

# CHAPTER 1

## WHAT DO ENGLISH LEARNERS BRING TO OUR SCHOOLS? COGNITIVE, LINGUISTIC, AND CULTURAL ASSETS

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### **Sebastian's Journey**

Sebastian is an 11-year-old student who had crossed the southern border of the United States the previous year with his mother, cousins, and older brother. Traveling without documentation, Sebastian and his family took a circuitous route to their current home in the Midwest, where they have distant relatives. Sebastian began sixth grade at a large middle school with ESOL services and a transitional 1-year program for students with interrupted education. Sebastian's teachers in this transitional program report that he is eager to please, yet has difficulty focusing and completing work. As they worked to address his language needs and deficits in content knowledge, one of his teachers also noticed he is particularly adept in two areas: connecting with peers and problem solving in practical situations. In fact, when the power went out unexpectedly, Sebastian was the first student in the class to pipe up with a suggestion for continuing the lesson. When a classmate joked about wanting to learn how to play golf, Sebastian googled the sport and created a set of miniature golf balls and a club, using loose-leaf paper and tape. Sebastian's teachers use these observations to modify how they present lessons to Sebastian and how they differentiate products for him. During partner work, they make sure to give Sebastian and his partner practical tasks with concrete deliverables (such as a chart, a sculpture, or a model). In math instruction, they include at least three practical, real-world

problems in each lesson—two for the teacher and class to solve, and one for students to work on during independent practice. These strategies, they find, not only help to engage Sebastian more, but also allow him to master content at a faster rate. Most of all, his teachers find they are better able to appreciate Sebastian as a person, taking into account his strengths rather than focusing on his deficits.

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**F**requently, we see our culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners through a deficit lens, noting what they can't do (speak English fluently), haven't mastered (demands of academic language), and aren't familiar with (daily school routines). Doing this constitutes a great injustice not only to these students but to the rest of our students as well. In fact, CLD learners bring tremendous assets to schools, enriching not only their own learning but also that of peers. Appropriately identifying and leveraging these strengths is a critical component of good practice. This chapter describes the evidence base underlying these strengths, provides practical strategies for utilizing strengths of learners who are CLD or English learners, and places strengths-based teaching in the context of overall responsive practice and identification for this population.

In a book addressing comprehensive supports for English learners with disabilities, it may seem unusual to begin with a general look at this population's strengths. Indeed, educators often view disabilities through a lens focused on deficits and challenges (Harry & Klingner, 2007) rather than on assets. Serving English learners with disabilities can be challenging precisely because our system is not built to take account, or advantage, of their unique strengths and gifts. These strengths may provide students notable resilience or socioemotional skills; may manifest in culturally unexpected or underappreciated ways; and may mask the impact of existing disabilities, further complicating the assessment and identification process. For all of these reasons, it is essential to begin by understanding the unique attributes—including strengths as well as needs—that our English learners bring to our schools, particularly when those students may be candidates for special education services.

Additionally, a strengths-based approach is fundamental to special education, philosophically and practically. In recent years, special education has increasingly emphasized students' strengths and abilities alongside their needs for additional support (Armstrong, 2012). Helping students to achieve to their greatest abilities is possible only when we accurately understand what those abilities are. Understanding students' current skills and abilities, and areas where they excel, also allows school personnel to set realistic yet challenging goals to maximize their potential (Climie & Henley, 2016).

What does it mean in practice to consider students' strengths, along with their needs? The story of Sebastian at the start of this chapter provides an example. Sebastian's teachers leveraged several assets he brought with him into the classroom, including his resilience, his social skills and peer relationships, and his native language abilities. Various frameworks and concepts can help us to identify assets such as these. Some, such as a list of developmental assets, are more structured, while others, such as strengths-based language, may be less formalized. The following section reviews several of the most frequently used frameworks and concepts as a starting point.

## *Important Concepts for Strengths-Based Viewing of English Learners*

While careful and responsive differentiation for each student is essential, commonalities often exist in the concepts schools and teachers may leverage to support English learners' achievements through their unique abilities. Each of these concepts is listed, then described briefly and discussed in more detail as it relates to specific students' needs. Throughout the rest of this book, as we discuss planning for instructional and socioemotional needs, these concepts will serve as reference and starting points for strengths-based intervention.

