KEEP
Kenyan Education Empowerment Project

KEEP means Kutunza, To Take Care
April, 2017

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to present to you the KEEP Curriculum that has evolved over a two year period with the collaboration of many people. The comments and suggestions received on the first edition have made this new edition even better. We want to thank everyone who worked with us to create a high-quality document. We will continue to work with you to develop strength-based learning and we encourage your comments and ideas. This curriculum is subject to continuous review and improvement, for the benefit of the whole learning community. Thank you again for your ongoing support and commitment to achieving the goals.

[Logos and images]
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OVERVIEW

The aim of this program is to create a learning community to build and share character strengths to increase well-being and engagement. This program provides a framework for character strength development in the classroom and school community. This packet provides specific skill building activities are for teachers to use in the classroom with pupils in Levels 6-8. After the first round of the pilot project, we incorporated the guidance and direction of the Ministry of Education, Murang’a County, Kandara sub-county; the Kimo Wellness Foundation, the Gathage Primary School teachers and William James College graduate students regarding what worked best for the children. The current program reflects these changes. Family and community engagement is encouraged by inviting parents to a series of community meetings to share and spread strengths outward into the larger community and in this way, will drive local ownership of learning and foster a culture of evaluation.
INTRODUCTION

Character Strengths

This guide offers ways to teach character strengths to increase pupil confidence, motivation, and the belief that you can shape your own future. Strengths include: perseverance or grit, kindness, leadership, citizenship, and bravery, self-regulation, among others. Greater awareness and use of character strengths is associated with:

- Higher levels of well-being
- More engagement in school
- Stronger relationships
- Improved health
- Greater goal achievement
- Improvements in school performance
**Relationships and Community**

This guide makes certain assumptions about relationships that build a learning community with shared responsibility:

- Teachers encourage pupils to value their school and elevate love of learning.
- Teachers believe that each student has a valuable voice to be heard and they gently encourage pupils to speak up, especially in mixed gender groups.
- Teachers share and fairly distribute leadership roles.
- Pupils in grades 6-8 also have a responsibility to mentor younger children as one way to increase citizenship.
- Teachers value and respect the role of parents in the lives of children.
- Parents have an important part to play in their children’s education by knowing what is going on in the schools and providing ongoing feedback to teachers.

**Academic Behaviors and Learning Outcomes**

To begin, pupils need to be engaged in the classroom and for this to happen, they need engaged teachers. This might be most important of all. Development of one’s character strengths leads to better academic outcomes. Children need to use their individual strengths to set goals for themselves, make plans to accomplish these goals, seek help when needed, and change the course of action when necessary. In order to achieve what has been called a “growth mindset\(^1\),” pupils must:

- Trust that their choices matter and they will have a voice.
- Have faith that teachers listen to them.

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\(^3\) Fialkov, C., Haddad, D., Ndirangu, N. & Karanja, J. (2015) Tukae Tusemesane – Let’s Sit Down
- Learn to listen deeply to each other.
- Trust their teachers and be able to make mistakes and take risks.

Pupils need to see the connection between academic behaviors, future goals and life in the community. This is likely to occur if children find learning connected to themselves, their families, and the community. The pupils will have important homework. They will ask their families about where their strengths came from, and these stories will become relevant markers for success.
When the wheels turn together you have academic success and social-emotional well-being
NOTE TO TEACHERS

Kenyan education expert, Marcella Mwaka (2013) and her colleagues make an excellent point about the importance of teacher engagement in the Kenyan educational process. They say: “No education reform is likely to succeed without the active participation and ownership of teachers. Teachers at all levels of the education system should be respected and adequately remunerated; have access to training and ongoing professional development and support, including through open and distance learning; and be able to participate, locally and nationally, in decisions affecting their professional lives and teaching environments. Teachers must also accept their professional responsibilities and be accountable to both learners and communities (Mwaka, 2013, p. 154).”

Our program begins with the implementation of a teacher empowerment curriculum called Tukae Tusemesane: Let’s Sit Down and Reason Together, Enlivening Strengths and Community. The intention of first rolling out a teacher strength-building curriculum is to elevate teachers and allow them to experience what they are being asked to teach to the pupils. In this way, teachers will “walk the walk”. The complete curriculum can be found online at: http://www.appreciativeaction.com/curriculum.html.

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MAIN IDEAS

Social-emotional learning

This is a “social-emotional” curriculum which is a global learning domain according to the Learning Metrics Task Force (2013). Social and emotional learning happens when kids talk with each other, when they share stories, listen, cooperate and use critical thinking. The skills for social and emotional learning require character strengths like self-regulation, compassion, empathy, hope, and persistence, among others. Social-emotional learning requires self-reflective capacity and the ability to think aloud. Perhaps most importantly, true social and emotional learning means you are able to have a voice and speak your feelings and beliefs without fear. To address this, our curriculum places a top value on the development of trust in relationships. Social and emotional skills are not “soft” skills, but complex skills that can be taught, learned, and measured. Evidence suggests that it is trust and the quality of the relationship between teacher, parent and child opens the door to learning.

The purpose of this program is to address these needs by implementing a curriculum to cultivate character strengths to increase well-being in Kenyan youth communities. This is in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030 that target inclusive and equitable quality education at the early childhood and primary levels in a nurturing environment that promotes physical and mental health and well-being (U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, 2015).

A whole community program

In addition to teachers, parents have a critical role to play in improving learning outcomes, not only by holding their schools and policy makers accountable, but also by directly investing in and encouraging their children’s performance. This program

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4 Learning Metrics Task Force Summary Report (September, 2013) — A report from the United Nations, UNESCO, and the Brookings Institute citing social-emotional learning as one of the seven domains of learning that are essential as children and youth prepare for their future lives and livelihoods.
extends resources outward into the community, through a series of planned community activities, meetings and education, and encourages parents, teachers, local officials and other community leaders to use information for action and impact. We believe that the entire educational ecosystem is needed for sustainable change. There is more likelihood that positive educational change will take root and spread if it is in sync with national Kenyan priorities.

**Character strengths and the Kenyan National Education Sector Plan**

The Kenyan National Education Sector Plan (March 2014) indicates that there is an inadequate integration of positive values and attitudes in current curriculum models. Mwake and her colleagues at Moi University suggest that “Kenya needs to re-focus and re-orient education. There is a need to move the focus from exam-orientation to overall development of the individual. This does not mean that teachers abandon academic work and focus on co-curricular activities, but they should focus on both and realise (in original) that both reinforce each other (Mwoke et al 2013, p. 154).” The Kenya Institute of Education (KIE, 2002) currently referred to as the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), agrees, and includes in its goals the promotion of social equality and responsibility, positive attitudes towards good health and environmental protection, and individual development and self-fulfillment. It states “Education should provide opportunities for the fullest development of [the] individual...It should help its recipients to develop their potential interests and abilities. A vital aspect of individual development is character building (In, Mwa ke et al 2013, p. 151).”

The program uses character building educational interventions, which are evidenced-based and have been shown to produce positive and reliable improvements in student academic achievement. Anticipated student outcomes include increased social emotional well-being, including: listening skills, enhanced feelings of trust, increased awareness of character strengths; and increased physical well-being, including: protective hygiene behaviors like hand washing at appropriate times and drinking safe water. These outcomes are predictive of physical and social-emotional well-being and will be measured pre and post intervention using the KIDSCREEN assessment.
The curriculum has 3 units or sections that can be delivered in an intensive format with reinforcement and follow up activities throughout the school year. The below chart shows the 3 different units or stages of learning and a summary of each unit. Unit 1 is a foundational unit that sets the stage for learning. Unit 2 activities are the building blocks for children to learn the vocabulary of strengths and for recognizing character strengths in themselves. Unit 3 prepares children to carry forward the strengths in classrooms, families and extend the strengths as good citizens into the community.

