Circles

Yemen

India

are important to human beings.

Kenya

North America

Why?

They are non-hierarchical (no head, no front)

They allow people to face each other

They encourage authentic verbal interaction

They provide safe and dynamic experiences

How can circles be used in school?

To teach academic behaviors and social protocols

To set agendas – for a day, for a period, for a year

To share and learn about ourselves and others

To discuss and resolve conflicts in class

To support a student's change in behavior

What forms can circles take in the classroom?

Introduction, Icebreakers and Games

Classroom Agenda-Setting

Group Assist / Interventions

Classroom Discussions

Town Meetings

Basic Circle Meetings

Setup

Chairs are arranged in a circle
Students may not bring backpacks, food or anything with them to circle

Ground Rules & Greeting/Check In

YES, you should go over this really often.

Ground Rules
1. Everybody stays seated in the circle; no backpacks or "extra" items
2. Nothing in Your Hands
3. Speak and Listen Respectfully

It's important to keep the terminology "ground rules" and keep coming back to them when students are off-track. There may be 3 or 4 times during the meeting when you check in about the ground rules.

Greeting
Is really what it looks like: a group of people who are familiar to each other, formally taking a moment to greet each other. We may do this in simple or more complex ways; we may communicate verbally or non-verbally; we may greet each other in ways that teach us about other cultures, or in ways that teach us "adult" protocols

Check In
Check In allows the teacher and group to gauge each other's emotional state and readiness for school; it allows students to put whatever obstacles they may see to learning effectively to "one side" by sharing and empathizing with the group. An activity may involve "throwing out" concerns people bring with them from home into the classroom…

Examples:
Raise your hand if you ate breakfast this morning
Raise your hand if you did our homework last night
Raise your hand if you helped a younger sibling this morning
On a scale of 1-10, how ready are you for the Global Regents?

Meeting Topic / Go Around / Activity

This is an opportunity for individuals and the group to set goals for the day and the week; for students to share out their understandings or opinions about a personal, "outside-world" or school based or current-event topic

Example: "Need/Have"

Round 1 – Two things you need to have completed or have to do by the end of the week

Round 2 – One thing you need from the group to help you complete one of your goals

Example: A Leader I Know

Round 1 – Who is a leader you know personally? In one sentence, why or how would you describe them as a leader?

Example: Looking at an image from media

How, in low-inference terms, would you describe what you see in this print advertisement?

What is this advertisement intending to sell?

Who is this advertisement trying to appeal to, or communicate to?

How do you feel about this image / advertisement?

News & Announcements / Next Agenda

This is the place where basic announcements (relating to school calendar and perhaps project deadlines) how you transition the group from the meeting to the next segment of Advisory, or to the instruction portion of your class period.

Examples:

"Who has suggestions for the three steps to get us ready for the next activity?"

Three Steps: Chairs Back; Pencil Out; In Your Seats

"Remember, Friday people in Lauren's Science class have a mid-term – how many people said *oh no!* when I said that?"

"Remember, last time we broke out from a circle, it took 10 minutes to get anything done in Study Hall / Independent Reading. Who has solutions for us?"

Variation: The Group Assist

Protocol

describe the behavior in non-judgmental, low-inference terms
discuss why this behavior is a problem
(acceptance of the problem: the person needs to accept that they are causing problems for others
solutions - the group proposes solutions, but the adult leading the group decides

Why

it is safe the short format and *help* purpose of the protocol assures the student "on the spot" and others that they can and should trust in the management system
the best classroom management takes place in your classroom; challenging students trust teachers who will handle their most difficult behaviors and be in charge
it promotes the teaching of positive behaviors by having students help each other, be honest, and, with their peers and teacher, collaboratively come up with replacement behaviors

Suggestions & Variations

discuss and **strategize** with a student's advisor and your
grade team members directly after an incident has occurred, or after you have noticed a pattern. it may be that the behavior in question does not merit a group assist – either a private conversation with the student, a personal note to the student or a direct grade-level consequence may be in order

plan the group assist carefully; think of which students will or should participate, and how the respondents will participate

enlist the students involved it isn't necessary to put students on the spot in every instance; students may trust the process more and perform far better if you prepare them for the group assist

vary the size of the group or **pullout group** involving the
student(s) involved in the incident or pattern, and a small compliment of "support" students

co-facilitate with a student advisor, or **have the advisor facilitate** to emphasize the need for you to participate and acknowledge your own moves and possible flaws in the process

limit student participation by selecting or pre-selecting students to describe the incident or pattern (step 1) and/or discussion of the impact of the incident or pattern (step 2), and or proposed solutions (step 3); **encourage student participation only in step 3** in order to reduce tension and/or debate