

# First 40: Community Building Circles

*Adapted from Milwaukee Public Schools for Reynolds School District by Emma Forslund*

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***Community Building circle  
ideas for the first 40 days  
of school to build strong,  
inclusive classroom  
communities.***



***“Transforming inequitable systems through  
fostering, sustaining, and repairing relationships  
where each community member is seen, heard, and  
valued”***

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	pg. 3
Why Circles? .....	pg. 4
How to use this guide .....	pg. 5
Week 1 Overview .....	pg. 6
Week 1: Days 1-5 .....	pgs. 7-11
Week 2 Overview .....	pg. 12
Week 2: Days 1-5 .....	pgs. 13-17
Week 3 Overview .....	pg. 18
Week 3: Days 1-5 .....	pgs. 19-23
Week 4 Overview .....	pg. 24
Week 4: Days 1-5 .....	pgs. 25-29
Week 5 Overview .....	pg. 30
Week 5: Days 1-5 .....	pgs. 31-35
Week 6 Overview .....	pg. 36
Week 6: Days 1-5 .....	pgs. 37-41
Week 7 Overview .....	pg. 42
Week 7: Days 1-5 .....	pgs. 43-47
Week 8 Overview .....	pg. 48
Week 8: Days 1-5 .....	pgs. 49-53
Appendix A .....	pg. 54-65
Appendix B .....	pg. 57-59
Appendix C .....	pg. 60-63
Appendix D .....	pg. 64-65

## Introduction

This guide supports the facilitation of restorative practices and circles in your classroom. Restorative Practices are a philosophy that provides us the tools and practices to **build community, repair harm,** and **develop authentic, meaningful relationships** in classrooms and schools.

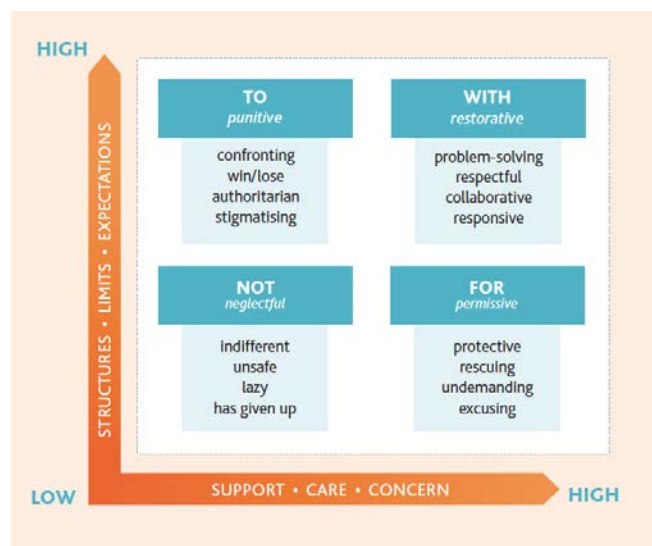
The First 40 Days provides an outline of various types of community building circles that can be used during the first eight weeks of school and beyond. Using circles routinely and consistently at the beginning of the year sets your classroom up for success and starts the year building strong and meaningful relationships. Teachers who circle up frequently find that they need to respond less to behavior because students **want** to be a part of the classroom community. When something happens that affects the class, the circle is a tool that students and teachers know they can use to process big emotions and when needed, repair harm. Often, students begin to ask for circles when something comes up in the classroom, this is a sign that the process has become meaningful for students!



**Restorative philosophy places an emphasis on building relationships. Circles are just one of the ways we can build strong meaningful connections.**

Other practices like engaging in Restorative Dialogues and using the Restorative Questions are other examples of the tools that Restorative Practices provides. These practices help community members feel connected to their classrooms and when needed, repair harm.

- The goal of Restorative Practices is to do things **WITH** students instead of **TO** or **FOR** them. Circle time is a perfect place to mix high levels of support with high levels of structure and expectations.
- This guide provides tools for how to do both. When we run circles proactively at the beginning of the year we build trust with students to get to the restorative window as seen on the right.



## Why Circles?

**Restorative Practices cultivate a culture in which everyone feels like they belong. They build a particularly unique sense of community in which every member--students, teacher, parent volunteers, aides--feel that they are seen, heard, and respected. Circles build that community through intentional practices and opportunities for connection.**

Circles are not new, ingenious communities and cultures around the world have used circles for thousands of years. Native American cultures and around North America and right here in the Pacific Northwest have used circles and as a way of life. Circles embody a philosophy, principles, and values that can and should apply whether people are sitting in circle or not. That is the goal of what we are also trying to accomplish in our classrooms through circles: **that students and adults feel connected and understanding of each other.** These connections don't have to only occur during circle time; however, it is the time that is set-aside during the day where students and teachers can explicitly focus on building relationships with each other.



*Figure 1 from Living Justice Press*

Circle time gives a place and space to practice many SEL skills to be learned and practiced, and for students to feel courageous and confident to speak. Lastly, circles provide rituals and routines that are consistent. This is not only trauma informed and creates relational safety, but also makes circle time a unique and special time of the day. Often it quickly becomes the favorite part of a child's (and usually teachers') time at school. This speaks to our very basic human need for connection that everyone, adults and children crave.

Circles also provide us with guidelines for how we want to treat one another, here are a few examples on the left. These guidelines are created for the classroom community by the group. Again, the goal is that what students learn in circle times starts to translate into the rest of their day.

Other elements unique to circle time are the talking piece and centerpiece. The talking piece ensures that everyone has an opportunity to speak and that while others are sharing in circle, the rest of the group is listening fully. This is an extremely important (and at times challenging) skill to learn, even for adults! The centerpiece grounds and centers the circle space and provides meaning! their minds and to be heard by others. **Please see appendix D for more on these elements!**



*Figure 2 from MSEANnewsfeed.com*

## *How to Use this Guide*

Each week begins with an overview section, this provides a simple explanation of what the week covers including the purpose and any tips or adaptations you may need to keep in mind. A suggestion would be to read over the overview sections the week before and get a sense of what might need to be changed or adapted for your classroom and students.

Each day of the week is on one page and is broken down into various recommended steps. If there are any materials needed to be prepped before an activity, there will be a box on the top right-hand side of that day. As the weeks go on, the steps become less explicit and require more adaptation, this is intentionally done so that teachers and classrooms can adapt the circle plans as they see fit.

**As this is the second version of The First 40 Days, some students may have already experienced certain activities, if you are anticipating they might be bored with the same exercise or game, change it up! The appendixes' in the back provide lots of circle examples and ideas. If you are going to change the activities, these days are highly recommended to repeat every year with your students to build elements of your circle practice that will be used for the rest of the year:**

**Week 1: Days 1 and Day 3**

**Week 2: Adapt as you see fit**

**Week 3: Day 1 and Day 3**

**Week 4: Day 1, Day 2, and Day 5**

**Week 5: Adapt as you see fit**

**Week 6: All Days**

**Week 7: Day 4 and Day 5**

**Week 8: Adapt as you see fit**

*Also check out Schoology! There is a "School Climate and Culture" group which has tabs full of circle ideas and games that you might find useful. The access code is:*

**84TCN-5SNZS**

## *Week 1: Overview*

### ***Purpose:***

The purpose behind the activities created for the first week is to develop student buy-in with community building time. Activities should be fun, engaging, and interesting. It will also be crucial to have clear expectations and to pause and reflect with your class if an activity starts to go awry. By talking with students about struggles that may occur, students begin to develop personal reflection skills and ownership for community building time.

### ***Tips:***

Since this will be students first time in community building circles, be aware of body language, engagement, and student's interest to share. Often if students are feeling uncomfortable or nervous in circle they will be hesitant to share, always allow for a non-verbal way for students to engage in circle and utilize the right to pass. If students are feeling bored or un-invested, behaviors might escalate. Use this time to reflect and discuss with your class patterns you're seeing and what would make community building circles work best for everyone.

### ***Adaptations:***

Feel free to add questions or activities, combine certain elements, or re-work as you see fit. The focus of this week should be engagement from students so if an activity isn't resonating with your class, it is fine to change it up. If you need support with community building time or would please reach out to your administration, school-based Restorative Practices TOSA, or district-based Restorative Practices TOSA.

## Week 1-Day 1

### Exercise: Circle Introduction

**Purpose:** Students and adults will practice getting in and out of the community building circle. This will be the first important step of introducing students to sitting in a circle and sharing with one another. It will also start to develop classroom routines for community building circles.

### Recommended Activity Steps:

- 1) *Explain to students where in the room the community circle will take place*
- 2) *Ask for suggestions from students of how to walk to and from circle*
- 3) *Create any cue's or processes to transition into circle (below are a few options)*
  - a. *A chime that signals it's time to transition into circle*
  - b. *Auditory or visual cues:*
    - i. *1-stand up/push in chair*
    - ii. *2-walk to circle space (furniture may need to be moved, practice this)*
    - iii. *3-when the circle is formed, everyone finds their seat*
  - c. *A song that is played or that students sing as they walk into circle*
- 4) *Practice the transition in and out of circle a few times, create a "challenge" element by seeing how quickly and quietly students can transition in and out, or by incorporating silly or engaging elements while students are transitioning in and out*
- 5) *When in circle after a few practice transitions, get into the circle shape and ask students "What is special about sitting in the shape of a circle?"*
  - a. *Example answers could be "because it's round, we get to sit on the floor, the teacher sits with us, no one is left out, we get to see everyone, etc."*
  - b. *Explain to students that being in circle is a special time of the day to share with one another and have fun*
- 6) *Play quick ice breaker game in the circle for 5-10 mins (ex. Hot potato or telephone)*
- 7) *Share Out with raised hands: What should our bodies do when we're in circle? How should we sit, how should we control our bodies? \**
  - a. *Students should generate some ideas on sitting calmly (ex. crisscross)*
- 8) *Practice the same transitions out of circle and back to seats*

***\*This is a crucial discussion to have with your students on the first day! Students will get fidgety at times, this is completely normal and should be allowed if it doesn't distract others from sharing. A tip is to give students the option to pick a new seat in circle, and if that doesn't help, have them come sit next to you.***



## Week 1-Day 2

### Exercise: Partner Interview

**Purpose:** Students will begin to learn the basic elements of being in circle and practice listening to their peers during community building time. This will also be an opportunity for students to get to know one another and how to share information.

### Recommended Activity Steps

- 1) *Practice transition developed from day 1, make this transition special for students so that they start to develop excitement for community building circles. Often teachers turn off a portion of the lights or plug in ambient lighting for circle to set the tone.*
- 2) *Sit in circle and fist-to-five check in with how transition(s) went*
- 3) *Explain Partner Game*
  - a. *Circle participants will partner up with the person on their right. Each participant will interview his/her partner and gather information to introduce their partner to the rest of the circle. Teachers should also participate with a partner!*
    - i. *Name (use first names)*
    - ii. *Super Hero. If you could be one super hero, who would it be?*
    - iii. *The Perfect Gift (if time): "When you get home from school, there will be a present waiting for you at your door. You're super excited. It's a gift that you really want badly. What is it?"*
- 4) *Allow students 3-5 minutes to talk to their partner and determine the answer to the questions and what they want to share out to the group.*
- 5) *Have students share out about their partner around the circle clockwise*
  - a. *If students are feeling shy and nervous about talking explain to them "right to pass" (have it written on the board or anchor chart for visual learners) \**
  - b. *Explain that in circle it's okay to not want to talk! "You always have the right to pass, if you decide later that you want to participate, raise a hand for your chance to share and we will come back to you."*
- 6) *When everyone has shared, have students do a quick check-out on if they liked the partner interview (one-to-five on fingers, thumbs up or down, etc.)*
- 7) *Practice transition back to seats*

**\*Revisit "right to pass" in every circle you have with your class. This is a major component of community building circles that students need to be explicitly taught. It's okay if students pass for the first few weeks as they develop trust and buy-in with circles.**



## Week 1-Day 3

**Prep:**

Choose 3-5 objects that students can choose from to use for the talking piece.

### **Exercise: Talking Piece Name Game**

**Purpose: Students will learn what a talking piece is and how they are used in community building circles.** This is important to explicitly teach to students, talking pieces will be used almost daily in circles and when students respect the talking piece, circles become meaningful.

### **Recommended Activity Steps**

- 1) *Practice transition developed from day 1, make this transition engaging and special for students so that they start to develop excitement for community building circles*
- 2) *Sit in circle and finger-to-five check in with how transition(s) went*
- 3) *Explain what a talking piece is (see page 4 for more information about the talking piece use and importance) and choose a talking piece as a group*
  - a. *Have three options for the talking piece laid out in the center of the circle (ex. a ball, stuffed animal, or other object)*
  - b. *Discuss with students which talking piece might be best*
    - i. *Suggested language: "Which one could we toss across the circle? Which one would you like to hold when you speak?"*
  - c. *Take a vote and decide on a talking piece*
- 4) *Explain and discuss the guideline "Respect the talking piece"*
- 5) *Play a name game where students say their name, and then toss the talking piece (underhand tosses) to another student*
- 6) *Play the game for 5-10 minutes (adding complexity by having students say the name of the person they are tossing to)*
- 7) *Discuss how the game went (using the talking piece)*
  - a. *If the class struggles to respect the talking piece explain to students that using a talking piece is HARD work! This is just their first time and it will get easier after time! \**

***\*The important part of this activity is the reflection afterwards. Students will call out and talk without holding the talking piece for the first few months of community building time. This is completely normal and to be expected. Discuss with your students how they think they did with the "respect the talking piece" guideline after every activity you do in circle and this will increase student reflection and investment in your circle.***

## Week 1-Day 4

### **Exercise: Meetings and Greetings**

**Purpose:** Students will be able to engage in an activity in community building circle. This day will be a good opportunity to practice controlled bodies in circle as well as relational building between students.

