

Inside-Outside Circle

Overview

During this strategy, students form two different circles: half of the group stands in a circle facing outward while the other half forms a circle around them facing inward. Students exchange information until the teacher signals the outer circle to move in one direction. The students now have a different partner with whom to exchange.



Steps

1. Decide which students will be in each circle (inside and outside).
2. Put a question or statement on the board.
3. Give students at least ten seconds to think on their own ("think time").
4. Ask students in the inside circle to share their response with the classmate facing them in the outside circle. When they have done this, ask them to say "pass", at which point the students in the outside circle will share their responses with the classmate facing them in the inside circle.
5. Have the outside circle move one step to the left or right and discuss the same question with the new partner. Option: post a new question for another discussion.

Hints and Management Ideas

- *Pre-assign groups.* You can use letters (a–b–c) to divide the class into two or more groups as needed.
- *Change partners.* Move the outside or inside circle at least one step to the right or left so students have the opportunity to communicate with more than one partner.
- *Monitor the discussions* for common misconceptions and to make sure that students are on task.

Benefits of Inside-Outside Circle

- When students have appropriate "think time", the quality of their responses improves.
- Students are actively engaged in thinking with different questions and different partners.
- The activity encourages community building among students while incorporating movement and interaction.
- Many students find it safer or easier to enter into a discussion with another classmate rather than with a large group.
- No specific materials are needed for the strategy, so it can be easily incorporated into lessons.

For more detailed information, refer to Bennett, B. and C. Rolheiser. *Beyond Monet: The Artful Science of Instructional Integration*. Toronto, Ontario: Bookation, 2001.