



USE WITH:
Whole class



GRADE LEVEL:
Upper elementary, middle school, or high school



CONTEXT:
Remote friendly

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Identify Your Sparks

Tap into student sparks to help expand their possibilities.

Created by [Search Institute](#)

Description:

Build awareness of interests and passions within the classroom by engaging students in an interactive activity to identify their deep interests, talents, or activities they love—their sparks.

Prep time needed:
5 minutes

Est. time to complete:
30 minutes

Steps:

1. Communicate that today students will be exploring their sparks. Share that sparks are passions and interests. Communicate to students that every spark is unique and that students should feel welcome to write or draw anything that they would like.
2. Let students know you'll be asking them to reflect on, or think about, some questions independently, or by themselves. Communicate that they can write or draw as they answer each of the questions you share. After each of the following questions, pause for a few moments to give students time to think and write before moving on to the next question:
 - What are some things you are really interested in?
 - What is an activity you are really good at?
 - If you woke up one morning and were told you could do one activity for as long as you wanted, what activity would you choose?
 - When in your life do you feel happiest? What are you doing at those times?

- Are there times when you lose track of time because you like the activity you are doing so much? What is that activity?
3. Explain, "What you just did was an exercise to start identifying your own sparks. Sparks are interests or passions that give people great enjoyment and often a sense of purpose. They can be sports, music, dance, art, technology, reading, caring for others, math, science, animals, and much more." Share some of your own sparks with students as examples.
 4. Ask students to now look at the answers on their papers and circle the things that they think are their sparks. Share with students that it can take time to identify, or figure out, their sparks. Communicate that it is okay not to be sure about their spark(s) and that sometimes what they consider an interest or hobby often turns into a spark over time. Be sure to walk around and ask anyone if they need help identifying their sparks, or if they are feeling stuck.
 5. Ask students to choose one of their sparks. Without saying anything or letting others see, they should write that spark on a sticky note or half sheet. Tell them to try to write in plain handwriting so that other people won't be able to guess who wrote it by the handwriting. Tell them that they will be sharing their spark through a gallery walk.
 6. Collect the sticky notes (make sure to mix them up) and put them up throughout the class room.
 7. Ask students to move around the room and read the sparks. When they have had a chance to read all of the notes, come back together as a full group.
 8. Ask the full group these reflection questions:
 - Did you find anyone else in the group who had a spark in common with you (even if it's not the one you wrote down)?
 - What is a spark you read as you walked around the classroom that surprised you or caught your attention?
 - Were there any sparks you have had never heard of? If so, what were they?
 9. Communicate that you look forward to learning more about each students' spark(s) over time and that sparks may be some of what brings them joy in their lives.

Tips for Educators:

- Provide a sticky note to each student for easier posting of sparks on the wall. You can also use tape and a half sheet of paper, or lay the sparks all down on tables or on the floor.
- This is a good precursor activity to the “Share Sparks” classroom activity.
- Read the room to determine the length of each pause between questions. At first students may have very little to write or say. They may become more interested as the questions proceed and may need more time to reflect. The reverse might also be true.



Inspired by:

1. Scales, P. C. (2017). High-quality OST activities and programs: Using the RISE approach (relationships, interests and sparks, and empowerment) to promote thriving in youth and their settings. In H. J. Malone & T. Donahue (Eds.), *The growing out-of-school time field: Past, present, and future* (pp. 25-46). Information Age Publishing.