

## **PEACE KEEPER CIRCLES DESIGNED FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

Restorative Practices involves more than conflict resolution, making amends, and healing harm. Restorative Practices encompasses a new paradigm, a new way of living together; it requires deliberate actions to build respectful relationships and results in the creation of a compassionate, caring, cohesive community. Classrooms are an ideal place to develop relationship-building skills with communities from differing backgrounds and perspectives.

The purpose of the Peace Keeper Circle is to practice public acknowledgment of appreciation for others' kindnesses and, *in a safe environment*, respectfully air small grievances and hurts before they grow to become grudges and full-blown conflicts. It allows everyone in the class to hear how their behavior attracts or repels friends. It also gives hurting students the chance to educate others about what feels bad to them, and opens the door for offenders to make things right and change hurtful behaviors. The circle focuses on understanding other's perspectives or points of view. A core value learned in the circle process is the Golden Rule: **"Treat others as you like to be treated."**

The circle has the potential when practiced weekly to address complex and sophisticated social dynamics and moral issues far more advanced than what current theory in social psychology would deem elementary aged students capable. This simple circle process empowers students, and over time allows them to develop their own set of norms for positive behavior.

**CIRCLE FORMAT:** Sit in a circle around the peace cloth, free of barriers and distractions. Have students review guidelines/agreements out loud each week. The circle uses a talking piece, which builds respect and patience. Careful introduction of each stage is essential for safety and trust.

Stage I- Appreciation, gratitude, compliments

Stage II- Grievances, hurts, harms

Stage III- Second hand hurt or helping

Stage IV- Making amends and sincere apologies

Closure/ Student Feedback

**AWARENESS: We ALL need practice looking for what is Right!** It is all too common in our culture in our homes and our schools to we focus on what is not working. The net result, however, both in our society and in our classroom communities, is that we correct more often than we affirm, and critique more often than we compliment. While this might sometimes serve to advance learning, it does little to enhance self-esteem, and offers even less toward building community. Praise, respect and encouragement are key to positive, co-operative, considerate and compassionate behavior, when one feels heard and connected one is more apt to reflect that back to the community in which they are relating. Learning is easier when one is safe confident, happy and relieved of burdens.

**FOR INFORMATION AND TRAINING CONTACT KIRI SAFTLER MSD:**

Kirilynn@mywdo.com OR 970-493-1427