**Positive vs. deficit-based language.** Sometimes, it is tempting to describe students' challenges in a sort of shorthand, focusing on what they cannot do or the competencies they lack. Even in describing genuine needs that students bring to the classroom, educators provide a better roadmap forward for problem solving when they lead with what students can do instead of what they cannot (Harry & Klingner, 2007). This idea is hardly new; Harry and Klingner (2007) cite a 1983 article that describes dramatic gaps between the narrative skills that African American students actually had and the skills their teachers assumed they had (Brice-Heath, 1983). In formulating statements such as, "Josefina cannot add," or "Martin doesn't ever pay attention," teachers run the risk of overstating challenges and eliminating the nuance and additional information that could be teased out through careful description. In fact, you can gather a great deal more information from more careful, nuanced statements such as: "When given a set of single-digit numbers, Josefina can add successfully if she is provided extra time; however, she is not successful in adding double-digit numbers even with extra time." Such a statement not only allows the teacher to hypothesize exactly where Josefina is experiencing difficulty (making the transition from single-digit to double-digit addition), but it also suggests some potential accommodations and interventions (targeted support with double-digit addition; extra time once that targeted support has been provided). Table 1 lists some frequently used "deficit words" and phrases and suggests alternatives.

**Table 1 Deficit-Oriented Phrases and Suggested Alternatives**

<b>Frequent deficit phrase</b>	<b>Alternatives</b>
Does not	Can _____ but has not demonstrated ability to _____
Will not	Does _____ on a regular basis but does not do _____ on a regular basis
Refuses to/Chooses not to	Does _____ on a regular basis but does not do _____ on a regular basis
Unmotivated	Does complete _____ tasks but does not complete _____ tasks on a regular basis
Lazy	Does engage in _____ tasks but does not engage in _____ tasks

**Developmental approaches to growth and disability.** It is also easy to look at development and disability themselves through a deficit-focused lens. Of necessity, special education requires identification of specific deficits, and individualized education programs (IEPs) typically describe extensively what challenges and needs students demonstrate. In recent years, the adoption of response-to-intervention (RTI) and multitiered systems of support (MTSS) paradigms have encouraged educators to take a holistic and developmental approach toward student needs, providing interventions and supports as indicated without the need for specific labels or diagnoses (NCCREST, 2008; National Center on Response to Intervention, 2011) and meeting students at their current levels of performance and achievement while considering how best to support their growth. It should be noted, and will be discussed later in this text in more depth, that the use of an RTI/MTSS model should not limit intensive, early intervention for those students who truly need it; when data identify a student as significantly at-risk, intensive supports can and should be implemented promptly (Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012).

Responsive, individualized approaches are particularly important for English learners, who may present with uneven skills in some areas, particularly those relating to language and cultural familiarity. These students may appear advanced in some skills or domains, such as creativity, problem solving, or ability to adapt and transition. They may likewise appear to be challenged in other areas, particularly those related to formal academic knowledge that may not have been part of their prior educational experiences.

Furthermore, even for students who are not English learners, the continuum of development must be taken into account. Particularly in the early childhood years, students may develop at different rates, leading to potential mismatches between their achievement and their teachers' expectations. Several recent studies, for example, have found that students who are the youngest in their grades have

a significantly higher likelihood of being diagnosed with ADHD (Chen et al., 2016; Morrow et al., 2012). These studies, and some additional literature (Thomas, Mitchell, & Batstra, 2013; Cohen, Hockman, & Bedard, 2017), suggest that, for some students, the issue is less one of their intrinsic abilities and more one of developmental pace matching the expectations their environment and their teachers place on them. Anecdotally, our experience bears this out. It is not uncommon, in student problem-solving meetings, to hear staff express concerns about a kindergarten student who turns out to be one of the younger in their grade. Some clinicians in our experience have recommended “the tincture of time” for students experiencing regression or delayed development, rather than beginning more intensive treatment. It is, granted, sometimes a fine line between watchful waiting and proactive intervention. Carefully evaluating a student’s current level of functioning can help teams to make this decision wisely (see Table 2).

**Table 2 Developmental Considerations: When to Intervene and When to Wait**

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How far behind peers is the student?

Is the student evidencing a rate of growth that will lead to improvements?

Is the student showing signs of frustration, social isolation, or depression?

Are the student’s parents significantly concerned?

