

Incorporation of Restorative Justice in Education Practices, Principles, and Strategies in LEARN & ESL Classes to Support Refugee and Newcomer Students

More Effectively

“A Guide for LEARN and ESL Teachers”



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**Incorporation of Restorative Justice in Education Practices, Principles, and
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More Effectively

“A Guide for LEARN and ESL Teachers”

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Dedication

This guide comes from my soul and my heart and the experiences that a newcomer parent and an international student has been through in her journey as an immigrant. The ups and downs of my immigration path have been embedded in it. I aim to illustrate the hardships refugees and newcomers undergo in this journey and how the practices of Restorative Justice can create a better environment for this vulnerable group of society. Such practices can help them feel valued and at peace in the place which they have called their new home, a land filled with hope! I would like to sincerely dedicate this guide to all those who have found themselves in this guide.

First of all, I would like to appreciate my parents who as teachers and invaluable role models have taught me that teaching is not just a profession but a passion and nurtured the love of teaching in me with the fondness and dedication I found in their hearts.

To my family: This difficult path of immigration and continuation of my studies was not feasible without my husband's and my children's help, support and patience. Both of my children were live navigators and witnesses on this journey which has been absolutely inspiring for me; they have allowed me to reflect on many issues we confronted together and integrated those messages into this guide. Without them, I would not have been able to identify the challenges that newcomer students may face and how relationships can truly make a miracle.

I would also like to dedicate this guide to all ESL and LEARN teachers who have this challenging but rewarding responsibility to be a firm anchor and support system for all refugee and

newcomer students and parents and have this opportunity to facilitate their integration through various practices, including RJE.

Here, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my knowledgeable professor who introduced me to the world of Restorative Justice and taught me the significance and the impact of developing quality relationships with students on their academic thriving. It was truly a blessing for me to know her in this journey of my life. I am deeply grateful for all the changes she has brought to my personal and professional life with her vast knowledge in the area of RJE and the interest she has instilled in me. There is still a lot for me to learn from her manners, attitudes, and unique approaches to teaching.

Part One: Introduction



Figure 1

Introduction

Canada welcomes a large number of refugees (people who are forced to flee their home countries) annually. In 2016, Canada accepted 25000 refugees from Syria (Ogilvie & Fuller, 2016). According to the official website of the government 17,050 Afghan refugees arrived in Canada in 2021, and Canada is committed to accept more Afghan refugees in the following years. (Immigration, & Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2022). Moreover, due to the imposed war on Ukraine, Canada is admitting a large number of Ukrainians under a different program. Apart from these regions, many other refugees from all over the world arrive in Canada every year. Additionally, many people from different nationalities like myself decided to leave their home countries due to a variety of reasons which includes economic and political instability, lack of any hope for improvement in their country, looking for a better quality of life, security, freedom and better education opportunities (I refer to these people in this project as newcomers). This is not an easy decision and not a path that every person can take.

While refugees and newcomers have different backgrounds and situations, they share some common characteristics: One of them is that they are new to a foreign country and need support as they integrate into the school community. As a multicultural country, Canada has launched several initiatives to support refugee and newcomer students on this path, one of which is supporting refugee and newcomer students in the Literacy Enrichment and Academic Readiness for Newcomers (LEARN) and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

Coming from tough situations and struggling to adapt to a new environment, language, culture and education system, refugee and newcomer students first need a caring and safe environment to feel at home so they gradually adjust to all these very new things. Hence, the

LEARN and ESL classes have a lot of potential for this new and vulnerable group of society. The mission of teachers in this class is far beyond just teaching and assessing the new students. Tompkins et al. (2015, p.443, as cited in Fuller, 2016) provide a broader definition of literacy as they describe, "Literacy, then, is not a prescription, or reading list, but rather a way to come to learn about the world and to participate more fully in society." So, as Rossiter and Rossiter asserted (2009), ESL teachers ought to be specialists in their profession, not just regular classroom teachers.

One of the ways that LEARN and ESL teachers can transform the climate of a class and provide a safe, caring, engaging and a participatory environment for the students is via Restorative Justice in Education (RJE). RJE builds on three major interconnected concepts: creating just and equitable learning environments, nurturing healthy relationships, repairing harm and transforming conflict. These concepts have been derived from foundational beliefs that consider humans as relational and worthy and grounded in values of respect, dignity, and mutual concern (Evan and Vaandering, 2016). Each of these three concepts is important to reflect on and be considered for their implementation in any setting but are critical in the refugee and newcomer context.

a) Creating just and equitable learning environments is accepting and acknowledging students and staff for who they are regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, religion, or language. One of the main purposes of RJE is "to create spaces of belonging that embraces everyone in the ways they require" (Evan and Vaandering, 2016, p.10).

b) RJE considers nurturing healthy relationships that embed social and emotional health in the school community as essential for learning and living. As stated by Boyes-Watson & Pranis (2014), enhancing students' social-emotional intelligence through these RJE practices contributes to success more than IQ, so students' focus should not be only on academic success but also on facing challenges throughout their life. Evans and Vaandering (2016) also indicate that "respect, inclusion, conflict resolution, reciprocal learning and teaching, decision making, etc. are integrated within all aspects of education -i.e., curriculum, pedagogy, hallway interactions, lunchroom and bus environments, administrative and policy protocol, staff meetings, and family-school engagement" (p.10).

c) Repairing harm and transforming conflict is another aspect of RJE. RJE perceives conflict and harm as an opportunity for learning and growing, so addressing conflict differs significantly from what is the norm in our societies as the needs of all people involved in the conflict are explored and taken into attention.

Restorative justice emphasizes the values of respect, dignity, and mutual concern. These are the foundation of our relationships, and RJE addresses them very delicately to be sure we observe them in our interactions with our students. As these concepts may differ in various cultures and perspectives, RJE approaches them by posing three questions: Am I honoring? Am I measuring? What message am I sending? And clarifies that "honoring" people is accepting them as they are but "measuring" conveys the message of being in power and emphasizing the deficiencies of others to get credit. It is critical to be mindful of our attitude and interactions

with others, whether we empathize with them or not. In these interactions, we can bring that sense of belonging to them, as stated by Evan & Vaandering (2016) "Belonging and support are nurtured when I am willing to be present with another without judging that person" (p.34).

