Circles and the Virtues Project: The Way to Build a Dynamic and Peaceful Classroom Community

Presenters:
Deb Ruscitelli
Pat Greger
Elisabeth Friel
Mary Hallinan
What Are Circles?

Circles are sacred.

Opening and closing prayers and rituals mark off the time spent in circle as sacred.

A candle or other sacramental at the center of the circle is a reminder of God’s presence and marks the circle space as sacred.
What Else Makes Circles Sacred?

Circle Process:

- **Honors** the presence and dignity of each participant
- **Values** the contributions of each participant
- Emphasizes our **connectedness**
- **Supports** emotional and spiritual expressions
- **Gives equal voice** to all
What Happens in Circles?

People touch one another’s lives by sharing stories that have meaning to them.

Because stories unite us in our common humanity and help us to appreciate the depth and beauty of the human experience, there are many beautiful circle outcomes.
Circles Outcomes

Circles build community.

In community:

Peace is created.
Conflict is resolved.
Spirituality is encouraged.
Resilience grows.
Emotional intelligence is learned.
Responsibility and motivation are fostered.
How Do Circles Work?

Circles are a place of great emotional safety because circle participants agree to follow guidelines which include at least the following:

- What is shared in circle stays in circle, except when children need to share with a parent to feel safe or when safety is otherwise an issue.
Cont’d.

• Speak from the heart with respect.
• Speak only when you have the talking piece.
• Listen from the heart with respect: Listen for understanding, and Be open to what others offer.
• Stay in circle Physically and emotionally.
Where Does The Virtues Project Come In?

The Virtues Project is a comprehensive program for creating a culture of character. The program features 52 virtues that are honored by all cultures worldwide as bringing out the best within us.
Why Bring Circles and The Virtues Project Together?

The Virtues Project provides us with concrete ways to carry out the commandment Jesus gave us to love one another. Circles provide a sacred context in which to learn those lessons.
The 52 Virtues

- Assertiveness
- Caring
- Cleanliness
- Commitment
- Compassion
- Confidence
- Consideration
- Cooperation
- Courage
- Courtesy
- Creativity
- Detachment
- Determination

- Diligence
- Enthusiasm
- Excellence
- Flexibility
- Forgiveness
- Friendliness
- Generosity
- Gentleness
- Helpfulness
- Honesty
- Honor
- Humility
- Idealism
The 52 Virtues Cont’d.

- Integrity
- Joyfulness
- Justice
- Kindness
- Love
- Loyalty
- Moderation
- Orderliness
- Modesty
- Patience
- Peacefulness
- Perseverance
- Purposefulness
- Reliability
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Self-discipline
- Service
- Tact
- Thankfulness
- Tolerance
- Trust
- Trustworthiness
- Truthfulness
- Understanding
- Unity
Other Uses of Circle

• For prayer services
• To resolve disputes in the classroom and anywhere else on the school campus
• To celebrate successes
• To end bullying behavior
• To relieve anxiety
• To process grief
• To engage distracted or disaffected students
• To teach
Print and Media Resources

• Books:
  
  • The Little Book of Circle Processes by Kay Pranis
  • The Virtues Project Educator’s Guide by Linda Kavelin Popov
  • The Adventures of Mali and Keela: A Virtues Book for Children by Jonathan Collins
  • Peacemaking Circles and Urban Youth by Carolyn Boyes-Watson
  • Circle in the Square: Building Community and Repairing Harm in School by Nancy Riestenberg
Print and Media Resources cont’d.

Online Articles and Booklets:

- Teaching and Learning in Circle by Greg Lewis
  http://www.creducation.org/resources/cmher_vol_3_2_lewis.pdf

- *Engage Conflict Well*, JustPeace Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation

Websites:
The Virtues Project:  www.virtuesproject.com/
Local Personal Resources

• Mary Hallinan
  mfhallinan@gmail.com
  937.299.7084

• Deb Ruscitelli L.P.C., LICDC
  d.ruscitelli@gmail.com
  937.654.2312

• Pat Greger
  St. Albert the Great
  Kettering OH
  npsapgreger@mdeca.org
  937.293.9452 ext. 236

• Elisabeth Friel
  Ascension School
  Kettering OH
  efriel@ascensionkettering.org
  937.254.5411
Dear Parents,

My class has the opportunity to participate in a Prayer Circle twice a month this the school year. The prayer circle will take place in our classroom. A Prayer Circle is where the students and I, with the guidance of a facilitator, talk about character traits. In the first session we will set-up the guidelines for the discussion and each of us will talk about ourselves. Each student is asked to bring an object that tells something about them. These objects will remain at school for the rest of the year. For example: I will bring something that I have made because creativity is a big part of who I am. Please have your child choose something to share. This object needs to be brought to school before Monday, November 26, 2012. If a student should forget his or her object they will have an opportunity to choose an object in the room. They can then bring their object the following week. Thank you for your continued support. If you have any questions about the Prayer Circle, please call or email me.

Sincerely,
Pat Greger
More Miscellany

Guidelines for Preschoolers

Respect the Talking Piece

Talk from the Heart

Listen from the Heart

I can pass