

# What You Need to Know About Community Circles

The goal of the circle is to deepen connections between students and establish a collaborative classroom community.



## What is a Community Circle?

Community circles are held to create a sense of belonging, giving everyone a chance to feel seen, heard and respected.

They can also be used to discuss challenges experienced by students or help mediate conflict. The circle shape emphasizes fairness and equity for all participants. Regular use of circles supports the development of empathy, perspective taking and patience leading to a calmer, more focused community.

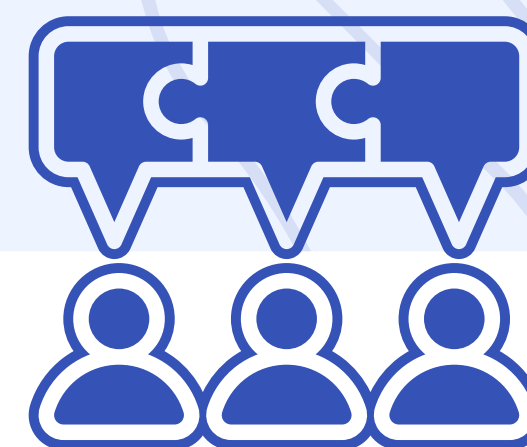
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## Plan ahead

It's important to establish trust between participants. Start by asking low-risk questions that do not require students to share deeply personal information to normalize this style of communication. As trust builds, shift the focus to more revealing questions about students' lived experiences. Clear, open-ended questions facilitate discussion and self-reflection.

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## Set the Tone

Arrange the space so there are no tables or desks between students or in the middle of the circle. You should be able to see every face without leaning forward.

Make time to establish group agreements together. Some key guidelines include:

- Everyone is equal
- Speak from the heart
- Listen from the heart
- Refrain from using names

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## The Talking Piece

A talking piece can be used to support turn taking. It can be any object that can easily be passed between participants.

- Only speak when you have the talking piece
- Everyone will have a turn
- You may pass if you don't have something to add

If you shift from using the talking piece, make sure you explicitly notify students.

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Your VOICE MATTERS

## Empower Student Voice

Community circles allow students to share their unique experiences and perspectives. They can voice concerns, engage in problem solving and contribute ideas about how to improve the wellbeing of the community. If many students are passing or sharing superficially during the circle, this is an indicator that there is insufficient trust in the community. Trust is established when ideas are respected and well received by the community.

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