



Teacher Toolkit #3: Everyone Matters

GRADES 8–12

The third step to create a culture of mattering in your classroom is to **create a team environment** where individuals can use their strengths to work together for the common good and go from being classmates to teammates.

Some Things to Think About

In school systems that rank students, which creates a hierarchical learning environment, children learn to differentiate themselves from one another by prioritizing individual achievement and seeking ways to stand out among their peers. As a result, in 2019, a national report published by top developmental scientists stated that students in what researchers call “high-achieving schools” are now considered an “at risk” group due to the mental health effects of their high pressure environments.¹

In this context, classmates become competitors, which undermines deep learning and community building in schools. Mattering offers a roadmap to reframe this thinking: It creates space for students to identify their unique gifts and work together toward a shared purpose beyond themselves. As a result, classmates learn to see each other as teammates, which reinforces many critical qualities (see next page).

¹Jennifer B. Wallace, *Students in High-Achieving Schools Now Named an ‘At-Risk’ Group, Study Says* (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2019/09/26/students-high-achieving-schools-are-now-named-an-at-risk-group/>)



Critical Teammate Qualities

COLLABORATION Teammates work together, share ideas, and contribute to the overall efforts of the team. They understand that their success is intertwined with the success of the team as a whole.

SUPPORT Teammates offer assistance, encouragement, and guidance to their fellow team members, helping them overcome challenges and achieve their best performance.

COMMUNICATION Good teammates understand the importance of clear and open communication. They actively listen to others, express their thoughts and ideas clearly, and ensure that information flows smoothly within the team.

TRUST AND RELIABILITY Teammates are dependable and trustworthy. They fulfill their commitments and follow through on their responsibilities. They can be relied upon to contribute their fair share and maintain the confidence of their team members.

ADAPTABILITY A good teammate is flexible and able to adjust their approach, priorities, and strategies based on the team's needs and changing circumstances. They embrace new ideas and are willing to step out of their comfort zone to support the team's objectives.

RESPECT AND EMPATHY A teammate acknowledges diversity of opinions, backgrounds, and experiences within the team. They value and appreciate the perspectives and contributions of their teammates, treating others with empathy and consideration.

ACCOUNTABILITY A teammate takes ownership of their actions and accepts responsibility for their role in the team's outcomes. They hold themselves accountable to meet deadlines, fulfill their commitments, and continuously strive for excellence.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE A good teammate maintains a constructive and optimistic mindset, even in challenging situations. They contribute to a supportive and motivating atmosphere that fosters collaboration and productivity.



Some Things to Try

Team Building Activity: "Bear, Eagle, Deer, Buffalo"
(see following pages)

1

Move the desks so that people can move freely around the room.

Print out one copy of the Bear, Deer, Buffalo, Eagle Compass. Tape it to the front of the room, indicating which animal is North, South, East and West.

Project the description of each animal category or print out copies for each student.

2

After students read through the description of each animal, instruct students to walk toward the area of the room associated with the animal that resonates the most with their interests, qualities, and characteristics.

