Nov. 9, 2016

Dear Colleagues,

I just want to remind you that the Circle process provides a calm way to help students talk about their thoughts and feelings regarding the election. If you and your staff have the capacity, use the Circle process when questions come up or to help people talk.

A few suggestions:

Use the full Circle process proactively:
- Mindful silence, opening quote, song, story or activity,
- Meeting, getting acquainted round (‘say your name and one thing....’),
- Common agreement round (‘which common agreement is important to you today?’)
- Storytelling (‘what value is important to you today, and who taught that value to you?’)
- Addressing issues (‘what are your thoughts about the election? Do you have questions about the process? What do you feel about the outcome?’)
- Making a plan (‘we all have different feelings and thoughts and hopes. What is one thing you can do to help others get along and learn?’) Closing round final quote, song or activity.

Practice a Circle discussion with staff first, if possible, so they can process their feelings and thoughts.

Use a talking piece if questions about the election come up in the middle of class. “Yes, we can discuss that, but I would like to do it in Circle, so we can slow down, listen to each other and give everyone a chance to speak. Let me send around this stone and ask you first to say your name and a value that is important to you, and the name of the person who taught you that value.

I’ll go first: my name is Ms. Nancy, compassion, my dad.” When that round is done, give the talking piece to the person who had the question, and start going around in order from him or her.

Refer students who seem very withdrawn or very agitated to student support staff.

Include opportunities for students to write what they are grateful for, and to identify acts of kindness they can do each day. These practices lift the happy hormones in the body.

Smile at all students and call them by name.

If students cause harm to another, help them learn empathy and accountability by offering them a restorative process. Offer the same to the person who was harmed. Include community who were affected by the harm.

Finally, here is a note that was forwarded to me from a friend that was written by a school leader:

Irrespective of our personal and political viewpoints that are surfacing today in response to the election, I want to appeal to all of you today. We will have students who are working through a myriad of reactions...
Our work does not stop. Please keep a special eye out for students in crisis. Get them to the guidance suite as soon as possible. Be there to listen and create a safe space for discussion if you feel comfortable.

Our work does not stop because WE TEACH KIDS. Every day. All day.

Thank you!

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