
Conducting Circles Virtually & In-Person

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Circles





Communication

How information is received

- 55% body language and eye contact
- 38% Voice
 - Tone
 - Volume
 - Pitch
- **7% Verbal**
 - What you actually say



Circles in the Time of Covid – 19

Even if we can't conduct circles exclusively face-to-face, it is important to keep in mind *why* circles are important to implement and keep their spirit alive even if we have to remain physically distanced.



We must be

physically
distanced...yet
(highly) *socially*
connected!



Why Circles?

Circles need to be conducted deliberately and thoughtfully with the following goals in mind....

- Equality ← Everyone *literally* has equal seating
- Safety & Trust ← You can **see everyone** in a circle
- Vulnerability!! ← You can **see everyone** in a circle
- Responsibility ← Everyone plays a role (even to pass)
- Reminds **you** to facilitate ← Rather than lecture!
- Builds connections ← Everyone hears everyone else
- Ownership ← Feels shared among all participants
- Inclusive ← Each and every member belongs/has a place

(Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Academic Status, Circumstances, Culture, etc.)



Circles are NOT “Special Events”

Circles are *a way of doing business*, of accomplishing the things we need to get done in the classroom whether that’s getting to know one another, becoming culturally & racially aware, discussing an academic topic or responding to behavior/relational issues.

Just like lecture, video and small group discussions, circles are just another possible delivery made for teachers.



Use Circles Ritually

- **Establish your own patterns and purposes**
- Time of Day
 - Beginning of Class
 - After lunch recess (for younger students)
 - End of Day
 - Others?
- Purpose
 - Begin or end the day
 - Build relationships and community
 - Calm down and regroup
 - Solve problems
 - Conduct lessons
 - Others?



Rituals: Summary

Rituals provide...

- Safety
- Comfort
- Consistency
- Predictability
- Tangible bridge from one thing to the next



Circles: Critical Issues

These are some of the issues that will be evident in the video clips you are about to see:

- Circles can be related to course content, interpersonal matters, taking attendance, giving compliments, etc.!!
- Circles help people take responsibility, allow quiet voices to be heard and allow leaders to emerge
- Circles intentionally give everyone the opportunity to be a member of the community
 - Not just those “favored” individuals who are usually chosen to participate
- Many people will say, “I don’t know,” or “Can I pass?”
 - Make sure you have responses ready to these statements



Circles: More Critical Issues

- The shape of the circle is important
- Clear directions increase the likelihood of success
- Leaders should model appropriate participation, and/or always participate
- Circles can help people explore issues on a deeper level, brainstorm and/or problem solve together
 - In circles, participants learn about one another and build relationships, no matter the topic
 - Culturally, racially, ethnically, perspectives, likes/dislikes, interests, etc.



Types of Circles: Virtual, Hybrid & Face-to-Face

Circle Configurations

Sequential Circles

Non-Sequential Circles

Concentric Circles**
(Fishbowl Circles)
(Talking Pieces)

Circle Topic Areas

- Adults & Children

Problem Solving Circles

Serious Situation Circles

Game Circles

Academic Circles

Get To Know You Circles

- Check-In Circles

Reflection Circles

Compliment Giving Circles

** E.G., Use Breakout Rooms for pairs of students to share



Types Of Circles

- Sequential Go-Around ← The easiest & is the most controlled to run
- Non-Sequential Circle ← Allows for more freedom
- Fishbowl ← Is a different way to do either of these circles
- Concentric ← Allows everyone to talk & listen at once!



Sequential Go-Around

- Specific Question
- Done In Order
- Participation is Expected, *although not always required*

A “Talking Piece” can be used to help provide additional structure



Talking Pieces I

Can be anything that can be safely passed around the circle

Whoever has the “talking piece” in their hand is the only one who is allowed to speak

- There are lots of ways to “agree” with no talking!

It is then passed around the circle during the go-around (sequential circle)

It's another way to reinforce the fact that one person talks at a time and that the person should have the group's attention



Talking Pieces II

A talking piece can help give fidgety kids something tactile to do while speaking

While the object can be something mundane

- Eraser
- Box of pencils

May want to pick something more symbolic to the group

- You could choose something symbolic for your class, school or...
- Let them decide as a group/class
- Have a basket of Talking Pieces



Talking Pieces



Talking Pieces



Talking Pieces in Covid Face-to Face



Talking Pieces in Covid Face-to Face

Pointer Stick!!



Video: “Definition of Success”

National Academy Foundation School,
Baltimore, MD

This is a HS class. Notice
how the teacher models the
level of detail he is looking for.
Also, what is the Talking
Piece?



