



Doing SAIGs with Circles

Circle Principles and Processes easily lend themselves to effective implementation of Social Academic Intervention Groups. Circle Principles of respect for the personal experiences, needs, and feelings of all participants and the importance of all voices having an opportunity to be heard help to establish a safe and welcoming learning environment in which students feel comfortable and open to experimenting with new skills. Circle Processes can also increase the likelihood that students will encourage and support each other in their attempts to master and use those skills.

SAIG Circle Basics

- **Setting** – The ideal is to have chairs arranged in a circle with an open space in the center. If people feel comfortable sitting on the floor, that is also an option. If SAIG participants will need to write or draw, and it would be helpful to have them seated around a table, try to use a table arrangement that is closer to a circle than a long rectangle. The circle shape itself helps communicate a sense of equality.
- **Centerpiece** – The centerpiece could be something related to the topic of the SAIG or just something restful to look at. If students create artwork as part of the SAIG, that also could be used as a centerpiece. Since students in the SAIG may not know each other’s names, another option could be to put each student’s name on a paper plate and form a circle of paper plates in the center.
- **Talking Piece** – The talking piece could be something related to the SAIG focus. The main thing to keep in mind is that you probably don’t want to use something easily breakable – or potentially dangerous. 😊 The key thing to remember about the talking piece is that when you are using it for a Go Round, it needs to be passed from person to person around the circle – not across the circle.
- **Shared Agreements** – It’s probably best to adapt your school’s PBIS expectations for your SAIG Shared Agreements. You can talk with students about what those expectations look like and sound like for SAIG. For example, Be Respectful includes respecting the talking piece. Be Responsible could include participating in activities. Be Safe could include using “friendly” words.
- **Ceremony/Ritual/Tradition** – Any brief opening and closing procedures that is used consistently can contribute to a sense of safety. Openings could be a particular kind of welcome, a hand shake, a yoga pose, a short poem, a very quick icebreaker-type Go Round, some deep breaths – anything that lets participants know they are about to start a special time. Same for closing –a group cheer, high fives, a Go Round of “pass the smile”, etc.
- **Circle Facilitator** – as the SAIG facilitator, you are accepting responsibility for helping circle participants create and maintain a safe space for learning and experimenting. Reference the Shared Agreements as needed. If put-downs are an issue, you might want to use the Ropes Course “mantra” of 3 put-ups for every put-down. (It’s OK to ask the group for help with put-ups.)