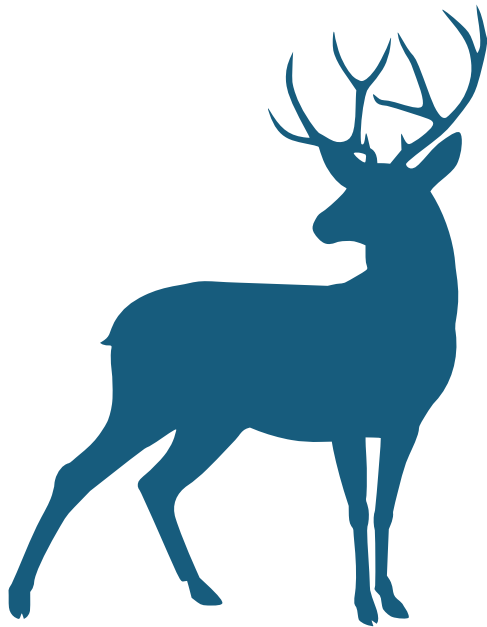
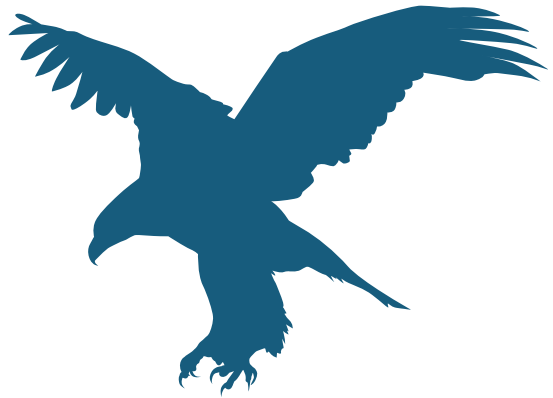
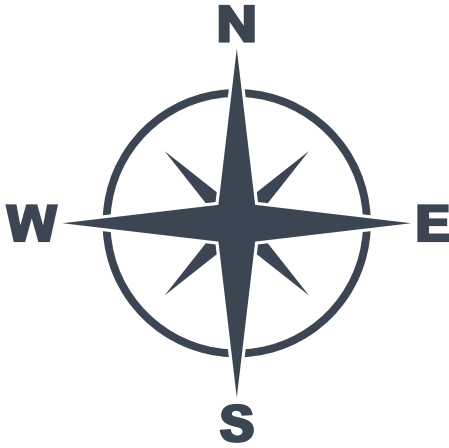
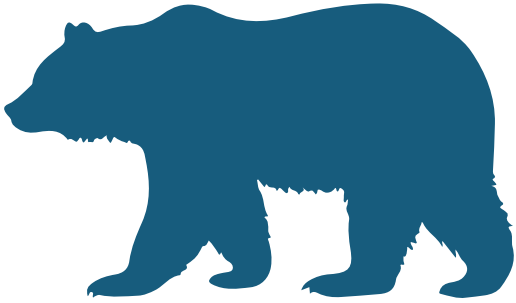
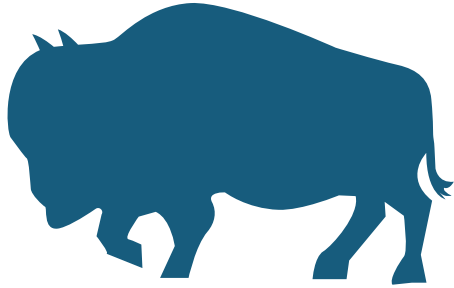
When gathered, ask students why they gravitated toward each group.

3

Then ask students to re-read the descriptions and to go to the side of the room with the qualities they identify with least.

