# Character Sprint Book

Introduction

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The standards tell us our goals for our students: Produce clear and coherent writing. Answer a focused research question. Solve quadratic equations.

But as teachers, we know there's more that is unstated and immeasurable: Cultivate curiosity. Encourage gratitude. Grow self-control and social intelligence.

So we asked our community of teacher designers: How might we build character in our students from day one? We explored and defined nine character traits, brainstormed online and in person, and built out our favorite ideas.

And here they are, for your inspiration. As you plan out your curriculum, perhaps one of these ideas will spark a lesson or conversation with your students, or maybe you'll bring an idea to your staff meeting. Whatever the outcome, please share with us at **teachersguild.org** or using **#tguild.**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY: **MEGHAN MCMAHON**
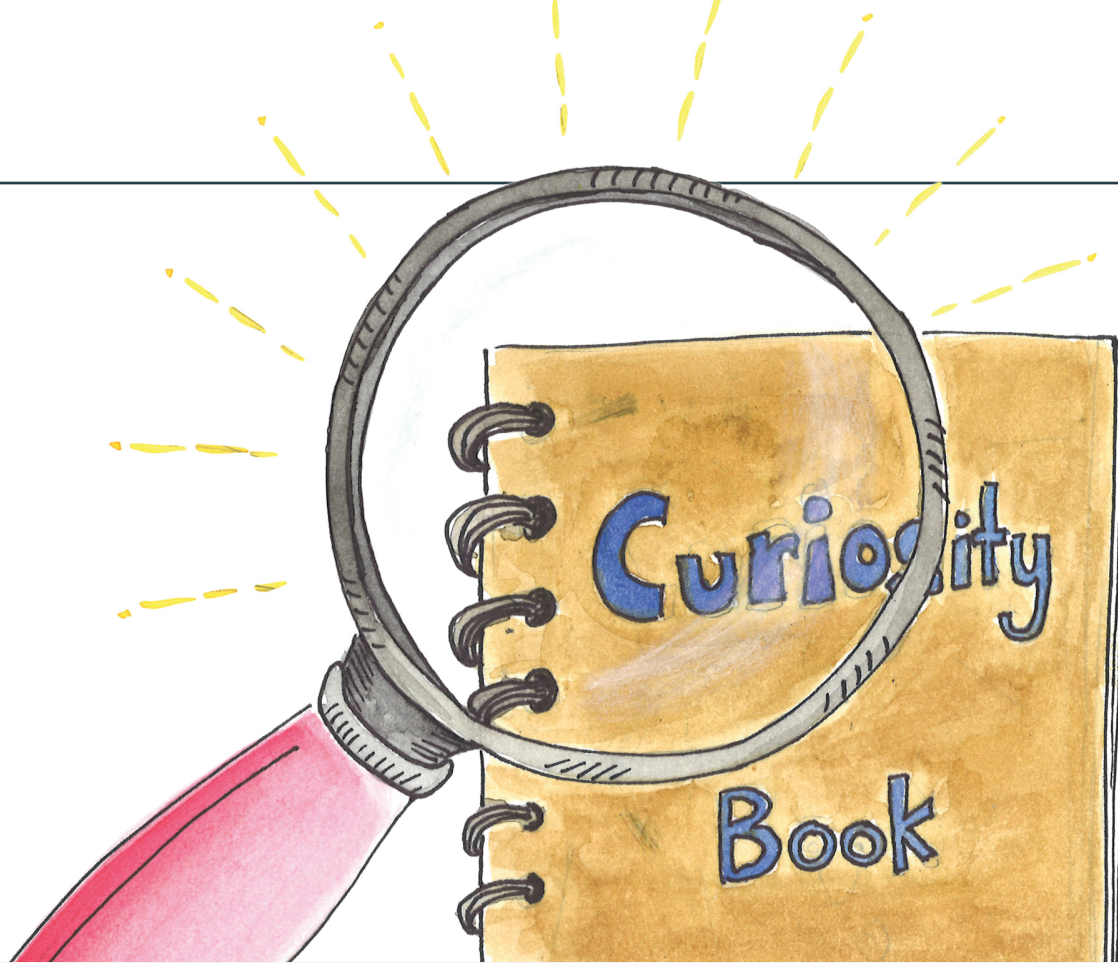
ERIN QUINN

#CarryCuriosity book

What makes you curious? What makes your students curious? Pass a notebook amongst a class of students, asking them to add to it with what makes them curious or gets them full of zest.

