



The Next Step

moving on to secondary school

A set of Circle Time lesson plans for the last few weeks
of Year 6 and the first few weeks of Year 7

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The Next Step moving on to secondary school

This is a set of Circle Time notes for teachers of Year 6 and Year 7 students. The notes provide ideas for helping these students to share their questions, expectations, hopes and anxieties about changing schools in a safe and relaxed atmosphere. It is assumed that the teachers using these materials are experienced Circle Time facilitators and that the classes are used to the conventions of Circle Time. If this is not the case it is recommended that the introductory notes be read carefully. Circle Time is NOT about sitting round in a circle and discussing problems. You are likely to have problems if you approach it this way!

The aims of these materials are:

Year 6

- To encourage students to say goodbye, appreciate what they are leaving and celebrate their own personal achievements.
- To develop the confidence to face the changes with optimism.
- To share questions, expectations, hopes and anxieties with others in their class and realise they are not the only ones!
- To explore how the class can support each other in the last few weeks and perhaps when they move to the next school.
- To make links with the new schools and encourage information sharing in the Circle Time format.
- To have some fun with classmates in the last few weeks of term.

Year 7

- To build a sense of community and support with the new tutor group.
- To feel safe to ask questions and make mistakes.
- To develop a class agreement to support each other.
- To explore the differences between junior and secondary school.
- To have some fun with new friends.

Introductory Notes

This is not meant to be a short course on how to run Circle Time. However, if you have not tried it before but would like to help your class through this time of transition I hope these notes will give you some ideas on how to proceed. If you enjoy your Circle Time experience and would like to read more, I strongly recommend the materials on Circle Time produced by the Lucky Duck Publishers. (See below for contact details.)

These are my guiding principles for running a good session:

- Circle Time is, above all, fun. Never forget the games! Laughing and playing together builds trust and a sense of belonging.
- Circle Time is developmental – the skills required to make the most of the Circle are learned by taking part.
- Sitting in a circle, on chairs of the same height, in an airy room where there will be no interruptions or people doing other things is, for me, essential. Everyone can then feel included and the focus of attention is into the circle.
- The facilitator encourages everyone to take responsibility for the smooth running of the session by asking them to identify some simple guidelines which they will need to take part. This would be a session in itself if your group has not already done this. (See overleaf for negotiating guidelines.)
- The facilitator is not responsible for the 'discipline' of the group once the rules have been negotiated: the whole class is. If someone is unable to respect the rules I would stop the session, explain I was feeling uneasy and ask how everyone else is feeling (as a 'go-round') and then ask for ways forward. I would encourage respect for the feelings of those who appear 'disruptive' and endeavour to offer alternatives to the circle if it is proving challenging for them. (Reprimands and sanctions are not congruent with the spirit of Circle Time, to my mind.)
- Everyone has the right to pass on a go-round or a game. No one must feel under pressure to contribute but in time most people feel safe to do so. This may take weeks though. Sitting in the room but not in the Circle would not be an option as far as I am concerned, however. Do you have a colleague who could welcome someone who really does not want to join in at all?
- The facilitator says as little as possible. Making a comment after each contribution by a student is an abuse of power! Encourage students to deliver their comments to the circle, not to you. A talking stick highlights how often any one person talks – it certainly shuts *me* up!

Value Base of these Materials

Themed through the whole of this set of materials is:

- A commitment to mutual respect, which means that all 'put-downs' are discouraged, and challenged if made. (It is vital that the facilitator keeps positive and respectful at all times to model this, however frustrated they may feel!)
- An acknowledgement that we have the right to feel what we feel. There are no 'shoulds' and 'shouldn'ts' about feeling.
- An acceptance of the right of others to a different point of view even if we disagree with it.
- An openness to working with people we may not usually work with, so we can learn about tolerance and diversity, even in our own classroom.
- A commitment to respecting our differences and celebrating our shared experiences.
- An awareness of the shared responsibility for the well-running of the session.
- An acceptance of the shared responsibility for including everyone and a sensitivity to each other's feelings about feeling excluded.
- An understanding by everyone that not being able to respect Circle Time rules is not being 'naughty' or 'disruptive', but evidence that a need is not being met and something else is required to enable that need to be met.
- A belief that the content and process of Circle Time need to be congruent so that what we are saying and what we are doing fit!

Links between Feeder Schools and Secondary Schools

If you are considering using these materials with your Year 6 students you may like to send a copy of the materials to the schools your students are going to.

There may be certain links which can be made through these materials:

- It helps the new schools to know what you have been doing with the students to prepare them for the next step.
- It may give them some ideas of how to develop the work in the first few weeks of the new school year.
- You may wish to invite the Heads of Year 7 to one or two of the Circle Time sessions.
- You might consider inviting some of last year's school leavers back to join in a Circle Time – especially to Session five, when concerns are being expressed and there are opportunities for the Year Sevens from the secondary schools to share advice.

