



September 8-15, 2023

Spark Activity Booklet

*Easy Activities and Useful Resources for Young People
to Actively Explore Their Sparks*

For Schools, Parents, Caregivers, and Youth Leaders

**Activities designed for grades 3-12
with additional suggestions for younger children.**



**Council for
Youth Development**
Bartholomew County

Prepared by
Council for Youth Development Bartholomew County
Youth Empowerment Workgroup

About CYD and the Spark Spirit Week 2023

The [Council for Youth Development](#) (CYD) is a cross-sector coalition that aligns efforts to advance a culture of positive youth development in Bartholomew County. Each year, CYD and partner organizations host free opportunities around 'Ignite Your Spark' to support youth mental health and family well-being. In line with CYD's efforts to implement the Search Institute's Developmental Assets® and Developmental Relationships framework, we believe that *Spark Spirit Week* contributes to building a community where every young person in Bartholomew County is healthy, safe, educated, engaged, and supported.

Spark Spirit Week is a week-long celebration (September 8-15, 2023) designed to encourage our youngest Bartholomew County residents to embrace and explore their 'spark'. A spark is more than just a passing interest or a talent. It's what you're passionate about. It's your very favorite hobby, something you really love to do. It's what unleashes your energy and joy, gives your life purpose and focus, and allows you to make your own unique contribution to the world.

Why is it important for young people to know sparks?

Research from the Search Institute shows that when young people know their sparks and have adult support in nurturing them, they are *more likely to have a sense of purpose, to be socially competent, physically healthy, and to do better in school.*

Ways to Participate in Spark Spirit Week:

- Download and do activities on this Spark Activity Booklet
- Attend community partner events
- Share and inspire others on social media using #SparkSpiritWeek

Visit <https://www.cydbartholomew.org/spark-spirit-week-2023> to learn more about Spark Spirit Week

Spark Activity Booklet

Everyone has the potential to ignite their spark! We have created three easy activities for young people to creatively explore their spark. CYD has adapted the content from Search Institute's resource *Igniting Sparks- Turning Young People's Interests and Talents into Improved Life Outcomes.*

What is in this booklet?

We have designed a straightforward booklet whether you are using this with a classroom of students, a club or faith-based group, or one-on-one with a special child or teen in your life. While we recommend Activities 1-4 be completed in order, the additional pages provide guidance and resources that may be helpful to you beyond Spark Spirit Week.

- **Tips on Teaching and Talking About Sparks** p. 2
- **Activity 1: What is a Spark?** p. 3
- **Activity 2: Exploring Sparks** p. 4
- **Activity 3: Using Sparks to Help the Community** p. 5
- **Activity 4: Using Sparks to Help the Community - Make It Happen!** p. 6
- **Resources for Parents & Caregivers** p. 7
- **References** p. 8

Watch these great videos on Spark to learn more and get inspired

- **For Parents, Teachers, and Adult Mentors**
 - [FDxTC - Peter Benson - Sparks: How Youth Thrive.](#) (21 min)
 - [TEDxFargo - Kent Pekel - Getting Relationships Right.](#) (14 min)
- **For Young People**
 - [Search Institute - Sparks Matter: Finding Your Spark](#) (5 min)
 - [TedX: How To Find Your Spark: Hannah Alper](#) (11 min)

This handout may be reproduced for educational, noncommercial uses only. The Council for Youth Development Bartholomew County Spark Activity Booklet content has been adapted from *Igniting Sparks: Turning Young People's Interests and Talents into Improved Life Outcomes, Youth Leader Guide, Out of School Time, Grades Three through Twelve.* Copyright © 2009, 2012 by Search Institute®, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 800-888-7828, www.search-institute.org. All rights reserved. Updated 2022.

Tips on Teaching and Talking About Sparks

Create a Safe Place

In order for many people to talk about their innermost selves, their dreams, and their passions, they need to feel safe. Sharing sparks with others may feel like a big risk for some children and teens. Keep a close watch for teasing, put-downs, or other negative behaviors that could affect young people's feelings or safety.

