# Canyon Center for Character Education Framework for *Purposeful Cultures of Character*
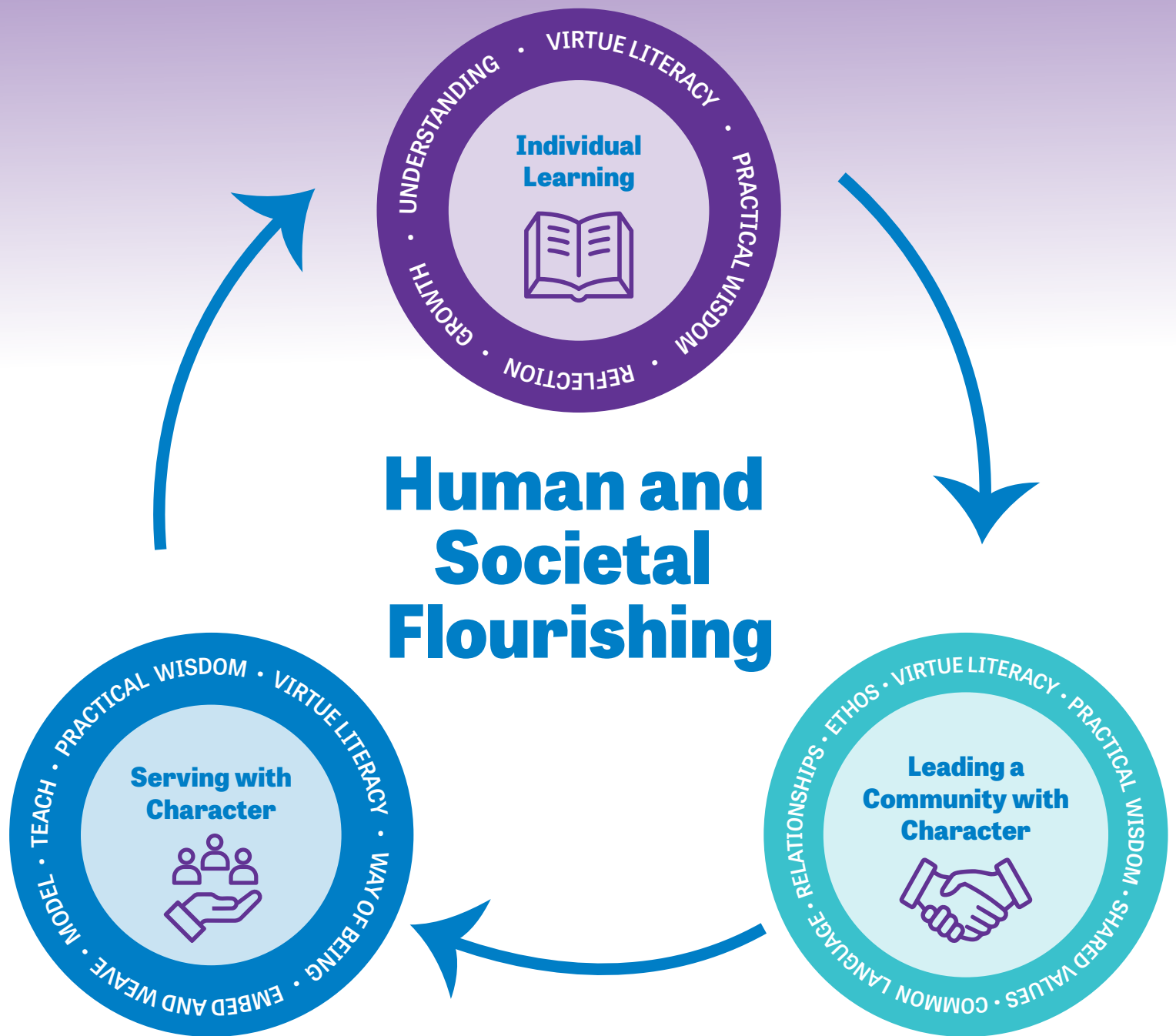
*The Canyon Center for Character Education (CCCE) framework for Purposeful Cultures of Character aims to guide, inform and support organizations in developing a culture centered on character formation and practical wisdom, leading to human and societal flourishing. Reference and inspiration have been taken from the following to develop this framework: GCU's Mission Statement, GCU's Statement on the Integration of Faith, Learning and Work, College of Education (COE)'s Conceptual Framework, COE's Dispositions and the CCCE Academic Program Competencies.*

