AS OUR FORAY INTO ONLINE LEARNING DEMONSTRATED THIS PAST SPRING, ensuring that students can take part in this learning means that we must provide more than just devices and wifi. None of us is privy to all of the factors that contribute to each student joining or not joining online learning. However, last spring, many teachers noted that students who did show up online had strong bonds with their class—bonds from a community that had been fostered in the preceding months. It was the desire for classmates to stay connected that moved their learning forward. Developing and maintaining strong relationships between students and teachers will be critical this year since the classroom environment will likely be shifting and unpredictable. One activity for building community that can be adapted to either an in-person or online environment is the Sketchnote ID.

Before asking students to make and share Sketchnote ID’s—a student’s visual representation of how students define themselves—let them know that their IDs will be publicly shared. In this time of social distancing and remote learning, you might have your students make their IDs by hand on paper, or you might let them use digital tools, incorporating digital images. On sharing day, start by displaying your own ID, inviting questions from your students. Once the rhythm of the interviewing and answering is clear, answer any question and then move students into pairs.

If students are meeting physically but sitting six feet apart, using “six foot voices” might get pretty loud with noise also seeping through the walls to nearby classrooms. Therefore, you might think about how students could communicate both electronically and physically. Physically, they can hold their ID’s up for their partner to view and pairs can enjoy each other’s expressions and physical cues while the actual interviews take place using a chat platform. After class, hang the IDs in your classroom.

If students are connecting online from home, post all of the IDs in a place where the students can access them. Then, invite partners to interview each other via video chat (utilizing breakout rooms) or written conversation (via Google Docs or a class chat platform). After the interview, ask students to post two or three sentences that summarize something they learned about their partner during the interview.

All my best,

Nancy
Illustrate Student Interests with Sketchnote IDs

**Immediate Result:** Sketchnote IDs offer yet another avenue for your students to get to know one another. Anything students draw is fine, and for those who are reluctant to think in doodles and images, this activity gives them a safe way to experiment with this form of communication.

**Long-Term Result:** The kinds of conversations that sketchnote IDs spark support a genuinely collaborative classroom. Sketchnote IDs also serve as another personal interest inventory that might offer ideas for students as they look for writing or inquiry inspiration. Finally, as students become familiar and comfortable with sketchnoting, this visual organization technique can be applied to most academic note-taking tasks.

Dan Weinstein, an English teacher at Great Neck South High School on Long Island, aims to have his students think creatively and visually early in the school year as they create student IDs that rely on a combination of words, images, and vivid color. Dan begins by handing out extra-large (5×8-inch) index cards, explaining, “The idea here is for you to mind map your passions, activities, hobbies, and anything else that you really love.” Dan shows students numerous examples from previous students, encourages them to get started, and gives them workshop time for some first-draft brainstorming and sketching in their notebooks before they commit to a final draft on the note card. Dan asks students to submit their final versions, which are often quite highly designed, a few days later (see Figures 3.11, 3.12, and 3.13). Here’s how Dan concludes this assignment:

*When my students all have their ID cards ready, I lead them in a whip around the room. Each and every student explains a bit about the topics on their cards,*
which almost always display effort and wonderful art from nonartists. Then students move into smaller groups to talk about their interests in more detail.

I hold these index cards in my hands in class during the first few weeks of school and use them to get to know the students. Once I have the names memorized, I turn them into a bulletin board that looks awesome and inspires many compliments. In the spring, students add them to their portfolios.

Figure 3.11  In his sketchnote ID, Connor decided to focus on four aspects of his life: social media, sports, food, and Netflix.

Figure 3.12  Gianna’s sketchnote ID organizes her ideas in a different way. She displays many interests and favorites; some are explained with words and images, while others are represented with image alone.

Figure 3.13  Sketchnote IDs nurture a natural curiosity in one’s classmates because the images grab attention and make a viewer want to start asking questions. The details in the IDs offer numerous openings for student interviewing (discussed in Help Kids Get to Know One Another Even Better earlier in this chapter).