RJE attempts to transform schools from being rule-based institutions to relationship-based communities (Vaandering, 2014) by:

- Replacing punitive models of discipline with restorative models that promote repair of harm.
- Moving from systems of social control to systems of social engagement (Morrison, 2011),
- Challenging hierarchical and authoritarian structures that promote submission and conformity (Sullivan & Tifft, 2001, as cited in Gregory & Evans, 2020)
- Focusing on accountability rather than punishment.

The RJE framework emphasizes accountability within a supportive community, allowing the community's members to maintain their dignity and sense of belonging even after wrongdoing occurs (Evans & Vaandering, 2016). As RJE is grounded on communication, integrating restorative practices into a school community supports building and repairing relationships, empowering students to make decisions, and de-emphasizing punitive discipline in favor of communication (Evans & Vaandering, 2016, Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014). LEARN, and ESL classes often experience significant conflicts for different reasons, such as language barriers, traumatized students, and separated communities in class. Therefore, applying RJE discipline models and strategies instead of coercive and tough strategies can prevent refugee

and newcomer students from feeling ignored or being defensive and teaches them new attitudes and practices for handling problems and issues so they can develop more friendships among different communities in class.

"Nurturing a relational culture in RF schools requires not only the inclusion of staff, administration and students but also parents and caregivers" (Vaandering & Voelker, 2018, p. 32). According to Lee and Bowen (2006), parents' involvement at school further promotes their children's educational achievement. As an immigrant parent, I strongly believe parents are the main part of this community and have a crucial role in their children's academic and moral progress. Thus, engaging parents in RJE practices can raise their awareness and have a significant role in the students' and families' integration and adaptation into the community. Full participation in school helps newcomers to learn about the institutions and norms of their new society and develop academic and social-emotional skills while also improving their future economic and health outcomes (Adams 2002; Tamborini et al. 2015; Ma et al. 2016; Zajacova and Lawrence 2018, as cited in Gandarilla Ocampo et al., 2020). According to Gandarilla Ocampo et al., although newcomer parents face plenty of challenges, parents devote time to their children's support by getting involved in the school community and accommodating them at home. However, several barriers may impede parent engagement in school, which can be addressed through RJE's approach and its practices that aim to empower parents and consider equal rights for them and strengthen relationships between the family and the school community. (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014).

The Purpose of this Project

Coming from a different education system, having two school-aged children, and getting familiar with a LEARN class in one other school in St. John's, I have seen many new methods and different supports that students receive in their classes. Yet, after experiencing RJE and its implementation in a variety of schools throughout the world, I noticed ESL and LEARN classes can be strengthened by using RJE more effectively to provide a loving, caring and inclusive environment for students and nurturing positive relationships among students of different nationalities. This project aims to introduce RJE practices and principles to LEARN and ESL teachers through a written guidebook and encourage healthy, effective, and caring relationships between teachers, students and amongst students. It will explain how different terms and issues in the area of education have been addressed through RJE which will impact their teaching pedagogy substantially. As we know, ESL and LEARN teachers may carry different positions; they are not just teachers but sometimes counselors, social workers, and advocates. In describing the foundations of restorative justice, Howard Zehr (1990, s stated in Evan & Vaandering 2016, p.27) explains that "engaging with RJ requires that we examine and change the lenses through which we are seeing the world." Thus, I am quite convinced that by incorporating restorative justice practices into these classes' schedules, we can take a significant step in smoothing the way for teachers, students, and parents, as they all gradually benefit from the outcomes.

Literature Review

The field of restorative justice developed out of the criminal justice system. It is derived from Indigenous cultures and mindsets which view harm and conflict as signs of disconnection

and justice as an opportunity for healing and reconnection. In many Indigenous cultures, there is a strong connection between everything in the universe (Pranis, 2005). Consequently, humans cannot be considered autonomous beings but are closely connected to their surroundings. It is based on the belief that all beings are important and appreciate their contribution to society's general well-being. As a result, "harm to one is harm to all. Good for one is good for all" (Pranis, 2005, p.26).

Restorative justice began as a way to find better ways of addressing harm and responding to crime by emphasizing relationships and healing rather than law and punishment. Restorative justice in education has been adapted by educators who learned about the effectiveness of principles and values of RJ in the criminal legal system and found it helpful in an educational context. The focus of RJ in school began primarily with students' behavior and discipline. However, RJE in school now is implemented and focuses on principles that include promoting healthy relationships, developing caring communication and environments, and facilitating dialogue for those affected by harm and those who have caused harm that could eventually lead to the wellbeing of both sides and all affected parties. (Evans, & Vaandering,2016).

Restorative justice has been implemented in many schools in the US, Australia, Canada, Europe, South America, and New Zealand. According to the reports of RJ implementation in Oakland schools (Jain et al., 2014), restorative practices, such as 'Whole School Restorative Justice' and 'Peer Restorative Justice', are a viable alternative to suspension. "Our multi-tiered restorative framework is taking root, fostering community in our schools, building and repairing caring relationships, and creating positive school-wide culture" (p.i). Some evidence suggests

that the change witnessed in students participating in the RJ programs include reducing harm and conflict, building community and caring relationships, developing a greater sense of connectedness at school, and improving relationships with parents, teachers, and staff/adults. Moreover, students gradually developed a sense of empathy, peer understanding, and accountability. As a result, RJs' life skills are sustained and applied to many social spheres of their lives, thereby benefiting the broader society as a whole.

Meetze (2018) investigated the impact of employing Restorative Practices (RP) affective statements and affective questions in the classroom climate. Using effective language with kids and actively listening to them can reduce the occurrence of exclusionary repercussions and discipline referrals. (Smith et al., 2015; Gonzalez, 2012, as cited in Meetze, 2018). Additionally, RP can significantly improve student-teacher relations (Meetze, 2018), positively affecting student academic performance, social interaction, and mental and physical health (Wang, Brinkworth, & Eccles, 2013; Wentzel, 1998, as cited in Meetze, 2018). This form of language would contribute to a more positive classroom climate (Costello et al., 2009; Gregory et al., 2016; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012; Smith et al., 2015, as cited in Meetze, 2018).

