

# Strategy and Lesson Plans

# Humans of Your School

Grades 3-5

Making Caring Common

**Caring Schools Network 2022 - 2023**

Updated September 2022

# Overview

Students will identify their own interests and characteristics, as well as those of others in their school community, to build towards an understanding of each other's identities. Students will practice different ways to get to know others, focusing on interviewing skills, to learn what makes others special and unique.

## Recommended time

- 20-35 mins per lesson (use the pacing suggestions or timestamps to adjust, depending on time available.)
- Five lessons in total, one lesson per week

## Materials and advance prep

- Worksheets in appendices
- Tape/string (for the “Line Game” in Lessons 1-2)
- Lessons 4-5 require students to interview a buddy, potentially from a different class. Preparation is required to find a buddy classroom. Together with the other classroom teacher, schedule 15-20 minutes for Lesson 4, the interview, and 15-20 minutes for Lesson 5, the presentation.
- Review classroom norms ([Appendix 1](#)) at the start of the series of lessons and whenever necessary

**MCC Tip:** If your class did not complete [HOYS K-2](#), you may want to review those lessons and use that curriculum instead.

## Objectives

- To reflect on personal interests and characteristics, begin to understand identity, and to learn about others' interests, characteristics, and identities.
- To learn what an interview is and practice getting to know others better through interviewing and deep listening

## Why this matters

Students' capacity for empathy can be developed by learning to appreciate other people's identities and perspectives. By engaging in self-reflection about one's own interests, history, and

characteristics, students will learn about what makes them who they are and use a similar approach to understand below the surface what makes the people around them who they are. By engaging with others in a structured way, students will begin to understand others' lived experiences and their identities. Students will practice interviewing others, especially those who may be different from them, and practice both listening and developing trust which in turn will strengthen their school community. This exercise will also help students work toward an understanding of identity they will further develop in Phase 3: Challenging Students to Understand and Seek Justice.

## Other considerations

In this strategy, students will have the opportunity to interview a fellow classmate or someone from another class or grade. If the latter, establish your buddy classroom, collaborate with the buddy class teacher to pick partners for interviews prior to [Lesson 4](#), and plan the final celebration and presentation in [Lesson 5](#). The buddy pairings can happen organically or with careful planning and conversation between you and the buddy teacher. Either way, ensure that buddies complement each other, in commonalities as well as differences.

## Extending this strategy

To extend these lessons and help students think about what makes others who they are, continue to ask the class about identity when reading stories together, talking about historical figures, or during other times it's appropriate. See the [Humans of Your School | Routines K-5](#) for recommended Humans Of New York stories, books and media. Furthermore, you can have students (individually or in groups) do more rounds of interviewing by interviewing other students, members of the school staff and faculty, the janitors or librarians, etc.

# Lesson 1: Self-Reflection: What Makes Me, Me? (20-30 minutes)

## Introduce and define (5-8 minutes)

Begin this lesson by telling the class something like, *“Today we are starting the first of a series of lessons and activities that help us learn about what makes us who we are, and what makes other people who they are. This is called “identity.”*

Share the definition: **Identity** is what is important to you and makes you who you are. Identities are complex and develop over time.

Have the following words written on the board and introduce them to the class by saying, *“The words on the board are different things that can be important to you and your identity.”* Ask for volunteers to read them out-loud to the class. Afterwards, ask the class if anyone has questions about some of the items on the board, or if anyone feels that some things are missing from the board. You can add any student suggestions to the list.

Languages you speak, country of origin, race, gender or pronouns, learning style, age, culture, family, friends, hobbies

Being: adventurous, athletic, brave, creative, generous, honest, kind

Invite students to take 5 minutes to write down a few words, sentences, or drawings that describe different parts of their identity. Save these papers to be used again when the class plays “Echoing a Friend” in Lesson 2.

**MCC Tip:** You know your class best. Feel free to remove or add words that you think will resonate most with your class. Be sure to collect and save students’ papers for the following lesson.