### **Recommended Activity Steps:**

- 1) *Practice transition developed from day 1, make this transition engaging and special for students so that they start to develop excitement for community building circles*
- 2) *Sit in circle and fist-to-five check in with how transition(s) went*
- 3) *Ask all participants to standing in a circle facing inward. The first student (or the teacher can demonstrate first) steps into the circle, then turns to the left, and faces the next student on his/her left.*
- 4) *The person in the middle then says a greeting (hi, hello, what's up, hola, nice to see you, etc.) and either gives a wave, high five, handshake, or a light fist bump. This first individual then moves around the circle and greets one student after another until returning to his/her place in the circle.*
- 5) *The second person follows behind the first person and greets each person in the same manner until reaching his/her place back in the circle. The participants will naturally follow one another and "snake" around the interior of the circle until the entire line is completed. Each circle participant should give and receive a handshake, light fist bump, or other safe touch if they feel ready to participate.*
- 6) *Once everyone has had the opportunity to give a greeting, bring the class back together in circle*
- 8) *Discuss with students (using the talking piece)*
  - a. *Did we all have the same greeting? Why is being different important?*
  - b. *What did you like about the activity?*

***\*Because of the eye contact, the smiles, the safe human touch, and one-on-one connections, the students naturally acknowledge the value of the other individual. This is also a great time to invite students to say a greeting in their home language to increase cultural awareness of others and make all students feel welcome.***

## Week 1-Day 5

### **Exercise: Step in Step Out**

**Purpose:** Students will be able to engage in an activity in community building circle. It's important that the first week of community building circles is fun, engaging, and purposeful. Students are at the beginning stage of developing routines for community building that will deepen over time. This activity can be used for many different types of circles during the year.

### **Recommended Activity Steps:**

- 1) *Practice transition developed from day 1, make this transition engaging and special for students so that they start to develop excitement for community building circles*
- 2) *Sit in circle and fist-to-five check in with how transition(s) went*
- 3) *Step In Step Out Activity \**
  - a. *Explain to students that they will be hearing a list of statements. If the statement is true for them, they take one step into the circle for a few moments*
  - b. *The teacher will start with some statements like these:*
    - i. *If you have siblings step in*
    - ii. *If you are the youngest of your family step in*
    - iii. *If your favorite season is summer step in*
    - iv. *If you like dogs more than cats step in*
  - c. *Be creative with the statements and then offer up the possibility for students to create statements! This will increase buy-in and student voice. Practice having the speaker use the talking piece to develop routines.*
    - i. *You can also bring an element of silliness into the game by having students jump into the circle, dance into the circle, etc.*
- 4) *When engagement starts to dwindle, ask a question that brings everyone into the circle (ex. "If you are in second grade step in") and then transition back to their seat in circle*
- 5) *Reflect on the activity with the class*
  - a. *Did you see others with the same answer? Different?*
  - b. *Why is it important that we have some of the same things in common?*
  - c. *Why is it important that we all had some different answers?*

***This activity really allows students to make connections with their peers and their teacher. By allowing students to see how similar they might be to their peers it is increasing the relational safety of the classroom. The more comfortable students feel with one another, the stronger the classroom community becomes.***

## *Week 2: Overview*

### ***Purpose:***

The purpose of week 2 is to start developing meaningful connections between students and adults in a classroom. Trust needs to be established so that students feel as though they are in a safe place to share, these activities were designed to generate meaningful conversation and reflection while creating a positive classroom environment.

### ***Tips:***

These activities require more movement and more energy than the previous weeks which can create more off-task behaviors. This is to be expected during the second week of school and should be met with some discussion and accountability. When an activity starts to de-rail, pause, come back to the circle, and problem solve with your students. Allow them to try it again if they have reflected meaningfully. The more responsive we can be at the beginning of the school year, the better.

### ***Adaptations:***

A few of these activities will require patience of your students if they are not selected. For example, with “Who started it” only one student will be asked to guess at a time. This will be challenging for some students who really want to be chosen. Extending these activities over multiple days or incorporating similar elements into your circle might be a way to ensure student investment. However, be aware that your circles don’t turn into “game time” for students as they meant to be places to share and build relationships with one another.

## Week 2-Day 1

### **Exercise: Who Started It?**

**Purpose:** Students will practice the expectations for the talking piece. The talking piece is a crucial element of community building circles, going over the importance of this tool will be critical to do early and often in the school year.

### **Recommended Activity Steps:**

- 1) *Practice transition developed from day 1, make this transition engaging and special for students so that they start to develop excitement for community building circles*
- 2) *Revisit Posted Guideline “Respect the talking piece”*
- 3) *Check in Round with talking piece:*
  - a. *Explain to students that every day from now on when we start circle the circle keeper will start with a check in question, these questions are a way to get to know each other. Remind students of right to pass.*
  - b. *Ask: “What is your favorite breakfast food?” then send the talking piece around the circle and everyone has an opportunity to share in one word*
- 4) *Explain the game*
  - a. *One participant leaves the room. The rest of the participants remain in the room and decide to do start a pattern of a group action. The participant who has left the room then returns and observes the actions of the rest of the participants. The returning student attempts to guess which participant started the activity. \**
    - i. *For example, one student may decide to clap a certain beat or make a silly facial expression. It is up to the imagination of the participant(s) as to what activity they select.*
- 5) *Explain that in circle sometimes we won’t use the talking piece.*
  - a. *“Suspend” or “Pause” the talking piece by placing it on the floor or on a table*
- 6) *Start Playing “Who started it?” (what will most likely happen is when the student returning starts to guess students will all shout out at once)*
- 7) *Play the game for a few rounds and then reflect*
- 8) *Every student will want to be the one sent out of the room so have this game in your back pocket as an activity to use throughout the day as a quick energy booster*
- 9) *Quick reflection popcorn style with the talking piece*
  - a. *Was that game fun? Why?*

**\*You may need to help younger students think of ideas if they are stuck or provide options**

**Prep:**

As the students arrive in the morning ask them to tell you their favorite animal and then either you or the student write down the answers to these three questions on a name tag- 1. What color it is 2. Where it lives 3. What it eats

## Week 2-Day 2

### **Exercise: Animal Detectives**

**Purpose: Students will be able to communicate with one another to solve a problem.**

Students by the second week should start feeling comfortable asking questions of one another. This activity is great to get students moving and engaging with one another.

### **Recommended Activity Steps:**

- 1) *Practice transition developed from day 1, make this transition engaging and special for students so that they start to develop excitement for community building circles*
- 2) *Revisit Posted Guideline “Respect the talking piece”*
- 3) *Check in question with talking piece: “What is your favorite meal to make/eat with your family?”*
- 4) *Explain to students the premise of the game*
  - a. *You each have three adjectives on your name tag*
  - b. *You will walk around for 5-10 minutes and try to guess what animal is written on other’s name tags \*\**
- 5) *Reflect on the game whole class using the talking piece*
  - a. *What was easy about that game?*
  - b. *What was challenging?*
  - c. *Share out of adjectives and animal for each person*
  - d. *Did anyone else have your same animal?*

**\* For younger students: have them think of their favorite animal, the class then walks around the room acting out their animal and others have to guess, when the animal is guessed they can either choose another one or go sit in circle**

**\*\* Students may struggle thinking of questions to ask their peers. Have a brief discussion on what sort of questions may help them. Ex “Does your animal fly or swim? Does it live in the hot or cold?” This may even be a great opportunity to teach open-ended versus closed questions.**

## Week 2-Day 3

**Prep:**

Print out Roving Reporter form  
from appendix A

### **Exercise: Roving Reporters**

**Purpose:** Students will be able to learn more about their peers and teacher through asking and answering intentional questions. Since it is still early in the school year it is important that students get to know one another through community building times and feel included.

### **Recommended Activity Steps:**

- 1) Practice transition developed from day 1, make this transition engaging and special for students so that they start to develop excitement for community building circles
- 2) Revisit Posted Guideline “Respect the talking piece”
- 3) Check In Question “What is your favorite game at recess?”
- 4) Roving Reporters Activity:
  - a. Have students develop a group list of questions that are written on the board.
  - b. Then each reporter selects 2 questions he or she wants to ask from the list.
    - i. Examples “What sports do you play? When is your birthday?”
  - c. Once reporters have each decided on their two questions, the group mingles and interviews one another. As reporters do their interviews, they write down the person’s name and take some notes about the answer.
- 5) Before starting, ask: “How do we make sure that everyone gets asked a question? How do we make sure no one is left out?”
- 6) 5-10 minutes for “Reporting Rovers”
- 7) If students want to share out what they learned about someone do a popcorn share out with the talking piece
- 8) There may be students that didn’t get asked a question. This is a great opportunity to discuss inclusion with your students.
  - a. Ask class “How did we do today including everyone?”
  - b. “Why is it important to include others?”\*

**\*The responses from the last question will help shape the next guideline that you will create for your class regarding community building time so write down or make note of responses on anchor chart paper or on the white board.**



## Week 2-Day 4

### Exercise: “No Hands” Stand Up

**Purpose: Students will be able to work together to complete a task.** This is another activity that can generate some great reflection afterwards with your students. As students engage in the activity pay attention for those that are struggling as a topic for reflection afterwards.

### Recommended Activity Steps:

- 1) *Practice transition developed from day 1, make this transition engaging and special for students so that they start to develop excitement for community building circles*
- 2) *Revisit Posted Guideline “Respect the talking piece”*
- 3) *Check in question with talking piece “What is your favorite movie or cartoon?”*
- 4) *Have the entire group break up into two-person pairs. The pairs will sit on the floor, back pressed to back. The pairs of people must stand up without using their hands.*
- 5) *After the first two pairs stand up, have them find another pair.*
- 6) *Then, all four persons must sit down and stand up together. \**
- 7) *Go on as such until the entire group is together and have everyone try to stand up. This is a good game to promote teamwork and is a great energizer*
- 8) *This is a really fun and silly activity for students and will increase the energy level in the room. To bring students back down after playing practice some mindfulness activities:*
  - a. *Deep breathing*
  - b. *Grounding (what do you see, hear, smell, feel)*
  - c. *Meditation (3 deep breaths with eyes closed)*
  - d. *Yoga/Stretching*
- 9) *Class Reflection*
  - a. *What was easy about that game?*
  - b. *What was hard?*
  - c. *Why is it important to work together? \*\**

***\*This game is really silly and can cause an increase in the energy level of the room. If the class starts to get wild or unsafe, pause and discuss in circle how to re-set and try again.***

***\*\*The responses from this question will help shape the next guideline that you will create for your class regarding community building time so write down or make note of responses on anchor chart paper or on the white board.***

## Week 2-Day 5

**Prep:**

*Find manipulatives that can be passed easily around the circle*

### **Exercise: Introduction Pieces**

**Purpose:** Students will have the opportunity share out information about themselves to the class. This day will be a talking-heavy community building circle and will be a great opportunity for students to practice attentive listening with one another.

### **Recommended Activity Steps:**

- 1) *Practice transition developed from day 1, make this transition engaging and special for students so that they start to develop excitement for community building circles*
- 2) *Revisit Posted Guideline “Respect the talking piece”*
- 3) *Check in question with talking piece “What is your favorite game you like to play?”*
- 4) *Facilitator will need a bag of manipulatives such as marbles, counting pieces, dried beans, Legos, etc.*
- 5) *Facilitator directs the participants to pass around the bag in a clockwise direction.*
- 6) *Participants must take at least one item but can take no more than 3 items*
- 7) *When the bag has been fully passed around the circle, the facilitator will give the next direction.*
- 8) *Participants will be informed that, for every piece they took, they can tell one thing about themselves (it could be a talent, place where they traveled, favorite vacation, factoid about their family, their likes/dislikes, sports/interests, etc.). For example, if a person took 2 pieces, then they can tell the circle 2 things about themselves. (you may need to give ideas students on what to share)*
- 9) *Before students share, discuss with class what it means to be a good listener*
  - a. *Ex; calm bodies, eyes of the speaker*
- 10) *Make sure you remind students on the right to pass, this is also a great time to incorporate sentence stems to help students share out See Appendix C for examples.*
- 11) *When everyone has had a chance to share praise students for their attentive listening if applicable or discuss how to listen better next time\**

***\*The responses from this question will help shape the guidelines that you will create for your class next week. Write down or make note of responses on anchor chart paper or on the white board to revisit as a class.***

## *Week 3: Overview*

### ***Purpose:***

Week 3 is all about classroom communities learning more about one another. Activities this week center around sharing, which can be vulnerable for students. Try modeling activities first for them where applicable, and reminding about the right to pass, so that students feel more comfortable. Plus, students will love learning more about you.

**This week you will also start choosing your own check-in questions, Appendix B has great suggestions for this. You could create a “question wall” or “drop box” where students can suggest fun and engaging questions for circle time!**

### ***Tips:***

Behaviors may start to ramp up as the novelty of circles wears off, this is normal and to be expected. Try to create circle spaces that are welcoming while also creating high-expectations. It's okay if students need a break from the circle setting, this should be their decision if they need to take a break from circle. As soon as they are calm and ready to try again, invite them back. No one should be excluded from the circle process as a punishment from earlier behavior or choices. The circle should be accessible to all students regardless of earlier choices, circles are not a “privilege” to be earned.