If you have acquired these materials to use with your new Year 7 classes you may like to send a copy to your feeder schools to see if they would like to consider using some of the Year 6 materials. It may even be possible for you to offer your time to facilitate some of these sessions in the junior schools as a way of getting to know each other.

Negotiating guidelines – Year 6

If you are trying Circle Time for the last few weeks of Year 6 you do not want to spend too long on developing guidelines. In any case, you want to demonstrate that Circle Time is fun and too many lengthy discussions about rules may put people off!

I suggest playing games straight away and introducing the idea of guidelines through the games. Explain a game and then ask if any rules are needed for the game to work (e.g. if it involves swapping chairs what rules might there need to be to make it safe?). Once a few rules have been suggested ask if everyone agrees. After the game, review whether people were able to stick to the rules or if any more were needed. Maybe try the game again. Variations on the game could also be suggested and tried out.

Important questions include:

- How can we ensure people do not feel left out?
- Is the game safe or might someone get hurt?
- How can we mix up boys and girls?
- Is this game possible for all abilities in the room? Do we need to make adjustments so it can be? (For example, swapping seats is difficult for someone in a wheelchair.)

Listening to everyone's contribution is vital, so early on you may need to ask students what they need from each other to be able to take part in discussions.

Whenever you ask for contributions it may be worth considering asking students to work in pairs before inviting contributions in the open circle. Speaking out is daunting, and sharing some ideas with a partner beforehand builds confidence. It also ensures that everyone gets their ideas heard by someone, even if they do not get a chance to talk in the wider circle.

NB The guideline for getting attention: What do the students suggest? My favourite is raising my hand and waiting. What usually happens is that others notice and raise their hand too. It does not take very long for people to hush down for the next bit. There is something very incongruent about raising the voice to get silence!

Negotiating guidelines – Year 7

Negotiating guidelines at the beginning of Year 7 could be a more thoughtful exercise once a few ice-breakers have helped people to feel safe. (Although the ideas above may also be helpful.) I would ask a question like: 'What do we need from each other to work at our best?'

Ask pairs to consider it first and then invite comments for the board/flipchart.

Of the many you get you need to hone it down to five or six, so invite everyone to choose the three most important ones and come up and either tick their choices or put a sticky dot by them. This should identify the most important ones and their 'choice' gives them ownership.

Type up the main ones but keep the others in smaller type to value them anyway. This could be enlarged and laminated for the classroom wall. It also needs reviewing constantly to ensure that people's needs are being met.

(There are more ideas in Session Five and Six.)

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Year 6: Session One – Saying Goodbye

Session lasts about 60 mins in current format. See ideas for shorter versions at the end.

- Aims** – To reflect on the experience of junior school.
To acknowledge that it is time to say goodbye.
To share feelings about saying goodbye, and respect differences and similarities.

Gathering – Silent Statements (c. 5 mins)

It is a good idea if you prepare this first session in advance. Subsequently you can be more spontaneous or ask for suggestions from students. You make a statement and those people for whom it is true stand up and change places with others on their feet. Encourage people to notice who they have things in common with.

NB Beware of excluding people; ensure there will be opportunities for everyone to move at some point.

Examples:

Stand up and change places all those who . . .

- *will be leaving this school at the end of term.*
- *know which school they are going to next term.*
- *have visited their new school already.*
- *know someone already at that school.*
- *wonder what it will be like in their new school.*
- *will be wearing school uniform in the new school.*
- *like the school uniform at the new school.*

Change (c. 20 mins, inc. debrief)

Invite students to get into pairs (I pass quickly round circle, pairing people off so no one is left out) and to stand up and make themselves a bit of space. They decide who will be A and who will be B.

- a) A looks very carefully at B and then turns away.
- b) B makes a small change to their appearance (give examples but do not pre-empt debrief – takes off a shoe, undoes a button, picks up a book, etc.).
- c) A turns back and tries to guess what the change has been.
- d) Swap over and repeat exercise.
- e) Maybe swap partners or else stay with same partner and repeat whole cycle.
- f) All sit back in circle with partner for debrief.

DEBRIEF (of **Change**) – Invite sharing from circle about the kind of changes people made. Then ask for hands up for those who made changes which involved taking off or removing something. Now ask for hands up from those who made a change by picking up something. I guarantee these will be the minority. WE TEND TO ASSOCIATE CHANGE WITH LOSS AND GIVING THINGS UP! We do not often think we will gain from change.

Go-Round - Sentence Completion (15 mins)

Usually the facilitator starts with an example to model what is required and to show that you are prepared to share your feelings and ideas too. In this case you might want to choose someone else to start unless you are leaving too! The turn then passes round the circle, maybe passing a talking object, which gives **only** the person holding it the right to speak. If people choose to pass, always go round a second time in case they have changed their minds. This activity is meant to be snappy. One-phrase answers are encouraged and comments about contributions are discouraged – besides, no one else has the talking stick!

