

Hello, and welcome to Through the Language Lens, the professional development series for teachers where we talk about pedagogical strategies for working with multilingual students, also known as English language learners.

I'm Jared Kubokawa, the English Language Consultant and Coach at Ingham Intermediate School District. Today, we're talking about asset-based thinking in teaching.

Some of the key words you might hear today are teaching positivity, teaching strength, utilizing differentiation and collaboration, teaching growth and thinking about reflection.

All right, so let's jump right into Through the Language Lens.

The issue in education is that we sometimes fall into deficit-based thinking. You can see that in this visualization here, where the gray square represents the current educational system that asks students, "You're going to have to change to fit into the system." But the different-colored circular students say, "How about you change the system so we can all fit?"

That's deficit-based thinking.

But why asset-based thinking?

This is a key concept. First of all, it creates an effective and engaging learning environment for both your students and the teachers themselves. It also supports DEI and other behavioral issues that you may confront in your classroom.

Asset-based thinking is both collaborative and reflective. Students reflect on their learning and also collaborate with peers and the teacher.

Of course, it's a positive, strengths-based approach where teachers focus on what students can already do well already in order to aid them in learning new concepts.

Very important. Let's jump right into the teaching tips and pedagogical strategies.

First of all, right at the beginning of your semester or trimester, start with an interest survey. Of course, you want to get to know your students, but also thinking about skills inventories and doing a small review of what they probably have forgotten over the summer. This helps you get a sense of what students already know so you can start from this base of strength as you move forward with your teaching.

Next is differentiated instruction, which comes in many different shapes and forms.

For multilingual learners, differentiated instruction could include:

- The use of technology.

- Different scaffolding strategies.
- Tools such as word walls, vocabulary banks and definitions.
- Pictures, photographs and other visual supports.

Within that, create flexible work groups so students can work together in pairs, diads, small groups, larger groups or whole-class discussions.

Also, use multiple modalities, including technology as well as good old pen and paper.

Finally, looking at positive classroom environments and ways to enhance how students think about their learning while reinforcing a growth mindset.

That happens through positive language in your classroom because words matter.

Teaching Strategies 2 – More pedagogical tips.

Start with collaborative learning. That means peers teaching other peers or working together in pairs and small groups.

Next, use reflective practices.

Self-assessment is a very effective strategy that can strengthen the assessment package you offer in your classroom. It helps gauge what students think they know and how they feel about the content.

I also encourage students to write in journals, especially through ungraded writing.

When I say "ungraded," I mean students may still receive participation credit, but you remove grammatical requirements and, unless students are struggling to write enough, remove word-count requirements as well.

Simply allow students to reflect and write about your content in the way that works best for them.

Let's do a quick review of these key concepts.

Asset-based thinking creates a more inclusive and engaging environment where teaching becomes more effective through positive language and by reinforcing a growth mindset that supports the development of both students and teachers.

Some of the key words you've heard today are:

- Positivity
- Strengths
- Differentiation

- Collaboration
- Growth
- Reflection

Finally, I'd like to offer some additional reading if you're interested in learning more about asset-based thinking approaches.

The book on the left, *Asset-Based Approaches*, is more research-focused and helps explain the theory behind asset-based thinking.

The book on the right, *Better Learning*, takes a more pedagogical approach and focuses on applying asset-based thinking in the classroom.

I'll leave you with a quote from the great John Dewey:

"We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience."

Reflection is an important part of any classroom and every learning experience.

Thank you very much for participating.

Feel free to leave a comment below and hit the like button. If there's something you didn't necessarily agree with and would like to discuss, please leave a comment about that as well. I always encourage open discussion.

You can also reach out to me via email at the address shown on the screen.

Thank you for stopping by Through the Language Lens.

Goodbye.