Introduction

An Invitation to Turn Around

The spirit of hope, inner strength, enthusiasm and persistent determination are the pillars for any success.

—Lailah Gifty Akita

What if it were possible to capture all the words that we said to and about each and every student and put them in a giant word cloud? Furthermore, what if the giant word cloud floated above and followed the student throughout the school day and accumulated year after year? What would those words look like? Sound like? Feel like? Look at the two word clouds in Figure i.1. What comes to mind? How would you respond to having each of these word clouds floating above your head as you went about your day?

FIGURE i.1: Word Clouds

Source: Word clouds created using wordcloud.com. Images courtesy of iStock.com.

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Unfortunately, the word clouds for some students may be filled with negative, deficit-based words that drain students' motivation and interest in learning, such as those you see on the left. However, teaching with a strengths-based conviction, more often using the language you see on the right, isn't easy. As teachers, particularly teachers of mathematics, we have been carefully taught that our role is to diagnose, eradicate, and erase students' misconceptions—in other words, even in the best of classrooms with the best formative assessment practices, we are taught to focus on the aspects of a child's work that demonstrate their challenges in order to determine where to take them next. Rather than viewing teaching as what Paulo Freire (1972) compared to banking, by making deposits in children, he prompts the educational community to recognize the knowledge and expertise that exist within the learner. He eloquently explains, "The teacher is of course, an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can make the profile, can shape the students. What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves" (p. 181). Learning, in its natural state, invites the learner to bring forth experiences, ideas, culture, feelings, passions, and interests into the learning experience. When students learn this way, they flourish. This is the essence of **strengths-based** instruction. Looking for and showcasing students' strengths recognizes the learner as valuable, competent, and important.

Strengths-Based: The strong points and the internal fortitude that students and teachers can build from; they are the collection of assets that support learning and teaching.

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Why Strengths-Based Instruction?

Children may regularly hear:

"You didn't do well on the math test we had yesterday."
"You need to listen more carefully."
"Take your time with this test, it is important that you do better this time."
"Your work showed you still do not know your facts."

What if teachers heard each day:

"Your students are not learning the math standards."
"I hope your math lesson is better today."

What if we regularly were only told what we don't do well? That environment would make it hard to stay in our chosen profession. We would likely be discouraged, be disheartened, and feel inadequate for the task. How can children who are likely less equipped with emotional strategies do any better?

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If you think they can't, you're right. What we are proposing in this book is that shifting from an attention to students' weaknesses to an emphasis on their strengths is an essential revolution. We believe this revolution holds a great deal of promise to fill classrooms with the following:

- Students eager to learn more mathematics
- Students who are more willing to persevere and engage in productive struggle
- Students who build agency that they can solve problems and think mathematically
- Students who think about what they are learning in mathematics at other times of the day—besides math class
- Teachers and students who develop a passion for the possibilities that mathematical literacy facilitates
- Teachers who relish the deeply positive and productive relationships they develop with students
- Families who grow in their desire to have their children become mathematical thinkers
- Families who enjoy mathematics at home in ways they didn't experience when the they were in school
- Communities that are filled with members who understand mathematics and can use it to solve problems at home and at the workplace
- Community members who will not be scammed because they didn't grasp mathematical ideas important to function in our economy
- Community members who believe they "can do math"

As the pebble of this idea of strengths-based teaching is tossed into the lake—the ripples are endless.

Who Is Strengths-Based Mathematics Teaching For?

Strengths-based mathematics teaching is for each and every educator or family member in all school contexts. Teachers and leaders can use strengths-based mathematics teaching to design lessons, organize their classrooms, provide feedback, engage in professional learning communities, and communicate with families. This approach benefits all students, including those who repeatedly have difficulty in mathematics, those who sometimes need support, multilingual learners, those with specific learning challenges, and those who may not exhibit learning challenges but instead relish challenges. In other words, strengths-based instruction supports students to recognize their value, develop an identity as a competent learner, increase their confidence, and engage in learning with clarity and purpose (Anderson, 2000).

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For students, having a teacher—any teacher—who sleuths out and capitalizes on their strengths in mathematics can stimulate more engagement and eagerness to learn and make for a more positive and productive learning environment as a whole.

Look at Figure i.2. What do you think these data represent? What is the story behind them?