Non-Sequential Circles

Usually involves a more general question like: “***Does anyone want to share their reaction to the activity we just did?***” or “***Who needs help today to finish their project?***”

Non-Sequential Circles can be:

- Structured
- Loosely structured
- Unstructured:

More like “group” with a SW

No order

Participation is voluntary (but you could require everyone to have a turn...placement of hands before and after having a turn)



Video: “Non-Sequential Circle”

National Academy Foundation School,
Baltimore, MD

This is a public middle school.

For some reason, the class is
mad up of all boys, but we have
no idea why that is. They are
talking about how they think they
did on pop quiz. Wow, can these
boys throw and catch!!



Secrets To Success

- Clear topic and goal ← Clarity better allows participants to respond accordingly
- Set a positive tone ← Circles are worthwhile and fun!
- Keep the focus ← Gently refocus participants when they stray from the topic by repeating the topic or question at hand
- Get some allies ↙
- These are helpful things to keep in mind

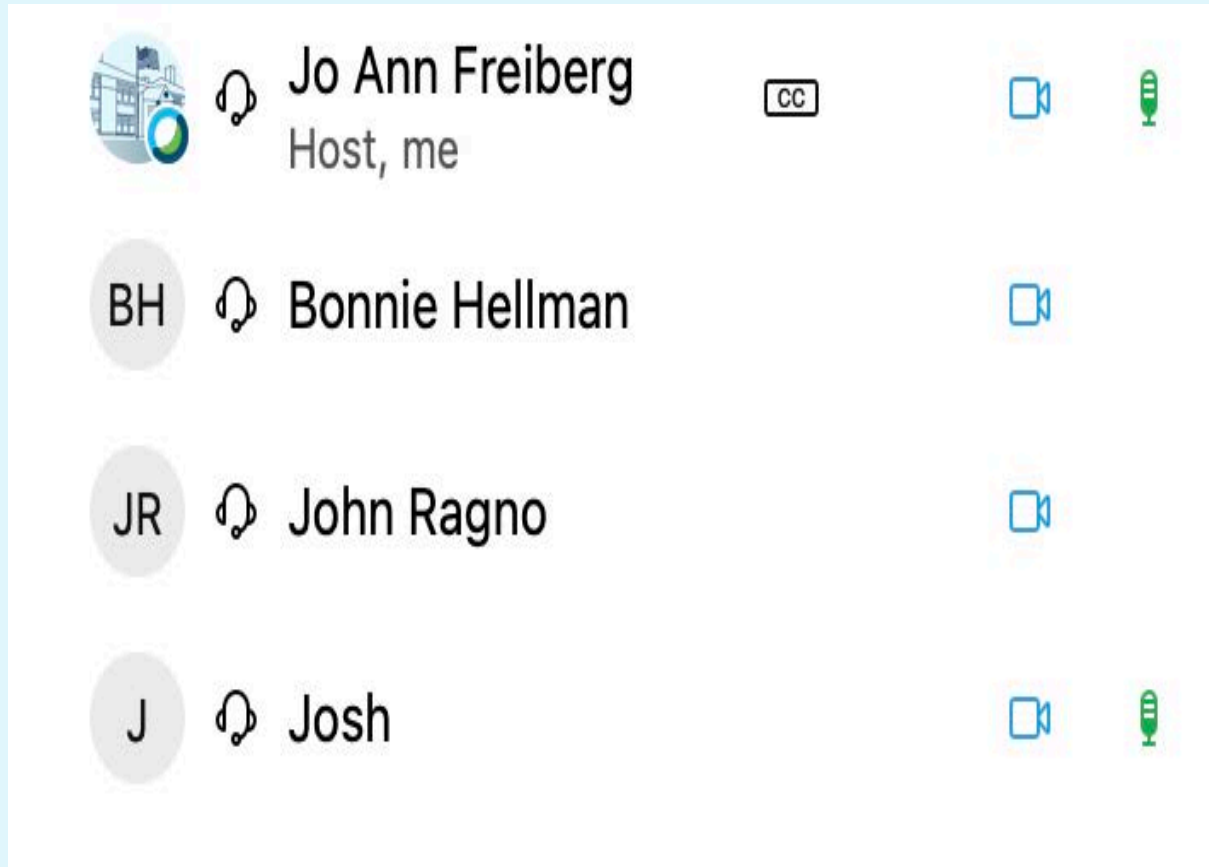
Frequently, it is helpful to pull a few participants aside beforehand (*if you think you need to!*) to get their support and commitment to participate appropriately













Conducting Virtual Circles



Order: Using the Participants Feature



A screenshot of the Zoom meeting interface showing the Participants list. The list is displayed on a white background with a light blue border. At the top, there is a header bar with a blue background and white text. The list contains four participants, each with a circular profile picture, a name, a role, and icons for video and audio.

