

**In Character Strengths and Virtues:** A Handbook and Classification (Oxford University Press, 2004), positive psychologists Christopher Peterson and **Martin Seligman** identified the most commonly accepted strengths of character. Here are seven strengths that fit well with any PBL project:

**Creativity.** The ability to produce ideas or behaviors that are recognizably original is closely tied to innovation: the ideas must be adaptable and useful to oneself or others. *The PBL solution? Use the breakthrough rubric for creativity.*

**Curiosity.** Curiosity is an intrinsic desire for experience and knowledge, plus an active pursuit of challenging activities. *The PBL solution? Create a challenging project focused on an engaging Driving Question.*

**Open-mindedness.** A person who possesses this strength willingly searches for evidence against favored beliefs, plans, or goals and weighs such evidence when it is available. *The PBL solution? A good Driving Question requires problem solving and critical thinking—the hallmarks of open-mindedness.*

**Persistence.** Persistence is the voluntary continuation of a goal-directed activity in spite of obstacles, difficulties, or discouragement. Nothing defines a good learner more than this strength. *The PBL solution? Use a work ethic rubric and have students keep journals on their ability to work through difficult challenges.*

**Citizenship.** Citizenship includes social responsibility, loyalty, and teamwork. Students who learn citizenship feel a sense of obligation that includes the self but extends beyond their own self-interest. *The PBL solution? The collaborative environment of PBL offers numerous opportunities for students to reflect on their character, measure their growth as individuals, and exhibit their character in relationship to others.*

**Empathy and kindness.** An empathetic person appreciates others, regardless of background, culture, gender, or similar reasons for bias. The larger strength is the ability to love and feel compassion. *The PBL solution?*



*Learning empathy and kindness begins with listening to others attentively, using respectful language, and supporting one another. When students work in focused teams in PBL, these attributes become evident and can be measured.*

**Hope.** This strength encompasses optimism and future-mindedness. Hope enables confidence, goal-directed actions, and high expectations. *The PBL solution? Design projects that matter and help students solve important challenges while they hone their skills. When reflecting on projects at the end, talk about the future. What problem do we tackle next?*

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## **Focus on Quality**

### **Build Collective Knowledge through Collaboration**

1. Prepare the Teams
2. Insist on Norms
3. Empower Students to Coach One Another
4. Challenge the Teams
5. Value Beautiful Work

