



Developing Hopeful Minds: Strengthening Student Resilience and Well-Being



Karen Scheaffer, Shelby Blackwood, Bailie Cobble, Rachelle Johnson

Published by K20 Center

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

Time Frame 60 minutes

Essential Question(s)

- Why does Hope matter in education?

Summary

This professional development session introduces educators to the science of Hope and its critical role in student success, resilience, achievement, and well-being. Participants will explore how Hope differs from optimism, learn about Dr. Chan Hellman's research and Hope theory, and leave with practical strategies to intentionally cultivate Hope in students. The session is grounded in the understanding that Hope is: measurable, malleable, and attainable. Participants will develop a strong understanding that Hope is not simply wishful thinking or positivity but a science-based construct that can be intentionally taught and strengthened through educational practice.

Learning Goals

Standards

InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards (K-12th)

- 1j:** The teacher takes responsibility for promoting learners' growth and development.
- 2l:** The teacher believes that all learners can achieve at high levels and persists in helping each learner reach his/her full potential.
- 2n:** The teacher makes learners feel valued and helps them learn to value each other.
- 3i:** The teacher understands the relationship between motivation and engagement and knows how to design learning experiences using strategies that build learner self-direction and ownership of learning.
- 3j:** The teacher knows how to help learners work productively and cooperatively with each other to achieve learning goals.
- 3o:** The teacher values the role of learners in promoting each other's learning and recognizes the importance of peer relationships in establishing a climate of learning.
- 6m:** The teacher knows when and how to engage learners in analyzing their own assessment results and in helping to set goals for their own learning.

Attachments

- [Card Sort Cards—Developing Hopeful Minds.docx](#)
- [Card Sort Cards—Developing Hopeful Minds.pdf](#)
- [Hope Scales Surveys—Developing Hopeful Minds.pdf](#)
- [Hope Sunflower—Developing Hopeful Minds.docx](#)
- [Hope Sunflower—Developing Hopeful Minds.pdf](#)
- [Instructional Strategy Note Sheet—Developing Hopeful Minds.docx](#)
- [Instructional Strategy Note Sheet—Developing Hopeful Minds.pdf](#)
- [Presentation Slides—Developing Hopeful Minds.pptx](#)
- [Research Article Summaries—Developing Hopeful Minds.docx](#)
- [Research Article Summaries—Developing Hopeful Minds.pdf](#)
- [Student Scenario Cards—Developing Hopeful Minds.docx](#)
- [Student Scenario Cards—Developing Hopeful Minds.pdf](#)

Materials

- Presentation Slides (attached)
- Instructional Strategy Note Sheet handout (attached; one per participant)
- Hope Scales Surveys handout (attached; two-sided; one per participant)
- Hope Sunflower handout (attached; one per participant)
- Card Sort Cards (attached; one per group of four)
- Research Article Summaries handout (attached; one copy per six participants)
- Student Scenario Cards (attached; one card per group of four)
- Sticky notes (five per participant)
- Easel pads or chart paper
- Markers
- Blank paper

10 minutes

Engage

Use the attached **Presentation Slides** to facilitate the session. Display **slide 2** to introduce participants to the session title and topic. Pass out a copy of the **Instructional Strategy Note Sheet** to each participant. Explain that as they go through the session they should take notes on the strategies that are used. Move to **slide 3** and ask participants to think about times that they faced obstacles. Invite them to talk about how they overcame and succeeded despite these obstacles with an [Elbow Partner](#). Ask for volunteers to share with the whole group. Move to **slide 4** and pass out a copy of the **Hope Scales Surveys** to each participant. Give participants time to fill out the Adult Hope Scale. Then, have them look over the Children's Hope Scale to compare the two surveys.

When they are finished, move to **slide 5** and ask participants to answer the questions on the screen. Pass out a copy of the **Hope Sunflower** handout to each participant. Display **slide 6** and have participants answer the prompt in one of the petals of the flower.

Use **slides 7-8** to go over the essential question and the learning objectives.

15 minutes

Explore

Transition to **slide 9** and introduce participants to the [Card Sort](#) instructional strategy. Put participants into small groups. Explain that participants will sort the cards into two categories: Hope and optimism. Once participants have finished sorting the cards, facilitate a discussion about how we use the word Hope in everyday conversation and how that might change its meaning.

Move to **slide 10**. Read the prompt to the participants and ask them to fill out a second petal on the flower.

15 minutes

Explain

Display **slide 11** and introduce Dr. Hellman's TEDx video [The Science and Power of Hope](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qt0fRSx5KI4). Explain that the video will go over what Hope is and show the video on the slide.

Embedded video

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=qt0fRSx5KI4>

Teacher's Note: Video Times

Dr. Hellman's video is 20 minutes. For time purposes, the topic and times that apply to this session are below:

- Intro: 0:00–1:17
- What is Hope?: 3:22–3:47

Pass out five sticky notes and one article to each participant from the **Research Article Summaries**. Move to **slide 12** and explain to participants that as they read, they should make note of words, phrases, or ideas they think are important. Tell them to put each word, phrase, or idea on a separate sticky note. Transition to **slide 13** and introduce participants to the [Affinity Process](#) instructional strategy. Instruct participants to take their sticky notes to their poster. As a group, they should organize their sticky notes into similar themes. Ask them to add a title to each group of sticky notes. Invite groups to share their themes and what they wrote on the sticky notes. Ask participants to return to their seats. Move to **slide 14** and have participants fill out the third petal on their sunflower with the answer to the prompt.