Examples:

One thing I will miss about [name of school] is

One thing I am looking forward to next year is

Here I sit, in the long grass . . . (c. 10 mins)

- 1) Ensure there is an empty chair next to you. Move into it and say *Here I sit.*
- 2) The person who had been sitting next to you then moves into the chair you have left and says *in the long grass.*
- 3) The person sitting next to them moves into their seat and says *with my friend . . .* and names someone from across the circle. (I always insist a boy names a girl and a girl names a boy, otherwise the game freezes up after a while.)
- 4) The named person moves across to the empty chair and leaves their own seat empty. The two either side try to fill it first. (**NB** Safety guidelines.)
- 5) There is now a new empty chair and the game starts again, going in the direction of the victorious chair filler. (In other words, they do not move back again – the person they have moved away from starts the next round by moving into the empty chair and saying *Here I sit.*)

EITHER play this for long enough for everyone to get a go OR stop it after a short while so that many people do not get called!

NB Ground rules of inclusion.

Evaluation and Close (c. 10 mins)

Start by saying one thing you have enjoyed about the session and then invite each person round the circle to say what they have enjoyed.

(**NB** Right to pass and second chance.)

One thing I enjoyed about today's session was . . .

Shorter Versions of Session One

(If you think an hour is too long or there is not enough time.)

Try dividing the session up into two halves of 30 mins. Always start with a gathering, and end with an evaluation go-round, however.

a) **Gathering - Silent Statements**

Change

Evaluation Go-Round

b) **Gathering - Silent Statements (different ones!)**

Go-Round - *One thing I'll miss . . .*

One thing I am looking forward to . . .

Here I sit . . .

Evaluation Go-Round

Year 6: Session Two – Farewell Gifts

Session lasts about 50 mins in current format. See ideas for shorter versions at the end. Add another game if you do an hour-long session.

- Aims** – To think back over the time at school.
To consider ways of leaving.
To encourage a sense of a shared experience.
To experience working with different people.

Gathering – A Sentence Go-Round (c. 10 mins)

One thing I'll remember about [name of school] is

(NB Right to pass and second round if passers want to join in.)

Mixer – Fruit Salad (c. 5 mins)

- 1) Walk around circle and give everyone, including yourself, the name of a fruit (choose four), e.g. apple, plum, banana, pear; apple, plum, . . . , etc.
- 2) Remove your chair from circle and stand in the middle.
- 3) Call out the name of a fruit and all those people with that name stand up and exchange places. No one can return to the same seat. (It is useful to negotiate some safety rules beforehand.)
- 4) Try to sit down, so someone new is left standing in the centre and the game begins again.

The person in the middle could also choose to call out 'fruit salad' at which point everyone must stand up and change places.

Farewell Gifts (c. 15 mins)

Facilitator quickly sweeps round circle, allocating pairs. (It may be necessary to discuss briefly with group the ground rules about accepting partners they may not have otherwise chosen and the feelings of people if they are rejected.)

In pairs (c. 5 mins) – invent a gift you would like to give to the school when you leave (money no object – encourage imagination). If possible sketch/write this quickly on a piece of paper.

Class go-round – pairs share their ideas (c. 10 mins) – perhaps holding up drawings.

Hello and Goodbye (c. 10 mins)

Everyone stands up in the circle and mills around. At a sign (a bang of a drum, a whistle, a loud clap, some music stopping) everyone finds a partner, stops still and listens to the instruction.

(NB Pre-discussion about feeling left out and encourage students to make ground rules to deal with this.)

Say hello to partner **IN THE MANNER YOU DESCRIBE**, for example, softly, loudly, quickly, slowly, with surprise, fearfully, etc.

Repeat several times then switch to saying goodbye in different ways.

Evaluation (c. 10 mins)

One thing I enjoyed about this session was . . .

Shorter Versions of Session Two

(If you think 50 mins is too long or there is not enough time.)

- a) **Gathering - Silent Statements** (Maybe focussing on achievements likely over years at the school, being as inclusive as possible so all move at least twice.)

Mixer - Fruit Salad

Farewell Gifts (Short version, i.e. discussion in pairs and either come up with a shared idea or stick with two different ones.)

Sentence Go-Round - Each pair share their ideas round the circle (Maybe worth recording these on a flipchart to follow up at another time.)

Evaluation - *One thing I've enjoyed about this session . . .*

- b) **Gathering - One thing I'll remember about this school is . . .**

Mixer - The sun shines on . . . Someone stands in middle and says something that is true for them; everyone else it is true for must stand up and change places. For example: *The sun shines on all those who . . . have a pet; own a bicycle; are wearing something blue; like chocolate, etc.* The person in the middle tries to find a spare seat - and this should leave a new person in the middle.

Places - In pairs, discuss places round the school they like, feel safe in, don't like, would like to re-design, etc. **In a group** - share thoughts but emphasise right to pass. Some people might not like to share them.

