**Restorative Practice Circle Types**

1. Community-Building Circles
2. Integration/leaving Circles
3. Learning Circles
4. Dialogue Circles
5. Peer mediation
6. Decision Making Circles
7. Conflict Circles

*Restorative Circles operate on a continuum from greeting newcomers, establishing rapport, exploring school values, and supporting learning through to exploring the drivers behind low-level negative behaviors, looking for ways to repair the harm caused to relationships, and building new cultures and ways of being within a school community. The first five circles focus on building connectedness and a sense of community, sharing stories, establishing consensus among a group, sharing responsibility, and deepening learning opportunities – outcomes that significantly benefit any school community. The sixth and most formal type of Restorative Circle, the Conflict/Healing Circle, is different in that it uses a restorative script to address low-level conflict that has occurred.*

*Together, the Restorative Practices Circles in the model are appropriate for a wide range of situations and needs. They are semi-formal (in that there is a process) and are facilitated by the classroom teacher, a cultural leader, or a student. Mostly they follow a similar approach – the group sits in a circle, the facilitator uses activities and asks prompting questions to build trust and support dialogue, and the participants take turns to contribute. What distinguishes one circle from another is its purpose. But whatever its intended outcome, a Restorative Practices Circle uses a non-hierarchical, consensus approach in which all participants have an equal voice.*

*The Circles at the proactive or informal end of the continuum should account for 80% of the circles that are done within a setting. These Circles are intentional and can allow for participants to take risks as the community strengthens by building social capital and trust.  These types of circles are used to lay the groundwork for the way your community interacts together and does business.*

*The Circles at the responsive end, that is the conflict/healing circle, should account for 20% of the circles that are done within a setting. These Circles address conflict and manage tension in a community. They involve all who are impacted by the conflict and tension and allow a safe place for people to discuss issues as they arise.*

*The Dialogue Circle is a platform for discussion. It offers the opportunity to explore topics, share ideas on a particular subject, hear different perspectives, and share understandings. It creates an inclusive environment in which all participants feel confident about joining in a discussion and can be particularly helpful in encouraging the less outgoing among the group to contribute their opinions and ideas. The Dialogue Circle does not require a collective agreement or outcome. This kind of circle allows people to explore different viewpoints with honesty and respect, as equals. The discussion can involve any issue – for example, a minor disagreement, class rules, the code of conduct for a sports or cultural group and learning expectations. Teachers can use the process to touch base with colleagues (for example, at department meetings) or groups of students on a regular basis.  The Dialogue Circle promotes connectedness by encouraging staff and students to share their unique stories. It enables the links between school values and expectations of behavior to be made explicit – for example, by exploring the values of the school, a sports or cultural group, or a classroom.*

*Like the Dialogue Circle, the Learning Circle is a platform for discussion that does not always require a collective decision or outcome. A Learning Circle tends to be facilitated by a staff member; however, one of the learning circle activities may be small-group dialogues facilitated by students. Learning Circles focus on deepening participants’ understanding of specific curriculum-related topics or projects. They provide a forum for sharing prior knowledge, expertise, and individual perspectives on a chosen topic, for informing learning objectives, and for encouraging both teacher and students to share their unique experiences and individual understandings in order to build the knowledge base of the whole group. Learning Circles are useful for project-based work, where they give students the opportunity to understand the different ways in which people learn, to take ownership of their individual learning needs and expected achievement outcomes, and to facilitate one another’s learning.*

*The Decision-Making Circle, also known as a Problem-Solving Circle, is a collaborative process through which adults and students can establish agreement on expected behavior and develop group, class, or school protocols. It allows participants to explore options, plan learning and achievement outcomes, create agreements, and draw up procedures for managing situations and relationships when things go wrong. Decision-making Circles are also suitable for establishing whole-school values and expectations of behavior, particularly with regard to implementing the Restorative Practice model within the school community.*

*In a Decision-Making Circle, participants can define issues and generate ideas for solving problems, evaluate solutions, create and prioritize plans, and discuss what level of consensus is acceptable to the group. While the circle focuses on collaborative decision-making and no one person controlling the outcomes, the facilitator plays a vital role: the circle keeper, the facilitator, is the most important person in terms of the circle’s success or failure. The circle keeper guides the group toward reaching the goals that have been set by the organizer and the participants. It is the keeper’s responsibility to stimulate and moderate the discussion by asking questions, identifying key points, and managing the group process. While doing all this, the leader must be friendly, understanding, and supportive.*

*The Integration Circle is an opportunity for introducing and welcoming new staff and students to the school community. It allows people to get to know each other and fosters belonging, connection, and inclusiveness. Integration Circles provide a platform for new students and staff to introduce themselves and get a sense of the values and culture of the school (or class or group) and the expectations of behavior and learning within this community.  Transition and integration into a school community can be a daunting experience. Schools sometimes expect new students and staff to know how things work without any induction process. For a new student or staff member, an informal introduction in the form of a circle is a more relational and inclusive approach than, for example, receiving good wishes and a copy of their timetable.*

*Integration circles provide a process for:*

*• welcoming individual staff and students to a school community or class*

*• welcoming cohorts of students to a school community*

*• welcoming students and staff back from an extended time away.*

*The Leaving Circle acknowledges the positive attributes and strengths of those leaving. It provides them with an opportunity to hear the hopes and good wishes of their peers and the school. This is particularly important for students who are leaving, as it supports their ongoing relationships with others from within the school community.*

*The Conflict/Healing Circle is a semi-formal process for exploring low-level harm between two or more people in a class. This circle typically involves approximately three to six people and includes those who have caused harm, those who have been harmed, and those who are there to provide support. It has the same aim as a Restorative Conference, but a Restorative Conference addresses incidents of more serious harm, uses a more formal process, and is facilitated by a specially trained staff member or adult.*

*The aim of the circle is to consider who has been affected, establish how they have been harmed, and reach an agreement about what needs to be done to put things right.  This type of circle requires the teacher to act as facilitator and uses a restorative script to explore challenging incidents within the classroom or school. However, if the classroom teacher has also been harmed, then the circle will need to be facilitated by student support personnel, such as a school counselor, social worker or psychologist, an administrator or other trusted colleague. For the classroom teacher, one of the benefits of facilitating this type of circle is that it provides participants with an opportunity to repair the harm and to reach an agreement that supports positive changes in behavior. It also gives the teacher more ownership when managing low-level issues in their classroom in the future*