There has been some research about implementing RJ in school communities for refugee students and parents. According to Ogilvie and Fuller (2016), restorative principles have been utilized in school discipline, particularly in ESL classrooms, to recognize students' needs and contribute to healing and community building. The authors employ authentic dialogue embedded in the morning pages (See page 76), teatime Circles to share immigration stories, and home visits to engage families, and know their expectations and needs so that they can better help them in different ways and speed up their integration process.

Fuller (2016) investigates his practices and aims to find ways to enhance his ability to teach and live well with students from refugee contexts. He also explores the impact of restorative practices (morning pages, teatime, and home visits) on his teaching. According to conclusions, restorative teaching practices for students from refugee contexts fostered positive relationships and helped the author to identify and begin to address the diverse and profound needs of his students and himself.

Bennouna et al. (2021) explained the opportunities and challenges surrounding school-wide social and emotional learning (SEL) initiatives that may help refugees integrate, belong, and thrive. The school wide SEL program implemented a variety of mechanisms that facilitated newcomer integration and belonging including schools utilizing restorative practices that were centered on nurturing healthy relationships, creating just and equal learning environments, and repairing the harm caused by conflict or misbehavior.

In his study, Ertle (2021) discusses some of the methodologies and resources employed in supporting refugees and newcomers, especially the Whole School Approach, Participatory Approach, and Restorative Justice. Unlike traditional justice systems, restoration models allow victims and offenders to interact openly and work together to develop solutions that serve both parties. This democratic approach will improve relationships between and among students, teachers, schools, and communities (Evans et al., 2013, p. 63, as cited in Ertle,2021).

Pentón Herrera & McNair (2020) present restorative and community-building practices as social justice practices for English learners. As Circle keepers and educators, the authors emphasize the need to rethink English for speakers of other language classes as spaces not limited to learning English but also for students to meditate, reflect, and heal. For refugees and

newcomers of all ages who have experienced adverse childhood experiences and/or adverse life circumstances, it is imperative to integrate belonging, safety, and well-being with English language learning. Pentón Herrera & McNair (2020) indicates that Restorative Practices are a unique way to provide English learners and immigrants of all ages with help and healing. These people frequently experience insecurity, fear, and rage and require a safe place to discuss their experiences, receive support, make connections with others, and find healing.

The involvement of refugee parents in their children's education is crucial for academic success and social integration. The study by Cranston et al. (2021) examined the perspectives of newly arrived Arabic-speaking refugee parents about how they became involved in their children's education after they arrived in Canada. According to the findings of this study, parents' involvement is constrained by: (1) limited language proficiency, (2) completing basic needs, (3) lack of homework for students, (4) inadequate cross-cultural and interreligious knowledge of teachers, and (5) conflicting views of the sexual health education.

Researchers suggest that newly arrived refugees are more likely to fail academically and socially if their parents do not participate in their education (Hamilton & Moore, 2004, as cited in Cranston et al., 2021). Strong parent-school relationships are crucial to refugee students' educational attainment (Barowsky & McIntyre, 2010; Bhattacharya, 2000; Kanu, 2008; Stewart, 2011, 2014a, 2014b, as cited in Cranston et al.). Oglive & Fuller (2016), in separate studies, both asserted that home visits of refugee and newcomer families, as one of the restorative practices, aims to identify their particular needs, strengthen the relationship among families, teachers, and students and facilitate their settlement and integration.

RJE is a growing approach in the Canadian educational system. A growing body of literature and field-based experience has demonstrated the need for restorative principles and practices in school, their impact, and how they might be applied most effectively. RJE is not a framework that can be limited to particular classes in school. If implemented as a whole school approach, the effects would be evident. The findings for its implementation in ESL and LEARN classes and how it can transform the pedagogy and create a safe and caring learning environment for speeding up the refugee and newcomer students and parents' integration process is still limited to some research. However, in accordance with the principles, values, and practices specific to RJE and the outlined challenges faced by newcomers, it is evident that LEARN and ESL classes would benefit enormously by incorporating RJE practices into their activities.



Figure 2

Challenges of Newcomer and Refugee parents and students in school

Background and Culture of students

Refugee and newcomer students come from various backgrounds and cultures, and without knowledge of these backgrounds, teachers cannot make connections with them. When we buy any appliances, we tend to study the manual before using the device. However, it's strange to me that for humans, especially students with vulnerable souls, some teachers don't pay any attention to this important point and make no attempt to learn more about them. This piece of information has the potential to motivate students and even save lives in some circumstances. According to Soylu et al. (2020), staff and students at some schools had no knowledge of the cultural background, language, and traditions of many of the refugee population, yet they are expected to assist in the integration and transition of these students who become part of the school community. Indeed, knowing about the culture and background of students can function as an invaluable asset for teachers and an important question arises as

to why we do not take positive advantage of this information and try to make relationships with students and bring them that sense of belonging. Integration cannot happen easily if the teachers don't make a conscious effort to know their students' cultural background.

Researchers have found that teachers who are unfamiliar with students' cultural and educational backgrounds make incorrect diagnoses of their students (Soylu et al., 2020). Roxas (2011, as cited in Soylu et al., 2020) found that it is essential for teachers to be aware of the lives of these students and to differentiate their instruction based on past educational experiences and available resources in the classroom to avoid negative effects that a teacher may cause due to not understanding refugee students.

Bringing educational support to refugee students will be easier if we understand their cultural backgrounds (Walick & Sullivan, 2015, as cited in Soylu et al., 2020). For instance, some students don't participate actively in group work or collaborate readily with peers on cooperative assignments. Teachers in some cultures never use cooperative group work. Thus, students may view sharing as "giving away knowledge" and see no distinction between legitimate collaboration and cheating (Government of Newfoundland & Labrador, 2011).

"The research findings show that teachers' awareness of different cultural backgrounds of the students, caring about these differences, and adopting a constructive attitude towards the inclusion of refugee children in the teaching process has positive reflections on the classroom atmosphere." (Soylu et al., 2020). This can be accomplished by incorporating topics about how culture affects learning into teacher training programs as opportunities for preservice teachers to learn about culture and link that knowledge to their classroom practices and curriculum. According to a study conducted by Li and Grineva (2016, as cited in Flight, 2021)

about youth's struggle in Newfoundland and Labrador, teachers' awareness of students' cultures, past experiences, and present situations and the efforts they make to increase this knowledge can have a significant impact on students. This study focused on the personal hygiene of refugee students, which has been considered a barrier to faster integration and friendship-building process with the other students. I faced a similar situation in school, and I think supportive organizations like ANC can effectively do their job by holding life skills sessions for families and providing more training about hygiene for students and families. RJE practices can also be useful for developing some good habits in students. For example, as hygiene issues are delicate topics to discuss and may hurt students and slow their adjustment process, RJE can address them indirectly during talking circles.