Transition to **slide 15** and go over the three components of Hope. Organize the participants into three groups for each component of Hope. Give each group a piece of large chart paper. Move to **slide 16** and introduce participants to a modified version of the [Color, Symbol, Image](#) instructional strategy. Instruct participants to divide their paper into four quadrants. Explain to participants to select a color, write a summary, and draw an image that represents their component in the corresponding quadrants of the chart paper. The bottom right quadrant is left blank. Display **slide 17** and have groups share what they put in each quadrant and why with the whole group. Ask participants to return to their seats. Move to **slide 18** and have participants fill out the fourth petal on their sunflower with the answer to the prompt.

Teacher's Note: Participant Grouping

When putting participants into three groups, it is suggested that you partner up two of the research articles. For example, participants who read articles 1 and 2 will group together and get the component of Pathways. If you have a larger group of participants, it may be necessary to have more than three groups. If that is the case consider making two for each component.

Extend

Move to **slide 19**. Pass out one of the **Student Scenario Cards** to each table group. Explain that they should read the scenario aloud and then determine a goal, a pathway, and agency for the student. When participants are done with developing a solution, invite participants to share what their group came up with. Display **slide 20** and have participants fill out the fifth petal on their sunflower with the answer to the prompt.

Pass out blank sheets of paper to each participant. Move to **slide 21** and introduce participants to the [Commit and Toss](#) instructional strategy. Instruct participants to answer the question on their paper without writing their names. Show **slide 22** and ask participants to crumple their paper and toss it across the room. Have them retrieve a paper that is not theirs, read the answer, then share it with a partner. Invite participants to share their thoughts with the whole group.

Evaluate

Transition to **slide 23**. Ask participants to return to their CSI poster. Explain that they will be filling in the bottom right quadrant with their definition of Hope. Invite participants to share their definition of Hope and facilitate a discussion about the similarities between the groups.

Ask participants to return to their seats. Move to **slide 24** and ask participants to fill out the sixth petal on their sunflower with the answer to the prompt. Once participants have finished that, show **slide 25**. Instruct participants to move to the center of the sunflower and complete the prompt "Hope is..."

Move to **slide 26** and read the quote from Dr. Hellman on the slide. Display **slide 27** and provide participants with a review of the instructional strategies used in this session.

Research Rationale

Across multiple studies, hope consistently emerges as a measurable, malleable, and attainable psychological strength that directly supports adolescents' academic success, well-being, and resilience. Hope theory, which is built on goals, pathways, and agency, provides a clear cognitive framework to help students envision meaningful futures, generate strategies for progress, and sustain motivation despite obstacles (Bryce et al., 2020; Kirby et al., 2022).

Research demonstrates that higher hope predicts stronger academic engagement and outcomes, reduced anxiety, and improved coping skills in middle and high school students (Bryce et al., 2020; Marques et al., 2011). Hope-based interventions, including brief school programs, mentoring relationships, and structured curriculum, have been shown to increase students' hopeful thinking, life satisfaction, self-worth, and resilience (Marques et al., 2011; Kirby et al., 2022; Sulimani-Aidan et al., 2019). Even youth facing significant adversity, including exposure to domestic violence or high ACE scores, show measurable gains in hope and related strengths when provided with intentional support (Hellman & Gwinn, 2017; Hellman et al., 2023).

Collectively, these findings highlight hope as a foundational skill educators can cultivate to strengthen students' academic trajectories, emotional well-being, and long-term resilience. Embedding hope practices into school culture equips students with the cognitive tools needed to navigate challenges and pursue meaningful goals.

Resources

- Bryce, C. I., Fabes, R. A., Alexander, B. L., & Fraser, A. M. (2020). Dimensions of hope in adolescence: Relations to academic functioning and well-being. *Psychology in the Schools*, 57(2), 171–190.
- Gwinn, C., & Hellman, C. (2019). *Hope rising: How the science of hope can change your life*. Morgan James Publishing.
- Hellman, C. M., & Gwinn, C. (2017). Camp HOPE as an intervention for children exposed to domestic violence: A program evaluation of hope, and strength of character. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 34(3), 269–276. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-016-0460-6>
- Hellman, C. M., Pharris, A. B., & Muñoz, R. T. (2023). Responding to adverse childhood experiences: The science of hope as a framework for action. *Advances in Social Work*, 22(3), 1066–1083. <https://doi.org/10.18060/25632>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Affinity process. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/87>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Card sort. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/147>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Color, symbol, image. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/161>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Commit and toss. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/119>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Elbow partners. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/116>
- Kirby, K., Sweeney, S., Armour, C., Goetzke, K., Dunne, M., Davidson, M., & Belfer, M. (2022). Developing hopeful minds: Can teaching hope improve well-being and protective factors in children? *Child Care in Practice*, 28(4), 504–521. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2021.1924121>
- Marques, S. C., Lopez, S. J., & Pais-Ribeiro, J. L. (2011). “Building hope for the future”: A program to foster strengths in middle-school students. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 12(1), 139–152. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-009-9180-3>
- Sulimani-Aidan, Y., Melkman, E., & Hellman, C. M. (2019). Nurturing the hope of youth in care: The contribution of mentoring. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 89(2), 134–143. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000320>
- TEDx Talks. (2021, June 21). *The science and power of hope* | Chad Hellman | TEDxOklahomaCity [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qt0fRSx5KI4>