

Strengths in Focus

Helping students bring their strengths, confidence, and identity into high school.

Every student has strengths worth celebrating.

Challenges Behind Acceptance

Introduction

Starting high school is a major milestone — new classrooms, new teachers, new routines, and new expectations.

For many students with disabilities, this shift can feel overwhelming, especially when the focus has often been on what they struggle with rather than what they do well.

Many students grow up hearing more about the things they can't do. Their identities often become wrapped around their disability — which is completely understandable.

Strengths in Focus helps shift that story by giving families and teachers practical tools to recognise strengths, build confidence, and support belonging.

Why Strengths-Based Support Matters

Strengths-based support helps students:

- Build confidence during times of change
- Improve emotional wellbeing
- Feel proud of their abilities
- Understand how they learn best
- Feel recognised for more than their struggles
- Form meaningful connections with peers and teachers

When students know their strengths, they walk into high school with a clearer sense of who they are — and who they can become.

The Strengths Map

Use this map to identify strengths that describe the student.

Personal Strengths

- Caring
- Persistent
- Creative
- Curious
- Funny
- Responsible
- Brave
- Kind
- Patient
- Hard-working

Other: _____

Learning Strengths

- Works well with visuals
- Strong memory for facts
- Hands-on learner
- Follows routines well
- Good with step-by-step tasks
- Asks for help
- Focuses well in quiet spaces

Other: _____

Social Strengths

- Loyal friend
- Good listener
- Welcoming
- Helpful
- Shares ideas
- Works well in groups
- Empathetic

Other: _____

Activity Sheet A — My Strengths Before High School

A page to complete together and share with Year 7 teachers.

Something I'm good at:

Something I enjoy doing:

Something people say I'm good at:

Something I'm proud of:

A strength that helps me at school:

A strength I want my new teachers to know about:

Activity Sheet B — Strengths in Action Planner

Day	Strength I Used	What I Did	How It Felt

Activity Sheet C — Parent/Teacher Strengths Checklist

Emotional Strengths

- Tries again after challenges
- Notices others' feelings
- Stays calm with support
- Handles change better over time

Learning Strengths

- Focuses well with routines
- Enjoys hands-on tasks
- Follows visual instructions
- Uses tools or supports well

Social Strengths

- Kind
- Inclusive
- Communicates clearly
- Enjoys being part of a group

Independence Strengths

- Packs bag with reminders
- Manages routines
- Uses visual schedules
- Takes responsibility for materials

Strength Conversations — How to Talk About Strengths

Parents and teachers can use these to help students recognise their strengths:

- “I think you’re really good at...”
- “One thing I’ve noticed about you is...”
- “Something that makes you unique is...”
- “A strength I see in you is...”
- “You might not realise this, but you’re great at...”
- “I’m proud of the way you...”

Strengths I Want to Grow

A strength I want to build:

Why this strength matters to me:

How I can practice this strength:

Who can help me grow this strength:

Reflection — My Wins This Month

My proudest moment this month:

A strength I used well:

Something new I discovered about myself:

Someone who supported me:

A strength I want to focus on next month:

Where real belonging begins

Candice — Challenges Behind Acceptance

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