Evaluation - *One thing I have enjoyed about this session . . .*

Year 6: Session Three – I've Done This Before & Survived!

Session lasts about 60 mins in current format. See ideas for shorter versions at the end.

- Aims** – To reflect on previous changes.
To share coping strategies.
To develop confidence about change.
To acknowledge different styles of dealing with change.
To emphasise that a feeling is a feeling and we have the right to our feelings.

Gathering – Silent Statements (c. 5 mins)

Examples:

Stand up and change places all those who have . . .

- *ever moved house*
- *moved around the furniture in their bedroom*
- *stayed away from home for at least a night*
- *been to playgroup or nursery*
- *remembered getting a new pet*

Mixer – Groups by Numbers (c. 10 mins)

Everyone stands up and mingles around circle to music, hand clapping or a banging drum. At an agreed sign they freeze and you call out a number. Everyone rushes to get into a group of that number. Then everyone looks around and absorbs those left alone.

(I deally discuss this first and see if they come up with a strategy for this. Such discussions, I hope, will sensitise them to what it feels like to be left out. If it is safe, you might even discuss what it *did* feel like being left out at first as part of the debrief of this exercise. This may be asking a lot of someone so use your judgement)

Group dissolves and activity is repeated using different numbers.

Introduce an extra element – all groups must include boys and girls if possible. (Or else let it run for a bit then do a quick debrief to see if 'segregation' of any sort is happening and then invite ideas for dealing with that.)

End on the number 'two' and then invite partners to sit down together for next activity.

Pair Activity - Bridges (c. 20 mins)

Hand out sheets of blank paper and offer coloured crayons or felt tips.

The idea is to draw something which represents their journey through education to date and the changes they have already experienced. (c. 5-10 mins) Examples:

- 1) Each stage, maybe childminder, playgroup, nursery, infant school and junior school, is represented by an island, each one connected by a bridge or a ferry.
- 2) Each stage is the rung of a ladder.
- 3) Each stage is a resting place along a road, through a jungle or across a galaxy.

Draw an example of what you suggest on the board or flipchart. Encourage students to come up with their own images though.

Partners work quietly side by side, maybe discussing ideas before they start or else working alone and then comparing what they have done. Give all pairs a chance to talk about their drawing to their partner. (c. 5-10 mins)

(NB Negotiate the rules needed for open, non-judgemental acceptance of partner's drawing.)

Change Tips (c. 15 mins)

Encourage students to think back to when they first joined the school.

Remember how they felt on the first day. Imagine someone had come up to them and given them some words of advice to help them feel better - what would have helped? In the same pairs agree on some words of advice for those joining the school next year. Go round the circle sharing this advice.

Our words of advice (for next year's new people) would be . . .

(It might be worth collating these as a booklet for them to leave for next year!)

Evaluation (c. 10 mins)

One thing I enjoyed about this session was . . .

Shorter Versions of Session Three

(If you think an hour is too long or there is not enough time.)

- a) **Warm-Up - Silent Statements** (this is also a mixer, of course)

Pair Activity - Bridges

Evaluation

- b) **Warm-Up - *The sun shines on . . .***

Change Tips

Here I sit, in the long grass . . .

Evaluation

Year 6: Session Four – Making Friends

Session lasts about 80 mins in current format. See ideas for shorter versions at the end.

Aims – To consider what we look for in a friend.

To reflect on what being a good friend means to each of us.

To share the skills of making new friends.

To develop the skills and confidence to make new friends and function in new groups.

Gathering – *A friend is someone who . . .* (c. 10 mins)

Mixer – *Here I sit, in the long grass . . .* (c. 10 mins)

See Session One for explanation.

Pyramid Build (c. 40 mins)

The time pressure on this activity is deliberate. Part of the debrief is about how the groups tackled the task of negotiating and co-operating under pressure – but don't give that away at first!

- **In pairs**, on a sheet of paper, list the five most important skills or qualities of a friend. Phrased another way, what are the five most important things you value in your friends? (3 mins)
- Pair up with another pair. **In fours** try the same task. Ensure everyone feels heard and valued. You need to end up with a shared list of only five things however. This does not mean that the ones you discard are not important! (5 mins)
- Form a **group of eight** with another four. (Encourage boys and girls to join forces. In the debrief it may be interesting to see if boys and girls look for different things from a friendship.) Repeat the task. (7 mins)
- **Re-form big circle**. Each group reports back to whole circle and someone scribes the results on the board. (c. 10 mins) Is there enough consensus to make a shared class list of five?