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UNIT 1: TRUST AND CONNECTION
Reflecting on your strengths requires trust that people are listening to you and have your best interest at heart. Unit 1 is designed to build trust, respect and listening to increase connection between children, teachers and families.

**Rationale for Unit 1**

When teachers take the time to listen to children they feel respected. When children respect the teacher, they are more likely to attend to what they have to say and follow their lead. When children learn to really listen to each other they will have more compassion and empathy, both of which are linked to well-being and good relationships.

**Goal of Unit 1**

To create opportunities for good listening and turn taking behaviors that lead to respect and trust in others. Behaviors that indicate these goals include:

- Listening to others
- Playing fair
- Using good manners
- Waiting your turn without interrupting
- Complimenting someone else
- Cleaning up
- Expressing gratitude

**Instructional Design for Unit 1**

Unit 1 presents activities for getting warmed up and playful, listening, developing trust, and being respectful. Directions follow for carrying out the activities.
When children feel gratitude for what they have, they feel more well-being and kindness.
Activity tip:

Every class, every day:

Discuss and describe things that you are grateful for in the classroom to start each day and end each day.

*Children learn as they play. Most importantly,*

in play children learn how to learn....

**Playful Warm-up Activities**

1. **Name Gesture/Dance**

   Directions: Teacher/facilitator begins by stepping forward and saying their name along with an action. The individual then steps back and ask the students to follow with their own example, and then to pass it on to the next student etc. Go around the circle repeating everyone’s name and dance in succession. Continue until everyone has been introduced.

2. **Ball Toss**

   **Directions:** A ball is tossed around an open circle and when someone catches the ball, they introduce themselves until everyone has been introduced. They may like to add where they are from or what their name means/where it comes from.

   Optional Addition: Once the names are learned then participants toss the ball to someone calling their name. Leader starts by calling out their name and the name of the person they intend to throw to. For example, Tutu to Fabiola. When Tutu has Fabiola’s attention she tosses the ball. The last person thrown to should be the leader. Ask people to remember whom they tossed it to and try another round to ensure the flow is accurate and people are attentive.
3. **Two Truths and a Lie**

**Directions:** Form a group of 6 to 8 children and instruct each person to tell the others 2 things that are true about themselves and one thing that is not. The others get to ask one question each to flush out the lie. Participants can vote on which statement or experience they think is the lie.

4. **A Great Wind Blows**

**Directions:** Arrange the chairs in a circle, facing the middle. All the children sit down. An adult stand outside the circle and calls out "A great wind blows for everyone who...." then fills in the blank with a statement that will affect some of the group (see ideas below). Anyone who is affected must stand up and find another chair that is at least 2 seats away from their own. If a large group of children stand up, the adult should quickly remove one of the chairs from the circle as soon as the kids stand up and begin moving. Any child who cannot find a chair moves outside the circle and helps the adult come up with ideas for the next "great wind blows".

Here are some ideas:

- A great wind blows for everyone who has a little brother
- A great wind blows for everyone who has a big sister
- A great wind blows for everyone who has been to France
- A great wind blows for everyone who has a dog
- A great wind blows for everyone who ate cornflakes for breakfast this morning
- A great wind blows for everyone who likes (celebrity)
Listening Activities

1. **Mirror Image Activity (This is a beginning trust activity for all ages)**

   **Directions**

   Children will partner up and stand to face each other. One individual will be assigned the “mirror” role and will try to follow the movement of the other person as best he or she can. After a few minutes the partners will switch roles. Since we will be working with very young children, we will remind them to move slowly and try not to exhibit behaviors that are impossible for your partner to do in order to help the “mirror” be successful. Afterwards we can debrief by asking them questions such as:

   - *What was the most difficult part of being the mirror?*
   - *How could your partner have helped you?*

2. **Shakers Game Activity (Trust-building for Grade 6)**

   This can be considered a musical version of Marco Polo

   **Directions**

   Children break up into groups according to their animals assigned (Dogs, Lions, Cow, Goats, Cats, etc.). One person in each group will imitate a specific animal sound and their group members will have to actively listen and attune to their specific animal noise with their eyes closed in order to find the rest of their group.

3. **Matching Game Activity (Hygiene related activity suitable for all ages)**

   **Directions**

   Design cards with various pictures of hygiene related-tools (i.e. running water, soap, nail clippers, a toothbrush, coconut oil, etc.) and could then break the students up into groups and encourage them to word together
to match these pictures to a separate group of cards that is made up of various body parts (i.e. hands, feet, teeth, entire body, etc.)

**Goal**

The hope is that this will be a fun and engaging activity, meant to normalize the hygiene process by getting everyone involved and lessening any stigma

4. **“Don’t Clap This Back” Activity (Listening activity for all ages)**

This can be considered a musical version of Simon Says (Instructor vs. Children)

**Directions**

The teacher claps a range of rhythms (no more than 4 beats long) using hands, body, voice, feet, and so on. The children should follow along by copying these rhythms; however, if they hear in any form the rhythm associated with the rule “Don’t clap this one back,” they don’t clap it back. Every time someone claps the rhythm when they aren’t supposed to, the teacher gets a point. If no one claps when they hear “don’t clap this one back” the children get a point.

**Listening & Trust Activities**

1. **The Lion & The Three Bulls**

Three bulls happily grazed in a field together in peace and amity. A lion on the hunt had long watched them in the hopes of making them his dinner, but the King of the Jungle knew that there was little chance for him so long as they all grazed together: Every time he approached, three pairs of horns warned convincingly against his attack. He therefore began secretly to spread evil and slanderous reports of one against the other. The bulls became jealous and mistrustful of one another, and their pleasant mealtimes were upended. Before
long, the bulls began to graze in separate fields, disgusted at the sight of one another. The lion, seeing how well his plans had come to fruition, attacked each bull one by one, easily dispatching them singly. Thus, the quarrels of friends become opportunities of foes. The message here is that “unity is strength.” In other words, we are stronger together than we are apart.

**Group size**

5-10 children depending on developmental (memory) level. Also, they can lose interest while they are waiting for a turn if it is too large a group.

**Time**

10 – 15 minutes

**Directions**

- Gather students in a circle and decide who the head of the circle will be.
- The head of the circle then says one word that begins with the letter "A."
- The person to the head’s right then states the word previously given and adds word starting with the letter "B."
- This routine of repeating the previous words then adding a new word that begins with the following alphabetical letter continues around the circle. For example, if the first person says "apple," the next person should state "apple" then add a word that begins with "B," such as "boat." (Apple, boat...apple, boat, cat...apple, boat, cat, drum...etc.).
- Those who forget the words stated before them are disqualified from the group.
- (Alternatively, others in the group could help them out.)

**Options**

- Try to get students to use words that revolve around class themes or work, e.g. names, vegetables, colors, geography, animals, etc. Start with a statement such as, “I’m going to a farm and I will see a ...”
- Add more students in the group and change the categories as the developmental level increases.
Discussion

How important is it to listen to those around you? How important is it to pay attention when someone else is speaking? How do you feel if someone doesn't pay attention when you are talking? What kinds of things can we do to make sure we all pay attention to (respect) each other in this class, in this school, community, world?

