

# Secret Strengths Spotting

Middle School

High school

Elementary Education



## Intervention Overview

After learning about the VIA (Values in Action) Character Strengths(See [Recognizing and Utilizing Personal Strengths](#)), students are encouraged to look for those strengths in their peers. Additionally, teachers are encouraged to “spot” the strengths in their students and model this activity on a daily basis. This activity will improve peer-to-peer relationships as well as student-teacher relationships.

## Intervention Guide

Grade Level:	Upper Elementary- 12th
Materials:	Notebook, writing utensil
Duration:	20-30 minutes weekly, as needed.
Implementation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. At the beginning of each week randomly assign students to observe another student. This can be done by drawing names.</li><li>2. Instruct students to observe and record the character strengths the other student uses and perceived positive outcomes of using them (students should already be familiar with the VIA character strengths).</li><li>3. Provide students a few minutes in class each day to record their observations.</li><li>4. At the end of the week give students the opportunity to share their observations with the student that was observed.</li><li>5. Afterwards, have students reflect on their experience (could be done through writing or sharing in a class discussion).</li></ol>

## Does it work?

Govindji and Linley (2008) evaluated the impact of a strengths spotting exercise in schools. They found that recognizing strengths in others improved students' self-confidence, relationships with the teacher, and school climate. In a six session strengths-based intervention called "Awesome Us," researchers assessed the effects of strengths-based activities on the social skills of upper elementary students (Quinlan, 2013). At a follow up three months following the intervention's completion students reported higher levels of positive emotion, relatedness and strengths use. The strengths spotting activity was specifically linked to improving students' awareness of their strengths and in building relatedness among peers (Quinlan, 2013).

### References:

- Govindji, R., & Linley, P. (2008). *An evaluation of celebrating strengths* (Report prepared for North Lincolnshire Local Education Authority). Coventry, UK.
- Linkins, M., Niemiec, R.M., Gillham, J. & Mayerson, D. (2013). Through the lens of strength: A framework for educating the heart. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 10, 64-68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2014.888581>
- Quinlan, D. M. (2013). *Awesome us: the individual, group and contextual effects of a strengths intervention in the classroom*. University of Otago. <http://hdl.handle.net/10523/4114>



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