

RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

Integration/Leaving Circles

TIME REQUIRED

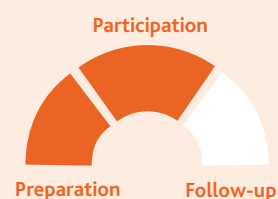
20 minutes minimum

FORMAT

Small groups, whole-group discussion

OBJECTIVES

- To explore and develop an understanding of the Integration/Leaving Circle.
- To develop strategies and approaches for using Integration/Leaving Circles.

PROCESS PHASE COVERED**COMMENT: KEEPING MANA INTACT**

The Integration/Leaving Circle focuses on a set of protocols for students, staff, and whānau entering and leaving the school community. Using these protocols effectively makes joining or leaving the school community a positive, affirming experience for those involved and for the broader school community.

For new students, staff, and whānau, the transition or integration into a school community can be a daunting experience. Integration circles provide a process for welcoming:

- individual students and staff to a school community or class
- cohorts of students to a school community
- students, their whānau, and staff back from an extended time away.

A teacher going on sabbatical or maternity leave can use an Integration Circle to hand over their class to the relieving teacher. Students need to be prepared carefully, so that the new teacher isn't made to feel undermined by the process or that they are not a welcome replacement.

Appendix 1 gives examples of low-risk prompts for Integration Circles. These and the activities in Appendix 2 are a good starting point for facilitating an Integration Circle.

When a student is reintegrated into a class after a long absence or a withdrawal, it is important to ensure that they are reconnected with the class in positive and inclusive ways. If there has been a withdrawal, the teacher and the students in that class will have been affected by it. The reintegration process should be supported by the dean or head of faculty who has been responsible for managing the behaviour throughout the withdrawal period. In some circumstances, a Conflict/Healing Circle may be more appropriate (see Module 6).

Leaving Circles support staff, students, and whānau who are leaving a school community. The Leaving Circle is the coming together of the person leaving with the people who have been involved in his or her school life – friends, peers, whānau, and significant adults from the school community.

Questions for staff to consider before facilitating a Leaving Circle include:

- What aspects of the circle would have the most value for the person leaving?
- What aspects of the circle would have the most value for those in the school community?

A praise round (see Appendix 2) is an excellent activity when people are leaving.

ACTIVITY

Small groups

Consider the two scenarios on the resource sheet **Exploring Integration/Leaving Circles** and discuss the questions that follow. If you have a particularly powerful experience of an Integration or Leaving Circle, share your story with the group. If anyone has been involved in a formal reintegration, discuss the success of that occasion.

Whole-group discussion

Share the main points of the small-group discussions with the whole group. Consider these questions:

- What are some of the challenges when starting a new position without any integration or induction process?
- What would it be like for students starting at a school without any kind of welcoming or integration process?
- What are some of the challenges for staff when a student has been withdrawn for a period of time and then comes back to class without any reintegration process or acknowledgement?
- What are the benefits of a Leaving Circle for the people leaving and for the community they are leaving behind?

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RESOURCE SHEET: EXPLORING INTEGRATION/LEAVING CIRCLES

Consider the two scenarios below and discuss the questions that follow.

SCENARIO 1

A school employs five new staff members at the beginning of the year. Their teaching backgrounds vary considerably – some have had international teaching experience, while others are quite new to the profession.

The principal spends some time with each of them, showing them around the school. Before the start of the school year they each spend time at the school familiarising themselves with the student management systems and the library and reading curriculum resources.

In the first week of term, the principal asks the Restorative Practice coach to talk to the five new staff members about the school's approach to building and managing relationships. When the coach asks the group if they have ever worked in a restorative school, they look at one other and ask: "What's a restorative school?"

Questions for discussion

- How effective is this introduction to Restorative Practice in the school? How could it be done better?
- What are some of the risks if we don't have systems for introducing new staff, students, and whānau to the school community?
- How important is it to introduce new staff, students, and whānau to the values and culture of the school?
- What do we do to integrate new staff and students into our school community?

SCENARIO 2

After 8 years teaching in a college science department, you have built up collegial relationships and genuine friendships with your colleagues. However, your partner is offered employment 100 km away and you both decide to move.

As a parting gift your colleagues, together with the year 13 form class you have taught since they were in year 9, prepare a Leaving Circle. The circle time includes a slide show of photographs of your time at the school and the presentation of a leaving gift.

What you value most, however, is that everyone in the Leaving Circle has prepared something to say to send you on your way – funny poems, anecdotes, and heartfelt appreciation and praise for your hard work over the years. You feel more connected to the students and school community than ever before.

Questions for discussion

- Have you facilitated or participated in a Leaving Circle? What were the major benefits for both the adults and the students involved?
- What do we do to farewell staff, students, or whānau leaving our school community?
- What could we do better when farewelling those from our school community?