2. Keep it Moving

Directions

Play a variation of the traditional musical chairs so one is eliminated. Place numbered papers on the floor and fill a small jar with the same numbers. When the music stops, have each child dash for a number and call out one number from the jar. Have the child on the winning number share something about themselves and then continue the game. When everyone is having fun, the kids are more likely to open up and get comfortable with each other.

3. I Am Special

Directions

Let each child get comfortable with each other by sharing something special about themselves. Have the new group sit together in a circle and start the icebreaker by introducing yourself and telling the group something special. "My name is Rosie and I'm special because I have a German Shepherd puppy."

Listening & Respect Activities

1. Have You Ever?

Directions

This game requires a volunteer to enter the circle. Ask people to establish their spots around the circle and close in so there are no gaps. The object of the game is for the center person to find a spot in the circle. Their job is to ask a question that leads with “Have you ever...” Those who have done what the question asks must enter the
center and find a new place in the circle. The last one in the middle gets to ask the next question. For example, “have you ever sung in front of a group of people?” Those who have sung will move forward, while the rest stay put. *Note, stepping sideways to find a new spot is not allowed.

**Optional Addition**

Can also be done as, “I Have Never” Have everyone sit in a circle except one person. The person in the middle says something that they have never done (i.e. I have never lied or I have never worn a dress). All the people who have never done that have to get up and find an empty seat (from someone else who just got up). The person stuck without a seat is now in the middle.

2. **Getting To Know You**

**Group size**

3

**Time**

Small group: 10 minutes per question, whole group: 10 minutes to dialogue

**Directions**

Divide the large group into smaller groups of three. The teacher chooses 3 topics to present to the class. The class votes (one student, one vote) on the topic to talk about. Examples include:

- What are the benefits of being educated?
- What do you like about your teachers?
- Given a chance, what celebration would you like your family to hold together?
- What is the best part of being a friend?
- What would you like to do more of in school?
One person states his/her views on this subject for three minutes.

The second person listens, and then has two minutes to summarize what was said.

The third person has one minute to evaluate the second person’s listening skills based on how close the summary came to what the third person heard.

The first person should then comment on whether or not they were accurate.

Switch off so everyone in the group has a chance to play each role.

Encourage your students to talk about friendship and the strengths they value in a friend. This heightened awareness will help students make good decisions about friendships, while also building an appreciation of differences.

**Active listening**

Have your students listen carefully to one another by practicing “active listening.” This is the practice of hearing and responding not only to the content of what a person is saying, but also to the meaning behind the message. This skill can help reduce conflict in the classroom, as there are fewer misunderstandings.

Have students try active listening while sitting back-to-back with a classmate: is it easier or harder to capture the meaning of the message if you can’t see body language? Ask students to share how they know someone is upset with them – even if that person doesn’t say a word. What cues do they pick up that leads them to this knowledge?

3. **Connecting/Creating Story Collectively**

**Directions**

Everyone stands or sit in a circle. A randomly chosen leader begins the story by saying a sentence or a word. The next person adds to the story by adding another
sentence or word. This continues until the last person in line concludes the story.

4. **Web We Weave**

**Directions**

The group stands in one large circle. The facilitator begins the game by asking a question such as, “What is your favorite place to be when you are happy?” The facilitator answers the question and tosses a yarn ball across to another person, while holding onto the end of the yarn. The person answers the question, holds a piece of the yarn, and then tosses it to someone else. Game continues in the same fashion, until everyone has shared. By tossing the yarn (or twine) around the group, participants weave a web that connects all of the members of the team in some manner. The facilitator can ask as many questions as appropriate. The facilitator then asks two or three of the team members to “drop” their string. The web begins to sag and appears to be very weak and vulnerable. The facilitator then can discuss how important each participant is to the team and the effect that low levels of involvement and commitment has on the entire team. At the end, the group can kneel down and place the web on the ground. Works well to have a discussion on teamwork. Group members can cut a piece of the string from the web to keep as a reminder of the exercise and the thoughts the group shared.
UNIT 2: BUILD CHARACTER STRENGTHS
You have valuable character strengths. To build them, you first need to have names for them. Identifying strengths is an important skill for learning. It requires being able to step back and wonder about the qualities that make you your very best self; to think about what it is about you that makes you feel positive about yourself – and where your strengths come from. Once you have this knowledge of yourself, you are prepared to build on your character strengths.

**Rationale for Unit 2**

Unit 2 teaches the names for character strengths and what each strength means. When you learn about strengths it is natural to consider whether or not you have a lot of the strength yourself. Unit 2 also teaches the importance of self-reflection or thinking about yourself in order to gain a better understanding of how to build your strengths. Each child possesses a unique set of strengths, interests and skills. When students learn to use their character strengths, those strengths emerge and develop in a healthy way. A child who has many chances to use their strengths has more chances to develop confidence and healthy self-esteem.

**Goal of Unit 2**

The Goal of Unit 2 is to help students to develop self-reflective capacity by learning to think critically about their own character strengths, in order that they might begin to build on and further develop those strengths.

**Materials Needed for Unit 2**

- Journals or strength booklets to fill in
- Writing utensils
- Strengths posters
- Strength handouts
Instructional Design for Unit 2

1. Warm up Activity

Unit 2 is preceded by a Warm up activity in which each member of the class is expected to participate actively. Teachers and students interact in a question-and-answer format that is lively, open, and encouraging of creativity. The goal of the Warm up is to create a good flow of communication in a relaxed and fun environment. By the end of the Warm up, students will have gained some comfort in actively brainstorming. They will be comfortable hearing their own voice and voices of others in the discussion.

2. Lesson Plan

Using information drawn from the strengths posters and discussion of internal and external strengths, students are now ready to move into Unit 2’s Lesson Plan.

The Lesson Plan is divided into six parts:

- Introduction to character strengths development;
- Class discussion;
- Reflective writing prompt;
- Homework assignment;
- Class activities (to be selected from the suggested list, below);
- Recap of strengths and what students learned.

3. Skills Objectives

- Self-reflection;
- Increased awareness of one’s own character strengths;
- Journaling of one’s thoughts regarding personal character strengths;
- Active sharing of strengths narratives, both within and outside of the classroom.
Unit 2: Warm-Up Activity

1. Teachers ask students to think of the names of different animals.
2. Teachers write the names of the animals on the board as the children think of them.
3. Teachers ask students to identify which of the animals they think of as “strong” and why:
   - “You have thought of a lot of different animals today!”
   - “Now I would like to ask you to tell me which of these animals is strong, and why.”
4. Teachers make the observation that only the big and fierce animals have been characterized as strong.
5. Teachers ask whether some of the smaller animals are also strong:
   - “I see that no one said the little squirrel (or other small animal) was strong.”
   - “But do you think that this little animal might be strong in a different way from the lion (or another large animal)?”
   - “Maybe the little animal is very smart to be able to run, hide, or feed its babies – do you think that being fast, smart, or able to find food for babies is also a strength?”
6. Teachers then explain the difference between “Internal” and “External” strengths.
   - “There are different kinds of strengths – strengths can be ‘Internal’ or they can be ‘External’.”
   - “Internal strengths are invisible – they are inside you. They might include having a strong mind or a strong heart.”
   - “External strengths can be seen by others when the look at you. They might include your physical strength, your muscles, or your athletic ability.”
7. Teachers relate the animal brainstorming activity to the students. Teachers explain that just like animals, people have a variety of strengths, and that some are “Internal” strengths, while others are “External” strengths.
8. Teachers ask students to refer to the strengths posters to see that some of the strengths are internal and others are external.
9. Teachers remind students that all strengths are different, and that each strength is very important, and that the students will be learning about how to recognize internal and external strengths in themselves, because it is very important that each person discover and build strengths that he or she already possesses.

