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Cross the Line

Description of Cross the Line:
- This is an instructional strategy in which students start on a line and move to a different line depending on their views
- A non-verbal way for both students and teachers to learn the different views of students
- It is a simple way to assess students’ ideas, opinions, or knowledge in a fun, active, and non-threatening way

Methods of Using Cross the Line:
- A statement is read by the teacher starting with “cross the line if…” Students then move across the line if that particular statement applies to them. This can be used to assess likes and dislikes of the class. A simple example is chocolate ice cream. Students move to the other side if they like chocolate ice cream. They stay in their spot if they don’t like chocolate ice cream.

- Cross the line can also be used as a form of checking for understanding. For example, the teacher can say “cross the line if you think that the highest mountain peak is Mount McKinley” after covering the information in class.

Strengths of Cross the Line:
- It is good for students who are quiet and don’t like to express their opinions openly
- It can be fun for students because they get to rise out of their seats and interact
- When used for checking for understanding, it can be an indicator of knowledge
- When used for likes/dislikes, there is no “wrong” answer

Weaknesses of Cross the Line:
- Some students may not like to participate
- Some students may copy other students
- It could be intimidating for some students
- Depending on class size, it could take up a lot of space

Tips or Suggestions for Improving the Effectiveness of Cross the Line:
- When first introducing this, start off with simple prompts and gradually move to harder ones
- To prevent copying on knowledge questions, the teacher can have students cross the line if they think they know the answer. The teacher will then ask a specific student what the answer is. For example, the teacher can say “cross the line if you think you know what the tallest mountain in the world is.” Students will cross the line if they think know. The teacher will then pick a specific student to answer what the tallest mountain is.
• The teacher should be sure to use prompts that don’t offend anybody
• Students can take turns reading the prompts to the class, rather than the teacher always reading

Suggestions for Use:
• This is a good strategy to use when students are not displaying much energy. This will get them out of their seats and moving
• This is an excellent ice-breaker at the beginning of the school year, especially if the students don’t know one another
• This can be used at the end of a unit as a way to check for understanding
• Can be used for elementary, middle school, high school, and college students

Demonstration of Cross the Line:

Step-by-Step Directions:
1. Students will line up shoulder to shoulder across the widest part of the classroom. The teacher will then prompt students to “cross the line” for a series of mental health prompts. Students will only walk across the room if they feel comfortable identifying themselves in the way the prompt describes. Students will not be permitted to talk. To get the hang of it, the teacher will ask students to cross the line if they like chocolate ice cream. After this, students will be asked the following questions.
   • Cross the line if you are happy when Penn State wins a football game
   • Cross the line if you are happy that it is fall
   • Cross the line if you are happy that the semester is over half way over
   • Cross the line if you are happy when you get a B on a test
2. The teacher will ask students to reflect on or analyze any of the responses of the class to the Cross the Line prompts.
3. The teacher will summarize and debrief about what the purpose of the activity was. In this case, the main idea was that different things make different people happy. This is part of mental health. It is important to realize that everyone is unique. You need to accept them for what they are and they should accept you for what you are. Realizing this will improve your mental health.
4. The teacher will transition into the rest of the lesson.

Management of Classroom:
• Students will line up shoulder to shoulder across the widest part of the classroom. If there is not enough room, students will make 2 separate shoulder to shoulder lines and be asked to make sure that they do not walk into each other.
• Once the class is lined up, the teacher will scan the classroom to make sure desks and other objects are not in the walking pathway.
• Teacher will make sure that the entire class is quiet before reading the next prompt.
Materials Needed:
- List of Cross the Line prompts
- Chalkboard/whiteboard (only needed if the teacher decides to write down observations that the class has)

References:
