

Education 701 Strengths-Based Leadership for Teaching and Learning

Azusa Pacific University
School of Education and Behavioral Studies
Department of Doctoral Studies in Education
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Course Description:

This course is a critical analysis of strengths-based educational theory and practice with an emphasis on how awareness and application of strengths can increase teaching, learning, and leadership effectiveness. Using case studies of excellence in educational practice, research papers and individual reflection, students develop and evaluate theoretical principles of strengths-based education and how to move an educational organization towards being a strengths-based institution.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students will have an opportunity to demonstrate the following outcomes:

1. Articulate a set of principles for strengths-based education strongly grounded in an understanding of theory, research and theological foundations.
2. Synthesize current literature on strengths-based education and engage other learners in a critical examination of that literature.
3. Identify and analyze current approaches to teaching, learning, and leading and evaluate the extent to which these approaches are based on the strengths of teachers, learners, and leaders.
4. Identify and evaluate issues and points of potential conflict and agreement between a Christian worldview and a strengths-based educational philosophy.
5. Identify and analyze how personal strengths have produced past achievements and how a better application of personal strengths can produce greater excellence in the process of teaching, learning, and leading.
6. Collaboratively develop a plan for the future of a strengths-based approach within higher education.

Required Texts

- Buckingham, M. (2005). *The one thing you need to know*. New York: Free Press.
- Buckingham, M., & Coffman, C. (1999). *First, break all the rules*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Clifton, D. O., & Anderson, E. C. (2002). *StrengthsQuest: Discover and develop your strengths in academics, career, and beyond*. Washington, DC: The Gallup Organization.

Required Articles:

- Clifton, D. O., & Harter, J. K. (2003). Investing in strengths. In K. S. Cameron, J. E. Dutton, & R. E. Quinn (Eds.), *Positive organizational scholarship* (pp. 111-121). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Lopez, S., Janowski, K., & Wells, K. (Unpublished manuscript) Developing strengths in college students: exploring programs, contexts, theories and research.
- Nakamura, J., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2002). The concept of flow. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 89-105). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pajares, F. (1996). Self-efficacy beliefs in academic settings. *Review of Educational Research*, 66(4), 543-578.
- Salovey, P., Mayer, J. D., & Caruso, D. (2002). The positive psychology of emotional intelligence. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 159-171). New York: Oxford University Press.

Additional Articles:

- Anderson, E. C. (1991). What would we do if we really loved the students? In G.I. Berry & J. K. Asamen (Eds.), *Black students*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Anderson, E. C. , Cave, S., & McDowell, S. (October, 2001). *Why become strengths-based?* Keynote presented at the Eastern University Strengths Conference, St. Davids, PA. Available at <http://www.eastern.edu/academic/strengths/strengths.based.html>
- Averill, J. R. (2002). Emotional creativity: Toward “spiritualizing the passions.” In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 172-188). New York: Oxford University Press.

[Excerpts from] Beechnan, M. (1995). *Developing the gifts and talents of all students in the regular classroom*. CT: Creative Learning Press.

Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (2003). Three human strengths. In L. G. Aspinwall & U. M. Staudinger (Eds.), *A psychology of human strengths: Fundamental questions and future directions for a positive psychology* (pp. 87-102). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

[Excerpts from] Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap—and others don't*. San Francisco: HarperCollins.

Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56, 218-226.

Gibbons, M. (2002). *The self-directed learning handbook: Challenging adolescent students to excel*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Glickman, C. D. (2003). *Holding sacred ground: Essays on leadership, courage, and endurance in our schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[Excerpts from] Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R., & McKee, A. (2002). *Primal leadership: Realizing the power of emotional intelligence*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Harter, S. (2002). Authenticity. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 382-394). New York: Oxford University Press.

Langer, E. (2002). Well-being: Mindfulness versus positive evaluation. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 214-230). New York: Oxford University Press.

Masten, A. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56, 227-238.

McCullough, M., & Snyder, C. (2000). Classical sources of human strength: Revisiting an old home and building a new one. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 19, 1-10.

