

Agreement Circles

Agreement Circles provide a kinesthetic way to activate thinking and engage students in academic argumentation. Students listen to statements made by the teacher and decide whether they agree or disagree. Through this activity, students must access existing knowledge and justify their thinking to their peers about why they agree or disagree with the statements. As they engage in academic argument with their peers, they may modify their ideas as new information convinces them that their original ideas may need adjustment.

This strategy may be used prior to instruction or during the concept development stage when formally introduced concepts may need reinforcement. The teacher can get a quick visual sense of students' understanding according to which part of the circle they are in. As the teacher circulates and listens to students' arguments, information about students' thinking is revealed that can be used to design further learning experiences or revisit prior experiences aimed at developing conceptual understanding. Giving students an opportunity to change their positions after dialogue indicates the extent to which the small group dialogue may have changes some students' initial thinking.

How to implement the strategy (Summarizing):

1. Prepare a collection of statements related to the topic or concept being studied. These statements should provide students the opportunity to agree or disagree with the ideas presented.
2. Students begin by standing in a circle.
3. Read one of the statements to the students. The students who agree with the statement step to the center of the circle.
4. Students who stepped to the center of the circle turn to face their peers still standing in the circle. They match themselves up in small groups of students who agree and disagree. The small groups engage in dialogue to defend their thinking.
5. After dialogue, give students an opportunity to reposition themselves with those who now agree standing in the center of the circle.
6. The idea is to get everyone either in the circle or on the circumference.
7. Repeat with several rounds of questions related to the same topic, each time with students starting by standing along the circumference of a large circle.

Adapted from:

- Keeley, P. (2008). *Science Formative Assessment: 75 Practical Strategies for Linking Assessment, Instruction, and Learning*, Thousand Oaks CA. Corwin Press.
- Keeley, P. and Tobey, C.R. (2011). *Mathematics Formative Assessment: 75 Practical Strategies for Linking Assessment, Instruction, and Learning*, Thousand Oaks CA. Corwin Press.