



Why Circles in Curriculum?*

Curriculum circles...

- Help teachers figure out where students are with curriculum, so they can adapt delivery, figure out what to repeat, how to repeat, etc.
- Creates a forum for extension of the curriculum in interesting, non-threatening, time-efficient ways within the traditional curriculum
- Creates new opportunities for assessment for students who benefit from other ways of representing knowledge
 - This has real consequences for how students see themselves as 'smart' or not, for the very real construction of what a 'good student' is – one who can learn independently, quietly, reproduce their knowledge in writing or test situations – we know not all learners are like this, so what other valid ways can we offer to see what kids know?
- Opens new spaces for voices not typically heard – fosters recognition among peers, challenges growth in individuals
- Fosters peer-to-peer teaching and learning
- Creates legitimate space for Affective Dimension of learning, as well as Meta-cognition – how we feel and think in and about our learning, learning to understand why we feel and think those ways
- Removes the cultural privileging of the individual as the knower – vs – the collaborative nature of meaning-making, of knowledge production and transmission
- Counter-cultural in recasting relationships as essential to what and how we know – we constantly complain about the hyper-individualism of youth culture; here is one way to challenge it in education vs. implicitly reproducing it through our educating models

"Circles are a great way to cover your content - the objectives that you set out for a particular class, and it's a really amazing way for students to share their experiences - their thoughts and feelings. What I've noticed in circles is that students actually look at each other when they are speaking, and they actually listen to each other, so it's a great way of forming relationships." – High School English Teacher

**As presented by David Martino during an RF School PL session.*

Vaanderling, Ph.D. Dorothy and Deenaree Voelker, M.Ed. 2018. *Relationships First Implementation Guide: A Holistic, Whole-School Responsive Approach*, p. 63. <https://rfnl.org> [Publication is currently suspended, November 2023].