Restorative Justice P³
Philosophy, Principles, and Practices

Michigan Department of Education
Segment 9: Other Uses for the Circle Process
1. Expand application of the Circle Process

2. Consider how educators have used circles successfully to teach and engage others in discussion, community-building, learning and more.

3. Engage in a brainstorming circle.
Remember this Quotation from the Restorative Circles unit?

How Circles Work

“Circles intentionally create a sacred space that lifts barriers between people, opening fresh possibilities for connection, collaboration and mutual understanding. The process works because it brings people together in a way that allows them to see one another as human beings and to talk about what matters.”

--Kay Pranis

The Little Book of Circle Processes: A New Approach to Peacemaking
Remember this Quotation from the Restorative Circles unit?

Restorative Justice Circles Process Described as Medicine Wheel

Developed by Kay Pranis

Restorative Circles Training March 2009

Solution
- How do we make things right?
- What must happen for all to move forward?
- Closing

Introduction
- Meet as human beings
- Use ritual to establish safe space.

Issues
- What happened?
- Who was affected and how?

Trust Building
- Share traits, values or personal contribution
- Establish respect for each other.
Think About It

- Education is designed to “lift barriers,” “open fresh possibilities,” “talk about what matters,” and “bring people together.”

- The Circle Process can be a powerful tool that:
  - Facilitates teaching and classroom management;
  - Helps give each student a voice—even those you don’t hear from often;
  - Offers insights into students’ experiences, helping you take the pulse of your class;
  - Recognizes and honors each class member;
  - Gives peers the opportunity to support each other;
  - Provides a venue for group discussions on topics from the serious to the sublime.

- In addition to a conflict resolution or discipline tool, the Circles Process can also serve other roles in your teaching tool box!
Expanding Circle Uses

“If the Circle is used only to repair harm, then this simple yet profound communication process becomes associated with frustration, anger, and shame.

By contrast, if Circles are also used to build relationships and community, then, when you have to use Circle to mend harms, the really hard conversations can look like magic.

As with most things, the magic is in the practice. Clarity and reconciliation come as a result of practicing the Circle process.”

--Nancy Reistenberg

*Circle in the Square*, p. 6
Classroom Circles Process Adapted to the Medicine Wheel

Developed by Roxann Kriete

Page 3 of *The Morning Meeting Book*, From the Strategies for Teachers Series, Northeast Foundation for Students, 2002
Teacher explains the circle processes all will follow and welcomes students then models or introduces the first go-around question or activity such as “say your name and shake the hand of the person next to you.”

Students greet each other by name, perhaps with a handshake or some other sign of welcome.

This welcomes and values every member of the classroom community.
Establish ground rules. Two fundamental rules are: We treat each other with respect and we use a talking piece. Include more if needed for the situation.

Introduce Talking Piece and imbue it with meaning to help participants speak only when they are holding it. When they are not holding the talking piece it’s their turn to listen.

Facilitator will ask one question then will hand talking piece to person next to him/her. Each participant answers the same question in turn then passes the talking piece to his/her neighbor. (No handing across the circle or changing the question without full agreement.)

Anyone has the right to pass if s/he chooses not to speak when the talking piece comes to him/her. Just silently pass it on to the next person.
Just for Fun

- Gather participants in a circle so they are all at the same level (height) and facing into the center. All can see and hear each other and no one is left out, hiding behind a barrier, using technology or writing.

- Many educators run circles to check in or “take the temperature” of their students. In these circles, questions are simple and designed to engage students in lighthearted participation. Some examples could include:
  - What’s your favorite food/color/movie/etc.?
  - What did you do this weekend?
  - How are you feeling today?
  - Name one thing that you’re happy for today and one thing that makes you unhappy. (This is sometimes call Rose and Thorn)
  - If you were a __________ what __________ would you have?
  - Let your imagination run free and have fun getting to know your students!
Everyone gets a chance to share/participate if they choose.

As always, if a participant chooses not to share, s/he is free to silently pass the talking piece to the next person in the circle.

Passing is respected, though we hope the student will want to share a future time when the talking piece comes around.
Trust Building Exercises

- Some possible statements/ideas to build trust or share:
  - Say how they’re feeling and one reason why;
  - Tell everyone one thing they admire about the person next to/ across from them;
  - Reveal one thing no one in the circle knows about them;
  - Mention a hope or goal for the day;
  - Express thoughts on a topic the teacher chooses;
  - Etc.—let your imagination go.
Opportunities abound for using Circles in the classroom!

Incorporate the circle into the day’s lesson plan.

Use the circle as a format for group discussion of:
- a current event from the news;
- a favorite movie or TV show;
- an assigned reading or shared classroom activity;
- a story or poem the teacher introduces into circle;
- A mathematical concept that can be solved various ways.
Social/Emotional Learning in Circle

- But the circle isn’t limited to academics or discipline!
- Use the circle process to address behavior or social issues in a general, nonthreatening way. Some examples might include:
  - Establishing behavior standards for an upcoming field trip;
  - Defining how to behave for substitute teachers;
  - Exploring the impact that bullying behavior can have on students in general;
  - Brainstorm ideas for potential projects;
  - and more!
Launch students into learning with a message/problem or challenge that introduces the day’s lesson.

Conclude discussion of important topics by writing down the consensus reached in the discussion.

Give students an inspiring quotation or message for their day or as the topic of tomorrow’s circle discussion.

Do the final go-around by asking: “What is one thing you take from today’s circle?”
Worth the Investment

“The sense of belonging and the skills of attention, listening, expression and cooperative interaction developed in [circle] are a foundation for every lesson, every transition time, every lining up, every upset and conflict all day and all year long. [Circle time] is a microcosm of the way we wish our schools to be—communities full of learning, safe and respectful and challenging for all.”

-- Roxann Kriete
The Morning Meetings Book (p. 3)
Circle Closing

- If you are taking this training alone, skip to the bolded questions at the bottom of this slide and think about their answers. If you are in a group, arrange your chairs in a circle with everyone facing into the center.

- Taking turns so that only one person speaks at a time, go around the circle so that each person answers the first question listed in bold below.

- Once everyone has answered the first question, follow the same process to answer the remaining two questions. Keep track of the time you have—if necessary apply time limits to each answer so everyone has the same amount of time to speak.

  - What is one conflict-free topic you could address in circle like those described here?
  - Thinking of your classroom or students, what purpose might one of these non-conflict circles serve for them?
  - What is one question you could ask in a non-conflict circle?