



# Portraits of a Student: Analysis

## FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

For this activity, participants will read a description of a student and based on that description, they will determine whether or not the student is flourishing mathematically. After deciding, participants will be exposed to additional context about the student and will be allowed to change their initial response.

You can hand out ([Printables](#)) or display portraits on a projector one portrait at a time or all four at once (e.g. you could use this [slideshow](#)). Only show the Initial Description of each student. After participants discuss whether the student is flourishing or not, have them indicate what led them to that decision and what they would do to support each student. Then, one at a time, reveal the extra context for the student and ask if that would change their assessment and/or approach. The overall point of this activity is that teachers/coaches should not make assumptions about students due to the way they show up in class and that developing a relationship with each student can lead to better, more student-centered support.

## Portraits

**FOR FACILITATOR De'Vincent: The initial description conveys that the student is not flourishing but the additional context does not support this.**

### *Initial Description*

- De'Vincent is a student at Lincoln Middle School. He needs to perform well in his 8th-grade math class to be able to move on to high school.
- At least once a week, De'Vincent is sent to the principal's office by his math teacher and, based on his current performance, he will end the first quarter with an F.
- De'Vincent sits in the back of classes with his head down and often doesn't participate in class activities.

*What does De'Vincent need to flourish (or continue to flourish) mathematically?*

### *Additional context to be revealed after the initial analysis*

- De'Vincent has a 3.54 GPA. In his past mathematics classes, he has passed every test with at least a B.
- He likes to look for patterns and problem-solve using what he knows already rather than using steps that were given to him. This causes him to butt heads with his current math teacher because he uses strategies that are unapproved by his teacher.
- He is a delight to his other teachers, especially in language arts and social studies which are his favorite subjects. He also enjoys reading mangas and watching anime and writes very intriguing and creative essays in his language arts course.

*What does De'Vincent need to flourish (or continue to flourish) mathematically?*

**FOR FACILITATOR Saadia: The initial description conveys that the student is flourishing and the additional context supports this.**

*Initial Description*

- Saadia Mahmud is a new student at Jefferson Middle School. Her family just moved into the area from Pakistan.
- Saadia enjoys solving problems by figuring out and applying patterns. Saadia also likes the challenge of taking known information and using it to find “the unknown”.
- Based on her placement assessments, Saadia was put in an advanced mathematics class. At the end of the first quarter, Saadia had an A in the class.

*What does Saadia need to flourish (or continue to flourish) mathematically?*

*Additional context to be revealed after the initial analysis*

- Her parents are both graduates of the University of Karachi, Pakistan, and are always playing math games as a family (e.g. creating math equations out of the digits that make up the time displayed in their digital clock).
- Until now, Saadia has been educated in a public school in Pakistan where all instruction was in Urdu, and Saadia’s teacher often looks up mathematical terms and numbers in Urdu and shares what she learns when interacting with Saadia.
- Saadia’s teacher values the mathematical strategies that she learned in Pakistan and frequently calls on her to share with the rest of the class.

*What does Saadia need to flourish (or continue to flourish) mathematically?*

**FOR FACILITATOR Antwon: The initial description conveys that the student is flourishing but the additional context does not support this.**

***Initial Description***

- Antwon is a 6th-grade student, in Advanced Math.
- He actively participates in discussions, asks questions, and completes all his assignments on time.
- He is the president of his middle school math club and regularly participates in math competitions.
- He currently has an A in mathematics class and has been recommended by his teacher, after consultation with his parents, to take Math 1 next year in 7th grade.

***What does Antwon need to flourish (or continue to flourish) mathematically?***

***Additional context to be revealed after the initial analysis***

- Antwon's parents own two Chick-fil-A restaurants and contribute financially to the school.
- His mother is very active in the PTA and is a substitute teacher.
- He regularly attends math tutoring after school and has scored a 4 on the EOG.
- His current math teacher thinks he should take advanced 7th-grade mathematics next year, but his parents insist that he be placed in Math 1. Antwon does not like math and wants to be in 7th grade mathematics next year.
- Antwon has succeeded because he is good at memorizing the teacher's steps and thinks math is boring. He wants to take as little math in high school as needed.

***What does Antwon need to flourish (or continue to flourish) mathematically?***

**FOR FACILITATOR Zachary: The initial description conveys that the student is not flourishing and the additional context supports this.**

*Initial Description*

- Zachary recently enrolled at Green Valley Middle School towards the end of the first quarter and was placed into a standard math course.
- When he first enrolled, he was completing most of his assignments regularly and had a good rapport with classmates and the teacher. He also made a B+ on his first major test.
- A few weeks later, Zachary began acting out in class. He was easily distracted, quick to get angry, and would often get frustrated and act disrespectfully towards his teachers.
- By the end of the second quarter, Zachary had disengaged from class discussions, held his head on the desk during most class sessions, had multiple missing assignments, and his math grade was now a D.

*What does Zachary need to flourish (or continue to flourish) mathematically?*

*Additional context to be revealed after the initial analysis*

- Zachary is in the foster care system and is now attending his 4th school in the last 18 months.
- He has enjoyed being with his current foster parents but discovered that he will be moving soon.
- Zachary is frustrated with the frequent moves and longs for routine and stability.
- Because of his many moves, Zachary missed the 7th-grade eye test that all students are given, and in actuality needs glasses to help him see the board at the front of the classroom.

*What does Zachary need to flourish (or continue to flourish) mathematically?*

**Reflection question:** What assumptions did you make about each student prior to learning their context? How did learning about their background change the type of support you would give each student? What Ah-ha's did you have from engaging in this activity?