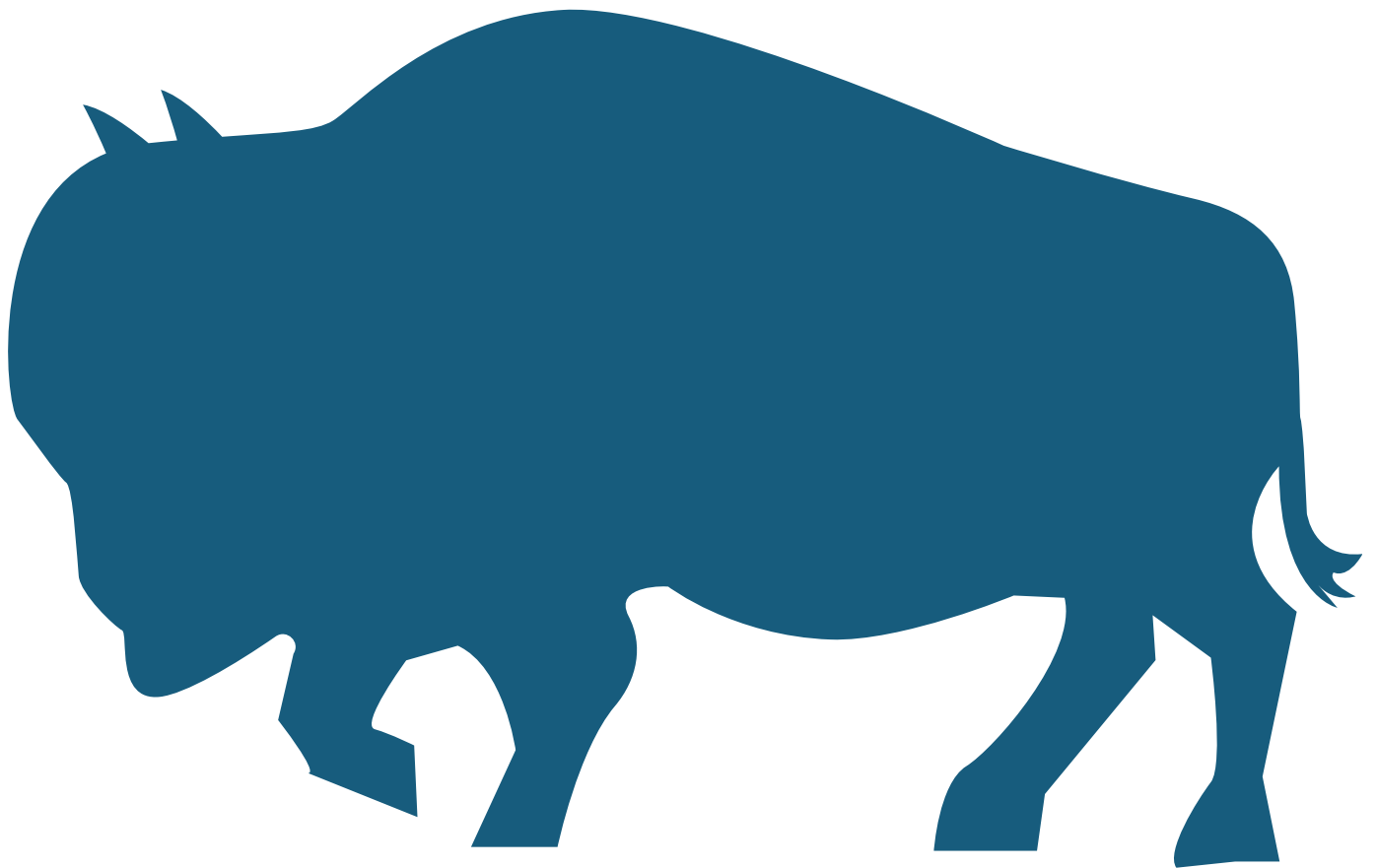
When gathered, see how many students from the first group went with you to the next group. Ask what they identified with least.

Your group will start to see that each animal has strengths and weaknesses and that .. people with different skill sets and interests are needed in every group.