### ***Adaptations:***

Some of these activities incorporate whole-class sharing which can sometimes be lengthy, there is a strategy to teach students called “say just enough” that is introduced in day 5, which you can teach whenever is necessary. Also utilize the time after lunch to continue discussion or share outs, as well as end of the day if it fits into your schedule. These activities designed in this guide don't have to only live in community building circles. Feel free to use them as “brain breaks” or transition activities if energy is down in the room or students need a break.

If students are eager to share, praise that! It is also okay to acknowledge that there are others in the room with stories to tell and that you will be in circle every day so there will be a chance for everyone to share.

## Week 3-Day 1

### **Exercise: Community Building Purpose**

**Purpose:** Students will discuss the purpose of community building time. By the third week of school, talk with your class about why you meet in circle every day and get your students feedback on what community building time may mean to them.

### **Recommended Activity Steps**

- 1) *Practice transition developed from day 1, make this transition engaging and special for students so that they start to develop excitement for community building circles*
- 2) *Revisit Posted Guideline “Respect the talking piece”*
- 3) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)\**
- 4) *Explain community circle purpose to students (see example points 1-3 below)\*\**
  - a. *POINT #1: “Healthy Relationships. Community Building Circles help us to build healthy relationships and friendships with each other.”*
  - b. *POINT #2: Safety. “Every member of the circle helps others to feel safe. Circle time should be a safe place for our bodies and our minds”*
  - c. *POINT #3: Trust. “Community Building Circles is to help us build TRUST in our classroom. When we trust each other we can work together.”*
- 5) *Ask question with the talking piece: What class your favorite class? Who was your favorite teacher?*
- 6) *Look for themes in student answers from the previous question, connect back to why we sit in circle each morning.*

***\*It’s a great idea to create a system in your classroom where students can suggest check in questions. Students can write questions and drop them into a box to be used in circle***

***\*\*It is important to ask students for their opinions on what community building time means to them and why they think that the class has been meeting in the morning. This will be valuable information for you and increase reflection with your students.***

## Week 3-Day 2

### Exercise: “When the Wind Blows”

**Purpose:** Students will have the opportunity listen to their peers and share information about themselves. Again, this activity focuses on student’s ability to listen to each other carefully to participate with a discussion at the end that makes the activity meaningful

### Recommended Activity Steps

- 1) *Practice transition developed from day 1, make this transition engaging and special for students so that they start to develop excitement for community building circles*
- 2) *Revisit Posted Guideline “Respect the talking piece”*
- 3) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)*
- 4) *Explain musical chairs activity*
- 5) *Chairs should be set around the circle to match the number of participants. One chair should be removed, leaving one fewer chair than the total number of participants. One individual will be standing in the center of the circle. The person in the middle of the circle will state a sentence stem and then say something which is true about himself or herself. The sentence stem should be something like: “The wind blows if...” For all participants in the circle for whom the statement is also true, those individuals must get up and move to a different chair.*
- 6) *Facilitators should direct those individuals to select any other chair in the circle besides their own chairs and the chairs on either side of them. After each sentence stem, one participant will be without a chair. Then, that participant will state the sentence stem with a new thing that is true about himself / herself.*
- 7) *Play game for 5-10 Minutes*
- 8) *Discussion with the talking piece \**
  - a. *Did you learn something new about someone today?*
  - b. *Did you have to listen during the game?*
  - c. *Why is it important that we listen to one another during circle?*

**\*The discussion that occurs after activities in circle is where the real teachable moment occurs. Be aware of time while in community circle activities to leave 5 minutes at the end for class discussion. This can be popcorn style sharing where students raise their hand and are tossed the talking piece or can be a question round where the talking piece is sent around the circle. To help students feel comfortable, share out first to questions you ask of the group.**

## Week 3-Day 3

### Exercise: Creating Our Circle Guidelines

**Purpose:** Students will create guidelines for community circle time collaboratively. It is important to create class guidelines for community building circles so that the circle feels safe for individuals to share. The guidelines created in this lesson will be used for every circle.

### Recommended Activity Steps

- 1) *Practice transition developed from day 1, make this transition engaging and special for students so that they start to develop excitement for community building circles*
- 2) *Revisit Posted Guideline “Respect the talking piece”*
- 3) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)*
- 4) *Explain to students that today will be a bit different, as a class you will be creating guidelines for community circles*
- 5) *Explain to students that guidelines are the way that we want to treat ourselves and others during community circle time*
- 6) *Show the guideline “Respect the talking piece” explain to students that this is the first guideline for how we want to act in the circle, we will be creating a few more today as a class*
- 7) *Question Round (send the talking piece around to everyone in the circle)*
  - a. *How do you want to treat others in the circle OR how do you want to be treated in the circle? (remind students to respect the talking piece if needed and that they have the right to pass but you really would like to hear from everyone)*
  - b. *Synthesize responses into guidelines (see Community Building Circle Guide for a list of common circle guidelines) \**
- 8) *Your class should have 3-5 guidelines, these should be written down on a piece of paper and made visible for every circle. It is a good idea to laminate these.*
- 9) *Play a game if time (step in step out, who started it, etc.) See appendix C for additional ideas*
- 10) *Reflect with the class how they did practicing their new guidelines*

**\*You may need to help students generate ideas for what the guidelines of circle should be (especially for younger grades) try reflective listening. For example, you could say to a student “I’m hearing you say that you want to be nice to others, do you think that we could create a guideline called ‘treat others the way you want to be treated’?”**

## Week 3-Day 4

### Exercise: “Line Up”

**Purpose:** Students will be able to practice determining their feelings towards specific scenarios. This is a great activity that will build trust between. Try to keep the questions low-risk at first and then if students are ready you can increase the risk. This is also a great way to determine likes/dislikes of your students.

### Recommended Activity Steps:

**PREP:** put a line of masking tape down the middle of the room, or create an imaginary line

- 1) Practice transition developed from day 1, make this transition engaging and special for students so that they start to develop excitement for community building circles
- 2) **Revisit your room’s community circle guidelines** (now that you’ve built these with your class, revisit them daily and have students explain what they mean)
- 3) Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)
- 4) Explain line up game
  - a. The teacher will start by stating something they really like/dislike
    - i. Ex “I really like chocolate”
  - b. Students will then place themselves on the line. One end is like/agree the other side is dislike/disagree. They can either pick an end or be somewhere in the middle if they somewhat agree. Adapt this language for younger students if needed to “Yes, No, and Maybe”
- 5) Play the game for 5/10 minutes
  - a. Examples of statements
    - i. I love to play soccer, I love Tacos, I dislike the rain
    - ii. My favorite movie is CoCo, my favorite food is pizza
    - iii. Winter is the best season, Chocolate chip cookies are the best
  - b. Students may disagree with others place on the line, instead of shutting that behavior down engage in a classroom discussion on people having different likes and interests in circle to reflect. See below. \*

**\*Save 5 minutes at the end to discuss a fictional scenario where someone was on the line and another person was making fun of them for their choice. Ask your students if this represents the guidelines that you created yesterday. Engage in a discussion on how it’s okay for people to disagree and still be friends.**



## Week 3-Day 5

### Exercise: VIP Portrait

**Purpose:** Students will be able to share out about a person that is special to them.

### Recommended Activity Steps:

- 1) *Practice transition developed from day 1, make this transition engaging and special for students so that they start to develop excitement for community building circles*
- 2) *Revisit your room's community circle guidelines*
- 3) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)*
- 4) *Explain to students the VIP activity*
  - a. *"You will have ten minutes to draw a picture of someone who is really important to you, it could be a family member, a friend, an adult you really trust*
  - b. *We will then come back into circle as pass the talking piece around in a circle*
  - c. *You will have a chance to share out who you drew for your VIP if you want"*
- 5) *Give students paper and drawing utensils*
- 6) *10 minutes to draw*
- 7) *Transition back into circle*
- 8) *5-10 minutes to share (you can also continue to share later in the day if needed)*
  - a. *It will be important that students have the opportunity to share but that they also don't talk for so long that you run out of time to get to the others*
  - b. *To teach this write the words "**Say just enough**" on the board or anchor chart*
  - c. *Explain to students that saying just enough means that you are able to say what you feel and think but not too much*
    - i. *Use the metaphor of filling up a glass of water when you're thirsty*
    - ii. *If you only pour a little in you will still be thirsty*
    - iii. *If you keep pouring the water, it will spill all over the table*
    - iv. *You need just enough in the cup*
- 9) *Ask students "Did you learn something new about your classmates today?" (thumbs up or down)*

***\*It might be a good idea to have some sort of a visual cue for students so that they know when it is time to wrap up and move onto the next person. This could be a piece of paper you hold up with a clock on it, a finger sign, or a soft auditory cue. Decide what will work best for your students and then you will have a system for ensuring equitable talking time in circle.***

## *Week 4: Overview*

### ***Purpose:***

This week will be the final week where students are learning about the elements of circle and really get to start practicing them. This is also a week where the risk-level of questions and activities increases. Circles should be the time to build and maintain classroom communities, so the questions and activities should be meaningful in order to promote sharing.

### ***Tips:***

As risk and rigor of circle content increases, so will the potential for discomfort. Remember that when circles are quiet, and students aren't engaging in the activities, this may be a sign that students might not feel comfortable sharing. Also, be aware of students that are really loud or silly during circle, this can also be a sign that they are experiencing some nervousness around sharing in circle. Some of these activities in this week require patience and listening skills. Some students may struggle, support all participants of a circle by revisiting the guidelines frequently.

### ***Adaptations:***

Some of these activities can and should be extended over 2 or possibly 3 days. Circles can be broken up if students really want to share and there isn't enough time. If you do break up a circle up over two days, be sure to keep the same elements of community building circles (Transition, opening, check in question) so that it feels consistent and routine for students.

## Week 4-Day 1

### Exercise: “Bookends: Opening and Closing a circle”

**Purpose:** Students will learn the purpose and practices of opening and closing a circle.

Teaching students explicitly the different elements of a circle provide them with the frameworks to lead circles themselves and create meaning for the circle process.

### Recommended Activity Steps

- 1) *Transition into circle*
- 2) *Explain the purpose of having an opening and a closing for circle*
  - a. *“This is a way for us to prepare our minds and bodies to be in circle, and to transition out when it’s time to get back to our regular day”*
  - b. *“This is important because circles are special places where we get to share with one another and having an opening can help you feel ready to participate in circle and get you feeling ready for your day”*
- 3) *Explain to students the different type of openings: \**
  - a. *Mindfulness practice (breathing, yoga, meditation, etc.)*
  - b. *A chime or bell*
  - c. *A song (either playing a song or having students sing/create one)*
  - d. *A chant/phrase everyone says*
  - e. *A quote or poem*
  - f. *Any other meaningful opening you and your students decide on*
- 4) *Pick an opening for the circle and walk your students through it*
- 5) *Revisit the room’s community circle guidelines (should be visible)*
- 6) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)*
- 7) *Quick activity if time (see Appendix C for suggestions)*
- 8) *Closing (choose the same activity you used for an opening)*

***\*This is a great opportunity to ask your students what makes them feel calm. This could be done popcorn style and provides insight to student’s needs. If students help create the opening and closing elements of a circle they are much more likely to be invested in participating. This is a great practice to do every morning before and after circle, it is a trauma-informed practice as well as it gives students a moment to self-regulate.***

## Week 4-Day 2

### Exercise: Quilt Making

**Purpose:** Students will engage in a community building activity to create artistic elements to be used as a potential center piece.

### Recommended Activity Steps

- 1) *Transition into circle*
- 2) *Open circle (chime, song, deep breathing, etc.)*
- 3) *Revisit the room's community circle guidelines (should be visible)*
- 4) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)*
- 5) *Explain quilt making activity*
  - a. *Students will get a small square of paper (roughly 2x2 or 3x3 will work)*
  - b. *They will create a picture on the quilt*
    - i. *It could be a self-portrait, an item or activity that is special to them, or a design of their choice just as long as it represents them*
  - c. *When all of the quilt squares have been made they will be hole punched on each side and then strung together (it might be a good idea to laminate squares if you have the time)*
  - d. *Eventually the quilt will become the centerpiece of the circle*
- 6) *Allow students 10 minutes to draw/color their quilt*
- 7) *Bring students back into circle and have them share out using talking piece what they drew and why (it's okay if students haven't finished, just have them share out what progress they've made and what it will be when it's finished) \**
- 8) *Explain to students that this quilt will be in the center of the circle every time the class meets to:*
  - a. *Remind us how we are all different*
  - b. *Show how we are all connected*
  - c. *Give us something to look at and center the circle*
- 9) *Close circle*

**\*Make sure that you allow new students who enter the class throughout the year an opportunity to make their quilt piece. Centerpieces should have meaning to the circle, by having students involved in creating the center piece, they have ownership in the circle space and will be more invested in community building time.**

## Week 4-Day 3

**Prep:**

Have a stack of index cards with a number from 1-5 written on them.

