

RESPECT! 24/7

UPSTANDER MONTH

High School Toolkit

Belonging • Choices • Voice • Culture

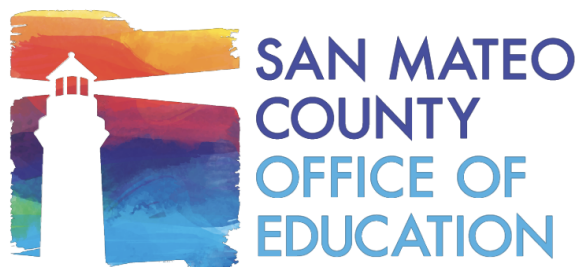


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Welcome to Respect! 24/7 Upstander Month

For more than a decade, the San Mateo County Office of Education has partnered with school districts through Respect! 24/7 to promote safe, welcoming, and inclusive schools. The initiative began after a San Mateo County Grand Jury report called on districts to strengthen and align their anti-bullying policies. Since then, Respect! 24/7 has expanded beyond bullying prevention to support positive school climate, belonging, digital citizenship, restorative practices, youth voice, LGBTQ+ inclusion, suicide prevention, and student mental health.

Each year, Respect! 24/7 has brought educators together through a countywide conference to share promising practices and strengthen school communities. While that conference has been a valuable opportunity, we recognize that it is increasingly difficult for many school staff to step away from their campuses to participate. This year, we are rebooting Respect! 24/7 by bringing the learning directly to schools through Respect! 24/7 Upstander Month.

Rather than asking schools to attend a single event, we are providing a flexible, school-based campaign that can reach every student, every classroom, and every family throughout October. Schools are encouraged to adapt these resources to meet their local needs. Use the materials exactly as written, select only the pieces that fit your school, or use them as inspiration to create your own activities and messaging. The goal is simple: to promote a shared countywide message that every student deserves to feel safe, welcomed, valued, and included.

What's Included

- Daily morning announcements
- Two layered community circle options each week; the second session is optional for schools with additional advisory time
- Weekly student challenges
- Family conversation starters and parent messaging ideas.

Each day's announcement concludes with a brief journal reflection that encourages students to think independently before optionally sharing an idea with an elbow partner. This simple routine supports student voice, reflection, and meaningful conversation.

Weekly Themes

Week 1: Who Gets to Belong?

Belonging without changing who you are.

Week 2: What Influence Do I Have?

Choices, impact, and accountability.

Week 3: What Do I Do When Something is Wrong?

Knowing when to speak, when to listen, and when to act.

Week 4: What Are We Willing to Change?

The culture we allow and the culture we create.

THANK YOU!

Thank you for partnering with us to create schools where every student feels connected, respected, and empowered to make a difference. Together, we can ensure that Respect! 24/7 is more than a month-long campaign; it is a shared commitment to building school communities where every student belongs, every voice matters, and every day is an opportunity to strengthen the culture we create together.

Daily Announcements

Week 1: Who Gets To Belong?

MONDAY: Belonging or fitting in?

Good morning! Welcome to Respect 24/7 Upstander Month. Belonging and fitting in are not the same thing. Fitting in can mean changing how you speak, what you wear, what you share, or who you spend time with so that others will accept you. Belonging means knowing that you matter without having to hide parts of yourself.

This week's question is: Who gets to belong?

It may sound like the answer should be "everyone," but our actions do not always communicate that. Throughout the week, pay attention to who is included, who is overlooked, and who may feel pressure to change to be accepted.

Invitation for the Week: Notice one moment when someone is welcomed as they are or expected to fit in.

Reflect

Notice one moment when someone is welcomed as they are or expected to fit in.

TUESDAY: The Unwritten Rules

Every school has written rules, but it also has unwritten ones. These are the expectations about what is considered normal, popular, acceptable, or "cool." They influence how people dress, speak, participate, and interact with others. Unwritten rules are not always harmful, but they can make people feel like they have to hide parts of their identity, interests, culture, or personality to avoid judgment.

Consider this: What are some of the unwritten rules at our school, and who benefits from them?

Reflect

See if you notice an unwritten rule. Ask yourself whether it helps people belong or pressures them to fit in.

WEDNESDAY: Belonging is Built in Small Moments

A student walks into class, and no one makes room. Someone shares an idea and others exchange looks. A person is left out of a group chat, lunch table, team, or weekend plan. None of these moments may seem significant on their own, but repeated experiences can send a powerful message:

You do not belong here.

The opposite is also true. Making room, learning someone's name, inviting a person into a conversation, or showing genuine interest can communicate: You matter here. Belonging is not created by a poster or a slogan. It is built or weakened through small moments that happen every day.

Reflect

What small action has helped you feel like you belonged?

THURSDAY: Who is Expected to Adjust?

