

**Counselors SPEAK:
Connecting
Carefully, Candidly
and Courageously**
June 26, 2020



OKLAHOMA
Education



OSDE Student Support Panel



Beth Whittle,
M.Ed., LPC
Executive Director of
Counseling



Petra Woodard,
M.Ed.
Executive Director of
Academic
Counseling



Tosin Akande, MPH
Bullying Prevention
Specialist



Shelly Ellis, Ph.D.
Deputy Supt. of
Student
Support

OSDE Student Support Panel - 2



Cheryl McGee, MHR, LPC, LADC-MH
Project AWARE Program Manager

Why Are We Here?

To provide Oklahoma Counselors a forum to:

- **S**hare thoughts and concerns in a safe space
- **P**rocess possible causes and solutions
- **E**ducate, equip, and empower one another
- **A**ct, plan and implement
- **K**eep the conversation going

What's the Conversation?

- Being Reactive
 - An intervention to promote positive school culture
- Circles as a tool for student self exploration
- Additional Talking Points from last week:
 - SROs
 - Facemasks and reading emotions/sensory issues

Culture

Putting into action the skills learned

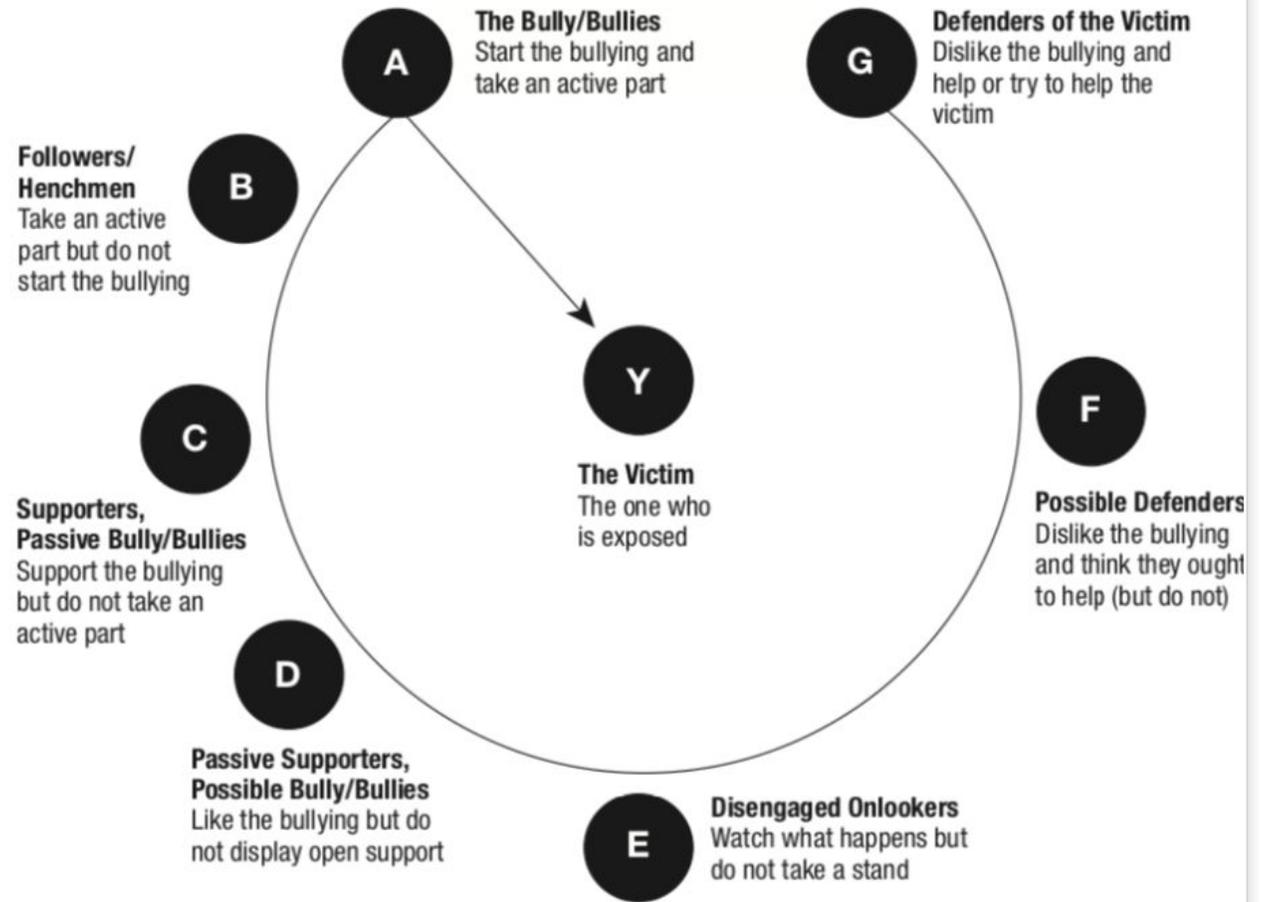
- Be Established
 - Have clear rules and follow them
- Be Reactive
 - Always Intervene appropriately to incidents
- Be Proactive
 - Stay abreast of social issues
- Be Engaging
 - Fostering and Leveraging relationships
- Be Informed
 - Utilize evidence-based resources