### **Exercise: Colors and Numbers**

**Purpose: Students will share out in groups about their families.**

#### **Recommended Activity Steps:**

- 1) *Transition into circle*
- 2) *Open circle (chime, song, deep breathing, etc.)*
- 3) *Revisit the room's community circle guidelines (should be visible)*
- 4) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)*
- 5) *Each participant selects one index card with a number on it.*
  - a. *Everyone who has the same number on their card will go find each other and sit together (all number 1's go a part of the room, 2's go elsewhere, etc.)*
- 6) *Each group will answer this question in their groups one at a time "Who are you closest to in your family?" (allow 3 minutes to answer)*
- 7) *Next, ask the groups to form, no longer by number, but by getting together into groups that have every number (1,2,3,4,5)*
- 8) *Each group will answer this question in their groups one at a time "What is something that you like to do with your family?" (allow 3 minutes to answer)*
- 9) *Gather back in circle whole group*
- 10) *Whole class discussion popcorn-style using the talking piece:*
  - a. *Did you have the same answer as someone in your group?*
  - b. *Did you have different answers?*
  - c. *What was something interesting that you learned about someone's family in your group?*
- 11) *Close circle*

***\*The activities this week begin to ask more challenging questions of students and for them to share out more about their background and family. As a teacher, it can be helpful if you are modeling this with students. Intentionally place yourself in group discussions that seem quiet. Share first your response to the questions to engage students in discussion. Also, this is a great way to break the class up into smaller groups for sharing. Keep this as a strategy for the year!***

## Week 4-Day 4

### Exercise: Human Chain

**Purpose:** Students will participate in a team building exercise with each other.

### Recommended Activity Steps:

- 1) *Transition into circle*
- 2) *Open circle (chime, song, deep breathing, etc.)*
- 3) *Revisit the room's community circle guidelines (should be visible)*
- 4) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)*
- 5) *Explain the activity*
  - a. *The teacher will start with a statement like "Find a buddy who is wearing jeans"*
  - b. *Students will have to find a buddy that is also wearing jeans and link arms together*
  - c. *The teacher will continue with another statement like "Find or join a buddy pair that likes to eat cereal for breakfast"*
  - d. *Students without a buddy can either find one person or join a buddy team*
  - e. *Continue with statements until the entire class has formed a human chain*
- 6) *Transition back to circle and discuss how chains are strong because they formed of many links, just like the classroom is strong because it's formed of many people*
- 7) *Explain to students that when the whole class comes together we are stronger than when we are by ourselves*
- 8) *Ask students "What makes our classroom strong?"*
  - a. *For younger grades you might need to ask, "What do you like about our classroom?"*
- 9) *If time play the game again with a student leading*
- 10) *Close circle*

***\*With activities that require movement, students will have a higher level of energy which may result in un-desired behavior like running or yelling. Instead of shutting down the activity, pause and have students discuss what is going on and what needs to be "reset "as a class. Allow students to try it again. If problems still occur, talk about the activity in circle for your discussion.***

## Week 4-Day 5

**Prep:**

*Cut rectangular colored strips of paper for students*

### **Exercise: Human Chain Part 2**

**Purpose: Students will determine their strengths.**

#### **Recommended Activity Steps:**

- 1) *Transition into circle*
- 2) *Open circle (chime, song, deep breathing, etc.)*
- 3) *Revisit the room's community circle guidelines (should be visible)*
- 4) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)*
- 5) *Revisit game from yesterday "Yesterday we made a human chain with our bodies, today we are going to make one with our strengths:*
  - a. *"Our strengths are what make us special, they are the things that we are proud of about ourselves or do really well."*
- 6) *Pass out strips of colored paper (roughly 2x6)*
- 7) *Explain to students that they will write their name on the piece of paper and then 3 strengths (have a list of adjectives on the board or projector)*
  - a. *Fill out one for yourself to demonstrate*
- 8) *Give students 5 minutes to write their name and their strengths\**
- 9) *Transition back into circle*
- 10) *Go around the circle with the talking piece and allow students to share out*
- 11) *When everyone has had the opportunity to share, take a stapler and staple each link together to form a paper chain*
- 12) *Again, explain to students that you are all stronger together than you are alone*
- 13) *Hang the chain somewhere in your room for students to look at*
- 14) *Close the circle*

***\*This activity might be challenging for some students who don't feel comfortable describing their attributes, or don't have the vocabulary or cognitive skills. Help those who are struggling by making observations on what strengths you think they possess and why. Not only will this help students feel comfortable but will be a great way to develop meaningful connections between you and your students.***



## *Week 5: Overview*

### ***Purpose:***

The activities this week lead up to a culminating activity on Friday that focuses on defining community. This is a large and complex concept for some students so be sure to use the word community intentionally during the week to prepare. Students will practice sharing personal details about themselves this week, so it will be important for students to be reminded what an “active listener” looks like. Also please remind students that they always have the right to pass in circle and are never forced to share.

### ***Tips:***

This week will provide space for meaningful sharing from your students. Listen attentively to what they share-out in circle to gain insight to their background, interests, and personality. This will be a good opportunity to practice giving intentional feedback as a circle keeper both verbal and non-verbal so that students feel encouraged to feel open and share. This could be as simple as a thumbs up, a “thank you for sharing” or “mhm” after a student speaks in circle.

### ***Adaptations:***

Some of these activities can take longer than 20 minutes, extended activities that keep student interest and engagement up. Another great adaptation is for day 4, use whatever the students bring in that day for a talking piece for the next few weeks if applicable. This will make students feel valued and excited for circle process if their objects are being used during community building time.

## Week 5-Day 1

### Exercise: Friendship sentence stems

**Purpose:** Students will share out attributes of what makes a good friend.

#### **Recommended Activity Steps:**

- 1) *Transition into circle*
- 2) *Open circle (chime, song, deep breathing, etc.)*
- 3) *Revisit the room's community circle guidelines (should be visible)*
- 4) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)*
- 5) *Choose two or three sentences that pertain to the friendship theme or create a sentence \*stem of your own. The sentence stems need to be age appropriate. (See Appendix B for sentence stem ideas)*
- 6) *Have 2 rounds of discussion with sentence stems \*\**
- 7) *Close circle*
  - a. *(you could also extend this activity to have students create a piece of artwork with what a good friend looks like to them)*

**\* Be mindful that students are learning skills such as public speaking, developing confidence, and developing a vocabulary to express their thoughts and feelings. Younger children may tend to copy the statements of others until they progress towards more confidence. Therefore, it may be wise to begin with less risky sentence stems before moving to sentence stems that will require more depth and sharing.**

**\*\*This is a more traditional model of circle. Students may be a bit more fidgety than usual since it is less active and more based on discussion. Encourage students to respect the circle guidelines and show one another respect in the circle. If conversation is running long, shorten the circle to only one question.**

## Week 5-Day 2

### **Prep:**

*Have strips/pieces of colored paper cut up and in a bag. You could also use blocks, Legos, or any other colored manipulatives you have*

### **Exercise: Color Share Out**

**Purpose:** Students will share out positively about themselves.

### **Recommended Activity Steps:**

- 1) *Transition into circle*
- 2) *Open circle (chime, song, deep breathing, etc.)*
- 3) *Revisit the room's community circle guidelines (should be visible)*
- 4) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)*
- 5) *Provide a bag of colored pieces of paper (or colored Legos or manipulatives) in a bag or in a bowl. Each participant selects two, holding them in their hands. Depending upon the colors they selected, each participant shares one thing, such as: \**
  - a. RED: What is something that you like about yourself?
  - b. ORANGE: What is something you do well?
  - c. YELLOW: Tell about something you've done that you feel proud about.
  - d. BLUE: What is something that you want to become better at?
  - e. GREEN: What is one word would your good friend use to describe you?
  - f. BROWN: Tell one favorite place and why.
- 6) *Close circle*

***\*For younger students this activity may need some differentiation. Students might need less colors or sentence stems or word banks to choose from to help them answer the question. Again, as always in circle, allow for the right to pass. Students may also change out their color strips if it makes them feel more comfortable sharing.***

***For example:***

***Limit the color choices to three and provide sentence stems for each color as seen below:***

***"Something I like about myself is..."***

***"My favorite place is..."***

## Week 5-Day 3

### Exercise: Concentric Circles

**Purpose:** Students will take turns sharing and listening on a particular topic.

#### Recommended Activity Steps:

- 1) *Transition into circle*
- 2) *Open circle (chime, song, deep breathing, etc.)*
- 3) *Revisit the room's community circle guidelines (should be visible)*
- 4) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)*
- 5) *The participants are separated into two groups. One group stands shoulder to shoulder, forming an inner circle facing outwards. The other group forms an inner circle facing outwards. The other group forms an outer circle facing inwards. The facilitator gives a sentence stem to one of the circles (inner or outer) such as:\**
  - a. *The difference between cats and dogs is...*
  - b. *A fruit or vegetable you like is...*
  - c. *Something you like to do in your free time is...*
  - d. *I think that a good teacher is...*
  - e. *The best part about school is...*
- 6) *The outer circle then rotates around the stationery inner circle spending a minute or so facing each person in the inner circle answering the prompt together*
- 7) *Play for 10 minutes.*
- 8) *Close the circle*

**\* The exercise provides for movement and a different level of sharing. Also, as participants state their reactions to different sentence stems or issues, they will have an opportunity to repeat themselves and increase their ability to articulate themselves. You can use one of the sample questions or increase the rigor depending on student ability and openness.**

**\*\*This is a great opportunity to remind students how to be an active listener (ex. nodding head, body language, and eye contact**

## Week 5-Day 4

**Prep:**

Send home a letter to students on Monday encouraging students to bring in an item for show and tell

### **Exercise: Show and Tell**

**Purpose:** Students will share something with personal importance to them with the class.

### **Recommended Activity Steps:**

- 1) *Transition into circle*
- 2) *Open circle (chime, song, deep breathing, etc.)*
- 3) *Revisit the room's community circle guidelines (should be visible)*
- 4) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)*
- 5) *The teacher will ask students to bring something into class that represents their family or something important to them. Encourage students to be creative. For example, students could play a song to the class that their family loves or bring in a picture from their favorite trip or tell a special story about a cherished family memory.*
  - a. *If a student isn't able to bring something in they can choose between drawing a picture of an item that is special to them or choosing something in the room that they like/enjoy and share why*
- 6) *Students will take turns sharing their items and corresponding stories.*
  - a. *This is a great opportunity to revisit the guideline "Share just enough" with your students*
- 7) *If circle goes long, revisit later in the day or the following morning.*
- 8) *Close circle*

***\* This exercise is a standard activity for youth, but it has significant meaning in a classroom because students share a part of their personal histories with their peers. This will help them learn more about each other to improve the classroom environment. Students will observe and build upon both their commonalities and individuality. As a teacher, bring in something important to you and also share with the class!***

## Week 5-Day 5

**Prep:**

Print community circle sheets found in appendix A. You may want to draw one first to model.

**Exercise: “What a community means to me”**

**Purpose: Students will be able to create visual representations of different communities.**

**Recommended Activity Steps:**

- 1) *Transition into circle*
- 2) *Open circle (chime, song, deep breathing, etc.)*
- 3) *Revisit the room’s community circle guidelines (should be visible)*
- 4) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)*
- 5) *Explain to students that today they will be drawing a picture of what a community means to them*
  - a. *They will draw themselves in the center circle*
  - b. *Family and friends in the circle outside of that*
  - c. *Their classroom and school in the circle outside of that*
  - d. *Their neighborhood in the background*
- 6) *Give students 10/15 minutes to draw (students will not finish in this time which is alright, this activity may take 2 days)*
- 7) *Gather back in circle, and explain that community can mean many different things*
  - a. *“Community is all of the different places that a person can live, work, learn, and make friends with another person”*
  - b. *“Sometime a community is an actual place like a school or park, and sometimes it’s a group of people that make a community together”*
  - c. *“The more that we learn about what the word community means the stronger and closer our classroom community becomes.”*
- 8) *If time: discuss with your students what communities they drew*
- 9) *Close circle*

***\*Allow students to be creative when they’re creating their communities. They can use pictures, words, they can write sentences. Whatever will allow them to best represent who is in their different communities. A way to extend this activity is to have all students can share out their communities.***

## *Week 6: Overview*

### ***Purpose:***

Week 6 is an important week of activities because it teaches students explicitly the elements of Restorative Practices. In order to build positive classroom culture, we need to include students in on the theory of Restorative Practices. If students better know why they are building community and feel invested, they will be much more willing to repair it if harm occurs.

### ***Tips:***

This week requires a lot of attention for students in the community circle time. They will need to practice their listening skills for the lessons in this week. You can explain that explicitly to students. This week you'll really need to remind students how important the community circle guidelines are and re-visit them in every circle .

### ***Adaptations:***

This is a great opportunity to invite your Restorative Practices TOSA or EA into your community building circle time. They could explain what their role is to students and be there to support conversation and role plays using the restorative questions and affective statements. It is important that we are teaching all students K-5 the importance of restorative practices, adapt these lessons as you see fit for your students. There are also some great opportunities for older/younger students to work together for these community building lessons if you have a buddy classroom or peer mentors.

**Prep:**

*Build or draw a house in the center of the circle.*

## Week 6-Day 1

### **Exercise: Defining Restorative Practices “Building a Strong House”**

**Purpose:** Students will be able to define what are restorative practices and how community building time has been building a strong classroom community.

