

## Instructions for Continuum

The continuum activity is a method that encourages students to express positions on controversial issues. It is very useful to assess student knowledge before a lesson or to assess student understanding after a lesson. Because the method involves physical movement of students, it often stimulates even quiet students to speak out.

### Procedure

1. Before the class begins, select a controversial question or statement that gets to the heart of the subject being taught. For instance, if the subject of class is the Equal Protection Clause or *Brown v. Board of Education*, you may want to pose the question, "Does treating people equally mean treating them the same?" Post the question where all can see it.
2. If the question posed requires a "yes" or "no" answer, post signs at opposite ends of the classroom with each of these responses. If a statement is posed to students, place signs at opposite ends of the classroom with the words "agree" and "disagree" on them.
3. Pose the question or statement to students and ask all or some of the students to physically place themselves next to a sign that corresponds with their opinion. Students may also stand between the two signs to indicate different levels of agreement or disagreement along the continuum.
4. Ask students to express their opinions orally, using follow-up questions to help them clarify, elaborate on, or support their positions. Ask other students to respond to those who have already expressed their opinions. Do they agree or disagree? Explain to students that if they change their minds during the activity, they can move physically along the continuum to indicate that change.
5. You may wish to extend students' thinking on the controversial question by changing the wording and asking students to move themselves along the continuum according to their position on the new question or statement being posed. Another alternative is to introduce factual material that may sway students' positions on the issues, asking students to reposition themselves along the continuum after each fact is unveiled.