## “Line Game” (5-8 minutes)

If your class needs a movement break and you have time, play the “Line Game.” First, ask students to move aside chairs/desks so there is space for the class to move around. Either make a long line with masking tape, string, or indicate an invisible line, and separate students into two lines, facing one another on either side of the line. Students should begin by standing about a foot or two away from the person opposite them. Explain the game to the students by saying something like,

*“We are going to play a game to learn about what makes your classmates who they are. I will call out different statements, and if any of them are true for you, I want you to move forward and stand on the line. Try to do this activity in silence, but think about who is standing next to you after each statement and see what you can learn about yourself and others.”*

Begin with the statement “Stand on the line if you are a student.” Continue with multiple statements such as ‘stand on the line if your favorite color is blue, if you’re an only child, if you were born in a different state/country’ (additional examples in [Appendix 2](#)). At the end of the game ask students if they learned something new about their peers and what makes them who they are.

**MCC Tip:** Choose statements that will be comfortable and engaging for your classroom community. Avoid sensitive or challenging statements that may isolate students.

## Humans of New York (10-12 minutes)

Next, choose one or two stories from [Humans of New York](#), or use an [MCC pre-approved](#) story to read aloud either as a class or in small groups. Be sure to share the photos with your students so they can better understand the person they are reading about. Upon finishing the story, talk about the interviewees’ identity, what they learned about them through the text and photos, how the story and photos made them feel, and what more they would want to know.

**MCC Tip:** Pre-read the stories before sharing with your class, as some may cover sensitive topics and you might find they are either not appropriate for your students or require some explanations before reading.

Close the lesson by thanking your class for engaging in these stories and learning about their classroom community. Let students know when the next lesson will take place.

## Lesson 2: “Echoing a Friend” (25-35 minutes)

### Introduction & Humans of New York (5-10 minutes)

Begin the lesson by asking students if they can remember what an identity is. Invite them to share examples. If needed, repeat the definition below to remind students.

**Identity** is what is important to you and makes you who you are. Identities are complex and develop over time.

Next, choose a new story from [Humans of New York](#) or use an [MCC pre-approved](#) story to read aloud either as a class or in small groups. Be sure to share the photos with your students, so they can better understand the person they are reading about. Upon finishing the story, talk about the interviewees’ identity, what they learned about them through the text and photos, how the story and photos made them feel, and what more they would want to know.

**MCC Tip:** Pre-read the stories before sharing with your class as some may cover sensitive topics and you might find they are either not appropriate for your students or require some explanations before reading.

### “Echoing a Friend” (15-18 minutes)

Prepare students to step into another’s shoes by facilitating an “Echoing a Friend” exercise. Explain the activity to students by saying something like,

*“We will be doing an exercise called “Echoing a Friend”. We will get into pairs and take turns talking to each other about something you each wrote about your identity in the previous lesson. You and your partner will have two minutes to talk about one thing you each chose to write or draw about in the last lesson. As a partner, your job is to listen carefully and express empathy. That means really trying to understand the thoughts and feelings of others, and show that we care about them. Examples of this include nodding, facing the speaker, making eye-contact, asking thoughtful follow-up questions, and asking about your partner’s feelings. After two minutes, partners will switch who is talking and who is listening for the next two minutes. At the end of this exercise, each one of you will be responsible for telling the whole class what you learned about your partner, so be sure to listen carefully to one another. You can ask your partner questions or take notes to help you remember.”*

**MCC Tip:** Adjust the timing for your students if you believe two minutes is too long.

Take a minute to define the term empathy if your class is not familiar with the term.

**Empathy:** the way we connect to others by trying to understand and feel what they are going through and care for them as people.

**MCC Tip:** This is a good place to pause and reference the classroom norms ([Appendix 1](#)). Encourage students to think about which norms are especially important to keep in mind during the activity.

Have students sit in pairs, pass out student papers from the last lesson, and make sure each group has decided who will start speaking first. Begin the activity once everyone has had a chance to quickly review their sheet. Time the activity for the students, indicating when to switch partners. Allow some time before switching in case partners want to write anything down to help them remember what the speaker said. Once both partners have spoken and taken notes, have the class stand or sit in a circle and report out what their partner told them one by one (if you are limited on time, you can ask for volunteers instead of having everyone share). Ask students to share what their partner told them and if they learned something new about their classmate. You can finish the exercise by asking students: “How did you listen differently knowing you were going to share your partner’s work with the class?”