Profile Picture	Name	Role	Video Icon	Audio Icon
	Jo Ann Freiberg	Host, me		
	Bonnie Hellman			
	John Ragno			
	Josh			



Order: Using the Chat Feature

✓ Chat

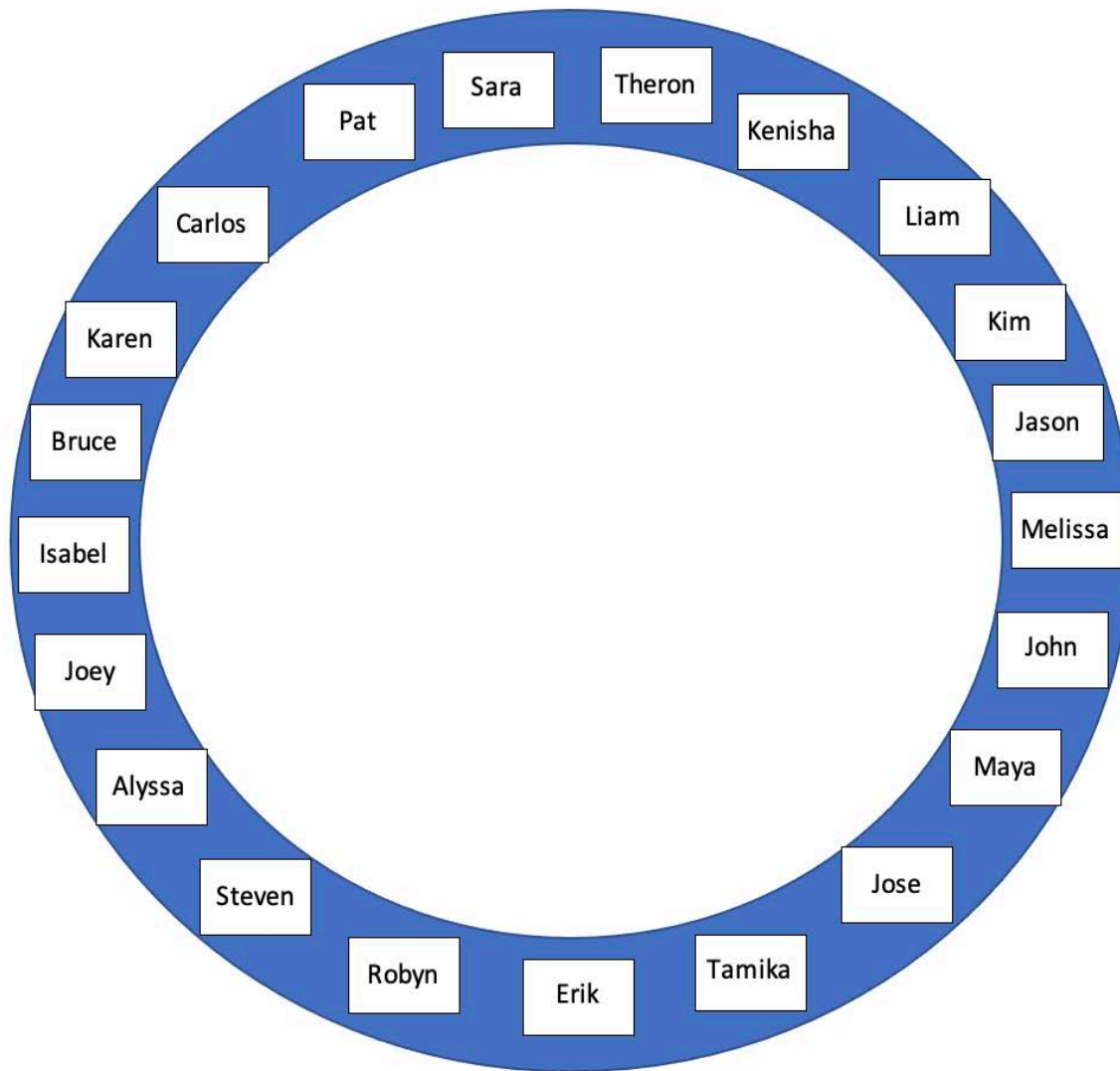


from Jo Ann Freiberg to Everyone: 7:30 AM

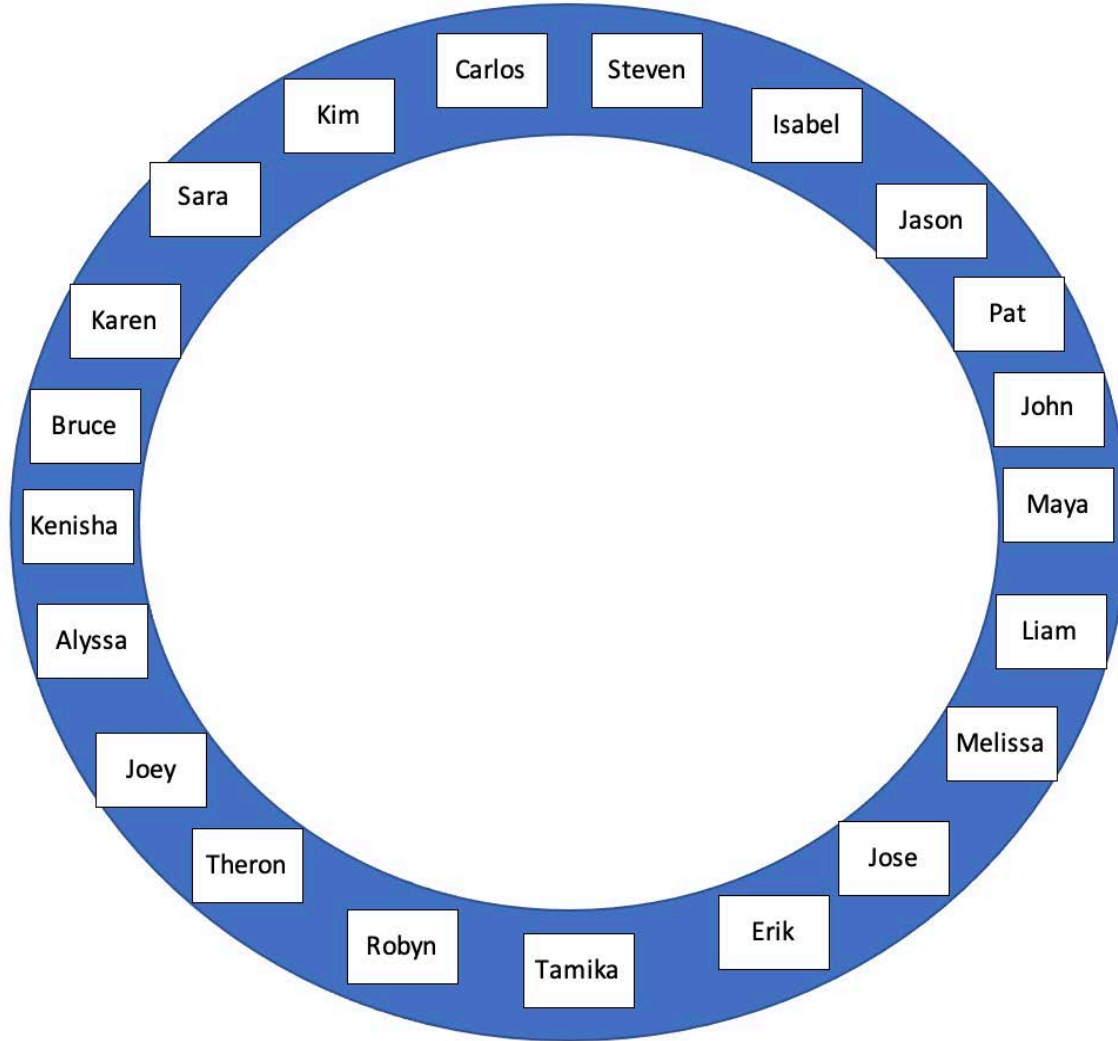
The virtual circle order for today!: Carlos, Isabel, Pat, Maya, Melissa, Erik, Robyn, Joey, Kenisha, Karen, Kim, Steven, Jason, John, Liam, Jose, Tamika, Theron, Alyssa, Bruce, Sara, (back to Carlos!)



Sample Seating Chart



Sample Seating Chart



Check-In and Check-Out Circles

- Done (usually) as a sequential go-around
- Tool to foster accountability on the part of the participants
- Related to:
 - Course content
 - Interpersonal matters (**relationships**)
- Acknowledgements, agreements, goals and agreements
 - A way to review and reiterate what everyone has made





I don't worry about
tomorrow's journey will come
a life is to stay in the present moment
Riding pickup trucks to have things forward doesn't work that anymore
Horses will not speed to the process, or the journey to but I want about it
spend on this but you want to go back, come to the parts you stopped over, and go
through I agree fully present
stay in the present moment I don't know if you think's right now. Be open to guidance!