## USING THE FRAMEWORK

The CCCE framework for Purposeful Cultures of Character is structured to allow organizations to deepen the support and guidance needed beginning with a high-level overview of the framework's three main components for creating a culture centered on character through *Individual Learning, Leading a Community with Character* and *Serving with Character*. Each of these components can support the cohesive and continuous formation of cultures of character and enhance character formation with organizational stakeholders.

Following the high-level overview, the framework document provides further details of the three main framework components through associated explanations and actionable steps and provides practical strategies for completing those actionable steps. The framework components of *Individual Learning, Leading a Community with Character* and *Serving with Character* have been developed with an understanding that character can be caught, taught and sought by others, empowering transformative leaders to change their communities.

# GCU

## CANYON CENTER FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION

# Human and Societal Flourishing

**Individual Learning**
VIRTUE LITERACY · PRACTICAL WISDOM · REFLECTION · GROWTH · UNDERSTANDING

**Leading a Community with Character**
VIRTUE LITERACY · PRACTICAL WISDOM · SHARED VALUES · COMMON LANGUAGE · RELATIONSHIPS · ETHOS

**Serving with Character**
VIRTUE LITERACY · WAY OF BEING · EMBED AND WEAVE · MODEL · TEACH · PRACTICAL WISDOM

▶ Character can be caught by others as individuals model their own character in their actions, words and choices. Thus, *Individual Learning* sets the foundation for understanding how one models for others implicitly and explicitly. *Leading a Community with Character* includes recognizing how others "catch" one's character and empowering others to participate in individual learning to bring together diverse perspectives in a shared vision and selection of core values unique to the organization.

▶ Together, the community built can develop a shared plan for teaching character (taught character).

▶ With an action plan for caught and taught character, *Serving with Character* is the deployment of the plan and intentions to empower stakeholders to seek character formation (sought character).

Reference: Arthur, J. and Kristjansson, K. (2022) Framework for Character Education in Schools. Jubilee Centre for Character & Virtues. https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/character-education/Framework%20for%20Character%20Education.pdf

# Individual Learning

## EXPLANATION

Individual learning involves reflecting upon personal character development and professional practices while continuing to apply virtue literacy and practical wisdom in the pursuit of human flourishing.

## ACTIONS

▶ Reflect on individual character

▶ Reflect on biases and influences that lead to individual character

▶ Reflect on individual perceptions of practical wisdom, moral goodness and human flourishing

