



# Strengths-Based Approach

## Using a Strengths-Based Approach

A strengths-based (or assets-based) approach starts with what's present—not what's absent in the child's abilities, learning, and development. It is a shift in thinking and a movement away from deficit-based language. It is not a denial of challenges and differences, but a focus on what the child can do.

A strengths-based approach can:

- provide more information about strengths and strategies to support children in their daily lives.
- celebrate neuro-diverse children and their learning styles.
- improve how children see themselves and how their families and providers see them.
- promote resilience and effective coping to support children throughout their lives.

## Strategies to move toward a SBA

- Use assessment tools that highlight a student's strengths as well as their challenges. For instance, use developmental charts developed for children with Down Syndrome in addition to charts for typically developing children.
- Use descriptions of the students' skills that are objective, and non-judgemental, for instance, rather than "He has limited focus," use "He has many interests." Rather than, "She is unable to.." use "next steps for her are."
- Avoid using words like, 'red flags' or 'delays' and replace them with words like 'indicators', 'challenges', and 'differences', or simply describe what you see in a neutral language.
- Place test results at the bottom of the reports to move the focus toward strengths and abilities.
- Write goals that include new skills that are within the context of what THAT child should be able to achieve within a set time frame, not necessarily developmental or age-level next steps.
- INCLUDE learning styles and supports (visuals, sensory, etc.) the student uses and needs to succeed in various report sections, present levels, needs, and goals. (See our Goal Rubric handout for examples.)

Resources:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/documents/childhood/professionals/learning/strengthbappr.pdf>resources

Steiner, A. M. (2011). A strength-based approach to parent education for children with autism. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 13(3), 178-190. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300710384134>  
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