

Self-Portrait Through Collage for: 1st Grade, 7th Grade, and 12th Grade

1st Grade (Ages 6–7): “The Magic Mirror Body Collage”

How it starts:

Bring out a large, colorfully decorated “magic mirror” as we sit in the Friendship Circle.

Teacher says:

“This isn’t just any mirror. It shows the most amazing and unique parts of you — the things that make you special, strong, and filled with love. When you look into it, what do you see that makes you – you?”

Each student gets a moment to look in the mirror and share one thing about themselves: “I’m good at jumping!” or “I like helping my friends.”

Activity: The Magic Mirror Body Collage

Students lie down on a large piece of paper while I trace around their body.

Then they glue things inside the silhouette that shows:

What they like to do. What makes them happy. Who they are as a friend or helper.

Teacher says:

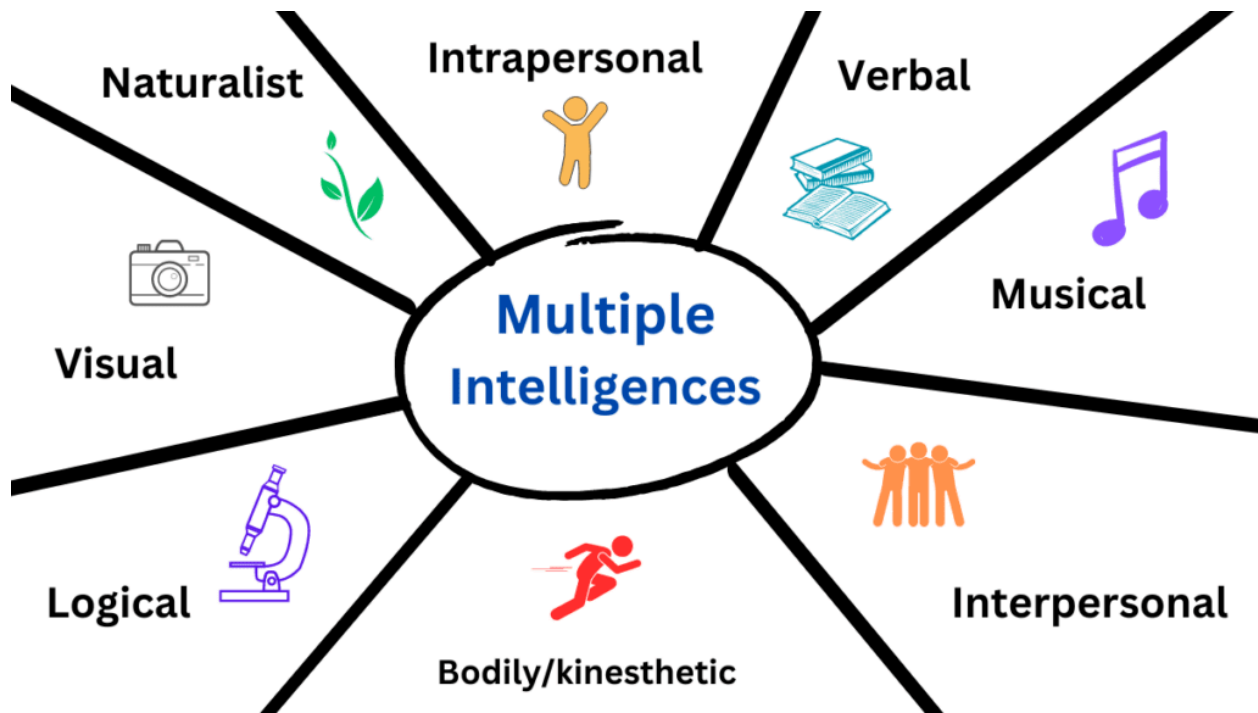
“You’re going to decorate your Magic Mirror Body Collage with things that show who you are on the inside — your heart wishes, things you are good at, and your favorite things. It doesn’t have to look like you — it just has to feel like you!” Here you will find crayons, and markers, pictures of kids doing fun things - art, music, sports, and you can fill the inside of your body with lots of images or colors that represent what you care about. We will put our Magic Mirror Body Collages up around the room and then walk around as each of you talk about when you made them the way you did with your friends.