FIGURE i.2: Tally of Comments

STRENGTH COMMENTS	DEFICIT COMMENTS
𝍸	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸

Imagine the conversations you hear daily about students' mathematics ability. In a study by one of the authors (Kobett, 2016), teachers were asked to describe the mathematics strengths of several of the students who were experiencing challenges with learning mathematics in their classes. The teachers were unable to describe any. Then the students' family members were asked the same question. The parents, extended family, or guardians were able to provide details of multiple strengths their children had in mathematics. Some of the family comments included

- Charlie loves to count everything! He is always counting and comparing amounts.
- Nyia tells me that she likes when they do fractions at school. She cooks with me at home a lot and says fractions make sense to her.
- Alonso plays checkers with his grandpa and is learning to play chess. He beats everyone but his grandpa!

Fourteenth-century Persian poet Shams-ud-din Muhammad Hafiz (ca. 1320–1389) wrote, "The words we speak become the house we live in." This phrase illustrates the power of the words we use. As we describe children in varying ways, we situate their position as learners in an instructional environment. The late, well-known influential thinker about business management Peter Drucker (2005) stated, "And yet, a person can perform only from strength. One cannot build performance on weaknesses, let alone on something one cannot do at all" (p. 100). If our goal is to deliver excellent mathematics instruction to each and every one of our students, we need to heed these words and think of ourselves as strength detectives. To explore this idea more deeply, first imagine a learner you have worked with in the past year who has struggled in

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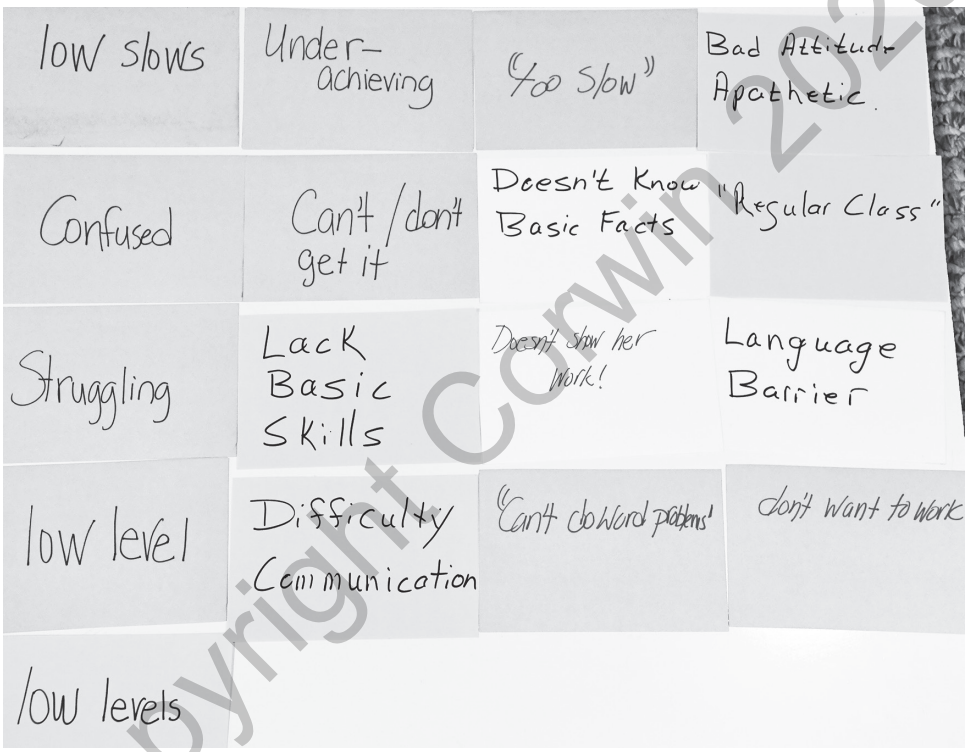
mathematics. Write three to five words below that you have heard others use to talk about or describe this student.

What do you notice about the words? If you are like many people we have posed this task to, the words can be perceived as negative, maybe even derogatory, and they tend to detail what the student cannot do. In a recent workshop, we asked teachers and counselors to write the words they had heard about students who were currently struggling in mathematics (Figure i.3).

FIGURE i.3: Deficit-Based Descriptors of Students



Now, imagine what hearing these phrases might be like for a student who is struggling. Imagine if you were the student they were describing. Of course, you wouldn't necessarily have heard those words spoken about you, but you might have overheard a conversation or two. Or, you might just get the feeling that the educators you are working with don't think you can be successful in mathematics or even have low expectations about your ability to learn any new mathematical ideas. If we call attention to the idea that the words teachers use to describe their students might influence how other professionals respond to them, we understand the power of Shams-ud-din Muhammad Hafiz's quotation. Consider these descriptions in Figure i.4 and reflect about how you might respond as a teacher to each of these students.