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- Steele, C. (1997). A threat in the air. *American Psychologist*, 52(6), 613-629.
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- Weisberg, R. P., Shriver, T. P., Bose, S., & DeFalco, K., (1997). Creating a district-wide social development project. *Educational Leadership*, 54, 37-39.
- Wrzesniewski, A., McCauley, C. R., Rozin, P., & Schwartz, B. (1997). Jobs, careers, and callings: People's relations to their work. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 31, 21-33.

Tentative Course Schedule

Note: Course schedule, topics, evaluation and assignments may be changed at the instructor's discretion. Any changes in assignments will be provided to you in writing during class.

July Sessions:

Session 1 – Monday, July 18th, 1:30 – 5:00

Introduction to the Course and to Strengths-Based Education: The concept, philosophy, theory, and research on Strengths-Based teaching, learning, managing and leading. Introduction to course expectations, graduate level writing and doctoral work.

Session 2 – Tuesday, July 19th, 1:30 – 5:00

The Larger Context of the Strengths Philosophy and the Measurement and Self-Awareness of Strengths and Positive Psychology: How this paradigm fits within positive psychology, organizational development theory and the development of a sense of calling. Identification of inventories designed to identify strengths and talents, as well as the theoretical frameworks on which they are based. How to interpret these strengths and positive psychology inventories within the context of teaching, learning, and leading.

Session 3 – Wednesday, July 20th, 2:00 – 4:30

Strengths-Based Relationship Management: Application of strengths-based research and philosophy to relationship management issues.

Session 4 – Thursday, July 21st, **2:00 – 7:00** (dinner provided)

The Strengths-Based Paradigm of Teaching and Learning: Theories and research comparing strengths-based approaches to deficit remediation approaches and how these approaches are reflected in current educational practices. Panel of outstanding graduate students discussing strategies for student success and the future of strengths.

Session 5 – Friday, July 22nd, **1:30 – 3:00**

Strengths-Based Leadership: Application of strengths-based research and philosophy to leadership development theories.

January Sessions:

Session 6 – **The Theology of Strengths:** Understanding how this theory embodies central theological positions of a Christian world-view. Identification of spiritual formation patterns of various strength patterns.

Session 7 – Strengths-Based Teaching and Learning: Identifying patterns of strengths and the application of strengths among the best of the best, highest achieving teachers, learners, and educational leaders.

Sessions 8 and 9 – Strengths-Based Leadership: How to implement a strengths-based educational approach within an existing educational institution, taking into account contextual dynamics within the institution and the community in which it is located.

Session 10 – The Future of the Strengths Movement: Group presentations forecasting the future of the strengths movement in America and beyond.

Assignments and Grading Procedures

1. Measurement and Self Awareness of Strengths

- a) Write a 5 - 10 page paper that provides a self-analysis of one's own strengths and talents as they have been manifested in past achievements in teaching, learning and leading and articulate the ways in which one's strengths can be more effectively applied to move to higher levels of excellence in teaching, learning and leading. Provided a specific plan for developing your strengths throughout your doctoral pursuit. Due: August 22nd. (150 points, 15% of final grade)

- b) Conduct three interviews with professional colleagues regarding your strengths report. Carefully craft interview questions before meeting with the individuals. Submit a 5 – 10 page reflection paper indicating your findings and include your interview protocol.
Due: August 22nd. (100 points, 10% of final grade)

2. Positive Psychology and Strengths-Based Research

- a) Compose a 10 – 15 page formal research paper critiquing the positive psychology movement. Compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of the movement. A minimum of 10 citations is required. Due: September 22nd. (200 points, 20% of final grade)

3. Teaching and Learning

- a) Write a 3 - 5 page specific description of your best learning experience and your worst. These will be distributed to the class to complete the following assignment. Due: October 1st. (50 points, 5% of final grade)

- b) Write a 3 – 5 page review of your classmates’ best and worse learning experiences and discuss themes that are found throughout those documents. Due: November 1st. (50 points, 5% of final grade)

4. Managing and Leading

Post a critique and engage in an on-line discussion regarding your reading of *The One Thing You Should Know* by Buckingham. Due: November 15th, on-line chat – TBA. (100 points, 10% of final grade)

5. Theology of Strengths

Write a 5 – 7 page formal critique of Anderson’s *Theology of Strengths*. Minimum of 3 citations required. (Document provided by the professor) Due: December 10th. (100 points, 10% of final grade)

6. Future of the Strengths-Based Education Movement

- a) Working with a team of 3 - 4 classmates, contribute to a collaborative project and presentation to the class concerning the development of a national center for strengths-based education. This project should provide a contextual overview for the progress made in advancing the strengths movement to this point as well as crafting a proposed direction for the future of the movement. The team should arrange through the faculty member telephone conference calls with various key constituents. Interview protocols should be established and submitted before receiving the contact information. All recommendations for development should be substantiated through complete literature reviews and documented conversations. A formal paper must be submitted with the presentation on the last day of class in January. Due: January 7th. (200 points, 20% of grade)
- b) Each team member will write a 3 - 5 page reflection paper on how each person in the group used their particular strengths to ensure the success of the team. Specific examples of how the person’s strengths were used are required. Due: January 7th. (50 points, 5 % of final grade)

7. Wild Card - optional

You may substitute a project for any of the above assignments with exception of the positive psychology research paper and the future of strengths-based education group project. The project must be preapproved by the faculty member and carry the same academic rigor and assigned value as one of the aforementioned requirements.

Evaluation

Students may earn a possible 1000 points in this course, accumulated via the assignments outlined above. The final grade will be based on the following point allocations.

940-1000=A	890-900=B+	790-800=C+	650-690=D	0-640=F
910-930=A-	840-880=B	740-780=C		
810-830=B-	700-730=C-			

Basic proficiency at the graduate level is considered B work. Work that is exceptionally crafted in its writing, depth of knowledge and ability to apply that knowledge will receive an A. Work that demonstrates minimal proficiency will earn a C. A C- does not count toward doctoral credit. The final course grade reflects learning consistent with the descriptions below.

- A** Superior knowledge regarding details, assumptions, implications, and theories of strengths-based teaching, learning, and leading; superior ability to synthesize theories, apply knowledge to real-life situations, and analyze and critique theory and research in these areas.
- B** More than adequate knowledge regarding technical terms, distinctions, and basic concepts, along with a basic ability to use these concepts in new situations
- C** Basic knowledge regarding major principles, central terms, and major figures; also possesses a basic awareness of current issues in this field.
- D, F** Graduate credit not given for the grade of D or F

Course Policies and Guidelines

- 1. Incompletes.** According to the Graduate Education Faculty Handbook: “An incomplete is given only under special circumstances and is not to be used simply because students are not able to complete work in the allotted time. ‘Incompletes’ are initiated by the student well in advance of the end of the semester with the use of the Official Incomplete Form signed by both the student and instructor.” The Incomplete will then be approved by the Department Chair and Dean, and the student will have 12 weeks after the last class session to complete the work. It is entirely the student’s responsibility to complete the work in such a way as to remove the Incomplete. ***Please note the department policy that students who take Incompletes for any reason other than medical emergency or death in the family cannot earn a grade higher than a B in the course.***
- 2. Class Attendance.** Because of our limited time together, it is important that you are prepared for class, arrive on time, stay the entire class session, and actively participate in class. Please notify the professor in advance whenever possible if you cannot avoid being late or missing a class.

- 3. Deadlines.** All assignments must be received by the published due date in order to receive full credit. Assignments must be submitted via e-mail. Any assignment received after the due date will receive a one-letter grade reduction, unless the instructor has approved an extension in advance. *No assignments will be accepted more than one week past the due date, unless an extension has been approved by the instructor in advance.*
- 4. Advance Assistance.** Student wishing feedback (comments, but no grade) from the professor prior to the due date are invited to notify the professor of their desire and to schedule with the professor a timely means of accomplishing this. We strongly encourage you to get feedback on your work throughout the process.
- 5. Extra-Credit Work.** There is no extra-credit work in this course.
- 6. Cell phones and Emergencies.** Please turn off your cell phone before coming to class. There will be breaks during each class session during which you may check your messages.
- 7. Returning Course Work to Students.** Assignments should be submitted electronically and will be returned via email or the postal service.
- 8. Academic Integrity.** Graduate students are expected to do their own independent work, and to refrain from cheating, copying or plagiarizing the work of others. When drawing from various resources for research purposes students must provide citations, footnotes and bibliographic information. Students may not use an editor for any work turned in under their own name. Students who engage in academic dishonesty (as defined below) will automatically receive an "F" in the course. The following statement appears in the Graduate Catalog:

