

Students stand behind their chairs, forming the «Blessing Rope»



An international student shares on why she likes Singapore, offering a different perspective. Often our international students can provide fresh insights into why they appreciate living in Singapore.

COMING FULL CIRCLE IN NATIONAL EDUCATION

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The student is holding on to a “sceptre” which gives the holder permission to speak. This is useful in ensuring the rest of the class keep quiet and listens to their classmate who is sharing his/her thoughts on the topic being discussed.

Students seated down, ready for the check-in.



WHAT IS CIRCLE TIME?

It is a structured and creative form of group work in which pupils and the group facilitator sit together in a circle. Creating a safe, risk-taking, trusting and non-blaming environment to speak, listen, share thoughts, explore ideas and interact.

USE OF CIRCLE TIME IN NATIONAL EDUCATION

This year, Beatty Secondary School adopted the school-wide approach in using circle time to deliver National Education (NE) values to our students. The topic we focused on was "Appreciate what we have in Singapore".

SETTING THE SCENE

Each class was split into two and the form and co-form teachers would each take half the class. The teacher takes on the role of a facilitator. The facilitator gets the students to sit in a circle, and works on creating a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. Before the circle time begins, the facilitator visits the rules of circle time with the students. This includes the following:

- Listening to one another
- Talking one at a time
- Respect the ideas and values of others
- Keeping personal comments POSITIVE
- Confidentiality
- Opportunity to pass (but we will return to the students for their thoughts, hence ultimately, ALL will have to share their thoughts/ feelings.)

CHECK-IN

With that the circle time begins. Facilitator starts off by asking students to introduce themselves by completing the sentence "My name is and I am glad to be in Singapore because"

Next we move on to playing a "mixer" where the aim is to break up the cliques which tend to sit together. In this case, the facilitator instructs students to "stand up and change places if you" (remind them that they are not allowed to simply switch seats with those beside them)

- Stay in a HDB flat
- Have completed your primary school education (all will have to stand!)
- Have a maid at home
- Have a TV at home

By now, students should be well mixed and suitably worked up and alert.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The facilitator goes on to show a video entitled "Rebuilding children's lives after the South Asian Tsunami". The objective is to allow our students to be able to contrast their lives in Singapore against those in other countries, thereby allowing them to build compassion (a school value) and appreciate with what they have in our little red dot.

The facilitator goes on to divide students into groups of four (still remaining in a circle) and get them to identify the misery and suffering that was seen in the video clip. A representative from each group will write the findings on the board. The facilitator then asks students to complete the sentence "After watching the video, I feel"

ENERGISER

Here we play a game of "blessing rope". The facilitator gets the students to stand in a circle around the chairs. Students are to sit on the chairs if they have:

- Parents who own a car
- Air conditioners at home
- Water heaters in the home
- Lived in HDB flats

By the end of the last category, all students should be comfortably seated down.

CONCLUSION

This leads to the last part of our circle. The facilitator asks the students to each complete the sentence "One thing I like about Singapore is"

You know this is a successful session if your students are able to articulate higher order reasons for liking Singapore (versus simpler / mono syllabic answers). Some of the answers my students gave included:

- At least my family is with me
- I have a roof over my head
- There is peace and security
- I have a home
- My loved ones are with me

The conclusion is always important in the circle time for it rounds up the objectives of the session. Here we share with our students the feelings about how fortunate it is to be a Singaporean or living in Singapore (for our international students), despite having problems (as in all societies/ countries). At least our basic needs are met; we can use the streets safely at night and our loved ones are with us.