Pyramid Build (continued)

- **Debrief as a go-round** (15 mins)
(Or as a **free discussion** using a talking stick/soft ball. Whoever wants to speak puts up their hand and is passed the talking object. Only the person with the object can speak – including the facilitator who tries to remain silent throughout, unless another probing question is needed.)
Questions might include:
 - *What skills were you using to decide on the five skills/qualities?*
 - *What new skills were you using as the group got bigger?*
 - *Do you think everyone in your group had a chance to say something?*
 - *Did you value everyone's contribution?*
 - *What did you do when there was disagreement?*
 - *What did it feel like to be under time pressure?*

Evaluation (c. 10 mins)

One thing I learned from this session . . .

Shorter Versions of Session Four

This is a long session – Pyramid Build is a lengthy but enriching activity. However, shortcuts could include:

- Omitting the mixer.
- Omitting the stage when groups move from four to eight.
- Covering the whole topic as a pair activity which is then shared and recorded on a flipchart. A second stage could perhaps be to get people to rank the skills and qualities as a pair, emphasising that there are no right answers. (This could even fit into some maths work on statistics and graphs, pie charts, etc., using interviews, etc.)
- Doing the whole session in two stages, asking people to remember what they came up with during the break between sessions.

Year 6: Session Five – What’s On Your Mind?

Session lasts about 60 mins in current format. See ideas for shorter versions at the end.

Aims – To share questions about the new school.

To respect each other’s hopes, expectations, anxieties and questions.

To explore ways of dealing with all of these.

To consider the support everyone can offer each other.

Gathering (c. 15 mins)

First turn to a partner and prepare a response to the sentence beginning

One thing I’m wondering about my new school is . . . (c. 5 mins)

(Facilitator encourages sensitivity to people left without a partner – hopefully this will be less necessary by now. If this is happening spontaneously you may want to acknowledge it.)

Then go round circle with either pairs reporting back on their joint ‘wonder’ or individuals speaking for themselves. A more sophisticated version would be for each person to report back on their partner’s ‘wonder’ – which encourages respect for different perspectives. (c. 10 mins)

Mixer – Birthday Line-Up (c. 10 mins)

Everyone stands up and gets into line in order of birth date, but without using any words. It will help if it is indicated where in the room the line starts (i.e. January birthdays) and finishes. Mime, hand gestures, etc. are permitted and people can help each other – but NO TALKING! If actual dates are tricky simply do months.

Divide up into pairs down the line and sit back in the circle with this partner.

Once line-up is complete run down it asking people to give their birth date. Make it safe to be in the wrong place and allow for extra adjustments to order if mistakes are noticed.

Hat Trick – Pair Activity (c. 25 mins)

On a small sheet of paper each pair writes one question or concern they have about their new school. If they need to write two questions then they need two sheets of paper. Each sheet is folded up and put in a hat/box/container which is in the middle of the circle. (c. 5 mins)

When everyone is ready, people take turns to take a piece of paper out of the ‘hat’ and read it out as if it were their own concern/question. (Agree to respect idiosyncrasies of spelling – ‘It’s OK to make mistakes’ is a good ground rule here.)

Hat Trick - Pair Activity (Continued)

If this were my question I would . . . The focus being on either how they would find out what they need to know or maybe even one way of solving the problem. Other people can then chip in their ideas. The writers of the sheet need not identify themselves and anonymity must be respected. (Maybe a ground rule discussion about how it feels to own up to a worry you feel a bit embarrassed about?)

If whole class discussion is still a bit chaotic and many people do not contribute then try inviting people to get back in their pairs after the first person has drawn a concern from the hat and responded. Share ideas in the circle from the pair discussion.

This activity could be repeated on several occasions to cover most points if it is found useful.

Evaluation (c. 10 mins)

One thing I have learned from this session . . .

Shorter Versions of Session Five

This session can be made much shorter by omitting the Birthday Line-Up and only having one or two ideas from the hat, and perhaps having another session with this as the main activity another day. Choose a gathering and a game from another session to give it a frame.

Year 6: Session Six – New Directions

Session lasts about 60 mins in current format. See ideas for shorter versions at the end.

Aims – To gain confidence in asking for help.

Gathering (c. 5 mins)

One thing I am planning to do in the holidays is . . .

Finding My Way (c. 45 mins)

- Everyone is on their feet milling round the circle to the sound of music, a drum beat or hands clapping. At an agreed signal everyone finds a partner, stops them and asks the way to somewhere in the school. (c. 3 mins)

- **Immediately debrief** (c. 7 mins) because even this bit can be excruciatingly difficult.

Did you notice anyone left out?

What could you have done to involve them?

What did you say when someone stopped you?

What could you do to make them feel comfortable?

When you asked for directions do you think you said it in a way which would get an answer?

- **Role-Play** (c. 10 mins) Any volunteers to try this out in the middle of the circle?

If not maybe demo yourself with one other.

Give feedback on things that were done well on either side, for example, body language, eye contact, clear speech, smile, 'excuse me', etc.

NB The Feedback Bun

Draw a hamburger on the board. The top bun is some initial positive feedback (two or three comments); the filling is the bit that could have been done differently (one or two comments); and the bottom bun is some more positive feedback. Always end on the positive!