All Sparks are Different

Remind young people that sparks are not limited to things that come easily to them or that they already know how to do. People discover their sparks at all different times in their lives, and their sparks can change over time. Children and teens can look now at current sparks and potential sparks that they might become passionate about. And they can practice and work hard at learning about the new sparks they try out.

Be their Support System

Help them understand that they can become smarter and more talented as they try new things and practice new skills. Praise them more for perseverance, willingness to try, discipline, and hard work than for their natural talents.

Be Flexible

You may want to substitute a new activity for the ones suggested here as you learn about the sparks of your young people.

Tips for Middle School & High School Students

The concepts of empowerment, fairness, and friendship can be important. In the context of sparks, you can think of these concepts in the following ways:

- **Empowerment:** Each of us, no matter what our skills, talents, interests, or backgrounds may be, can honor our uniqueness and take steps to turn our dreams into dreams-come-true— if we start small and start today.
- **Fairness:** The Golden Rule reminds us to treat others the way we would like to be treated. Fairness requires that we apply this to all—in particular, we would all like to be who we are and choose our interests and activities without having to worry about being teased or made fun of.
- **Friendship:** It's important to our own success and happiness to surround ourselves with people—both adults and peers—who are supportive of our efforts and who encourage us in exploring and developing our sparks. People who discourage us, put us down, or make fun of our sparks are not being good friends.

Importance of Relationships

The core foundation for success for young people—especially for those facing extra obstacles—is the development of strong, caring adult-student relationships.

The concept of spark provides a concrete, focused way to begin or deepen those necessary relationships that are grounded in the strengths, interests, and empowerment of the young people themselves. When young people have those relationships and they know their sparks, they are more likely to thrive.

Thriving young people are those who are not just surviving, not just getting by, but truly doing well—aware of and using their interests, talents, and abilities; achieving their goals; living up to and even beyond their potential.

According to Search Institute research, the likelihood that a young person will thrive is greatly increased when all three of the following are present in their life:

- A young person knows his, her, their sparks—special interests and activities that he, she, they are passionate about
- He, she, or they pursue those sparks and uses them to contribute to a better world
- A young person's teachers, parents, and other caring adults support, encourage, and help her, him, them to explore, name, and develop their sparks

Activity 1: What is a Spark?

A spark is more than just a passing interest or a talent. It's something you really love to do. It's what unleashes your energy and joy, gives your life purpose and focus, and allows you to make your own unique contribution to the world. Try this activity to get started to help young people learn what a spark is. Visit www.cydbartholomew.org/spark-spirit-week-2022 to learn more.

Objective

- To help young people learn what a spark is.

Guiding Questions

Some questions to ask or think about as you move through the activity.

- Does everyone have a spark?
- What might happen to people who don't explore and find their sparks?
- Do you think people who have identified their sparks are happier than people who haven't? Why?

Materials

- Video: [Sparks Matter: Finding Your Spark](#)
- PDF: [Spark Categories Handout](#)

Timeline

Suggested total time: 20–26 min

1. Definition of Spark (2 min)
2. Watch Videos (5 min)
3. Activity step 3 (7 min)
4. Activity step 4 (7 min)
5. Reflection (5 min)

Other Resources

Full list of resources on page 7.

- Book: [I Could Do Anything If I Only Knew What It Was](#) by Barbara Sher

Activity

1. Explain what Spark is (refer to page 1 for more info).
2. Watch [Sparks Matter: Finding Your Spark](#).
3. Brainstorm pop culture references (have one ready and/or use young people's examples). Ask the young people to think about books, TV, video games, music, or movies they have enjoyed recently that have memorable characters/personalities. Ask the young people to share their favorite characters/personalities and describe their spark.
4. Share [Spark Categories Handout](#) and have young people put a star next to the spark categories that interest them.
5. Have young people share in their group or walk around and find others who have similar interests.
6. Post pictures of the youth sharing out their spark using **#SparkSpiritWeek** and tag **@cydbartholomew** on Facebook or Instagram!