Unit 2, Lesson Plan, Part 1

Introduction to Building Character Strengths and Promoting Awareness of Character Strengths

1. Teachers begin the Lesson Plan by explaining to the students as follows:
   - “Each of you has strengths that make you who you are!”
   - “We sometimes use some strengths more than we use others – those might be our favorite strengths.”
   - “Each of us can have a favorite strength.”
   - “You will learn how to recognize those strengths that are a part of you, and how to exercise your favorite strengths, to make them even stronger.”
   - “You will also learn to use other strengths that you possess.”
   - “You will become expert “strength spotters” in your classmates, teachers, your families -- and even in your community.”

2. Teachers ask each student to identify, name and share, with the rest of the class, their own strengths, as follows:
   - “What are your strengths?” “Which strengths do you think describe you best?”

3. Teachers encourage students to refer to the posters as prompts for recalling strengths.

4. Teachers tell students that this lesson will involve homework; they encourage students to begin thinking about how they will discuss their strengths with their families, friends, or care providers:
   - “How will you ask your mother, father, sibling to tell you about your character strength and where it comes from?”
5. If necessary, teachers can help the student to rehearse the questions they will ask of their families, as it may not come naturally to the student to asking the question at home.

Unit 2: Lesson Plan, Part 2

Class Discussion

In the class discussion, students should be encouraged to participate by answering a series of questions. The questions are designed to help students to begin to apply character strengths to their own lives and histories. By recalling specific situations and relating these memories to character strengths that the students identify as particularly helpful, students will begin to make connections between actions, thoughts and character strengths. The first two questions require students to remember a past event, while the third question asks the students to imagine something that they can do or say in the future.

1. Teachers ask students to reflect on a time in their lives when they needed to draw courage to persist, even though they may have been fearful:
   - “Can you remember a time in your life when you thought you could not go on because you were scared, but you did anyway? What strength were you then?”

2. Teachers ask students to reflect on a time when they used their voice to speak up in an honest way about something that seemed wrong, unjust or unfair:
   - “Think of a time when you spoke up about something bad that was happening, even though you might have been afraid to speak up about it.”
   - “What strength were you using?”

3. Teachers ask students to think about how they might draw from their strengths to comfort a friend, or offer support when adversity strikes, by using a mix of their strengths creatively:
   - “If your friend is sad, what strength might you use to cheer them up?”
● “What else might you do to help your friend to feel better?”
● “If someone you know was worrying a lot about an exam at school, what strength would you use to help support them?”
● “What strengths do you think your teachers use so that they can do their best to teach you?”
● “What strengths can you use in order to learn better?”

Unit 2: Lesson Plan, Part 3

Reflective Writing Prompt

In this series of reflective writing prompts, teachers explain to students that they will present a question that the students will write about in their journals. Because one of the goals of this activity is to encourage self-reflection, the students’ responses to this prompt are not shared with other students. Students are able to refer to the strengths posters to remember the various strengths – or they can write about a strength that is not reflected in the posters.

“The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.”

1. Reflective Writing Prompt 1

I am remembering a time when I used my strengths to do my best – and I succeeded!

a. Teachers ask students to take out their personal journals, think carefully, and write down their answers to the following questions:
   ● “Think of a time when you tried your very best to do something and you succeeded!”
   ● “What strengths were you using that made you feel that you were doing your best?”
b. Teachers explain to students that they can choose either to write down an entire strength story, or to list important details of their story.

c. Teachers allow students some quiet time to write their responses to the questions.

d. Teachers repeat the question, as needed; if a student seems not to be writing at all, teachers encourage them to put their thoughts in writing, as follows:
   - “I am sure you can remember a time when you felt really good about yourself; I want you to remember that time and explain what strength you showed to yourself and to others around you.”

2. Reflective Writing Prompt 2
   I am remembering a time when I used my strengths – and I felt appreciated!

   “African women in general need to know that it’s OK for them to be the way they are – to see the way they are as a strength, and to be liberated from fear and from silence.” – Wangari Maathai, Nobel Prize winner

a. Teachers ask students to think carefully, and write down their answers to the following questions:
   - “Think of a time when you felt appreciated by others.”
   - “An example of this could be when a person identified something you said or did as very good or important.”
   - “What strength were you using?”
   - “For example, were you using your Courage? -- Bravery? -- Honesty? -- Kindness?”
b. Teachers allow students some quiet time to write their responses to the question.

c. Teachers repeat the question, as needed; if a student seems not to be writing at all, teachers encourage them to put their thoughts in writing, as follows:
   ● “I am sure you can remember a time when you felt really appreciated by someone; I want you to remember that time and explain what strength you showed that was appreciated by someone else.”

3. Reflective Writing Prompt 3

I will choose my three “top strengths and share them with my class.”

a. Teachers invite students to summarize their reflective writing activities by making a list of their strengths in their journals.

b. Teachers tell students that it is OK to continue to add to their lists, even after this activity is over.

c. Teachers invite students to choose the top three strengths that best describe them, saying:
   ● “Of all the strengths that make you who you are, please pick three that most closely describe you, and write them down in your journals. You are allowed to mention strengths that are not even listed on our posters.”

d. Teachers allow the students some time to record their top three strengths in their journals.

e. Teachers invite each student to share their top three strengths with the class by reading them from their journal, saying:
• “Now I am going to ask each one of you to read, to the class, the top three character strengths that you have written down, that you believe best describe you.”

f. As each student reads from their journal, teachers provide praise and encouragement to validate the student’s choices of character strengths. Teacher encourages the rest of the class to clap or otherwise express appreciation to the student.
Unit 2: Lesson Plan, Part 4

Homework Assignment

The value in assigning homework is to encourage students to discuss, with their caregivers, families, and friends, what they have learned, and to ask these important figures in their lives to provide them with feedback including a validation of and encouragement of their reflections regarding their strengths. In this way, learning continues outside the classroom, and enriches the students’ experience. It also provides students with a new way in which to engage in dialogue with the people in their lives who mean the most to them. Each student should be strongly encouraged to participate in the assignments, and their efforts should be praised. There may be occasions when a student cannot engage family, friends or caregivers in a dialogue. Teachers should be sensitive to this, and help their students not to feel shame. Teachers should try to create an environment of understanding, and should try to provide the student who is in this situation with an opportunity for teacher/student dialogue to compensate for the lack of feedback at home.

a. Teachers explain the homework assignment, saying:
   • “At the end of this unit, you will take your top three strengths home and discuss these strengths with your family.”
   • “Ask them what stories they remember about times when you used your strengths.”
   • “You are invited to write these stories in your journal so that you can remember the details.” “Come back to school prepared to share one story about your favorite strength and what your family member told you.”
Unit 2: Lesson Plan, Part 5

Class Activities (Suggested)

