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Description:

The Four Corners strategy is used to ensure that all students participate in group activities. It helps to develop listening, verbal communication, critical thinking, and decision-making skills in the classroom context.

Uses:

One advantage of this strategy is that it can be used to reinforce course content, to clarify student values, and to develop an understanding of differences in values and opinions. Not only does it encourage students to participate in activities by making decisions, it encourages students to cognitively justify their decisions.

Materials:

Flipcharts and markers

Instructions:

1. Preparation:

- Create four large signs with the following phrases - STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, DISAGREE, STRONGLY DISAGREE.
- Place the signs in the four corners of the classroom.
- Clear the corners and sides of the room by moving chairs and tables to the center.
- Prepare position statement(s) on an overhead to be used during the group activity.
- The position statements should be expressed in such a way that the students will easily understand them. For example, one position statement might read "The legal drinking age in Ohio should be lowered to 18." An example of a content-related position statement for a sociology class on social deviance might read "The new address of a violent sex offender should be made available to neighbors upon the offender's release from prison."

2. Present the position statements:

- Present the first statement using the overhead projector.
- Give the students time to read the statement.
- Verbally repeat the question.

3. Take a position:

- Ask the students to move to the corner that best describes their feelings on the statement.
- Tell the students they may change corners at any time.

4. Justification:

- Once all the students have selected their corners, randomly call on students one at a time to give simple, one sentence statements supporting their opinions on the position statement.

5. Repeat or follow up:

- After an appropriate number of students have given their statements, such that a diversity of opinions have been expressed, the instructor may present a new

position statement and begin the process again, or the instructor may follow up with a critical thinking activity.

- One critical-thinking activity involves creating an affinity diagram with the class.
- Another critical-thinking activity involves breaking the class into four groups (corresponding to the four positions) and asking each group to prepare a short summary of the issue and their opinions; the summaries may be written or presented orally to the rest of the class.

Tips:

This exercise needs enough time to develop. Do not try to squeeze this exercise into a small amount of time.