

## Classroom Meetings and Restorative Circles

The ritual of meeting in “Circle” has been a staple of indigenous communities since time immemorial. Circles bring everyone face to face; when someone shares, all can experience that person's point of view, at least momentarily.

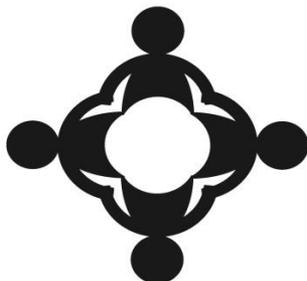
Restorative circles are the proactive end of the Restorative Justice movement. Practitioners take time to build community. This takes place as each person takes a turn in the circle to answer an open-ended question. “What do you like to do on Saturdays?” “What is a place that is special to you?” “When do you feel respected?”

As individuals begin to connect to their community, there is also a growing sense of responsibility to the other members. This is important because conflict is inevitable in any community, and harm (physical or other) can be the result.

The circle can then become the container for healing harm. The person harmed can give voice to their feelings. The person who caused the harm is given a chance to make things right.

Other uses for circles include: making plans (for a field trip, a guest, a substitute teacher), to process change, to reflect and debrief from experiences. Students can monitor and share their progress in a check-in circle. Check-out circles prepare young people to take leave for a weekend and prepare them for the following week. Hellos and goodbyes can be done in the circle.

Serious offenses can be dealt with in smaller circles, called conferences, often including the families of those involved. Suspensions may be foregone in favor of an action plan to repair the harm. Since being suspended or expelled is associated with entrance into the criminal justice system,<sup>1</sup> then curtailing suspensions interrupts the school-to-prison pipeline.<sup>2</sup>



1. *Stop the School-to-Prison Pipeline.* [rethinkingschools.org/archive/26\\_02/edit262.shtml](http://rethinkingschools.org/archive/26_02/edit262.shtml)

2. *The School To Prison Pipeline.* [tolerance.org/magazine/number-43-spring-2013/school-to-prison](http://tolerance.org/magazine/number-43-spring-2013/school-to-prison)

3. *Just Schools: A Whole School Approach to Restorative Justice* (2003) by Hopkins, B.

4. *Breaking School Rules.* [knowledgecenter.csg.org/kc/system/files/Breaking\\_School\\_Rules.pdf](http://knowledgecenter.csg.org/kc/system/files/Breaking_School_Rules.pdf)