

Mini Guide to Strengths-Based Counseling: How Counselors Can Foster Student Growth with The Positivity Project (P2)

Why Strengths-Based School Counseling Matters

As a school counselor, you help students navigate academic, social, and emotional challenges every day. But too often, the focus is on what's wrong – fixing deficits rather than building on strengths.

A strengths-based approach shifts this perspective by helping students recognize and use their existing character strengths to solve problems, build resilience, and form positive relationships.

The Positivity Project (P2) provides an easy-to-use framework for integrating character strengths into the work of a school counselor – by helping students develop self-awareness, confidence, and interpersonal skills that last a lifetime.

Step 1: Identify Strengths in Students

Instead of focusing on what students struggle with, start by identifying their strengths. Here's how:

✓ **Use P2's [24 Character Strengths](#) as a Guide** – These include kindness, perseverance, bravery, social intelligence, and more. Use the [5-Minute P2 Strengths Survey](#) to get started.

✓ **Ask Strengths-Based Questions** – Instead of “Why did you do that?” try:

- *What strength helped you handle this situation?*
- *Which strength would help you improve next time?*

✓ **Have Students Reflect** – Ask them to **journal** or **share stories** about when they used a strength successfully.

Step 2: Teach Students to Leverage Their Strengths

Once students recognize their strengths, they can **apply them** to challenges.

✓ **Strengths Reframing** – If a student struggles with focus, they might use their **prudence** (careful decision-making) or **perseverance** to create better study habits.

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✓ **Role-Playing** – Help students act out real-life situations in which they can apply their strengths (e.g., using **bravery** to speak up, or **social intelligence** to navigate friendships).

✓ **Daily Strengths Check-In** – Ask: *Which strength did you use today? How did it help?*

Step 3: Use Strengths to Build Relationships

Helping students recognize strengths in others fosters empathy and strong relationships.

✓ **Peer Strength Spotting** – Have students recognize and acknowledge strengths in classmates.

✓ **Family Engagement** – Encourage students to discuss strengths at home (e.g., “Who showed gratitude today?”) and encourage parents to use [P2 for Families](#).

✓ **Strength-Based Problem Solving** – When conflicts arise, ask: *What strengths can you use to resolve this?*

Step 4: Strengths-Based Goal Setting

Counselors can guide students in setting goals that focus on strengths.

✓ **SMART Goals with Strengths** – Tie goals to strengths:

- *Instead of “I want to stop procrastinating,” try “I will use my perseverance and self-control to complete my homework by 5 PM each day.”*

✓ **Growth Mindset Check-Ins** – Celebrate progress by asking: *Which strengths helped you move forward?*

✓ **Encouraging Long-Term Growth** – Help students track how their strengths develop over time.

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A Strengths-Based School Counseling Success Story

At **Patriots STEM Elementary School** in Cabarrus County, NC, The Positivity Project is doing more than teaching weekly character strengths—it's transforming the school's culture and fostering emotional and social growth. By focusing on kindness, empathy, and resilience, P2 helps students and staff recognize the best in themselves and others, creating a foundation for lifelong success.

Teachers find P2 invaluable in building stronger connections with students. "Many say it's the best part of their day," shares Melissa Cahall, school counselor and P2 Leader. "It's a chance to focus on more than just academics and connect as people." Community involvement amplifies P2's impact, with newsletters and service projects, such as creating sensory pathways for students, and fostering collaboration between families and the school. Additionally, Patriots' staff undergo annual training to ensure consistent and effective implementation.



The results are clear: fewer office referrals, higher scores on surveys measuring sense of belonging and relationships, and an overall boost of morale among students and staff.

Patriots STEM Elementary, along with two other district schools, has been recognized as a **Positivity Project Green Shield School** for its commitment to positive relationships and character development. Patriots STEM received **Character.org's North Carolina State School of Character** recognition for 2024–25, and **Melissa Cahall won the Cabarrus County Schools School Counselor of the Year** award for 2024–25 in a school district with more than 40 schools.

As Melissa sums it up, "At the end of the day, we want to create kind humans, and the P2 curriculum gives us the tools to do that."

Read more [P2 success stories here](#).

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Want More?

P2's daily lessons and resources make it **easy for counselors** to integrate strengths-based counseling into their work. Learn how P2 can help your school cultivate a **culture of character and relationships**.

Unlock your P2 free lessons today:

FREE LESSONS



FREE LESSONS

P2 Weekly Toolbox: Perseverance

Welcome, and thank you for registering for your Free Lesson! You have unlocked exclusive access to explore our Tier 1 Daily Lessons, Family Newsletters, and Daily School Announcement Scripts for the character strength of **Perseverance**.

[Click here to register for a Free Trial to All P2 Resources <](#)

CHARACTER STRENGTH/OTHER PEOPLE MINDSET OVERVIEW

[Character Strength - Perseverance](#)

Tier 1 Daily Lessons

Pre-K	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12

Differentiated Character Cards

[Character Card Toolbox](#)

Spanish Resources

[Spanish Toolbox](#)

Mindful Moment

[Grades Pre-K-5](#)

[Grades 6-8](#)

[Grades 9-12](#)

Tier 2 and Tier 3 Resources

[Tier 2 and Tier 3 Toolbox](#)

Family Newsletter

[Perseverance](#)

Daily Morning Announcement Scripts

[Pre-K-K](#)

[Elementary](#)

[Secondary](#)

[Full Resource Guide](#)

Free Webinars

- P2 for Educators - Webinar recordings [here](#) and [here](#)
- Elementary School Weekly Must-Haves - Webinar recording [here](#)
- Middle & High School Weekly Must-Haves - Webinar recording [here](#)
- Middle & High School Electives - Webinar recording [here](#)
- Project-Based Learning Units: Webinar recording [here](#)

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