- Now repeat activity in the middle of the circle several times, this time giving people a chance to give the directions (partners can decide who does which bit but encourage them to try out both roles). (c. 10 mins)

- **Debrief** this part (c. 10 mins)

How did it feel now?

What happened if you did not understand instructions?

What could you do? (NB Policy in supermarkets. Assistants usually show you the way to the correct section)

Evaluation (c. 10 mins)

One thing I have learned from this session . . .

Shorter Versions of Session Six

Shorter version – Same central activity but have people walking around in pairs and then allow them to debrief in pairs, maybe with a few key questions to think about (and then share) ideas.

Year 6: Session Seven – Circle Party

Session lasts about 60 mins in current format. See ideas for shorter versions at the end.

Aims – To have fun in the circle to encourage reflection on the Circle experience.

Gathering (c. 5 mins)

One person I want to say goodbye to before I leave is . . .

Mixer – Let them choose? (c. 10 mins)

Elephants and Palm Trees (c. 15 mins)

Ask for a volunteer and invite them to stick out an arm as if it were an elephant's trunk.

The person on either side of this central person turns towards them and, raising one arm and dropping the other to create a kind of circle, forms the shape of an elephant's ear. From the front this should look a bit like an elephant's head. (Try it!)

Ask for another volunteer and ask them to stand with their arms raised above their head. They are the trunk of a palm tree. The people either side turn away from this central person, hold their arms out straight away from their bodies and begin swooshing them up and down. These are the swaying fronds of the tree. (Trust me!)

Ask for another volunteer and ask them to hold their arms out straight on either side and start rotating like a helicopter, BUT ONLY WHEN THE PEOPLE EITHER SIDE HAVE CROUCHED DOWN SAFELY.

Now you are ready to start the game. Circulate slowly in the centre of the circle and then point to someone and say either 'Elephant', 'Palm Tree' or 'Helicopter'. Whichever it is, the person you have pointed to is the centre of the sculpture and the people either side have to take up their positions too.

Try this slowly for a while and then speed up. Anyone who hesitates or gets it wrong can take their turn in the centre of the circle but this is meant to be fun so keep it light!

Tropical Storm (c. 10 mins)

You can introduce this by asking if anyone has experience of a tropical storm or can remember a hot sultry day when a thunderstorm develops and swiftly goes away. Recall the initial breeze, the drops increasing to a crescendo, then dying away until there is only the breeze and finally silence.

Tropical Storm (continued)

The instructions are that no one talks, but keenly watches the person on their right. Whatever they do or stop doing must be copied, but don't copy anyone else. (The temptation is to copy the facilitator!)

- 1) Now you start by slowly rubbing your hands. This movement should pass round the circle.
- 2) When it comes back to you start tapping two fingers of one hand on the palm of the other.
- 3) Again when this has passed round the circle start clapping. (Try to discourage clapping in time. It works best if it is random.)
- 4) Next stamp your feet.
- 5) Next return to clapping.
- 6) Next return to tapping.
- 7) Next return to rubbing your hands.
- 8) Next lay your hands on your lap.

Remember the movements should pass round the circle so that the changes happen gradually. Everyone should keep doing whatever they are doing until the person on their right starts doing something else.

The whole thing should sound like a tropical storm!

Time for another game? Let them choose! (c. 10 mins)

Evaluation (10 mins)

First in pairs – share things you have gained/enjoyed about the Circle Time this term. Then do a go-round.

What I have enjoyed from the Circle Time this term is . . .

Shorter Versions of Session Six

Just fewer games!

Year 7: Session One – Hello!

Each session for Year 7 is designed to fit into a lesson of 40–45 mins. Try to leave time at the end for a closing go-round even if you have to cut short something. If you have more time introduce another game.

Aims – To help everyone get to know each other and feel relaxed.

Gathering – Silent Statements (c. 5 mins)

You make a statement and those people for whom it is true stand up and change places with others on their feet. Encourage people to notice who they have things in common with.

NB Beware of excluding people; ensure there will be opportunities for everyone to move at some point.

Stand up and change places all those who . . .

- *came to school by car.*
- *on foot.*
- *by bus.*
- *by bike.*
- *by something I haven't thought of.*
- *will be eating a packed lunch.*
- *will eat in the canteen today.*

Name Game 1 (c. 20 mins)

Whisk round circle ensuring everyone has a partner. Invite people to find out their partner's name, their previous school and something they do in their spare time.

Anticipate problems by asking what difficulties there might be. What do people need to do to make the exercise work? Note down these ground rules before you start if you get agreement.

Then go round the circle with everyone introducing their partner to the rest of the circle.

This is S/he went to . . . and s/he likes . . .

Mixer – Birthday Line-Up (c. 10 mins)

Everyone stands up and gets into line in order of birth date. It will help to indicate which end of the line is January. Mime, hand gestures, etc. are permitted and people can help each other – but NO TALKING! If actual dates are tricky simply do months.