**MCC Tip:** You know your class best. It can be helpful to set pairs that you believe may work well together before the lesson. It is important to pair students who don’t know each other well for this exercise so they can focus on learning about someone new.

Multiple seated discussions can be long and tiresome for some students. Consider including a movement break within the lesson, perhaps after students complete the “Echoing a Friend” activity and before they sit as a whole group to discuss the exercise. You can repeat the “Line Game” from lesson one, using the same or new prompts for 4-5 minutes ([Appendix 2](#)).

## Closing (1 minute)

Close the lesson by telling students that you will continue to practice different ways to learn about the identities in their community and classroom next week, and tell the class when you think the following lesson will take place.

# Lesson 3: Interviewing Skills (30-35 minutes)

## Interview vs. Chit-Chats (10-12 minutes)

To begin today's lesson, introduce the new topic by saying something like, "Today we will learn a new way to get to know other people in school. Like our "Echoing a Friend" activity from Lesson 2, we will be paired with different students and interview them to learn about their lives and who they are." Write and share the following definition.

An **interview** is a meeting or conversation where one person asks questions and the other person answers. Interviews are often between two people to learn information about the person being interviewed.

Ask, "When have you seen interviews? What do they sound like and look like? What makes an interview different from a chit-chat with a friend?" As students answer, build a venn-diagram outlining the similarities and differences between the two types of conversations; an interview and a chit-chat (see [Appendix 3](#)). Prompt students with questions like:

- Who speaks more in an interview?
- What is the purpose of an interview? What is the purpose of a chit-chat?
- What is your body language like in either scenario?
- When do interviews happen? When do chit-chats happen?

Share that all HONY stories that the class has read come from interviews. Pass out the new [HONY story](#) you've chosen to read and the Interview Steps ([Appendix 4](#)). Give students time to read both documents, either individually, in pairs, or aloud as a class. After reading, ask questions like:

- What questions do you think the interviewer was asking?
- What did you learn about the person being interviewed through the text? What did you learn through the photo?
- Why do you think they shared this story?
- How do you think the interviewer encouraged the person to share their story?
- Why do you think we never hear from or see the interviewer in these stories?



## Model interview (10 minutes)

Next, pass out the ‘My Buddy Interview’ worksheet ([Appendix 5](#)) and ask students to look over the questions as you write 2-3 questions on the board. Ask for a student (or adult) willing to be interviewed by you in front of the class. Set up two chairs in the front of the class and have the volunteer sit across from you. As a demonstration for the class, ask the volunteer the questions on the board using the interview steps above. Pause after the volunteer responds to the questions to write down key points from their response on the board. Explain to students that it is important to write down important things their partner says in the interview, so they can remember important details.

In the time remaining, ask students to add one question of their own to the bottom of their sheet. Tell them to consider what they would be curious to know about someone. If they need support, offer the following options:

- What is a place you really want to visit and why?
- What is something you are really good at?
- What is something you wish more people knew about you?

Once students have chosen a question to add, have them write it neatly at the bottom of their interview sheet and collect the sheets to be used again in Lesson 4.

**MCC Tip:** Consider adding a movement break to re-energize students before their practice interviews. Before engaging in interviews, review classroom norms ([Appendix 1](#)), and ask for volunteers to share which norms are especially important during interviews to make sure their peers are comfortable.

## Practice interviews (10-12 minutes)

Next, it’s the students’ turn to practice asking and recording interview questions. Hand out the ‘Speed Interview’ sheets ([Appendix 6](#)) and set up the classroom so there are two rows of chairs facing each other with enough seats for each student.

