch.** Welcome students in the hallway before class. Create a “front porch” for your classroom. Visit on the “front porch” about strengths — yours and theirs. This welcoming start to class will create a warm and accepting classroom environment.
- 2. Strengths Deck.** Ask students to fill out a 3x5 card with their name (as they would like to be called in the class) on one side of the card. Ask students to include their Signature Themes (or strengths) on the other side of the card. Ask students to note the strength(s) they think will serve them most during your class. This activity does several things. First, it provides a classroom name and strengths deck for you. Second, it requires students to know and link their strengths to your class. And finally, it provides opportunities for future conversations as students’ understanding of their strengths and class content evolve.
- 3. Dear Teacher Letter.** Ask students in your class to write you a “Dear Teacher” letter, detailing their understanding, questions, celebrations, and confusions about their strengths, as well as how to apply them in class and in a future career.
- 4. Strengths Notes.** Use the Name-Strengths Deck to get to know something special about each student. Note this positive attribution with the student’s strengths so that you will have ready access to your notes when you return papers with comments or write notes or winners cards for your students.
- 5. Connecting Through Strengths.** Start each class period with five minutes of talking with students about strengths. Connecting seems to help students relax and feel more comfortable talking with others during class discussions, volunteering during question and answer periods of the lecture, and presenting projects in front of the class.
- 6. Good News.** Begin a ritual of starting class by tossing a koosh ball around among students. When a student gets the Koosh Ball they can tell a “good news” story about a way they have recently used their strengths.
- 7. Question of the Day.** Invite students to write a question on the board about strengths — before you arrive in the classroom. Start class with a “Question for the Day” discussion-and-answer conversation.
- 8. Capture Students’ Interest.** Do strengths activities or exercises at the beginning of class, before getting into the academic content instead of afterward. Doing it this way captures students’ interest and focuses them in on their strengths in relationship to the lesson. The experience will help students want to understand how to use their strengths in pursuit

of educational goals. Doing it first also makes strengths conversations a priority.

9. **Strengths Chat.** Ask students to partner with a classmate and share a story about a time when they were successful. Ask students to link their strengths to their success. You can do this activity in small groups or with the larger class, but starting with dyads builds trust and confidence in strengths chats.
10. **Envelop Please.** At the beginning of each class, ask students to write one question about using their strengths in class. Collect the questions. Put them in an envelope. Randomly select 3-4 questions at the end of each class, and engage students in a brief discussion about the questions.
11. **Silly Questions.** During the first few weeks of school, as a method of more firmly associating a name with a face and getting to know the students' strengths, have them write their names on a pass-around sheet and then answer a silly question, such as "Would you rather be an astronaut or an oceanographer?" "Do you like red-blue-yellow or green-purple-orange better?" See if they can incorporate their strengths into their answer. "One of my strengths is Achiever. If I have to choose, I would choose astronaut because they have a list to check off." Or, "With Woo in my strengths, it's definitely a red-blue-yellow world for me!"

CREATIVE APPLICATIONS:

12. **Creative Strengths.** Take tinker toys, pins, straws, marshmallows, and toothpicks to class. Ask students to create a tower, bridge, or "masterpiece" using the objects. After the creative exercise, discuss the processes that went on during the experience. Tie the process to students' strengths.
13. **How I Use My Strengths.** At various times throughout the term, have students write short

essays on the way they see and use their strengths — nonthreatening, in-class credit, 10 points for anything handed in. These short pieces can be done at any time — sometimes unplanned is best!

14. **Strengths Bio-Sketch.** Ask students to write a biographical sketch about themselves, a beloved family member, or famous person. Ask students to consider how strengths have served them, their family member, or the famous person in life achievements.
15. **Strengths Learning Teams.** Organize learning teams at the beginning of the term based on diversity of strengths. Encourage students to share their strengths as they form the team. Encourage students to recognize and play to their strengths and the strengths of others on the team during group projects and presentations.
16. **Understanding Strengths in Context.** Ask students to write comments or questions about strengths and hand them in anonymously at the end of class. Begin the next class discussing the questions. Or, if appropriate, ask students to work through the questions on teams of 4-5 as an active learning assignment at the beginning of the next class. This might be a good strategy for anonymously managing issues related to classroom team behavior, roommate issues, etc.
17. **Walk the Halls Slowly.** In the halls, cafeterias, or stores, take time to greet students. Talk with students informally about their strengths (and yours).
18. **Book Bag Strengths.** Promote resiliency and get to know each other by asking each student to share something from their wallet, handbag, or book bag that gives them strength.
19. **Strengths Slogans.** Have students create slogans about their strengths. Ask student to create posters

on flip charts with their strengths slogans. Add fun by asking students to create a Strengths Flag Post.

