

Portraits of a Learning Partner

**And God created humankind in the Divine
image, creating it in the image of God...**

—Genesis 1:27

This activity can be adapted for all ages from early childhood on up depending on the sophistication of the prompts and materials. It works well for young children who may need to do their thinking and sharing through drawing and images, and many older learners enjoy it too. This activity helps students to “show up” and articulate their strengths. It prompts students to think about what makes them unique and also what can be challenging and to connect with other students around these areas. It also helps them consider how they can help their peers and the important role they play in doing so. It highlights the PoP principle that each individual makes a unique contribution because we all were created in the image of God. It also highlights that we all have something to learn and we all have something to teach.

Goals and purpose:

- Students should begin to articulate some of their own strengths and challenges as a learning partner, and they should learn more about those of their classmates.
- Students should begin to articulate some ways that they can be helpful to their peers in contributing to their learning and how their peers can be helpful to them.

Materials:

- In advance, the teacher should make a sample completed portrait to show.
- Students will need a blank piece of paper and a marker.
- You will want to provide students with a protocol to guide their conversation. See below.

Introduce the Activity:

“It is important to know yourself as a learner, and it’s fun to get to know your partner! Follow these simple steps so that we can all get to know more about you as a learner and a partner. You will be sharing your answers with a havruta.

Take out a blank page and a marker. Turn your page so it is wide (landscape). On the left half of the page, draw a stick figure of a person.

On the right half, you are going to write some words about yourself as I give you prompts for different parts of the body. For example, I’ll start with the head and ask you to write something that you like to think about. For me, it might be reading, or my children. I’ll give you a minute or so for each step. Ready? Any clarifying questions?”

After answering questions, go through each step, giving them a minute or so to think and write, saying:

- 1 Next to the head, write or draw something that you like to think about.
- 2 Put an arrow to the heart and write or draw about something that you love.

- 3 On or near the arms, write or draw about some strengths that you have. Write one strength that you have in school and one that is out of school.
- 4 Put an arrow to the knees and write or draw something that is challenging for you.
- 5 Next to the feet, write or draw two goals that you have for yourself. One in school; one outside of school.¹

After you've worked through the whole body, it will be time to pair students into havruta partnerships in order to share their portraits and get to know one another as partners.

Introduce Havruta Pair Share:

"I'm going to put you in pairs. You'll be in havruta for about ten minutes [or however long the teacher decides, see notes]. Together, you will have a discussion about your self-portraits. You can look up here to remind you what to talk about (create an anchor chart or post on the smart board) that will remind you what to talk about. You'll want to share your portraits with each other."

Protocol

- 1 First, decide who will be Partner A and who will be Partner B.
- 2 Partner A will share three things about their portrait.
- 3 Then Partner B should point out two things that they notice in Partner A's portrait and ask a question about the portrait.
- 4 Then you'll switch: Partner B will share and Partner A will listen, notice, and ask a question.
- 5 Next, you will work together to identify something you have in common and something you each have that is different. Think about whether your differences could complement one another.
- 6 Lastly, you will think about what you each can help the other with based on what you portrayed in your portraits.

After students have spent 5-10 minutes going through this together, bring them back together to discuss what they wrote.

¹ Jenn Laytin, adapted from the work of Pedagogy of Partnership.

Wrap-up

"I hope you all had good discussions! I loved getting to drop in and hearing a bit of your conversations. I heard some really thoughtful observations and noticings. Now, I'd like to ask a couple of volunteers to share some thoughts."

- Did anyone discover anything about themselves as learners from doing this self-portrait and sharing it with their partner?
- Did anyone learn something new about their classmate?
- Can we hear some examples of how different partnerships discovered how the partners can help one another in havruta partnerships?

Make sure to appreciate how students were able to reflect about themselves, share these reflections with others, and figure out how they may help one another in learning.

Consider closing with language like:

We all have different strengths and challenges, and we are all here to learn and grow and help one another do this. As we practice learning in havruta partnership, we will learn more tools to support us in doing this.

Notes for the teacher:

- Do the activity yourself ahead of time, both to get comfortable with the task and to have a sample to show your students. It is a great relationship-building opportunity between you and your students to share about yourself as a learning partner.
- Younger students and more concrete thinkers will likely move through the discussion instructions quite quickly (thus we suggest allotting five minutes or so). Older students may be able to spend more time on it. Adjust the time for your group.
- Make this activity more sophisticated for older learners by adjusting how students can create their self-portraits and represent their specific strengths, challenges, and goals. Challenge older students to create their portraits with the given criteria on their own time and come to class ready to receive the instructions about how to share them with their havruta partner.

