

First Week Lesson 1: Circle Set-Up

Purpose

Depending on your schedule, finding time for the classroom circle may be tricky. Using the time from 8:30-8:50 was useful for me. If the kids are taught how to set up the circle themselves, the morning routine did not require my attention and I could handle all the other morning responsibilities. We would often be set and ready to go in the circle by 8:35, work until the announcements, listen to them in the circle, and then continue our work for a few more minutes before jumping into our first subject. Also, if the students came back from recess with major class-wide issues, I would (sometimes) pull another circle and solve it right away. If the students can set up the circle quickly, it allows it to be used more often and more efficiently. Today is dedicated just to practicing setting up the circle.

Teacher Work

Have students bring chairs into a circle shape. Teach students how to make room for other people coming in, how to help by bringing multiple chairs to the circle if necessary, how to appear welcoming by not saving seats or actively moving away from a particular student, and how to make a circle – not a “squirle” with spots where people feel hidden.

“We will be meeting in circles to learn ways to better communicate and solve problems we may have with each other. We’ll be talking about restorative justice, which is a way to make things right between people after someone has done something hurtful.”

The shape of the circle is important. Even if we cannot sit in a perfectly round arrangement, we consider it a circle when everyone is able to see everyone else’s face without having to lean forward.”

Ask students to go get the center piece items one by one after they are in the circle. Explain where they are kept so anyone can help gather these items or put them away.

Put the circle away then set it up again, including the center pieces. Let them solve problems – watch silently. Give feedback once everyone is back in the circle. Praise people who moved aside to let someone else scoot in, moved seats to make room, allowed another person to take a center piece item.

Student Work

Students participate by building and rebuilding the circle.

Closing

Stress that the circle set up has to be done with autonomy and without argument. If someone feels excluded from the circle because of seating or the inability to help, they will not be willing to participate that day. Emphasize how important it is that they work together and think flexibly to get things ready quickly.

Modify this lesson as needed depending on your classroom. Students may sit on chairs or on the floor, the shape of the circle may have to be flexible, for example. Do what works for you.



Sometimes kids would fight over who can bring what to the circle. If this happens, you can develop a system so it is a classroom job or teach taking turns.



Additional Resources

Excerpt from “Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles” from the Center for Restorative Process. Check out our posts for more information.



resource courtesy of *Lead Teacher*