20. **Strengths Skit.** Ask students to create a skit about their strengths. The skit can be a humorous way to integrate strengths into unique combinations for achievement.
 21. **Strengths Poster.** Organize students onto teams of 4-5. Give teams paper, flip charts, markers, or other resources, and ask them to demonstrate a strengths concept through illustration with words or pictures.
 22. **Graffiti Brainstorming.** Write key components for strengths discovery or study on separate pages of flip chart paper. Ideas might include: Dynamics of Strengths, Avoiding Barrier Language, Theme Interaction, Strengths and Performance, or Critical Activities and Strengths. Assign students to groups of 4-5 and ask them to move in a Gallery Walk around the room to each of the flip charts. Ask student teams to add “Graffiti” ideas to the charts. End the activity when the original group returns to their first poster. Ask each group to share a Graffiti Poster with the class. Lead a brief discussion.
 23. **Talent and Performance.** Ask student to draw a circle on a piece of paper. Ask them to draw 4-5 arrows pointing in toward the center of the poster. Encourage students to think of a performance challenge or goal that they are currently facing. Examples might include: studying for an exam, completing a paper, or working effectively on a team project. Ask students to write that challenge or goal in the center of the circle on their paper. Now, ask students to use the arrows to identify the strengths they can use in pursuit of the challenge or goal. Ask them to write the strength on the line created by the arrow. Encourage them to write the specific talents (or behaviors) of the strength under the arrow line.
- Model one on a challenge or goal you are facing. Invite a discussion.
24. **Muddiest Point.** Ask students to write a one-page narrative on the “Muddiest Point” about strengths — theirs or others. Ask students to bring their Muddiest Points to class. Begin class with a discussion of the Muddy Points.
 25. **Clean Up!** Begin class by asking students to exchange their Muddy Points. Ask students to “clean up” the Muddy Point of their classmate. Invite dyadic and large-group discussion after the clean up.
 26. **Muddy Mess.** Ask students to join a team of 4-5 students. Encourage them to read and share their Muddy Points. Ask them to create a “Muddy Mess” of questions and concerns from their Muddiest Points. Ask teams to trade Muddy Messes. Each team works to find answers and then shares their work with the class. This is a fun pro-academic way to add team competition to the class. While our focus should be on the benefits and celebrations of strengths, students will have questions and concerns. Articulating those questions and finding answers in community with classmates is a powerful way to demonstrate the value of strengths.
 27. **Problem Box.** Create a Problem Box for issues related to strengths. While our primary focus will be on strengths celebration and learning, students will inevitably begin to see issues around themes, i.e., barrier language and how to avoid it, blind spots to strengths, leveraging and maximizing for the most benefit from their strengths, productive application of strengths in specific or critical activities, and strengths and interview. Ask students to place their “problems” in the box. Select a few problems at the beginning of class for a large- or small-group discussion. Take a few minutes at the

end of the week and ask teams of students to come up with potential solutions to the problems in the Problem Box.

