

Dance Card

Purpose

Dance Card sets up students with multiple, but consistent, partners for work across a unit, reducing the amount of energy and work it takes for the teacher to assign partners. It allows students autonomy and choice in whom they pick for partner work. Students of all ages are familiar with the idea of partnering off for dancing, although teachers may wish to explain the metaphor of the historical “dance card.”

Materials

- Three index cards per student, each in a different color, easily distinguishable from the others
- Recording sheet for Dance Card names, one per student, to be kept throughout the unit

Procedure

1. Give the three colored index cards to each student. Students write their name on each card.
2. At your signal to “dance,” students find one partner to trade their blue card with. This pair becomes blue “dance card” partners. Then direct students to do the same with their red card, green card, etc. (or whatever colors are being used). Optionally, for fun or to fill a need for movement, students can “dance” over to do their trade, do a quick dance after the trade (e.g., the chicken dance), or you can play music during this transition. Remind students that they can only pair up together for one of their colors. They must end up with as many different partners as they have colored index cards.
3. Once all rounds are complete, students fill in the recording sheet with the names of their three different partners.
4. At the end of the protocol, each student has different partners for discussion to be used repeatedly, but with variety, throughout the unit. When it is time for students to pair up, you can direct them to their “blue dance partner,” “red dance partner,” and so on.

Variations

- This protocol can involve any number of partners. Colors are used for ease of repeating the protocol, but you may choose to add names to the dance cards (e.g., “Sudanese desert”; “the refugee camp”; “the box car”) pertinent to the unit of study. If you wish to pre-assign a partnership for any reason, fill out two cards of matching color with the names you want matched and give them to the appropriate students before the dancing begins.