▶ Develop a growth plan for enhancing individual character and virtues

▶ Develop a growth plan for applying discernment in ethical decision-making to ensure individual advocacy for diversity and inclusion
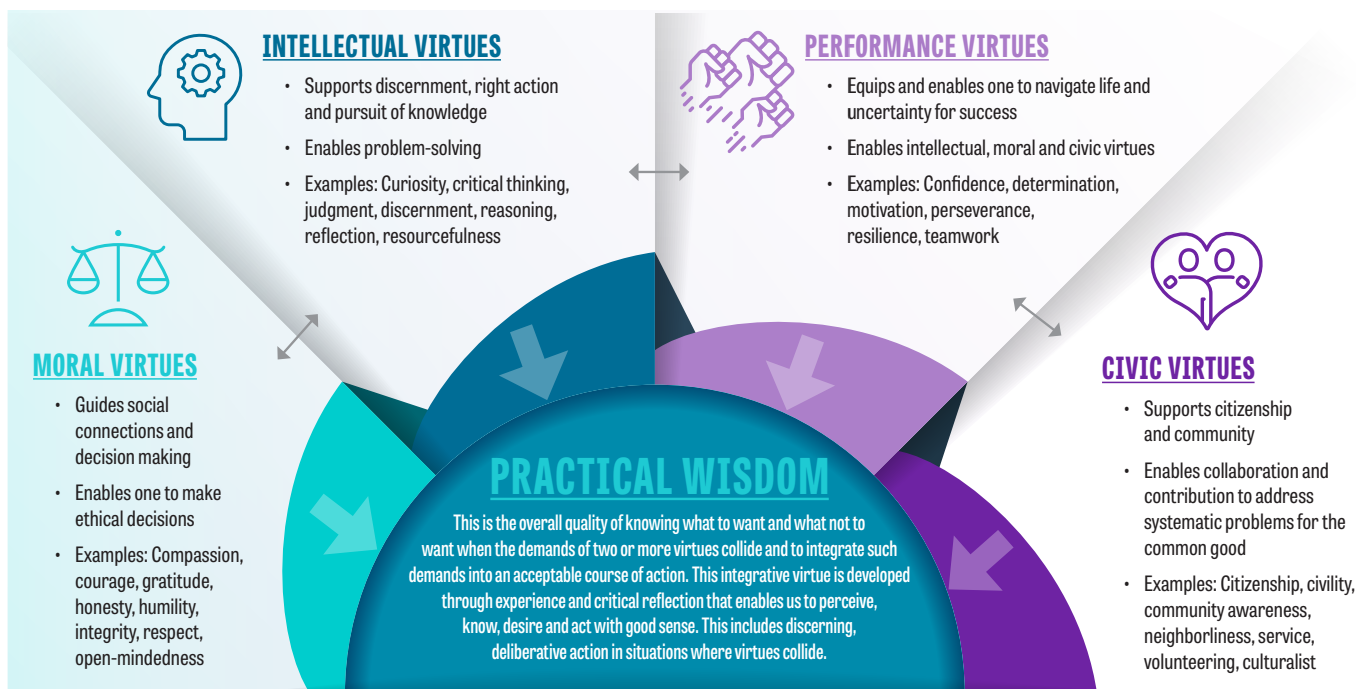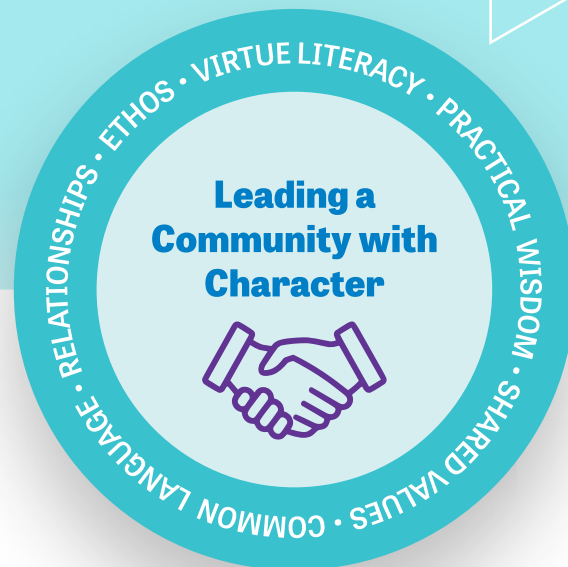
UNDERSTANDING · VIRTUE LITERACY · PRACTICAL WISDOM · REFLECTION · GROWTH

**Individual Learning**

# Leading a Community with Character

## EXPLANATION

Leading a community with a culture centered around character involves gathering stakeholders to develop a shared vision and core values, fostering relationships and "a way of being" focused on character formation.