According to research, educators can effectively engage refugee students by building strong relationships, being culturally aware, and applying culturally appropriate pedagogies (DeCapua & Marshall, 2009, as cited in Flight, 2021). In 2015, Stewart emphasized the importance of employing refugee experiences to teach literacy that assists educators in understanding refugee students. Culturally relevant content is necessary to boost refugee students' academic performance by drawing from their experiences and forging a bond between them and their educators. The study Henderson and Ambrosio conducted indicates that most teachers are unprepared to instruct refugee students with significant educational gaps (As cited in Flight, 2021). No matter what their educational background is, most teachers believe that the classroom education they received at university was not sufficient for the complexity of a multicultural classroom full of refugees with such significant educational gaps and adjustment difficulties.

Additionally, the same researchers stressed that workshops promoting the native culture of different refugee cultures could be valuable. These training can be through inviting parents to ESL or LEARN classes to talk about their cultures, traditions, and languages, which can be applied in RJE practices and parents' involvement in school or asking students to give presentations or being involved in some collaborative activities. Certainly, this cultural awareness can be started from LEARN and ESL class but extended to the whole school, because not only refugee students need to learn about each other, but as a multicultural community all students need to know about each other and learn to respect each other's values and traditions.

Below are some of the differences examined in different cultures:

- Bangladeshi families eat with their hands.
- Muslim people use water in the washroom, not only toilet paper.
- Middle east people share food with each other.
- When you make a compliment about an Iranian's cloth or any other items they possess, they might be willing to present it to you.
- When you go to the home of people from the Middle East, they love to offer you something to eat and don't feel good when you refuse to eat anything.
- When Iranians and Afghans enter a room, they let their elders enter first
- When Afghans and Iranians have a party, and someone, especially the elders, enter the room, all stand up for respect.
- Iranians are into bargaining, and they may ask you to do something for them more than once.

- African children do not like to be touched on their hair.
- Taarof is an Iranian and Afghan form of etiquette, hospitality, and politeness which may look weird in some cultures. It happens in the context of giving and receiving gifts, food, money, entering a room, paying the restaurant's bill, and more. For example, two families may go to a restaurant together, and to pay the bill, they may argue about who pays first or refuse to accept the amount you have paid for someone just to show politeness and kindness.
- Schooling in some cultures involves a strict formality. For students who are used to this, an informal classroom atmosphere may seem chaotic and undemanding, while teachers with an informal approach may seem unprofessional.
- There are also significant differences among cultures concerning people's sense of what is considered an appropriate amount of personal space. The student may refuse to eat with peers because some students may be unaccustomed to eating with anyone but their own family members.

Some of these cultural differences have been adapted from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (2011). Guidelines for Delivery of ESL Services in K-6.



Figure 3

"Nowruz" is one of the biggest celebrations on 21 March in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.



Figure 4

Acculturation and Adapting to a New Society

Cultural adaptation and integration are referred to as acculturation. Most refugees who migrate to Western countries bring significant cultural differences with them. A study conducted by Hadfield, Ostrowski, and Ungar (2017, as cited in Flight, 2021) on Syrian children and adolescents' integration in Canada identifies major barriers to integration facing refugee youth.

Many refugees and newcomers come to Canada with different languages, foods, traditions, religions, laws, and the judicial system. These cultural differences could make people feel disoriented and cause great stress due to their new environment. McBrien (2005) stated that misunderstandings about culture could impede proper integration. For example, in many countries like Iran and other Islamic countries, female and male students attend separate

schools and have specific dress codes. For my daughter and many other students with similar backgrounds, this much freedom and not having any dress code in school and having free interaction with the opposite sex is a cultural shock. The lack of understanding of the new culture can lead to prejudice, bias, and overall intolerance. In addition to adapting to a new culture and learning a new language, students have to deal with potentially negative attitudes from other facets of society. McBrien stated that newcomers who know the language of their new environment are more successfully integrated than people who do not (2005, as cited in Flight, 2021). It is evident that language and culture usually go hand in hand; thus, according to McBrien's study about refugees' barriers to adaptation to their new environment, language and cultural misunderstanding were among the obvious barriers in this process.

It is common for refugee and newcomer students to feel isolated and unwelcome when they cannot speak their dominant language. As some of these students don't have their community in school and are unable to communicate in a language in which they are proficient, they feel excluded and suffer from low self-esteem. In schools, many newcomers encounter hostile behavior from peers. Language barriers may result in bullying and discrimination within schools. "Cases of students engaging in harassment against refugee students need to be resolved quickly and be restorative in nature." (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009, as cited in Flight, 2021, P.28). "This makes learning the new language more complex and adds pressure to integrate properly. Language plays a significant role in acculturation and learning the language of the new environment speeds up the settlement process. Many conflicts in LEARN and ESL classes happen because of the inability to communicate in English. Refugee and newcomer students sometimes show aggressive behavior because they are frustrated or unable to express

themselves. Thus, it's crucial for LEARN and ESL teachers or all teachers who are in contact with refugee and newcomer students to be mindful of these barriers and not judge students based on a particular reaction in a particular situation.

Refugees and newcomer students must maintain a delicate balance when trying to adapt to their new country. Often, refugee youth feel pressure from parents and relatives to stay true to their origins and countries. Moreover, they attempt to integrate into their new culture while trying to build a new life after being uprooted from their old one. Newcomer families should adhere to the progressive laws and standards of Western countries such as Canada. However, giving them space to celebrate their roots and diverse culture is equally imperative. Refugees must strike a balance between settling in a new country and honoring their heritage. This is also what Hadfield, Ostrowski, and Ungar stated in their findings in 2017(As cited in Flight 2021). According to Asadi (2014), it is critical to create a new identity based on the principles and values of both cultures. Positive development often results from these new identities for youth. In order for that to happen, educational institutions must also facilitate acculturation. In the curriculum, educational institutions can promote acculturation by representing race, culture, language, religion, class, and gender correctly and engaging students. "This approach allows for students to feel that their histories and heritage are respected, and they can be related to and allows for proper integration and belonging" (Asadi, 2014, as cited in Flight, 2021, p.32).