Being Reactive

Intervening in Bullying Incidents

- That's how we do things here. (Or: That's not how we do things here.)
- That's our culture. (Or: That's not our culture.)
- _____ jokes are not acceptable here.
- That's not funny to me. It sounds _____.
- Let's be careful of our words. We respect all people here.
- I have no idea if you realize the impact of those words.
- What you just said does not reflect for me the good person I know you are.
- Can we talk in private? I was concerned with your statement earlier; it comes across as insensitive to _____.
- I feel obligated as a peer, supervisor, friend to tell you _____.
- Think before you speak. Whatever you say, you can't take back.

The Bullying Cycle



Why it matters

Virtual Bullying Circle

Resources

[Class Activities](#)

[Tolerance.Org](#)

[Bullying Prevention: Documents](#)

- Class Meetings
 - Set class rules
 - Class discussions
- Preferred identifications
 - Names, nicknames, gender, etc.
- Appropriately Report/document incidents

Be Reactive

Recap

- Awareness and involvement of adults
- Firm limits on unacceptable words and behaviors
- Consistent application of nonpunitive, nonphysical sanctions for unacceptable behaviors or violations of school rules
- Adults who act as authorities and positive role models.

Restorative Practices and Circles

Restorative Practices build community and can help set things right when the integrity of the community is challenged by harmful behaviors.

When people come together for restorative interactions they sit in circles. Circle dialogue is a fundamental element of restorative dialogue.

Classroom circles support the two main goals of restorative practices: building community; and responding to harms through dialogue that sets things right.

Safety

Establish classroom norms that include a list of specific words and phrases that students commit to not using. This list may include “calling peoples opinions *stupid or lame*”, saying “That’s so gay” or using the n-word or the r-word.

Potentially taking this a step further by creating a class contract with student signatures committing to norms and behaviors that define classroom community as a socially and emotionally safe place.

Prompting Questions for Circles

The goal is to have **relevant** questions about something that is real and meaningful to the lives of students.

Often a high quality prompt **gives voice to existing unspoken questions** that are in the social field; consider this: “What does it mean....to be popular?” as an example of a question that is implicit in many students’ minds, but is perhaps rarely discussed openly.

Simple and clear language is used.

Open-ended: not yes-or-no questions, but worded in a way that invites deeper inquiry.

Prompting Questions for Circles - 2

Prompting questions are about **inquiry, not advocacy**; discovery, not teaching facts or proving a point. Thus, a prompt framed as “Why is it always best to be polite?” maybe helpful, but it also assumes its own conclusion; you may as well say, “It’s best to be polite. Tell me why.” It might be more interesting to ask, “What makes relationships work out well?”

They **support re-storying**. Re-storying is the process by which we loosen the grip that stories that we have constructed about each other and our world have on us, thus opening up new possibilities for how we see and experience each other.

They **energize** the class and get the attention of students while **inviting** deeper follow up questions.

