



# Teacher Toolkit #1: Every Story Matters

GRADES 6–12

The simplest way to **create a culture of mattering** at school is to connect with the people who fill it. That means getting to know the stories of both the colleagues we collaborate with occasionally and the students we teach every day. Why? When we express interest in each other, we satisfy the human need to be seen and heard—we foster mattering.

## Some Things to Think About

Whether you're a parent or teacher, getting to know children and celebrating their individuality helps them feel worthy regardless of their accomplishments. This fuels their self-esteem so they can reach their full potential.

As teachers, we have the power to both be confidants to our students and encourage them to build relationship with each other—a good thing since research suggests that friendship and community buffer against anxiety, lower stress, and help with emotion regulation. Research shows that just 60 minutes a week of deliberate time focused on creating connections can foster resilience with positive mental health benefits—particularly when we set up kids with shared experiences to be each others' "go-to-people."

## Some Things to Try

Conducting this simple exercise at the beginning of the year can help set the tone for the kind of connected classroom community that has the power to be a “go-to-people” place.

1

Print out this [Extended Nametag Activity](#) for each member of your class.

2

Ask students to complete their own Extended Name Tag Activity.

3

Move the desks in your classroom so that students can roam around the room freely. Ask students to stand up and to wander around the classroom, trying to find at least one person who shares one similarity on their nametag.

4

Share out. Ask students to share who they found with similar answers.

5

Continue sharing, focusing on the questions:

- What is one challenge facing your school community that you care deeply about personally?
- What is one area of knowledge or skill that you feel you can contribute to our community?