

## Where Do You Stand?

### Overview

Through this activity, students will learn new things about one another and begin to recognize that they all hold differing opinions. As a prelude to discussing controversial topics, this activity will help remind students that they are all different and, therefore, have different opinions and ideas.

### Materials

- Masking tape
- Numbered signs (1-10)

### Duration

20+ minutes

### Procedure

1. Before students enter class, create a long line on the floor using masking tape and place signs with the numbers 1-10 sequentially along the line. (The line must be long enough and the space large enough that all students will have room to move about the line. Teachers with smaller classrooms may want to conduct this activity in larger spaces such as the hall, cafeteria, gym, or auditorium.)
2. As a warm-up, tell students that they are going to learn a bit more about each other. Instruct students that you will say a word or phrase and that they are to move along the line according to their opinion of the subject, 1 being strongly disagree or hate, 10 being strongly agree or love. Remind students to move safely about the room, and to be brave enough to take their own stand on issues and not to simply follow their friends' movements. Tell students that they must not talk during the exercise. Begin to read off subjects that you want the class to explore; it is recommended that you start off with simple items, like foods, and then move to more substantive subjects. After each subject is called and students move, give students a moment to notice where everyone else in the class stands. Examples of items to call out include:

Pizza	Brussel sprouts
Chocolate	Playing sports
Country music	Hip/Hop
Videogames	Cartoons
Shopping	Math
Police officers	Teachers
Democrats	Republicans

3. Once you have called all of the topics you choose to use, ask students to guess what they think the point of the exercise was. Ideally, students will point out that at times there were perhaps similarities among them, but that there was also never complete agreement among them. Students may also note that some reactions surprised them or that people who are seemingly "alike" (men, women, white students, black students, etc.) didn't necessarily respond alike.

4. Write the word **diversity** on the board, and ask students to define this word and connect it to the experience they just had. Tell students that you want them to keep this exercise in their minds, particularly as the class delves into more controversial material and discussions. Point out that they are a diverse group of people, with different experiences, opinions, and attitudes, and that this is something to be celebrated. Remind students that they don't necessarily agree on music or food, so when even more serious topics are discussed, they should expect to have a diversity of opinions once more. Facilitate the understanding that such diversity should be welcomed and respected.
  
5. At any point in the reading or discussing controversial issues, if students are experiencing extreme disagreement or discomfort with a controversial topic, remind them of this activity and that is acceptable and expected that differences will be present.