“Get to Know You” Circles

Some Simple Go-Arounds *With One, or Two Word Answers* **

- “Where would you like to go on vacation?”
- Binary choices...e.g., “Cake or Pie?,” “Night or Day?”
- “If you could turn into an animal, which would it be?”
- “**What is your favorite** book or story...soup...pizza...candy...weather...color...dessert...summer drink...song...super hero...anything else(!)?”
- What’s one word that describes how you are feeling now?

(**You could instead require full sentences)

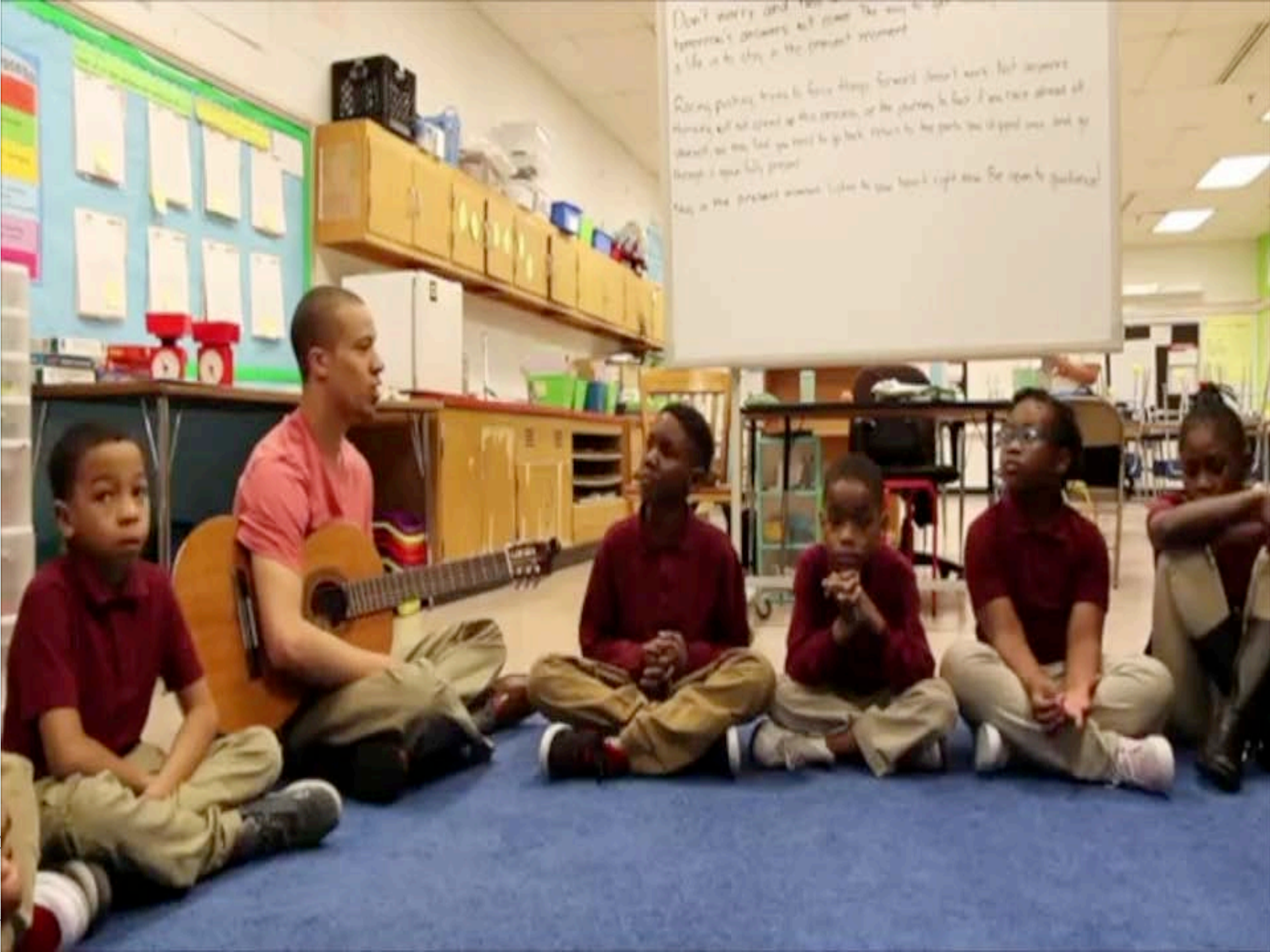


Video: “Check in Circle”

Oak Hill Middle School,
Sabattus, ME

This is likely an advisory group.
Notice how very clear directions
allow for the circles to move
quickly and give the students a
chance to think about ‘why?’





Don't worry and don't
hesitate's answers will come. The way to
a life is to stay in the present moment.

