

Community Building Activities

Early Elementary

Tell Me More...

Goals:

- To show how important it is to bring each learner's voice into the classroom, and to show that each voice is important. Without our partners, we do not have a full story.
- To remind students that we bring our entire selves to a lesson, an important PoP principle.
- To practice the skills of listening, articulating, and following group norms.

Steps:

Step 1: “Today we are going to play a game together! The only way the game can work is if everyone listens to each other really, really carefully. We are going to be writing a story ALL together! It can be about ANYTHING we want! The trick is that each of us will only write ONE sentence. After you share your sentence, the person next to you will write the next sentence!”

Step 2: Ask students for topics to write about. Have a list of three topics in your mind that you can interject if students are having difficulty generating a topic.

“Who wants to share a topic that we can write about? Think about what we have been learning about together—we can write about space, dinosaurs, Africa—and our story can be silly, it doesn’t have to be true!”

Step 3: Write topic ideas down on the board and choose one to write about.

Step 4: Each student should write one sentence of the group story. The teacher should start the story to give it a solid foundation. Example: Once upon a time, Jenn’s 5–7 students went on a mission to the moon!

As the students are sharing their sentences, write each sentence on chart paper or record them in a Google Doc and project them. If students are not yet readers, make sure to add illustrations. This can be done in Google Docs or slides by adding images as students are thinking of their next sentence. Next to each child’s sentence you should write the author's name in parentheses.

Step 5: Read the entire story aloud!

Step 6: Reflection

Allow students to share their favorite part of the story.

“Wow, what an amazing story! We each wrote one sentence and together we wrote a whole story. Each sentence on its own was good, but it took all of us working together to make something great! I am so proud of how well you listened to each other and continued our story together.”

Notes for teacher:

- This is a slightly longer warm-up, but a good one to establish active listening at the beginning of the year. It is also good to come back to this activity later in the year to show students how much better they have become at listening.
- If a student tries to share a sentence that does not at all go with the story, try to reframe the sentence to have it make sense.
- Make sure at the end of the lesson to reinforce the importance of EVERYONE contributing to the story. You can do this by having students offer up compliments to each other (this can be heavily teacher-led) and reiterating the fact that without every student sharing their words, and without listening to each other, we would have only sentences, no story.

“I can learn from my peers”

Goals:

- To show your students that they can learn from their peers and not just a teacher, reinforcing the PoP stance of “I have something to learn and something to teach.”
- To help students feel empowered and encourage kids who can be shy to share in a group.

This lesson can be done over the course of a week, with just a few students sharing each time.

Prepare before lesson:

- An anchor chart that says, “I can learn from my peers—not only from a teacher or an expert.”
- Tell the students to think of something they know a lot about (books, tv, shows, movies, Pokémon cards, soccer, gymnastics, art) and let them know that they are going to be teaching about that thing to their friends in the classroom.

Steps:

Step 1: Framing

“Today, we are going to see that everyone in this room has something to teach us! We can learn a lot from looking in a book, or reading a text with our havruta, BUT we can also learn a lot from each other! There are some things that ONLY your friends can teach you, not even your teachers! Everyone has already thought of something that they are really good at. Who wants to teach us something first?”

Step 2: Allow 3-4 students (can be more or fewer depending on how many kids are in a class and how much time you have) to share.

Step 3: After each student shares, say “Thank you _____. Who can tell me something they learned from listening to _____? See how much we can learn from the friends in our class! It is amazing.”



Step 4: Repeat steps 2 & 3 until all students have had the opportunity to share.

Step 5: Wrap-Up

“Wow! We just learned so much from each other. We don’t always need a book or a text to learn; sometimes we can learn from our friends. Great work today!”

Notes for teacher:

- Make sure to prepare students ahead of time that they will be sharing something they know a lot about. Tell them it can be anything!
- Give each student about one minute to share, otherwise it can drag on and on.

