Mingling Activity

This is a flexible classroom activity that can be adapted to a variety of disciplines, class sizes, and periods of time.

**Summary:** The following classroom activity is one that allows learners to actively engage with class materials through interaction (asking and answering questions) with multiple members of the class. This mingling activity provides options for the instructor to observe or to participate. Afterwards, there is a group review and reflection led by the instructor either during class or virtually.

**Materials:** A list of questions in three formats:
- hard copy
- electronic copy
- hard copy cut into strips

**Time:** 10-45 minutes

**Procedures:**

**PRE-CLASS**

1. Prepare a list of questions based on a unit of your course (lesson, chapter, etc.). For small classes, make 1 question per student; for larger classes, make 1 question for every 2, 3, or 4 students.
2. Write the questions so that there is space between each one. Cut the paper into strips (1 question per strip) so that you have at least 1 question per student (always bring extras and 1 for the instructor).

**IN-CLASS**

1. Put the list of questions on the board or screen, and introduce the activity. Provide accommodation for those students who may request it at this point.
2. Distribute the strips of paper (i.e., questions) so each student gets one.
3. Model the activity once or twice with one or more students. Then, all students stand up and find a partner.
4. Working in their pairs, Student A asks Student B his/her question. After answering, Student B asks Student A his/her question.
5. Next, they exchange strips of paper, and each one finds another member of the class who is also looking for a new partner. This will require that students move around the room and engage with different individuals and different questions (e.g., mingling). They follow the same procedure as they did with their first partner.
6. The rules of engagement can be as strict as the instructor wishes. The activity could be timed, with students switching partners when the instructor specifies (e.g., after 60 seconds).

7. Depending on the style of the instructor and the particular educational goals, the instructor could do a number of things:
   a. mingle with students in the question/answer exchange
   b. circulate around the class participating with or merely observing the students
   c. remain at the front of the classroom
   d. participate for part of the time

Each type of engagement allows instructors to assess student progress “on the fly” in a non-threatening way and often keeps students on task. If there is an odd number of students, the instructor could fill in, talking with students who may be standing around or too shy to talk with other students.

8. After the time allotted, ask students to take a seat.

9. The instructor refers to the questions that are on the screen or the board. The instructor leads an open discussion about the questions and answers. Discussion of easier questions can serve to encourage student participation. Also, the instructor could highlight the particular questions that s/he noticed were challenging and address them directly. Students may feel more comfortable participating in the remainder of the class because they had an opportunity to ask and respond to questions beforehand, testing hypotheses about their knowledge of the material.

10. Depending on the time available, the instructor could review all of the questions, most of them, or just a selection of them. The questions also could be posted on ICON for asynchronous virtual discussion. This way, if students have questions or concerns, they are invited to participate outside of class.

Notes on flexibility:

This activity can be adapted to meet the needs of many teaching situations, even if you do not have the required materials. For example, if you were not able to prepare the questions beforehand, students can generate the questions. These can be composed on the board (or common screen) and then copied on students’ own sheets of paper or on index cards provided by the instructor.