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FIGURE i.4: Teacher Descriptions

"This student is never prepared for class! He rarely does homework. He is easily distracted and gets off track all the time. He doesn't know many of the basic addition facts and still counts on his fingers! He is very physical and seems to be moving all the time."	"This student will persevere through anything. He never gives up. He responds well to redirection and is very well liked among the other students. He is very athletic and loves to move around the classroom to work in different spots. He responds really well to collaborative activities."

Would it surprise you to learn that the *same* teacher wrote these descriptions about the *same* child? The first was written before engaging with the notion of a strengths-based approach in a professional development experience and the second after an extensive professional development experience. As the teacher began to focus on the student's assets rather than his deficits, there was a shift not only in her words but also in her actions. The teacher then used those assets in designing lessons based on the strengths the student brought to the learning experience. She shared, "Before [strengths-based work] I would perseverate on what he couldn't do—and I often reminded him of that! He would just slump down in the chair. Oh, yes, I was positive and told him he could learn, but I was so focused on building off his weaknesses, I couldn't see beyond that." Ron Kral (1995), author of *Strategies That Work,* explains: "If we ask people to look for deficits, they will usually find them and their view of situations will be colored by this. If we ask people to look for successes, they will usually find them and their view of situations will be colored by this" (p. 35).

We have a natural tendency to bolster students' performance by identifying their challenges, describing them in great detail, and focusing on what students do not know. After all, the business of education is to promote student learning. It will always be important to understand students' learning, academic, and social-emotional challenges. However, leveraging their strengths to address their challenges yields greater success than marshaling efforts into overcoming weaknesses and deficits (Clifton & Harter, 2003).

We believe that each and every teacher possesses mathematics teaching strengths and that every student possesses mathematics learning strengths. Our goal is to help you discover, embrace, and grow your mathematics teaching strengths to best support your students. Equally important, we want you to uncover and nurture your students' mathematics strengths.

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Rather than having teachers and families who fixate on the lowest grades and ignore the higher scores, students need teachers to invest more time in using their areas of strength to build bridges to areas that need attention. Otherwise—with consistent negative messaging—children will feel disheartened, be disenfranchised, and ultimately may begin wanting to avoid going to school. It's a slippery slope that we as teachers are in the best position to prevent.

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What Are Mathematics Strengths We See in Students?

When we first started doing this work, we were asked for a list of mathematics strengths and we resisted. Why resist, you may wonder? We worried that students might be pigeonholed into particular strengths, much like the myth of specific learning styles (Riener & Willingham, 2010). But then we found we enjoyed sharing the multiple strengths of different students we knew and worked with. The activity actually pointed to new ways of thinking about strengths in mathematics beyond the idea that strengths equaled mathematics content knowledge. We found that some strengths on our list were dispositional, others related to processes and practices, and then others were specific to content knowledge. We know this is not an exhaustive accounting of all options, and hence, our original caution remains. But, we'd like to share our initial thoughts with you and hope you will send to us and share with your colleagues lists of other strengths that you identify from your practice (Figure i.5).

Once we began the strengths-based work with students, we discovered more strengths that students possess, and more important, students identified their own and one another's strengths. We also noticed that students possessed multiple strengths that ebb and flow within and around particular content areas and within particular contexts. It is important to recognize that this strengths-finding work is dynamic—ever changing in response to the beliefs and expectations of those who teach and support the students.

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FIGURE i.5: Student Strengths

DISPOSITIONAL	PROCESSES AND PRACTICES	CONTENT
• Perseveres • Works well with other students • Uses novel or creative approaches • Compromises with others when working on strategies and solutions • Knows when to ask for help • Asks good questions • Takes risks • Recognizes making mistakes is part of learning • Can teach/mentor others • Demonstrates a positive attitude towards mathematics • Enjoys mathematics • Sees mathematics as a way to understand the world • Listens to others' ideas • Works well with other students • Works independently • Is curious about mathematical ideas	• Creates varied representations (e.g., manipulatives, drawings, numberlines) • Sketches mathematical ideas • Links manipulatives to abstract concepts • Explains strategies and ideas • Explains thinking • Connects mathematical concepts and procedures • Listens to others' ideas • Uses and applies appropriate mathematical vocabulary • Identifies and understands patterns • Enjoys solving puzzles • Enjoys finding another way to solve a problem • Regularly seeks multiple ways to solve problems • Uses reasoning • Uses manipulatives well • Perseveres	• Understands concepts • Understands and uses procedures • Uses number sense • Identifies and understands patterns • Converts measurements • Connects real-world problems • Regularly estimates quantities • Has algebra sense • Has graph sense • Has fraction sense • Has spatial sense • Has number sense • Visualizes mathematics • Knows basic math facts • Understands and regularly uses mental math • Interprets information from a chart, table, or graph • Converts measurements