Sometimes we say that everyone is welcome, but the welcome comes with conditions: You can belong if you act like us, agree with us, laugh at the same things, or avoid making other people uncomfortable. Real belonging does not require people to give up their identity, culture, language, beliefs, interests, abilities, gender expression, or other important parts of who they are.

This does not mean that every behavior is acceptable. Everyone is still responsible for treating others with respect. But respecting shared expectations is different from asking someone to become less of themselves.

Reflect

Today, consider: Who is usually expected to adjust, the group or the person trying to join it?

FRIDAY: Making Belonging Real

This week, we asked: Who gets to belong? If our answer is "everyone," our actions should make that visible. Belonging grows when people are noticed, respected, included, and able to participate without pretending to be someone else. Being an upstander can begin before bullying or harm occurs. It can mean noticing exclusion, questioning an unfair assumption, making space for another person, or refusing to participate in something that makes others feel unwelcome.

As you move through today, ask yourself:

What is one thing I can do to make belonging more real for someone else?

Week 2: What Influence Do I Have?

Purpose: Students examine how their words, actions, online behavior, and silence influence others. The week emphasizes that intent matters, but impact also matters, and accountability means listening, acknowledging harm, and taking steps to repair it.

MONDAY: Influence is not the same as popularity.

When people hear the word influence, they may think about popularity, leadership positions, or the number of followers someone has. But everyone has influence. We influence others through what we say, what we share, what we laugh at, who we include, and what we allow to continue. Even small choices can affect whether another person feels respected, ignored, supported, or embarrassed.

This week's question is: What influence do I have?

Today's Challenge

Today, notice one moment when someone's words or actions affect the people around them.

TUESDAY: Intent and Impact

Sometimes we hurt someone without intending to. A joke may seem harmless to one person but humiliating to another. A comment meant as advice may feel like criticism. Excluding someone may not be planned, but it can still have an impact. Intent matters because it helps explain a choice. Impact matters because it tells us what another person experienced.

When someone tells us that our behavior affected them, accountability does not require us to agree with every detail. It begins with listening and being willing to understand.

Reflection

How can you acknowledge someone's experience without immediately defending your intent?

WEDNESDAY: What we encourage.

Our reactions influence what happens next. Laughing, liking, sharing, or remaining part of an audience can encourage behavior, even when we did not start it. Imagine that someone posts an embarrassing picture of a classmate in a group chat. You did not take the picture or post it, but you see it. What you do next still matters.

You could share it, react to it, ignore it, check in with the person, ask for it to be removed, or seek help. Each response sends a different message.

Today, consider: What does my reaction encourage?

Reflect

Today, consider: What does my reaction encourage?

THURSDAY: Accountability is more than an apology.

Accountability is not the same as getting in trouble, and it is more than saying, “Sorry you felt that way.”

Accountability means being willing to understand what happened, acknowledge the impact, take responsibility for your part, and make a reasonable effort to repair the harm. It may also mean changing what you do next.

A meaningful apology does not erase what happened, but it can be a beginning.

Reflection

What makes an apology feel sincere?

FRIDAY: Using your influence.

This week, we asked: What influence do I have? Influence is present in everyday choices: inviting someone into a conversation, refusing to share a rumor, questioning a hurtful joke, listening when someone says they were affected, or admitting when you made a mistake. You may not control every situation, but you can decide what your actions encourage and what kind of impact you want to have.

Today's Challenge

As you move through today, ask yourself: What is one way I can use my influence responsibly?

Week 3: What Do I Do When Something Is Wrong?

Purpose: Students explore the different ways they can respond when they witness harm, exclusion, bullying, harassment, or unsafe behavior. The week emphasizes that upstander action should be thoughtful and safe. Responding may mean speaking up, interrupting, checking in, documenting, reporting, seeking help, or acting with others.

MONDAY: Noticing Is the First Step

Sometimes it is obvious when something is wrong. Other times, it looks like a joke, a rumor, an uncomfortable comment, repeated exclusion, or something posted online. People may hesitate because they are unsure what happened, whether the person needs help, or whether responding will make the situation worse. But being an upstander does not require having every answer. It begins with noticing what is happening and considering who may be affected.

This week's question is: What do I do when something is wrong?

Today's Challenge	pay attention to moments when someone may need support—even if they do not ask for it directly.
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TUESDAY: There Is More Than One Way to Act

Speaking up in the moment can be powerful, but it is not always the safest or most helpful response. Depending on the situation, an upstander might:

- Interrupt or redirect the behavior
- Check in privately with the person affected
- Ask other people to help
- Report what happened (use your anonymous reporting system)
- Contact a trusted adult
- Stay with someone until help arrives

Choosing not to confront someone directly does not automatically mean doing nothing. The goal is to select a response that supports the person affected without creating additional harm.