Once line-up is complete run down it asking people to give their birth date. Make it safe to be in the wrong place and allow for extra adjustments to order if mistakes are noticed. Sit back down next to those in your birthday month.

Evaluation (c. 10 mins)

Start by saying one thing you have enjoyed about the session and then invite each person round the circle to say what they have enjoyed.

(**NB** Right to pass and second chance – see introductory notes.)

One thing I have enjoyed about this session . . .

Year 7: Session Two – What Was Your Name again?

Aims – To carry on getting to know each other to share the feelings of being new.

Gathering – Silent Statements (c. 10 mins)

Stand up and change places all those who . . .

- *have met all their teachers by now.*
- *still feel a bit lost finding classrooms.*
- *have found the library.*
- *think they know their way around by now.*

Maybe think of a few more that are likely to be common experiences or easy to admit to.

Name Game 2 (c. 10 mins)

You start by introducing the person on your left, then yourself, then the person on your right. It's OK to have forgotten and to ask first! In fact it would be good to even pretend you need to ask, maybe.

This is . . . , I am . . . , this is . . .

The person on your right then does the same thing and so the activity passes round the circle.

Here I sit, in the long grass . . . (c. 10 mins)

- 1) Ensure there is an empty chair next to you. Move into it and say *Here I sit.*
- 2) The person who had been sitting next to you then moves into the chair you have left and says *in the long grass.*
- 3) The person sitting next to them moves into their seat and says *with my friend . . .* and names someone from across the circle. (I always insist a boy names a girl and a girl names a boy, otherwise the game freezes up after a while.)
- 4) The named person moves across to the empty chair and leaves their own seat empty. The two either side try to fill it first.
(**NB** Safety guidelines.)
- 5) There is now a new empty chair and the game starts again, going in the direction of the victorious chair filler (i.e. they do not move back again but the person they have moved away from starts the next round by moving into the empty chair and saying *Here I sit . . .*).

EITHER play this for long enough for everyone to get a go OR stop it after a short while so that many people do not get called!

NB Ground rules of inclusion.

Evaluation (c. 10 mins)

Start by saying one thing you have enjoyed about the session and then invite people round the circle to say what they have enjoyed.

(**NB** Right to pass and second chance.)

One thing I enjoyed about this session . . .

Year 7: Session Three – How's It Going?

Aims – To take stock of the first few weeks to create a safe space to share concerns.

Gathering – Sentence Completion (c. 10 mins)

Invite a go-round in which everyone thinks of one word which sums up their first few weeks at the new school. For example, fun, confusing, tiring, etc.

(NB Right to pass and the second round to allow people to contribute if they want to.)

Mixer – Fruit Salad (c. 10 mins, inc. negotiating ground rules)

- 1) Walk around circle and give everyone, including yourself, the name of a fruit (choose four), e.g. apple, plum, banana, pear; apple, plum, . . . , etc.
- 2) Remove your chair from circle and stand in the middle.
- 3) Call out the name of a fruit and all those people with that name stand up and exchange places. No one can return to the same seat. (It is useful to negotiate some safety rules beforehand.)
- 4) Try to sit down, so someone new is left standing in the centre and the game begins again.

The person in the middle could also choose to call out 'fruit salad', at which point everyone must stand up and change places.

Pair Activity – Likes and Dislikes (c. 15 mins)

In pairs share one thing you like about the new school and one thing you dislike or are not so keen on.

Back in the circle ask each pair to take it in turns to explain respectfully to the group their partner's like and dislike. (This encourages good listening and respect for each other's feelings although it may be worth exploring what respect means in this context, what we can do to show respect, and what we sometimes do that shows lack of respect.)

Evaluation (c. 10 mins)

Start by saying one thing you have found helpful about the session and then invite each person round the circle to say what they have enjoyed.

(NB Right to pass and second chance.)

One thing I've found helpful in this session . . .

Year 7: Session Four - Spot the difference!

Aims - To develop a sense of shared experience to develop listening and support skills.

Gathering - *To get to school on time I have to get up at . . .* (c. 5 mins)

Mixer - *The sun shines on . . .* (c. 10 mins)

Someone stands in the middle and says something that is true for them; everyone else it is true for must stand up and change places. For example: *The sun shines on all those who . . . have a pet; own a bicycle; are wearing something blue; like chocolate*, etc. The person in the middle tries to find a spare seat - and this should leave a new person in the middle.

Spot the Difference - Pair Activity (c. 20 mins)

Give the following instructions:

Fold a sheet of paper in half.

In one column write 'Junior School' and in the other write the name of this school.

Try to list as many differences as you can between the two schools.

If your partner went to a different school then you may not have exactly the same list but that does not matter. Write them all down anyway.

