

COMPASS POINTS

A routine for examining propositions

1. E = Excited
What excites you about this idea or proposition? What's the upside?
2. W = Worrisome
What do you find worrisome about this idea or proposition? What's the downside?
3. N = Need to Know
What else do you need to know or find out about this idea or proposition? What additional information would help you to evaluate things?
4. S = Stance or Suggestion for Moving Forward
What is your current stance or opinion on the idea or proposition? How might you move forward in your evaluation of this idea or proposition?

Purpose: Why use this routine?

To help students flesh out an idea or proposition and eventually evaluate it.

Application: When and where can I use this routine?

This routine works well to explore various sides and facets of a proposition or idea prior to taking a stand or expressing an opinion on it. For instance, the school may be considering the idea of a dress code, a teacher might present the class with idea of altering the room arrangement, a character in a book might be confronted with making a choice, a politician might be putting forth a new way of structuring taxes, and so on.

Launch: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

The routine needs to be modeled with the whole group initially with responses recorded for the entire class to see. This enables students to build on each other's ideas. You might record responses using the directions of a compass to provide a visual anchor. That is, draw a compass in the center of the board and then record responses corresponding the appropriate direction: E, W, N, or S. It is generally easiest for students to begin with what is exciting or positive about the idea or proposition and then move to worrisome and need to know. Students might be asked to write down their individual stance or suggestion for moving forward after the initial group discussion.

You can also ask students to make an initial judgment or evaluation of the idea or proposition before doing the compass points and then ask them how their thinking has changed after discussion using the compass points routine.