Explain the following directions for ‘Speed Interviews’ to the students by saying something like:

*“Now we will play a game to practice our listening and interviewing skills with partners, but instead of being assigned one partner you will have multiple different partners. First, we will all take a seat across from someone. Everyone in the row on the right will start as the interviewer and everyone in the row on the left will start as the interviewee. The interviewer will pick one question from their sheet to ask the person sitting across from them. As the partner answers, the*

*interviewers should practice listening and taking notes. If time remains, the interviewer can ask additional questions from the sheet and listen to the answers. Once the time has run out, the interviewees will shift one seat to the right and then become the interviewer. We will repeat this process, switching roles between interviewer and interviewee and shifting seats after each round.”*

Have students find seats. Ask students who are interviewers to raise their hands, and then ask interviewees to raise their hands. These are the same questions that will be part of their interview in the following lesson, so use this time to ask if anyone needs clarification. Direct students when to move seats and when to switch roles. Keep time; provide at least 1 minute per interview; conduct two to three rounds.

After the game, close the lesson by letting students know when the next lesson might take place and who they might be interviewing.

The following lesson includes pairing each student with a classmate or someone from another class or grade. If you choose the latter, plan ahead to find a buddy class, collaborate with the buddy class teacher to decide on good pairings, and coordinate locations for the interviews before Lesson 4. If that class is also doing the HOYS strategy, buddies can take turns interviewing each other.

**MCC Tip:** Even if you opt to coordinate interviews among your own class of students, think about the spacing and whether you can reserve other spaces, like the library, to ensure partners have space to conduct interviews. Pair students that don't know each other well or express strong differences from one another. If the latter, check in with those students individually in advance to see if they'd be ok interviewing one another.

## Lesson 4: Buddy Interview (25-30 minutes)

### Introduce the lesson (5 minutes)

Begin this lesson with a quick review of the three terms you learned so far, 'identity', 'empathy', 'interview'. Ask students for volunteers to remind the class what you've learned about these two words so far. Use the definitions below if needed.

- **Identity** is what is important to you and makes you who you are.
- **Empathy** is the way we connect to others by trying to understand and feel what they are going through, and care for them as people.
- An **interview** is a meeting or conversation between people to learn information about the person being interviewed.

Next, pass out students' My Buddy Interview Worksheet ([Appendix 5](#)) and explain how the final interview and buddy pairing will work. Say something like:

*"Today we have a very special lesson where we will practice our interviewing skills with [a classmate, or a buddy in a different class]. In a few minutes, we will meet with our buddies and have time to ask them questions from your worksheet. At the end of the interview you will get to draw and write about your buddy and anything that you think shows who they are. Then in the next lesson, we will get to showcase our work with our buddies and have a party to celebrate all that we have learned."*

Ask students if they have any questions, and then transition so buddies meet.

### Interviews (20-25 minutes)

If you have the time, play a quick icebreaker when your class meets with their buddy class before you explain directions/pair students. You can play a name game, "[All my Friends and Neighbors](#)", or another MCC game.

When the students get together or classes combine, call out the student pairs and have them begin. Walk around the room to check on students. Give them about 10 minutes to interview their partners and give them a 2-minute warning so they know when to start finishing up. After students finish the interviews, say a classroom 'thank you' to all of the buddies and tell everyone what you and the buddy teacher have planned for the final lesson.

## Wrap up (1 minute )

To wrap up the lesson when your students return to their desks/rooms, say something like *“I am so proud of how well everyone interviewed and listened to their partners. I hope you all learned a lot about your buddy and what makes them special. Next week we get to work on drawing and writing about our buddies so they can see all that you learned.”*

If time allows, ask some reflection questions like:

- What did it feel like to be an interviewer?
- What are some things you learned about your buddy?
- Was it hard to only listen during the interview? Did you want to talk about yourself?
- How do you think you’ll greet your buddy next time you see them?

**MCC Tip:** Think about the best way for your students to show their work to their buddy class. You can put up a gallery of the buddy worksheets they will fill out next week; have students volunteer to present their work to the entire buddy class; or throw a small party with their buddy class where students can talk to their buddies, show their work, and let their buddy keep the worksheet they completed.