Age Appropriateness:

This symbolic approach lets them express who they are without the pressure of making something look like themselves. They use pictures that ready to be glued in that are all kinds of fun things with art, sports, nature, or music (all the things represented by the multiple intelligence.) And colorful cut-outs, shapes, and stickers and as they glue them in their body outline it builds fine motor skills while offering creative autonomy.

Intrinsic Motivators Tapped:

Fun & Play- Belonging & Being Seen - Self-Empowerment - Emotional Expression



Multiple Intelligences Assessment: By doing this lesson, we see how aware they are about what they are naturally good at. Although we don't talk to them about the Multiple Intelligences, all the things they are adding are symbolic of them. This way, teachers can understand more about them and how aware they are of their natural multiple intelligences.

7th Grade (Ages 12–13): “Layers of Me - Empowerment Collage”

How it starts:

On the board, I write: “What’s invisible but deeply true about you?”

I show examples of layered digital empowerment collages that blend words, symbols, color, and abstract imagery. The Empowerment Collage is about who you are now and the many things you care about, love to do, and want to become.

Teacher says:

“If someone looked at you from the outside, what would they see?”

”How many layers do you have? What’s true about you that not everyone gets to see?”

If we could see everything that matters to you — your ideas, memories, dreams, and passions — all in one image that when you see it, you feel empowered.

Activity Introduction: “Today, we will be working in photoshop - some of you have had experience in Photoshop and others are new to it. How many have experience please hold up your hand and if you are new at Photoshop go to someone with some experience and pair up. We are going to make a layered mixed-media portrait that represents different parts of who you are — not just how you look, but what you care about, what you’ve been through, and what makes you... you. Your self-portrait can have symbols, words, textures - layers of the things you love that make you - you.”

Activity:

This Empowerment Collage will have the words, symbols, images, drawings, and colors that represent who they are and what they care about. This may include hobbies, people, cultural heritage, emotions, goals, values, and dreams and can create something deeply personal, symbolic, and nonlinear. Students create a digital Empowerment Collage titled “Layers of Me.” A collection of images, textures, colors, and words that reflect who they are, and things they love to do, showing their truth. And then sharing their Empowerment Collage and Its meaning in the Friendship Circle.

Age Appropriateness:

Middle schoolers are navigating identity formation and can feel misunderstood. This symbolic digital collage helps them express their personal truth in a safe, creative, and empowering way as they are navigating identity formation, peer influence, and emotional complexity. The metaphor of the Empowerment Collage and the many layers it has speaks to their experience, and the many aspects of themselves.

Intrinsic Motivators Tapped: Autonomy, Self-Knowledge, Belonging through self-expression as they share them in the friendship circle.



12th Grade (Ages 17–18): “Mindset Collage Portrait”

How it starts:

The teacher begins by asking: “What does it mean to truly see yourself?” And then they introduce the idea that we will be learning how to draw a realistic head-and-shoulders portrait using basic face proportions.

Teacher asks:

“What would happen if we filled the inside of our portraits with the things we love, value, or dream of?” As we do this, we symbolically show our “mindset”. How many of you have drawn faces before? Raise your hand. And those of you who have not, remember that these students can help you, if you get stuck with your face proportions. And we have this hand out to help you know what they are. However, this is not about drawing a perfect face that looks just like you. This is about a symbolic portrait of you that you can add to creativity your mindset through the things you love and care about.

Activity:

With the hand out, students learn the basic face proportion structure for a head-and-shoulders drawing. Inside the face and around the head, they create a collage of meaningful images, words, and symbols that reflect their inner world — their thoughts, values, experiences, and future dreams. Those who have experience drawing team up with beginners to support them as they draw to get the right proportions and suggest their features. The Mindset Collage Portraits are hung in our showcase area and each student talks about their friends and talks about how their mindset has shifted from 9th-12th & what they feel will stay with them as they become adults through a positive mindset. There is another hand out with 5 Key Characteristics of a Positive Mindset. And after we have hung them on the wall, we go around and have each student present their portrait and talk about their mindsets and how they symbolized it.

Age Appropriateness:

High school seniors are preparing for the transition to adulthood. This lesson offers a grounding artistic skill (portrait proportions) combined with a meaningful expressive outlet. It balances structure and freedom, supporting identity integration.

Intrinsic Motivators Tapped:

Mastery - Self-Reflection - Personal Meaning & Legacy & CoCreative Teamwork

Positive Mindset

5 Key Characteristics