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DISPOSITIONAL	PROCESSES AND PRACTICES	CONTENT
• Enjoys finding another way to solve a problem • Creates mathematics problems • Brainstorms new approaches	• Works analytically • Knows when responses are reasonable • Thinks and works logically • Explains mathematical information • Identifies important and unimportant information • Justifies results • Translates data into different forms • Thinks flexibly • Organizes information • Uses novel or creative approaches • Appropriately sequences multiple steps or directions • Asks probing questions • Regularly seeks multiple ways to solve problems	• Remembers and uses previously learned mathematics ideas • Understands concepts • Identifies the correct operation • Regularly estimates quantities • Explains the meaning of procedures

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Exploring Your Own Math Identity

Before we can think further about how we identify our students' strengths, take a moment to consider your own experiences with learning mathematics. What do you remember most? What messages did you hear about your mathematics performance? Before reading further, write a memory down. Don't censor your memory; just let it come to you.

What do you notice about the memory? Were you judged? Coaxed? Reassured? Championed? Shamed? Supported? Praised? Energized? Take a moment to feel what it felt like in your memory. If you had to identify one feeling that matches that moment, what would it be?

Now, consider how that one memory may have shaped your beliefs. Did you emerge from this experience with a belief that you were a mathematics learner, adept problem solver, and capable of achieving the highest levels of mathematical understanding? Or did you feel that you were "not a math person" or "just not smart in math" or maybe you began to identify as someone who struggles with learning mathematics?

Finally, we wonder, did you have people in your life who acted as mathematics role models? Did you see math learners who looked like you in school or in your community? Did you have a teacher or family member who encouraged you to study higher levels of mathematics? At a mathematics teachers' conference, a panel of people who work in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields were asked what was their trajectory to getting to this job they hold. Each panel member pointed directly back to a teacher they had who inspired them or in some cases pushed them to continue in mathematics. To a person, they felt that their teacher lighted and fueled a flame from a spark. Did you have such a teacher? Or possibly a family member? If yes, how did they support your math identity? If no, how did the absence of a mathematics role model affect your notion about who excels at mathematics?

Our own teaching decisions are influenced by so much of our own experiences. We carry our lived experiences of learning mathematics into our classrooms. Our mathematics identity is constructed through our own very special and curated collection of involvements inside and outside of

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the classroom, through our interactions around mathematics learning, and through the relationships we have formed with our families, peers, teachers, and communities. Imagine that this identity begins from our earliest moments experiencing mathematics, is still formulating now, and extends to the future. **Mathematical identity** can be defined as "the dispositions and deeply held beliefs that students develop about their ability to participate and perform effectively in mathematical contexts and to use mathematics in powerful ways across the contexts of their lives" (Aguirre, Mayfield-Ingram, & Martin, 2013, p. 14). Given this definition, we wonder, do you find yourself feeling powerful about the role of mathematics in your life? Fortunately, mathematical identity is not a fixed trait. It is malleable (Boaler, 2013) and can be changed at any time—for better or, unfortunately, for worse. You play an important role in not only the advancement of students' mathematics knowledge but also the process of their development of a positive math identity instead of an identity of failure. Let's harken back to the words of the members of the STEM panel described earlier and realize that as a teacher, you have the opportunity—and the responsibility—to help shape students' mathematical identity into one of success and empowerment, rather than failure. You are a critical piece of their evolution. We hope that as you build a positive, energetic, and strengths-based approach for your students that your own mathematical identity will flourish, in tandem, with your students seeing themselves as a "math person."

Mathematical Identity: The dispositions and deeply held beliefs that students develop about their ability to participate and perform effectively in mathematical contexts and to use mathematics in powerful ways across the contexts of their lives (Aguirre, Mayfield-Ingram, & Martin 2013, p. 14).

