

## Professionals (Youth)

# Using Strengths to Increase Educator and Student Engagement

BY KAREN GRAVES



Engaged educators create learning environments that promote student motivation, collaboration, learning, and performance and are the number one predictor of student engagement. In turn, student engagement is a predictor of student performance. However, a recent Gallup survey on education and teacher engagement found that 7 out of 10 teachers rated themselves as “not engaged” or “actively disengaged” while at work. In addition, although teachers typically report a high level of emotional health and well-being, they also report very high levels of stress in their work environment. Strengths use has been linked to lower levels of stress and is a core predictor of workplace engagement.

While teachers search for a means to overcome disengagement and stress, students are faced with significant social and emotional challenges that interfere with their own success, both inside and outside of the classroom. A positive school environment, where students understand and utilize their personal strengths, is linked to well-being, engagement at school, and academic performance, and is fundamental to building social and emotional learning.

Teachers and school administrators can consider integrating character strengths into their work in the following two ways:

1. Have teachers “name and claim” their strengths during team meetings, encouraging them to use those strengths in their roles as teachers. Employees who use their character strengths at work report greater job satisfaction and engagement, and are more likely to see their work as a calling than those not using their strengths. Teachers can explore how to use their unique constellation of strengths, exploring how those particular strengths can enhance teaching and learning each day in the classroom.
2. Try this same activity with your students. Ask students to look at the list of character strengths and select which five strengths best describe them. Or better yet, encourage students to take the free VIA Youth Survey to learn their top strengths. Have students focus throughout the week on using the strengths that are high on their profile. Programs that promote student use of strengths have been shown to improve student academic skills while increasing student enjoyment and engagement at school.

Learn how to create a VIA Pro Site for Youth to get access to your students’ VIA Survey results.

When you are ready to go deeper, visit the [Mayerson Academy](#) website to learn about [Thriving Learning Communities](#), comprehensive character strength curriculum guides, services and resources.

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*Karen Graves, Ph.D.*

Karen Graves, Ph.D., is an experienced psychologist with more than 20 years of distinguished service to children, adolescents and their families. She is an experienced facilitator who has designed and led highly regarded professional learning experiences for parents, teachers and clinicians, and is a sought-after expert in online coaching. Karen is passionate about the potential of nonprofit organizations and has served as a consultant to develop nonprofit leaders' capacity in strategic planning, efficiency management and team building.

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