## ACTIONS

▶ Gather organizational stakeholders as a community to participate in the development and enhancement of a positive ethos centered on character

▶ Foster relationships that empower others to lead, model, teach and seek character

▶ Implement a character initiative across the organization

▶ Continue to evaluate the initiative to drive growth

▶ As a community of diverse stakeholders, develop a shared vision with common values, language and purpose concentrating on cultivating character and human flourishing (consider the four domains of virtues: intellectual, civic, moral and performance that lead to practical wisdom and human flourishing)

**Leading a Community with Character** — ETHOS · VIRTUE LITERACY · PRACTICAL WISDOM · SHARED VALUES · COMMON LANGUAGE · RELATIONSHIPS

### INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES
- Supports discernment, right action and pursuit of knowledge
- Enables problem-solving
- Examples: Curiosity, critical thinking, judgment, discernment, reasoning, reflection, resourcefulness

### PERFORMANCE VIRTUES
- Equips and enables one to navigate life and uncertainty for success
- Enables intellectual, moral and civic virtues
- Examples: Confidence, determination, motivation, perseverance, resilience, teamwork

### MORAL VIRTUES
- Guides social connections and decision making
- Enables one to make ethical decisions
- Examples: Compassion, courage, gratitude, honesty, humility, integrity, respect, open-mindedness

### CIVIC VIRTUES
- Supports citizenship and community
- Enables collaboration and contribution to address systematic problems for the common good
- Examples: Citizenship, civility, community awareness, neighborliness, service, volunteering, culturalist

### PRACTICAL WISDOM
This is the overall quality of knowing what to want and what not to want when the demands of two or more virtues collide and to integrate such demands into an acceptable course of action. This integrative virtue is developed through experience and critical reflection that enables us to perceive, know, desire and act with good sense. This includes discerning, deliberative action in situations where virtues collide.

Have questions? Reach out to CharacterEducation@gcu.edu

# Serving with Character

## EXPLANATION

Serving with character involves answering a vocational calling, modeling and teaching character that fosters human and societal flourishing by supporting virtue formation and the application of practical wisdom.

## ACTIONS

▶ Cultivate character and virtue formation through modeling with character and practical wisdom (caught character)

▶ Promote taught and sought character by developing and providing trainings and lessons centered on virtue literacy and practical wisdom

▶ Embed and weave character education initiatives and core values throughout the organization to promote character and virtue formation

▶ Pursue and encourage virtuous action and high expectation

▶ Deepen shared understanding of character and cultivate active citizenship through creating and participating in service opportunities by serving the wider community (sought character)

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**Serving with Character**

# Practical Strategies

## INDIVIDUAL LEARNING

Critical virtues and principles to deploy and consider throughout Individual Learning include but are not limited to critical thinking, love, compassion, positivity, kindness, courage, self-awareness, inquiry, curiosity and practical wisdom.

*When implementing practical strategies for Individual Learning, consider the following:*

▶ *Reflect on individual character.*

▷ Research different virtues in the four domains: civic, moral, performance and intellectual virtues and determine which you value most and why.

▷ Take a free virtue assessment, such as the Big 5 or VIA, to determine your virtue strengths and opportunities for growth.

▷ Reflect on a recent dilemma wherein you had to make a tough decision. What virtues did you employ and why did you make that decision? Does that affect your daily decision-making?

▶ *Reflect on biases and influences that led to individual character.*

▷ Research cultural differences in virtue definitions and virtue emphasis and consider how you learned about the virtue definitions you hold.

▷ Journal about the influences in your life that led to the virtues you value most, personally and professionally.

▷ Reflect: Have you considered the varying definitions or perspectives of the virtues you value most and how your worldview affects these perspectives?