Reflection	What factors should someone consider before deciding how to respond?
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WEDNESDAY: What Does Support Look Like?

When someone is hurt, excluded, or targeted, our first instinct may be to tell them what they should do. But support often begins with listening. A simple question such as “Are you okay?” or “What would be helpful right now?” gives the person affected some choice in what happens next. They may want someone to listen, stay with them, help them report, or give them time to think.

Some situations involve safety or serious harm and must be shared with an adult, even if someone asks you to keep them secret. Supporting someone does not mean handling a dangerous situation alone.

Today's Challenge	Today, consider: How can you support someone without taking over?
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THURSDAY: Why People Stay Silent

People stay silent for many reasons. They may fear becoming a target, losing friends, making the situation worse, being labeled a “snitch,” or not being believed. Sometimes they assume someone else will respond. These concerns are real. Being an upstander does not require putting yourself in danger, but silence can allow harmful behavior to continue. If responding alone feels unsafe, involve someone else. Ask a friend to go with you, save evidence when appropriate, or speak privately with a trusted adult.

Reflection	Who could you turn to if you needed help responding to a concerning situation?
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FRIDAY: Choosing Your Next Step

This week, we asked: What do I do when something is wrong?

There is no single response that works in every situation. The most responsible action may be public or private, immediate or planned, direct or supported by others. Before acting, consider:

- Is anyone in immediate danger?
- What does the person affected need?
- Is it safe for me to respond directly?
- Who else can help?
- What action is least likely to cause more harm?

Being an upstander does not mean solving everything yourself. It means refusing to ignore harm and choosing a safe, helpful next step.

Reflection	What is one action you could take when something does not feel right?
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Week 4: The Culture We Allow and the Culture We Create

Purpose: Students reflect on the culture created through repeated behaviors, shared expectations, and the actions people choose to encourage, challenge, or ignore. The final week moves students from individual upstander actions toward shared responsibility and realistic, student-informed change.

MONDAY: Culture Is What Becomes Normal

This month, we have explored belonging, influence, and how to respond when something is wrong. This week, we bring those ideas together by asking: What are we willing to change? School culture is not only found in rules, mission statements, or posters. It is also found in what happens every day: how people treat one another, whose voices are heard, what behavior gets attention, and what becomes accepted as normal. Not every student has the same power or responsibility for changing school culture. However, everyone can influence it.

Today's Challenge

Today, consider: What have we accepted as “just the way things are”?

TUESDAY: What We Normalize

When a behavior happens repeatedly without being questioned, it can begin to feel normal. That might include dismissing certain students, spreading rumors, recording conflicts, making identity-based comments, excluding people, or treating harmful online behavior as entertainment. Something being common does not make it harmless. Changing a culture begins by noticing the difference between what is normal and what should be acceptable.

Reflection

What behavior do people sometimes dismiss because “everyone does it”?

WEDNESDAY: Who Gets Heard?

A healthy school culture makes room for different perspectives, especially those of people most affected by a problem. But not every student feels equally safe or confident speaking up. Some voices are taken more seriously than others. Some students may have shared concerns before and felt ignored. Others may worry about criticism, retaliation, or being labeled difficult. Student voice is more than being asked for an opinion. It means having meaningful opportunities to influence decisions and seeing adults respond to what students share.

Reflection

Today, consider: Whose voices may be missing from conversations about our school?

THURSDAY: Change Is More Than a Slogan

Change does not always begin with a major campaign. It can begin when a group stops participating in a harmful joke, an advisory changes how it welcomes new members, students bring a concern to an

adult, or school leaders ask students what they are experiencing. Individual actions matter, but some problems require a shared response. Students and adults may need to work together to change routines, expectations, or practices that repeatedly leave people out. The goal is not to change everything at once. It is to identify something specific and take a realistic first step.

Reflection

What is one change that would make our school more welcoming, respectful, or safe?

FRIDAY: What Happens Next?

Respect! 24/7 Upstander Month may be ending, but the choices that shape our culture continue.

Over the past four weeks, we have asked:

- Who gets to belong?
- What influence do I have?
- What do I do when something is wrong?
- What are we willing to change?

Being an upstander is not a title we earn once. It is a series of choices: noticing, listening, including, questioning, supporting, reporting, repairing, and working with others to create change.

As we close the month, ask yourself: ***What is one action I am willing to continue after this month ends?***

Community Circles

Week 1: Who Gets To Belong?

