



Dear Families,

We are so grateful you are a part of the school community this year.

One of the aims at our school is to equip young people for all the realities of today's world. With that in mind, we have partnered with CharacterStrong - an organization that provides training for educators and social & emotional learning curriculum for students. Their work in grades 6-12 focus on 3 main outcomes: increasing a sense of belonging for all students, improving skills that support student well-being, and deepening student engagement in their academics, in their school, and in their community.

Here's what the data tells us:

- A sense of belonging in school is one of the most important conditions for learning and a fundamental support for social and emotional well-being. Nearly  $\frac{1}{3}$  of all students report a weak sense of belonging in their schools. Roughly half of 6th - 12th grade students say they don't enjoy coming to school most of the time.
- Mental health challenges for teens have been increasing and 7 out of 10 teens in the U.S. (between 13 and 17 years old) have named anxiety or depression as a major problem among their peers.
- Student engagement drives learning and supports school success.

This curriculum was created to support school communities as they engage in the work of preparing young people to thrive in the 21st century. [The research](#) supports the effectiveness of social & emotional learning in schools to increase student's academic success and college & career readiness. The lessons focus on developing skills and mindsets around building positive habits, understanding our emotions, and increasing empathy for people and communities who have lived different lives than us. The curriculum helps students think about things they want to improve in their school, their relationships, and their world and then provides tools for them to work individually and in teams to close the gaps they've identified.

One of the key parts of nearly every lesson is the "CharacterDare" for Middle School students and the "To Be List" for High School students. These are invitations near the end of most lessons to put the content that they are learning into action in the real world. If you ever want to play an active role in the CharacterStrong curricula, simply ask your student about the most recent CharacterDare or To Be List challenge. Maybe they'll invite you to try one yourself!

To learn more about CharacterStrong, check out [characterstrong.com](https://characterstrong.com) to discover other resources for students and families.

Looking forward to a great year!