

THOUGH MANY, WE ARE ONE

UNIT 1

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Lesson 1

Prayer and Community Building

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Building Community

Prayer and Community Building

Lesson Overview

Through an introduction to community circles, students build mutual trust and understanding.

Duration: 40 minutes

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Religious Education:

Gr 4 - LC1.2: Describe how the Church strives to be “one” (i.e. common faith, worship-celebration, and teaching)

Gr 5 - PR2.1: Identify and use various means to enter into and experience vocal prayer

Gr 5 - LS3: Demonstrate an understanding of Christianity as a religion that seeks unity within the experience of diversity.

Gr 6 – ML1.2: Explain through example, how God’s gift of human reason promotes human dignity and identify ways we can use reason to participate in the wisdom and goodness of Creation.

Language:

Oral Communication 1: listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes

Oral Communication 2: use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes

ONTARIO CATHOLIC SCHOOL GRADUATE EXPECTATIONS & CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS

The Catholic Social Teachings evident in this lesson include:

Dignity of the Human Person

The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations evident in this lesson include:

CGE 3: An Effective Communicator

CGE 5: A Collaborative Contributor

CGE 6: A Caring Family Member

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GUIDING QUESTIONS (coming out of the Big Idea)

Big Idea:

- Building community through inclusive practices such as restorative circles. Through these practices, students will understand that they are responsible for their moral actions.

Scripture Passages:

- Matthew 25:31-46

LEARNING GOALS

At the end of this lesson, students will know, understand and/or be able to:

- share the reasons how circles promote the dignity of each person and how they help build an inclusive environment

Success Criteria, based on the Learning Goals, can be co-constructed as a class in language meaningful to students. The success criteria help students understand what to look for during the learning and what it looks like once they have learned. They identify the significant aspects of student performance that are assessed and/or evaluated (i.e., the “look-fors”) in relation to curriculum expectations.

INSTRUCTIONAL COMPONENTS AND CONTEXT

Terminology:

- Inclusive environment
- Community
- Restorative Practice

Materials:

- Talking item (ball, stick, pencil, tape, etc.)
- Chairs/Physical Space for all students to sit in a circle

Resources: (see attached appendices)

- Five Key Themes of Restorative Practice (*Appendix 1*)
- Circle Information (*Appendix 2*)
- RP @ ALCDSB (*Appendix 3*)
- Additional support may be available from board personnel (e.g. Safe Schools Teacher)

NOTE:

If you have a very large class, it may be wise to split class into two circles. However, the first circle should be done as an entire class to set guidelines and expectations.

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MINDS ON

- Establishing a positive learning environment
- Connecting to prior learning and/or experiences
- Setting the context for learning

Discuss the importance of creating an inclusive environment for all students: *How can we make everyone feel welcome and included? What is dignity? How can we promote dignity of the Human Person in our classroom? What can we do to become all God wants us to be?*

- Rearrange classroom with chairs into a circle. The circle is a sign of equality and unity.
- Discuss how the physical set up of the classroom fosters feelings of inclusion.

ACTION

- Introducing new learning or extending/reinforcing prior learning
- Providing opportunities for practice and application of learning (guided → independent)

Introduce circles using theme 1 from *Five Key Themes of Restorative Practice*

Introduce the Rules: No names, no shame, no blame. Can only talk with the *talking item*.

Ask students why we have these rules, how does this build inclusion? How do these rules make us feel like everyone has ideas that are valued? Pass the talking item.

Introduce the idea behind circles - to build community and foster positive relationships.

Circle begins with each student taking a turn with the “talking item” and saying a *brag or drag* (something positive or negative happening in their life right now) – this helps the community get a sense of where everyone is coming from.

As students listen and share their ideas- remind them to save questions for the end and only talk with the talking item.

CONSOLIDATION

- Providing opportunities for consolidation and reflection
- Helping students demonstrate what they have learned

Explain to students that, just as we as a class create community through common beliefs and practices, so do we as the Church.

- What are some of the common beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church?

As this is an introduction activity, end the circle with one of the following “just for fun” questions:

- If you could have a superpower, what would it be?
- What is your favourite animal and why?
- If you could travel anywhere, where would you go and why?

Pass the talking item around the circle to give the students the opportunity to share their answer or “pass” and just think about their answer in their head. The entire idea of this circle is to make

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the class feel comfortable and included.

Really focus on Theme 1 from ***Five Key Themes of Restorative Practice*** (see Appendix 1) and the concept of value.

End the circle in a prayer- class joins together to pray aloud the Our Father, Hail Mary or other known prayer to the students. Our common faith and prayer is one of the ways the Church strives to be 'one.'

CONTINUED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Further extensions to this lesson might include:

- Web of dignity: Pass or roll a ball of yarn back and forth around the circle. The person holding the yarn says something positive about the person to whom it is passed.
- Continue until everyone is connected to one another.

APPENDIX 1

Five Key Themes of Restorative Practice

~taken from The Restorative Classroom Hopkins, Belinda, Optimus Education 2011~

Theme 1:

We all have unique and valued perspectives. In this classroom we listen to each other's perspectives.

Theme 2:

Our thoughts influence our emotions, and our emotions influence our actions. In our classroom, we share our emotions and how we are feeling. We listen, without judgment, to others explain how they are feeling.

Theme 3:

Empathy and consideration

In our classroom we realize that our words and actions have an impact on others. We consider the impact of our words and actions before we speak or act.