Good for

- A class of students or a club, or even your department or PLN

- All grades

Consider this

- Include a few examples to start

- Start a new book each unit as an intro activity

- Create a collage of curiosities in a classroom wall at natural points in the school year

CICELY DAY

Character rally

Have a character rally each month where everyone in the community gets involved. Celebrate a different trait/strength each time.
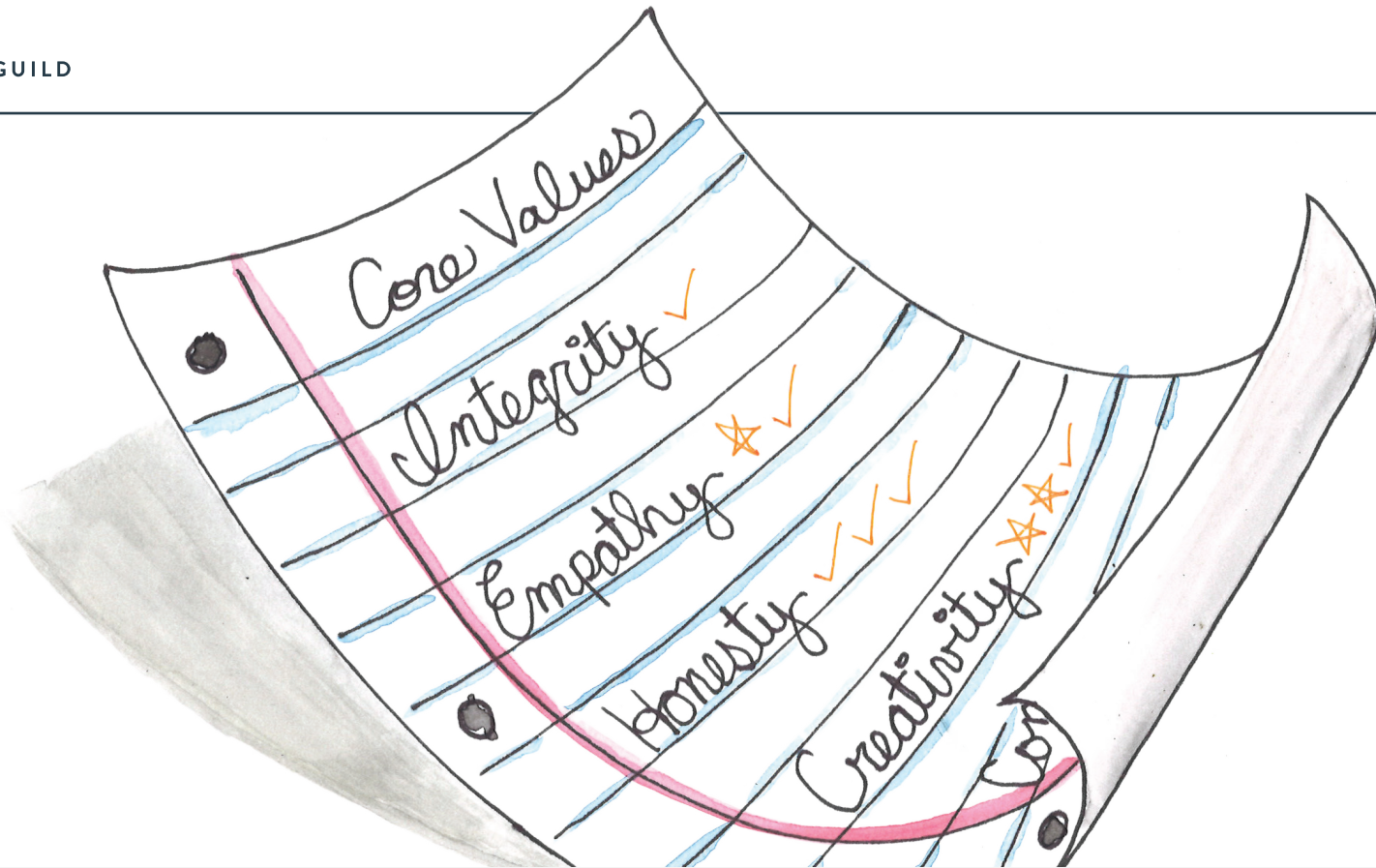
Good for

