

GIANT STEPS

(Ref: Active Learning and Teaching Methods – Northern Ireland Curriculum)

Skills

Thinking, Decision-Making

What is it?

This is a useful activity for exploring diverse opinions and emotions as regards a particular issue. It might be used as a lead into a particular topic and to gauge pupil interest and base understanding of the issue in question. It requires pupils to take a stance on an issue and allows everybody to have a voice, even if they do not speak out. The aims of this activity are similar to those of the walking debates, such as the Four Corners Debate.

Implications for classroom layout

A large space is needed for ease of movement and interaction.

How does it work?

1. Pupils stand in a long line. In order to get pupils in the line and to break the ice as regards discussion, the facilitator may ask pupils to create a spectrum based on the issue at hand. For example, pupils might be asked to form a line from the most optimistic to the least optimistic, the most organised to the least organised, etc. Pupils should be able to justify their position in the line.

2. Once all pupils are in the line, the facilitator reads out a statement. Sample statements might include, for example:

Topic: Personal Development

People should do what their friends do at all times, even if they know what they are doing is wrong.

It's OK to provide an alibi for a friend.

Bullies have a high self-esteem.

3. The pupil then takes a step based on how comfortable they feel about the issue or based on whether they agree with the statement or not. If they disagree or are totally uncomfortable with the statement, they take a step backwards. If they agree/are comfortable, they take a step forwards. If they are not sure they stand still. The degree of the step may also indicate just *how* comfortable or uncomfortable they may feel. A small step forward, to cite an instance, might mean that a pupil agrees but with perhaps some reservations.

4. As pupils move, they should explain why they have taken their particular step. Views could be obtained from those who have moved forwards and those who have moved backwards, as well as those who remained still.

5. Subsidiary questions could be used to draw out more complex issues and to refine the initial statement.

6. A **debrief** after the activity could discuss the issues upon which there was widespread consensus and issues that divided the class.