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# Character Does Matter Program

## Gwynedd Mercy Academy Elementary School (GMAE)

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### **2026 Implementation for 6th and 7th Grade Students Program Overview**

The Character Does Matter program is a voluntary character development seminar series designed specifically for 6th and 7th grade students at Gwynedd Mercy Academy Elementary School. The program consists of five sessions, each lasting 45–60 minutes and scheduled during lunch/recess hours to minimize disruption to the academic day.

Students who choose to participate are asked to commit to all five sessions. The program is structured so that 6th and 7th graders attend together, with 7th graders taking on a mentorship role toward the 6th graders. These intergenerational dynamic fosters leadership in the older students while providing younger students with relatable peer role models.

At the conclusion of the series, participating 7th graders will “graduate” from the program and receive a formal certificate of completion that can be included in high school applications and résumés.

### **Long-Term Vision**

Our goal is to establish the Character Does Matter program as an ongoing annual offering at GMAE. This will allow students to participate for two consecutive years (6th and 7th grade), exposing them to a broader range of character traits, deeper discussions, and progressive leadership responsibilities.

### **Seminar Focus and Format**

Each session centers on specific character traits. Students will:

- Receive clear instruction and definitions of the trait
- Explore why the trait matters to individuals and communities
- Examine real-world examples of the trait in action
- Leave with practical strategies they can use to strengthen that trait in their own lives

The curriculum has been carefully curated and successfully implemented in private secondary schools, universities, and Fortune 500 companies.

### **Student Workload**

Outside-of-session commitments are intentionally minimal:

- Light journaling (Character Journal provided by TMF)
- Optional participation in a Service Project
- For 7th graders only: creation of a simple tri-fold display board for the closing ceremony



**Program Schedule (Five Sessions)**

		<h2>CDM : Course Overview</h2>
<p><b>Session 1- 3 FEB2026:</b></p>	<p><b>Introduction to Character</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is Character?</li> <li>- How do we strengthen it?</li> <li>- Why Does It Matter?</li> <li>- WIFM?</li> <li>- Start your Character Journal.</li> </ul>	<p><u>WORKLOAD SUMMARY</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Five One-Hour Mentorship Sessions</li> <li>✓ Weekly 5-min Character Journal Entries</li> <li>✓ Group Service Project Challenge</li> <li>✓ Graduation Board</li> </ul>
<p><b>Session 2- 3 MAR2026:</b></p>	<p><b>SelfAwareness &amp; SelfRegulation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is it?</li> <li>- Why does it matter?</li> <li>- How can you strengthen it?</li> <li>- Service Project Challenge.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Session 3- 31 MAR2026:</b></p>	<p><b>Gratitude &amp; Kindness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is it?</li> <li>- Why does it matter?</li> <li>- How can you strengthen it?</li> <li>- Demonstrate &amp; Report Back.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Session 4- 14 APR2026 :</b></p>	<p><b>Moral Courage &amp; Integrity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is it?</li> <li>- Why does it matter?</li> <li>- How can you strengthen it?</li> <li>- Charettes Exercise.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Session 5- 12 MAY2026 :</b></p>	<p><b>Service &amp; Graduation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is it?</li> <li>- Why does it matter?</li> <li>- How can you strengthen it?</li> <li>- Graduation &amp; Presentation / Awards</li> </ul>	
<p>CHARACTER DOES MATTER POWERED BY  FREEDOM</p>		

**Program Mentor**

The Character Does Matter seminars at GMAE will be led by LtCol Joseph Fay, USMCR, a certified Travis Manion Foundation (TMF) Character Development Mentor. LtCol Fay is a Blue Bell, PA resident who attended the United States Naval Academy. In 2003 he graduated from Navy and was commissioned as a 2ndLt in the United States Marine Corps. Joseph transferred his service to the Reserve Marine Corps in 2009 and has continued to serve as a reservist ever since. Joseph received training at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, and at the NATO Training Command in Oberammergau, Germany. He also received his MBA from Penn State Smeal School of Business.

Since 2011, Joseph has provided character instruction to a broad range of audiences, including secondary school students across the region; ROTC cadets at the University of Pennsylvania, Villanova University, and Drexel University; and United States Naval Academy plebe classes, where he has delivered introductory character instruction during Plebe Summer annually since 2018. He has also worked with several executive leadership teams, including the C-suite at Casper Mattress. In addition to his professional experience, Joseph is a GMAE parent with two daughters currently enrolled: Skyla, in Pre-K 4, and Sienna, in sixth grade.

**Enrollment**

Participation is voluntary and open to all interested 6th and 7th grade students. Students should plan to attend all five sessions. For questions or to express interest, please complete the link provided to 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade parents.