



USE WITH:
Whole class



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



CONTEXT:
Remote friendly with adaptation

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Explore Interests by Sharing Sparks

Build a classroom community that nurtures students' interests and talents.

Created by [Search Institute](#)

Description:

Students will learn about the sparks, or interests, of their classmates. Sharing interests can help create a sense of community and allow students to see their strengths and those of their peers.

Prep time needed:
30 minutes

Est. time to complete:
30 minutes

Steps:

1. If students have not previously been introduced to the idea of sparks, explain that sparks are talents, deep interests, or activities that people really enjoy doing and that make their lives more meaningful. If you have not done so already, share your spark with the group.
2. Begin by giving each student a blank sticky note or half sheet of blank paper.
3. Have each student write or draw one of their sparks on the sticky note. Alternatively, provide the option to type and print out their sparks. Tell students not to write their names on the sticky note and to write in plain handwriting that will make it difficult for their friends to know who wrote on the slip of paper.
4. After everyone has completed the task, collect the sticky notes and affix them to a wall. Leave enough space between each note for the students to read what is written on them without too much crowding.

5. Ask students to read the following questions (write these on a board or screen before the start of the activity): Which spark besides your own would you enjoy doing the most? Which spark surprises you the most? Which spark do you think would be most difficult to do?
6. Ask students to move around the room and read the sparks written on the notes. Tell them that as they read the notes, they should think about how to answer the three posted questions.
7. After students have had a chance to read all of the notes, come back together as a full group and ask some or all of the students to share their answers to the questions you posted.
8. Discuss the following questions: How does knowing something new about each other affect how we relate to each other? Who are some people who have helped you develop your spark? What did they do? What are some ways we can learn more about each other's sparks in the weeks and months ahead? How can we support each other in cultivating our sparks?

Tips for Educators:

- Small sheets of paper and tape will work if sticky notes are not available.
- For students who may need more time, consider offering the opportunity to write or draw their spark ahead of time.
- Consider how to provide reading support for students (ex: read aloud, reading with a partner).

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.