

Havruta Routine: Supporting and Challenging as a Team

Pedagogy of Partnership's havruta learning routines are designed to facilitate two or more learners to engage with texts and one another as full partners in learning. Each routine provides a step-by-step guide for discussion and reinforces select partnership learning skills and attitudes.

Supporting and Challenging¹ as a Team is a havruta routine in which the learners choose or are given a text, along with a statement of interpretation, in order to explore the textual evidence that both supports and challenges that interpretation. Through this process of supporting and challenging, learners work together to seek deeper understanding of the text.

This routine demonstrates how the learning practices of Supporting and Challenging are important skills not just to win arguments but rather to engage in interpretation in an honest and accountable manner. In his commentary about *machloket l'shem shamayim*, or “argument for the sake of heaven,” Don Yitzhak Abravanel (1437–1508) explains, “that the purpose [of argument] is to bring the truth to light and to uncover the things that are concealed in the matter, which become known through the give and take of their argumentation” (Nachalat Avot on Pirkei Avot 5:16).

In this spirit, this routine positions the learners *to work together* to return to the text, notice its details, and discuss the ways in which the textual evidence supports the interpretation and then separately, how textual evidence may challenge that interpretation.

The routine further demonstrates that the practices of Supporting and Challenging are not the same as agreeing or disagreeing. This routine reinforces a partnership learning stance that one should support and challenge ideas regardless of personal opinion in order to refine one's understanding of the text and one another's ideas.

Steps of this routine may be repeated for multiple interpretations of the same text.

Learners will need:

- **A text:** a “text” may be broadly defined as a written text, image, personal story, or any rich “third thing” that lends itself to multiple interpretations.
- **A given interpretation of that text:** interpretations are claims of meaning that may read like: “*This text is about X...*” or “*This text means...*” or “*This text teaches us...*”.
- **This Havruta Routine**

¹ “Supporting and Challenging” comprise a twin set of learning practices within Pedagogy of Partnership's foundational framework, “The Six Partnership Learning Practices.” These practices also include “Listening and Articulating” and “Wondering and Focusing” (O. Kent, 2008). For more information, see [Ancient Wisdom for Modern-Day Conversation and Collaboration](#).

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Greet the Partners

- 1 Greet one another and take a minute to catch up socially.
- 2 Read aloud, listen to, or view the text. Read aloud the interpretation given for consideration.

Supporting

- 3 Individually take a moment to notice details in the text that **support** the given interpretation.
Take turns offering evidence from the text that supports the given interpretation:
In cases where there are more than two partners, make sure each person has a turn to contribute their evidence and respond to others.
- 4 Partner A points to evidence in the text that would support it. “I notice...”
Partner B should use prompts such as, “Tell me more...” or “Where in the text do you see that?” to ensure that they understand Partner A’s ideas.
- 5 Partner B contributes their own supporting evidence, building on to what Partner A has said. Partner B might say, “I want to build onto this interpretation” or “I think x (part of the text) also supports this interpretation” and cites any additional evidence.
- 6 Discuss any new thoughts, questions, or ideas, that arise from noticing the supporting evidence for the given interpretation.

Challenging

- 7 Individually take a moment to notice details in the text that **challenge** the given interpretation.
Take turns offering evidence from the text that challenges the given interpretation:
In cases where there are more than two partners, make sure each person has a turn to contribute their evidence and respond to others.
- 8 Partner B points to evidence in the text that may challenge it. “I notice...”
Partner A should use prompts such as, “Tell me more...” or “Where in the text do you see that?” to ensure that they understand Partner B’s ideas.
- 9 Partner A contributes any additional challenging evidence. “I want to build on what you said...” or “I think x (part of the text) also challenges this interpretation” and cites any additional evidence.
- 10 Together, discuss any new thoughts, questions, or ideas, that arise from noticing the challenging evidence for the given interpretation.



Reflection

- 11** Take a moment to reflect and then share your responses with your havruta.
 - a** What is a new insight or question that emerged for you about the text through the process of supporting and challenging?
 - b** What is a new insight that emerged for you about your own practice of Supporting and Challenging through this havruta routine? Was one practice easier than the other? If so, why do you think this is?

Appreciation

- 12** Share one thing you appreciated about learning with your havruta partner/s.

