Okay, maybe not 1000 words, but this 3-step lesson for character analysis has generated close to 100 adjectives in exercises with students and teachers, grades 5-8.

With the CALIS Expansion Initiative, two Dornsife students modeled “virtues clusters” — an analytical tool that frames 31 virtues. Students use the frame as a launch pad to develop language arts skills (e.g., precision of language, nuance). Going further, they compare their perspectives and literally experience the wide scope of virtues we must practice to overcome life’s challenges.

In Step 1, 5th grade students at 32nd St/USC Magnet record their first impressions of Ida Cortez, a 5th grader with dyslexia who shares her struggle with learning to read.

Step 1: Students record their first impressions of Ida Cortez.

Step 2: In this instance—Students refer to the text and determine traits that fit the moment.

Step 3: The class creates a Portrait Gallery, comparing their top 5 traits in rank order.

As a standard practice to process the session, students pass the mic. Each pair shares their reasoning and evidence for their top ranked virtue.

For more info or to join the CALIS Expansion Initiative, contact calis@dornsife.usc.edu

CALIS service-learning outreach expands to 5th grade!

A First Impression Paints a Thousand Words?

In March 2023, the virtue series connects values, rights, and responsibilities.