

- 1** Understanding the Impact of Strength-Based Practices
- 2** Strength-Based Practices for Communication
- 3** Showing Up as Strength-Based
- 4** Speaking & Listening as a Strength-Based Practitioner

Facilitator Guide

Understanding the Impact of Strength-Based Practice



In order for students to meet academic expectations, they must feel like school is a place where they can be successful. One essential component of self-efficacy is a sense of belonging and discovery of strength in students who had previously been deemed failures. In this session, participants develop an understanding of how strength-based practices can combat the effects of trauma and feelings of rejection.

Session Overview

TIME: 55 MIN



Reflection and Connection: 10 MIN
Discuss how a lack of a sense of belonging can lead to trauma



Research and Inspiration: 20 MIN
Develop an understanding of how strength-based practices can combat the effects of trauma








Interactive Application: 20 MIN
Consider how strength-based practices can support specific students





Next Steps: 5 MIN
Decide on path forward

Learning Objectives:

- › Understand how strength-based practices can counteract the effects of trauma.
- › Identify symptoms and root causes of student disengagement due to a lack of a sense of belonging.
- › Explore ways to seek to understand what experiences are crucial to disengaged students.

Steps		Materials
 Prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine pairs for Step 6 if you'd like participants to share ideas with specific colleagues about strength-based practices. 	
Full Session 55 MIN		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slides Participant Note Catcher
 10 MIN	1 Reflect on how lacking a sense of belonging can impact students' feelings about school	
	2 Discuss how a lack of a sense of belonging and trauma go hand in hand	EXTENSION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belonging Simulation
 20 MIN	3 Learn about the relationship between strength-based practices and trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What Is Strength-Based Practice's Relationship to Trauma? handout
	4 Consider how strength-based practices can combat the effects of trauma	
 20 MIN	5 Apply conceptual understandings about strength-based approaches to actual practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength-Based Practice Entry Points
	6 Identify strength-based practices to support specific students	
 5 MIN	7 Complete an Exit Ticket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exit Ticket
	8 Decide on a path forward	
Follow-Up		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review participants' Exit Tickets and provide additional resources and support. Determine next steps for professional learning, such as proceeding to the next session in this series. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If appropriate: Strength-Based Culture Session 2: Strength-Based Practices for Communication

 Download materials for this session at <https://eskolta.org/learningcenter/sessions/understanding-impact-of-strength-based-practices/>
 For tips on facilitation, visit the [School Improvement Methods](#) section of our site.



Reflection and Connection | 10 MIN

The session opening invites participants to draw on previous experiences to establish a new foundation for learning about the impact that a sense of belonging can have on students.



MATERIALS:
Distribute
**Participant
Note Catcher**


1. Reflect on Feeling Marginalized | 5 MIN

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Reflect on Feeling Marginalized:

Reflect on a situation where you were somewhere that you felt like you did not truly belong or knew you would fail.

- What was that like for you?
- Do you remember how that feeling might have made an impact on your thoughts, actions, or relationships?



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This prompt primes participants to understand how powerful a sense of belonging can be by reflecting on what it feels like when it's missing.

FACILITATOR: Invite participants to reflect on a situation where they were somewhere that they felt like they did not truly belong, or they knew they would fail.

PARTICIPANTS: What was that like for you? Do you remember how that feeling might have made an impact on your thoughts, actions, or relationships?

Establishing community agreements around confidentiality at the outset will help to ensure that participant and student privacy is protected during this session.


2. Discuss Relationship to Trauma | 5 MIN

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Discuss Relationship to Trauma:

Imagine feeling like you don't belong or know you will fail every day for 180 days a year.

- In what ways can a feeling of not belonging affect a young person's engagement within a school community?



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Providing an opportunity for discussion allows participants to process their reflections, unearth connections to their own learning experiences, and engage in collaborative inquiry with colleagues.

FACILITATOR: Facilitate a brief discussion about the effects of feeling a lack of belonging in a community.

PARTICIPANTS: Imagine feeling that way every day for 180 days a year. In what ways can a feeling of not belonging affect a young person's engagement within a school community?

At its heart, strength-based practice is about communicating to young people that they belong—in their schools, and in their lives, that they have strengths in them, and what is strong in them will define their story. But in order to begin to send these messages of belonging, we need to understand how deep the feelings of not belonging really go.

