

Maximizing One's Strengths


A Discussion of Purnell School's

AFFINITIES PROGRAM

with

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The background of the slide features a textured, light brown paper-like surface. In the center, there are faint, layered silhouettes of mountains. On the right side, there is a detailed illustration of a willow tree with long, thin branches and small, dark, round leaves.

Warm-Up Activity

**Give directions from your
home
to Purnell School**

**Use the paper
provided.**

Why are activities like these
important?

**During Affinities Seminars students have
the opportunity to participate in these
kinds of activities to uncover strengths in
many areas of life.**

**During their traditional classes and in the
Purnell community students are then
encouraged to apply their strengths.**

Why focus on affinities and strengths?

- ✧ **Building self-esteem**
- ✧ **Giving purpose to life and learning**
- ✧ **Engaging children in school**
- ✧ **Empowering students with knowledge and tools**
- ✧ **Celebrating diversity and uniqueness**
- ✧ **Creating a context for learning**
- ✧ **Understanding weaknesses in context**

How does Purnell help students maximize their strengths?

In four ways:

- ✧ **During Affinities Seminars**
- ✧ **Through the demystification process**
- ✧ **In the academic setting**
- ✧ **In the Purnell community**

Let's start with Affinities Seminars...

In 9th grade, students:

- ✧ **First, learn their way around the Purnell campus, and discover what it means to be a community member**
- ✧ **Then, think about their self concept and how they relate to the people around them**
- ✧ **Next, name their relationship strengths and make a plan for utilizing them with friends and family**
- ✧ **Additionally, name learning strengths and take steps to utilize them in a variety of classes**
- ✧ **Finally, focus on healthy habits that can aid them in managing stress and living balanced lives**

Let's start with Affinities
Seminars...

In 10th grade, students:

***Spend almost the entire year working on their
teamwork strengths through...***

- ✧ **Trust building activities**
- ✧ **Collaborative problem solving**
- ✧ **Activities on the ropes course**

Let's start with Affinities
Seminars...
In 11th grade, students:

Spend time applying what they know about strengths...

- ✧ **Through career searches**
- ✧ **Through the college process**
- ✧ **By searching for and securing a 2-week summer internship**
- ✧ **And they write their first resumé and cover letter**

Let's start with Affinities
Seminars...

In 12th grade, students:

Spend time proclaiming their strengths

- ✧ **By writing their college essays**
- ✧ **By writing and delivering their senior speeches**

Now, the demystification process

Each new student, in her first year at Purnell,

takes part in the demystification process

- ✧ **The student and her parents complete surveys about learning and other interests**
- ✧ **One faculty member compiles the data and looks for trends of strengths and weaknesses, while meeting with the student and teachers to further distill the data**
- ✧ **The faculty member presents the data and conclusions to the student in a 20 minute one-on-one meeting**
- ✧ **The student learns strategies to strengthen both strengths and weaknesses in and out of class**
- ✧ **The findings and strategies are communicated to teachers and the parents through the advisor**

Why is the demystification process so helpful?

- ✧ **Students understand that everyone has unique strengths and weaknesses, and that we should strengthen both**
- ✧ **Students feel validated and in control of their own learning**
- ✧ **Students learn vocabulary to talk to their teachers about their learning style and needs in the classroom**
- ✧ **Students and teachers learn a variety of strategies to aid in comprehension and personal effectiveness**
- ✧ **Teachers have a common language to talk about students' needs**

How are strengths utilized in academic settings?

- ✧ **Student choice for assignments and assessments**
- ✧ **Students have a wide variety of elective classes from which to choose**
- ✧ **Teachers and students know demystification information and utilize strategies that incorporate students' strengths**
- ✧ **Teachers form some groups and plan some projects based on students' strengths**
- ✧ **Students and teachers meta-cognitively discuss learning strategies**
- ✧ **Students understand how to bring areas of strength to an area of weakness**

How are strengths utilized in the Purnell community?

- ✧ **Internships**
- ✧ **Affinities Wednesday**
- ✧ **Activities**
- ✧ **Sports**
- ✧ **Project Exploration**
- ✧ **Special events and opportunities**
- ✧ **Suggestions from teachers and advisors**

The background features a textured, light-colored paper surface. In the upper right, there is a faint illustration of a mountain range. On the right side, a willow tree with long, thin branches and small, dark buds is depicted. The text is overlaid on this background.

Questions?

**Please feel free to contact me throughout
the year**

if you have questions or concerns,

**or if you feel your daughter could benefit
from one-on-one work with me
to concentrate on her affinities and
strengths**