#### **Recommended Activity Steps:**

- 1) *Transition into circle*
- 2) *Open circle (chime, song, deep breathing, etc.)*
- 3) *Revisit the room’s community circle guidelines (should be visible)*
- 4) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)*
- 5) *Define restorative practices for students (you may choose to do this in any language you see fit, below are some examples)*
  - a. *“Restorative practices are the ways that we build a strong classroom community where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued (explain to students that this can mean important)”*
  - b. *“When I say strong what I mean is that everyone feels like they can be themselves and that other people care about them”*
  - c. *Draw a picture of a house on the white board (or if you have blocks, build a house in the center of the circle) explain to students that “community building time has built our classroom to be really strong, just like this house”\**
- 6) *Discussion Round with the talking piece*
  - a. *“What makes our house strong?”*
  - b. *“Why is our classroom community strong?”*
    - i. *If students are confused ask “Do you feel like you care about others in the class and they care about you?”*
- 7) *Close circle*

**\* The metaphor of the classroom community being a house will be important for the circle tomorrow. Try to choose a check in question that is engaging but also pertains to the focus of the circle.**



## Week 6-Day 2

**Exercise: Defining Restorative Practices “How to Make Our House Stronger”**

**Purpose: Students will be able to understand how to use affective statements.**

**Recommended Activity Steps:**

- 1) *Transition into circle*
- 2) *Open circle (chime, song, deep breathing, etc.)*
- 3) *Revisit the room’s community circle guidelines (should be visible)*
- 4) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)*
- 5) *“Let’s revisit our house that we built yesterday, we said that it was strong because we care about each other and our class. Today we are going to learn how to make our classroom even stronger. We are going to learn about something called an affective statement”*
- 6) *“An affective statement is a way to tell someone how you feel”*
  - a. *Have the sentence frame available in an anchor chart*
    - i. *Sentence Frame: I feel...when you...*
- 7) *Model an example for students “I feel...proud...when you...respect the guidelines...during community circle”*
- 8) *Explain to students these statements can be positive (happy) or negative (sad) feelings\**
- 9) *Have students practice statements with partner \*\**
  - a. *Scenario 1: Someone shares part of their lunch with you*
  - b. *Scenario 2: The person next to you is tapping their pencil really loud*
  - c. *Scenario 3: A friend says you can’t play with them on the playground*
- 10) *Have students share out their responses to the circle*
- 11) *Explain that by using these statements we are making our house strong (can use visual metaphor by pointing out the roof of the house or the walls)*
- 12) *Close circle*

***\*Explain to students that happy and sad are basic feelings but we want to be really specific with what we’re feeling. Ex (frustrated, excited, annoyed, etc.)***

***\*\*Students will probably need a feelings list in order to express what the scenario is making them feel. Some students may also really struggle labeling what feelings the scenarios bring up. Adapt this activity to best suit the needs of the students in your classroom.***

## Week 6-Day 3

### **Exercise: Defining Restorative Justice “How to Fix Our House”**

**Purpose:** Students will be able to learn how to use restorative questions.

#### **Recommended Activity Steps:**

- 1) *Transition into circle*
- 2) *Open circle (chime, song, deep breathing, etc.)*
- 3) *Revisit the room’s community circle guidelines (should be visible)*
- 4) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)*
- 5) *Revisit the house (either drawing or model)*
  - a. *“What if something were to happen to our house? What if a big storm came in and took off part of the roof or broke a window?”*
  - b. *“We would have to repair our house. The word repair means fix! Just like houses can be harmed, people and communities can also be harmed.”*
- 6) *“Harm can look a lot of different ways, it could be harm to someone’s feelings, their body, it could even be harm to a classroom. When someone or a community is harmed we have to repair it. We can start to repair by asking these questions!”*
- 7) *Show restorative questions (these should be written on an anchor chart)*
  - a. *What happened?*
  - b. *What were you thinking at the time?*
  - c. *What have you thought about since*
  - d. *Who was affected? How?*
  - e. *What can you do to make things right?*
- 8) *Determine a situation to first model for your students (this could be a problem with peer/peer, student/teacher, or any other challenge you may be facing)*
- 9) *If time, give students 5 minutes to role play asking the questions \**
- 10) *Explain to students that these are going to be the questions that everyone in the community can use to repair harm when it happens*
- 11) *Close Circle*

**\*For younger students a role play may not be appropriate, this could be adapted into a whole class discussion. For the classes that do role-play, try picking a scenario that is a common occurrence in your classroom.**

## Week 6-Day 4

**Prep:**

Print a picture of the social discipline window that is found in appendix A

### Exercise: "Helping Tommy and Alex Problem Solve"

**Purpose:** Students will be introduced to the basic elements of the social discipline window.

#### Recommended Activity Steps:

- 1) Transition into circle
- 2) Open circle (chime, song, deep breathing, etc.)
- 3) Revisit the room's community circle guidelines (should be visible)
- 4) Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)
- 5) Explain to students the social discipline window
  - a. "In our classroom community we want to do things WITH each other. That means that we need to be kind to one another but also have limits and rules in our classroom that everyone understands We are going to practice today what it looks like to do things WITH other people"
- 6) Read the first scenario
  - a. "Sam just got into an argument with Alex out on the playground. They are both really angry and run up to you tell you what happened and ask you to pick a side"
- 7) Discuss with your class: \*
  - a. What would it look like to:
    - i. **Not** problem solve with them (not do anything)
    - ii. Problem solve **for** them (try to solve the problem for them)
    - iii. Tell them how **to** problem solve (tell them to figure it out on their own)
    - iv. Problem solve **with** them (try to help them problem solve and ask an adult to help)
- 8) Discussion with students "Why is it important that we work with other people to solve problems?"
- 9) Close circle

**\*For younger students it might be best to already have answered pre-prepared for your classroom and to have them try to put the responses into the right quadrant. Another really fun adaption for this activity is to have students play "four corners" where each of the quadrants (not, to, for, with) are corners in the classroom and when you read a scenario they move to a corner of the room.**

## Week 6-Day 5

**Prep:**

*Determine a space in your room that will be your peace zone (or whatever name you decide)*

### **Exercise: Finding Our Peace Zone and How to Use It**

**Purpose:** Students and teacher will discuss the calm spot in the classroom where students can de-escalate and be prepared to return back to the group.

### **Recommended Activity Steps:**

- 1) *Transition into circle*
- 2) *Revisit the room's community circle guidelines (should be visible)*
- 3) *Check in question (Choose a question from Appendix B or create your own)*
- 4) *Whole-Class Check In*
  - a. *"This week we have learned a LOT about how our classroom is a community and how we can repair the community when it is harmed"*
  - b. *"Today we are going to learn about where we can go to calm down so that we can repair the harm that might have happened"*
- 5) *Question Round with Talking Piece: "What does it feel like when you start to become angry? What do you need to help you calm down?"*
- 6) *Explain to students where the "peace zone" will be in the classroom*
- 7) *Ask students what might help them calm down in the zone (books, stress relief balls, stuffed animals, etc.) \**
  - a. *Some students might start naming toys, remind them that this is a space to be in for a short while, calm down, and then return to learning*
- 8) *Determine how to measure how long students can be there (a timer, an hourglass, etc.)*
- 9) *Discuss how others should interact/treat those in the peace zone*
- 10) *Create some sort of a silent signal so that students can request the quiet zone without interrupting instruction, as well as the signals a teacher may respond with if it is occupied, or that they might need to wait 5 minutes before going*
- 11) *Close Circle*

***\*There should be some sort of a reflection element to the space where students can write down what they are thinking/feeling and how to proceed. Make it meaningful by having the restorative questions on the reflection form. Even young students can complete this if the form has visual elements they can circle instead of writing out sentences.***

## *Week 7: Overview*

### ***Purpose:***

The purpose of week 7 is to develop more ownership for community building time. The format for the lessons is now in the community circle template style to clearly outline the elements and process of the circle. There are activities or discussions for each day but fewer steps are written. This is to encourage classrooms to adapt the activities in the ways that will best work for students.

### ***Tips:***

Try to give more student ownership in the circle building process. Students can open and close the circle by this week and also help develop check-in questions for the class. When students are leading an element of circle, watch others in the circle space. Usually students are much more invested if one of their peers is leading the circle or activity, give opportunity to all students to lead for the rest of the year, even creating a rotating schedule of co-facilitators.

### ***Adaptations:***

By this week you can adapt these lessons to best suit the needs of your students. It is important in circle to keep the general structure (opening, guidelines, talking piece, check in, discussion/activity, check out, closing) but take those elements and adapt them as you see fit. If problems are occurring in the classroom, use the circle space to discuss and problem solve with students. This is the meaningful work to be done in circle.

## Week 7-Day 1

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1. Opening</b></p> <p><i>What is the purpose of your circle? (building community, curriculum, addressing a specific issue, etc.). How will you introduce and convey the reason for the circle to participants? How will you open the circle? (breathing, quote, etc.)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Circle participants will be able to write and share compliments to one another.</b></p> <p><i>Pick an opening for the circle and walk your students through it. OR ask a student to open the circle. This is a great time to release responsibility to students in the circle.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2. Guidelines</b></p> <p><i>What are the core guidelines you're going to introduce? What additional questions will you ask regarding the guidelines and values?</i></p>	<p><i>Revisit classroom guidelines that should be posted somewhere near the circle space. Also, this is a good opportunity to revisit the centerpiece (the quilt that students all made together)</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3. Introduction of the talking piece</b></p> <p><i>What object will you use and why? How will you explain the purpose of the talking piece?</i></p>	<p><i>It is a good idea to quickly discuss the talking piece at the beginning of every community building circle as a way to remind students of the expectations.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4. Check In</b></p> <p><i>What question will you ask for the initial check-in round?</i></p>	<p><i>Choose from appendix B, create your own, or have students suggest check in questions for the group!</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5. Discussion Rounds Or Activity</b></p> <p><i>What needs to be addressed in the circle? Will you do an activity or just have a discussion? What questions will you ask? Are your questions low risk or high risk?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>You will need paper plates for this activity.</b></p> <p><i>Have students draw their face on the backside of the plate in the circle. (you may need to do this in advance) Then, have them flip it over to the flat side and write their name in the middle. Students will have 5-10 minutes to walk around and write kind things on everyone's plate.</i></p> <p><i>(for younger students give them a word bank or stickers)</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6. Check Out</b></p> <p><i>What discussion will you have about the topic or activity that will make it meaningful?</i></p>	<p><i>Ask the question: "Why is it important to say kind things to one another? How did this activity make you feel?"</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7. Closing</b></p> <p><i>How will you close the circle and praise members for participating?</i></p>	<p><i>Close circle, or have a student close it.</i></p>

## Week 7-Day 2

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1. Opening</b></p> <p><i>What is the purpose of your circle? (building community, curriculum, addressing a specific issue, etc.). How will you introduce and convey the reason for the circle to participants? How will you open the circle? (breathing, quote, etc.)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Circle participants will be able to creatively build a story.</b></p> <p><i>Pick an opening for the circle and walk your students through it. OR ask a student to open the circle. This is a great time to release responsibility to students in the circle.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2. Guidelines</b></p> <p><i>What are the core guidelines you're going to introduce? What additional questions will you ask regarding the guidelines and values?</i></p>	<p><i>Revisit classroom guidelines that should be posted somewhere near the circle space. Also, this is a good opportunity to revisit the centerpiece (the quilt that students all made together)</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3. Introduction of the talking piece</b></p> <p><i>What object will you use and why? How will you explain the purpose of the talking piece?</i></p>	<p><i>It is a good idea to quickly discuss the talking piece at the beginning of every community building circle as a way to remind students of the expectations.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4. Check In</b></p> <p><i>What question will you ask for the initial check-in round?</i></p>	<p><i>Choose from appendix B, create your own, or have students suggest check in questions for the group!</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5. Discussion Rounds Or Activity</b></p> <p><i>What needs to be addressed in the circle? Will you do an activity or just have a discussion? What questions will you ask? Are your questions low risk or high risk?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Discussion Rounds:</b></p> <p><i>Have the circle keeper start with "Once upon a time..."</i></p> <p><i>The person to their left or right will continue to add to the story, as the story goes around the circle students will continue to add to it until it goes all the way around the circle.</i></p> <p><i>Play 2-3 times.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6. Check Out</b></p> <p><i>What discussion will you have about the topic or activity that will make it meaningful?</i></p>	<p><i>What was fun/silly about creating a story together?</i></p> <p><i>What was challenging?</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7. Closing</b></p> <p><i>How will you close the circle and praise members for participating?</i></p>	<p><i>Close circle, or have a student close it.</i></p>

## Week 7-Day 3

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1. Opening</b></p> <p><i>What is the purpose of your circle? (building community, curriculum, addressing a specific issue, etc.). How will you introduce and convey the reason for the circle to participants? How will you open the circle? (breathing, quote, etc.)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Circle participants will be able to visually represent their outward and inward selves.</b></p> <p><i>Pick an opening for the circle and walk your students through it. OR ask a student to open the circle. This is a great time to release responsibility to students in the circle.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2. Guidelines</b></p> <p><i>What are the core guidelines you're going to introduce? What additional questions will you ask regarding the guidelines and values?</i></p>	<p><i>Revisit classroom guidelines that should be posted somewhere near the circle space. Also, this is a good opportunity to revisit the centerpiece (the quilt that students all made together)</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3. Introduction of the talking piece</b></p> <p><i>What object will you use and why? How will you explain the purpose of the talking piece?</i></p>	<p><i>It is a good idea to quickly revisit the talking piece at the beginning of every community building circle as a way to remind students.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4. Check In</b></p> <p><i>What question will you ask for the initial check-in round?</i></p>	<p><i>Choose from appendix, create your own, or have students suggest check in questions for the group!</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5. Discussion Rounds Or Activity</b></p> <p><i>What needs to be addressed in the circle? Will you do an activity or just have a discussion? What questions will you ask? Are your questions low risk or high risk?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Inside Out Book Cover Activity *</b></p> <p><i>Students will get a folded piece of paper. On the outside (the cover) they will draw how the world sees them, this could be their physical appearance or common words used to describe them.</i></p> <p><i>On the inside they will draw/write who they are on the inside, what their hopes are, and elements of their personality (you may need to demonstrate what this looks like, especially for younger grades)</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6. Check Out</b></p> <p><i>What discussion will you have about the topic or activity that will make it meaningful?</i></p>	<p><i>Have students share out their covers if they want to, this activity will probably take 2 days to create and share out.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7. Closing</b></p> <p><i>How will you close the circle and praise members for participating?</i></p>	<p><i>Close circle, or have a student close it.</i></p>

