Big Idea/ Topic
Dialogue Circles

Georgia Standards of Excellence Alignment

Health Standard 4: Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) Alignment

Standard 7 - Positive Learning Environment: The teacher provides a well-managed, safe, and orderly environment that is conducive to learning and encourages respect for all.

Standard 10 - Communication: The teacher communicates effectively with students, parents or guardians, district and school personnel, and other stakeholders in ways that enhance student learning.

Instructional Design

Define Simply
Dialogue circles are where all participants sit in a circle facing each other to participate in open and direct communication. This strategy provides a safe place in the classroom to build respect, collaboration, and a positive community.

Introduce students to dialogue circles by going over guidelines. Here are some examples:
- Students will get in a circle
- Everyone participates, but you do not need to talk
- Treat each other with kindness and respect
- Only the person with the “talking stick” may talk; everyone else listens
- Keep responses to 1 minute; with short answers or 1-2 sentences
- Circle can move from left to right

For topics, students can put ideas in a topic box, which the teacher may draw from throughout the year. Circles can also be a time to talk about different issues, both academic and social (e.g., pressure to achieve, friendship challenges). Teachers can use circles to do check-ins to see how students are feeling and whether they are ready to learn. Students may use a feelings wheel to describe their emotions (Example). In addition, classes can utilize circles to review, discuss, and debate recently learned academic content.
Model/Demonstrate with Examples
Teacher modeling during dialogue circles will help students know what is expected.

Practice in All Relevant Settings
Dialogue circles are a great way to interact at the start of the day, or during a home period. (Video Example)

Monitor & Provide Positive Feedback and Reinforcement
Teachers can reinforce and normalize student sharing by showing appreciation during dialogue circles. Behavior specific praise will let students know specifically what they did correctly; it also gives them positive attention. For example, “I appreciate how you took turns using the ‘talking stick’ and while someone else was talking, you were listening. Great work!”

Based on Data, Adjust Instruction & Reteach
Teachers should monitor how dialogue circles are working. It is recommended to do them at least once a week, although daily practice may also be beneficial. If students are having trouble learning that day, a dialogue circle may be a class wide response strategy to help everyone focus and connect (Video Example).

Evidence of Student Success
- 80% of students will participate actively in dialogue circles without verbal or nonverbal prompts. This strategy will help classrooms become a community of learners.

Student Learning Supports
- This is a universal lesson plan and an effective practice used for struggling students in the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) process.
- Some students may need additional support/scaffolding. Consider adapting for the individual needs of the student.

Engaging Families
- Students may teach their families to hold a dialogue circle to reconnect at the end of the day.