

RESPECT! 24/7

UPSTANDER MONTH

Middle School Toolkit

Belonging • Choices • Voice • Culture

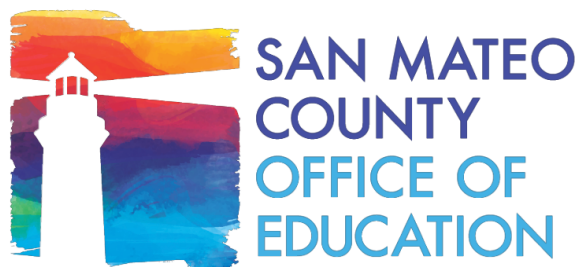


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Welcome to Respect! 24/7 Upstander Month

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
- Daily reflection journal prompts with optional elbow-partner discussions
- Two layered community circle options each week; the second session is optional for schools with additional advisory time
- Respect! 24/7 Online Circle scenarios as an option
- 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: Everyone Wants to Belong

Explore how welcoming, including, and respecting others creates a stronger school community.

Week 2: Our Choices Matter.

Discover how everyday decisions, both in person and online, shape others' experiences and contribute to a positive school climate.

Week 3: Your Voice Matters

Encourage students to recognize their influence as leaders, listeners, problem-solvers, and upstanders who can make a positive difference.

Week 4: We Create Our Culture

Bring together belonging, respect, kindness, and leadership to reinforce that school culture is something we build together every day.

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: Everyone Wants to Belong

MONDAY

Good morning! Welcome to Respect 24/7 Upstander Month. This month isn't about adding more rules; it's about creating the kind of school where everyone feels respected, included, and valued.

Belonging starts with simple actions. Saying hello. Learning someone's name. Inviting someone into a conversation. Choosing kindness when no one is watching. Every person on this campus wants to know they matter. Today, you have the opportunity to help create that feeling for someone else.

Today's Challenge	Introduce yourself to someone you don't know well or include someone new during class or lunch.
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Journal Reflection	What helps you feel like you belong at school? Describe a time when you felt welcomed, included, or accepted. What made that experience meaningful?
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Optional Turn & Talk	Share one part of your reflection with an elbow partner.
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TUESDAY

Think about the best day you've ever had at school. Chances are, someone made you feel welcome, noticed, or included. The same is true for everyone around you. A smile, a compliment, holding a door, or inviting someone to join your group may seem small, but those moments shape our school culture. Culture isn't created by one big event. It's built through thousands of small choices made every day.

Today's Challenge	Complete one unexpected act of kindness without expecting anything in return.
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Journal Reflection	Think about a small action someone took that made your day better. What did they do, and why did it matter to you? How did it affect the rest of your day?
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Optional Turn & Talk	Share one part of your reflection with an elbow partner.
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WEDNESDAY

Everyone you pass in the hallway—and everyone you interact with online—is carrying a story you probably don't know. Some classmates are celebrating something exciting. Others may be dealing with challenges at home, stress, anxiety, or something difficult that isn't visible. A post, photo, comment, or group chat never tells us someone's whole story. Respect starts when we remember that everyone deserves kindness, even when we don't know what they're going through. Before making assumptions in person or online, choose curiosity and compassion.

Today's Challenge	Instead of making a judgment today, choose to ask a question or simply offer kindness.
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Journal Reflection	Think about a time when someone misunderstood you or made an assumption about
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	you. How did it make you feel? What did you wish they had known before making that judgment?
Optional Turn & Talk	Share one idea with an elbow partner.

THURSDAY

Belonging doesn't happen by accident. It happens when people intentionally choose to include others. Maybe it's inviting someone to sit with you. Maybe it's making sure everyone has a voice in a group project. Maybe it's simply noticing someone who often goes unnoticed. An upstander looks for opportunities to include, not exclude.

Today's Challenge	Find one way to include someone today who might otherwise be left out.
Journal Reflection	What does inclusion look like at our school? Describe one thing students already do well and one idea that could help more students feel welcomed and valued.
Optional Turn & Talk	Share one idea from your reflection with an elbow partner.

FRIDAY

This week we've talked about belonging, kindness, and inclusion. None of these happen because of posters on the wall or rules in a handbook. They happen because of the choices students and adults make every day. A positive school culture isn't something we're given; it's something we create together. Thank you for helping make our school a place where everyone has the opportunity to belong.