Back in the circle, go round the circle sharing observations. Maybe anticipate problems beforehand and negotiate listening respectfully, for example, not laughing if somebody mentions something that isn't different or is a bit unusual or personal. The emphasis is on valuing everyone's experience and if something feels different to one person then it *is* - for them.

Evaluation (c. 5 mins)

Start by saying one thing you have realised in this session and then invite each person round the circle to say what they have enjoyed.

(NB Right to pass and second chance.)

One thing I have realised in this session is . . .

Year 7: Session Five – Being There

Aims – To commit to supporting each other as a tutor group.
To identify what the group needs from each other.
To begin to establish a group contract for the year.

Gathering – *One thing I have learnt so far this term . . .* (c. 5 mins)
(This can be from experience in or out of class.) The facilitator could set the tone with a light hearted comment, perhaps.

Mixer – Groups by Numbers (c. 10 mins)

- 1) Everyone stands up and mingles around circle to music, hand clapping or a banging drum.
- 2) At an agreed sign they freeze and you call out a number.
- 3) Everyone rushes to get into a group of that number.
- 4) Then everyone looks around and absorbs those left alone.

I ideally discuss this first and see if they come up with a strategy for this. Such discussions, I hope, will sensitise them to what it feels like to be left out. If it is safe, you might even discuss what it *did* feel like being left out at first as part of the debrief of this exercise. This may be asking a lot of someone so use your judgement.

Group dissolves and activity is repeated using different numbers.

Introduce an extra element – all groups must include boys and girls if possible.
(Or else let it run for a bit then do a quick debrief to see if 'segregation' of any sort is happening and then invite ideas for dealing with that.)

End on the number 'two' and then invite partners to sit down together for next activity.

What We Need from Each Other - Pair Activity (c. 20 mins)

- 1) In pairs discuss some things which you need from everyone in the class to take part in Circle Time and class discussions.
- 2) Write this question up so people can refer to it.
What do you need from each other to work at your best?
For example, being allowed to finish what you are saying, being listened to, and being respected (i.e. no put-downs).
- 3) In the circle go round and collect one idea from every pair and write them up on a flipchart or board. Keep on going round until all are up.
- 4) Ask everyone to choose the three most important things without which they definitely would not be able to work at their best. Sometimes I invite people up to tick the sheet/board or stick a little sticky dot by the three. This way they feel they have actually put their stamp on the sheet. (If this is a bit too chaotic then go round and ask people for their choices and add the ticks or dots yourself.) This part of the activity should reduce the list to a manageable six or seven points.

Evaluation (c.5 mins)

Start by saying one thing you have enjoyed about the session and then invite each person round the circle to say what they have enjoyed.

(NB Right to pass and second chance.)

One thing I enjoyed about this session . . .

Year 7: Session Six – Working as a Team

NB You have been working towards this for the last few weeks but often it needs the team spirit to have developed a bit before people feel safe to talk about their needs in a meaningful way and to care about respecting the needs of others.

Aims – To clarify how we support each other to consider the impact on others if we don't.

Gathering – *One thing I plan to do at half term . . .* (c. 5 mins)

Mixer – **Let them choose from your repertoire!** (c. 10 mins)

What do the class guidelines mean to me? (c. 20 mins)

- 1) Display the list from the last session, which may still be unclear as behaviour guidelines. In my experience you get words like support, listening, honesty, etc., which may not be very clear.
- 2) Divide the group up into the number of groups needed to discuss each of the points. Each group makes a list of the kind of things they would need to do to provide for that particular need.
- 3) Invite them to give concrete examples. Circulate round groups to help if necessary. They may need to remember the ground rules to have a mutually respectful and inclusive discussion about this!
- 4) In the big circle each group could report back their findings and invite others to give examples. (This could become a board display to serve as a reminder of what they are agreeing to do.)

You could debrief the actual discussion activity and see if they can identify the problems of group discussion and whether they were able to keep to their own rules.

Consequences (c. 10 mins)

Choose one of the ground rules and turn it into a sentence completion:

If someone did not . . . then I would feel . . .

(You may not have time for this but please come back to it. It is vital that people realise the impact of their behaviour on other people and that the work on the group agreement is not just a paper exercise.)

Quick one-word evaluation (c. 5 mins)

Whiz round the circle – *One word to describe your feelings about Circle Time?*

What Next?

If you want to continue with Circle Time it is recommended that you acquire some of the excellent materials around to help you.

Lucky Duck Publishing have a wide range of materials including an excellent video. Visit their website at www.luckyduck.co.uk or ring them for a catalogue on **0117 973 2881**.

If you fancy going on a short course about Circle Time or can see the benefit of some whole-school in-service training about it, then contact the author of these notes, Belinda Hopkins, on **0118 933 1520** or visit the website of her company, Transforming Conflict, at www.transformingconflict.org.

If you need help or advice about any of the ideas in this pack then also feel free to ring Belinda or e-mail her at Belinda@transformingconflict.org.

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