

RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

Dialogue Circles

TIME REQUIRED

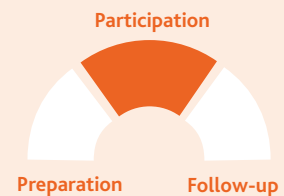
30 minutes minimum

FORMAT

Small groups, whole-group discussion

OBJECTIVES

- To explore and deepen understanding of the Dialogue Circle.
- To practise effective questioning and listening strategies for Dialogue Circles in classrooms.

PROCESS PHASE COVERED**COMMENT: DIFFERENT USES OF DIALOGUE CIRCLES**

The Dialogue Circle uses low-risk prompts aimed at making connections and building trust rather than reaching an agreement or consensus. (Low-risk prompts are effective for opening up discussions on topics and sharing perspectives.) It can be particularly useful when a group of students want to take action on an issue, allowing them to hear each other's views before moving into a Decision-making Circle.

Like other circles, Dialogue Circles are based on an agreed commitment to respectful speaking and listening, without criticism. This agreement, reinforced by the facilitator and by protocols such as the raised hand signal (see page 15), provides a safe way for less outgoing participants (those who would usually choose not to speak out in class) to contribute to the discussion.

By gauging the reactions of others in a Dialogue Circle, participants can begin to deepen their understanding of what socially acceptable and unacceptable dialogue and behaviour look and sound like.

The resource sheet for this activity has a number of low-risk prompts to encourage dialogue. (For more suggestions, see Appendix 1.)

ACTIVITY**Small groups**

In groups of five, select a few questions from the resource sheet **Low-risk prompts for Dialogue Circles**. Form a circle and practise answering the questions over a couple of rounds, with one participant taking the role of the facilitator to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute.

Share your experiences in the circle and discuss either how you have used Dialogue Circles to support and

enhance learning in your classrooms, or how you could use them to do so in the future. Record the main points from your discussion for sharing with the whole group.

Whole-group discussion

After each group has presented their main points, identify common themes and responses and record them on large sheets of paper for displaying in the staffroom. If possible, revisit these findings in a follow-up PLD session in a few weeks.

Below are some low-risk prompts to encourage participants to contribute in Dialogue Circles. More prompts and starter questions are given in Appendix 1.

In groups of 3–5, select a few of the prompts, form a circle, and practise answering the questions over a couple of rounds, with one participant taking the role of the facilitator to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute.

Share your experiences in the circle and discuss either how you have used Dialogue Circles to support and enhance learning in your classrooms, or how you could use them to do so in the future. Record the main points from your discussion for sharing with the whole group.

PROMPTS TO ENCOURAGE SHARING

- What things make you feel hopeful?
- Can you share a story about when a friend helped you achieve something?
- What keeps you going when facing challenging situations?

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- The best thing about where we live is ...
- If we could change one thing about our school, it should be ...
- My friends are important to me because ...
- A difficult experience I got through was ...
- The best thing that happened in class today was ...

EXPLORING VALUES

- What does respect look like?
- What are the good things about our school community?
- What things about our school community are not so good?
- What would you like to see changed?
- How would you go about making that change?
- What does a good class look and feel like?