Running, pushing, trying to force things forward. Don't worry, but improve.
Hurry will not speed up the process, or the journey. In fact, it will take almost all
yourself, so you have to go back, return to the path, you'll find your way, and go
through it your life's journey.

Stay in the present moment. Listen to your heart's right now. Be open to guidance!

Video: “Get to Know You Circle”

Freedom High School, Bethlehem, PA

This is a class of high school students. Try to figure out what is the Talking Piece that they are using.



Educator Testimonial Video



Video: “Course Content Circle”

National Academy Foundation School,
Baltimore, MD

This is a public middle school; Watch all the hands go up (“pick me!”) until the Talking Piece is given. Notice how easily the Piece (ball, in this case) goes back to the teacher.





Video: “Feedback Circle”

Freedom High School, Bethlehem, PA

This class of students is obviously very accomplished. You may be wondering how your students could possibly give this kind of feedback. We will show an easier way next with younger students.

Notice that the young men are just as capable of sharing feelings as the young women



Appreciation or Compliment Circles... Face-to-Face or Virtual





Problem Solving Circles



Primary Grades Group Problem Solving Video



From Hostility to Harmony



Circle Games

Games are just another way to use the circle format!

There are many games you can play in this way – recreation books, your imagination and on and on...

When playing games (especially those that are physical) be mindful of inclusion issues, any physical/emotional limitations of students and that competition is kept within fun and reasonable boundaries.



Circle Game Samples

- Cross the circle, IF.....
(Find our Connections)
- Duck, Duck, Goose
- Ring-around-the-Rosie
- Birthday Ordering in Silence
- Group Juggling
- Let's Dance!
- Rainstorm
- Musical Chairs
- And, SO many others!!





Teachers' Circles

Circles can be used for teachers to support and encourage one another.

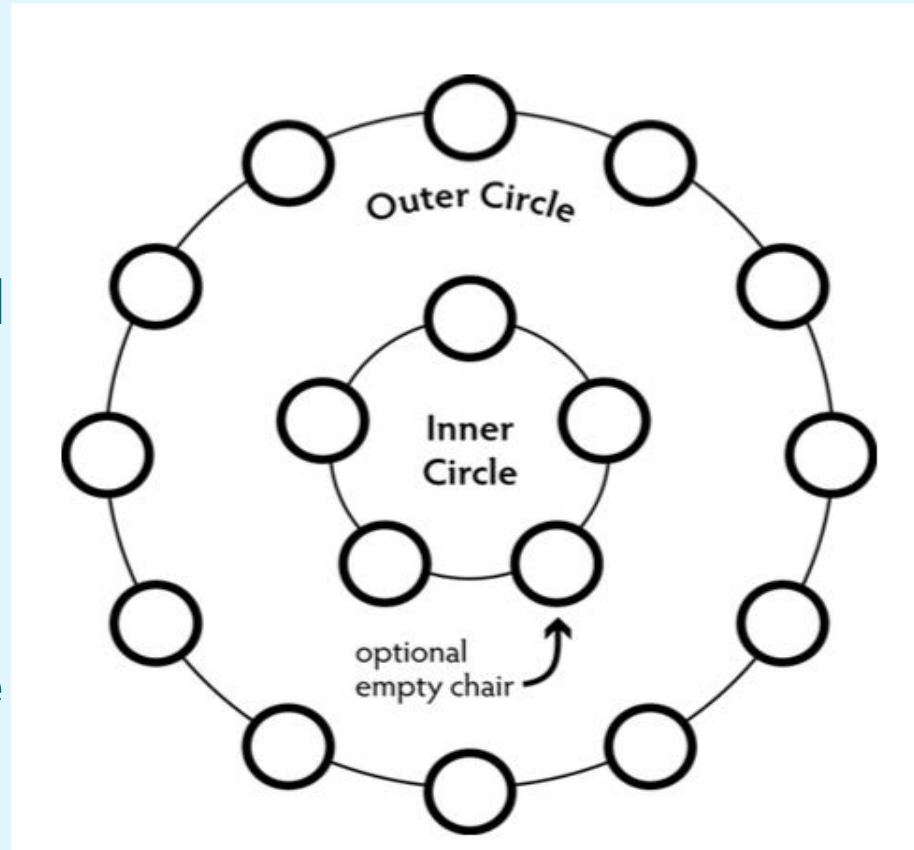
Almost ***any*** circle application that works with kids also works with adults (norm-setting, go-arounds, problem solving, faculty meetings, data teams, PPTs, etc.)