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**Individual Learning**
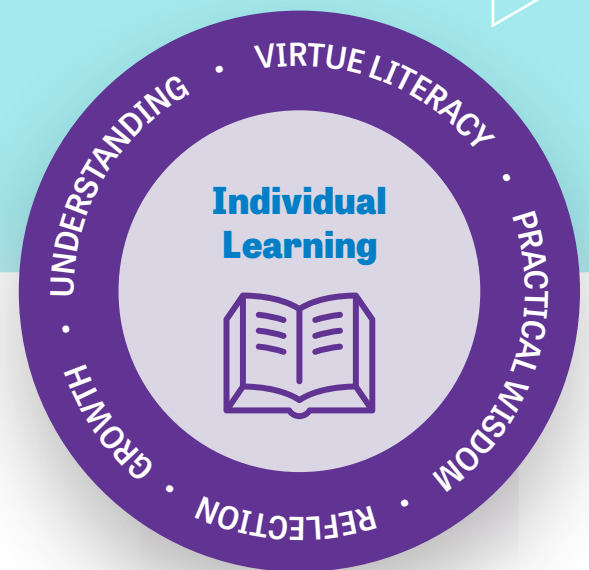
# INDIVIDUAL LEARNING

▶ *Reflect on individual perceptions of practical wisdom, moral goodness and human flourishing.*

▷ Read diverse texts related to individuals that demonstrate practical wisdom, moral goodness and/or human flourishing across the globe and consider the different perspectives of their definitions, virtues deployed and virtuous choices.

▷ Journal how you define practical wisdom, moral goodness and human flourishing and how you want to employ each to lead to your individual life of meaning.

▷ Reflect on who you want to be as a person and how your perceptions of these major concepts influence your daily actions that lead to flourishing.

▶ *Develop a growth plan for enhancing individual character and virtues.*

▷ Map out where you are with your character formation and where you want to go, personally and professionally.

▷ Add details to your map that embody small goals for reflecting and continuing to enhance your character formation as you model and teach others.

▷ Take action to continue learning about perspectives through relationship building and thought-provoking discussions with others and/or continued reading and researching.

▶ *Develop a growth plan for applying discernment in ethical decision-making to ensure individual advocacy for diversity and inclusion.*

▷ Research how ethical decision-making varies by personal perspectives and situational context and consider steps to using values-based and evidence-based actions that reflect equitable and inclusive decisions that support the common good.

▷ Review your definition of practical wisdom and how you might take actionable steps to enhance your process to discern the needs of all in a given dilemma, allowing you to make an informed decision for the betterment of society, inclusive of the individuals involved.

▷ Write a scaffolded plan for enhancing ethical decision-making, including how you will use your definitions of moral goodness and human flourishing to guide you in advocating for diversity and inclusion.

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**Individual Learning**
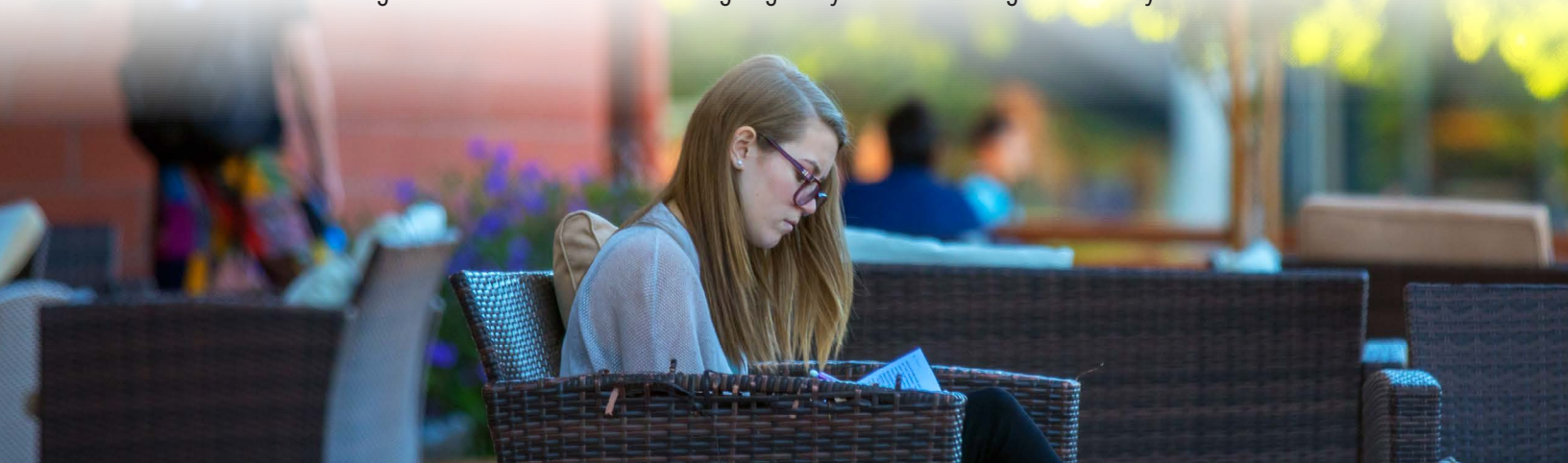
# Practical Strategies