Facilitator Note	
The Week 1 circle invites personal reflection but should not require students to disclose experiences of exclusion, discrimination, or harm. Remind students that they may pass or respond generally. Avoid asking individual students to represent an identity or group.	
Circle 1: Belonging and Fitting In	
Preview the options below and choose which questions you would like to use. For most sections, SELECT ONE question for reflection or discussion.	
Objective	Students distinguish between belonging and fitting in, consider what allows people to be themselves, and identify actions that create authentic belonging.
Community Builder	Complete the sentence: “ One place where I feel comfortable being myself...”
Easy/Low Risk	• What is the difference between belonging and fitting in? • What makes a group or space feel welcoming? • What are some small actions that help a new person feel included?
Personal Reflection	• Describe a time when you felt like you truly belonged. What helped create that feeling? • Have you ever felt pressure to change something about yourself to fit in? You may answer generally or pass. • What allows you to be yourself within a group?
Perspective Taking	• Why might someone appear to fit in but still feel like they do not belong? • What are some signs that a person may be feeling excluded, even if they do not say anything? • Who is usually expected to adjust—the group or the person trying to join it? • How can a group unintentionally send the message that someone needs to change to be accepted?
Application	• What can students do to help others belong without speaking for them or putting them on the spot? • What is one unwritten expectation at school that may make it harder for some students to be themselves? • What is one thing our advisory could do to make belonging more genuine?
Closing Round	Complete the sentence: “belonging becomes possible when...”

Optional - Circle 2: The Unwritten Rules of Belonging

Preview the options below and choose which questions you would like to use.

For most sections, **SELECT ONE** question for reflection or discussion.

Objective	Students examine how unwritten social expectations influence belonging and identify safe ways to question expectations that exclude or silence others.
Community Builder	Complete the sentence: "One quality I appreciate in a friend or group is..."
Easy/Low Risk	• What is an unwritten rule? • What are some unwritten rules people encounter in teams, clubs, friend groups, workplaces, or schools? • Why do people follow unwritten rules even when no one has directly stated them?
Personal Reflection	• Have you ever gone along with something because you did not want to stand out? What influenced your decision? • When do you feel most comfortable sharing your opinions or interests? • What helps you question a group expectation with which you disagree?
Perspective Taking	• Why might someone stay silent when a group says or does something hurtful? • How might silence be interpreted by the person causing harm? How might it be experienced by the person affected? • Which unwritten rules help a community function, and which ones make belonging conditional? • What social expectations might cause students to hide parts of themselves?
Application	• How can students question an unwritten rule without embarrassing or targeting another person? • What can someone do if responding directly does not feel safe? • What is one social expectation young people should be more willing to examine or challenge? • What could our advisory do to make it safer for people to express different perspectives?
Closing Round	Complete the sentence: "One unwritten rule worth questioning is..."

Weekly Action Invitation

Week 2: Intent, Impact, and Accountability

Circle 1: Everyday Impact Preview the options below and choose which questions you would like to use. For most sections, SELECT ONE question for reflection or discussion.	
Objective	Students examine the relationship between intent and impact and consider how listening, responsibility, and repair contribute to accountability.
Community Builder	Complete the sentence: “One quality I respect in another person is...”
Easy/Low Risk	• What does it mean to have influence? • What are some ways people influence others without realizing it? • What makes an apology feel sincere?
Personal Reflection	• Describe a time when someone’s small action had a positive impact on you. • Have you ever said or done something that was understood differently than you intended? • What makes it difficult to listen when someone tells us that we hurt or affected them?
Perspective Taking	• Why might two people experience the same interaction differently? • Why do people sometimes focus on their intent instead of the other person’s impact? • How might the statement “I was only joking” affect someone who was hurt? • Can a person cause harm without intending to? What responsibility do they have afterward?
Application	• How can someone acknowledge another person’s experience without immediately becoming defensive? • What could a person say when their words or actions have caused harm? • Besides apologizing, what might someone do to repair harm? • How could our advisory make it easier for people to take responsibility for mistakes?
Closing Round	Complete the sentence: “One way I can be more aware of my impact is...”

Optional - Circle 2: What does my reaction encourage?

Preview the options below and choose which questions you would like to use.

For most sections, **SELECT ONE** question for reflection or discussion.

Objective	Students explore how reactions, silence, and online engagement can reinforce or interrupt harmful behavior and identify safe ways to use their influence.
Community Builder	Complete the sentence: "Something that can quickly improve my day is..."
Easy/Low Risk	• What are some common ways people react to posts or messages online? • Why do people sometimes react to or share something without thinking about its impact? • How can a person's reaction influence what others do next?
Personal Reflection	• Have you ever felt pressure to laugh at or agree with something because other people did? • What makes it easier or harder to respond differently from a group? • How do you decide whether something online is appropriate to share?
Perspective Taking	Someone shares an embarrassing picture of a classmate in a group chat. Several people add laughing reactions, while others see the picture but say nothing. What messages might these different responses send? • How might the person in the picture experience the reactions and silence? • Why might someone choose not to respond, even if they believe the post is wrong? • What is the difference between choosing a safe response and simply ignoring harm?
Application	• What options does someone have if responding publicly does not feel safe? • How could a student support the person affected without drawing more attention to the post? • What should someone consider before saving, forwarding, or reporting harmful content? • What could students do to prevent a harmful post from gaining a larger audience?
Closing Round	Complete the sentence: "Before I react, post, or share, I want to remember..."