Today's Challenge	Thank someone who helped you feel welcome this week.
Journal Reflection	Looking back on this week, what is one thing you learned about belonging? Describe one action, either your own or someone else's, that helped create a more welcoming school community.
Optional Turn & Talk	Share one takeaway from your reflection with an elbow partner.

Week 2: Our Choices Matter

MONDAY

Good morning! Last week, we talked about belonging. This week, we're focusing on something that shapes belonging every single day: our choices. Every choice matters. The words we use, the way we treat others, what we post online, whether we include someone or leave them out. These decisions may seem small, but together they create the kind of school we all experience. Today, remember that every interaction is an opportunity to make a positive difference.

Today's Challenge	Choose one interaction today where you intentionally make someone else's day a little better.
Journal Reflection	Think about the choices you make during a typical school day. Which choices help others feel respected, included, or valued? Describe one choice you can make today that could positively impact someone else.
Optional Turn & Talk	Share one choice you plan to make today with an elbow partner.

TUESDAY

Think about a time when someone stood up for you or helped you when you needed it. Chances are, that person didn't solve every problem; they simply chose to do something instead of nothing. Being an upstander doesn't always mean making a big speech or stepping into a difficult situation. Sometimes it's inviting someone into your group, checking on a classmate, or speaking up when something doesn't feel right. Small acts of courage can make a big difference.

Today's Challenge	Look for one opportunity today to support or encourage someone else.
Journal Reflection	Think about a time when someone stood up for you or supported you. What did they do, and why did it matter? What sometimes makes it difficult to be an upstander, and what can give someone the courage to act?
Optional Turn & Talk	Share one idea from your reflection with an elbow partner.

WEDNESDAY

Our digital lives are part of our real lives. Group chats, Discord, TikTok, Instagram, gaming spaces, DMs, comments, and screenshots can strengthen friendships—but they can also turn a small disagreement into a much bigger conflict. The messages we send, comments we post, screenshots we share, and even the things we choose to like or repost can affect real people and real relationships. Before you hit “send,” “share,” or “post,” ask yourself: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary? Choosing respect online is just as important as choosing respect in person.

Today's Challenge	Pause before posting or sending a message today. Make sure your words reflect the kind of person you want to be.
Journal Reflection	Think about a post, comment, or message—either online or in a group chat—that

	made someone feel included or excluded. What happened, and what could have been done differently to show respect?
Optional Turn & Talk	Share one takeaway from your reflection with an elbow partner.

THURSDAY

Every school has a culture. That culture isn't created by adults alone. It's created by students, too. When students choose kindness, include others, and stand up for what's right, they help create a school where people feel safe, respected, and connected. Each of us has more influence than we realize.

Today's Challenge	Notice one positive thing someone else does today, and let them know you noticed.
Journal Reflection	Imagine you were helping design the kind of school every student wants to attend. What is one thing students could do every day to make the school more welcoming, respectful, or inclusive?
Optional Turn & Talk	Share one idea from your reflection with an elbow partner.

FRIDAY

This week we've talked about choices, courage, and the impact we have on others. Being respectful isn't about being perfect. Everyone makes mistakes. What matters is learning from them and choosing to do better the next time. Every day gives us another opportunity to build the kind of community we want to be part of. Thank you for choosing to make our school stronger this week.

Today's Challenge	Before you leave today, thank or encourage one person who made a positive difference this week.
Journal Reflection	Looking back on this week, what choice are you most proud of making? Describe how it affected someone else, or how it changed the way you think about your role in creating a positive school community. What is one choice you want to continue making next week?
Optional Turn & Talk	Share one reflection or commitment with an elbow partner.

Week 3: Your Voice Matters

MONDAY

Good morning! Over the past two weeks, we've talked about belonging and the choices we make every day. This week, we're focusing on something just as important—your voice. Leadership isn't about having a title. It's about taking action. Every student has the ability to influence others through their words, their actions, and the example they set. Your voice can encourage someone, solve a problem, or inspire positive change. Don't underestimate the impact you can have.

