

“Talking Circles in the Classroom”

Ideas for beginning talking circles in your classroom.

First day

Visit with with class asking them to please try talking circles for 3 - 4 weeks and that you would like to have them evaluate at the end of this time. You will be asking them what they think of talking circles, if they should continue to use them, and are there any benefits they feel they get from participating in them.

Talking Circles-

- Everyone sits in a circle, you will use a talking piece and only the person holding the talking piece can speak. (you may want to use whatever signal you usually use with the class to remind them to wait for their turn.)(In elementary, you may need to identify how they may sit, ie; cross legged or out in front) (Jr. HS - HS can use chairs if they are available)
- The Talking Piece always moves to the left. This is a native american custom, it is the way the earth rotates, it is clockwise. (start different places besides at your left so others gets a chance to begin.)
- Everyone will have a turn, please keep your answers brief so everyone has an opportunity to talk.
- The talking piece maybe placed in the center of the circle and you may have an open discussion.
- Define how much time you will have for circle discussion each day before beginning.
- Tell them you will have a suggestion box so students can put in their ideas that they would like to have discussed in the circle.
- This is optional for the first day. (If you feel students may use offensive language, for break rules often, you will need to add that put downs, offensive words, negative talk are not allowed. If they cannot follow the rules, they will be asked to leave the circle.

Opening question might be (beginning questions should be easy and something everyone can answer and that is FUN!

Fun question

What is your favorite food?

What is your favorite playground equipment to play on?

Favorite kind of music?

What kind of pets do you have at home? or if you could have a pet, what would it be?

Thinking question (if time permits)

What do you like best about school?

What is one thing you would like to change in school? (Teacher/or student can take notes on this one if you like to be used in later circles)

Second Day

Fun Question

Show me by making a face how much you like..... ie math, grammar, pizza, horses, go to the moon?

If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would it be?

Thinking question - Yesterday we talked about changing something in school.

Many(or some) of you said you would like to change.....

Do you think this is something that the school should change, Why or why not?

Problem Solving

What ideas do you have to change.....?

What could you do to make this happen?

Third day (Remind students to submit questions for the box)

(You can add that students may pass on the thinking question if they would like) I don't add this rule right away because students sometimes think it is cool to pass and followers follow along.

Fun question (from suggestion box or ask a couple to students to come up with fun questions to ask. You pick the ones you like best)

Thinking question - What is one thing we could do to improve this classroom?

Problem Solving

Continue from yesterday or use responses from thinking question or classroom rules.

Fourth day ... ongoing

Start students out with questions for them to think globally, community, school, classroom, and self.

What do you think of the war in Iraq? (Depending upon age of students)

Would you like to be on a spaceship and fly to the moon? why or why not? Or if you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?

What do you think about the laws regarding sex offenders in this state?

(Unsure of elementary state questions)

What do you think about students treat other students in this school?
What makes you happy about coming to school?

What do you think about how students treat in this class?
What makes you happy or sad about how other students treat you?

If you could change one thing about your self, what would it be and why?
What would you like to change about yourself? (Give a few examples for them)

What is needed in our school, so students treated each other more respectfully?

What can we do in the classroom so everyone feels respected?

What is one thing you could do so other students feel respected?