- A way to make clear and practice the school's stated values
- Moving beyond celebrating just sports achievements

Consider this

- Requires buy-in and attendance from site admin and entire school
- Reserve the MPR/gym/amphitheatre as soon as possible
- Ask community organizations to donate prizes/sponsor an award

SARAH SWAIN

Core values

Help students intentionally evaluate and build character through demonstrating and developing a list of core values. Students can self-evaluate themselves and also use the list to give positive feedback to a group

Good for

- Homeroom, advisory, or a mentor group that can work with an adult
- Any age or grade level

Consider this

- Return to this list regularly, at the end of every quarter, trimester or semester
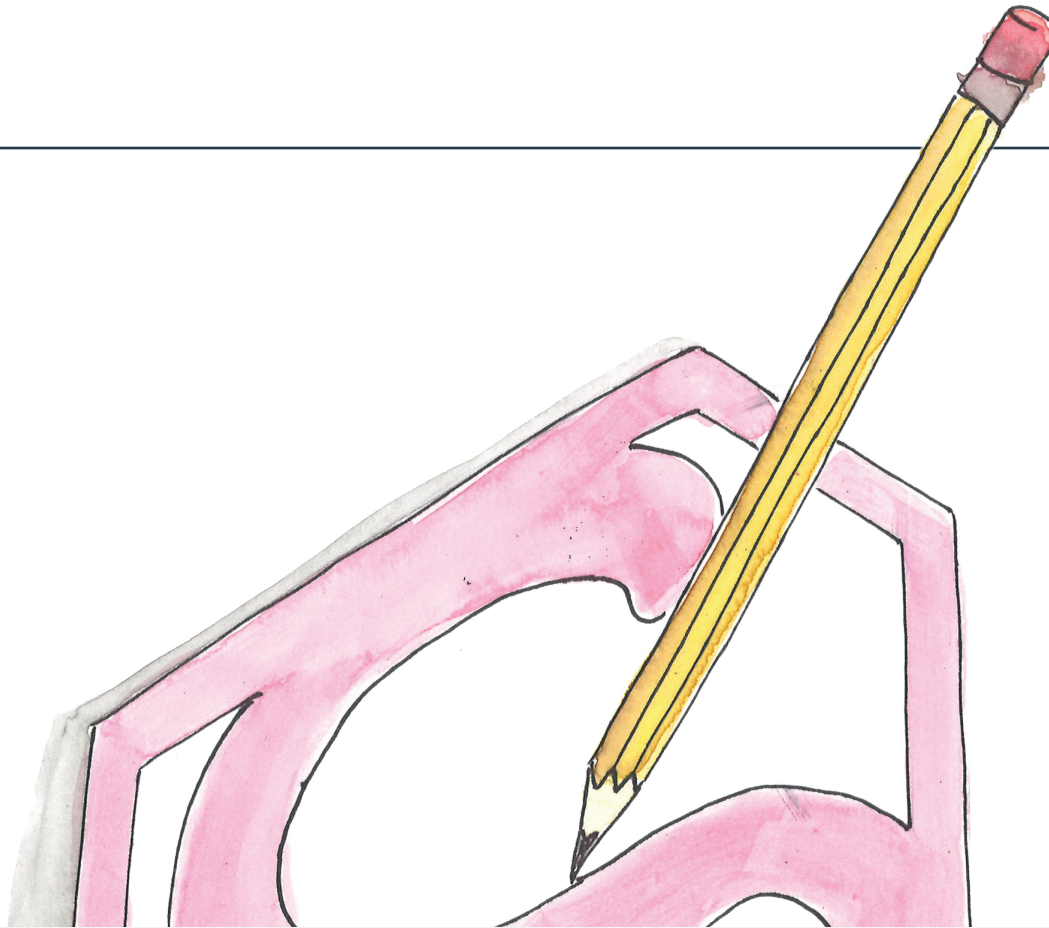
CHRIS GOOD

Character sketches

Rather than name a favorite superhero, ask students to invent their own original character. By having them craft the original backstory, students will explore what defines a life and shapes a character's world view.

