



HUMAN OPINION CONTINUUM

Purpose:

This strategy requires students to take a stand on an issue which involves at least two opposing viewpoints and demands that students verbally justify their stance. It also permits students to exchange ideas and attempt to persuade their peers to change their stance based on logical reasoning and arguments made by others. The strategy can be a brief method to initiate interest in a topic or an extensive exercise in debating the various perspectives or opinions surrounding an historical event or contemporary situation.

Procedure:

1. The instructor will lead the class through any necessary information needed prior to students discussing a topic or event, using a brief handout, if necessary, or by reading information aloud.
2. Five or six volunteers are asked to stand along a classroom wall. At either end of this wall, two signs have been posted, "Agree" or "Disagree." Volunteers are asked to stand beneath the sign that best represents their stance on the issue.
3. Student volunteers are then required to verbally tell the class why they have taken this stance. As fellow volunteers listen to the opinions of others, they may opt to move and stand under the opposite sign, should their opinion change. Students who are being swayed to change their opinions slightly may opt to come to the middle of the wall. They, too, are asked to justify why their opinions are changing.
4. Option: Students in the class may now take the opportunity to ask questions of any student standing along the continuum wall.
5. Option: Along the continuum, place multiple signs such as "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree."
6. Option: Use the entire class in the exercise, forming a continuum of opinion in one large U-shaped line around the classroom. Allow for volunteers to justify their stance and others change position along the continuum. Also, of interest, take note if there are any gender-based patterns in where students are taking their stance.