Activity For Younger Children

Help young people learn what a spark is by reading stories of characters with different sparks. Here are some book suggestions:

- *The Sons of the Dragon King: a Chinese Legend* by Ed Young
- *Seeds* by George Shannon
- *Dragon doctor: the Woman Who Loved Reptiles* by Patricia Valdez.

Reflections

Simple conversation or something to write about after the activity.

- What's something you learned about yourself today?
- How can you help others find their sparks?

Keep In Mind

Some young people may struggle to know their spark. Using the categories sheet and/or culture brainstorm may help them come up with general interests they enjoy or have enjoyed in the past.

Activity 2: Exploring Sparks

A spark is more than just a passing interest or a talent. It's something you really love to do. It's what unleashes your energy and joy, gives your life purpose and focus, and allows you to make your own unique contribution to the world. Try this activity to help young people begin to see the many varieties of sparks and think about their purpose. Visit www.cydbartholomew.org/spark-spirit-week-2022 to learn more.

Objectives

- To help young people begin to see the many varieties of sparks
- To help young people begin to consider their own sparks or potential sparks

Guiding Questions

Some questions to ask or think about as you move through the activity.

- What is something you really enjoy doing – that gives you pleasure and that you almost lose track of time when you do it?
- How can we find new sparks?

Materials

Will depend on your choice.

- Video: [How to find your spark - Mark Leruste](#)
- Post-its, poster board or access to google slides or computer paper
- If collaging is an option, you may want magazines, glue/tape.

Timeline

Suggested total time: 25-35 min

1. Video (2 min)
2. Post it activity & share out (8 min) - Optional
3. Create their own spark poster/slide/collage and optional share (20+ min)
4. Reflection (5 min)

Other Resources

Full list of resources on page 7.

- Podcast: [You Are The Inspiration \(Ep 501\) - Lewis Howes](#)

Activity

1. Watch [How to find your spark - Mark Leruste](#).
2. Hand out three to five post-it notes and have young people write down five sparks of their own. They can use the [Spark Categories Handout](#) from Activity 1. If space is available, display on a wall.
3. Ask young people to share at least one spark each – this may help others think of ideas and give opportunities for relationship building.
4. All young people will then choose one out of their five sparks and create a Google Slide/poster/collage/drawing/etc. about that spark.
5. If time permits, young people can share their creations.
6. Post pictures of their Google slide/poster/collage/drawing using **#SparkSpiritWeek** and tag **@cydbartholomew** on Facebook or Instagram!

Activity For Younger Children

Ask younger children what their spark is. [Use this handout](#) to think about what makes them happy and full of joy.

Handout created and shared by Turning Point Domestic Violence Prevention Team

Reflections

Simple conversation or something to write about after the activity.

- What are ways to learn more about your spark (or potential spark)?
- Is there a spark you heard about today that you may be interested in exploring in the future?
- Who helps you the most with your spark? Or if you don't know your spark yet, who might help you get to try that potential spark?
Reference resource: [What Spark Champions Do \(PDF\)](#)

Keep In Mind:

If the young person is struggling to find their spark, consider asking them to explore something familiar as a potential spark. It doesn't matter if you are good at it or not. Also, some young people may be hesitant to share.

Activity 3: Using Sparks to Help the Community

A spark is more than just a passing interest or a talent. It's something you really love to do. It's what unleashes your energy and joy, gives your life purpose and focus, and allows you to make your own unique contribution to the world. Try this activity to point young people toward sharing and thinking about next steps on their spark with their peers, family, and community.

Visit www.cydbartholomew.org/spark-spirit-week-2022 to learn more.

Objective

- To point young people toward sharing and thinking about next steps about their spark with their peers, family, and community.

Guiding Questions

Some questions to ask or think about as you move through the activity.

- Are there ways you can help others with your spark?
- What/Who is important when trying to share your spark?

Materials

- Videos:
 - [TedTalk: Derek Sivers: How to Start a Movement](#)
 - [Giving back: Stories of individuals creating positive change in their communities](#)

Timeline

Suggested total time: 15-17 min

1. Video (5-7 mins)
2. Quick write/discussion (5 min)
3. Reflection for Day 1 (5 min)

Other Resources

Full list of resources on page 7.