1. **Suggested Class Activity 1: Let’s Discuss Citizenship**

The **Goal** of Activity #1 is to think about and discuss what citizenship means for the students, and how citizenship relates to character strengths. This activity can be done as one large group, or in several smaller groups.

   a. Teachers ask students to provide their own definitions for “citizenship”, saying:
      - “When you say, ‘Yes, I am a citizen!’ what does that mean?”
      - “Are you a citizen of Kenya? Are you a citizen of your township? Are you a citizen of your village?”
      - “Is citizenship only about where you live?”

   b. Teachers ask students to take turns at the board, writing words to complete the sentence,
      - “Citizenship means...”

   c. Teachers make suggestions to help students to think about citizenship in a broader sense, such as:
      - “Being a member of my community”
      - “Being a student at my school”
      - “Being my parents’ child”
      - “Being a member of my church”
      - “Belonging to others”
      - “Cooperating with other people”
      - “Being responsible for others”
      - “Being cooperative.”
d. Teachers ask students to distinguish between good and poor citizenship, saying:
   - “Is a bad person a citizen?”
   - “What is an example of poor citizenship?”

e. Teachers ask students what character strengths they might need to use in order to help a poor citizen to become a good citizen, saying:
   - “What can you do to help someone who is a poor citizen to be a better member of his or her community?”

f. Teachers refer to the strengths of Honesty, Fairness, Justice, Kindness, Love, Forgiveness, as some character strengths that might help people to become better citizens.

g. Teachers help students identify Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviors that might describe a good citizen.

h. Teachers pose other discussion questions, such as:
   - What are the most important traits of an effective citizen?
   - Think of someone who demonstrates citizenship. What things do they do that help you to see them this way? What are some of the characteristics that they demonstrate?
   - What are our responsibilities as citizens of our communities, our society, or the world?
i. Teachers invite students to share personal stories about when/how they have exhibited citizenship. Examples might include:
   - **Friendliness to other children in the community**
   - **Standing up for what one thinks is right**
   - **Helping family with household responsibilities**
   - **Being respectful of other people and their property**
   - **Being welcoming to others**
   - **Being respectful of parents/teachers/elders**
   - **Following school rules**
   - **Listening carefully to the opinions of others**
   - **Respecting diversity and differences in people**

2. **Suggested Class Activity 2: Let’s Discuss the Importance of Quiet Time**

   The **Goal** of Activity #2 is to introduce guided meditation, in order to help children to find healthy ways in which to meet their needs for time alone and for quiet time to recharge. Children, like adults, have a variety of needs during the day and sometimes need time alone. When their needs are met in this regard, they can engage in reflective thinking, develop more self-awareness, and engage in more positive behaviors that draw from their character strengths.

   a. Teachers provide space in the classroom for children to retreat to for alone time, or even rest time, as needed. They make opportunities for quiet reflection known to the students.

   b. Teachers create a quiet and reflective atmosphere so children can think about themselves, their individual responsibility for the group and about the wider world.

   c. Teachers encourage students to savor good memories during quiet reflection time and instruct students to think about what they are grateful for, by saying:
● “Sometimes, we are so busy and our day is so noisy that we do not have a chance to just relax and take a little break.”
● “We all need a little break in our day, just to be alone with our thoughts.”
● “This quiet time gives us a chance to recharge, like a battery.”
● “For the next few minutes, we will all have a chance to be very quiet and remember good things that have happened to us, people we appreciate in our lives, and our own strengths.”

d. Following quiet reflection, teachers engage students in classroom discussion (inviting them to write down their reflections in their journals if they would like):

- What did you like about the quiet time?
- What is challenging about quiet time?
- What does it mean to have quiet time? Is it just that there is no noise? Or does quiet time mean something inside us as well? What are some good things about being quiet inside?
- During your quiet time, what thoughts came into your mind? How did the thoughts make you feel?
- What are some good memories that came to mind during the reflection?
- What thoughts did you notice about feeling grateful during our quiet time?
3. **Suggested Class Activity 3: What Does It Mean to Be Thankful?**

The **Goal** of Activity #3 is to help students to understand what it means to be grateful, what they can be grateful for, and the impact that expressing – and receiving – gratitude has on a person’s feeling of being loved, appreciated, and understood by others. This activity leads to a better understanding of the importance of Gratitude as a character strength.

a. Teachers open up a discussion of the statement, ‘Thank you’ and what it means to feel grateful. They help the students to understand that simply thanking someone is sometimes a common courtesy, which is important, but not the same as feeling gratitude from the heart. Teachers say:
   - “Sometimes saying ‘Thank you’ can be a polite reaction, such as when someone holds the door for us, or when someone lets us ahead of them in line.”
   - “Other times, when we say ‘Thank you’ it can be from our heart.”
   - “Do you think that saying ‘Thank you’ and expressing gratitude for another person can help them to feel appreciated or loved?”
   - “When you appreciate something that someone else did or a strength that they have, what does it provide for the other person? How do you think it makes them feel?
   - What does it mean to say ‘Thank you’ and really mean it?”

b. Teachers encourage students to share their memories of feeling grateful, and who (and what) they are grateful for, by saying:
   - “Is there a time in your life when you felt truly thankful?”
   - “How did that feel?”
• “If you could say ‘Thank you’ to someone right at this moment, who would that person be?” “How do you think that person would feel to know that you appreciate him or her?”

c. Teachers help students to understand that giving thanks to someone can make you feel good, by saying:
   • “How does it make you feel when you say ‘Thank you’ to someone who has done something to help you?”

d. Teachers encourage students to express thanks, both overtly and in their thoughts. Teachers suggest as follows:
   • “I would like each one of you to say ‘Thank you’ today to someone who has helped you, cared about you, loved you.”
   • “Then, I would like you to make a habit of being thankful – each day -- for the good things that have happened to you.”

e. Teachers conclude this activity by encouraging students to write down, in their journals, what they are thankful for.

4. Suggested Class Activity 4: Can You Guess What Strength I’m Demonstrating?

The Goal of this activity is to help students to recognize character strengths in the words and deeds of others. This activity draws from the students’ imaginations to create vignettes where character strengths shine through. It requires that students work in groups of three or four, and act out their vignettes for the rest of the class. It is necessary to limit the students’ demonstrations to a few minutes so that all groups have a chance to participate actively. Through this activity, students will have the opportunity to identify and define various character strengths and put them into action.
Procedure

1. Divide the classroom into many smaller groups of 3-4 children (or more—depending on the size of the classroom).
2. Randomly assign each group one character strength: Bravery, Zest, Persistence, Prudence, Self-Regulation, Fairness, Citizenship, Gratitude, Kindness, Curiosity etc.
3. Have each group create a brief dialogue and a “play” that demonstrates how the character strength shines through in actions and words.
4. After providing time for the students to discuss their group’s strength, return as a larger group and have each group share what they talked about in their smaller groups.

5. **Suggested Class Activity 5: Let’s Make a Strength Flag!**

The **Goal** of this activity is to use creative expression to tell a story and begin a discussion of strengths. Students will have the opportunity to use creative expression that will lead to a discussion of strengths with peers. Each personal flag will be unique and tell a story about the student that is represents.

Procedure

1. Provide each student with a blank sheet of paper that has been divided into 4 quadrants.
2. In each of the four sections of the paper, students may either draw a picture or write a brief narrative about a character strength that they most identify with.
3. Invite students to take turns presenting their completed flags to the rest of the class.
6. Suggested Class Activity 6: What Strengths Shine Through this Story?