Are the student’s skills impacting participation in curriculum or activities?

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See the [story of Rivka](http://www.tesol.org/exceptionalneeds) at [www.tesol.org/exceptionalneeds](http://www.tesol.org/exceptionalneeds) for a useful illustration of how teachers and teams might balance developmental awareness with carefully chosen, proactive supports. Developmental approaches often require a careful balance on the part of teachers, who need to remain vigilant without rushing to judgment or inappropriately referring for more intensive intervention than might be appropriate. As discussed below, looking at a child through a developmental lens also requires consideration of their strengths. The concept of developmental assets can be particularly helpful here.

**Developmental assets.** The Developmental Assets Framework (Search Institute, 2015) suggests that children can draw upon preexisting developmental assets and benefits from their backgrounds. The Developmental Assets Framework (which can be found on the Search Institute website at <http://page.search-institute.org/40-developmental-assets>) comprises “40 research-based, positive experiences” that build students’ skills, resilience, and abilities to “help them become positive, caring adults” (Search Institute, 2015). Over the past three decades, the Developmental Assets Framework has been refined to include focus on key relationships and community attributes that can also support growth in students and to incorporate elements from extensive research (Scales & Leffert, 1999). While the entire list of

assets is available through the Search Institute, a few are referenced here to illustrate the value of considering assets that students may have developed in their personal (or school) experiences and that may influence their classroom performance.

This particular organization's list of developmental assets is not tailored to English learners specifically. However, considering existing strengths and assets students have acquired (as a general practice) and considering this framework of Developmental Assets (in particular) can have striking relevance to English learners. In looking at the list of Developmental Assets for adolescents, as one example, it is striking that many of these assets, which are linked to positive growth and maturity in young people, are related to attributes that some English learners develop as a result of life experiences. Traits such as "personal responsibility," "cultural competence" (comfort with individuals from different cultures and ease in navigating cultural differences with sensitivity), and "planning ahead" are listed as developmental assets (Search Institute, 2015). Both anecdotes and research bear out the multiple ways English learners often demonstrate responsibility, planning, and sociocultural competence beyond their years, and planning with these unique abilities in mind supports student achievement (Willner & Monroe, 2016). It is also important to note that such traits are often culturally mediated in the ways they are displayed; teams may overlook students' personal responsibility, or caring family members, if they are using a lens that does not account for the different ways students may demonstrate responsibility or caring in differing cultural and family contexts. Indeed, as English learners are particularly vulnerable to family separation, it is important for school personnel to keep in mind that family relationships may take a variety of forms that may or may not be immediately evident to school personnel. Alfredo, for example, lives with a cousin but communicates nightly with his mother, Luisa, who is still in Honduras, via Skype, phone, or messaging app. While geographically distant, Luisa has recently given Alfredo advice on everything from choosing a research paper topic to how to ask his boss for more hours at work. Her involvement and care might not be evident to Alfredo's teachers unless they are quite familiar with his life outside school. While physically distant, Luisa has proven to be an invaluable developmental asset for Alfredo.

The story of Rihanna, which can be found at [www.tesol.org/exceptionalneeds](http://www.tesol.org/exceptionalneeds), describes additional ways teams can utilize developmental assets in planning using a culturally sensitive lens.

**Funds of knowledge from self, family, and community.** The "funds of knowledge" approach has potential to transform our traditional, deficit-based views of diverse students. Often, these students bring with them complex cognitive, social, and academic skills, even if they did not develop them in traditional English-speaking school settings. These may differ in significant ways from cultural and developmental expectations placed on American students. For example, a student in middle school may exercise far greater level of responsibility in his family environment than a typical American middle-schooler might, supporting younger siblings with homework, taking the lead on dinner preparation, and even making grocery lists,

shopping, or paying bills. Educators often think of such responsibilities in terms of their drawbacks—they may distract students from homework or keep them from attending after-school activities. However, those activities also provide students with a rich reservoir of real-world knowledge and skills, including budgeting, practical and applied mathematics, interpersonal skills, and development of personal responsibility. Traditional academic assessments may not reflect such skills, and teachers may find their diverse learners at risk for poor school performance or special education referral. However, a funds of knowledge approach can help educators to focus on the nontraditional, authentic ways students may be leveraging their skills, and this can be a first step to helping students utilize those skills in school settings as well. The story of Alphonse, at [www.tesol.org/exceptionalneeds](http://www.tesol.org/exceptionalneeds), illustrates the potential of seeing students through a lens focused on their funds of knowledge.