Theme 4:

Needs and unmet needs

In our classroom we realize that each of us needs different things to achieve our best. As much as possible, we work as a community to meet each other's needs.

Theme 5:

In our classroom we know that we have a shared responsibility to plan, problem solve, and make decisions. By working collaboratively, we can help all achieve and make things right when things go wrong.

Use these themes as the values for a classroom.

Each theme has some great ideas for circle.

Begin the year using Theme 1 and explore what that might look like in your class.

APPENDIX 2

Circles

"encourage people to seek ways of moving beyond differences in a 'good way' to build better relationships ... encourage and enable people to take the 'high road', to share with others in a 'good way.' ...create the spaces for disagreement without being disagreeable."

Guidelines of Circle

- 1) **Cooperation:** There are many voices in circle and we use the talking piece to allow one person to speak at a time. We share the talking piece to hear as many voices as possible.
- 2) **Responsibility:** It is our responsibility to listen to each person. We try to listen attentively.
- 3) **Respect:** Everyone has their own feelings, thoughts and ideas.

Note:

I always remind participants of the guidelines each circle. They are the expectations that each member of the circle has. Along with these explicit expectations, there should be a number of implicit agreements between members of the circles. These include the notion of "no name, no shame no blame." This is the idea, that in a large class circle we address problems not people. The no name agreement frees the circle from becoming about 1 person or as a means to shame and blame people. Other implicit agreements include "what's said in circle stays in circle" and "we laugh with people not at them". These agreements should be discussed with the members of the circle.

Circle Process

- 1) Check In
- 2) Presentation of Topic
- 3) Sharing/Discussion
- 4) Closing

Circle Process Explained

1) Check In:

Welcome everyone to circle

Reminder of the "Expectations"

Ask All Participants to Check In

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- Introduce themselves to the circle and ask a quick opening question (ex. How are you feeling right now? Brag and Drag).

Purpose: To gauge and give all participants an opportunity to express where they are.

2) Presentation of the Topic:

Present What Will Be Done in Circle

This can include:

- Specific Issues, ex. bullying, conflict resolution, empathy:
 - General discussions about what respect looks like, sounds like etc. can be a safe way to open up discussions. Conversations regarding how to solve conflicts, what are conflict can be effective ways find a process for the class to look at conflict vs. bullying. As a class feels more comfortable, it might be helpful to examine what does each member of the class need from each other and what are our own individual needs. Here, you might introduce the themes (see attached 5 Themes of RP).
- Curriculum:
 - Circle can be an ideal way to present curriculum ideas and topics, reinforce learning and help set criteria for learning. In the past I have had students share projects, discuss the criteria for an assignment (establish a rubric), discuss themes from literature, etc.
- Goals for the week:
 - Check in circles on a Monday can be used to set goals for the class. These goals can be in relation to classroom management or set timetables for assignments and activities. Involving students in Fair Process can help to achieve greater participation and “buy in”.
- Presentations: (*see above Curriculum*)
- Celebrations:
 - The simplest celebration circle is a “compliment Circle”. Each student is given an opportunity to say a positive statement about another member of the class. This can be done randomly or names can be assigned. The goal is to recognize what each person brings to the community. Other celebration circles can be used for birthdays, end of unit recaps, etc.
- Anything:
 - If you find you are stuck for ideas, solicit students’ input. Place a box where students can suggest topics. Indicate that you will review ideas and bring the matters forward in circle.

In my experience the best circles are not planned; like conversations, they take on a life of their own, and are guided by the comments and ideas of the members of the circle.

Note: After you have done circle for a while, and students are comfortable with the process, it is important that students take ownership of the process by suggesting topics, and running circles.

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3) Sharing/Discussion:

- Ask questions on the topics that are open ended
- Solicit responses
- Invite students to respond to each other
- Direct the discussion not control
- Remind students that in the circle we talk “**to**” each other, not “**at**” each other

4) Closing:

- Always formally end the circle
 - Should be a fun activity
- Ex:
- Name game
 - What if question
 - Telephone
- Thank everyone for his or her participation

Further Observations on Circles

- Try to find a regular and consistent time for circle; make it part of your schedule, as this will help students to appreciate their importance and it will become part of the class structure and environment.
- As well as encouraging student voices, circles are meant to promote listening. Encourage students to build on the ideas of others.
- Ensure that most circles are proactive. The simplest circle to run is the “weekly check in” or “check out” circle. Typically these circles run first thing Monday morning or Friday afternoon. During these circles, students should comment on the progress of the class, their own progress, celebrate accomplishments or make simple goals. These circles usually are 20 minutes.
- In the beginning students may need to be encouraged to share their voice, ideas and thoughts. Never make a member participate, but try to find some common question that most will feel comfortable to answer.
- As much as you are comfortable, share your thoughts. With older students, invite their comments on how they feel about your ideas.
- As the comfort level increases, place the responsibility for facilitating circle on the students. Give them the opportunity to plan the circle.

APPENDIX 3

RP @ A.L.C.D.S.B.

(RP – Restorative Practice)

- *believes that communities learn best when we do things **with** people rather than **to** them or **for** them*
- *is about building, maintaining and restoring relationships*
- *believes in high expectations in all areas, with high levels of support to help everyone achieve*
- *promotes the understanding of the impact of individual actions on the community of learners*
- *always seeks to make things right*
- *is a range of approaches that promotes a caring, accepting, inclusive and safe place to learn and grow*

