

Lesson Plan: Know Your Strengths. Own Your Strengths.

The WHY

The NextGen program brings students and business leaders together for dialogue and mentoring in a school environment to help individuals gain the skills and confidence to make bold career choices. Knowing and understanding our unique strengths is an important step in career decision-making. Through videos, discussion, and activities, students identify and share their strengths and explore how this awareness can inform life choices.

Learning objectives

- Students will be able to define strengths vs. weaknesses
- Students will be able to identify their strengths
- Students will recognize how the identification of their strengths can help to inform life choices

Age/ Experience Level Grades 10- 12

Time 60 minutes

Materials Computer and speakers for video, projector, extra chairs for mentor(s), flip chart paper, markers, student handout; Identify Your Strengths, pens

Part 1: Introduce the topic using a video (10 min)

Show this video to the students: [Let's be 11 again](#) (time 2:27)

The question below is highlighted in the video. Read this question to the students before showing the video and ask students to think about how they would answer it.

- Do you know yourself well enough to know what it is you love?

Discuss the video with the students and see what answers they came up with.

Ask the students to answer, “When was the last time a day flew by and what were you doing?” and have them share their answer with someone next to them or share as a group.

Background information on Marcus Buckingham

He is a best-selling author, consultant and speaker, widely considered one of the world's leading authorities on employee productivity and the practices of leading and managing. Buckingham addresses more than 250,000 people around the globe each year and is routinely lauded by leading corporations as an invaluable resource in informing, challenging, mentoring and inspiring people to find their strengths and obtain and sustain long-lasting personal success.

Part 2: Key Points (10 min)

Explain the following to students (a comment on strengths, leadership, diversity and inclusion): Taking a strengths-based approach means recognizing and accepting that we are not good at everything. It is hard for many people to step back and let others lead. It can feel like failure to ask others for help. But we can't fully embrace our strengths if we can't acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of others. Being able to see the unique talents of other people helps reduce bias and discrimination, and is the foundation of leadership. By valuing strengths, we can create groups, teams and communities that provide a sense of belonging to everyone.

Follow up the discussion above with the information below. Suggestion: write the definition of strengths on flip chart paper to post in the room and write "the data" information on a separate flip chart paper. Or, create 2 power point slides to project this information.

Define strengths

A strength is an activity that makes you feel strong. A strength is not just something that you are good at. That's a skill. A strength is an activity that you're good at and that gets you excited. A weakness, on the other hand, is something that makes you feel weak. You may be good at it, but the activity drains you. (Provide personal examples.)

The Data

When involved in strength activities,

- you have a sense of **energy and engagement**; this is called **flow**
- you often **lose your sense of time because you are so engrossed in the task**
- **you rapidly learn new information and approaches**
- you show **high levels of performance**
- you want to **do things that use your strengths**, even when you are tired or stressed

Part 3: Activities to Identify Strengths (25min)

Note: If time is tight, chose one of these activities to complete. If only one activity can be completed, Activity 2 is recommended.

Activity 1: Interests / Curiosities

Write the questions below on a piece of flip chart paper or hand out a piece of paper with these questions on them. Ask the students to write down the answers to these questions. Note that that these questions help to highlight strengths that people have.

Think back to when you were a kid:

What did you love to do?

What did other people say about you? (Parents, friends, teachers, etc.)

What were your deep interests or curiosities?

How do these things show up for you today?

Activity 2: Identifying Your Strengths

(See Handout A) Have students complete the handout.

Once they have completed the handout, choose 3 of the following questions for the students to answer and either a) share with the group, b) share with the person next to them, or c) write the answers on a sticky note and post it on a piece of flip chart paper at the front of the room that has the corresponding question. The answers can then all be read out loud.

- What are 3 things you are naturally good at?
- What knowledge or expertise do you have?
- Which personal characteristics are you most proud of?
- Think about what you have done in the last week. Do you feel like you are spending more time in your areas of strengths or weakness?
- How can greater self-awareness of your strengths influence the decisions you make about the future?

Part 4: Questions for mentor(s): (15 min)

Ask the mentor the questions below. If time permits, open the floor up for students to ask the mentor questions

- Can you share one of your strengths with us?
- How did your awareness of your strengths help you get to where you are today?
- Have you had experiences in your life when you knew you weren't using your strengths enough? How did it feel? What did you do?
- Have you had experiences when you knew you had "flow"? When you found yourself energized and engaged by what you were doing?
- Has your appreciation of your own strengths allowed you to better identify and appreciate the strengths of others? Can you provide some examples?
- Taking a strengths-based approach also means recognizing that we aren't good at everything. How do you handle this in your professional life? Have you ever felt that as a leader you had to be good at everything?
- Can you share some first-hand accounts on the different strengths that your work colleagues have and how this diversity allows you to be a more productive team?

Handout A: Identifying Your Strengths

Strengths can be identified as verbs, nouns, adjectives. Use the steps below to identify your strengths.

Step 1: Strengths as Verbs

Some of your strengths are action-based (verbs) or they can be made into verbs by adding “ing”.

Examples

- Memorizing
- Solving
- Driving
- Healing
- Constructing
- Calculating
- Researching
- Fixing
- Coaching
- Sewing
- Planning
- Motivating

Write down 3 action items that you are naturally good at.

Step 2: Strengths as Nouns

Some of your strengths are nouns. They are subjects, knowledge, or expertise that you know something about and love to use.

Examples

- Computers
- Math
- Fashion
- Data
- Graphics
- Antiques
- English
- Science
- Music
- Children
- History
- Flowers

Think about knowledge and expertise that you have and love to use. Write down 3 nouns that are your strengths.

Step 3: Strengths as Adjectives

And then there are the third kind of strengths: those that are adjectives or adverbs. These strengths enhance your verb strengths. They describe the style in which you do what you naturally do best, such as: research methodically, organize quickly, communicate clearly

Examples

- Adaptable
- Creative
- Flexible
- Responsible
- Punctual
- Calm
- Accurate
- Dependable
- Methodical
- Persistent
- Courteous
- Brave

Which personal characteristics are you most proud of? Write down three of your best personal traits or “adjective” strengths.