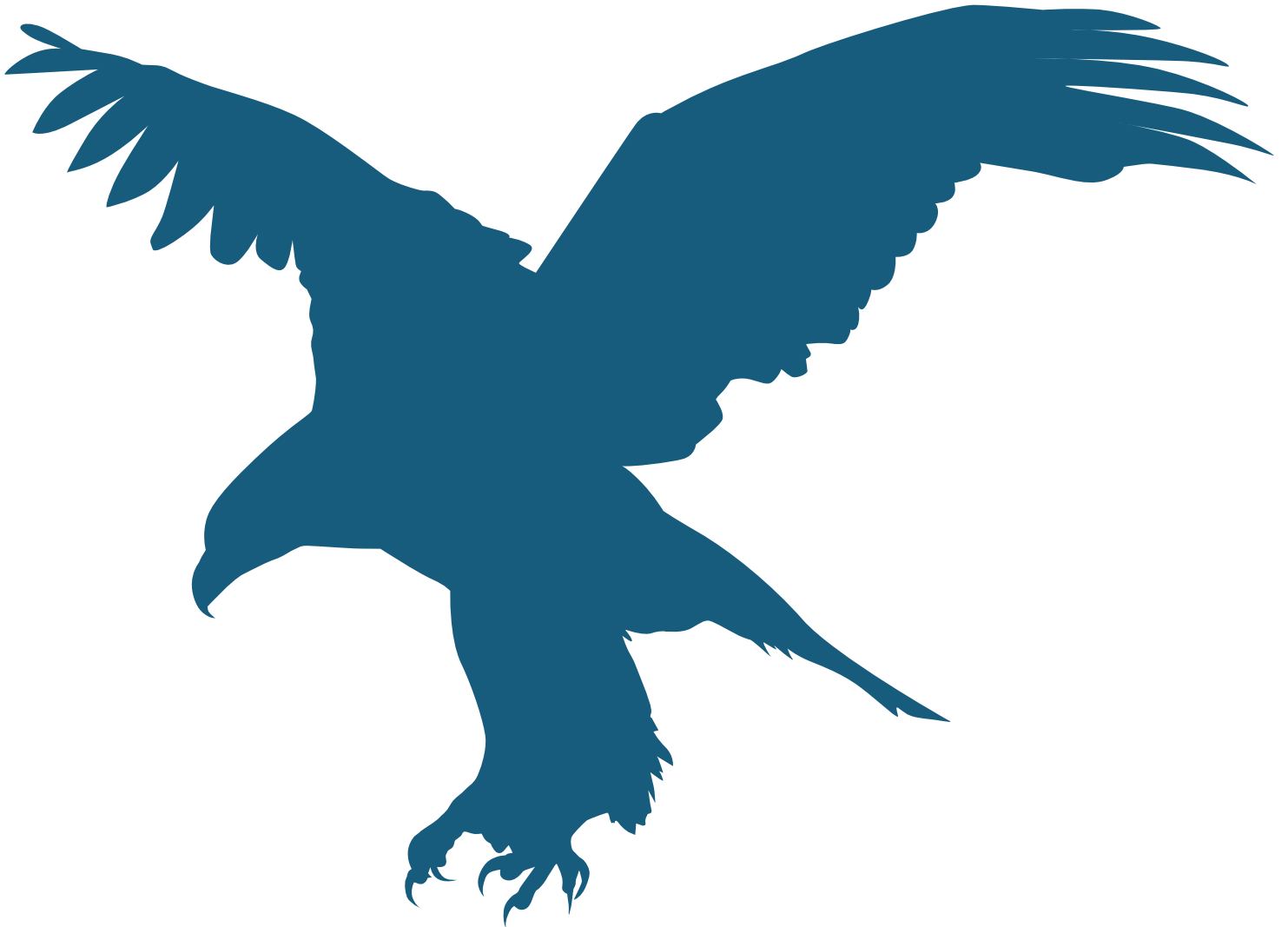


North: Buffalo



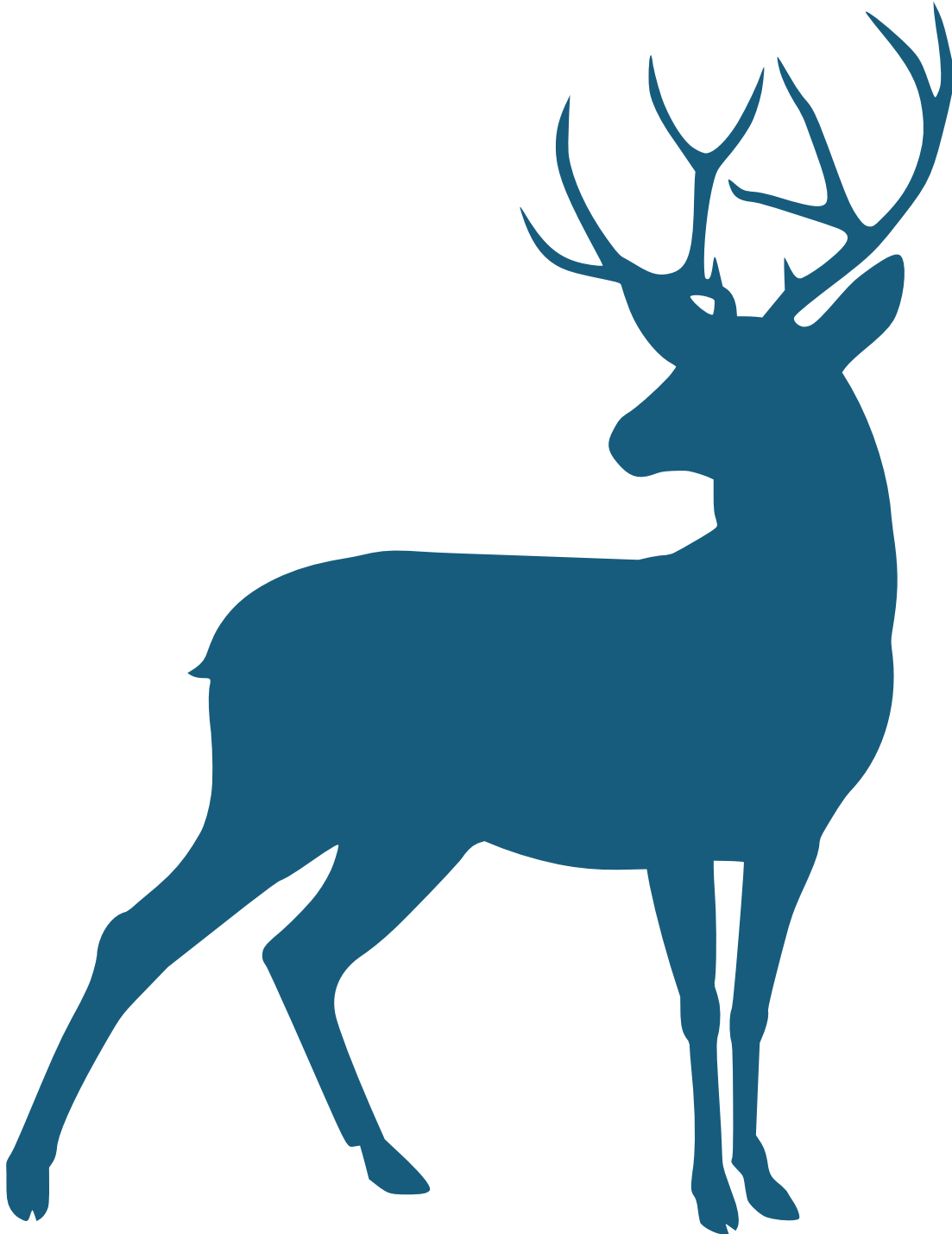


East: Eagle





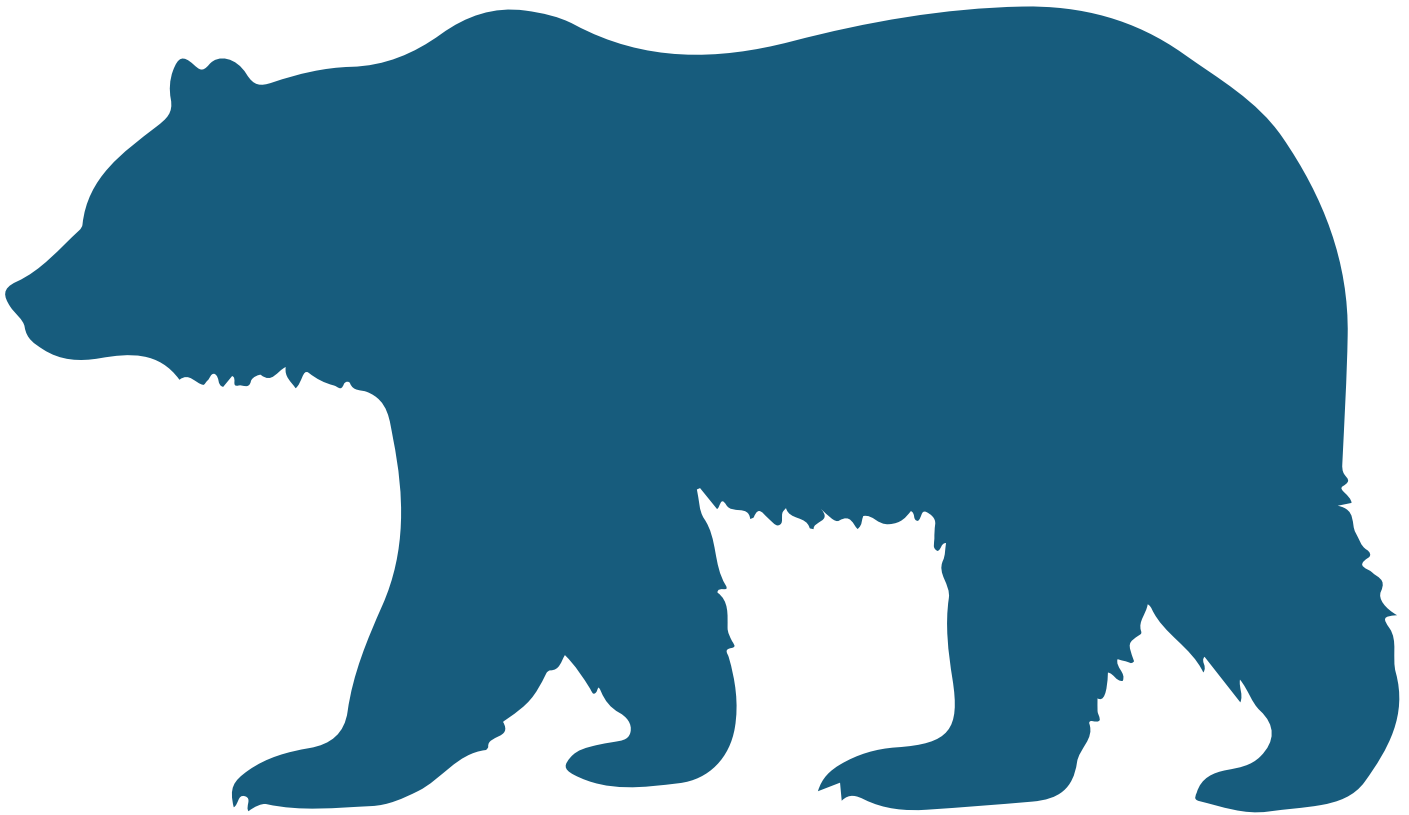
South: Deer



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West: Bear



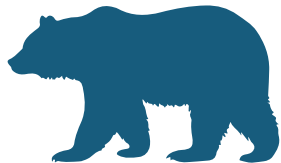


North: Buffalo

- Assertive, active, decisive
- Likes to be in control of relationships and determine events
- Quick to act, expresses sense of urgency for others to act
- Enjoys challenges and challenges others
- Thinks in terms of bottom line
- Likes quick page and fast track
- Courageous
- Perseveres, not stopping by hearing "NO," risk taker
- Likes variety, novelty, new projects
- Comfortable with being in front
- Good motivator of others

Value words: Action oriented phrases: "Do it now!" "I'll do it," "What's the bottom line?"