**\*Adapted from Resolutions NW Foundations Curriculum**



## Week 7-Day 4

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1. Opening</b></p> <p><i>What is the purpose of your circle? (building community, curriculum, addressing a specific issue, etc.). How will you introduce and convey the reason for the circle to participants? How will you open the circle? (breathing, quote, etc.)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Circle participants will be able to create academic and personal goals.</b></p> <p><i>Pick an opening for the circle and walk your students through it. OR ask a student to open the circle. This is a great time to release responsibility to students in the circle.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2. Guidelines</b></p> <p><i>What are the core guidelines you're going to introduce? What additional questions will you ask regarding the guidelines and values?</i></p>	<p><i>Revisit classroom guidelines that should be posted somewhere near the circle space. Also, this is a good opportunity to revisit the centerpiece (the quilt that students all made together)</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3. Introduction of the talking piece</b></p> <p><i>What object will you use and why? How will you explain the purpose of the talking piece?</i></p>	<p><i>It is a good idea to quickly discuss the talking piece at the beginning of every community building circle as a way to remind students of the expectations.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4. Check In</b></p> <p><i>What question will you ask for the initial check-in round?</i></p>	<p><i>Choose from appendix, create your own, or have students suggest check in questions for the group!</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5. Discussion Rounds Or Activity</b></p> <p><i>What needs to be addressed in the circle? Will you do an activity or just have a discussion? What questions will you ask? Are your questions low risk or high risk?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Goal-Setting Discussion Rounds *</b></p> <p><i>Popcorn: What is a goal? (you may need to define for students)</i></p> <p><i>What goals do you have for yourself this year for your learning? What do you want to become better at/learn more about?</i></p> <p><i>What personal goal do you have for yourself this year?</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6. Check Out</b></p> <p><i>What discussion will you have about the topic or activity that will make it meaningful?</i></p>	<p><i>What should our goal for our classroom be? (write down responses)</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7. Closing</b></p> <p><i>How will you close the circle and praise members for participating?</i></p>	<p><i>Close circle, or have a student close it.</i></p>

**\*This is a great circle prompt to re-visit at the start of every semester. Having student write down goals is another great way to make this circle meaningful.**

## Week 7-Day 5

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1. Opening</b></p> <p><i>What is the purpose of your circle? (building community, curriculum, addressing a specific issue, etc.). How will you introduce and convey the reason for the circle to participants? How will you open the circle? (breathing, quote, etc.)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Circle participants will be able to reflect on the community circle elements and share out what has been working/what needs to change.</b></p> <p><i>Pick an opening for the circle and walk your students through it. OR ask a student to open the circle. This is a great time to release responsibility to students in the circle.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2. Guidelines</b></p> <p><i>What are the core guidelines you're going to introduce? What additional questions will you ask regarding the guidelines and values?</i></p>	<p><i>Revisit classroom guidelines that should be posted somewhere near the circle space. Also, this is a good opportunity to revisit the centerpiece (the quilt that students all made together)</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3. Introduction of the talking piece</b></p> <p><i>What object will you use and why? How will you explain the purpose of the talking piece?</i></p>	<p><i>It is a good idea to quickly discuss the talking piece at the beginning of every community building circle as a way to remind students of the expectations.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4. Check In</b></p> <p><i>What question will you ask for the initial check-in round?</i></p>	<p><i>Choose from appendix, create your own, or have students suggest check in questions for the group!</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5. Discussion Rounds Or Activity</b></p> <p><i>What needs to be addressed in the circle? Will you do an activity or just have a discussion? What questions will you ask? Are your questions low risk or high risk?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Discussion Rounds with the Talking Piece:</b></p> <p><i>How much have you liked community circles? (fist-to-five)</i></p> <p><i>What has been fun about community circles?</i></p> <p><i>What would you want to add or change?</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6. Check Out</b></p> <p><i>What discussion will you have about the topic or activity that will make it meaningful?</i></p>	<p><i>Wrap up the discussion rounds based off of student feedback to the questions.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7. Closing</b></p> <p><i>How will you close the circle and praise members for participating?</i></p>	<p><i>Close circle, or have a student close it.</i></p>

## *Week 8: Overview*

### ***Purpose:***

Week 8 is to practice designing community circle lessons and activities. There are plenty of curriculum-based resources to do this including TRIBES, Kimochis, Second Steps, etc. that your school may be using. If you are looking for free resources to design lessons from, please look at the schoology group below and Appendix C:

<https://reynolds.schoology.com/group/556107365/materials#/group/556107365/materials?f=51248770>

*access code: 84TCN-5SNZS*

### ***Tips:***

Look to your students to determine whether or not a community circle is effective or not. Ask them in the check-out question if they liked the discussion/activity and would want to do it again. Use their feedback to help guide what you choose for the next time. A general rule of thumb for younger students is to have a good mix of discussion and activity throughout the week.

### ***Adaptations:***

Ask other staff at your school what they are using/planning for their community building time and share resources between grade levels. Also utilize your Restorative Practices TOSA or EA to help you generate ideas for community building time. By sharing resources between grade levels you will be able to discuss how certain activities are received by students and start developing a “best practice” list of resources for your school.

## Week 8-Day 1

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1. Opening</b></p> <p><i>What is the purpose of your circle? (building community, curriculum, addressing a specific issue, etc.). How will you introduce and convey the reason for the circle to participants? How will you open the circle? (breathing, quote, etc.)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Circle participants will be able to...</b></p> <p><i>Pick an opening for the circle and walk your students through it. OR ask a student to open the circle. This is a great time to release responsibility to students in the circle.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2. Guidelines</b></p> <p><i>What are the core guidelines you're going to introduce? What additional questions will you ask regarding the guidelines and values?</i></p>	<p><i>Revisit classroom guidelines that should be posted somewhere near the circle space. Also, this is a good opportunity to revisit the centerpiece (the quilt that students all made together)</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3. Introduction of the talking piece</b></p> <p><i>What object will you use and why? How will you explain the purpose of the talking piece?</i></p>	<p><i>It is a good idea to quickly revisit the talking piece at the beginning of every community building circle as a way to remind students.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4. Check In</b></p> <p><i>What question will you ask for the initial check-in round?</i></p>	<p><i>Choose from appendix, create your own, or have students suggest check in questions for the group!</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5. Discussion Rounds Or Activity</b></p> <p><i>What needs to be addressed in the circle? Will you do an activity or just have a discussion? What questions will you ask? Are your questions low risk or high risk?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Choose an activity or topic for your discussion rounds and write it here.</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6. Check Out</b></p> <p><i>What discussion will you have about the topic or activity that will make it meaningful?</i></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7. Closing</b></p> <p><i>How will you close the circle and praise members for participating?</i></p>	<p><i>Close circle, or have a student close it.</i></p>

## Week 8-Day 2

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1. Opening</b></p> <p><i>What is the purpose of your circle? (building community, curriculum, addressing a specific issue, etc.). How will you introduce and convey the reason for the circle to participants? How will you open the circle? (breathing, quote, etc.)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Circle participants will be able to...</b></p> <p><i>Pick an opening for the circle and walk your students through it. OR ask a student to open the circle. This is a great time to release responsibility to students in the circle.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2. Guidelines</b></p> <p><i>What are the core guidelines you're going to introduce? What additional questions will you ask regarding the guidelines and values?</i></p>	<p><i>Revisit classroom guidelines that should be posted somewhere near the circle space. Also, this is a good opportunity to revisit the centerpiece (the quilt that students all made together)</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3. Introduction of the talking piece</b></p> <p><i>What object will you use and why? How will you explain the purpose of the talking piece?</i></p>	<p><i>It is a good idea to quickly revisit the talking piece at the beginning of every community building circle as a way to remind students.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4. Check In</b></p> <p><i>What question will you ask for the initial check-in round?</i></p>	<p><i>Choose from appendix, create your own, or have students suggest check in questions for the group!</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5. Discussion Rounds Or Activity</b></p> <p><i>What needs to be addressed in the circle? Will you do an activity or just have a discussion? What questions will you ask? Are your questions low risk or high risk?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Choose an activity or topic for your discussion rounds and write it here.</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6. Check Out</b></p> <p><i>What discussion will you have about the topic or activity that will make it meaningful?</i></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7. Closing</b></p> <p><i>How will you close the circle and praise members for participating?</i></p>	<p><i>Close circle, or have a student close it.</i></p>

## Week 8-Day 3

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1. Opening</b></p> <p><i>What is the purpose of your circle? (building community, curriculum, addressing a specific issue, etc.). How will you introduce and convey the reason for the circle to participants? How will you open the circle? (breathing, quote, etc.)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Circle participants will be able to...</b></p> <p><i>Pick an opening for the circle and walk your students through it. OR ask a student to open the circle. This is a great time to release responsibility to students in the circle.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2. Guidelines</b></p> <p><i>What are the core guidelines you're going to introduce? What additional questions will you ask regarding the guidelines and values?</i></p>	<p><i>Revisit classroom guidelines that should be posted somewhere near the circle space. Also, this is a good opportunity to revisit the centerpiece (the quilt that students all made together)</i></p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4. Check In</b></p> <p><i>What question will you ask for the initial check-in round?</i></p>	<p><i>Choose from appendix, create your own, or have students suggest check in questions for the group!</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5. Discussion Rounds Or Activity</b></p> <p><i>What needs to be addressed in the circle? Will you do an activity or just have a discussion? What questions will you ask? Are your questions low risk or high risk?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Choose an activity or topic for your discussion rounds and write it here.</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6. Check Out</b></p> <p><i>What discussion will you have about the topic or activity that will make it meaningful?</i></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7. Closing</b></p> <p><i>How will you close the circle and praise members for participating?</i></p>	<p><i>Close circle, or have a student close it.</i></p>

## Week 8-Day 4

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1. Opening</b></p> <p><i>What is the purpose of your circle? (building community, curriculum, addressing a specific issue, etc.). How will you introduce and convey the reason for the circle to participants? How will you open the circle? (breathing, quote, etc.)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Circle participants will be able to...</b></p> <p><i>Pick an opening for the circle and walk your students through it. OR ask a student to open the circle. This is a great time to release responsibility to students in the circle.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2. Guidelines</b></p> <p><i>What are the core guidelines you're going to introduce? What additional questions will you ask regarding the guidelines and values?</i></p>	<p><i>Revisit classroom guidelines that should be posted somewhere near the circle space. Also, this is a good opportunity to revisit the centerpiece (the quilt that students all made together)</i></p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4. Check In</b></p> <p><i>What question will you ask for the initial check-in round?</i></p>	<p><i>Choose from appendix, create your own, or have students suggest check in questions for the group!</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5. Discussion Rounds Or Activity</b></p> <p><i>What needs to be addressed in the circle? Will you do an activity or just have a discussion? What questions will you ask? Are your questions low risk or high risk?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Choose an activity or topic for your discussion rounds and write it here.</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6. Check Out</b></p> <p><i>What discussion will you have about the topic or activity that will make it meaningful?</i></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7. Closing</b></p> <p><i>How will you close the circle and praise members for participating?</i></p>	<p><i>Close circle, or have a student close it.</i></p>

## Week 8-Day 5

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1. Opening</b></p> <p><i>What is the purpose of your circle? (building community, curriculum, addressing a specific issue, etc.). How will you introduce and convey the reason for the circle to participants? How will you open the circle? (breathing, quote, etc.)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Circle participants will be able to...</b></p> <p><i>Pick an opening for the circle and walk your students through it. OR ask a student to open the circle. This is a great time to release responsibility to students in the circle.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2. Guidelines</b></p> <p><i>What are the core guidelines you're going to introduce? What additional questions will you ask regarding the guidelines and values?</i></p>	<p><i>Revisit classroom guidelines that should be posted somewhere near the circle space. Also, this is a good opportunity to revisit the centerpiece (the quilt that students all made together)</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3. Introduction of the talking piece</b></p> <p><i>What object will you use and why? How will you explain the purpose of the talking piece?</i></p>	<p><i>It is a good idea to quickly revisit the talking piece at the beginning of every community building circle as a way to remind students.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4. Check In</b></p> <p><i>What question will you ask for the initial check-in round?</i></p>	<p><i>Choose from appendix, create your own, or have students suggest check in questions for the group!</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5. Discussion Rounds Or Activity</b></p> <p><i>What needs to be addressed in the circle? Will you do an activity or just have a discussion? What questions will you ask? Are your questions low risk or high risk?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Choose an activity or topic for your discussion rounds and write it here.</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6. Check Out</b></p> <p><i>What discussion will you have about the topic or activity that will make it meaningful?</i></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7. Closing</b></p> <p><i>How will you close the circle and praise members for participating?</i></p>	<p><i>Close circle, or have a student close it.</i></p>