Setting Up A Fishbowl: Smaller Groups

Sequential, or
Non-sequential
Optional Talking
Piece

Observers could
provide
feedback about
the process
and/or the
content after the
fishbowl is
finished

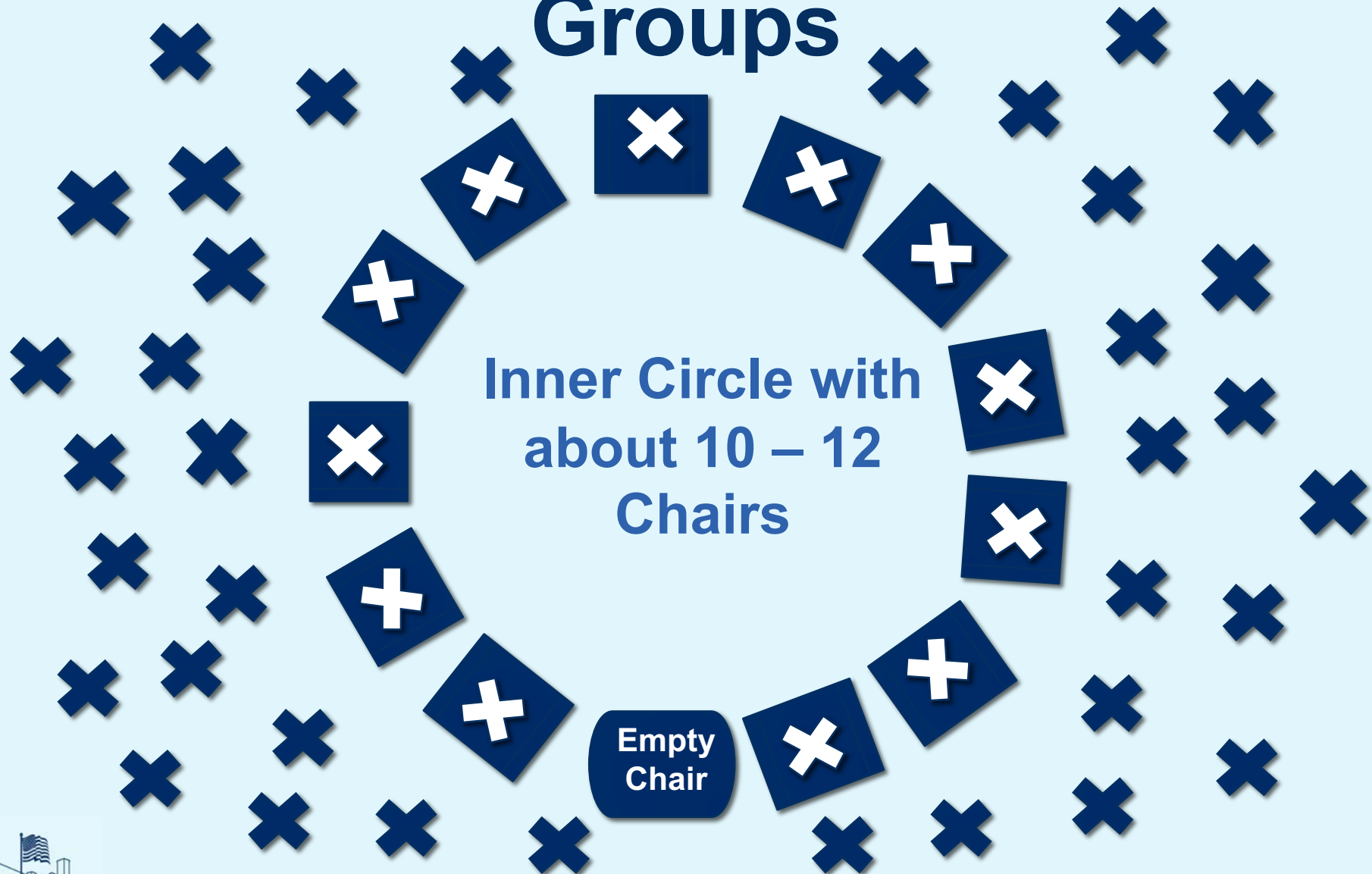


Optional Empty
Chair
Optional
Feedback about
the discussion
from those
observing

Fishbowls are
an effective way
to use circles
with a larger
number of
participants



Setting Up A Fishbowl: Larger Groups



Fishbowl: Empty Chair

Place an empty chair in the inner circle. Those in the outer circle are invited to leave their seats and sit in the empty chair to participate *briefly* in the discussion (by making a comment rather than by re-directing the discussion with a question). After they say what they want, they return to their original seats, leaving the empty chair available for anyone else who wishes to participate. The empty chair is a helpful tool in fishbowls because even if members of the outer circle do not use the empty chair, they know they could, which helps them pay more attention to the task.



Using Concentric Circles for Discussions

Group counts off by twos** ...