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Moving to a Strengths-Based Perspective

Let's revisit the word clouds we introduced at the beginning of this chapter. There are any number of well-intended assessment and instructional practices that can actually turn into unproductive, harmful, deficit-based cycles. We call these vicious cycles because they do not help children grow mathematically. Let's explore three vicious cycles we commonly see.

First, let's consider how mathematics learners are often assessed. Far too frequently, progress monitors and screening tools are used to shallowly assess computation skills only, and we find that children have problems with computation skills. Unfortunately, these practices lead to interventions that only attend to computational skills and not the underlying conceptual understandings. We call this the Vicious Assessment Cycle, as illustrated in Figure i.6.

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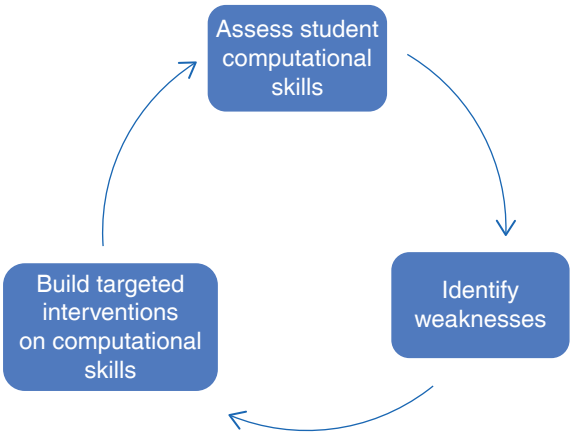
FIGURE i.6: The Vicious Assessment Cycle



The heavy emphasis on "math facts" and computation as being the definition of mathematical learning is a century-old norm that measures children against a dominant and possibly antiquated and obsolete notion of what mathematics really is for a student at the elementary level. What would mathematics look like if computation with whole numbers was not the only implied major expectation for most classrooms? Should children learn the same way their parents and teachers learned to be deemed "successful" at mathematics? In essence, is there benefit to keeping the status quo? We think not. Such heavy emphasis on knowing the math computational facts through multiple years of instruction and interventions may hide students' abilities to learn other, deeper mathematical ideas. Although we agree that computational skills are critical, they will not be the only understandings students need to advance toward college and career goals. Instead, students may be limited by this oversimplification of what they are to learn and miss out on building their ability to communicate and reason mathematically. If some experts have described algebra as a gatekeeper for the high school student (Schoenfeld, 1995), fluency with basic facts is the gatekeeper for the elementary school student who struggles—particularly a student with disabilities. Many students who are challenged by mathematics never "get to" the more engaging mathematics and therefore never experience the beauty and joy of doing mathematics—two features of the discipline that could be motivating and energizing.

We see another vicious cycle around students' completion of classwork or homework. Students who struggle to complete classwork may be challenged

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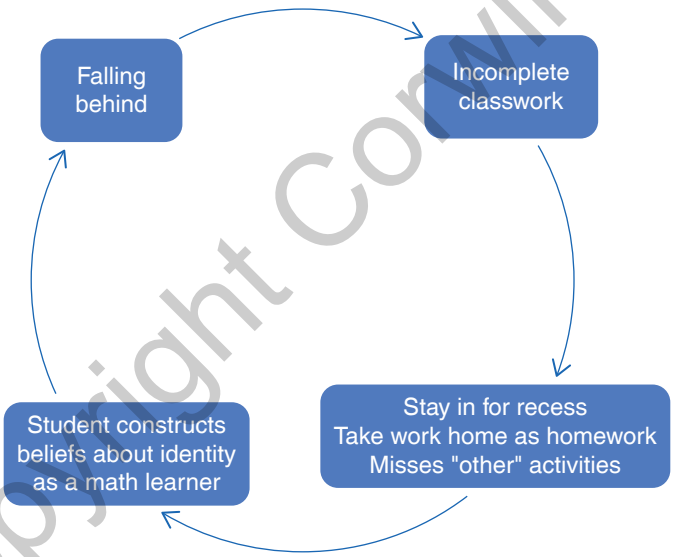
for a variety of reasons. Students may not complete homework because they have other, more demanding responsibilities at home, including caring for siblings or other obligations. They may not understand the homework or the scope of the homework is overwhelming. Other students may not be able to access the homework because of language or learning differences. These homework challenges can create inequities by inequitably rewarding some students. When students are then required to miss recess or more engaging learning activities because they have not completed the work, they can become defeated by the overwhelming deluge of work stacking up. They may then believe that learning mathematics, and even school, is not for them. Not unlike how we often feel as teachers. We call this the Vicious Classwork or Homework Cycle (Figure i.7).

