

# **Proactive Circles**

*Also called Class Meetings, Classroom Circles, Community Building Circles, Dialogue Circles, Reflective Circles....*

## **Purpose**

The purpose of a proactive circle is to create belonging and connectedness (community) through intentional relationship building. Once trust is built within the circle, circles are an effective process to create class agreements, make plans and decisions, engage with curriculum, and debrief incidents that impact our students, families, and staff.

## **Role of Facilitator(s)**

*With training, students can take on this role*

- Set a positive tone and maintain a safe environment
- Facilitate the agenda
- Monitor Circle Guidelines
- Offer support and encouragement

## **Circle Agenda**

### **Opening the Circle**

**Purpose:** To set the tone for the circle and to transition participants into the circle process.

**Examples:** Mindfulness or guided meditation, music, poem, quote, ritual (candle, bell, placing items at the center)

### **Circle Guidelines**

**Purpose:** To ensure that the circle is a space where participants feel safe, respected and included. Circle guidelines should be created by the participants so there is a sense of ownership and accountability. The facilitator should review the guidelines and get buy-in at the beginning of every circle.

**Examples:** Respect the talking piece, Speak and listen from your heart, Be kind, Participate

### **Introduction of the Talking Piece**

**Purpose:** To ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to share and to be heard.

The person holding the talking piece is the only one who is speaking; the rest of the participants are actively listening. A person can always “pass.” The talking piece is passed around the circle.

The facilitator should introduce the talking piece at the beginning of each circle.

The talking piece can be set aside at any point to allow for more spontaneous conversation.

**Examples:** A small object that is meaningful, symbolic, or relevant to the topic (stone, stuffed animal, object from nature)

### **Circle Dialogue**

**Introduction:** The facilitator should introduce the topic or the focus of the circle and then present the first prompt. The facilitator can respond to the prompt first or can pass the talking piece and answer last. When the facilitator answers first, they can set the tone of ‘speaking from the heart.’

**Prompts:** A circle dialogue is created through a series of prompts that each participant has an opportunity to respond to. It is wise to start with an “ice breaker” before diving into more vulnerable or controversial prompts. When planning the circle, the facilitator should gauge the level of trust/safety within the circle and maturity of participants when choosing prompts.

### **Closing the Circle**

**Purpose:** To mark the end of the circle process and transition back into school activities.

**Examples:** Poem, Quote, Sharing of Gratitude or Appreciation of Others, Reflection, Mindfulness or Meditation.

## Sample Proactive Circle Prompts

### Icebreakers

One word to describe how you are feeling

“Come stand with me” – Each participant takes a turn stating: “Come stand with me if you [something true about themselves].” Participants take one step towards the center of the circle if that statement is also true for them. Ex’s) Come stand with me if you get nervous before tests. Come stand with me if you like basketball.

Favorites (music, food, hobby, color, movie, book, subject in school, etc)

I want more \_\_\_\_\_ in my life

### Building Relationships

Something you are good at

Someone you admire

Something you could teach others

Describe your perfect day

If you had a theme song, what would it be?

I feel [excited, energized, nervous, anxious, scared, sad] when \_\_\_\_\_

I am looking forward to \_\_\_\_\_

Describe your last act of kindness towards yourself or another person

What do you need to feel more [successful, safe, connected] at school?

### Creating Class Agreements

What kind of environment do you need to learn? To feel safe? To feel respected?

How do you want to be treated in this class? What does that look like? What does it look like when you are not being treated that way?

What should we do if our agreement is broken?

### Engaging with Curriculum

How can we make this topic more relevant?

What would help you grasp this topic more fully? Who is willing to help?

When has this topic played a role in your life?

How could we take what we are learning and make a difference in our community?

How can we incorporate art, music, visual design into what we are learning?

What is most interesting, challenging, confusing, frustrating, exciting about this topic?

### **Debriefing an Incident**

What happened?

What were you thinking/feeling when you saw or heard about what happened?

How are you feeling now about what happened?

Who was impacted?

What questions do you have?

What do you need to feel safe moving forward? What do you need to be ready to learn?

### **Closing the Circle**

I am grateful for \_\_\_\_\_

I will make someone else's day today by \_\_\_\_\_

I am proud of myself today for \_\_\_\_\_

One word to describe how you are feeling

Facilitator passes a cup around that contains papers with each participants name. Each person picks a name and states what they appreciate about that person.