# Lesson 5: Buddy Worksheets, Presentations & Party (30-40 minutes)

## Introduce the lesson (2 minutes)

Begin this lesson by telling the class the plan for the day. Say something like, “*Today we will get to show our buddies everything we learned about them. First, we will draw and write about our buddy and what we think is important and special to them and their identity. After we finish, we will hang our work on the wall in a gallery (or whatever else you have planned). Our buddy class will join us to have a little celebration so they can see the hard work you did.*”

## Worksheet (10-15 minutes)

Pass out the ‘My Buddy Interview Final Worksheet’ ([Appendix 7](#)) and have students begin. Tell the students something like, “*You can draw your buddy or anything that shows others who they are. For example, you can draw a portrait of them, their favorite hobby or their family, or even what their favorite subject is in school. After that, you’ll need to pick something from the interview to write that you think would make your buddy happy.*”

## Celebration and gallery walk (15 minutes)

If applicable, have your buddy class join you for a final celebration where buddies can see your students’ work. Do an informal, buddy gallery walk when everyone arrives, and ask your students to tell their buddy about their worksheet. Depending on what you and the buddy class teacher decide, students can give their worksheets to their buddies at the end of the lesson.

## Debrief (optional; 5-6 minutes)

If you have time, once the buddy class leaves, have students engage in a quick debrief about their experience throughout this strategy. Below are some discussion questions (focus on the bold questions if you’re short on time).

- **What was easy about this whole exercise? What was hard about it?**
- What was it like asking questions to someone you didn’t know well or at all?
- **What did you learn from these exercises?** (*Optional: Have students go around the circle and share a few words or sentences that capture their key takeaways.*)

- What did you enjoy about learning about someone and their identity?
- **How do you think the interviewee felt? How did you feel learning about them?**
- **How can people’s stories help you become more empathetic towards them, help you understand what they are going through or how they may be feeling, and help you care about them?**

## Wrap up (1 minute)

Wrap up the lesson by thanking everyone for participating, listening to others, and getting to know someone new. Say something like, *“I hope you enjoyed getting to know your classmates or school community better by learning about someone new. I am proud of how hard you all worked and I hope you continue to listen to others and get to know them deeply.”*

## Extension ideas

To extend these lessons, continue to ask students in class about identity when reading stories in class or talking about historical figures to help students think about what makes others who they are. Furthermore, students can either individually or in groups do additional rounds of interviewing with other students, school staff and faculty, or other adults in the school.

For more details on these activities and additional extension ideas, see [Humans of Your School Routines](#).

# Appendix 1: Recommended Elementary Classroom Norms and Moral Principles

1. Consider WHAT someone said, not WHO said it
2. Assume that we all mean well and are trying our best.
3. You are responsible for your actions.
4. If you leave class with questions, it's ok and it's likely.
5. Be present, continue to listen and learn
6. Avoid generalizations about people, races, ethnicities, or economic class.
7. Think about who is in the room and how what you say can affect them.
8. Remember that we are all learning together and have different strengths and knowledge.
9. Mistakes are OK. They help us learn and grow.
10. When mistakes and conflicts happen, keep them in the classroom
11. Respect each other's privacy. Share lessons from class, not people's stories. Sensitive topics that are shared in the classroom should stay in the classroom.
12. Be open to learning something new or changing your opinions and beliefs.
13. When you disagree with someone, challenge yourself to ask kind questions and listen carefully.

If someone says something that is hurtful, help them understand how they hurt you without causing shame, or speak with them privately.

