A black background with a black square

Description automatically generated with medium confidenceConcentric Circles Discussion Format

**Discussion Guide**



**What to do:** Read the directions for this structured discussion format, then prepare questions to pose. Once you’ve introduced the format, ask students to suggest questions or put students in charge of managing the activity.

**Why it matters:** Using a structure to help build relationships puts everyone on the same level. Students who are shy — or who believe they’re different or not interesting — can participate equally. If staff members join the circle, too, you can strengthen relationships with students.

# Preparation

Write 10 to 20 questions you’ll pose to students.

# Activity Directions

1. Divide students into two equal groups.
2. Direct students in the first group to stand in a small circle, facing out.
3. Direct students in the second group to form an outer circle around the first group, with each student facing one student in the inner circle. The students who are facing one another are partners.
4. Have partners introduce themselves or greet one another.
   * If the partners don’t know one another, have them introduce themselves.
   * If the partners already know one another, have them greet each other with a handshake or high five.
5. Explain that you’ll ask a question, and each partner will take a turn answering the question while the other person listens.
6. After a minute or two, direct students in the inner circle to take one step to the left, thereby placing themselves in front of a new partner.
7. Have the new partners introduce themselves or greet one another.
8. Pose the next question.
9. Repeat until you have asked all questions.

**A group of hands holding different colored objects

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# Tips

* Structure questions so they’re related to each other in some way. For example:
  + Tell about your favorite activity.
  + Tell about something you enjoyed doing with your first friend.
  + Describe your earliest positive memory.
* Adjust the amount of time for giving answers by students’ ages. Young students may have short answers, and older students may have more to say.
* With small groups, continue until everyone has had a chance to interact. With large groups, offer 10 to 20 questions.
* If you have an odd number of participants, either join a circle yourself or have one pair of students in the inner circle move together.
* After students know the activity format, invite a student to create and give the questions.

*The only way to truly know someone is by being with them, by conversation.*

― Eric Overby



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