Today's Challenge	Use your voice today to encourage, support, or recognize someone else.
Journal Reflection	Think about a time when someone positively influenced you through their words or actions. What did they do, and why did it matter? How can you use your own voice to make a positive difference today?
Optional Turn & Talk	Share one way you plan to use your voice in a positive way today.

TUESDAY

Sometimes people think leadership means being the loudest person in the room. But some of the strongest leaders are the ones who listen first. Listening shows respect. It helps us understand different perspectives and build stronger relationships. Challenge yourself to listen to understand, not just to respond.

Today's Challenge	Have one conversation today where your goal is simply to listen and learn.
Journal Reflection	Think about a time when someone truly listened to you. How did it make you feel? What does good listening look and sound like, and why is it an important part of leadership?
Optional Turn & Talk	Share one quality of a good listener with an elbow partner.

WEDNESDAY

Conflict is a normal part of life. Friends disagree. Classmates misunderstand each other. Problems can start face-to-face or through a text, group chat, social media post, or gaming platform—and online conflict can quickly follow us onto campus. What matters is how we respond. Strong communities don't avoid conflict; they work through it with honesty, respect, and a willingness to repair relationships. Before posting, forwarding, screenshotting, or inviting more people into a conflict, consider whether your next move will calm the situation or make it bigger. Mistakes don't have to define us. They can help us grow.

Today's Challenge	If you have the opportunity today, choose a respectful conversation rather than avoiding the problem or making it worse.
Journal Reflection	Think about a time when you had a disagreement with someone. Without naming the person, what happened? Looking back, what could have helped repair the relationship or improve the outcome?

Optional Turn & Talk	Share one lesson you learned about resolving conflict respectfully.
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THURSDAY

Schools become stronger when students share ideas. Whether it's speaking up in class, joining a club, helping a classmate, or suggesting ways to improve your campus, your ideas matter. Positive change often starts with one person asking, "How can we make this better?"

Today's Challenge	Share one positive idea today that could improve your classroom or school.
Journal Reflection	Imagine you had the opportunity to make one positive change at your school. What would you change, why would it matter, and how could students help make it happen?
Optional Turn & Talk	Share your idea with an elbow partner and discuss how to make it a reality.

FRIDAY

This week we've talked about leadership, listening, solving problems, and using our voices. Leadership isn't about being perfect. It's about making choices that help others succeed. Every student has something valuable to contribute. When we use our voices to encourage others, solve problems, and build community, everyone benefits. Thank you for helping make our school a place where every voice matters.

Today's Challenge	Before the end of today, recognize someone who demonstrated leadership this week—even if they probably don't realize it.
Journal Reflection	Looking back on this week, when did you use your voice to encourage, support, solve a problem, or help someone else? What did you learn about leadership, and how will you continue using your voice to make a positive difference?
Optional Turn & Talk	Share one leadership lesson you'll carry with you beyond this week.

Week 4: We Create Our Culture

MONDAY

Good morning! This is the final week of Respect 24/7 Upstander Month, but it's not the end of the work we've been doing together. Over the past three weeks, we've explored belonging, the choices we make, and the power of our voices. Now it's time to think about what comes next. School culture isn't built in a single month. It's created every day through the way we treat one another. Every student and every adult plays a part.

Today's Challenge Choose one habit from this month that you'll continue throughout the school year.

Journal Reflection Think about the kind of school you want to be part of. What does it look and feel like? What is one habit or action you can continue this year to help create that kind of school?

Optional Turn & Talk Share one habit you'll commit to continuing throughout the school year.

TUESDAY

Think about someone who has made a positive difference in your life. Maybe they encouraged you when you needed it. Maybe they listened without judging. Maybe they simply made you feel like you belonged. Often, people don't realize the impact they've had on others. Today is a great day to let someone know they made a difference.

Today's Challenge Thank someone who has positively impacted your school experience.

Journal Reflection Think about someone who has helped you feel seen, valued, or supported at school. What did they do, and why did it make a difference? If you haven't already, how could you let them know you appreciate them?

Optional Turn & Talk Share one quality that made this person a positive influence in your life.

WEDNESDAY

A strong school isn't one where problems never happen. A strong school is one where people work together to solve problems, learn from mistakes, and keep moving forward. Respect isn't about being perfect. It's about choosing to learn, grow, and support one another. Every day gives us another opportunity to make our school a little better than it was yesterday.

