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Holmes High School Builds on Career and Character

Covington, Kentucky: November 16, 2012 – [Holmes High School](#) students in Covington, Kentucky are discovering their top strengths through an online survey, Values in Action (VIA). [The VIA survey](#) is a character strength assessment for youth and adults, focusing on people’s strengths rather than their flaws. The survey was created by the [VIA Institute on Character](#), a non-profit organization that systematically explores what is best about human beings. The [VIA Institute on Character](#) works with researchers around the world to create and utilize the VIA Classification of Strengths and the VIA Inventory of Strengths ([VIA survey](#)) as the backbone of the science of positive psychology.

All sophomore career focus introduction courses at [Holmes High School](#) are taking the [online survey](#) which explores and ranks 24 different character strengths within six categories. After taking the high school version of the [VIA survey](#), students receive a detailed listing of their top five strengths (core strengths). Last year’s results determined love, honesty, gratitude, hope and appreciation of beauty and excellence as top strengths among high school students surveyed at Holmes with 35% of students surveyed learning one of those aforementioned strengths is their “top strength.” Only 8% of students surveyed found prudence to be among their core strengths.



Above: Students participate in a reflection activity to build leadership, teamwork, creativity, and perseverance after taking the Values in Action survey through their career

Half of this year's sophomore students have already completed the [VIA survey](#), with three of the strengths (love, hope, and gratitude) reappearing on the top five list from last year's sophomore class. Added to the strengths of this year's sophomores are humor and spirituality. Of the students who have completed the survey this year thus far, 43% found love, hope, gratitude, humor, or spirituality to be their top strength.

Taking the survey in a career-related cluster class, students relate their character strengths to their chosen career and/or career field. One Holmes comments on her top character strength of fairness: *"As a future social worker, I believe in social justice and working to help all people reach their goals. I believe having fairness as my top strength will be a great advantage for me in my career."* Students complete reflection activities after completing and reviewing their strengths. Some activities include silent group exercises to build leadership, teamwork, creativity, and perseverance. Others focus on the core strengths of each individual student. Some students study mind maps (a graphical way to represent ideas and concepts) related to their top character strengths and work in groups of like-top strength students to create their own core character strength mind map.

Ashley McClure, employed by [Children, Inc.](#) through the [Youth Engagement Zone](#) (YEZ) grant, is at Holmes High School full time where she works with students and faculty. With character education a component of the YEZ grant, McClure works with teachers to administer the VIA survey in the career introduction courses at Holmes High School. Sixth graders at Holmes Middle School also complete the VIA survey. Results are collected and calculated by McClure to compare individual (e.g. John Doe), course (e.g. Introduction to Information Technologies), career pathway (e.g. Information Technologies), school year (e.g. sophomore class), and school (e.g. Holmes High School) results. Individual and course results are documented and sent to teachers for future reference. McClure also provides introduction and/or reflection activities for teachers and students.

If you would like more information about the [VIA survey](#) or would like to discover your core character strengths, visit www.viacharacter.org.

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