As per my experience as a mother of two school-aged students (10 and 18), the acculturation process is a very fast and easy trend for younger ages, while at ages 14 and older, it will be more challenging. For example, there are some values that are defined entirely

different in various cultures, like calling a professor by the first name at the post-secondary level or calling a teacher Ms. or Sir instead of "Master," which, according to some Afghan students, may lead to some physical violence by the teacher if not addressed by the expected title. Therefore, this group age needs more guidance, support, and assistance to integrate and accept some facts in their new community.



Figure 5

Education system

A major finding identified in the Flight (2021) study is that the environment in a Newfoundland and Labrador school is incredibly unfamiliar to refugee and newcomer students. There are many routines that are not familiar to these students that they would have acquired earlier in school. For example, the concept of deadlines for daily activities needs to be elaborated for them. Even the curriculum differs significantly from their expectations based on their experiences in their home country.

Refugee and newcomer parents are sometimes incapable of supporting their children due to their lack of education, English proficiency, and knowledge of the new education system. Moreover, some refugee parents often have questions about how to help their children at home with their schooling. Refugee parents usually regard teachers as academically knowledgeable and superior to themselves and accordingly responsible for their children's education. Some parents do not understand the homework children bring home, so they cannot be of any help. There are some intercultural challenges associated with the education system and family engagement. It's sometimes challenging for the teachers as, based on the background and culture of the education system in the home country, some parents expect the same system should be implemented to work in some situations. For instance, as stated in Bennouna et al. (2021, p.11), "And the parents do not understand, 'Well, if you're not gonna hit them, how are you gonna get them to do it?'" (KII_M1).

The challenges may have arisen from institutional differences between national education systems and differences in terms of school norms (e.g., dress code), practices (e.g., homeroom), values (e.g., SEL), and parents' roles in education. While parents "see us as the experts. . . they're the parents" (KII_M1.09, as cited in Bennouna et al., 2021, p.11), and without parents' cooperation, schools cannot function efficiently, which might be new to some parents.

Some participants in a study concurred that, as a first step, it was necessary to acknowledge the obstacles and develop intentional supports to increase school accessibility for newcomer families. Based on the view of the other participants in this study, we should recognize that they possess knowledge, wisdom, and many other assets. They are entitled to be

involved in the school community and feel they have their rights and shares in this community and belong to it, and their views, suggestions, and input is valued (Bennouna et al.,2021).

Based on parents' culture, the perception is different that, to some extent, parents and teachers are responsible for students' education?! As stated by one of the study's participants, "Not in any malevolent way... it's just traditionally it hasn't been the parents' rule to take a big role in education. It's more like I trust you as your role" (Ertle,2021, p.30). It is also very important to give this authority to parents to choose their preference for communication with the school.

Coming from a country with a completely different education system in terms of curriculum, policy, approaches, methods, and views, especially arriving amid Covid-19, I was completely confused about what was going on. There was no orientation to give me any idea about the system. What was the expectation from parents? Moreover, school left me completely unaware of all this vital information. There were so many question marks in my mind. What was my share? Where was my involvement in the school community, and why is there no relationship between parents and teachers? And of course, amongst the parents

In Iran, homework is an integral part of the education system, and I used to spend time with my son for about two or three hours after school. I was quite shocked to see there were no assignments for my child, who was in grade three at that time, and I needed to talk and express my concerns about it. Because my son was a newcomer, and if assignments were not needed for native students or those immigrant children who had already been settled years ago, my assumption was and still is that my son needed more practice. The only way of interaction with the school was by email, through which I did not feel connected or heard. As an educated

mother, especially as an international student studying "Education," and as I studied the importance of partnerships between parents and schools in my courses, I expected greater involvement and interaction with my child's school community. However, this expectation was not met, and after this long time still, I am surprised to see this big contradiction between what is recommended in my courses at the master's level and what I see that is practiced in some schools.

The inclusive education system in the Canadian system was very new for my children and I. There is no similar system in Iran and many other countries, and students with disabilities study in a separate school in the country I come from. We had no idea why they studied in the public education system, and after a while, I studied about inclusion and the rationale behind it in one of my courses, and I was really affected by it. While my first assumption was that there might not be enough funds for schools, and that's why they study in the same school. After knowing about this system, I wondered how it is possible that newcomer parents and students are not informed about the education system from the first day of school. Because new students and parents need to know about all these to have a good attitude toward different students with various limitations, my son didn't have this experience earlier. So, my interpretation as a parent is that the education system in some schools in St. John's doesn't respect the rights of parents and doesn't recognize them as members of the school community. I felt disconnected from the school community as a parent, and that is due to the fact that the school had not made any significant efforts to involve me in the school so that I could feel valued and have a right and share in this community and, most importantly be informed about the education system in the place which I have chosen as my new land. So, I strongly believe that since refugee

and newcomer families are not familiar with the school system in Canada, administrators and teachers need to provide orientation and have regular check-ins with them to keep them informed about the academic status of students.

In the newcomer and refugee's view, education is highly important as they are just not certain about who is responsible for supervising students directly and more effectively. For example, families may see the teacher's role as imparting academic knowledge to students, and the parent's role to teach morality to his/her students. So, these are the points which need to be discussed with the parents by engaging them more in the school community.

As part of the effort to support refugee families in adjusting to a new school community and to become valuable partners with the school, the staff must first identify who these families are, their needs, and how schools may bridge linguistic and cultural barriers. Administrators and staff can interview or assess students or families when they enroll in school to determine the family's specific needs. The school's engagement with families and communities is crucial to support newcomer students and to reduce the gap between adolescents and their adult family members. A Michigan school leader described the school as a "community learning center," emphasizing the importance of "the students feel[ing] there is a bond between the family and the school" (KII_M1.03, as cited in Bennouna et al.,2021, p.11).

