



START OFF THE YEAR WITH
**RESTORATIVE
PRACTICES**

Here are a few circle ideas
to get your year started in a
PROACTIVE way.



iirp

International Institute
for Restorative Practices
Graduate School



NEW CLASS, NEW AGREEMENTS

CIRCLE TOPIC

Creating Classroom Agreements

TYPE OF CIRCLE

Proactive

PURPOSE/GOAL OF CIRCLE

To ensure all students have a voice in the creation of the classroom agreements.

CIRCLE QUESTIONS*

- Think about a positive classroom learning experience. Name one or two things that contributed to that experience.
- What do you need in a classroom environment to be able to learn?
- What norms do you think would contribute to an environment that will contribute to your learning? (Record the norms on a poster.)
- Name one thing you can do to contribute to a positive learning environment.

*It is recommended that the first and last rounds be done as a Sequential circle to ensure all voices are heard and the round in between can be done as Sequential or Non-Sequential.

NOTES

- These questions can be adapted to any grade level.
- You may also consider having everyone in the class sign the agreements poster when it is complete.
- When new people enter the classroom community, you can have a circle to introduce them to the class, the agreements, and ask if they have anything to add.
- Over time, agreements become norms. The classroom norms will become a living document as the year goes on.



R-E-S-P-E-C-T

CIRCLE TOPIC

Respect

TYPE OF CIRCLE

Proactive

PURPOSE/GOAL OF CIRCLE

To create an understanding of the word “respect” and what respect will look like in this classroom.

CIRCLE QUESTIONS*

- Think of a time when you felt respected. Think of one or two words to describe that experience.
- Think of a time when you felt disrespected. Think of one or two words to describe that experience.
- How would you define respect? What does it look like and sound like? (Record answers.)
- How would you like to be shown respect?
- How can you show respect to your classmates and teacher in this class?

*It is recommended that the first and last rounds be done as a Sequential circle to ensure all voices are heard and the round in between can be done as Sequential or Non-Sequential.

NOTES

- Respect is often brought up regarding school-based discipline. When a student is perceived as being disrespectful, they may experience a consequence for said disrespect.
- This circle allows students to have a voice in what respect means to them and creates clear expectations of how respect will be defined in a classroom. It will also allow students and adults to talk about respect being a two-way street.
- These questions can be adapted to any grade level.



IT CAN BE ALL FUN AND GAMES

CIRCLE TOPIC

Community Building

TYPE OF CIRCLE

Proactive

PURPOSE/GOAL OF CIRCLE

To get to know one another and to have fun.

MATERIALS

You will need a beach ball and a permanent marker. Before the circle, write get-to-know-you questions (grade level appropriate) on the beach ball.

CIRCLE QUESTIONS

- What is one summertime activity that you like to participate in?
- In a non-sequential go around, have participants throw the ball to each other and answer the question that is closest to their right thumb. Do as many tosses as you have time for.
- What is one thing that you learned about someone in the circle?

NOTES

This activity can be a warm-up to begin class or a check-out to end class. It can also be adapted for use as a review before a test. Write review questions on the ball, and it can be used over and over. Here are some examples:

- What is your favorite part of the school day?
- What is your favorite outside activity?
- What is your favorite subject at school?
- What is your favorite season and why?
- If you could eat at any restaurant, where would it be?
- What is your favorite road trip snack?
- Who is your favorite superhero?
- What is your favorite breakfast cereal?
- If you could be any animal, what would you be and why?
- What song best describes your mood today?



BE OUR GUEST

CIRCLE TOPIC

Preparing for a Substitute or Guest Teacher

TYPE OF CIRCLE

Proactive

PURPOSE/GOAL OF CIRCLE

Let students know there will be a substitute/guest teacher and discuss agreements and plans for the day.

CIRCLE QUESTIONS*

- Share one thing you appreciate about your class.
- Share one way you can welcome the substitute/guest teacher.
 - Review classroom agreements and plans for the next day with the substitute.
- Share any questions or concerns you may have about the next day.
- Share one thing you will do to make the next day a success.

*It is recommended that the first and last rounds be done as a Sequential circle to ensure all voices are heard and the round in between can be done as Sequential or Non-Sequential.

NOTES

- This circle can be helpful when the teacher knows they will be out and will have a substitute or guest teacher.
- This circle allows the teacher to set boundaries and expectations and provide support, giving students a clear picture of the plans.
- Students are able to have a voice and participate in the planning for when the teacher is out.
- If the substitute or guest teacher is someone that the students already know or someone who is in the building often, it's a bonus if they can participate in the circle as well.



BE OUR GUEST

CIRCLE TOPIC

Addressing Issues with Substitute or Guest Teacher

TYPE OF CIRCLE

Responsive

PURPOSE/GOAL OF CIRCLE

To ensure all community members have a voice and space to process a harm.

CIRCLE QUESTIONS*

- What agreements were broken when the substitute teacher was in class?
- How were you and others impacted?
- How can you make things right?
- Share one thing you would like to see from today's circle.
- Record the list from this round and reach a consensus with the group on a plan moving forward.

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NOTES

- Even when teachers use circles proactively, issues may still arise. This circle is an opportunity to debrief the day, allow students to take responsibility, and discuss ways to make things right with the substitute or guest teacher.
- If possible, have the substitute or guest teacher join the circle.
- If the day went well, you can also change this circle topic to success with the substitute or guest teacher. The circle could be a quick debrief, and you can choose from the following questions:
 - What went well yesterday?
 - What is one thing you learned, realized, or appreciated about the day?
 - What is a success from yesterday you would like to share?



HELLO, GOODBYE

Welcome Circles and Goodbye Circles are part of our culture at the IIRP and our model programs, Community Service Foundation and Buxmont Academy. As we begin and end the school year, welcome and goodbye circles are a great opportunity to get to know each other and acknowledge goodbyes. These circles are great for the first and last days of school. They are even better to do when you welcome a new student or teacher into class or when a student or teacher leaves mid-year. It can be intimidating to enter a classroom after everyone has already connected, and it may also bring up some emotions to leave a class earlier in the year than expected. The following circles can be done as people join or leave the community during the year.

CIRCLE TOPIC

Welcome Circle

TYPE OF CIRCLE

Proactive

PURPOSE/GOAL OF CIRCLE

To welcome new community members to the class/school/workplace.

CIRCLE QUESTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

- Say your name.
- What is something you like to do in school, a goal you have for the year, or something you appreciate about your class?
- Share a class agreement or piece of advice.

CIRCLE QUESTIONS WITH ADULTS

- Say your name and role
- Share a piece of advice or something you wish you had known on your first day of work.

NOTES

These can be done as a Sequential circle, with the new community member going last and sharing their name and something about themselves.



HELLO, GOODBYE

CIRCLE TOPIC

Goodbye Circle

TYPE OF CIRCLE

Proactive

PURPOSE/GOAL OF CIRCLE

To acknowledge a person's contribution to the community, share emotions, and say goodbye.

CIRCLE QUESTIONS

Use any of the following:

- Share a favorite memory about the person leaving.
- Acknowledge something you appreciate about the person.
- Share something you will miss about learning/working with the person leaving.

NOTES

These can be done as a Sequential circle, with the departing community member going last and sharing their overall thoughts on what they heard or specific points with the individuals in the circle.

Goodbye circles can be emotional, and some people may want to pass. This is normal. There can be an option to write a note to the person leaving instead of sharing verbally in the circle.