Extension | 15–20 MIN

To allow participants to more deeply experience the feelings of a lack of belonging, consider beginning the session with the **Belonging Simulation Activity** in which you, as facilitator, role-play an authoritative figure requiring participants to follow strict norms. Provide time to process and reflect on the experience and how it might mirror the experiences students have at school.



Research and Inspiration | 20 MIN

Strength-based practices can counteract the effects of trauma and instill a sense of belonging in students who were previously failed by their school.

3. Explore Definition | 7 MIN

MATERIALS:
Distribute
*What Is
Strength-Based
Practices’
Relationship to
Trauma?*

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Explore the Definition of “Strength-Based:”

Read *What Is Strength-Based Practice’s Relationship to Trauma?*

- ★ Place a star next to anything that resonates with you.
- ? Place a question mark next to anything you wonder about.

Consider:

- Have you observed students feeling rejected or marginalized?
- How did that affect their feelings toward school or themselves?
- What, if anything, helped to combat this feeling of rejection?



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Participants will explore research on trauma and how strength-based practices can combat its effects.

FACILITATOR: Distribute *What Is Strength-Based Practice’s Relationship to Trauma?*

PARTICIPANTS: While you read, place a star next to anything that resonates for you, and a question mark next to anything you wonder about. Consider whether or not you have observed students feeling rejected or marginalized and how that affected their feelings toward school or themselves. What, if anything, helped to combat this feeling of rejection?


If participants are unfamiliar with deficit models, clarify that this is a focus on addressing weaknesses rather than building on strengths. For more information, see [Discarding the Deficit Model](#).

4. Discuss | 13 MIN

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Discuss Trauma and Being Strength-Based:

- ★ Pick one thing you **starred**:
 - Why did you star it?
 - What does it say to you about student actions and beliefs?
- ? Pick one item you **wondered** about:
 - What do you wonder?
 - When students engage in “bad behavior,” what questions might they be asking about whether or not they belong?
 - How can we counteract the trauma-informed voices in students that tell them they are unwanted and do not belong?



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Self-reflection empowers learners to derive their own meaning from research.

FACILITATOR: Invite participants to respond to the reading about strength-based practices and trauma.

PARTICIPANTS: Pick one thing you starred. Why did you star it? What does it say to you about student actions and beliefs? Pick one item you wondered about. What do you wonder? When students engage in “bad behavior,” what questions might they be asking about whether or not they belong? How can we counteract the trauma-informed voices in students that tell them they are unwanted and do not belong?

There may be questions participants raise that are hard to address in the moment. Keep a parking lot of these questions to ensure you will return to them.

Extension | 15–20 MIN

Facilitate a [Conversation on Paper](#) or [Carousel](#) with discussion prompts from Step 4 so that all participants have an opportunity to share and respond to one another.

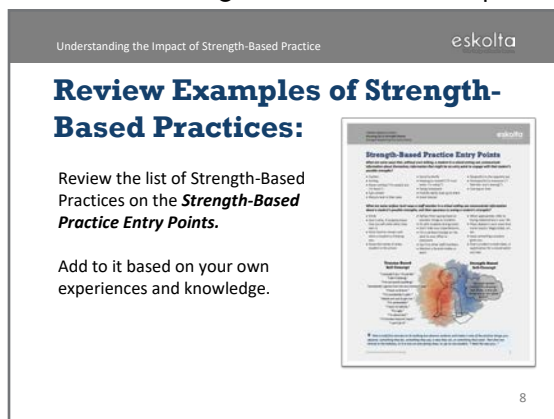


Interactive Application | 20 MIN

Participants will put their research-based understanding of a strength-based approach into practice through application and analysis.

5. Review Strength-Based Practices | 5 MIN


MATERIALS:
Distribute
*Strength-Based
Practice Entry
Points*




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Review Examples of Strength-Based Practices:

Review the list of Strength-Based Practices on the *Strength-Based Practice Entry Points*.

Add to it based on your own experiences and knowledge.