## LEADING A COMMUNITY WITH CHARACTER

Critical virtues and principles to deploy and consider throughout Leading a Community with Character include but are not limited to empathy, equity, inclusion, respect, integrity, justice, inquiry and practical wisdom.

*When implementing practical strategies for Leading a Community with Character, consider the following:*

▶ *Gather organizational stakeholders as a community to participate in the development and enhancement of an ethos centered on character.*

    ▷ Bring together staff, community members, families, students, etc. by offering open learning and discussion sessions centered on character.

    ▷ Survey stakeholders for preferred days, times and formats for meeting to accommodate the majority.

▶ *Foster relationships that empower others to lead, model, teach and seek character.*

    ▷ Provide time and space for stakeholders to gather in professional and personal settings.

    ▷ Provide engaging activities such as outings and team-based activities (scavenger hunts, problem-solving through inquiry, etc.) that foster community.

    ▷ Provide modeling and training on caring communities, empathy and relationship building.
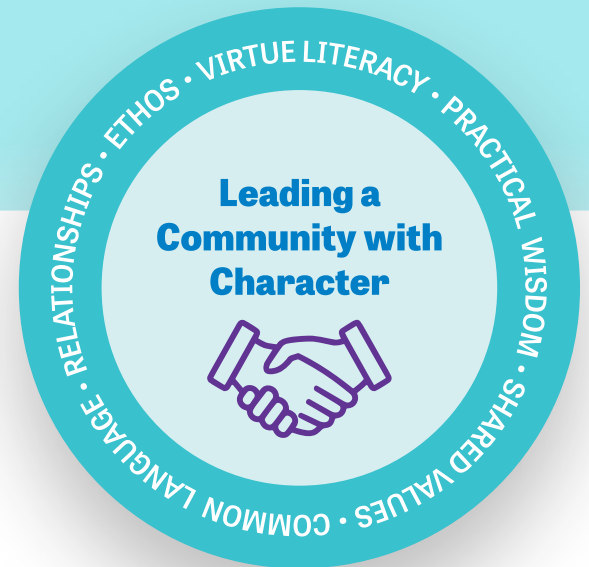
RELATIONSHIPS · ETHOS · VIRTUE LITERACY · PRACTICAL WISDOM · SHARED VALUES · COMMON LANGUAGE ·

**Leading a Community with Character**

# LEADING A COMMUNITY WITH CHARACTER

**Leading a Community with Character**

*RELATIONSHIPS • ETHOS • VIRTUE LITERACY • PRACTICAL WISDOM • SHARED VALUES • COMMON LANGUAGE*

▶ *As a community of diverse stakeholders, develop a shared vision with common values, language and purpose centered on cultivating character and human flourishing (consider the four domains of virtues: intellectual, civic, moral and performance that lead to practical wisdom and human flourishing).*

> ▷ Bring stakeholders together to review the four domains of virtues and determine the organization's needs to select core values the organization should focus on for its shared mission and vision. Together, discuss the meaning of determined values with varying perspectives and determine a common language. This can be done through iterative surveys and meetings.

> ▷ As a community, use the core values, virtues, traits and life skills chosen and develop a shared vision and purpose for the organization to implement character education.

