Four Corner Debate

Brief Description

This debate strategy gets children thinking *and* moving. This simple and active strategy helps students focus their thinking about topics of debate as they prepare to write a well-supported paragraph stating their position.

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.

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.

The Lesson

Present to students the following statement:

Conscription was the right thing for Britain to ensure their success in WW1.

Now 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.
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.

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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 notes.

Assessment

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.

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