Weekly Action Invitation

Notice one moment when your reaction could influence what happens next. Pause and choose a response that does not amplify embarrassment, exclusion, rumors, or harm.

Week 3: When to Speak, When to Listen, When to Act

Circle 1: Leadership Begins with Influence Preview the options below and choose which questions you would like to use. For most sections, SELECT ONE question for reflection or discussion.	
Objective	Students examine different ways to respond when something is wrong and identify actions that are safe, supportive, and appropriate to the situation.
Community Builder	Complete the sentence: "One person I can ask for help is..."
Easy/Low Risk	• What does it mean to be an upstander? • What are some reasons people may hesitate to respond when something is wrong? • What is the difference between noticing a problem and taking responsibility for solving it?
Personal Reflection	• Describe a time when someone supported you in a way that was helpful. • What makes it easier for you to ask another person for help? • Which feels more comfortable to you: speaking up publicly, checking in privately, or asking someone else for help? Why?
Perspective Taking	• Why might speaking up immediately help in one situation but make another situation worse? • How might unwanted public attention affect someone who has already been embarrassed or targeted? • Why might a person affected by harm not be ready to talk or report it? • When might an upstander need to involve an adult even if the person affected does not want them to?
Application	• What questions should someone consider before deciding how to respond? • How can you check in with someone without pressuring them to share? • What can you do if you are concerned but do not feel safe responding alone? • Who are the trusted adults or support resources available at our school?
Closing Round	Complete the sentence: "If something does not feel right, one step I can take is..."

Optional - Circle 2: Using Our Voices to Repair, Not Escalate

Preview the options below and choose which questions you would like to use.

For most sections, **SELECT ONE** question for reflection or discussion.

Objective	Students apply a range of upstander responses to a realistic situation and recognize that safe, helpful action may look different depending on the circumstances.
Community Builder	Complete the sentence: "One thing that helps me make a difficult decision is..."
Easy/Low Risk	• What makes a situation difficult to respond to? • What information might someone need before deciding what to do? • Who can help when a student is unsure how to respond?
Personal Reflection	• Think about a disagreement that ended well. What helped resolve it? • What makes it difficult to admit that our actions affected someone else?
Perspective Taking	Scenario: A student notices that a friend has become the repeated subject of "jokes" in a group chat. The friend usually responds with laughing emojis but has recently stopped participating in the chat and has been avoiding the group at school. • What might the friend's reactions communicate? What might they be hiding? • What assumptions should an upstander avoid making? • What are the possible risks of confronting the group publicly? • What are the possible risks of doing nothing? • How might the situation change if a friend checks in privately first?
Application	• What could someone say in a private check-in? • What could someone say to interrupt or redirect the group chat? • When should screenshots or other evidence be saved and shared with an adult? • Who else could help address the situation? • Which response, or combination of responses, would be most supportive and why?
Closing Round	Complete the sentence: "An upstander does not have to do everything, but they can..."

Weekly Action Invitation

Identify at least two trusted people you could turn to if you or someone else needed support. Consider one peer and one adult.

Week 4: The Culture We Allow and the Culture We Create

Essential Question: What kind of school community do we want to create, and how can we help make it a reality every day?

Circle 1: The School We Want To Create Preview the options below and choose which questions you would like to use. For most sections, SELECT ONE question for reflection or discussion.	
Objective	Students reflect on the qualities of a positive school culture and recognize that every student plays a role in creating a welcoming, respectful, and inclusive community.
Community Builder	Complete the sentence: One word I would use to describe our school is...
Easy/Low Risk	• What is one thing you appreciate about our school? • What makes a school feel welcoming, not just look welcoming?
Personal Reflection	• Think about a time when you felt proud to be part of your school or another group. What made that experience meaningful? • Looking back over this month, which habit or action has been the easiest for you to practice? Why?
Perspective Taking	• Imagine a new student joining our school tomorrow. What would you hope they notice during their first week? • How might different students experience the same school differently?
Application	• What do we want every student to be able to say about our school? • What can students do every day, not just during October, to help create that experience? • What role does our online behavior play in creating our school culture?
Closing Round	Complete the sentence: One thing I will continue doing to strengthen our school community is...

Optional - Circle 2: Keeping the Culture Going

Preview the options below and choose which questions you would like to use.

For most sections, **SELECT ONE** question for reflection or discussion.