Principle of Non-Interference

The principle of non-interference means that we simply welcome what people say without trying to influence them.

If someone is in pain, we listen and allow simple listening to be a comfort; we do not try to take away their pain.

If someone is confused, we simply listen and trust that in its own way the circle will provide clarification.

If someone is angry we honor their anger.

We don't indulge in psychological maneuvers. We don't directly correct, try to counsel, heal, or "fix" anyone's experience in anyway. We simply listen.

Reactions

Students reactions will vary. They may react passively, show sorrow, express anger, or respond unpredictably. Some students may become visibly upset: Others may pushback against discussing these topics in class/school. Many of these reactions stem from feelings of pain, anger, confusion, guilt and shame. There can be an urgency to blame others.

It is important that educators/mentors/individuals prepare by having thorough training in restorative practices and continually challenge their implicit biases to participate and structure these courageous discussions properly.

Circle Guidelines

Speak from the heart: This means speaking for yourself, talking about what is true for you based on your own experiences. When we speak from the heart we are aiming for eloquence, for choosing words that accurately communicate what we hold to be important.

Listen from the heart: We are used to judging other people. Sometimes without even knowing anything about another person we will make assumptions about them. These assumptions can keep us from really hearing what they have to say...and what they have to say may be something that is important and helpful. So when we listen from the heart we are trying to set aside any stories we may hold about the person. This opens up the possibility of making wonderful discoveries about, and surprising connections with, each other.

Circle Guidelines - 2

No need to rehearse: In circles we discover that we can trust that we will know what to say when it is our turn to speak. We don't have to mentally rehearse while we are waiting for the talking piece to come our way. When we find that we are rehearsing (everyone does) we gently remind ourselves “no need to rehearse” and bring our attention back to the person who is speaking. This guideline is sometimes referred to simply as “be spontaneous.”

Without feeling rushed, say just enough: Keep in mind the limits of time and making room for everyone to speak. This intention is also called “lean expression.” It is related to “speak from the heart” because we often find that when we speak carefully we can express ourselves with fewer words than we would normally use, and that when we do our words often have more impact. One way to think about this is, when you are considering what to say, ask, “Does it serve this circle in a good way?”

Communication Framework

Secondary: Reiterate-Contemplate-Respire-Communicate

- Reiterate- restate what you heard
- Contemplate- count to ten or allow ten seconds to pass before responding
- Respire- take a breath
- Communicate- speak with compassion

Elementary: Repeat- Think- Breathe- Feel

* Feel- use empathy (walking in someone else's shoes to help with this)

Communication Strategies

Fist to Five (Secondary)

Fist= very uncomfortable

1= I am uncomfortable

2= little uncomfortable

3= not sure how I am feeling

4= comfortable to move on

5=I am ready to move on full steam ahead.

Communication Strategies - 2

Elementary

Thumbs down= doesn't feel good

Thumbs side= Huh? Need some help

Thumbs up= Ready! Let's go.

or

Stoplight

Green= Ready

Yellow= I can but hesitant

Red= Do not want to go on

Questions to Consider

What is the harm?

What are the needs and obligations of all affected by the harm?

How can all affected parties plan to heal the harm as much as possible?

Prompts for Discussion

- Why is it so hard to talk about _____?
- What is the hardest thing about talking about _____?
- What does it feel like in your mind, body, spirit, heart when you consider _____?
- What does it feel like to be in your skin?
- What does the term _____ mean to you?
- What are you taking away from this conversation about _____?
- What supports do you need at school to deeper the conversation about _____?
- What wisdom about _____ would you want people to understand?
- Do you have any conversations about _____ at school, home, or work?
- One word that would describe this circle?

Sequence of Events

1. STARTING THE CIRCLE

- a. Arrive
- b. State Purpose of the circle
- c. Open the Circle
- d. State/Teach guidelines of the circle
- e. Make Remember Agreements

2. Doing the Work

- a. Connection-Talking piece (Check in Round)
- b. Core Activities (Community Building, Connection. Restorative Practice)
- c. Closure- Check out Round

3. Ending

- a. Close Circle
- b. Debrief if needed with Colleagues