**Language, culture, and resilience: Additional and essential assets.** Bilingual or bidialectal students often demonstrate sophisticated social competency in their ability to code-switch, or utilize different forms of language or dialect in social situations when each is called for (Pandey, 2012). Teachers may notice English learners in schools utilizing one form of language or dialect with peers in social settings and another form in school, in their community with parents or elders, or in church or work settings. To do so demonstrates social competence, understanding of various contexts socially and cognitively, and adaptability in language use. Addressing the needs of English learners in a comprehensive, strengths-based context requires educators, first and foremost, to see this language diversity not as a deficit to be remedied but as a profound asset—even if it presents a corresponding challenge for students in accessing monolingual classroom instruction.

Similarly, educators may think of students' life challenges and experiences as potential deficits, but these often serve as opportunities to develop remarkable resilience. The American Psychological Association defines *resilience* as “the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress” (APA, n.d.). As students demonstrate this ability to adapt, they benefit from specific approaches such as supportive connections, encouragement to pursue their goals, and social support (APA, n.d.). Teachers and school personnel can play a critical role in supporting their English learners who are experiencing stress, adversity, or trauma both by being aware of students' changing life circumstances and being open to hearing families' stories. As students who have experienced stress or trauma may bring real and intensive needs to the classroom, teachers may also rely on their positive relationships with students and their positive views of students' abilities as they connect students to additional needed supports.

One teacher of our acquaintance recently shared a story about a third-grader in her classroom who had crossed into the United States, without legal documentation, accompanied by his uncle. His uncle had subsequently died on the trip, and the student, taken in by a new family, walked from the southern border to a temporary home several hundred miles away. When he began school in the United States, this student was unquestionably in need of a variety of services, including counseling

as well as ESOL. More important, though, the student arrived in school having already demonstrated resilience far beyond those typical of third-graders raised in the United States without unusual circumstances. His teachers' challenge is to accurately assess his functioning to ensure he receives appropriate supports, but also to value his resilience and adaptability, considering those as positive attributes and including those in their estimates of his overall abilities and strengths. At times, this also means overlooking some challenging behaviors, as long as they do not pose a threat to student safety or well-being, with the understanding that some behavioral difficulty might occur as the student adjusts to his new life and the demands of his new school environment. The support of the school counselor, who provided the student a timetable for breaks and a "safe space" in which to take them, is invaluable in this regard. Both counselor and classroom teachers make sure to praise the student frequently for appropriate behavior, persistence, and creativity in the classroom, continuing to build on existing skills. In a less responsive school setting, this student might be frequently disciplined and labeled as "disruptive," without having a chance to demonstrate his true abilities or have his strengths appropriately valued.

Educators must be aware of students' levels of resilience and emotional strength, not only to leverage them when appropriate, but also to avoid placing additional undue stress on students who may still be processing difficult or traumatic events in their home countries or in the United States. Borjian (2016) recounts the story of a student without documentation who succeeded in the US educational system and went to a 4-year college, describing both the student's resilience and the supportive efforts of educators who worked with her. Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching strategies were central to this student's success and to others, as they provide ways to connect with her heritage and prior experiences and also to build bridges to future learning. Awareness of students' needs and resilience can be helpful to all school personnel in supporting those students' academic and socioemotional growth (Liebenberg et al., 2016).

## *Practical Application*

With these assets in mind, then, let's return to the scenario of Sebastian from the beginning of the chapter. Sebastian's teachers have leveraged his strengths and skills in helping him continue to achieve. If we look specifically at the areas discussed above, Sebastian has benefited from teachers' awareness and willingness to build on the following:

- **Developmental assets:** His relationships with family; presence of supportive adults in his life; personal skills in multiple areas
- **Strengths:** His problem-solving skills, peer relationships
- **Funds of knowledge:** His tactile and practical problem-solving abilities; real-world applications and knowledge gained from family members; interpersonal skills developed in family and community

- **Linguistic and cultural assets and resilience:** His ability to shift between his native language and English in social or academic situations; ability to cultivate positive relationships with adults; being eager to please and receptive to advice; ability to successfully adapt to changes and stressors, whether academic, social, or community-based