Good for

- Students to identify and communicate their ideas about character traits

- Creating heroes that are authentic to a student's community and context

Consider this

- Compiling a list of popular superheroes, then discussing who isn't represented

LUCY CHEN

Fail lab

Students often fear failure, but by demystifying and appreciating it, a compassionate understanding can help students grow. Define and explore how failure can be a positive force in shaping a student's journey.

Good for

- Students of any age
- A warm-up to a lab, an essay, a presentation, a group project

Consider this

- Create a famous failures gallery
- Design activities to reward detour and exploration

GARRETH HEIDTH

Mindful mondays

Students who can self-regulate are better self-advocates and can take responsibility for their actions and learning. Such self-awareness has positive effects on students' character, decreasing aggression, increasing understanding, and fostering empathy. Teachers first need training in mindfulness techniques, and then can in turn instruct their students.

Good for

- Reducing stress
- Both teachers and students

Consider this

- Offer an initial opt-in staff training and ask a few teachers to pilot mindfulness lessons
- Get buy in from admin and staff to make it a schoolwide daily/weekly practice

COMPASSION

KINDNESS

EMPATHY

ON

OFF
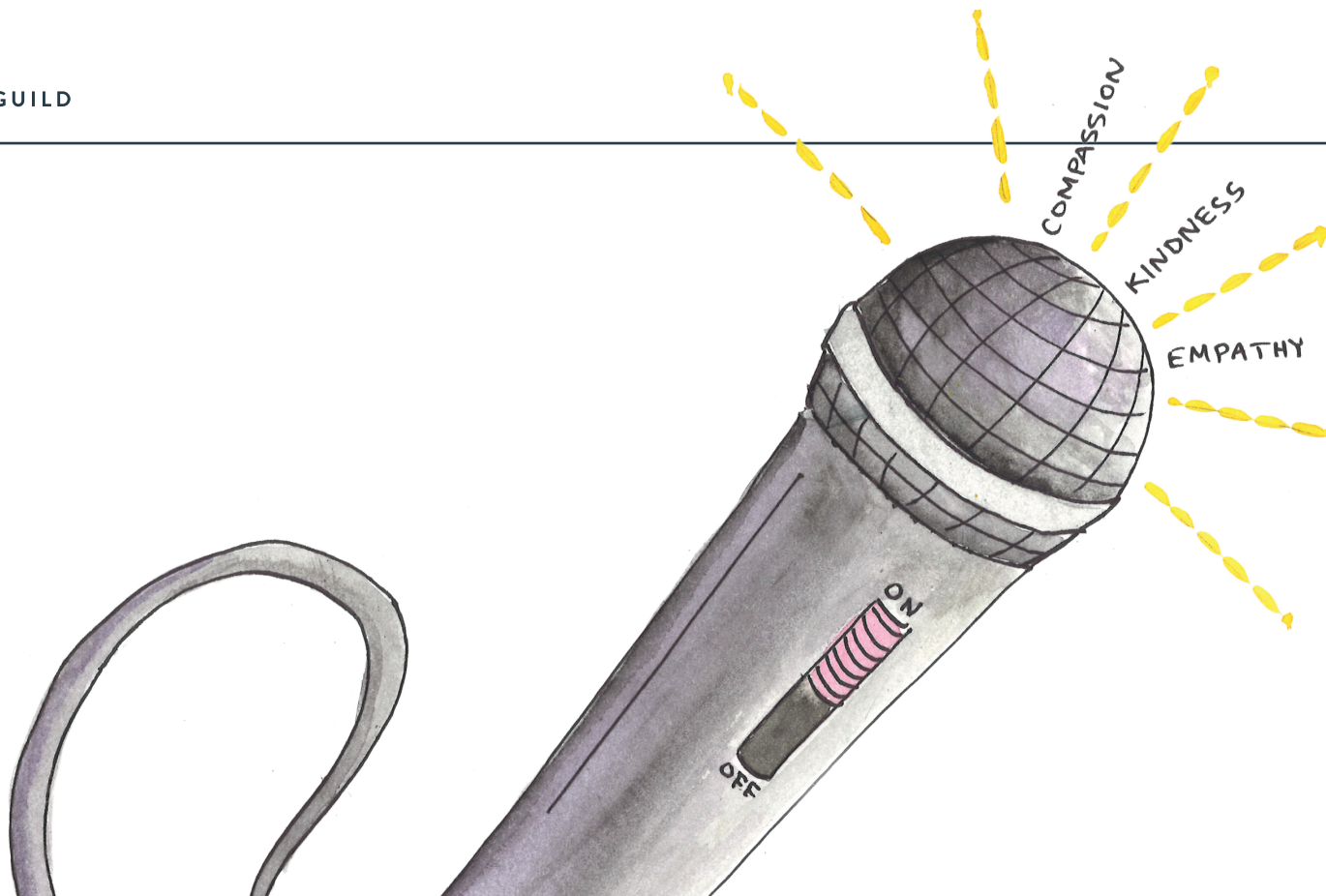
MISA SUGIURA

Interviews for values

Invite students' favorite staff members, as well as local school and community leaders, to be interviewed by your class. From the security guard to the head custodian to an engineer or an entrepreneur, an interview can reward curiosity and heighten empathy.

Good for

- Students of any age
- An intro to a larger writing unit

Consider this

- Pull published interviews from books, magazines, or blogs appropriate for your students' reading and writing level
- Model what to do (or what not to do) in an interview setting
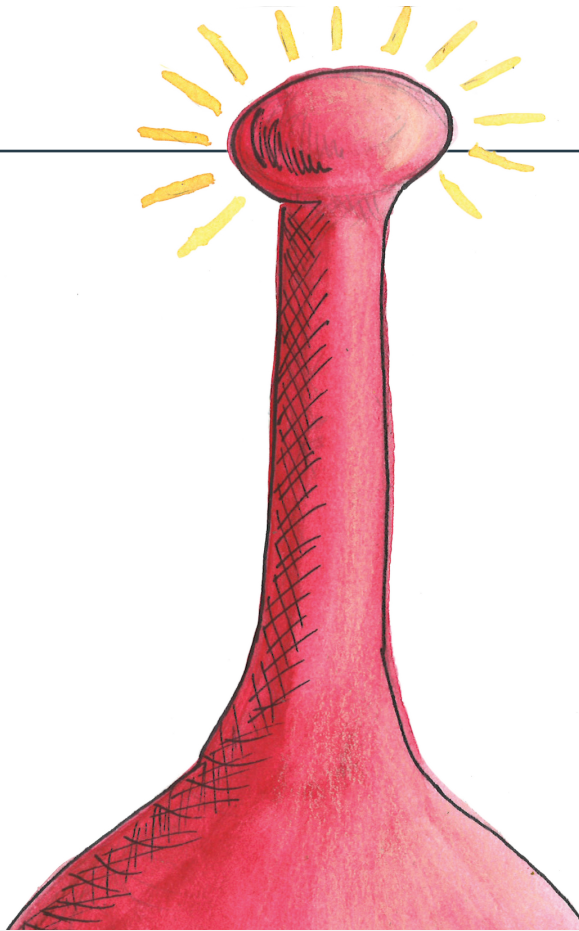
WILLIAM CAVADA