**Reporting Worksheet**

**Question 1:**

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**Interviewed:**

**His / Her Answer:**

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**Question 2:**

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**Interviewed:**

**His / Her Answer:**

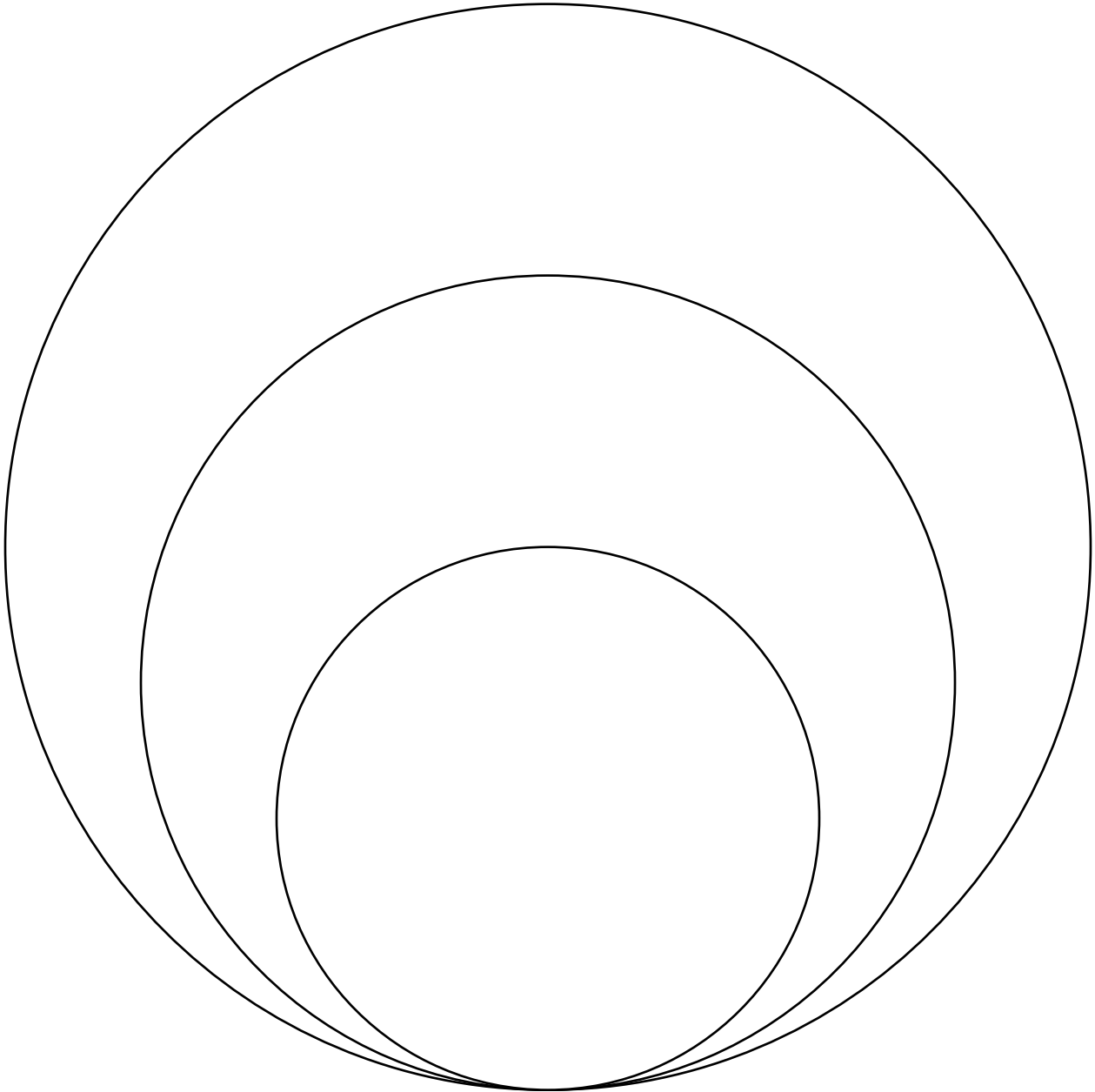
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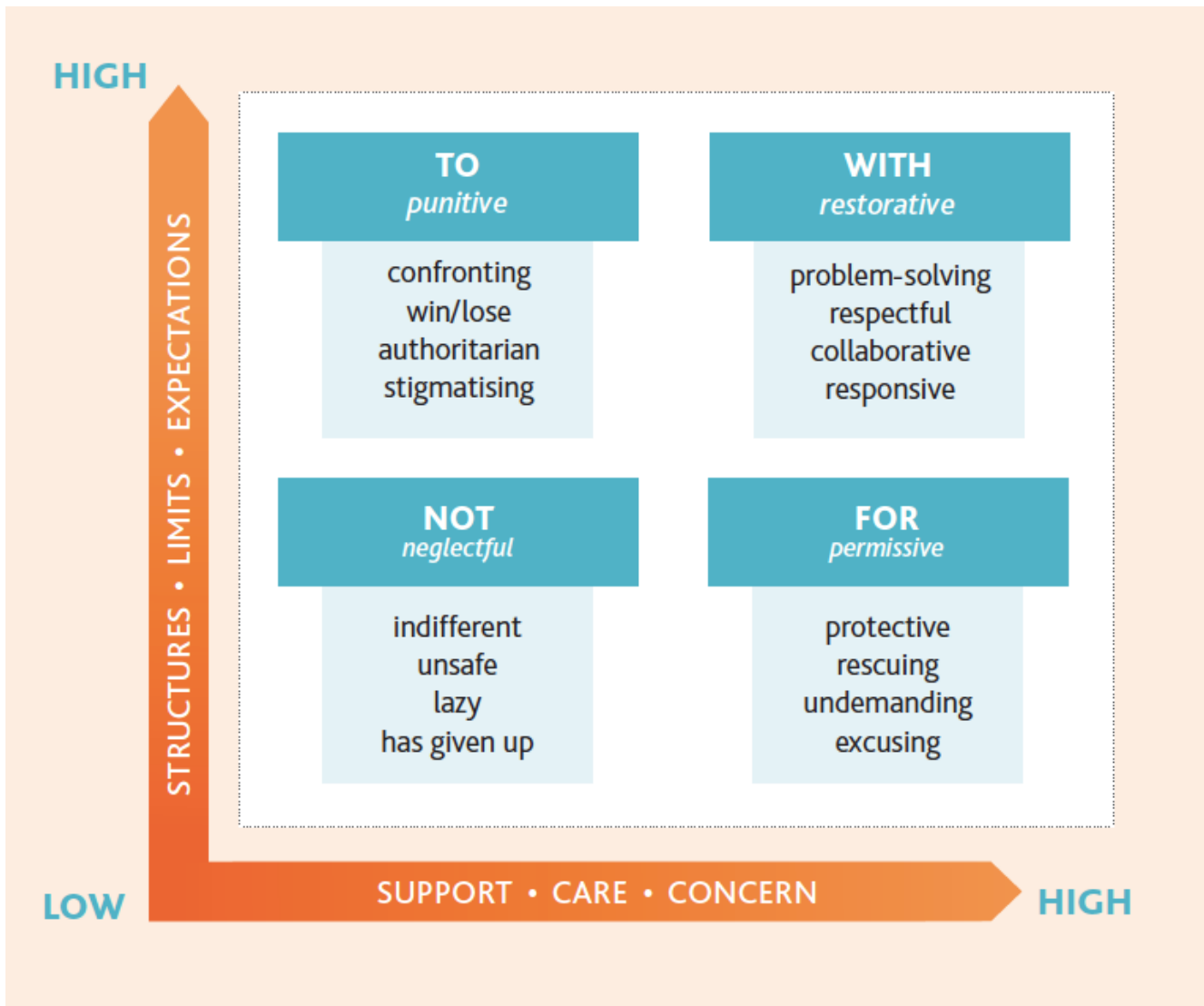
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# Community Circles Worksheet



## Social Discipline Window



## Appendix B: Check In's, Sentence Stems, and Discussion Questions

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <i>Today I am excited for...</i></li><li>2. <i>On the weekends I like to...</i></li><li>3. <i>I feel happy when...</i></li><li>4. <i>I feel nervous when...</i></li><li>5. <i>I feel excited when...</i></li><li>6. <i>I feel stressed when...</i></li><li>7. <i>I feel frustrated when...</i></li><li>8. <i>The best/worst thing about school is...</i></li><li>9. <i>My favorite hobby...</i></li><li>10. <i>If I could have any pet it would be...</i></li><li>11. <i>My favorite candy is...</i></li><li>12. <i>If I could be any age I would be...</i></li><li>13. <i>My favorite weekend activity is...</i></li><li>14. <i>My favorite song is...</i></li><li>15. <i>My favorite sport is...</i></li><li>16. <i>My favorite color is...</i></li><li>17. <i>My favorite weather is...</i></li><li>18. <i>Rain makes me feel...</i></li><li>19. <i>Wind makes me feel...</i></li><li>20. <i>Sunshine makes me feel...</i></li><li>21. <i>Something that makes me laugh is...</i></li><li>22. <i>I feel really overwhelmed when...</i></li><li>23. <i>My favorite part of the day is...</i></li><li>24. <i>I think that I'm really good at...</i></li><li>25. <i>My friends would describe me as...</i></li><li>26. <i>If I could travel anywhere I would go...</i></li><li>27. <i>Someday I would really like to...</i></li><li>28. <i>Something I like to do with my family is...</i></li><li>29. <i>My favorite meal I eat with my family is...</i></li><li>30. <i>Something special my family does is...</i></li><li>31. <i>My favorite snack is...</i></li><li>32. <i>My favorite T.V. show is...</i></li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>33. <i>My favorite movie is...</i></li><li>34. <i>My favorite teacher was...</i></li><li>35. <i>My favorite birthday was...</i></li><li>36. <i>My favorite season is...</i></li><li>37. <i>My favorite holiday is...</i></li><li>38. <i>My favorite Halloween costume was...</i></li><li>39. <i>If I had a million dollars I would...</i></li><li>40. <i>I like this class because...</i></li><li>41. <i>I can be a good friend today by...</i></li><li>42. <i>When I get angry I can...</i></li><li>43. <i>Today I feel...</i></li><li>44. <i>When I think of blue, I think of...</i></li><li>45. <i>When I think of red, I think of...</i></li><li>46. <i>When I think of green, I think of...</i></li><li>47. <i>When I think of yellow, I think of...</i></li><li>48. <i>When I think of black, I think of...</i></li><li>49. <i>When I think of brown, I think of...</i></li><li>50. <i>When I think of white, I think of...</i></li><li>51. <i>If I were an animal, I would be...</i></li><li>52. <i>If I were a famous actor/actress, I would be ...</i></li><li>53. <i>If I were a famous athlete, I would be...</i></li><li>54. <i>When I graduate from high school, I want to ...</i></li><li>55. <i>When I become an adult, I want to...</i></li><li>56. <i>When I start my career, I want to ...</i></li><li>57. <i>I can't wait until...</i></li><li>58. <i>Friends are ...</i></li><li>59. <i>Families are...</i></li><li>60. <i>Putdowns make me feel...</i></li><li>61. <i>Appreciations make me feel...</i></li><li>62. <i>Today I am in the...zone</i></li><li>63. <i>Today I will try to show...character trait</i></li><li>64. <i>I am excited for next year because...</i></li></ol>
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*\*\*This material is adopted from Kristi Cole and Paul Dedinsky's packet of Restorative Justice Practices, Milwaukee Public Schools. Safe Schools/Healthy Students.*

## Sentence Stems for Circle

Sentence Stems on Friendship:	Sentence Stems on Community:
<p>A friend is...</p> <p>Something I like to do with friends is...</p> <p>I laugh with my friends about...</p> <p>When I feel frustrated my friends help me...</p> <p>If I am angry with a friend I...</p> <p>I am a good friend because...</p> <p>My friends help me by...</p> <p>I help my friends by...</p> <p>Making new friends is...</p> <p>Friends can sometimes make me feel...</p> <p>When I am fighting with a friend I feel...</p> <p>Friends and I</p>	<p>The community I live in looks like...</p> <p>My classroom community is fun because...</p> <p>I would change my classroom community by..</p> <p>The best thing about where I live is...</p> <p>Someone I really like in my school community is...</p> <p>Someone I really like in my neighborhood community is...</p> <p>At home I act...</p> <p>At school I act...</p> <p>If I could change something in my neighborhood it would be...</p>
Sentence Stems on Family:	Sentence Stems on the Classroom:
<p>I love my family because...</p> <p>The people that I live with are...</p> <p>My favorite meal to make with my family is...</p> <p>My favorite holiday with my family is...</p> <p>My favorite person in my family is...</p> <p>Something I like to do with my family is...</p> <p>I wish that my family could go...</p> <p>I feel frustrated at my family when...</p> <p>My family helps me...</p> <p>I think that I am most like...</p> <p>Sometimes I fight with my family when...</p> <p>My family shows me they care about me by...</p>	<p>When I first came into the room I felt...</p> <p>Now in my classroom I feel...</p> <p>My teacher is...</p> <p>The students in the room are...</p> <p>Someone I feel close to in the class is...</p> <p>A subject I really like is...</p> <p>When I feel mad in my class I...</p> <p>My teacher can help me make good choices by...</p> <p>Classmates can help me make good choices by...</p> <p>Something I would change about the class...</p>
Sentence Stems on Self:	Silly/Engaging:
<p>My favorite thing about myself is...</p> <p>If I could change one thing I would...</p> <p>My friends think I am...</p> <p>My family thinks I am...</p> <p>When I get frustrated I...</p> <p>Something that makes me happy is...</p> <p>I am calm when...</p> <p>In my free time I like to...</p> <p>A talent I have is...</p> <p>Something I would like to learn is...</p>	<p>My favorite place to eat is...</p> <p>If I could be a famous person I would be...</p> <p>My favorite movie is...</p> <p>If I could eat anything I wanted I would...</p> <p>If I could fly the first place I would go is...</p> <p>The best summer I've ever had was...</p>