In a different school, with different teachers, Sebastian might very well have been identified as a “struggling learner” with limited potential for achievement. However, his teachers’ awareness of his gifts, along with his instructional and linguistic needs, allowed them to plan a tailored set of supports to help him succeed. In schools and classrooms where such differentiation occurs, multiple factors often underlie these successful efforts. This type of differentiation and responsive planning is critical for appropriate support of English learners, including those who may have disabilities, so that their special education plans can be formulated with their strengths as well as needs in mind. Additionally, and equally important, such differentiation early in a student’s educational career can put them on a successful trajectory and reduce the need for intensive supports and specialized programming in later years.

Let’s look quickly at the characteristics of his school, classroom, and family involvement paradigm that have allowed Sebastian to thrive.

**Schoolwide valuation of student strengths and assets: What practices can school leaders use?** Literature suggests that when schools value students’ cultural and developmental assets, this can be a powerful influence for positive outcomes (Simcox, Nuijens, & Lee, 2006). In our experience, schools that value students’ unique assets often share the following traits.

**Multilingual staff and materials.** Having staff members who can speak the various languages at your school—beyond the one or two that are most represented—makes a powerful if implicit statement to families that their backgrounds and opinions are valued. Similarly, the time needed to translate resources and notes home, or secure interpreters for all meetings, often pays off by cementing bonds with families who are included far more in the school’s daily activities than they might be in an English-only communications system.

**Positive messaging about students and families.** This may take the form of posters on the walls, greetings at the beginning of the day, friendly and affirming language in newsletters, and class discussions and events allowing students to see families and schools interact.

**Variety of events welcoming a variety of students and families.** Often, events move beyond the traditional “bring food from your culture” night and embrace more complex topics such as reading night, health-education night, middle school (or college) preparation night, and so on.

**Educational outreach for families as well as students.** Outreach to families about continuing education may allow parents and family members to build on their unique skills and background experiences and continue to develop them. These might include English classes, literacy classes, family exercise events or classes, and GED preparation.

**Variety of supports available for students/families.** In responsive schools, these often involve connecting families with each other and leveraging families' positive attributes, through peer educators, community liaisons, and family support groups.

**Twelve-month programming.** Year-round initiatives such as summer school and summer workshops for families allow students, and their relatives, to continue developing their knowledge and skills beyond the academic year.

**Community connections with local agencies, food pantries, tutoring services, non-profits, and businesses (for philanthropic support and job opportunities for students).** Such connections may take time for school leaders or family support coordinators to build, but they can pay extensive dividends for both students and families.

**Classroom valuation of student strengths and assets: What practices can classroom teachers support?** In addition to schoolwide frameworks and practices, individual teachers can bring about positive results for their students by incorporating strengths-based, culturally sensitive approaches in their instruction and intervention processes. Suggestions for teacher practices and strategies follow.

**Appropriate use of prereferral steps.** Appropriate prereferral practices may include referring a student to a team consideration process, rather than initiating special education referral, if the student is struggling, along with trying classroom-level interventions and strategies. Conversely, as data indicate more intensive needs on the student's part, more immediate action and referral may be indicated sooner. Flexibility, and adapting the process to each individual student's needs, both play a key role here.

**Positive classroom talk.** Affirming messages—both explicit and implicit—help students capitalize on their abilities and skills. These messages may include specific praise for tasks done well or general affirmations. (“This test is hard, but I have confidence in you all.”) Keep in mind that research finds that praise is most meaningful when it is concrete, tied to a specific experience, reinforcing desired academic-success behaviors, and authentic. (“I like the way you persevered on that problem” is more meaningful than “You all are so smart!” or “Great effort!”) (Dweck, 2012).

**Frequent use of oral language.** Providing a classroom environment rich in oral language helps to accelerate student mastery of language proficiency and oral literacy standards.

**Frequent reference to diverse cultures and communities.** Incorporating diverse backgrounds, practices, and family experiences into instruction without fanfare helps students to appreciate the wide range of backgrounds and experiences their classmates may have.

**Anchoring new learning goals to students' current skills and proficiencies.** Building on prior knowledge is a recognized brain-friendly practice (Willis, 2007). This includes tying new learning goals to prior knowledge gained in a different language to maximize students' linguistic and cognitive abilities (Cummins, 2007).

