

# 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.

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

---

✓ **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.

---

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

## 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.

—Belonging—  
**The power of positivity: How P2 is building resilience at Patriots STEM Elementary**

At Patriots STEM Elementary School, The Positivity Project (P2) is making a difference in the lives of students and staff. This innovative program is focused on building resilience, kindness, empathy, and social growth among students and staff.

Teachers also say P2 helps them connect with their students. “Many teachers say it’s a chance to focus on more than just academics and connect as people.”

The success of P2 comes from teachers and students participating in annual training sessions. Counselors model kindness, and students learn to be kind to others. The school’s P2 program is a success story for building resilience and social-emotional learning.

Each week, students learn about character strengths and how to use them to build resilience and self-awareness. Melissa notes that P2 is a chance to focus on more than just academics and connect as people.

One example of P2 impact is in the school’s behavior challenges where new leads P2

highlight successes, and when students are in trouble, the school has been a part of P2’s success. Melissa notes that P2 helps students recognize the best in themselves and others, creating a foundation for lifelong success.

Community involvement also plays a role in P2’s success. Teachers and staff create a daily priority. For Melissa, the goal of P2 is to create a more supportive and enriching environment for all students. “At the end of the day, we want to create kind humans, and the P2 curriculum gives us the tools to do that.”

By extending our program (the P2), we have to create a more supportive and enriching environment for all students to grow into productive citizens. I say this all the time, but at the end of the day, we want to create kind humans, and the P2 curriculum gives us the tools to do that.” —Melissa Cahall, School Counselor, Patriots Elementary

Patriots STEM Elementary and other district schools, including Cabarrus County Schools, are proud to be a part of P2’s success. Community involvement and strong character are the program goals. In these times, we want to create a more supportive and enriching environment for all students to grow into productive citizens.



Melissa Cahall is a school counselor at Patriots STEM Elementary School and a district champion for the Positivity Project (P2).

**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](#).

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

## 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**