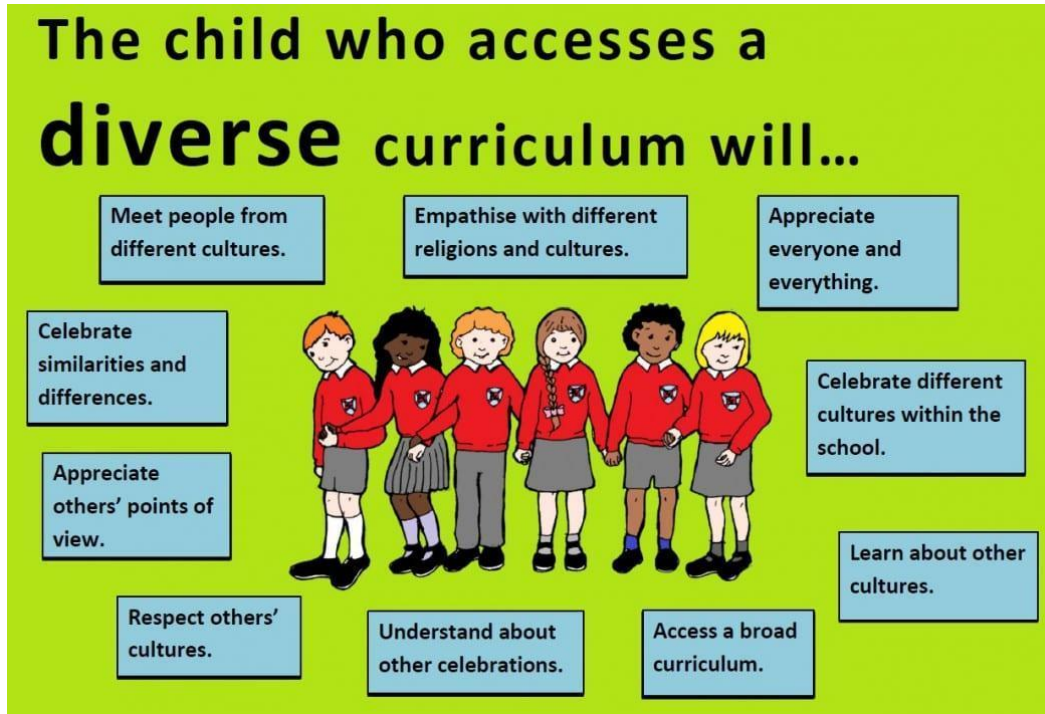


Figure 6

Need for a More Multicultural Education system

In a study, Amthor and Roaxs (2016, as cited in Flight, 2021) showed that western societies might hold anti-immigrant attitudes. For refugee and newcomer students to succeed, educators must create a more inclusive environment that counteracts society's anti-immigration sentiments. With the increasing number of refugees and newcomers in Canada, multicultural education is also essential, and a curriculum should reflect that focus. The majority of the curriculum for refugee and newcomer youth is designed by those in power, who may disregard the perspectives and experiences of these students, which results in marginalization among refugee youth (Amthor & Roaxs, 2016, as cited in Flight, 2021). According to Johnston (2008), curriculum matters need to be addressed. For instance, the Canadian curriculum most commonly used in each province is Eurocentric. Therefore, multicultural societies like Canada

need to incorporate multicultural content into their curriculum instead of provoking racial feelings, as was the case with the social studies assignment of junior high students in this province which raised many questions and caused controversial discussions in this area (Robers, 2022).

According to the study conducted by Li and Grineva, "The Muslim participants in our study reported discomfort in taking fine arts, a subject that required activities prohibited in their religion and therefore threatened their religious identity" (2016, as cited in Flight 2021). Similarly, I have also noticed that some Syrian female students refused to attend health classes that educate students about men's and women's reproductive parts in the presence of other male students. To accommodate religiously and culturally variant students, Li and Griniva suggest alternative course requirements. I think we can make the education system more diverse and inclusive through initiatives like this.

Moreover, many Canadian-born students do not have any information about the newcomer and refugee students' background, religion, history, or cultural sensitivity. Therefore, how can we not expect a conflict amongst the students?? This is the responsibility of school administrators and teachers to aim to achieve this goal which certainly smooths the way of integration for newcomer and refugee students. As stated by Flight (2021, p.59)

"When you don't fill in the blanks and help them transition. They will fill in their own blanks.

Often in a school setting that leads us to behavioral issues, social issues, emotional issues, many of them are avoidable because kids are very accepting when there is guidance in place for them."

School administrators and educators can provide this opportunity for refugee, newcomer, and Canadian-born students to be engaged together in restorative justice practices like talking circles. This is where students can talk about their different worlds and have an insight into their peers' lives, develop relationships and learn many skills like empathizing, conflict resolution, and decision making together. When administrators and educators take fundamental steps to fill this gap, these relationships will speed up refugee and newcomer students' integration into the school community, as their relationships are not restricted to LEARN and ESL classes.

Additionally, many minorities feel excluded from the school's culture and hence, unwelcome. According to this study, there was a high demand for more inclusive celebrations, sports, and extracurricular activities. Participants noted that attending to inclusion issues can positively impact the tension and uncertainty for many refugee students in Newfoundland and Labrador. Szente, Hoot, and Taylor (2006, as cited in Flight, 2021) proposed using literature to educate non-refugee students about the experiences refugees face. Learning this information will help non-refugee students to identify with refugees and gain a deeper understanding of the challenges that they face.



Figure 7

Trauma

People's assumption is that once students arrive in Canada, they should be thankful and begin their dream life. Yet, the trauma they experienced, the anxiety they feel in their new land, and the uncertainty they feel throughout the journey can remain with them for a long time, and even for a lifetime (Fuller,2016). Many refugees' minds continue to feel like refugees throughout

their lives. According to teachers, some students exhibit problematic behaviors as a result of war and migration psychology. Stewart states that some teachers feel unprepared or unsupported in responding to their students' ongoing spiritual and emotional needs (2011, as cited in Fuller, 2016). One common struggle that refugee youth experience is the emotional stress of trauma. There is a high rate of trauma among refugee youth, and a variety of experiences cause it.

Some of the experiences can be related to violence, relocation, separation, and loss. According to the study conducted by Dyregrov (2004, as cited in Flight, 2021) about the connection between trauma and education, trauma is negatively correlated with educational outcomes and academic achievement. In their study, Saltzman, Pynoos, Steinberg, Eisenberg, and Layne (2001, as cited in Flight, 2021) concluded that there is a possible link between trauma and its severity in academic performance. As Dyregrov concluded, children and adolescents who have suffered loss or trauma may struggle with learning (2004).