- Book: [Kids Who Are Changing the World](#) by Anne Jankeliowitch

Activity

1. Watch [TedTalk: Derek Sivers: How to Start a Movement](#) and pick one video from [Giving back: Stories of individuals creating positive change in their communities](#).
2. Write or discuss who was important in the video (The 1st person? The first person to follow? Everyone?) What else is important if you are creating a movement? How does or how can the spark you chose from Activity 2 help others (in your family? School? Community? State? World?).

Activity For Younger Children

Help your children get to know our community by exploring Bartholomew County. [Download the 'Did you know' resource](#) for ages 0-8 that provides caregivers affordable local activities to do with children that can build Developmental Assets®. Information is organized by season and year round. Available in English and Spanish.

Reflections

Simple conversation or something to write about after the activity.

- What opportunities are there available in our community to engage with, build and/or express such spark? Do you see a need for more? If so, what, where, how often, with/for whom, why?
- Go Ahead and Dream! What additional actions can you take to develop your spark?

Keep In Mind:

Help young people take the next step. Encourage them to pursue more information about their spark by connecting the child with other safe and responsible adults, especially those who are experienced in the young person's areas of interest.

Activity 4: Using Sparks to Help the Community – Make It Happen!

A spark is more than just a passing interest or a talent. It's something you really love to do. It's what unleashes your energy and joy, gives your life purpose and focus, and allows you to make your own unique contribution to the world. Try this activity to go beyond discussing and planning. Help young people take action and activate their power. Visit www.cydbartholomew.org/spark-spirit-week-2022 to learn more.

Objective

- To go beyond discussing and planning about how their sparks can help the community.
- To help young people consider ways to activate their power.

Guiding Questions

Some questions to ask or think about as you move through the activity.

- Are there ways you can help others with your spark?
- What/Who is important when trying to share your spark?

Materials

- Video: [Voices of Young People: Dhruv P. from America's Promise](#)
- Supplies to create advertisement: poster paper/Google Slides/phone

Timeline

Suggested total time: 23-38 min

1. Video (3 mins)
2. Create advertisement (15-30 min)
3. Reflection for Day 1 (5 min)

Resources:

Full list of resources on page 7.

- Mini-grants: [America's Promise - Power of Youth Challenge](#)
- Articles: Local stories about Bartholomew County youth in action:
 - [A heart for the hurting: 11-year-old's compassion feeds his effort to provide food and more for the struggling](#)
 - [Youngster donates hundreds of books to Book Express](#)

Activity

1. Watch [Voices of Young People: Dhruv P. from America's Promise](#)
2. Looking back on this week's spark ideas, choose a few that your class, family, or individual youth may be interested in turning into action.
3. As groups in classrooms or with individuals, try to "sell" your spark idea. What benefits are there? Who can help? Where can it be done? With whom? When?
4. Depending on time, have young people create a quick advertisement poster/slide/video to interest others in trying out their spark.
3. Share your projects using **#SparkSpiritWeek** and tag **@cydbartholomew** on Facebook or Instagram!

Activity For Younger Children

Watch a very special reading of "[Last Stop On Market Street](#)" written by Matt De La Peña. Use this story as a way to open the conversation with kids about how we can help others. After reading the book, draw pictures about how we can help in our daily lives. It can be simple things like being kind to a sibling or picking up toys.

Reflections

Simple conversation or something to write about after the activity.

- Do you have Spark Champion – caring adult or friend who helps you explore and develop your Spark?
- Describe your Spark Champion. Or, describe your ideas for finding one or two caring adults to support you with your Spark.
Reference resource: [Spark Champions: Look Around You! \(PDF\)](#)

Keep In Mind

This is an opportunity to highlight the importance of building leadership skills in order to activate their power. Important youth leadership skills include communicating, problem-solving, relationship-building, listening and expressing empathy.

Resources for Parents & Caregivers

Thinking About Your Own Sparks

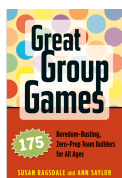
When you are helping your children explore and work on their sparks, it is helpful to be in touch with your own sparks, too. You can use these questions to guide you in some self-reflection about your own interests and passions. And if you aren't pursuing your own sparks right now, you can use these questions to help you spice up your own life with a new spark or with a recharged spark from your past.