The Goal of this activity is to help students to identify character strengths in scenarios and short stories, so that they can then be able to recognize character strengths in their own lives.

Students will listen to various short stories read out loud and will take turns identifying the character strengths that are depicted through each story. Through this activity, students practice using their language of strengths as well as their ability to identify and name the strengths of others.

Procedure

1. Have the students read the short stories to each other, and encourage careful listening to identify character strengths as they arise in the words and deeds of the people in the stories.

2. Facilitate a discussion of the stories, and prompt the students, when necessary to think about particular strengths.

Sample scenarios/short stories

The Honest Wood Cutter

A poor woodcutter accidentally dropped his axe into the river. He was very upset, as he had no money to buy another axe. Just then a fairy appeared in the river holding out a golden axe to him. “I found this axe in the river. Is this yours?” “That’s not mine”, replied the woodcutter. The fairy then brought out a silver axe. The woodcutter disowned this one too. Finally, the fairy held out a wooden axe. Smiling with happiness, the woodcutter said, “That’s mine. Thank you very much.” The fairy felt very happy seeing his honesty and said, “Such
honesty deserves a reward.” She gave the poor man all the three axes and disappeared.

**Sample Answer:** Integrity, Gratitude and Kindness.

*Hard Work Always Pays*

Once, two friends called Harry and Garry came to a city to earn money. They went to a rich merchant for a job. The merchant gave each of them a cane basket and pointing towards a well in his garden said, “Take these baskets and draw water from the well ‘till dusk. Harry thought it foolish to draw water in a cane basket. So, he slept. On the other hand, Garry kept working. After few hours, when he drew the basket up, he saw some gold coins in the basket. He took them to the merchant who rewarded him and gave him a job too. Harry went away ashamed.

**Sample Answer:** Persistence, Curiosity, Zest and Fairness

*The Man and the Little Cat*

One day, an old man was having a stroll in the forest when he suddenly saw a little cat stuck in a hole. The poor animal was struggling to get out. So, he gave him his hand to get him out. But the cat scratched his hand with fear. The man pulled his hand screaming with pain. But he did not stop; he tried to give a hand to the cat again and again. Another man was watching the scene, screamed with surprise, “Stop helping this cat! He’s going to get himself out of there!” The other man did not care about him, he just continued saving that animal until he finally succeeded, and then he walked to that man and said, “Son, it is cat’s instincts that make him scratch and hurt, and it is my job to love and care”.

**Sample Answer:** Bravery, Persistence, Kindness, Integrity
The Elephant Rope

As a man was passing the elephants, he suddenly stopped, confused by the fact that these huge creatures were being held by only a small rope tied to their front leg. No chains, no cages. It was obvious that the elephants could, at any time, break away from their bonds—but for some reason, they did not. He saw a trainer nearby and asked why these animals just stood there and made no attempt to get away. “Well,” trainer said, “when they are very young and much smaller we use the same size rope to tie them and, at that age, it’s enough to hold them. As they grow up, they are conditioned to believe they cannot break away. They believe the rope can still hold them, so they never try to break free.” The man was amazed. These animals could at any time break free from their bonds but because they believed they couldn’t, they were stuck right where they were. Like the elephants, how many of us go through life hanging onto a belief that we cannot do something, simply because we failed at it once before? Failure is part of learning; we should never give up the struggle in life.

Sample Answer (What they lacked): Persistence, Bravery

Unity in Strength

Once upon a time, there was a flock of doves that flew, led by their king, in search of food. One day, they had flown a long distance and were very tired. The dove king encouraged them to fly a little further. The smallest dove picked up speed and found some rice scattered beneath a banyan tree. So all the
doves landed and began to eat. Suddenly a net fell over them and they were all trapped. They saw a hunter approaching carrying a huge club. The doves desperately fluttered their wings trying to get out, but to no avail. The king had an idea. He advised all the doves to fly up together carrying the net with them. He said that there was strength in unity. Each dove picked up a portion of the net and together they flew off carrying the net with them. The hunter looked up in astonishment. He tried to follow them, but they were flying high over hills and valleys. They flew to a hill near a city of temples where there lived a mouse who could help them. He was a faithful friend of the dove king. When the mouse heard the loud noise of their approach, he went into hiding. The dove king gently called out to him and then the mouse was happy to see him. The dove king explained that they had been caught in a trap and needed the mouse’s help to gnaw at the net with his teeth and set them free. The mouse agreed saying that he would set the king free first. The king insisted that he first free his subjects and the king last. The mouse understood the king’s feelings and complied with his wishes. He began to cut the net and one by one all the doves were freed including the dove king. They all thanked the mouse and flew away together, united in their strength.

**Sample Answer:** Citizenship, Kindness, Persistence, Bravery, Integrity
7. **Suggested Class Activity 7: Four-Square Anchor Chart**

The **Goal** of this activity is to help students to think more critically about character strength – to identify descriptive words surrounding a particular strength, to identify verbal encouragements and other statements that embody or demonstrate the strength, and to identify words and actions that are the opposite of the strength. This activity helps students to engage in a deeper dialogue about what the strength really means, and to begin to apply it in their own words and the way they speak to others.

**Procedure**

1. Students are broken up into smaller groups and are each assigned a character strength/virtue.

2. Each group is provided with a blank sheet of paper and are asked to complete a “four-square anchor chart” that has the character strength written in the middle, then in one corner “is,” “does,” “sounds like,” and “is not.”

3. Teachers can provide an example on the board that the students can copy.

4. In their small groups, students work collaboratively to explain, and write on their group chart, what their assigned character strength is, does, sounds like and is not.

**Example:**

**Kindness is...**
- Considerate
- Compassionate
- Encouraging

**Kindness does....**
- Doing good deeds for others
- Helping others
- Holding the door for someone
- Being considerate of the feelings of others
● Smiling
● Telling others you love/appreciate them

Kindness sounds like...
● “You can do it!”
● “Thank you”

Kindness is not...
● Teasing
● Mean words
● Insulting
● Bullying
● Excluding
● Blaming

5. After students finish filling out each section, brainstorm ways that each group’s assigned character strength can be practiced in the classroom.
6. Come back as a larger group and invite each group to share what they came up with.
7. To wrap up, as the class to think about, and share, ways that they might practice their group’s character strength today.
8. Teachers ask:
   ● “How can you show kindness today? How did you show kindness this week?”
8. **Suggested Class Activity 8: Strengths Rainbow**

The **Goal** of this activity is to employ Guided Imagery, as adapted from: Guided Meditation for Primary Students-- Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc. The purpose of this activity is to facilitate for students, an opportunity for meditation, self-reflection and self-regulation through meditative guided-imagery. This particular meditation also provides a chance to think about developing one’s own strengths and spreading strengths outward to the community. Through guided imagery, self-reflection and reflection on embodying strengths, students will develop self-regulation skills through meditation and deep breathing, as well as awareness of various character strengths. Through quiet time and discussion, students will develop self-awareness and reflective-thinking skills.

**Procedure:**

1. Facilitate a brief discussion about rainbows and name all of the colors (R.O.Y.G.B.I.V).
   - Red
   - Orange
   - Yellow
   - Green
   - Blue
   - Indigo
   - Violet

2. Class preparation for guided imagery proceeds with Teacher suggesting as follows:
   - “Sit in a relaxed position with both feet flat on the floor.”
   - “Keep your eyes closed.”
   - “Notice your breathing. Is it fast? Is it slow?”
   - “Practice deep/belly breathing for a few moments:
     - *Breathe in 1, 2, 3 and out 1, 2, 3’*
     - *Try moving the air all the way to the bottom of your lungs down*
into your abdomen. Put your hand on your stomach and see if can feel your abdomen rise and fall as you take deep breaths in and out;
- Notice your breathing and feel how your body relaxes when you breathe deeply and slowly.”

