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The Impact of Conversation Circles

By Kaethe Perez, CFG Coach and NSRF National Facilitator in Florida, kaethe_p@msn.com

All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten is a well-known book written by Robert Fulghum. As a long-time kindergarten teacher, I know the impact sitting in a circle had on my students. Everyone felt an equal part of the group conversation, and sharing could be done side by side or across the circle. When I decided to move from my teacher chair to the floor, sitting cross-legged with my students, the impact was even more powerful.

Later in my career I was a math coach for elementary teachers. My natural inclination (from my kindergarten experience) was to bring the older students closer to the board to encourage shared thinking about mathematical concepts. Sitting in a circle again, using community agreements, gave us the ability to share thinking, to restate for understanding, and to agree/disagree without negativity.

In my current work with Success Partners, I am still seeing the power of the circle. For instance, we assembled a HUGE check-out circle at the end of our Success Partners Summer Institute.

This final activity allowed everyone to speak from their heart and to share the impact Success Partners would have on their parent-school partnership work. The circle naturally slowed us down and allowed us to focus, creating equality and connecting with others in a wonderful way.

During our November PEP rally at NorthRidge Christian Academy, this idea of the conversation circle was brought back to my thinking. During the [Futures protocol](#), their staff was too large to sit at one table, so they made the decision to move the chairs into a circle, with a scribe in the middle. The norms were already established to acknowledge one another as equals, monitor equity of participation, and to speak and listen from the heart, to name a few. As you can see from this picture, the impact of a conversation circle is powerful!

I encourage you to thoughtfully reconsider room setup, perhaps intentionally using conversation circles when you set up meetings with your staff, your students, and your parents. 