- 28. Stump the Teacher.** Make the Problem Box a “stump the teacher” strategy by asking students to come up with complex issues or problems related to strengths. Let students stump you. Give teams the task of finding answers to the Problem Box as extra credit.
- 29. Moments That Matter.** Create a Lessons Learned, Moments That Matter, and Light Bulb Moments Treasure Chest. Ask students to deposit comments, narratives, writings, and examples in the chest. Take a few examples out at the end of each week and celebrate the learning.
- 30. Fish Bowl.** Create a Fish Bowl discussion. Ask a group of students to sit in the center of the class and role play or discuss an issue related to strengths, while the rest of the class sits in a circle around the group watching. Lead a class discussion on the Fish Bowl issue or role play.
- 31. Teach to Strengths.** Use multiple strategies for adult learning in your class. Delivering material through lecture, group discussion, activities, role-play, problem-based learning, team learning . . . all contribute to teaching opportunities that will meet the unique talents and strengths of student in your class. Invite a classroom assessment paper at the end of the second week of class asking students to identify the teaching strategies that best suit their strengths. Use this feedback to enhance your class delivery methods.
- 32. Pop Culture.** Use relevant “pop” culture references in class. Ask students to reflect on a television show, movie, or CD and analyze the strengths they see evident or developed in the pop culture example.
- 33. Popular Media.** Use a short clip from a popular movie to explain a strength or strengths concept. Almost any popular media will do. Films like *Billy Elliot* or re-runs of the T.V. show *Friends* are quite engaging.
- 34. Traveling Files.** Create Traveling Files using common file folders. Develop brief questions about strengths or strengths concepts, and put one question in each file folder. Organize class into problem-solving teams of 4-5 students each. Give each team a Traveling File, ask each team to discuss and respond in writing to the question, and then pass the file on to the next team for continued discussion, elaboration, and writing. When the files have been to three or four teams, have the finishing team read and discuss the response.
- 35. Four Corners.** Organize students into four large teams. Using the Four Corners of the classroom, ask students to join a team in the corner and work together on a specific topic related to strengths. Examples of Four Corners discussions might include avoiding barrier language and blind spots; dynamics and interaction of strengths; application of strengths to critical activities; and recognition strategies for specific strengths. You might also use selected reading on strengths in each of the Four Corners. Check with each team to make sure they are on track with the material they are discussing. After about 10 minutes, ask each Corner team to share with the entire class.
- 36. Strengths Cards.** Strengths Cards are a 3x5 note card with a Signature Theme on one side of the card and a brief description of the strengths in the theme on the other side. Pass out the cards randomly as students arrive for class. Ask students to read the card and then turn to a partner and discuss the strength. Encourage students to share with their partner the benefits of the strength. Ask students

to identify strengths that they use. Ask students to discuss ways they might partner with a person with the strength on the Strengths Card. After a brief discussion, ask a few Strengths Card pairs to share their conversation with the entire class.

37. **Pop Quiz.** Have a Strengths Pop Quiz just for fun. Prepare a quiz with students' names and strengths. Use this as an engaging and energizing start to class. Give students 5 minutes to answer the Pop Quiz. Open discussion is encouraged!
38. **Scavenger Hunt.** Have a Strengths Scavenger Hunt. Provide a worksheet with 10 lines and three columns. The lines are for students to use as they find 10 students who have strengths that are different than their own. The columns are to write the name of the student, name of the strength, and brief description of the way the student is using the strength in class. After about 10 minutes, invite students to share lessons learned about strengths.
39. **Turn-to-a-Partner.** Use a Turn-to-a-Partner discussion strategy to break up the lecture. Regardless of the content you are teaching, make the partner discussion focus on strengths. Examples might be: "How are you using your strengths to understand the content of this lesson." In what ways does the content of this lesson align with your strengths?" If the content of this lesson becomes part of your career, how will you use your strengths to maximize your success?" After a brief discussion, ask a couple of pairs to share and continue on with the content of the class. This "lecture break" is an excellent way to re-energize class and link strengths to the specific lesson.
40. **Mission Possible.** Offer Mission Possible goals for additional assignments. Ask students to watch for Moments That Matter with their strengths. Those moments might be in class or outside of class. Provide the opportunity for students to write a one-page narrative about the Mission Possible through strengths narrative. Give bonus points to this assignment.
41. **Minute Paper.** Ask students to come to class with a Strengths Minute Paper. A Minute Paper is a short narrative that takes a minute or so to write: ½ page, handwritten. Ask students to be mindful and watch for applications of the strengths in their daily interactions. Encourage them to record this interaction with a Minute Paper. Ask students to gather on teams of 4-5 at the beginning of class to share their Minute Papers. Collect the papers and use them for participation points for the day.
42. **Focused Listing.** Ask students to create a Strengths Focused Listing of the talents in their strengths. Encourage them to add to the list as they discover more about the talents they bring to class, college, and their relationships. After a couple of weeks, invite student to share their Strengths Focused Listing with a partner. Lead a brief discussion of talents embedded in strengths.
43. **Top 10 List.** Close the term by asking student to create a Top 10 List, Top 5 List, Take Home Message, or Moments that Matter List of main points they are going to take away from your class discussion on strengths.
44. **Five on Friday.** Take five minutes at the end of the last class period of the week (even if it is not Friday). Ask students to reflect back on the week and identify five ways they have used their strengths in pursuit and achievement of class, college, or personal goals. Provide a few minutes of reflection time. Ask five volunteers to share so that you end the week with Five on Friday.
45. **Office Chats.** Encourage students to visit you during your office hours. Ask students to come for

a strengths chat. Use this time to ask students about their strengths and ways they are linking their strengths to the content and work in your class. This individualized strengths conversation can be very powerful as students learn to link their class success and future careers. This interpersonal connection with students is also a powerful motivation and source of great inspiration.