3. Teacher begins a Guided Imagery Narrative, as follows:
   - “Feel your body becoming lighter and lighter. See all of the colors of the rainbow. Feel your body becoming all of the colors of the rainbow.”
   - “Slowly, you are now giving out the red color. Your whole body becomes red color. Feel yourself giving out courage and bravery. You are now full of courage and bravery.” (Courage Virtue)
   - “Slowly, you are now giving out the orange color. Your whole body becomes orange color. Feel yourself giving out a sense of zest—you are giving out energy and excitement. You are now full of energy and excitement.” (Zest Virtue)
   - “Slowly, you are now giving out the yellow color. Your whole body is becoming the yellow color. Feel yourself giving out a sense of creativity and curiosity—feel yourself fill up with curiosity and creativity.” (Wisdom and Knowledge Virtue)
   - “Now imagine yourself giving out the color green. Your whole body is becoming the green color. Feel yourself now giving out and sharing a sense of love—feel yourself fill up with love.” (Humanity Virtue)
   - “Imagine yourself giving out the color blue. Your whole body is now becoming a blue color. Feel yourself giving out forgiveness. Feel yourself fill up with forgiveness.” (Temperance Virtue)
   - “Slowly, you are now giving out the color indigo. Your whole body is becoming the indigo color. Feel yourself giving out and sharing
a sense of gratitude. Feel yourself fill up with gratitude.”

(Transcendence Virtue)

● “Now, imagine that you are giving out the color violet. Your whole entire body is becoming this color. Feel yourself giving out and sharing a sense of kindness. Feel yourself fill up with kindness.” (Humanity Virtue)

● “You are the rainbow, your colors are going out everywhere. Feel yourself getting bigger and bigger, your colors are going out further and further, until they cover up this whole room, then further until they cover the entire community and even the whole country. As you spread out all the colors, you are also spreading out bravery, energy, curiosity, creativity, love, forgiveness, gratitude and kindness. You spread out even farther and you become even bigger. Now your colors of light are spreading throughout the whole world. You are as big as the whole world, your colors of light shining out in every direction.”

● “Now bring your attention back to your breathing. Focus on your breathing. Gradually bring your awareness back to the room. When you are ready, open/re-focus your eyes.”

4.Teacher opens the discussion of this exercise with the following discussion questions:

- What was your experience of this activity? What did you notice?
- Did you notice differences in the way that your body felt before and after this activity?
- How do you feel? What did you enjoy about this activity? What was difficulty about this activity?
- What thoughts did you notice?
9. **Suggested Class Activity 9: Kindness Meditation**

The **Goal** of this activity is to employ Kindness Meditation, as adapted from: Guided Meditation for Primary Students—Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc. The purpose of this activity is to facilitate for students, an opportunity for meditation, self-reflection and self-regulation through meditative guided-imagery. This particular meditation also provides a chance to think about developing one’s own strengths and spreading strengths outward to the community. Through guided imagery, self-reflection and reflection on embodying strengths, students will develop self-regulation skills through meditation and deep breathing, as well as awareness of various character strengths. Through quiet time and discussion, students will develop self-awareness and reflective-thinking skills.

**Procedure**

1. Class preparation for guided imagery proceeds with Teacher suggesting as follows:
   - Let’s sit in a relaxed position with both feet flat on the floor.
   - Close your eyes or keep them softly focused.
   - Notice your breathing. Is it fast? Is it slow?
   - Practice deep/belly breathing for a few moments:
     - Breathe in 1, 2, 3 and out 1, 2, 3
     - Try moving the air all the way to the bottom of your lungs down into your abdomen. Put your hand on your stomach and see if you can feel your abdomen rise and fall as you take deep breaths in and out.
   - Notice your breathing and feel how your body relaxes when you breathe deeply and slowly.
   - Imagine a feeling of kindness (hope, love, bravery, gratitude etc.) growing inside of you. Kindness fills up your head and neck. It fills your shoulders and arms. The kindness floats down into your chest and your head. Your heart is so full of kindness. The kindness gently floats on into your stomach and on into your
back. It floats into your legs and feet. Every part of your body is full of kindness. You are kindness.

- You are so full of kindness, it begins to spread out beyond your body. It spreads to everyone in our classroom. It reaches beyond the classroom farther and farther until it spreads over the whole of Kenya. It spreads out to the whole earth, and continues to spread out even further into the universe—beyond the planets, beyond the stars, farther and farther. The whole universe is filled with your kindness.

- Now bring your attention back to your breathing. Focus on your breathing. Gradually bring your awareness back to the room. When you are ready, open/re-focus your eyes.

2. Teacher opens the class discussion with the following questions:
   - What was your experience of this activity? What did you notice?
   - Did you notice differences in the way that your body felt before and after this activity?
   - How do you feel? What did you enjoy about this activity? What was difficulty about this activity?
   - What thoughts did you notice?
   - How do others notice our strengths?
   - How can we extend our strengths to others?
   - How can we notice strengths in others?

**Conclusion of Unit 2**

1. At the conclusion of Unit 2, students are invited to focus their attention and memory back to the strength list, in order that they might review the various virtues and names of strengths that they have come to better understand through this unit.

2. Teachers will encourage students to deepen their vocabulary of strengths as well as their capacities for dialogue in their homes, by reminding the students to create a list of important strengths to talk about with their families.
3. Teachers will once again remind students of the expectation that they take your top three strengths home and discuss these strengths with their family or important people in their life.

4. Teachers will ask students what stories they remember about times when they used their strengths.

5. Teachers will remind students that they wrote personal accounts of their strengths in their journals throughout this unit, and that these stories and narratives represent valuable perspectives on what they have learned.

6. Teachers will remind students that they should take time out of each day for solitude and reflection on what makes them grateful in their lives.

7. Teachers will remind students to continue to dialogue with their peers and families regarding the importance of character strengths.

8. Teachers will remind students that they have power to demonstrate their valuable character strengths in the words they choose when speaking to others, and that expressing thanks and appreciating others benefits both the person being thanked and the person who is doing the thanking.

9. Teachers will encourage students to show their family and friends the list of strengths in their strengths journal and give examples of what you talked about in school.

10. Finally, students are strongly encouraged to return to school prepared to tell one story about their favorite strength.
Homework Assignment Reminder

The value in assigning homework is to encourage students to discuss, with their caregivers, families, and friends, what they have learned, and to ask these important figures in their lives to provide them with feedback including a validation of and encouragement of their reflections regarding their strengths. In this way, learning continues outside the classroom, and enriches the students’ experience. It also provides students with a new way in which to engage in dialogue with the people in their lives who mean the most to them. Each student should be strongly encouraged to participate in the assignments, and their efforts should be praised. There may be occasions when a student cannot engage family, friends or caregivers in a dialogue. Teachers should be sensitive to this, and help their students not to feel shame. Teachers should try to create an environment of understanding, and should try to provide the student who is in this situation with an opportunity for teacher/student dialogue to compensate for the lack of feedback at home.