> Many students who are challenged by mathematics never "get to" the more engaging mathematics and therefore never experience the beauty and joy of doing mathematics.

FIGURE i.7: The Vicious Classwork or Homework Cycle



We often see a third vicious cycle occur when multilingual students are engaging in mathematics problem solving. Sometimes, well-intentioned teachers reduce the cognitive challenge of the problem in an effort to provide more access for multilingual learners when, in fact, this action reduces the students' access to rich mathematics learning opportunities. We call this the Vicious Low-Access Cycle (Figure i.8).

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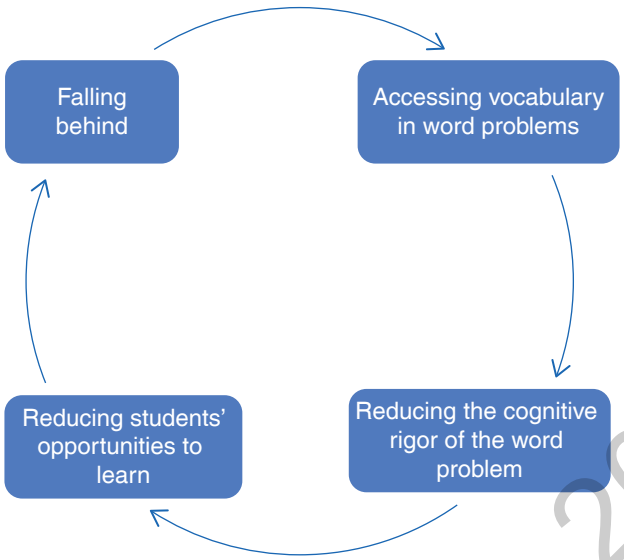
FIGURE i.8: The Vicious Low-Access Cycle



Practices That Build a Strengths-Based Cycle

Focusing attention solely on students' weaknesses or deficits can be mind-numbing and is neither professional nor ethical. Instead, how can we spot, target, and develop students' strengths? When students focus on their strengths as they often do with extracurricular activities like soccer, painting, dancing, or skateboarding, they are motivated and engaged. How can a similar transformation occur in the mathematics classroom?

> "Focusing attention solely on students' weaknesses or deficits can be mind-numbing and is neither professional nor ethical.

We need to initiate a model of "what's going right" and define what our strengths-based launching pad may be. What can we can build on rather than focusing exclusively on where the breakdowns are for students?

We suggest reframing this effort to one that emphasizes strengths and a problem-solving approach. This model is called the Strengths-Based Cycle.

This cycle begins with identifying strengths to support students' mathematics learning. By unpacking how a strength can be used to leverage a challenge, teachers and students are empowered in that moment and for a lifetime.

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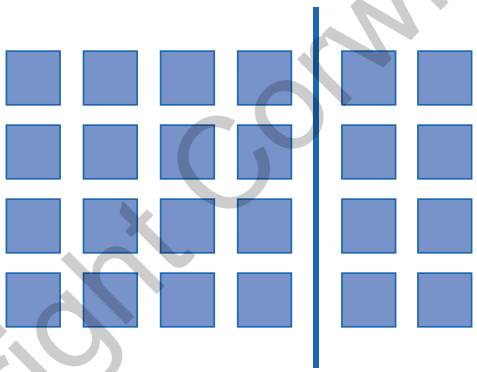
Following are two different examples of this cycle in action. In the first cycle (Figure i.9), students' strengths are identified first, and then teachers can develop targeted interventions or lessons. From there, students use their strengths to engage in and learn mathematics.

For example, Timmy struggles with timed assessment of basic multiplication facts. Instead of timing Timmy on a worksheet of basic facts, hoping he'll miraculously get faster, his teacher, Mandi, conducts an interview with Timmy to identify the strategies he uses to solve these facts. She first determines which facts he knows and those he struggles to remember. She discovers that he knows all his doubles, twos, and fives by memory. She shows him all that he knows, and then she introduces the near doubles strategy next, beautifully leveraging what he knows to access those facts that currently stump him. Next, she selects a fact that he doesn't know, 4 × 6, and asks him to make a 4 × 6 array using cubes. She then probes, "Let's see if we can find one of the doubles facts that you know in your 4 × 6 array." Timmy immediately notices the 4 × 4 array (Figure i.9).