**Experiential learning opportunities.** Tying learning activities to authentic, real-world experiences, especially those based in the community, helps to build students' social and communicative competence, increases the implicit value the school places on what the community should offer, and leverages prior knowledge and motivation.

### **Involving family and communities: What practices can schools and teachers support?**

While family involvement is often one of the last things discussed in supporting student needs, its role is among the most critical. Children with involved families are more successful in school, both socially and academically (Noel, Stark, Redford, & Zukerberg, 2016). Research suggests that the role of meaningful family involvement in school may be even more important for children with disabilities, as they are at a greater risk for adverse academic, social, and behavioral outcomes. Throughout this book, family involvement strategies and recommendations are integrated into each chapter and topic, on the assumption that continued partnership with families is essential at all stages of the support, planning and differentiation, and interventions process—not just while writing the final individualized educational program. However, in practice, both school leaders and teachers may find it difficult to contact families of English learners and to support their needs in an appropriate, responsive, and effective manner. Here are a few recommendations to get started.

**Clear communication with families.** Communicating clearly with families involves, first, ensuring communication occurs in a mutually intelligible language or supports are provided for mutual intelligibility. Defining terms and educational jargon, so all parties have equivalent understanding, is also important. Finally, both school leaders and teachers should consider the manner and frequency of communication. Is it frequent enough? Is it presented in a readily available and accessible format? Is it detailed enough, or too detailed?

**Asking good questions about what students know.** Implementing a strengths-based approach relies, first of all, on accurately assessing and understanding students' strengths. To do this, teachers must have a clear indication of what students know and can do. To accomplish this, they should utilize appropriate questioning strategies, evaluate prior knowledge (in multiple languages if called for), and provide students opportunities to show their knowledge using multiple modalities and means of expression (CAST, 2011).

**Nonthreatening interactions with families.** As political climates change, particularly with respect to immigration enforcement, families may hold varying perceptions about the role of schools and their interactions with school personnel. Sadly, immigrant families who fear deportation may be very reluctant to become involved in school-based activities (McWayne, Campos, & Owsianik, 2008). Explicitly reassuring families as to their children's safety and access to education may be helpful; clarification about local, state, and federal enforcement actions may be appropriate as family questions arise. For example, if families have questions about whether immigration enforcement actions can occur at school events, it may be helpful for school or district leadership to clarify as needed.

**Explicitly valuing families' experiences, cultures, and backgrounds.** When opportunities present themselves, school staff should express the ways in which they value families' diversity, both generally and in specific circumstances. This might include mentioning and affirming all of the various nationalities represented in a school community during back-to-school night; it might also include commenting on particular ways family and cultural background enriches a student's experience: "We're so glad he has the opportunity to return to Honduras to visit his grandmother. What a great experience that will be. We'll make sure his makeup work is ready for him when he gets back."

**Strengths-based approaches incorporated into problem solving and remediation.** Responsive instruction and positive school environments can mitigate and prevent many problems. However, schools will still have students who require additional targeted or intensive supports. Strengths-based thinking can play an important role here as well. As with Sebastian, any problem-solving process should begin with an inventory of what a student does well and how those attributes or skills might be leveraged to help them improve in areas of need. Further elements of problem-solving will be described in later chapters of this book and, therefore, are not addressed in detail here.

## *Summary and Conclusion*

The remainder of this book deals in greater depth with questions of how to provide effective interventions, assessments, and programming for English learners with exceptionalities. In our view, this chapter forms an essential prelude to such discussions. As with any population of students, English learners are best served within a holistic context that affirms their unique gifts even as it provides structured, deliberately chosen supports to help them attain proficiency. Such a program furthers the cause of educational equity, as English learners who receive an accessible, appropriate education are well positioned for a variety of successful postsecondary outcomes.

## Questions for Team Discussion or Shared Reflection

1. How familiar is our school staff with concepts such as strengths-based thinking, funds of knowledge, and student resilience? Are there ways we can explicitly build one another's knowledge in these areas?
2. Have we utilized strengths-based language in conceptualizing students' needs, or do we still speak in words that reflect deficit-based assumptions? If the latter, how can we reframe our language and thinking?
3. How does our school value students' many strengths and assets? Are these assets valued at the schoolwide level, in individual classrooms, and throughout the problem-solving process?

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