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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Planning Powerful Instruction, Grades 6-12*. This activity primes and orients students through discussion of controversial concepts that they will explore in the unit. Students also practice complex processes like making claims, supporting reasoning with evidence, listening and mirroring, summarizing, and addressing opposing viewpoints and reservations to their own thinking.

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## FRONTLOADING MOVE 2: WHERE DO I STAND?

Where Do I Stand? (also known as Four Corners) works well as a follow-up to a survey but can also stand on its own as a quick frontloading activity. Like a survey, this activity primes and orients students through discussion of controversial concepts that they will explore in the unit. Students also practice complex processes like making claims, supporting reasoning with evidence, listening and mirroring, summarizing, and addressing opposing viewpoints and reservations to their own thinking. The process is also a powerful way to stimulate discussion and to motivate students to further explore emerging topics throughout the inquiry unit.

To do this activity, teachers can select two or three statements (from a survey or elsewhere) that might be particularly controversial for the students. Put four signs in the corners of the room: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Read one of the statements and invite students to go stand by the sign that reflects their response to that statement. Give students a few minutes to discuss why they chose that response with the others in the same corner. Invite one student from each corner to summarize why their group selected the response they did. Open a discussion, inviting students to respond to the other groups. You can also do this through discussion dramas such as a “radio show,” which may involve students taking on various roles to share their perspective (see Chapter 13 on discussion strategies). During the discussion, invite students to move to another group if their thinking is changed by the discussion. We often invite those specific students to explain why their thinking was changed. Some examples of controversial statements follow:

Essential Question: *What are civil rights, and how can we best protect and promote them?*

- Children need their civil rights protected more vigorously than any other group.
- You can almost always trust authorities to protect your civil rights.
- If your civil rights are violated, the best course of action is to first address this with the person or group who violated them.

Essential Question: *How can we best deal with trouble?*

- A good friend will always tell you when you are wrong about something.
- The best way to deal with trouble is to ignore it if you can.
- You can't learn anything unless there is trouble; it's necessary to learning.

Essential Question: *How can we contribute to the sustainability of our planet?*

- The United States should be responsible for making sure other countries take action to reduce carbon emissions.
- It is absolutely essential to the future of our planet that everyone start using public transportation/recycling/eating only organic food.
- Nuclear power is the most environmentally responsible way to meet our energy needs.