



Greater Good in Education
SCIENCE-BASED PRACTICES FOR KINDER, HAPPIER SCHOOLS

DISCOVER YOUR GREAT FULL SELF

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

OVERVIEW

Students take the VIA (Values-In-Action online survey) to identify their strengths and discuss with each other ways they could use their strengths. (Gratitude for Tweens & Teens – Lesson 1)

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Anytime during the year

TIME REQUIRED

- 1 class period

LEVEL

- Middle School
- High School

MATERIALS

- [Lesson One PowerPoint slideshow](#)
- Computer & monitor or projector to show video: "[The Science of Character](#)"
- Computer or other device for every student to take computer-based survey
- Poster paper (one per student), pencil, markers, colored pencils, etc.
- [VIA Strengths Poster](#)

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Identify their top five character strengths
- Gain a greater understanding of themselves

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- Take the adult version of the [VIA](#) to explore your own character strengths.
- Do you agree with the survey results of your top five strengths?
- Think of a moment in your life when you were performing at your best and consider how any of your top strengths factored into that successful moment.

INSTRUCTIONS

Notes:

- This lesson is part of a [series on gratitude](#); however, this lesson can be done on its own as an introductory lesson on character strengths.
- The instructions below refer to the slides in the [Lesson One PowerPoint slideshow](#).

SLIDE 1 – INTRODUCE THE LESSON

- Introduce this program and its purpose:
 - *These lessons give us a special opportunity to learn about gratitude, how to practice it and why, and to learn about the gifts we each carry around inside us so that we can use them to make the world better.*

SLIDE 2 – CHARACTER STRENGTHS

- Introduce character strengths:

- *Before we get going on gratitude, we want to start this program by talking about YOU. Specifically, what are some of your top strengths?*
- *Character strengths are personal qualities, like honesty and leadership, that help you get along in the world and be a better person. People tend to be stronger at a few of these virtues than others. Knowing your character strengths and using them can help you be happier and more successful in the world. So...*
- Have students look at the word cloud on the slide and guess which would be their top three strengths.

SLIDE 3 – CHARACTER STRENGTHS VIDEO

- Have students watch the video "[The Science of Character](#)" (8 minutes).

SLIDE 4 – CHARACTER STRENGTHS SURVEY

- After watching the video, tell students that they will now take an online survey that will help them discover their own character strengths.
 - *Now it's your turn to find about YOUR strengths! We're going to take a survey that will help you identify your character strengths.*
 - *Everyone pull out a device and go to the following [website](#) (see slide).*
 - *Under the heading, "Register to Get Started," enter your name, email, gender, date of birth, and a password. Make sure the second box ("I have read...of this agreement") is checked, then click "register."*
 - *On the next page, select, "I want to take the VIA survey for youth" (it's shorter than the adult version), then click, "Take survey."*
 - *On the next page, select, "I am taking the survey for myself." Answer all of the questions.*
 - *At the end of the survey, you will come to a page labeled "demographics." You can fill in the information if you wish, or you can just click, "Complete survey."*
 - *On the next page, click "Download your character strengths profile."*
- Teachers: If you haven't yet taken the survey, please do so now!
- After everyone has completed the survey, tally up everyone's strengths (see the next slide).

SLIDE 5 – TALLYING UP THE CLASS'S CHARACTER STRENGTHS

- Tally up the class's strengths: Ask the students to look at their top two strengths. Then get a tally of how many students had one of their top two strengths in the wisdom category, courage category, etc.
- Then reveal what your class's top strengths were, e.g., "Looks like our class is really high on justice and courage!" This is a fun way for everyone to get a sense of each other's strengths.

SLIDE 6 – HOW YOU CAN USE YOUR STRENGTHS

- Students will now have an opportunity to discuss how they might use their strengths.
 - *Next I want you to get into partners and discuss how you could each use one of your top strengths to help others or society. For example, if one of your top strengths is bravery, then you might make a good firefighter. Or, if you score high in creativity, then you could use it to create music. If you score high in kindness, how might you find opportunities to encourage others to be kind?*
- Give students a few minutes to discuss their strengths with a partner.

- Hand out poster materials and have each student create a poster that lists their top five character strengths. This can be as creative as they would like and could include artwork that symbolizes their strengths. They could use pictures, images, drawings and words to describe themselves and their top five strengths. (OPTION: This can also be done as homework.)
- Teachers can create their own simpler poster that lists two of their top five strengths, one that may be apparent to most students and one that may not be.
- After, ask for a few volunteers to share an idea for how to use a particular strength.

CLOSURE

- Ask students to reflect either verbally or in written form about something that they discovered about themselves or that surprised them from this activity.

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

How did students respond to this practice? Were they surprised at their own and others' character strengths? Do you notice whether students are using their strengths more intentionally after doing this practice?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Research suggests that certain [character strengths that connect](#) us to others, such as gratitude, also [encourage us to serve the greater good](#).

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Studies have found that adolescents who are [passionate about helping](#) people in their neighborhoods and community are less depressed and less likely to engage in antisocial behavior. In addition, they tend to do better in school, are more satisfied with life, and show greater levels of self-esteem, hope, and happiness.

Thus, helping teens to identify their strengths and then encouraging them to use those strengths to make the world a better place yields benefits on many levels, including personal and in the wider world.

SOURCE

Thanks! A Strengths-Based Gratitude Curriculum for Tweens and Teens developed by Dr. Giacomo Bono and Yvonne Huffaker, in partnership with the Greater Good Science Center and the John Templeton Foundation. Slide design by Susan Mangan and Rachel Baumsteiger.

For the entire curriculum, click [here](#).