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COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Misconception 1: Restorative circles should only be used to address punitive issues.

Fact: While restorative circles can definitely be used to address classroom challenges such as a negative report from a substitute or an instance where the class as a whole is not meeting class/school expectations, they are also an effective way to foster community by discussing positive events and academic content.

Misconception 2: Restorative circles take away too much valuable instructional time.

Fact: Circles can be used to build a sense of belonging and community of learners when applied to academic content (e.g., “After conducting an experiment, what surprised you most?” or “After reading a piece of informational text, what is one word you feel is important to understanding the concept?”).

Misconception 3: Restorative circles are the best way to address any misbehavior issue.

Fact: If there is a specific incident that has occurred between a few students (e.g., there is someone who has done harm and someone who has been harmed), it is likely more appropriate to specifically address the incident using a restorative conference between just the affected students.

Misconception 4: “My classroom isn’t big enough for everyone to get into an actual circle shape, so I shouldn’t use circles.”

Fact: The goal is to have everyone in a circle so that all students are seen when they are sharing, are included in discussion, and don’t feel hidden. If your classroom isn’t big enough for a complete circle, do the best you can or consider using another space in the school that is conducive to the discussion you intend to have during the circle.