Four Corners

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Materials needed: 4 pieces of paper, each labeled differently (strongly agree; agree; disagree; strongly disagree). Place these 4 signs in different corners of the classroom.

Learning challenge addressed/predictable outcome: All students will be actively engaged in the activity as they form and defend their position.

Best used for: Readings assigned for class or something completely new; classes with 30 students or less

Learning objectives/skills fostered: Students will be able to articulate whether they agree or disagree with something and why.

What to do / how to do it: The instructor writes or reads a statement and asks the students to think if they “strongly agree”, “agree”, “disagree”, or “strongly disagree” with it. After a minute, ask the students to go to the corner that represents their position. Once everyone has gone to a corner, ask the students to discuss why they have chosen this corner (for example, “agree”, but not “strongly agree”). Giving the reason(s) is more important than what corner they selected. After students have a few minutes to discuss with each other, bring this conversation to the whole class. Ask a representative from each group to summarize or explain what they discussed in their group. After each representative from the groups has a chance to speak, ask if anyone has changed their mind and if so, to move to another corner. Allow 1 minute for students to move. Now ask those that moved why they did so. Did someone during the discussion make them rethink their position?

An alternative to 4 Corners is a similar activity called Value Line. One end of the line is “agree” and the other end is “disagree”. Students stand somewhere on this line that represents where they are in response to the instructor’s statement.

Tips for implementing: When you write or read the statement at the start of this activity, you may want to have students write it down (“agree” or “strongly disagree”, etc.) on a small piece of paper so that they are not influenced when they see peers going to a certain corner that is different from what they wrote down on their paper (they will have to stick with their original position).