Objective	Students reflect on the month's learning and make individual and collective commitments to continue creating a positive school culture throughout the year.
Community Builder	Complete the sentence: Respect means...
Easy/Low Risk	• Which weekly theme had the biggest impact on you? ○ Belonging ○ Choices ○ Voice ○ Culture • Which activity or challenge from this month do you think students should continue?
Personal Reflection	• Looking back over Respect! 24/7 Upstander Month, what lesson has stayed with you the most? • How has your thinking or behavior changed during the month?
Perspective Taking	Scenario A new student joins your school in January. Before their first day, they look at the school's social media, follow classmates online, and hear stories from other students. Their first impression of your school begins before they ever walk through the front doors. 1. What do you hope they see online and hear from other students? 2. What online behaviors communicate that people belong here? 3. What might make someone wonder if they would feel safe or welcomed?
Application	• What is one commitment our advisory could make for the rest of the school year? • How can we remind one another to keep practicing belonging, respectful choices, listening, and leadership? • If Respect! 24/7 became more than a month and truly became part of our school culture, what would look different by the end of the year?
Closing Round	Complete the sentence: One commitment I will carry forward this year is...

Parents Corner (Newsletter Blurbs)

Respect! 24/7 Upstander Month

This October, our school is participating in “Respect! 24/7 Upstander Month”, a countywide effort to strengthen belonging, respect, student voice, and shared responsibility for creating safe and inclusive schools. Throughout the month, students will hear brief announcements and participate in circles that encourage them to think about how their everyday choices shape school culture. Students will learn that being an upstander does not always mean confronting a situation directly. It can also mean including someone, checking in privately, refusing to participate in harmful behavior, reporting a concern, or asking a trusted adult for help.

Week 1: Who Gets to Belong?

This week, students will explore the difference between “belonging” and simply “fitting in”. Belonging means feeling accepted and valued without having to hide or change important parts of who you are. Students will consider how unwritten social rules, assumptions, and everyday interactions can communicate who is welcomed and who may feel left out.

Continue the conversation at home:

What helps you feel like you truly belong?

Are there places where people feel pressure to change in order to fit in?

What is one small action our family can take to help others feel welcomed and valued?

Week 2: What Influence Do I Have?

This week, Respect! 24/7 Upstander Month focuses on the influence students have through their words, choices, online behavior, and reactions. Students will consider the difference between intent and impact and discuss what meaningful accountability can look like when someone causes harm. Students will also examine how laughing, liking, sharing, or remaining part of an audience can encourage behavior, even when they did not start it. The goal is not to tell students that they must confront every situation. Instead, students will identify safe and responsible options, including declining to participate, checking in privately, asking others for support, reporting a concern, or seeking help from a trusted adult.

Continue the conversation at home:

What is one way people influence others without realizing it?

What can someone do when their impact does not match their intent?

How can we avoid amplifying harmful or embarrassing content online?

Week 3: What Do I Do When Something Is Wrong?

This week, Respect! 24/7 Upstander Month focuses on the different ways students can respond when they witness bullying, harassment, exclusion, unsafe behavior, or harm.

Students will learn that being an upstander does not always mean confronting someone directly. Depending on the situation, a safe and helpful response may include interrupting or redirecting behavior, checking in privately, asking others for help, documenting concerning online behavior, reporting what happened, or involving a trusted adult.

Students will also discuss how to support someone without taking over or pressuring them to respond in a particular way. When a situation involves immediate danger, threats, abuse, self-harm, or serious safety concerns, students should seek adult help rather than trying to manage it alone.

Continue the conversation at home:

- What might make it difficult for someone to respond when something is wrong?
- Who are the trusted adults you could contact if you or a friend needed help?
- How can you support someone while still respecting their voice and choices?

Week 4: What Are We Willing to Change?

During the final week of Respect! 24/7 Upstander Month, students will consider how repeated behaviors, shared expectations, and everyday choices shape school culture. They will examine the difference between behavior that is common and behavior that should be considered acceptable.

Students will also discuss how meaningful change happens when people listen to those most affected, identify a specific concern, and work together on a realistic response. While students should not be expected to solve schoolwide problems alone, their experiences and perspectives are essential to creating schools where everyone feels welcomed, respected, and safe.

As the month concludes, students will choose one upstander practice to continue. Respect! 24/7 is not limited to one month; it is reflected in the choices students and adults make throughout the year.

Continue the conversation at home:

What is one positive part of your school culture that you hope continues?

What is one change that could help more students feel welcomed, respected, or safe?

What is one action our family can continue after Respect! 24/7 Upstander Month ends?

Student Activities

Resources & References

Why Circles?