## Discussion Round Questions

*Please note: It is always important to carefully select which questions or topics to pose to the group depending on the needs of the group. The context/background of each member of the circle is always to be strongly considered. Remember that some of these questions are higher-risk than others. Keep this in mind when planning a circle.*

<b>Getting Acquainted</b>
<p><i>Share a happy memory.</i></p> <p><i>If you could be a superhero, what super powers would you choose and why?</i></p> <p><i>How would your best friend describe you?</i></p> <p><i>What has been your favorite age so far?</i></p> <p><i>If you had an unexpected free day, what would you like to do?</i></p> <p><i>If you were an animal, what animal would you be and why?</i></p> <p><i>Name two things or people who always make you laugh.</i></p> <p><i>I like to collect....</i></p> <p><i>If you could have a face to face conversation with anyone, who would it be and why?</i></p> <p><i>Describe your dream job.</i></p> <p><i>Describe your favorite place.</i></p> <p><i>If you could change anything about yourself what would it be?</i></p>
<b>Exploring Values</b>
<p><i>What makes a good teacher?</i></p> <p><i>What bring you happiness?</i></p> <p><i>What do you love to do? Why?</i></p> <p><i>What makes you feel frustrated?</i></p> <p><i>What demonstrates respect?</i></p> <p><i>What makes a good friend?</i></p> <p><i>What is important to you in a classroom?</i></p> <p><i>What change would you like to see in our classroom community? What can you do to promote that change?</i></p> <p><i>Who is important to you in your family? Why?</i></p>
<b>Storytelling</b>
<p><i>A time when you started something new</i></p> <p><i>A time when you did the right thing when no one was watching</i></p> <p><i>An experience in your life when you “made lemonade out of lemons”</i></p> <p><i>An experience of when you overcame something challenging</i></p> <p><i>A time when you had a problem with a friend and worked it out</i></p> <p><i>A time when you were angry and what you did to make yourself feel better</i></p> <p><i>A time when you felt really proud of yourself</i></p> <p><i>A time where made a new friend</i></p> <p><i>A celebration with your family that was really special</i></p> <p><i>A time when a friend did something really kind for you</i></p> <p><i>A time when you did something kind for a family member</i></p>
<b>Curriculum/Content</b>
<p><i>The best/worst thing about this science project is...</i></p> <p><i>The main character in the book we are reading is like/not like me when...</i></p> <p><i>Something that I would really like to learn more about is...</i></p> <p><i>These math problems make me feel...</i></p> <p><i>I am feeling really confident about...</i></p> <p><i>I feel like I need some more help with...</i></p> <p><i>I would like to get to reading level.... because...</i></p> <p><i>Something I would change or add to this lesson would be...</i></p> <p><i>What we are learning now will help me later in life because...</i></p>

## Appendix C: Ideas for Community Building Activities

### Grades K-2

#### Understanding Feelings

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Here are a few great activities to work with students on identifying and recognizing feelings <https://classroom.kidshealth.org/classroom/prekto2/personal/growing/feelings.pdf>

#### Fill My Bucket Fridays

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After reading the book, [Fill My Bucket](#), to your class. Take time at least once a week to let the students practice saying things in the circle that fill their buckets. (Appreciations and affirmations)

#### Mix it Up!

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Students often sit by the same kids every day in circle. This is a fun way to mix it up a bit. Say something like, “if you have a dog, stand up.” Everyone with a dog at home will stand up. These kids are then asked to switch seats. Continue with other comments like “if you have a sister, stand up” etc...

#### Emotion Cards

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This activity helps students learn how to check into circle. It can also be used at any time during the year to help build their vocabulary. Have a bunch of pictures with people displaying different emotions. There should be enough pictures for each student to have one. Spread them out in the circle and have the students pick a picture. Explain that today in circle, they are going to ‘Check in’ for a person in the picture. This activity works best if the students have a paper with many different emotion words to help build their vocabulary.

#### String Game

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Bring a ball of yarn. Start off by giving someone a compliment and rolling the ball of yarn to them. The new person with the yarn gives another compliment and sends the ball of yarn to the next person. In the end, talk about how connected everyone is in a community and how each person’s roles/skills/characteristics etc... are unique, but crucial to the community.

#### Balloon Keep Up

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Bring in a balloon and have students try to keep it up for as many bounces as they can. You can also incorporate math facts by having students skip count for each time the balloon bounces. At the end reflect with the class about why it is important to work together.

## Fill My Bucket Fridays

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One child is chosen to stand in the middle of the circle and do a spin so that everyone can see what they are wearing. The child then goes into the hall and changes one thing about their appearance. This can be subtle, like moving a bracelet from one wrist to another, or more obvious, like turning a shirt around so that it is being worn backwards. The child then comes back in and students raise their hands if they think they have spotted the change. The teacher calls on a raised hand, and whoever guesses correctly is the next student to take a turn changing.

## Guess the Animal

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Choose an animal and give three clues to the kids. For example, if the animal was a TIGER, I would say, "This animal has whiskers. This animal has sharp teeth. This animal has stripes." When students think that they know the animal, they put their hands on their heads. Then call on students to guess. Once they figure it out, students move like that animal to another spot on the rug. Then we play again. Later in the year, choose a student to pick the animal and give clues.

## I see...

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Students start out in their spots in the circle. Say, "I see... and then name an animal, plant or thing." Students can then leave their spot to act out what "I see" without making any noise. Some examples are:

- Palm trees swaying in the wind
- Tigers walking through the jungle
- Waves in the ocean
- Snakes slithering in the grass
- Rock stars playing guitars
- Mountains standing tall
- Students ready to learn

Whenever I saw "I see," students return to their rug spot to listen for the next direction for acting out.

*Also check out Schoology! There is a "School Climate and Culture" group which has tabs full of circle ideas and games that you might find useful. The access code is:*

**84TCN-5SNZS**



## Grades 3-5

### I Can Listen

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This is a great strategy to teach students why it is important to listen to each other. Have the students partner up. One partner leaves and goes into the hall. An adult or EA tells these students that their job is to tell their partner about their best friend (or any other topic/story). The adult or teacher in the classroom tells these students that they need to act bored and tired while their partner is speaking to them. Allow students to role play and then have a classroom discussion about how it felt to be ignored. Now have the students switch roles. Have the partner that stayed in the room leave into the hall. Give these students a topic to talk about such as “My best day ever...” . Have an adult in the room explain to the kids that their job is to interrupt their partners stories over and over again. Allow students to role play and then have a classroom discussion about how it felt to be interrupted.

### Remember When

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Tell the class to think of a time when you \_\_\_\_ (i.e. Think of a time when you felt like you didn't belong or were left out. Think of a time when you were devalued. Think of a time when you felt proud of something you accomplished. Think of a time when your friend was being picked on) - Have the students go around and tell what happened and how they felt in those moments)

### Characteristic Cards

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Have positive characteristic words written on cue cards (i.e. confident, caring, safe, thoughtful, etc...). It's good to have 30-40 cards. Spread these cards in the center of the circle and tell the students to pick a card that they think represents themselves. Have the kids go around the circle, one at a time, and pick up the card that represents them and explain why. They then put the card back. Example of Cue Cards (these cards would be best for older students, younger children would need to be taught explicitly the meaning of the cards before playing)

- [https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=explorer&chrome=true&srcid=0B4BPK7U3koeSYmYxY2UyNWetYzkzMC00ZTU5LWFmMjYtNTBkYmZkZjY2ZDdl&hl=en\\_US](https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=explorer&chrome=true&srcid=0B4BPK7U3koeSYmYxY2UyNWetYzkzMC00ZTU5LWFmMjYtNTBkYmZkZjY2ZDdl&hl=en_US)

### Alternative Characteristic Card Activity

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Using the same characteristic cards, spread them out in the middle of the circle and tell the students that they should pick one that represents someone they know, or admire, or someone in the circle, or school.

### Alternative Characteristic Card Activity #2

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Created characteristic skill cards with words that are often seen as ‘weaknesses’. (ie. Messy, disorganized, procrastinator, mean, bully, poor listener, discouraged easily, quitter, poor loser, etc...) Have students pick a card of a characteristic that they have that they would like to work on. This activity needs a lot of trust and maturity from the kids to develop mature answers that everyone will respect.

## BLOBS AND LINES

In this icebreaker, students are prompted to either line up in some particular order (by birthday, for example) or gather in “blobs” based on something they have in common (similar shoes, for example)

Here are some sample prompts you can use for this game:

- Line up in alphabetical order by your first names.
- Line up in alphabetical order by your last names.
- Gather with people who have the same eye color as you.
- Gather with people who get to school in the same way as you (car, bus, walk).
- Line up in order of your birthdays, from January 1 through December 31.
- Line up in order of how many languages you speak.
- Gather into 3 blobs: Those who have LOTS of chores at home, those who have A FEW chores at home, and those who have NO chores at home.
- Gather with people who have the same favorite season as you

## The Wind Blows

Sit in a circle with chairs, remove one chair so that one student is standing in the center of the circle. They use the sentence stem “The wind blows if...” and says something that they see students wearing or something that they like. For example, “The wind blows if you’re wearing a red shirt” or “The wind blows if you like pepperoni pizza.” For others in the circle that are wearing that article of clothing or like the same thing, they need to find a new seat in the circle as quickly as they can. Whoever is left in the middle starts the next round.

*Also check out Schoology! There is a “School Climate and Culture” group which has tabs full of circle ideas and games that you might find useful. The access code is:*

**84TCN-5SNZS**

## Appendix D: Circle Elements

### The Talking Piece

#### **What is a talking piece?**

A talking piece is an object with meaning that is used in circle to create opportunities for authentic speaking and listening. It is passed around the circle to each participant so that they have a chance to speak. While someone is holding the talking piece in circle, everyone else is listening.



#### **Why should I use a talking piece?**

The purpose behind circle time is to provide space to develop and deepen connections with students and adults in a classroom. If students and adults know that there are certain times to be a speaker, and certain times to be a listener, this helps us develop a safe and caring space for everyone in class to speak their truth in circle. Talking pieces are one of the most crucial elements to developing a circle practice and when students and adults can respect the talking piece, circles become deeply meaningful.

#### **How do I use a talking piece in circle?**

Start off by introducing your class to the talking piece and give some information on what the talking piece is and why we use it in circle. This first introduction is important because it provides students with the why. Create a circle guideline around the talking piece and revisit it frequently. When students are having a hard time respecting the talking piece, gently remind them what it is and why circle time is a space/place for people to practice speaking and listening to one another. There also may be times in circle where a talking piece isn't useful, you don't have to use it every time but if you want everyone to have a chance to speak in circle it is an important and valuable tool.

#### **Some key things to consider:**

- Have students bring in objects to use as the talking piece, this is a great way to increase engagement in your circle practice and learn more about your students!
- It is okay to pause or stop a circle if the students aren't respecting the talking piece, try to limit this as it should be only done when the circle has become unsafe for others to share authentically
- Model wait-time. If students are talking when you're holding the talking piece, wait, and have other students do the same when it is their turn. Then it becomes the culture of your circle time!
- Get feedback from your students! Ask how they feel they're doing with the talking piece in circle.

***Check out this great article about talking pieces in circle!***

<https://www.morningsidecenter.org/stories-voices/talking-piece-story>

## The Centerpiece

### What is a centerpiece?

Centerpieces are usually a collection of objects that have meaning to a group that on a piece of fabric on the floor. Often the circle guidelines surround the centerpiece. The centerpiece is an important element to any circle that has ancient and indigenous roots. Like the talking piece, center pieces are even more meaningful when they represent something important to the community.



### Why should I use a centerpiece?

The centerpiece represents the center of the community and sets the tone that the circle is a special and important time of the day, it also reminds students that they are in a community together, and provides a place for circle participants to rest their eyes. The centerpiece creates inclusion by incorporating the identities of circle members as well as cultures represented in the circle. Circles that use centerpieces often time feel more meaningful and special for participants and individuals feel more invested in circle.

### How do I create a centerpiece?

With your class! There are many ways to create meaningful centerpieces. Here are a few ideas to get you started: create an art project, use a class photo, have students bring in objects, have items sitting in a bowl or jar and choose one each day for a talking piece, have a “rotating” centerpiece where students can bring in items each week, add to the centerpiece as the year goes on, bring in a plant, use books that the class is reading, have students bring in artifacts from their culture, create a class quilt, tie-dye fabric, there are many ways to be creative and have your centerpiece be meaningful to your students!

#### **Some key things to consider:**

- Also have the centerpiece reflect you! Bring in something that connects to you and share with students!
- When you have new students come in throughout the year, allow them to contribute to the centerpiece
- Mention your centerpiece when you begin any circle to remind students quickly what it is and its use
- Ask your colleagues or Restorative Practice staff for ideas on how to create centerpieces
- Change your centerpiece throughout the year if it loses meaning, this will keep your circle intentional
- Use circles as a way for students to share about their identity/culture and develop new connections
- Incorporate academic content to your centerpiece like books or notable historical events/figures

***While centerpieces are an important element of circle, they are not the most important element to focus on. Students sharing and connecting with one another to build community is the goal of circle time.***