14. When challenges come up, work to build a classroom community that is kind, honest, forgiving, and fair.

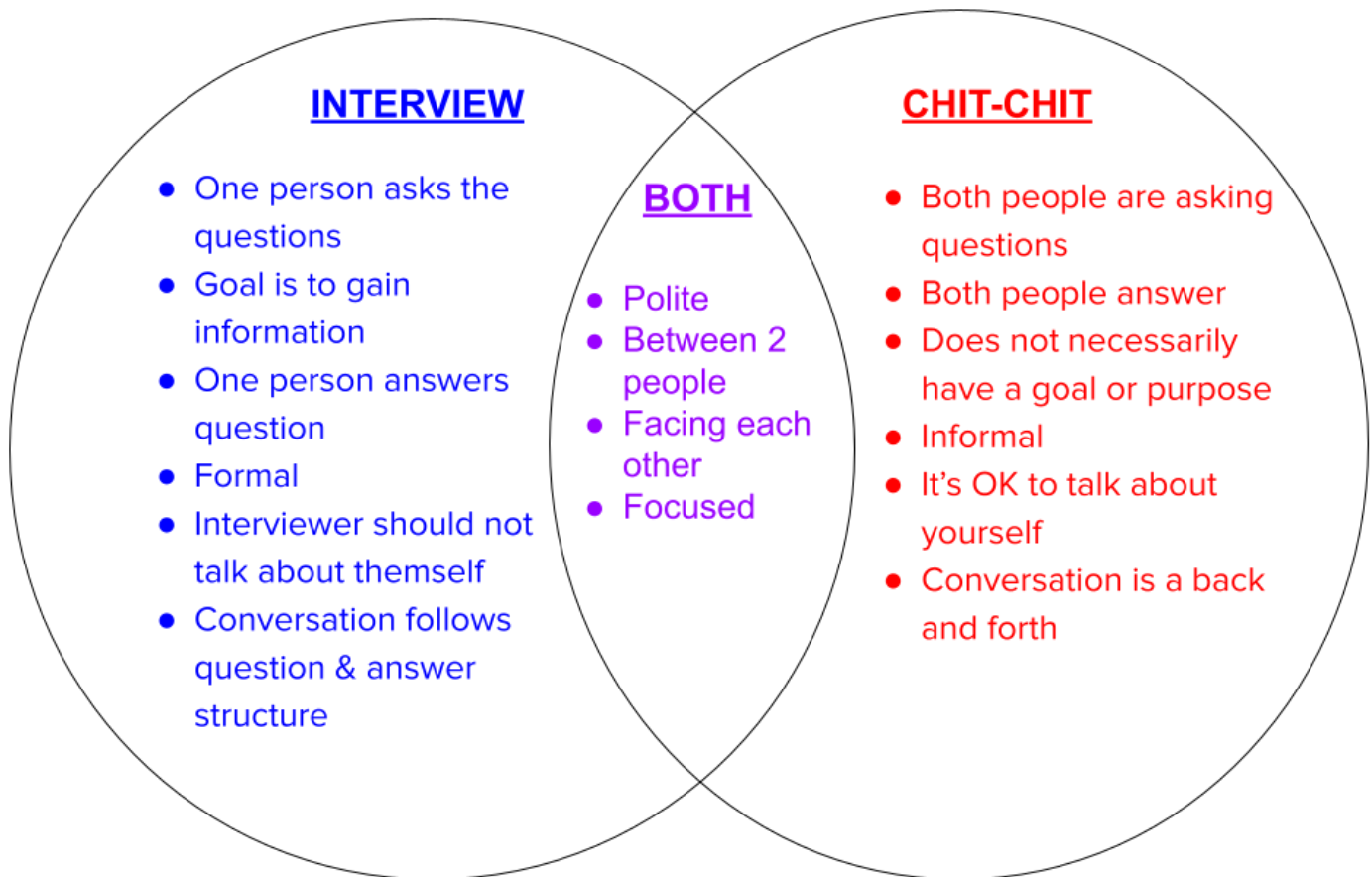
# Appendix 2: “Line Game” Sample Statements

## ***Stand on the line if....***

- You are wearing (any color)
- You are (average age of your students)
- You were born in (year that most students were born)
- You like to dance
- You like to play soccer
- You like to play outside
- You like to play inside
- You like dessert
- You like to sing
- You like food
- You like gym class
- You were born in (the state you are in)
- You have siblings
- You have a pet
- You like to read
- You like to do math
- You were born in a different country
- You like coming to school
- You have brown hair
- You have blonde hair
- You have black hair
- You are wearing glasses
- You like the winter



## Appendix 3: Interview/Chit-Chat Chart



## Appendix 4: Interview Steps

1. Have your interview materials with you and ready
2. Find a comfortable, quiet space to conduct the interview
3. Face your interview partner and keep focused body language (e.g. eye contact, nodding)
4. Say hello, introduce yourself, and ask your partner to introduce themselves
5. Tell your partner what the interview will be about
6. Ask the first question
7. Give you partner time in between questions to think and respond
8. Listen carefully by focusing on what your partner is saying, and take notes by writing the key words and examples they say
9. Express empathy to your partner by paraphrasing what was said (“you said...”), asking clarification questions (“what did you mean when...”) and acknowledging their feelings (“it seems like you feel...is that right?”)
10. At the end of the interview, thank your partner! Ask them if they’re ok with you sharing what you learned about them with your class. If you want to show a drawing of them, ask if your partner is ok with that. If they’re not ok with it, you can draw something else to represent what you learned about your partner

# Appendix 5: My Buddy Interview

## Worksheets

Directions:

- Print enough copies of interview sheets on **page 20 & 21** plus extras
- Students can use the blank space on the sheets to write any notes or provide scrap paper

My name: \_\_\_\_\_

## My Buddy Interview

What is your name?