Refugee youth in these war zones were traumatized by the nature of war, bombings, torture, and daily violence on different scales. This causes a great deal of culture shock for refugee students and their families, and Canada differs significantly from their chaotic home country. The researchers' study revealed the trauma experienced by their participants, as they were uprooted from their families and communities and then transported in dangerous circumstances to seek asylum, and then possibly lived in refugee camps for years before they were resettled in Canada, which is far beyond the imagination of many of us. (Hadfield, Ostrowski, & Ungar. 2017, as cited in Flight, 2021).

The loss or trauma often results in depression, and depression affects cognitive function. Literature has demonstrated that refugee youth face substantial obstacles in their education due to the emotional pain of fleeing. These factors contribute to such problems in the classroom as poor self-regulation, low motivation, disturbing mental images, impaired concentration, and low self-esteem (Flight,2021), and self-regulation problems can result in a poor socialization experience. Generally, refugee youth do not receive sufficient counseling or therapy to cope with the emotional and social upheaval that they have experienced and are enduring (Kanu, 2008, as cited in Flight, 2021). Restorative justice has a different approach to trauma and attempts to address it through a trauma-sensitive learning environment. As stated by Boyes-Watson & Pranis (2014), trauma theory means redefining academic challenges and students' misbehavior and encouraging educators and other supporters to provide support and guidance for students rather than having a zero tolerance and tough approach. In later chapters, I will give more details about the RJE practices and the gradual impact that RJE may have on traumatized students.

Author's Introduction



Figure 8

Coming to Canada is a dream for many people in my country. It was also a dream for me, but I didn't expect it to happen when I was over the age of forty. I was told that even getting a visa is not possible for me since there was a long gap between my bachelor's degree and master's admission and age. For all immigrants, the driving motivation for undertaking this challenging path is that "We are here for the future of our children". The same is true for me. However, despite all the hard times I have had on this journey, I cannot deny that as an

adventurous person, I have had incredible experiences so far. Sometimes, I even wonder where I am! Every day, new people, new experiences, and new challenges, ranging from personal experiences to those of my children.

One of those amazing experiences happened to me in the fifth semester of my Masters of Education. Usually, students take elective courses to fill the required credits to complete their master's. While looking at the list of the courses, I came across a course called "ED 6463-Relationships First: Rethinking Educational Engagement". I reflected on it for hours and was really enthusiastic about learning more about it, as "relationship in an educational setting" was always my priority, and I felt connected and resonated with it. This course was also among those wonderful experiences I attained in Canada and expanded my horizon profoundly, transformed my world, and gave me insights into how everything can change color by seeing through this lens and implementing the RJE approach.



Figure 9

I had the privilege of attending one of St. John's schools as a supporter of Refugee students, especially new Afghan students as we share similar languages. I was accepted as a "guest presenter" there to facilitate some circles with students in LEARN class. This class was composed of Syrian, Afghan, and Eritrean students with different English competence. I could vividly see how they are only inclined to join their own communities and are in different groups due to language barriers. However, I thought that sitting in a Circle would bring more unity to this class as they have so many commonalities to share, and it's just a language barrier that prevents them from approaching each other.

Designing RJE lesson plans for these students was challenging due to the different levels of English. However, with my supervisor's valuable advice and assistance from the LEARN teacher, I could provide some trauma-informed lesson plans. Being aware that most of the students come from war-torn regions and the probability of being traumatized, we aimed to avoid delicate topics. The focus was mainly on self and emotion awareness, making them familiar with mindful moments, nurturing their relationships, exploring cultural responsiveness, and reflecting on their academic achievements and each other's appreciation.

Every circle brought valuable experience and learning to me. First and foremost was the dire need for these circles in the school setting. Especially in the LEARN and ESL setting, which is the focus of this project. RJE practices can clearly be part of integrating refugee and newcomer students into the school community. It is very crucial that we start RJE practices as simple and short as possible for students as it contributes significantly to their engagement. The language barrier was one of the challenges that I faced in these Circles, and the solution that can be offered is again to keep the Circles simple and pose simple but practical and effective topics for

them as they have limited knowledge of English. For more engagement of students, it's better to focus more on their interests and avoid complicated questions from the beginning that need more reflection. In these circles, I found out that due to the essence of the circles and specific guidelines, students feel more empowered, and Circles encourage them to act more wisely. As ESL and LEARN classes are culturally diverse, we should be mindful of how to bring a sense of belonging to the Circles by incorporating anything related to the culture, tradition, and religion of students in Circles.

Talking Circles and RJE practices can positively impact the students' relationships and create a safe and caring environment where they can practice values and social skills, reflect on some issues, and make decisions with one another. These are some valuable practices that as stated by Dewey (1956, as cited in Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014) "embrace the core assumption that schools need to attend to all dimensions of human development in order for optimal learning and social development to take place" (p.513).