Today's Challenge Notice one thing you appreciate about your school and tell someone why it matters.

Journal Reflection Think about one thing that makes your school a positive place to learn. Why is it important? What can students do to help strengthen that part of the school community throughout the year?

Optional Turn & Talk Share one idea for keeping your school community strong after Upstander Month ends.

THURSDAY

Imagine a new student arriving at our school tomorrow. What would you hope they notice on their first day and in the school's online spaces? Would they see students helping one another? Would they feel welcomed into conversations and group chats? Would they notice people treating each other with respect both on campus and online? Those experiences don't happen by accident. They happen because students choose to create them.

Today's Challenge	Do one thing today that would help a new student feel welcome.
Journal Reflection	Imagine you are a new student walking onto campus for the first time. What would you hope to see, hear, and experience? What can students do every day to make that vision a reality?
Optional Turn & Talk	Share one action that would help every new student feel welcomed and included.

FRIDAY

Good morning! As Respect 24/7 Upstander Month comes to a close, remember that this isn't the finish line; it's a starting point. A positive school culture isn't created by a program, a poster, or a single event. It's built through everyday actions: including others, making thoughtful choices, listening, speaking up, and treating people with respect. And school culture doesn't end when we leave campus. What happens in group chats, on social media, in gaming spaces, and in DMs can walk through the school doors with us the next morning. Thank you for being part of this month's journey and for helping make our school a place where everyone has the opportunity to belong, online and in person.

Today's Challenge	Think of one action you'll commit to this year that will help make our school a stronger community and then follow through.
Journal Reflection	Looking back over Respect! 24/7 Upstander Month, what lesson has had the greatest impact on you? How have your actions or thinking changed? What is one commitment you will make to help create a positive school culture for the rest of the year?
Optional Turn & Talk	Share one commitment you'll carry forward beyond this month.

Community Circles

Week 1: Everyone Wants to Belong

Essential Question: How do we create a school where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and included?

Facilitator Note

The Week 1 circles build on the announcements and journal reflections by moving students from understanding what belonging feels like to identifying practical ways they can create a more welcoming school community. Belonging is not something that happens by chance; it is created through everyday actions, intentional choices, and the willingness to notice and include others.

Circle 1: Understanding 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 explore what belonging means, reflect on their own experiences, and identify simple actions that help others feel welcomed.
Community Builder	Complete the sentence: "One place where I feel comfortable is..."
Easy/Low Risk	• What helps someone feel welcome when they are new to a place? • What is one small act of kindness that almost anyone can do?
Personal Reflection	• Describe a time when you felt like you truly belonged. What happened? • What did someone do that helped you feel welcomed, included, or accepted?
Perspective Taking	• Why might someone have a difficult time feeling like they belong at school? • What are some signs that someone might be feeling left out, even if they don't say anything?
Application	• What can students do to help others feel like they belong? • What is one thing our advisory could do this week to make everyone feel more connected?
Closing Round	Complete the sentence: "One way I will help someone feel like they belong this week is..."

Optional - Circle 2: Creating a Culture 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 apply what they have learned by examining real-life situations, practicing empathy, and identifying ways to strengthen belonging within their school community.
Community Builder	Think of a teacher, staff member, coach, or student who helps others feel welcome. What do they do that makes people feel included?
Easy/Low Risk	• Why do you think people sometimes hesitate to include someone they don't know? • What makes it easier to introduce yourself to someone new?
Personal Reflection	• Without naming names, describe a time when you noticed someone being left out. What were you thinking at the time? • Looking back, is there anything you wish you had done differently?
Perspective Taking	• Scenario: A new student joins your advisory halfway through the year. They don't know anyone and spend the first few days sitting alone at lunch and rarely speaking during class. • How do you think that student might be feeling? • What might keep other students from reaching out? • What could one student do to help? What could an entire advisory class do?
Application	• If every student completed one small act of inclusion each day, how might our school be different? • What is one commitment our advisory could make to help every student feel like they belong?
Closing Round	Complete the sentence: "One thing I want people to experience when they come to our school is..."