Roles: Leader and driver



West: Bear

- Seen as practical, dependable, and thorough in task situations
- Helpful to others by providing planning and resources
- Moves carefully and follows procedures and guidelines
- Uses data analysis and logic to make decisions
- Weighs all sides of an issue, balanced
- Introspective, self-analytical
- Careful, thoroughly examines people's needs in situations
- Works well with existing resources
- Keeper of traditions
- Skilled at finding fatal flaws in an idea or project

Value word: "Objective"

Roles: Evaluator and follow up



South: Deer

- Allows others to feel important
- Value driven regarding aspects of professional life
- Interaction is primary
- Concerned with process
- Supportive, nurturing to colleagues and peers
- Willingness to trust others' statements at face value
- Feeling-based, trusts own emotions and intuition
- Team player, receptive to other's ideas, builds on ideas of others, noncompetitive
- Able to focus on present moment
- Concerned with creating a positive environment

Value words: "Right, fair"

Roles: Relationships and process



East: Eagle

- Visionary who sees the big picture
- Very idea oriented, focus on future thought
- Insight into mission and purpose
- Develops solutions creatively
- Looks for overarching themes, ideas
- Likes to experiment, explore
- Strong spiritual awareness - attitude to "higher level"
- Appreciates a lot of information
- Divergent thinker

Value words: "Option, possibility"

Roles: Big picture thinker and visionary