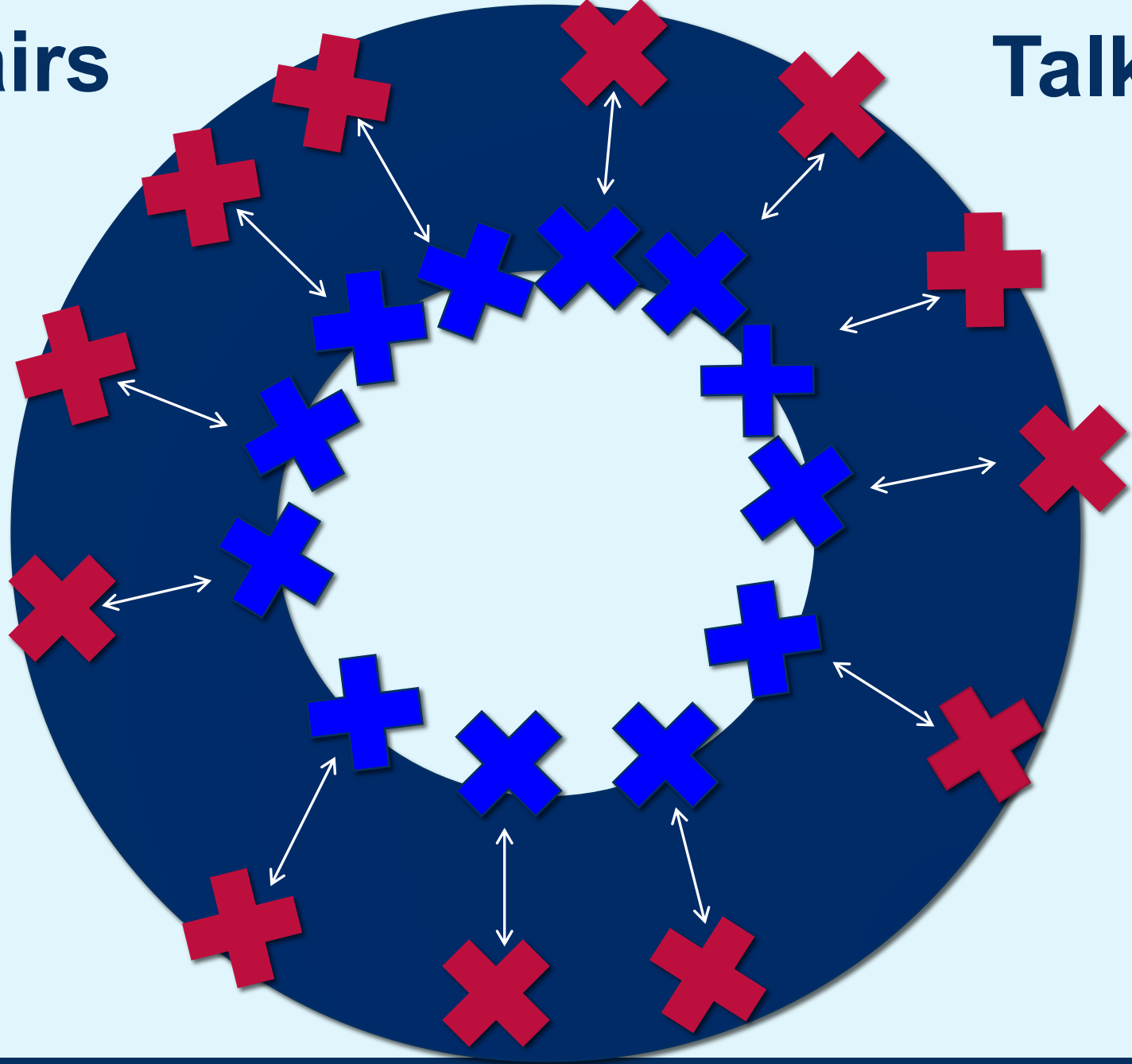
After conversation... outer circle moves to the right by ____; then the inner circle moves to the left by ____, etc.

**** E.G., Use Breakout Rooms for pairs of students to share**



Pairs

Talking





Restorative Practices in Baltimore City Schools:



Research Updates and Implementation Guide

September 2020



Restorative Classrooms & Schools Are Equitable, and...

Destinations for ALL

Happy & Inclusive

Calm & Peaceful

Productive Struggle

Collaborative & Trusting

Structured & Cooperative

Welcoming & Safe for ALL

Supportive & Accountable

Caring & Nurturing

Predictable & Engaging

Successful & Risk Taking

Stress-Free & Respectful

Active Learning Centers

High Quality Work

True Positive Communities

Intrinsically Motivating



Reflections



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