1. When you are not working, caring for children, or doing chores at home, how do you usually spend your time?
2. If you suddenly had a free weekend, with no work, no chores, no kids to take care of, what would you love to do (besides take a nap)?
3. When you're busy with the basics of life, what are the activities you wish you had more time to do?
4. Imagine you had the time and money to try one thing you've never tried before. What would it be? Bungee jumping? Attending a dog show? Going to space camp? Trying a new sport? Taking a gourmet cooking class? Starting your own business? Learning to repair an engine or play a musical instrument? Painting a beautiful painting?
5. When you were your children's ages, what were your sparks? Can you remember?
6. Did you get support for your sparks from the caring adults in your life when you were a
7. child? What did they do that helped?
8. Do you and your children share any of the same sparks?
9. Are there any interests you had when you were younger that you'd like to do again?

Additional Parent Resources

- [Having spark conversations at home](#)
- [Supporting your children's sparks](#)
- [Want to help your children with their sparks? Here are some quick tips to get you started](#)

Our Favorite Find



Great Group Games : 175 Boredom-Busting, Zero-Prep Team Builders for All Ages

This best seller offers 175 fun games and activities that will gently disband group-busting cliques, help newcomers feel welcome, and turn your participants into friends who can count on each other.

[Click here to purchase from Search Institute Online Resource Store](#)



Great Group Games for Kids : 150 Meaningful Activities for Any Setting

This engaging collection of 150 creative, asset-based activities is especially for elementary-age participants to teach them about concepts like teamwork, integrity, self-esteem, and creativity.

[Click here to purchase from Search Institute Online Resource Store](#)

REFERENCES

- Brielmaier, K. (2010). Finding the students' spark: Missed opportunities in school engagement. *Search Institute Insights and Evidence*, 5(1): 1-13.
- Post, R. (2012). *Igniting Sparks: Connecting students' interests and talents to classroom success: Instructor guide, grades nine through twelve*. Minneapolis, MN. Search Institute Press.
- Post, R. (2012). *Igniting Sparks: Turning young people's interests and talents into improved life outcomes, youth leaders guide, out of school time, grades three through twelve*. Minneapolis, MN. Search Institute Press.
- Search Institute (2018). *Highlights from the 2018 Itasca Area Youth Voice Survey*. Retrieved from https://www.search-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2018_SPARK_Report_Friends_final.pdf.
- Step it Up 2 Thrive (2020). *Sparks Youth and Mentor. Sparks Conversation Questions*. Retrieved from <http://stepitup2thrive.org/sparks/youth-mentor/>.

RESOURCES

Council for Youth Development Bartholomew County Online Resources

- [Assets In Action - Developmental Assets Community Best Practices](#)
- [Developmental Assets Weekly Emails Archived](#)
- ["Do You Live in Bartholomew County?" - Developmental Assets Category Videos](#)
- ["Show Me You Care" - Bartholomew County Video](#)
- [Ignite Your Spark - CYD Youth Ambassador Video Series](#)

Search Institute Resources

- [Developmental Asset Building Tools and Resources](#)
- [Developmental Relationships Framework](#)
- [Handouts for Igniting Sparks curricula \(Handouts & Parent Communication\)](#)
- [Igniting Spark Curricula](#)
- [Sparks and Thriving](#)
- [Search Institute Online Resource Store](#)

Spark Resources

- [Step-It-Up-2-Thrive Resource Center](#)

SEL Resources

- [Indiana Department of Education - Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Wellness](#)
- [Indiana FSSA - DMHA Project AWARE](#)
- [The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#)

FOR ANY QUESTIONS AND INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT

- Sara Dunlap, CYD Director at saradunlap@cydbartholomew.org
- Tim Green, CYD Youth Empowerment Coordinator tim@cydbartholomew.org
- Sarah Stermer, Communications & Community Impact Manager at sarahstermer@cydbartholomew.org