Teachers explain the homework assignment, saying:

- “At the end of this unit, you will take your top three strengths home and discuss these strengths with your family.”
- “Ask them what stories they remember about times when you used your strengths.”

“Please write down these stories very neatly in your journal also on a separate piece of paper (Teachers: the separate piece of part can be a classroom activity if you prefer) so that you can remember the details. Come back to school prepared to share one story about your favorite strength and what your family member told you.”
UNIT 3: SHARE CHARACTER STRENGTHS
“Kamuingii koyaga ndiiri”

Unity is strength

Rationale for Unit 3

Unit 3 is time to start spreading the strengths into the families, the class, the school, and the whole community. Sharing strengths in this way will build unity and community.

Goal of Unit 3

Now the class comes together so everyone can listen to each other’s stories. While listening to the story, instruct the children to listen for strengths. When character strengths are shared or communicated with others, you tend to feel seen and understood. This increases social connection, and community engagement and responsibility. This unit focuses on developing communication skills, recognizing strengths in others, and building citizen participation.

Materials Needed for Unit 3

- Homework assignments from the class – the written stories
- Pieces of shiny paper or paper cut into stars
- Scotch tape or sticky tack
- Single pieces of paper to collect that have the strengths stories written on them (may be a class activity or done at home).
- Journals
- Markers
- Big sheets of paper
- Bell (for when you are practicing strength spotting)
Instructional Design for Unit 3

Unit 3 is designed as mostly group and whole class activities and homework that engages the whole community. This unit sets the stage for future ongoing activities to weave throughout the year.

Review homework: Ask the class

- How many of you did the homework?
- What was it like for you to ask your family about your strengths and their strengths?
- Who in your family did you talk to?
- What did you learn?
- Any surprises?
- Was it hard or easy to find someone to talk to about strengths?
- Was it fun to talk about strengths?

Individual Activity: Strength Stars

Strength stars showing that students can shine. Have each pupil make a star with their top strength on it. Collect the stars. (For a later activity you will place the stars on the classroom wall).
Reflection Activity: “Kamuingi Koyaga Ndiri” – Together, We Can

Naomi Wanjiku Gakunga

This quilt depicts images of five women carrying a heavy load on their heads. Their mental and physical strength and resiliency are symbolized by their heads made of metal. The heavy weight of their load is symbolized by the basket made of steel. The hopes and success of this heavy lifting is symbolized by the fruits (of their labor) sprouting from the basket. It takes courage and strength to put a heavy load on the head and still walk tall. The heads of the five women on the quilt represent the five continents; the universality of the mission of the women of the world in search of peace and security. As we redefine our concepts of the boundaries of our communities, and share responsibility for one another, we will discover that working together towards
peace and security is one of the foundations for both our individual and collective response. “Kamuingi Koyaga Ndiri” is a proverb from the Kikuyu people of Kenya which means “Together, we can.”

Ask the class to reflect on this image of togetherness and community as a warm up for the sharing activity.

**Group Activity: Sharing Strength Stories in small groups**

**Materials**

markers, 1 big sheet of paper per group

**Procedure**

1. Place the class into groups of 4 children.
2. Assign a leader to each group, making sure there are an equal number of girl and boy leaders and the leaders are diverse.
3. Have them facing each other (move the desks) so they can easily hear and see each other.
4. Tell them that it is okay to speak in their mother tongue for this exercise.

“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head.

*If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.*

- *Nelson Mandela*

5. Assign numbers so everyone knows who in the group goes first, second, third, etc...

**Read and write these instructions in English and Kiswahili**

1. (Number 1’s go first) What are your top strengths? Write them down on the group piece of paper.
2. Tell your partners.
3. Tell your partners a story about a time when you used this strength. Maybe you used a strength for the first time and you were surprised or maybe you use this
strength all of the time. There is no right story or wrong story. It is up to you to
decide what story you want to tell. But try to really describe how you used the
strength.

4. The persons who are listening to the story should listen very closely and ask
questions to help your partner tell the story so that you can really imagine the
story about the strength.

5. Everyone takes a turn until everyone has shared a strength story.

**Homework**

Go home today and tell someone your favorite strength story. Share it with your family
and community.

**Group Activity**

**Sharing Strength Stories in the whole class (probably the next day)**

Now the class comes together so everyone can listen to each other’s strength stories.
While listening, the children should be listening for strengths. Sharing strengths:

1. The teacher decides which group goes first. The leader decides who shares first,
   second, third and fourth in the group.

2. Can you tell the whole class your story? Everyone listen closely for the strengths
   they hear.

**Additional strength spotting class activities**

- Strength spotting: The class will strength spot or listen for the strengths in the
  story.

- Strength spotting in each other can also happen when you someone notices a
  particular strength in a classmate.

- Have a ritual and stop the class every now and then and ask, who can spot a
  strength? Or who has seen a strength today? Pupils can say, for example: “I spot
  (honesty) in Emmah”. Celebrate by song or clapping, ringing a bell, etc...

- Encourage recognizing strengths in others and activities that cultivate reflection
  on others...I spot this strength in you, etc...
• Keep a special section of the journal booklet for strength spotting records. Children keep them.
• Nominate classmates for the “strength of the day” at the end of everyday.
• Teachers can engage pupils in appreciative inquiries of curiosity, bravery, kindness, citizenship or any strength they believe will be most useful for the class to discuss and understand more fully.

Class Discussion questions
• Teachers engage the class in discussions about questions such as:
• How do you develop strengths that are not high on your list?
• Who are the leaders at the school and in the community that are paragons (icons) of the strengths?
• Cluster students into groups of virtues and play games by virtue category.
• Follow up journal or reflection to increase writing skills.
• Savor art and music, appreciation of beauty in group activities.
• Strength stories about icons.
• Elevate gratitude by thinking about “Three Good Things” that happen each day. Students can do this at the end of the day at home and include their families or it can be private.

Homework

Interview one member of the family or community (church members, store keepers, farmers, neighbors) about their strengths. Find out what is their top strength? Ask them a story about their strength. Come back to school with a story about the strength of the person you interview. Write it down at home and read it to someone new. Share it. Then bring it to school for homework. Make sure to take your strength book and a pencil home.

Ending exercise

• This activity is best done at the end of a group experience. All participants are asked to:
• Line up to go outside for the activity.
● They spend some time walking on their own, thinking about what they have learning about themselves.
● Eventually, and give it enough time (at least 10 minutes), tell them to choose a special stone from outside.
● Gather the group together and return to the classroom.

Remind the pupils
● We all came here as individuals, bringing our own personal styles and characteristics. We have each given a part of ourselves to the group. This is what being an individual is all about. We have learned about others and also about ourselves. We all are unique pieces of the puzzle, with our thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and dreams. We are valuable because of this and what we have to offer to others.
● No one else is exactly like us. We need to look in at ourselves, see who we are and recognize our potential. We have the ability to accomplish whatever we start out to do. Know that we have no limits and only we can make things happen.
● I want you to take all you have experienced here and keep it with you. These Touchstones represent the experience we have shared together. Each stone is different — as each of us is our own person. But, they are similar too — each with hope, desires, and ambitions. Dig deep inside and always have the courage to be yourself. You are a wonderful individual just as you are.
● Keep this Touchstone and know the power and energy you feel here will always within you. DO not forfeit your potential to fulfill all you set out to do. Listen to the voice inside you, think about all there is for you to accomplish, and challenge yourself to do it. Go on...the power lies within.