46. **Invited Guests.** Invite guests to the classroom. While the guests are invited to discuss content, careers, and learning goals, use this opportunity for students to learn about the strengths of others. You might ask the guest to complete the Clifton StrengthsFinder prior to visiting your class. Or, you could simply ask the guest to tell about a time when they were at their best in their career, and then ask students to think about the strengths that might be the underpinning of that success.
47. **Service Learning.** Provide service learning opportunities through internships, clinical settings, and visits to business and industry. Include strengths observations as a part of the experience in addition to the content and career observations. Ask students to integrate strengths observations into their service learning narratives as a way to link strengths with “real-world” opportunities.
48. **Issue Bank.** Create a Strengths Issue Bank on a flip chart. Post it in your class every day. As issues arise inside, or outside, of class about strengths, ask students to record the issue on the Strengths Issue Bank. Arrange time at the end of each week to address the comments, questions, or issues listed on the Strengths Issue Bank. Assign students to answer issue bank questions as appropriate.
49. **Study Groups.** Encourage students to form study groups based on diversity of strengths. Much research demonstrates the importance of out-of-

class groups as beneficial for student engagement, retention, and achievement. By forming groups based on diversity of strengths, you are adding the mutual benefit of learning to work and partner with others with different strengths. This benefit will serve students well as they move into their careers and jobs.

ASSESSMENTS:

50. **Assignment Alignment.** Develop assessments and testing strategies to provide for a range of learning styles and strengths. Make sure to ask student to not only complete the assignment using their strengths, but also be prepared to tell why the choices they made in doing the assignment aligned with their strengths.
51. **Strengths Choice.** On a quiz or test, allow a two-part test. Each page would have a 40-point Part A or a 40-point Part B. Students can answer one question on Part A and move on to the next page OR answer Part B, which includes four questions worth 10 points each. This allows a student a choice when taking a test. Multiple choice or short answer essay by choice. The choice will be one way they can demonstrate their learning through their strengths.
52. **Your Own Question.** Provide a space at the end of the test for students to write and answer their own question. Use a statement like: “If there is something you studied that was NOT on the test, use this space to write and answer your own test question.” This test question gets bonus points if the student can identify why having this option links to their strengths.
53. **Exam Cover.** Create a cover sheet for your exams asking students to identify any questions on the exam that were misleading, confusing, or needed clarifying. Ask students to reword the question and

answer it. Give bonus points to students who can link their strengths to why they took or did not take this option.

- 54. Play to Your Strengths.** When students have a choice of assignments, encourage them to use their strengths as a way to analyze assessment options. Encourage students to link their strengths to assessments.
- 55. Strengths Samples.** Create examples (collect examples) of well-written test responses, creative projects, or other assignments. Link these examples to the student strengths represented. Share examples as you make the assignment. Attach the examples of written test responses to the course outline or syllabus.

RECOGNITION:

- 56. Winner's Cards.** Don't wait until the end of the term to write Winner's Cards. Winner's Cards are short notes to students explicitly tying strengths to achievements and success. Write winners cards for each of your students at three weeks into the term or at mid-term. Our orientation might be to wait until the end of the term. Writing a brief card or note earlier about your observations of the student's strengths will provide powerful interpersonal motivation for the student to succeed (using their strengths) for the rest of the term. Write them at the end of the semester too.
- 57. Strengths Treasure Chest.** Ask students to watch for times when they or others in the class use their strengths to the benefit of the class culture, energy, learning, achievement, etc. Ask students write a note about the experience and drop it in a box designated as the Strengths Treasure Chest. Use this as a recognition strategy several times a month

to get students excited about being "talent scouts" and watching for strengths.

- 58. Drop Zone.** After sharing the ideas from *How Full Is Your Bucket?*, use wall space outside your office or create a one-day opportunity in class for students to share "Positive Drops." (Templates for drops are available at www.bucketbook.com.)
- 59. Personal Assessment and Development Plan.** Ask students to complete a Strengths Personal Assessment and Development Plan. Ask students to list and briefly discuss three strengths they use to complete the critical activities of your class. Ask students to link these strengths to what they believe will be essential to their continued success in college and beyond. Next, ask students to write a paragraph description for each of these strengths. Encourage students to discuss their choices and narratives with a classmate.
- 60. Legacy Letter.** Have students write a legacy letter at the end of the term telling new students who will take the class the following semester how they used their strengths in the class. Faculty can use the letters in subsequent terms to help students understand how to use their strengths in pursuit of class outcomes.