Week 2: Our Choices Matter

Essential Question: How do our everyday choices shape the experiences of others and the culture of our school?*

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 recognize that even small choices (what they say, do, post, or ignore) can positively or negatively affect others and contribute to their school's culture.
Community Builder	Choose one and explain why: ☐ A kind word ☐ A helpful action ☐ Being included Which one has the biggest impact on making someone's day better?
Easy/Low Risk	• What are some choices students make every day without thinking much about them? • What is one small choice that can make someone else's day better?
Personal Reflection	• Think about a choice you made recently that you're proud of. What did you do, and why did it matter? • Describe a time when someone else's small choice had a positive impact on you.
Perspective Taking	• Why might two people experience the same situation differently? • Why do people sometimes not realize that their words or actions have affected someone else?
Application	• What everyday choices help create a respectful and welcoming school? • What is one choice you can make this week that reflects the kind of person you want to be?
Closing Round	Complete the sentence: One positive choice I will make this week is...

Optional - Circle 2: Choosing to be a Digital & In-Person Upstander

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 choices in person and online can either escalate or de-escalate conflict and identify realistic ways to support others.
Community Builder	Which feels harder? ☐ Speaking up when something isn't right ☐ Admitting when you were wrong
Easy/Low Risk	• What are some ways students can support someone without making a big scene? • What is the difference between being a bystander and being an upstander?
Personal Reflection	• Think about a time when someone supported or encouraged you. What did they do that helped? • Without naming names, have you ever seen an online disagreement become much bigger than the original problem? What caused it to grow?
Perspective Taking	Scenario: A disagreement starts in a group chat. Someone screenshots part of the conversation and sends it to other people. By the next morning, students who were not originally involved have taken sides. Comments are being shared, rumors are spreading, and people are talking about the conflict at school. 1. What choices caused this conflict to grow? 2. Why might students repost, comment, react, or take sides even when the conflict doesn't involve them? 3. How do you think the students involved might feel when the conflict follows them to school? 4. At what point could someone have interrupted the escalation?
Application	• What could a “digital upstander” do in this situation? • When is the best choice to involve a trusted adult? • What is one digital habit students could practice that would help create a safer online community?
Closing Round	Complete the sentence: "One way I can be an upstander, online or in person, is..."

Week 3: Your Voice Matters

Essential Question: How can we use our voices, our listening, and our actions to positively influence others and strengthen our school community?

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 recognize that leadership is not about having a title—it's about the everyday choices they make, the way they treat others, and how they use their voices to positively influence their school community.
Community Builder	Complete the sentence: One person I look up to is... because... (Students may choose someone they know personally or a public figure.)
Easy/Low Risk	• What qualities do you admire in a leader? • Can someone be a leader even if they aren't the loudest person in the room? Why?
Personal Reflection	• Think about someone whose words or actions have positively influenced you. What did they do? • When have your own words encouraged, helped, or made a difference for someone else?
Perspective Taking	• Why might some students believe their voice doesn't matter? • How does listening help people feel respected and included?
Application	• What are ways students can demonstrate leadership without having a leadership position? • How can students use their voices to make their classroom or school a better place?
Closing Round	Complete the sentence: One way I will use my voice to make a positive difference this week 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 explore how their words and choices, both in person and online, can either escalate conflict or strengthen relationships, and practice identifying ways to repair harm and solve problems respectfully.
Community Builder	When there's a disagreement, what is usually harder? ☐ Listening without interrupting ☐ Admitting you made a mistake ☐ Apologizing first
Easy/Low Risk	• What helps a conversation stay respectful when people disagree? • What does a sincere apology sound or feel like?
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: Two students begin arguing in a group chat after one person feels left out of weekend plans. Screenshots are shared, classmates begin commenting, and by the next morning students are choosing sides before school even starts. 1. How might each student involved be feeling? 2. What choices caused the conflict to grow? 3. How might students who are watching the conflict influence what happens next? 4. At what point could someone have helped calm the situation instead of making it worse?
Application	• What could a student say or do to help de-escalate this situation? • When is it important to involve a trusted adult? • How can students use their voices to solve problems rather than create a bigger audience for them? • What advice would you give a friend before they hit send, post, or share during a conflict?
Closing Round	Complete the sentence: "One thing I will remember before I speak, post, or respond during a conflict is..."