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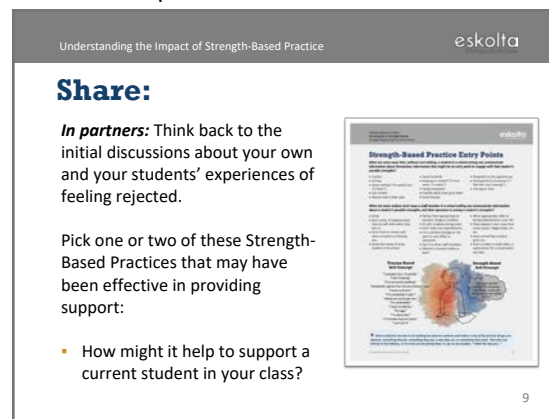
This activity allows participants to apply their conceptual understandings of what constitutes a strength-based approach to actual classroom practices.

FACILITATOR: Distribute the Strength-Based Practices handout.

PARTICIPANTS: Review the list of Strength-Based Practices and add to it based on your own experiences and knowledge.

Identify existing strength-based practices in your school community, and highlight those, especially if participants need support thinking of their own.

6. Share | 15 MIN



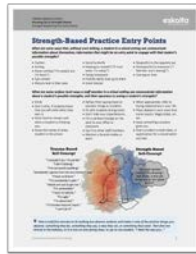
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Share:

In partners: Think back to the initial discussions about your own and your students' experiences of feeling rejected.

Pick one or two of these Strength-Based Practices that may have been effective in providing support:

- How might it help to support a current student in your class?



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This activity provides participants with an opportunity to synthesize their individual takeaways from the previous activity with their colleagues' ideas, thus illuminating broader schoolwide trends.

FACILITATOR: Ask participants to share their responses with a partner, then share out and document new ideas.

PARTICIPANTS: Think back to the initial discussions about your own and your students' experiences of feeling rejected. Pick one or two of these practices that may have been effective in providing support. How do they help to support a current student in your class?

Consider inviting participants to share the additional strength-based practices they generated in a digital file to serve as an ongoing resource for the school community.



Next Steps | 5 MIN

Based on where the group lands, invite participants to commit to completing follow-up steps before the next meeting.



MATERIALS:
Distribute
Exit Ticket

7. Wrap-Up | 3 MIN

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Learning Wrap-Up

- Reflect on what you learned today.
- How do your takeaways compare to the session's Learning Objectives? How were these objectives addressed today?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Understand how strength-based practices can counteract the effects of trauma.
- Identify symptoms and root causes of student disengagement due to a lack of a sense of belonging.
- Explore ways to understand what experiences are crucial to disengaged students.



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Reflecting on learning promotes closure and consolidation of new knowledge and skills.

FACILITATOR: Distribute the *Exit Ticket*. Invite participants to share how their thinking has shifted.

PARTICIPANTS: How do your takeaways compare to the session's Learning Objectives? How were these objectives addressed?


Consider highlighting specific insights or questions that emerged during the session and how they connect to the Learning Objectives.

8. Next Steps | 2 MIN

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What's Next?

- Explore strategies for identifying symptoms and root causes of student disengagement due to a lack of a sense of belonging.
- Learn more about how surface-level practices can engage with students' strengths.
- Develop a plan for implementing a surface-level practice with a specific student.
- Learn more about how communication practices can engage with students' strengths.
- Practice using listening and speaking skills to deepen understanding of students' strengths.



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Establishing next steps ensures that today's work is carried forward.

FACILITATOR: Offer next steps or follow up with participants based on their *Exit Ticket* responses.

PARTICIPANTS: What's next for your professional growth? What will you take back to your classroom? What resources will you need? How will you impact student learning? What evidence would determine that impact?

Participants may be at different places at this point. Provide specific recommendations based on readiness, such as in the chart on the following page.



Next Steps | *CONTINUED*

Based on where the group lands, invite participants to commit to completing follow-up steps before the next meeting.

If participants need to...	Support them in...
Learn more about the how a belonging mindset influences a student's engagement in school	› Reviewing Learning Mindsets Session 3: Sense of Belonging: Creating Safe Learning Environments
Explore research about sense of belonging and engagement in school	› Reading and discussing Karen Osterman's research about students' sense of belonging in school.
Understand how communication practices can engage with students' strengths	› Reviewing Strength-Based Culture Session 2: Strength-Based Practices for Communication
Develop a plan for implementing a surface-level practice with a specific student	› Reviewing Strength-Based Culture Session 3: Showing Up as Strength-Based