> ▷ With a leadership team, use the shared values and vision to write a strategic plan for implementing and assessing the character initiative.

▶ *Implement a character initiative across the organization.*

> ▷ Model and teach character based on the shared strategic plan.

> ▷ Make character a way of being across the organization.

> ▷ Focus training, activities, assemblies, gatherings, learnings, discussions, etc. on the character initiative.

▶ *Continue to evaluate the initiative and drive growth.*

> ▷ Come together as a community to evaluate the initiative and its effects via survey and observational data.

> ▷ Based on the data, determine actionable steps toward improvement on a regular basis.
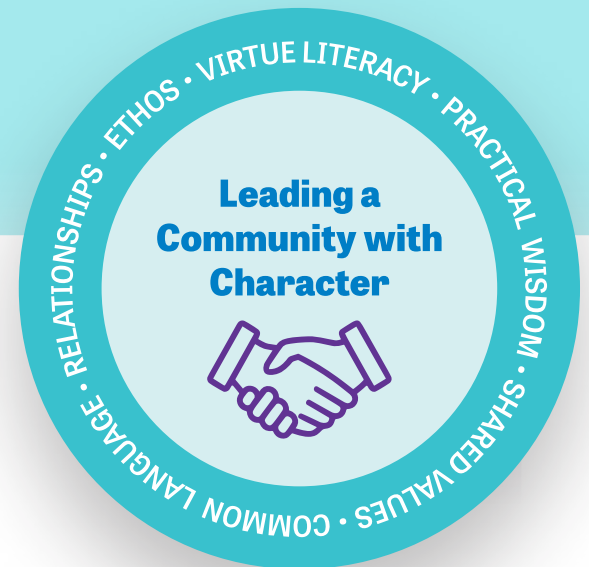
# Practical Strategies

## SERVING WITH CHARACTER

Critical virtues and principles to deploy and consider throughout Serving with Character include but are not limited to service, empathy, reflection, equity, inclusion, respect, community awareness, justice, resilience and practical wisdom.

*When implementing practical strategies for Serving with Character, consider the following:*

▶ *Cultivate character and virtue formation through modeling with character and practical wisdom (caught character).*

  ▷ Weave character education into the culture.

  ▷ Weave character into systems and ways of being.

  ▷ Demonstrate thoughtful decision-making.

▶ *Promote taught and sought character by developing and providing trainings and lessons centered on virtue literacy and practical wisdom.*

  ▷ Integrate opportunities for ethical decision-making such as role-playing or real-life problem-solving through inquiry.

  ▷ Provide continued learning through professional development and lessons focused on the organization's core values.

  ▷ *Examples:*

    ○ 3-year new hire onboarding

    ○ Modules for teachers

    ○ Professional development sessions for all school staff

    ○ Staff onboarding

    ○ Orientation and resources for families

    ○ Student assemblies

    ○ Curriculum writing

    ○ Extracurriculars

    ○ Adapted planning to incorporate the principles and shared language

    ○ Focus on relationship building for all stakeholders

**Serving with Character**

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# SERVING WITH CHARACTER

▶ *Embed and weave character education initiatives and core values throughout the organization to promote character and virtue formation.*

▷ Integrate across curriculum, procedures and subject areas.

▷ Promote the principles and language using visuals, graphics, curriculum, etc.

▶ *Deepen shared understanding of character through creating and participating in opportunities for service.*

▷ Provide service learning and volunteering opportunities.

▷ Provide enrichment activities focused on character.

▶ *Pursue and encourage virtuous action and high expectations.*

▷ Create a recognition process for all stakeholders when displaying virtuous actions.

▷ Provide an opportunity for other stakeholders to recognize each other.

▶ *Serve the wider community (sought character) by cultivating active citizenship with all community stakeholders.*

▷ Consider service learning and citizenship education integration.

▷ Consider community needs and allow projects time to serve the community.

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**Serving with Character**

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