Community-building circles create an intentional space for students and adults to strengthen relationships, build trust, practice listening, and ensure that every person has an opportunity to be heard. During Respect! 24/7 Upstander Month, each circle connects to the morning announcement and weekly theme, helping students explore belonging, kindness, upstander behavior, and respect through conversation and reflection.

Circles are rooted in Indigenous traditions of gathering in a circle to listen, share stories, and strengthen community. The physical shape of the circle allows participants to see one another and reduces traditional barriers or positions of authority within the group (Fisher & Frey, 2022). Educators should approach circle practice with respect for these roots and recognize that circles are more than a classroom management strategy.

Boyes-Watson and Pranis explain that circles intentionally attend to the whole person by creating space for emotional, social, moral, mental, and physical development. Skills and qualities such as empathy, patience, resilience, and emotional self-management are not simply fixed traits; they can be strengthened through practice and interaction with others. Regular opportunities to speak, listen, reflect, and connect allow students to develop these skills within the classroom community (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015).

Community-building circles are a proactive, Tier I restorative practice. They can help students develop social-emotional skills such as listening, respecting different perspectives, communicating thoughtfully, and solving problems. They also build the relationships and sense of community that schools can draw upon when challenges or conflicts arise (Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest, n.d.; Schott Foundation, 2014).

Fisher and Frey (2022) caution that schools may struggle when restorative practices are used only in response to conflict without first investing in positive relationships and a broader restorative culture. The power of circles comes from consistency and not from facilitating one “perfect” circle. Research on restorative practices suggests that consistent implementation may contribute to stronger student–student relationships, improved perceptions of school climate, increased attendance, and reductions in exclusionary discipline and aggressive behavior (Augustine et al., 2018; Darling-Hammond, 2023; Gregory et al., 2016; Jain et al., 2014; Jarjoura et al., 2023). Educators have also reported that

community circles help students feel welcomed, develop empathy, trust their teachers, and improve their ability to work through conflicts with peers.

Community Circles: Before You Begin

Set Up The Space

Whenever possible:

- Arrange chairs or invite students to stand so everyone can see one another.
- Remove physical barriers, such as desks, from the center of the circle.
- Choose a talking piece that is meaningful, appropriate, and easy to pass.
- Plan questions that move from low-risk and familiar to more reflective.
- Decide how you will open and close the circle.
- Consider how much time is available and how many students will have an opportunity to share.

Circles should feel predictable and welcoming. When students are new to the practice, keep circles brief and use familiar, low-risk questions. Consistent practice helps students develop the confidence and skills they may later need for more challenging conversations (Fisher & Frey, 2022).

Review the Circle Agreements

Before inviting students to share, review and visibly post the class's Circle Agreements or Sharing Norms. Predictable expectations help students understand how to participate and contribute to an environment where everyone feels safe and respected.

Suggested sharing norms include:

- Speak from your own experience.
- Listen to understand without interrupting or judging.
- Respect the talking piece; one person speaks at a time.
- It is okay to pass.
- Say enough for others to understand while allowing everyone time to share.
- Respect different identities, ideas, and experiences.
- Do not repeat another person's private story outside the circle.
- What is shared in the circle remains private unless someone is unsafe, may be harmed, or needs adult support.
- Everyone deserves an opportunity to be heard.

Participation should be encouraged but not forced. Students should always have the opportunity to pass and may choose to contribute during a later round. A student might say, "I pass, but I am still listening."

Educators should not promise absolute confidentiality. Students should understand that adults on campus are mandated reporters and may need to seek additional support when information is shared involving abuse, harm, safety concerns, or another situation that requires intervention.

Community Circles: Get Organized

A Simple Circle Flow

Effective circles follow a predictable rhythm. The structure may be adapted to fit the age, needs, familiarity, and available time of the group.

Welcome	Name the purpose of the circle and create a calm entry into the conversation. The facilitator might say: → “Today’s circle connects to our Respect 24/7 theme of belonging. We will think about what helps people feel welcomed and included in our school.” A brief grounding activity, moment of silence, breathing exercise, quotation, or opening statement can help students transition into the circle.
Review	Briefly revisit the circle agreements, use of the talking piece, and the right to pass. The facilitator might say: → “Remember that the person holding the talking piece has the opportunity to speak without interruption. Listen to understand, speak from your own experience, and know that you may pass if you are not ready to share.”
Connect	Begin with an easy, low-risk question that gives everyone a comfortable way to enter the conversation. Examples include: • What is one word that describes how you are arriving today? • What is one small thing that made you smile this week? • What is something you enjoy doing with other people? • What is one quality you appreciate in a classmate?
Reflect	Move to a deeper question that invites students to consider their experiences, perspectives, choices, or role within the community. Examples include: • What helps you feel comfortable contributing? • What helps you feel like you belong to a group? • What does respectful participation look and sound like? • How can we help someone feel seen, valued, or included? • How do our everyday choices affect other people?
Close	End with a takeaway, reflection, commitment, positive statement, or brief check-out question. Examples include: • What is one idea you are taking from today’s circle? • What is one word that describes how you are leaving the circle? • What is one action you are willing to take moving forward? • What is one way we can put today’s conversation into practice? Closing the circle helps students recognize that the conversation has ended and reconnects the discussion to their actions outside the circle.

