

My Shield

Self Confidence

Grade(s): 4–8

Learning objective/s or description

Students pass their named shields around the room in one-minute rotations, with each classmate writing one strength or success on every shield they receive — then get their shield back, add one self-identified strength, and decorate it with art supplies for classroom display.

Materials needed:

- Large drawing or poster paper
- Writing utensils
- Decorative art supplies

Any tips or important information

Pre-cut shields ahead of time to save class time. Coach students gently if their strengths are vague or sarcastic — model what specific, kind compliments sound like. Make sure every shield gets a strength written by every student so no one feels skipped.

Lesson structure:

Opening Circle

What is one strength you bring to this group?

Community Builder: Strength Spotlight

One student volunteers to be in the spotlight. Going around the circle, each other student shares one quick strength they see in that person — repeat with a couple of volunteers if time allows.

Main Activity

Introduction

- As an opening to class, give each student silent writing time to answer this question: “How can focusing on our strengths and successes enable us to feel more safe and comfortable?”
- After a few minutes of writing, ask a few students to share out their thoughts.
- Explain that in today’s activity, the goal is to help everyone feel more safe and comfortable in the classroom by increasing awareness of the strengths and successes of everyone in the class.

Instructions

- Have students cut out shields, or distribute one pre-cut shield per student. Have each student write their name at the top of the shield.

- Explain that students are going to work together as a classroom to create personal shields that reveal the strengths and successes of each other.
- Describe that they will be passing their shields around the room in one-minute increments.
- They will have one minute to write down one strength or success of the person whose shield they have. It can be anything that is positive, such as “has a good sense of style,” or “makes me laugh,” or “good at soccer.”
- They must write one strength or success for each person’s shield they receive.
- They will pass them around the room for 9 rotations so that each person has 9 strengths or successes on their shield.
- Then collect the shields and hand them back to the original owner.
- Each student will then add one strength or success of their own to the shield.

Shield Strengths

- Guide the activity you just described by giving students one-minute periods to write a strength or success of the person whose name is at the top of the shield, and then pass the shield to someone new each minute.
- After 9 one-minute rotations, collect shields and hand them to the original owners.
- Then give students a few minutes to read through what others wrote and to add one additional strength or success of their own.

Shield Art

- Give students art supplies and 10 minutes to “make their shields their own” by adding color and other media they would like to use to decorate them. Display shields around the classroom.

Reflection

- How did it feel to identify and write about someone else’s strengths or successes?
- How did it feel to read the strengths or successes others wrote about you?
- How can being aware of each other’s strengths and successes help everyone in the classroom feel safe and comfortable?

Closing Circle

What is one strength someone shared about you today that surprised you?