Week 4: We Create Our Culture

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...

Respect! 24/7 Our Digital Footprint

Students' online and in-person lives are deeply connected. A disagreement that begins in a group chat, on Discord, TikTok, Instagram, or on a gaming platform, or through direct messages, can affect friendships, classroom relationships, and what happens on campus the next day. For that reason, digital citizenship is woven throughout the middle school campaign rather than treated as a separate topic.

Key Message

What happens online doesn't always stay online.
Our digital choices are part of the culture we create together.

What Does a Digital Upstander Do?

- ★ Does not pile on, repost, forward, or turn someone else's conflict into entertainment.
- ★ Pauses before sharing screenshots, comments, photos, or messages that could embarrass or harm someone.
- ★ Checks in privately with someone who is being targeted or excluded.
- ★ Uses words that de-escalate rather than intensify a disagreement.
- ★ Does not pressure others to choose sides in a conflict.
- ★ Gets help from a trusted adult when threats, harassment, safety concerns, or escalating conflict are involved.

Digital Connections for the Weekly Circles

These optional scenarios can be substituted into the Perspective Taking or Application portion of the second weekly circle.

Week 1: Belonging Online

Scenario: A group of students creates a new group chat, but one student in the friend group is intentionally left out. Photos and inside jokes from the chat begin showing up at school the next day.

- How can online spaces make someone feel included or excluded?
- Why might students leave someone out online even if they would not exclude them face-to-face?
- How could one person change the situation without creating more drama?
- What should belonging look like both on campus and online?

Week 2: When Conflict Spreads

Scenario: A disagreement starts in a group chat. Someone screenshots part of the conversation and sends it to other people. By the next morning, students who were not originally involved have taken sides and are posting comments about meeting up at school.

- What choices caused this conflict to grow?
- Why might people repost, comment, react, or take sides even when the conflict does not involve them?
- At what points could someone have interrupted the escalation?
- What could a digital upstander realistically do? When should a trusted adult be involved?

Week 3: Using Your Voice to De-escalate

Scenario: Two students are arguing publicly in comments. Friends begin defending each person, and the conversation becomes more insulting with every reply.

- What is the difference between supporting a friend and escalating a conflict?
- What might listening look like in an online disagreement?
- What could someone say, or choose not to say, to lower the temperature?
- How can students use their voices online to solve problems instead of creating an audience for them?

Week 4: Our Online Culture is School Culture

Scenario: Imagine a new student follows classmates and joins school-related online spaces before their first day. Their first impressions of the school come partly from what students post, comment on, share, and joke about online.

- What would you hope that students see online?
- What online behaviors communicate that people belong here?
- What behaviors would make someone question whether they would feel safe or welcomed?
- What is one digital habit students could continue all year to strengthen school culture?

Parents & Caregiver Corner (Newsletter Blurbs)

Newsletter blurbs to inspire or use as is!

Week 1: Belonging Online

Scenario: A group of students creates a new group chat, but one student in the friend group is intentionally left out. Photos and inside jokes from the chat begin showing up at school the next day.

- How can online spaces make someone feel included or excluded?
- Why might students leave someone out online even if they would not exclude them face-to-face?
- How could one person change the situation without creating more drama?
- What should belonging look like both on campus and online?

Week 2: When Conflict Spreads

Scenario: A disagreement starts in a group chat. Someone screenshots part of the conversation and sends it to other people. By the next morning, students who were not originally involved have taken sides and are posting comments about meeting up at school.

- What choices caused this conflict to grow?
- Why might people repost, comment, react, or take sides even when the conflict does not involve them?
- At what points could someone have interrupted the escalation?
- What could a digital upstander realistically do? When should a trusted adult be involved?

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Week 4: We Create Our School Culture

As Respect! 24/7 Upstander Month comes to a close, students are bringing together what they have learned about belonging, choices, voice, and leadership. The message this week is that school culture is not created by a single program or month—it is shaped every day by how students and adults treat one another, both in person and online. Students are being asked to consider what they want their school community to be like and what they can personally do to help create it.

Try it at home: Ask your student, *“What is one thing you want to continue doing after Upstander Month to help make your school a place where people feel welcomed, respected, and included?”*

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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