

Oral Language Activities

Knowledge Building Circle

A Knowledge Building Circle is a class discussion activity that is specifically reserved for working out students' questions and ideas. The aim of the circle is to help all learners to improve their understandings as students pose questions, postulate theories, and refine ideas. This communal activity deepens students' understanding through increased exposure to the diverse perspectives of the class. The KBC aligns with the Aboriginal time-honoured tradition of the Talking Circle where individuals take turns sharing ideas.

The goal of a KBC is to have students speak and respond to each other in a conversational manner. It is wise to begin with a talking piece (e.g., stick, rock, microphone) that can be passed to the next speaker so that the circle is not teacher directed; however, over time students can learn to wait for the person who has just spoken to choose the next speaker. Speakers have the right to pass, if necessary.

Procedure:

1. Ask students to sit in a circle facing into the centre and you take your place in the circle as a co-learner.
2. Explain that in a Knowledge Building Circle everyone learns from, and contributes to, each other's understandings.
3. Establish expectations for behaviour and mutual respect. Students need to listen carefully to the speaker and take turns speaking.
4. Begin by passing a 'Talking Piece' or have one student start the discussion and choose the next speaker.
5. Model and facilitate dialogue to help students to internalize the behaviours (e.g., "Does anyone have something to add onto Sam's idea?" or "Katya, please pass-on to another student.").
6. Encourage student engagement by asking open-ended questions (e.g., "What do you think you know about our topic? What questions do you have? Did anyone notice/read/find out something that might help us understand our question?").
7. Support students by asking questions that help them test their ideas and change their theories based on new information (e.g., "What new information did you learn about the topic? How does that information support your theory? Have you changed or added to your theory?").

*adapted from *Natural Curiosity: A Resource for Teachers*