FIGURE i.9: 4 × 6 Array



Mandi then asks, "What other fact represents the other part of the array?" Timmy replies, "Oh it is my two fact: 2 × 4 = 8! So, 4 × 6 is the same as 4 × 4 and 4 × 2!" She says to Timmy, "You used the facts you knew to learn a new fact! Let's see if we can try that for another fact!" As this scenario illustrates, Mandi engages Timmy in the Strengths-Based Cycle (Figure i.10) by first designing a concept-based assessment to identify his strengths, build a targeted intervention that engages him in doing mathematics, and develop connections from prior knowledge to new knowledge.

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FIGURE i.10: Strengths-Based Cycle

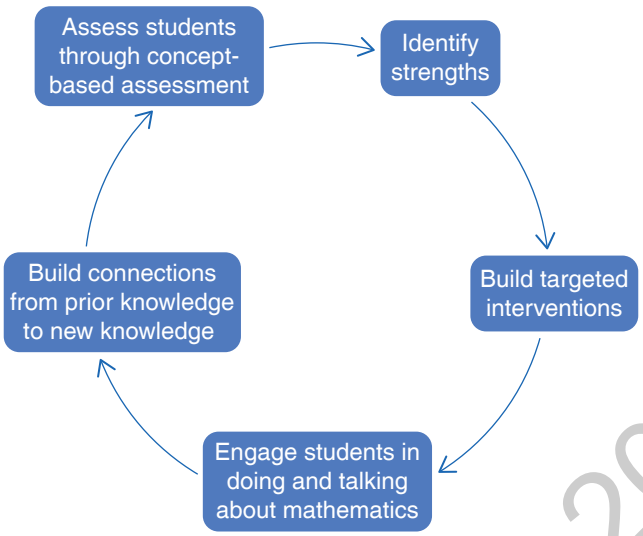
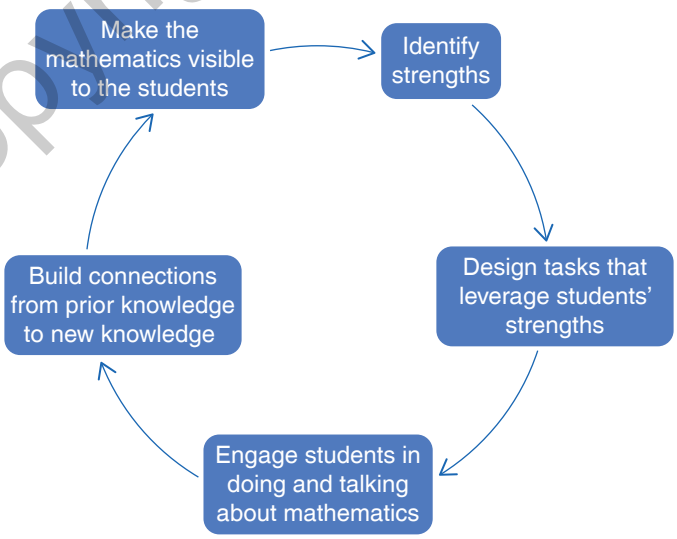


Figure i.11 illustrates another example of the Strengths-Based Cycle. Bob discovered through individual assessments that his multilingual students demonstrate their strengths when they can use visual images to accompany the problems. He also has observed that his students thrived when they had opportunities to talk about the problem with other multilingual learners first before discussing with nonmultilingual learners. He planned every lesson for students to engage in multiple discourse opportunities throughout every lesson. In addition, he designed visual images to accompany each lesson. For example, he created visual images for mathematics vocabulary such as add, subtract, problem, and so on. These two practices also benefited all his students and, therefore, became a regular part of his teaching practice.

FIGURE i.11: Strengths-Based Cycle in Action



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Again, Bob started with his students' strengths, recognizing when his multilingual students were strongest. He made a conscious effort to look for moments of brilliance, strength, competence, and confidence. When he saw those moments, he collected data about what the students were doing at that exact moment. Next, he designed mathematics tasks that were rich with visuals and that integrated opportunities for the students to engage in discourse with multilingual and nonmultilingual peers. As the students were working, he circulated about the room, listening in on their conversations and observing their representations. He paired students to present mathematical ideas to the rest of the class, giving them time to prepare their representation and rehearse their presentation. Finally, he recognized the contributions of the students, highlighted their strengths, and publicly posted their mathematical thinking.

These examples highlight strengths-based classrooms, where teachers see their students' brilliance and use their strengths to build confident, thoughtful mathematical thinkers.

