3.7: Four Corners

Student Objective
Students will deepen their knowledge about a topic by working collaboratively with others who possess similar baseline levels of understanding.

Overview
This structure can be used as a tool for students to evaluate both ideas and products. Use Four Corners to check for comprehension, build expressive capacity and accountability, and build cohesion and community amongst classmates.

Materials/Set-Up
- In advance of the activity, complete the following:
  - Set up the room by placing one of four topical posters in each of the four corners of the classroom. For example, if the purpose of the activity is to have students evaluate an idea, make four "posters" (e.g., Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree) and post them in the four corners of the room.

Instructional Steps
1. Read a statement aloud (e.g., "Failure is an important part of life"), and have the students write down whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement and why.
2. When finished writing, have the students move to the corner that most accurately represents their stance.
3. Students then engage in a group discussion justifying why they chose their corner.
4. Each group will need to identify a spokesperson who will summarize their group's position for the rest of the groups.
5. Allow each group to share and engage in a debate with each other, ensuring that before a group shares their next point, they summarize the point of the group that preceded them.

Extension
- To increase rigor, use this collaborative structure to evaluate a product (e.g., an anonymous Cornell notes sample) and replace the agreement posters with grades (e.g., A, B, C, and D/F instead of Strongly Agree, etc.). Pass out copies of the product in question and ask students to assign it a grade and explain why in writing. Have students move to the corner that matches their assigned grade and discuss their reasoning. After each group discusses why they chose that corner, have groups (or a group representative) debate their position with the other groups.
- To integrate technology, have each corner group (or small groups in each corner) use a social media or blogging platform to post their reasons justifying why they chose their corner, and then read the other corners' posts in lieu of a verbal share-out.