INspired: A Strengths Building Curriculum

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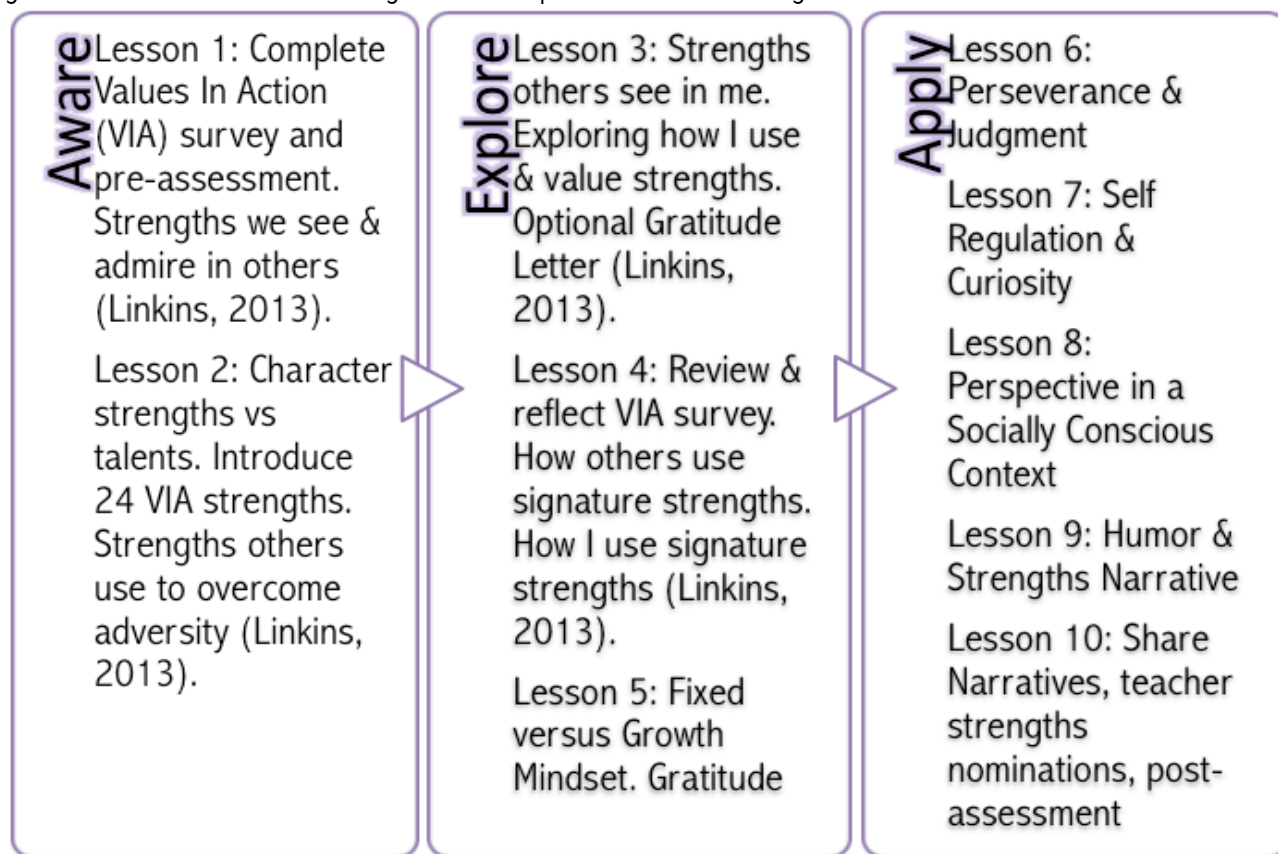## Brief Overview of Literature Review

- Positive psychology is the study & application of "positive emotion, positive character traits [strengths] and enabling institutions" (Seligman et al., 2005, p. 410).
- Why focus on character strengths? Strengths can be increased through identification, reflection and practice (Seligman et al., 2005; Niemiec, 2013).
- Research suggests that increasing character strengths improves:
    - Academic Achievement (**Park & Peterson, 2009**; Seligman et al., 2005; Shoshani & Slone, 2012; Weber & Ruch, 2012)
    - Subjective Wellbeing (Gillham et al., 2011; Seligman et al., 2005; Wood et al., 2010)

Needs assessment

On a written poll, 8th and 6th grade teachers reported a strong (3.46 out of 4) need for a positive psychology intervention (Seligman et al, 2005). Guidance staff concurred this finding.

Materials

Due to school staff demand and generous donation from VIA, all parties collaborated to create and deliver a 10 lesson program to increase students' knowledge and use of positive character strengths.

Aware
Lesson 1: Complete Values In Action (VIA) survey and pre-assessment. Strengths we see & admire in others (Linkins, 2013).

Lesson 2: Character strengths vs talents. Introduce 24 VIA strengths. Strengths others use to overcome adversity (Linkins, 2013).

Explore
Lesson 3: Strengths others see in me. Exploring how I use & value strengths. Optional Gratitude Letter (Linkins, 2013).

Lesson 4: Review & reflect VIA survey. How others use signature strengths. How I use signature strengths (Linkins, 2013).

Lesson 5: Fixed versus Growth Mindset. Gratitude

Apply
Lesson 6: Perseverance & Judgment

Lesson 7: Self Regulation & Curiosity

Lesson 8: Perspective in a Socially Conscious Context

Lesson 9: Humor & Strengths Narrative

Lesson 10: Share Narratives, teacher strengths nominations, post-assessment

Implementation plan

- Feb 12 & 13, 2013-Professional development delivered by Mark Linkins for Citizen Schools members & OGPS guidance staff.
- Feb 25 to May 13-Program implemented in two middle schools, McCormack & OGPS, through Citizen School's extended day programing. Delivered to over 100 8th grade students. CS liaison and I meet every week to prepare for the next lesson and modify lessons to meet population needs. I broker communication between schools, CS and VIA.

- Future Recommendations: Incorporate teacher & student feedback; involve core curriculum teachers; scale back to just OGPS, negotiate price with VIA institute.

Evaluation of Program

- Weekly teacher feedback form: Student could answer essential questions, students were engaged, material applied to students' lives, students used strengths throughout the week, students are motivated, or can be motivated, to overcome challenges using strength-based language, Comments/notes. Scale: 1 Agree to 4 Disagree.
- All students take a pre & post intervention self-survey on gratitude (McCullough, Emmons, Tsang, 2001) life satisfaction (Huebner, 1991), self-efficacy (Muris, 2001), and classroom satisfaction (Duda & Nichollls, 1992).
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Implication of Project

Development as a Practitioner	-Experience collaborating with multiple agencies -Experience with lesson planning & delivery -Following a project through inception to evaluation -Enables me to apply theories & practices learned in HGSE classes
Process of Project Development	Contacted VIA to simply find Positive Psychology resources ->Mark offered to create pro-bono curriculum for OGPS small group counseling run by me -> Supervisor very enthusiastic about project -> Collaboration with Citizen Schools Deputy Director -> 2 school, 6 lesson implementation ->Success of lessons led to CS request for additional 4 lessons (personally wrote + integrated 4 lessons)
Results	85% of students reported an increase in optimism Over 73% of students reported an increase in self-efficacy, resiliency and gratitude

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