

Common Challenges in Circle

Or...

When Good Circles Go Bad

<i>If this...</i>	<i>Then try this...</i>
It takes too long for students to get in a circle...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Practice getting in and out of circle before holding an actual talking circle ◦ Figure out possible alternate furniture or room arrangements ◦ Use a timer and build in an incentive for meeting the time expectation ◦ Have students sit on top of desks in a circle ◦ Consider holding the circle outside, or another location ◦ Ask the students to come up with suggestions
The circle process takes too long...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ You can do a check in circle in a few minutes with 32 students. You could ask for a one or two word check in on how their weekend was or how they are feeling at the moment ◦ Time spent up front building relationships and coming up with shared values and guidelines will save time in the long run dealing with problem behavior
No one is talking, or English may be a second language for my students, and they are hesitant to speak...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Use alternative methods of expression such as drawing, freestyle poetry, journaling, movement, activities with no words, etc. ◦ It is ok not to share as long as everyone participates by being present in circle ◦ Use a partner-share icebreaker or concentric circles so every student can have a chance to talk without speaking to the whole class ◦ Try to set a fun and community-building tone, gradually getting to more serious content over time ◦ Build in incentives for participation ◦ Ask students to brainstorm why they or others aren't talking (could be written, anonymous, etc.) and some suggestions to encourage it ◦ Ask questions students are more likely to want to answer like "What is it you want adults to understand about youth?"
There are specific misbehaviors that de-rail the circle...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Revisit the shared guidelines and values you created together ◦ Try to determine the possible function of each misbehavior and focus on that rather than the behavior itself ◦ Engage the students that are misbehaving as circle keepers or ask them to think of questions for the circle

Types of Circles by Tier

Tier	TYPES OF CIRCLE	PURPOSE OF CIRCLE
Tier 1	Community Building Circles	Teach empathy and self-reflection. Create a sense of belonging through sharing stories and active listening. Equity Build/ Strengthen relationships, connections
Tier 1	Learning/ Curriculum Circles	Use process to share/ teach one another Enhance learning by providing interactive forum for all students to participate in learning process Provide a structure and focus for easily distracted students
Tier 1	Talking/ Issues Circles	Visit a particular topic, reoccurring issue Opportunity to hear different perspectives Not trying to get to agreement, but rather, creating a venue for different voices to be heard
Tier 1	Celebration Circles	Honor, recognize important moments in the community A form of community building Bring attention to the health of the community
Tier 1	Healing Circles	Called to support a group (health issues, loss, etc.) Support and share pain
Tier 1	Decision making Circles	Group planning- perhaps smaller circles make initial proposals to bring forward to larger group
Tier 2	Community Conference/ Family Group Conference	Bring all affected parties (parent /guardian / community member) together to discuss serious conflict/harm and determine what needs to happen to repair harm and provide opportunity for healing
Tier 2	Harm/Conflict Circles	Bring all affected parties together to discuss conflict/ harm and figure out what needs to happen to move forward in a good way
Tier 3	Support Circles	Circles of support and accountability (COSA). Gather around one person to support long term change.
Tier 3	Healing Circles	Called to support one person (health issues, loss, etc.) Support and share pain
Tier 3	Re-entry/ Welcome Circle	Restorative re-integration from incarceration, expulsion or suspension to school in a caring way that identifies supports for student so that they can be successful at school and beyond