---

How old are you?

---

Where are you from?

---

What is your favorite subject in school?

---

---

What do you do you like to do outside of school?

---

---

---

What are some hopes or dreams you have for when you grow up?

---

---

---

What are things about yourself that you like or feel proud of? What are things that you want to get better at?

---

---

---

Who is a really important person in your life and what makes them so important to you?

---

---

---

## Appendix 6: Speed Interviews

Directions:

- Print the speed interview questions on **page 23** (print for half the number of students in your class)
- Cut sheets in half before lesson
- Hand out one half sheet (one table) to each student

<b>What is your favorite subject in school?</b>	<b>What do you do outside of school?</b>
<b>What are your hobbies?</b>	<b>What do you want to be when you grow up?</b>
<b>Who or what people do you feel close to?</b>	<b>What are things about you that you like? Things you want to get better at?</b>

<b>What is your favorite subject in school?</b>	<b>What do you do outside of school?</b>
<b>What are your hobbies?</b>	<b>What do you want to be when you grow up?</b>
<b>Who or what people do you feel close to?</b>	<b>What are things about you that you like? Things you want to get better at</b>

# Appendix 7: My Buddy Interview Final Worksheet

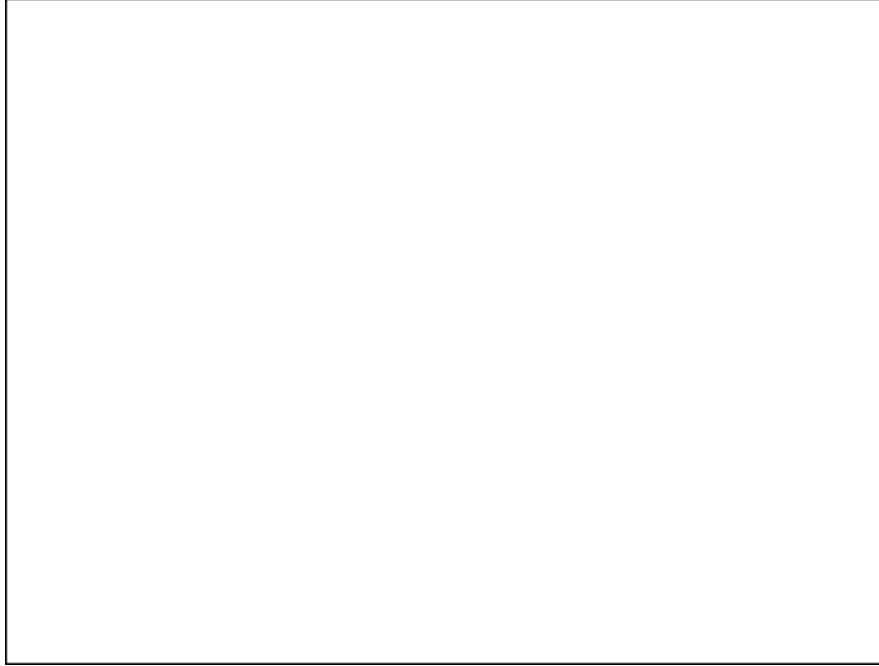
## Directions:

- Print one copy for each student plus extras of the My Buddy Interview sheet on **page 28**
- Make sure students know that they will be sharing these sheets with their class and their buddy's class so they should work carefully on them
- Give out crayons, markers, pens, and pencils

MCC Tip: Pass out pencils FIRST so students can draft what they want to draw before handing out crayons and markers.



## *My Buddy Interview*



---

*(Buddy's Name)*

---

---

---

---

---