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The Five Teaching Turnarounds

It's time to turn those vicious cycles around! We have organized this book around five Teaching Turnarounds that promote strengths-based mathematics teaching and learning.

These Teaching Turnarounds are based on practices in which we have firsthand experience turning around for ourselves and that we have facilitated for educational communities. Through these five Teaching Turnarounds, we explore how to promote a positive and productive learning environment that will illuminate the strengths, resources, knowledge, brilliance, and power that students and teachers hold. Join us on this mathematical strengths-finding adventure to seek out and celebrate your students' individual and collective mathematical superpowers.

Teaching Turnaround One: Identify Your Teaching Strengths

Understanding your own teaching strengths is a bit like putting on an oxygen mask in an airplane when you are traveling with a child. You must first know your own teaching strengths before you can

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> Understanding your own teaching strengths is a bit like putting on an oxygen mask in an airplane when you are traveling with a child.

begin the work of supporting your students' strengths. Chapter 1 will help you explore your own teaching strengths and capitalize on those strengths in productive and positive ways. Leveraging your strengths can help you capture and sustain joy in mathematics teaching, which leads to student learning success for your students and for you—a positive and productive career.

Teaching Turnaround Two: Discover and Leverage Your Students' Mathematical Strengths

This teaching turnaround will help you strategically discover your students' many mathematics strengths. Changing our mindsets from peering through the deficit lens we've been taught to use to instead locating assets requires specific shifts in thinking and teaching practices. You will be invited to discover your students' strengths by carefully observing and recording the moments when your students shine and by asking them, "What are you good at in _____?" Remarkably, once we hone our strengths-based observation skills, we find that the strengths spotting multiplies. In Chapter 2, you will explore the dispositions, processes, and practices that teachers facilitate and that the students exhibit while learning mathematics. Chapter 3 focuses on content and explores how students demonstrate strengths when learning and accessing mathematics concepts and procedural understanding.

Teaching Turnaround Three: Design Instruction From a Strengths-Based Perspective

This teaching turnaround focuses on designing mathematics instruction—primarily through grouping practices, content-specific task design, and feedback practices—that leverages students' strengths to achieve mathematics goals. Students who struggle with mathematics often do not frequently experience mathematics

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success. Without these successful moments, they may not build the network of understanding that connects mathematics strategies and promotes learning. By strategically designing instruction that promotes students' strengths, teachers leverage those strengths to counteract and respond to areas where students struggle most. Explore this turnaround in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Teaching Turnaround Four: Help Students Develop Their Points of Power

This teaching turnaround positions students as the central force in identifying and celebrating their strong points: Points of Power. Many students (and adults) wrongly perceive their mathematical abilities as weak, and often this belief is reinforced by messages about their test performance. Here, in Chapter 7, we emphasize the importance of improving students' positive attitudes toward mathematics as a discipline and their ability to persevere and guide their own visualization of a future where mathematics plays a key role. Possessing a positive vision makes jumping into investigations and problem solving with a can-do approach as appealing as the next level on a video game—"I will try and I can do it!"

Teaching Turnaround Five: Promote Strengths in the School Community

This teaching turnaround focuses on specific steps that you can take to promote a strengths-based perspective with colleagues (Turn Around Professional Learning Communities, Chapter 8) and families (Turn Around Family Communication, Chapter 9) in your school and school district. These strategies can be supported through professional learning communities or networks and be the impetus working as teams through Whole-School Agreements.

In the following chapters, we explore each of the Teaching Turnarounds in depth. We also invite you to explore the ideas in four distinct ways: Turnaround Tip, Spotlight on Your Practice, and Try It!

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- *Turnaround Tip* includes brief suggestions or reflections that you can make to transform the way you might think about or approach your teaching.
- *Spotlight on Your Practice* activities are deep dives into your current teaching practice. These activities often require recording or charting your current practices and considering ways to change or refine your future practice. Questions will prompt you to reflect on how you can promote a strengths-based learning environment for your students. Many of these are available for download.
- *Try It!* has activities that you can try with students, families, and your learning community. Many of these are available for download.
- You will also find a companion website to this book (**resources.corwin.com/teachingturnarounds**) that includes many tools and printables for easy download and use as well as a Reader's Guide that you can use to reflect with a group on how some of what you learn in this book may apply to your practice as individuals and as an educational community.

Don't delay—your strengths-based classroom is a Turnaround away!

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