"The maintenance of academic integrity and quality education is the responsibility of each student at Azusa Pacific University. Cheating or plagiarism in connection with an academic program is an offense for which a student will be expelled, suspended, or disciplined. Academic dishonesty is a serious offense which diminishes the quality of scholarship and defrauds those who depend upon the integrity of the educational system. Academic dishonesty includes:

1. Cheating – Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.
 - a. Students completing any examination should assume that external assistance is prohibited unless specifically authorized by the instructor.
 - b. Students may not allow others to conduct research or prepare work for them without advance authorization from the instructor.
 - c. Substantial portions of the same academic work may not be submitted for credit in more than one course without authorization.
2. Fabrication – Intentional falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

3. Facilitating academic dishonesty – Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another commit an act of academic dishonesty.
4. Plagiarism – Intentionally or knowingly representing the words, ideas, or work of another as one's own in any academic exercise.”
9. Appeals, grievance procedures, withdrawal, grade permanence, and retention of records policies are published in the Graduate Catalog and apply to this course.

Available Support Services

1. Students with disabilities.

Students in this course who have a disability that might prevent them from fully demonstrating their abilities should meet with an advisor in the Learning Enrichment Center as soon as possible to initiate disability verification and discuss accommodations that may be necessary to ensure full participation in the successful completion of course requirements.

2. Library, Computer Center, Media Center

Azusa Pacific University maintains excellent library and on-line, full-text databases available to all registered students. It is highly recommended that you visit the Darling and Marshburn Libraries, become familiar with on-line databases, and apply for internet access throughout your graduate program. For more information regarding library, computing and media services contact the Darling Library at (626) 815-5087.

Fundamental Principles of Doctoral Study

Your decision to pursue a doctorate and to enroll in this course represents a major commitment of your time, energy, and resources. It also should indicate your commitment to move from the position of “student” to that of “scholar.” For this course, this means the following:

1. *Diligent preparation for class.* You may assume that the professor will operate on a collaborative learning model; that is, all persons in the room are expected to be knowledgeable about the topic for the day and to have something to contribute.
2. *Active participation in class discussions.* Because of this collaborative learning model, your contribution to the class is vital. Your focused and attentive participation, openness to others' ideas, and positive attitude toward the learning experience are expected throughout the course.
3. *Intellectual engagement.* At the doctoral level, student-scholars view assignments as learning opportunities. Going above and beyond what is expected in the assignment helps you mature as a scholar. Bringing your own ideas or ideas from sources beyond those listed in the syllabus will make an important contribution to the class learning experience.
4. *Self-regulation.* At this level of study, student-scholars are expected to regulate their own behavior and to not need to be reminded of deadlines. Ask for feedback, take the initiative to get what you need from the class, and be courageous in the questions you ask. Hold one another accountable for the quality of the learning experience. Take risks and take responsibility for your own learning.

5. *Coherent, professional writing.* By this point in your career, you are expected to write in a way that is clear, concise, coherent, and professional. Every written assignment should be at least a second draft that has been reviewed by another person for clarity. If you have difficulty with your writing, take the initiative to pursue assistance in this area.
6. *Collegiality.* At its heart, doctoral study is an opportunity for you to become a colleague with your instructor and your classmates. Respect for one another's ideas, a willingness to engage the hard questions, and an openness to new ways of thinking about issues are some of the hallmarks of collegiality. An appropriate balance of challenge and support for one another is expected in this course.
(many thanks to Dennis Sheridan for allowing us to adapt these principles)

Bibliography

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- Anderson, E. C., Cave, S., & McDowell, S. (October, 2001). *Why become strengths-based?* Keynote presented at the Eastern University Strengths Conference, St. Davids, PA. Available at <http://www.eastern.edu/academic/strengths/strengths.based.html>
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