

4 Corner Debate

Collaboration Strategy

This collaborative strategy requires students to work and think together. It is a perfect WIC-R activity, involving writing, inquiry, collaboration and reading. Students take a position on a particular topic, and move to one of four corners of the room to collaborate with other students with similar views. Each corner puts together an argument to present to the other three corners. Students listen to each other, and have the chance to change their opinions and move to another corner if they are persuaded by another corner's argument.

Objectives

Students will :

- listen to a statement on a controversial topic and decide if they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement.
- work in groups to record information in support of their position.
- reconsider their stance in light of new information.
- write a concise paragraph expressing their opinion about the statement.

Materials Needed

- four posters, each labeled in large letters with one of the following: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
- a teacher-generated list of statements for discussion
- writing paper and pencils

Before the Lesson

Create four posters/signs printed in large letters with the following labels, one label per sign:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Place each poster in a different corner of the classroom.

Adapted from:
<http://www.education-world.com>

Present to students a statement that takes a stand on an issue of interest to students or of importance to the world. Or, *following a reading, present a controversial statement based on the text.*

For this lesson, you might use one of the following statements as the starting point for a classroom discussion. Select an appropriate statement that will engage your students. As an alternative, you might choose to make a statement about a controversy in the news or about an issue of interest to people in your area.

- Students should wear uniforms to school.
- Kids should be able to have TVs in their bedrooms.
- Beauty is only skin deep.
- Wearing a helmet when riding a bike should be mandatory.
- The Pledge of Allegiance should be recited in school each day.
- Because many kids need more sleep, school should start two hours later than it does now.
- Chewing gum should be banned from schools.
- Scientists should be allowed to use animals to test new medicines.
- Kids should be able to spend their allowance any way they want to.
- Kids younger than 18 should be able to make their own decisions about whether to get a body piercing.

Select a statement appropriate for your students, read aloud the statement, and give students 5 minutes to collect their thoughts about the topic. Then ask students if they

- strongly agree,
- agree,
- disagree, or
- strongly disagree

with the statement. Direct those who strongly agree to move to the corner of the classroom where the Strongly Agree sign is posted, those who agree to move to the corner of the classroom where the Agree sign is posted, and so on...

Hopefully, you have four groups gathered in different corners of the classroom. Appoint one student in each corner to be the note taker, and give students 5-10 minutes to discuss with the other students in their corner the reasons they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

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<http://www.education-world.com>

At the end of the discussion period, ask one student from each group to share with the class some of the ideas they discussed in their group.

Perhaps one of the four groups made such a strong case that some students have changed their minds about their reaction to the statement. If that is the case, at this point in the activity give students an opportunity to change corners.

Provide 5-10 more minutes for students to continue their group discussions. At this point, every student in the group should be taking Cornell Notes. At the end of the discussion time, each student uses those notes to write a concise paragraph stating his or her position on the issue. (for example, *I strongly agree with the statement [statement goes here] because...*) Students should include in their paragraphs the four strongest points supporting their position.

Extension Activity

- Have students come up with their own discussion topics.
- Over a couple class periods, use the four corner strategy to discuss three or four different statements. Then have students write a position paper on the statement they have the strongest feelings about.
- Provide time for students to read aloud their papers. Then provide time for peer reaction. First, ask students to share *only* positive comments about their classmates' papers; then provide time for students to share *only* constructive criticism. ("You might have done this differently...")

Assessment

Student paragraphs should follow the proper format and include at least four solid reasons supporting their position on the topic of discussion.