Building the Questions

Each Respect 24/7 circle includes two warm-up questions followed by a main prompt. The questions are intentionally sequenced from low-risk to more reflective:

- Easy entry: The first warm-up offers a familiar and comfortable way to participate.
- Personal connection: The second warm-up helps students connect the weekly theme to their own experiences or observations.
- Reflection and application: The main prompt invites students to think more deeply about their choices, relationships, or role within the school community.

You do not need to use every question, and you may want to use your own. Depending on the available time and students' familiarity with circles, you might use one warm-up and the main prompt or extend the conversation across several rounds. When students are new to circles, begin with short, familiar, and low-risk topics. Consistent practice with less emotionally charged questions helps students build the skills and confidence they may later need for more challenging conversations (Fisher & Frey, 2022). Facilitators should also consider whether a question invites reflection without pressuring students to disclose private, painful, or highly personal information. Community-building circles are designed to strengthen relationships—not to investigate incidents, determine who is at fault, or require public disclosure.

Essential Elements of a Community-Building Circle

Although circles may be adapted to fit the age and needs of the group, effective circles commonly include the following elements:

The Circle	Participants sit or stand so they can see one another, which supports open and direct communication.
A Talking Piece	The person holding it has the opportunity to speak without interruption. The talking piece helps to slow the conversation, supports focused listening, and helps ensure that each participant has an opportunity to contribute.
Circle agreements:	Participants collaboratively identify what they need from one another to feel safe and to participate. These agreements should be revisited regularly.
Predictable Rhythm:	Circles follow a consistent structure, such as a welcome, review of agreements, connection question, reflection prompt, and closing (Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, 2016).

Community Circles: Facilitation Tips

Facilitator Reminders	
DO:	AVOID
• Participate authentically without dominating the conversation. • Model a response that is honest, appropriate, and brief. • Listen without immediately correcting or judging • Allow silence and give students time to think. • Use the talking piece to support equal participation and attentive listening. • Keep community circles brief and predictable. • Redirect naming or blaming toward behaviors, choices, and impact. • Revisit agreements when the group needs a reminder or when new students join. • Follow up privately when a student may need additional support.	• Forcing participation or personal disclosure. • Using a community-building circle to investigate who did something. • Correcting or debating a student's response during a round. • Allowing one person, including the facilitator, to dominate the conversation. • Requiring an immediate public apology. • Promising complete confidentiality. • Asking students to share experiences that may be too personal or emotionally unsafe for the setting.

When to Pause and Redirect
Facilitators should respond when behavior threatens the safety of the circle. Minor distractions can sometimes be addressed after a round, but laughter directed at another student, demeaning language, targeted comments, or behavior that could cause harm should be interrupted in the moment. The goal is to correct the behavior clearly while preserving the student's dignity and protecting the circle.

If a Student Laughs While Someone Is Sharing	
Pause	"I noticed laughter while someone was sharing."
Redirect	"Let's remember our norms: we listen respectfully so everyone feels safe contributing. Let's reset."
Check In	After the circle, check in privately with the students involved. Seek to understand what happened, clarify the impact, and determine whether support or repair is needed.

If a Student Makes an Inappropriate Comment	
Pause	"That comment does not align with our circle agreements."
Redirect	"You may share respectfully or choose to pass."
Check In	If the comment is targeted, harmful, discriminatory, threatening, or otherwise serious, address it privately and follow school procedures as needed.

Respond Without Shaming

When redirecting behavior:

- Use a calm, neutral tone.
- Name the behavior without labeling the student.
- Refer back to the circle agreements.
- Restate the expected behavior.
- Avoid arguing or engaging in a prolonged public discussion.
- Do not demand an immediate public apology.
- Follow up privately to understand the impact and plan an authentic repair when appropriate.

Quick Planning Check

Before beginning, ask:

- Is the purpose of the circle clear?
- Are the prompts scaffolded from low-risk to reflective?
- Have the circle agreements been reviewed?
- Has the right to pass been clearly stated?
- Is the talking piece ready?
- Have I planned how to close the circle?
- Do I know how I will respond if someone needs redirection or additional support?

Final Thoughts

The purpose of these circles is not to reach one correct answer. The goal is to create repeated opportunities for students to practice voice, choice, empathy, listening, reflection, and responsible decision-making. Over time, these practices can help build a classroom and school community where students feel safe, welcomed, valued, and connected.

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