Lumosity for character

Reward good character and encourage active lifestyle choices through a game app about character. Students will engage in challenges, ranging from "who are you at home" to "who are you at school" to "who are you online?" They will see character as fluid and something that can grow.
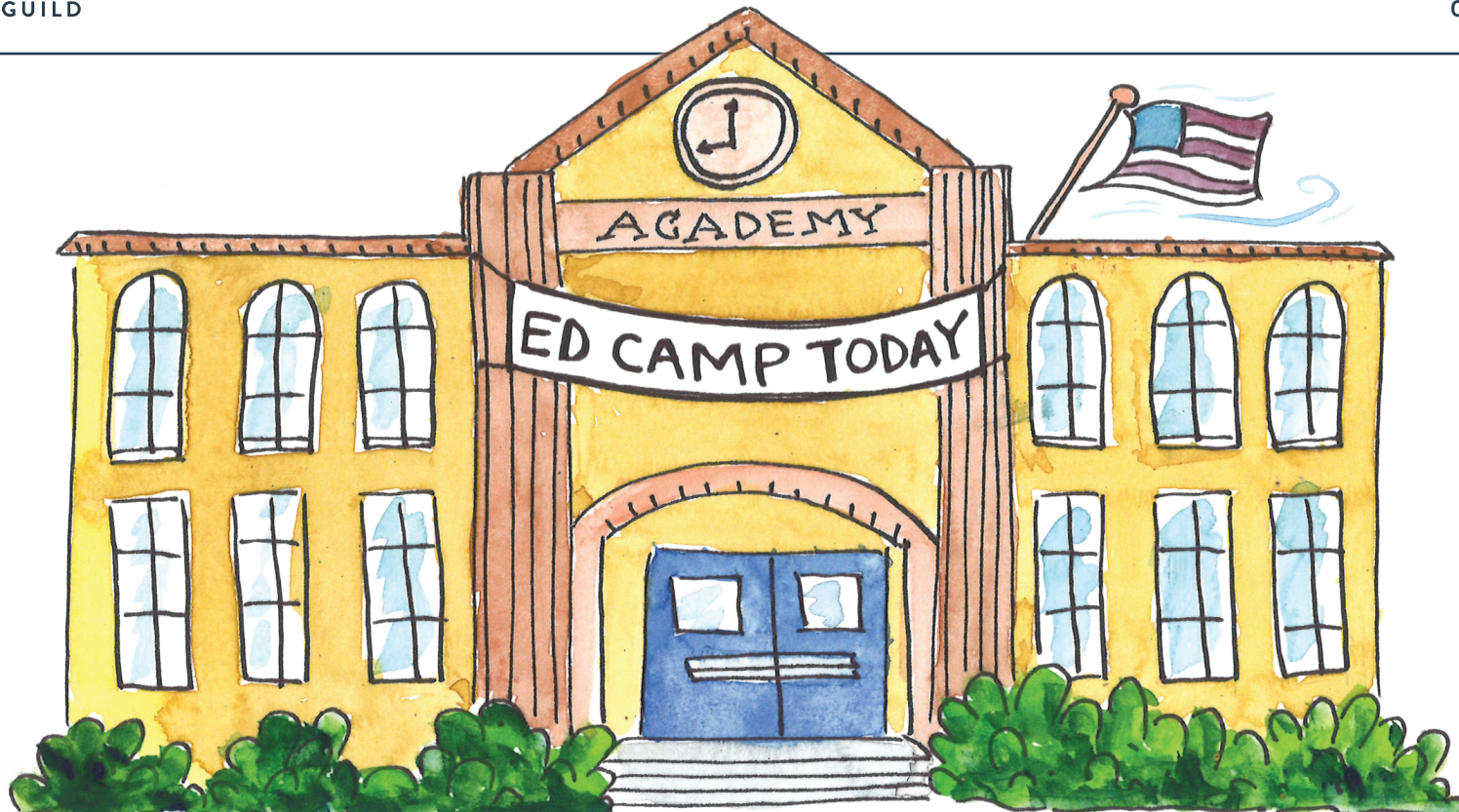
Good for

- Reframing gaming as a positive learning experience

Consider this

- Asking students to discuss their progress and connect to academic concepts

CATHY WOLFE

Student run EdCamp

To truly bring in student voice, ask students to envision, create and run their own EdCamp to teach their staff and fellow students about topics of their choosing.

Good for

- Giving students agency and ownership over an event
- Encouraging speaking and listening standards

Consider this

- Assign mentors to help students creating presentations, craft agendas and rehearse delivery

NORMAN TRAN

Masks we live in

Explore societal expectations by asking students what they think they "must" do, according to others' expectations, as well as what they should not do. Introduce the concept of masks and how often we show a partial self to the world

Good for

- Advisory groups
- Building emotional intelligence

Consider this

- Modeling your own openness and vulnerability so students can subsequently open up
- Discussing and agreeing to confidentiality

SARAH SWAIN

Get community buy in

Ask parents and caregivers at a school community night to identify and discuss their most important character traits.

Good for

- Making character a regular topic of conversation, in and out of school
- Reinforcing that character is build over a lifetime, not just in one activity or lesson

Consider this

- Asking adults to participate in some of the same character building activities as students
- Reminding families to explore how character is built in many ways