Part two: The Importance of Relationship

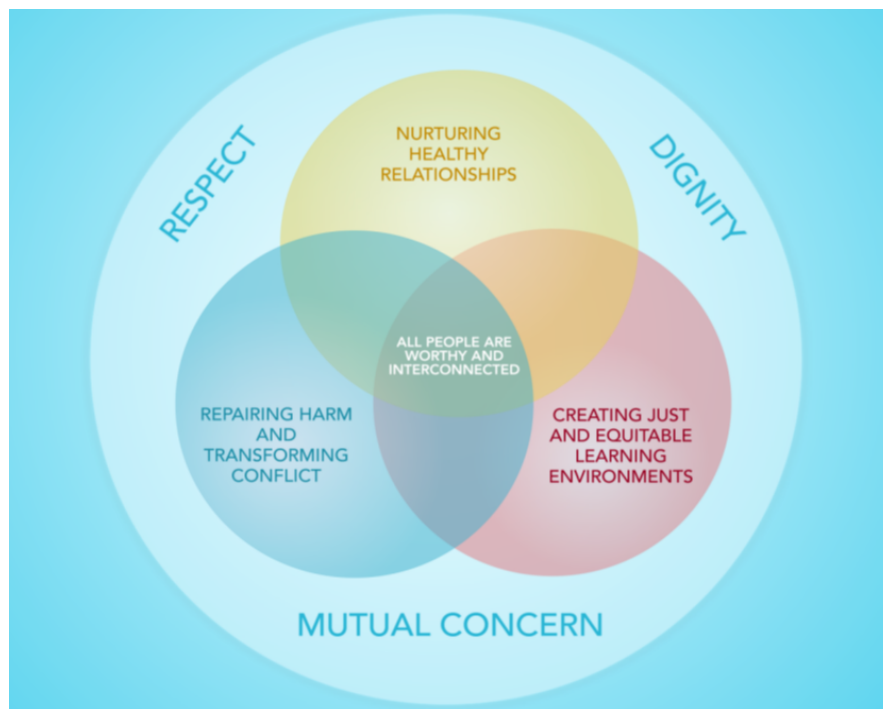


There is much suffering in the world—physical, material, mental...But the greatest suffering is being lonely, feeling unloved, having no one. I have come more and more to realize that it is being unwanted that is the worst disease that any human being can ever experience.

Mother Teresa

Introduction to the Importance of Relationship

There are three components of RF-RJE culture that are incorporated into all aspects of education: nurturing healthy relationships, creating just and equitable learning environments, and repairing harm and transforming conflict. According to the diagram below these three components overlap with each other and revolve around the foundation of core beliefs of considering all humans as worthy and relational. Dignity, respect, and mutual concern are key values that surround, influence and support the whole. The diagram suggests how each component influences and overlaps with the others.



(Evan & Vaandering, 2016)

The first phrase which attracted me in part to the course I had with Dr Vaandering was: 'Relationship First (RF)'. Educators need to be sensitive about establishing relationships with students from the very beginning through any means possible. By building positive relationships with students, teachers facilitate a more conducive learning environment and meet students' developmental, emotional, and academic needs. If educators can establish this relationship with students, they have taken a significant step. A teacher can have a great deal of power and impact, however, they have the choice to use it constructively or destructively. According to (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014), a child's capacity to learn is dependent on the quality of the relationship between the child and the adult. They pointed out that, "One cannot effectively teach without relationship, and relationships themselves teach"(p.526). Therefore, establishing this relationship will eliminate many future challenges. **Accordingly, the focus of this guide is nurturing healthy relationships between teachers and students as well as amongst them.**

Some theories emphasize the importance of relationships in cognitive and social learning. They include attachment theory within psychology, choice theory within education, an ethic of care within moral philosophy, and social control theory within sociology; these theories emphasize the importance of the relationship between adults and children for more effective learning and development. Students regard school life as meaningful as long as they feel safe and understood by others in school environments (Reimer, 2020). To gain these perspectives they need to experience supportive relationships with teachers over time.

A group of NL educators coined the term 'Relationships First (RF)' after having an intensive course about RJE in 2012. As stated by Vaandering & Voelker, (2018, p.5), "Relationships First is a holistic, whole-school, responsive, relationship-based expression of

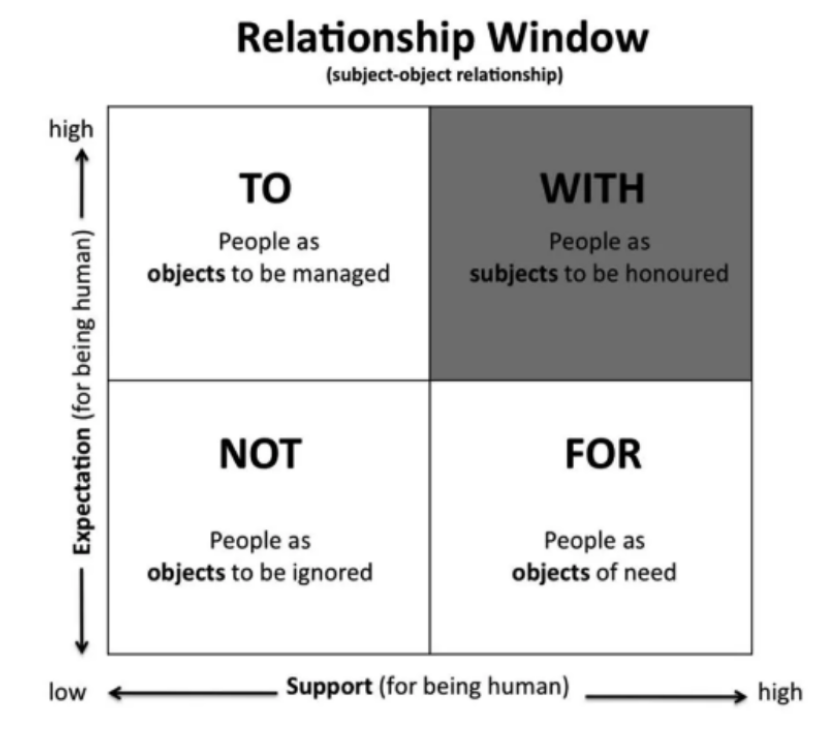
the belief that all people are worthy and interconnected." So, gradually Restorative justice expanded from addressing harm to a broader definition and goal encompassing nurturing, maintaining and repairing relationships so that when harm occurs, the community is well-established and supportive. Relationships First provides a precise perspective of its holistic approach through the following diagram (1).

Vaandering & Voelker (2018) introduce two strategies to determine whether we are in healthy relationships with others or not: One is by asking three key questions that we can identify as if we are honoring (showing high regard to that person), measuring (judging the other), and considering what message we are sending in our conversation with others. By analyzing our actions through these questions, we can determine how we are in a relationship . If we measure others, we undermine their value as we fail to appreciate them for who they are, and disconnection is bound to occur in that relationship. By honoring others, we acknowledge and celebrate their worth because as humans we are all beneficiaries of this connection. By putting ourselves in others' shoes and asking, "What message am I sending to this person?", we are able to discern whether we are dismissing or accepting them, and we can challenge ourselves to foster more inclusive spaces of belonging.

The other strategy is having 'power with' students rather than using it to confront them by doing things 'to' or 'for' them. How power is applied has a direct impact on the health of the relationship. As per the RF window [see below] designed by Evan & Vaandering (2016) when we are in the "power with" part of the window, it allows us to engage in support and expectation in a balanced and reciprocative way. This is a constructive way of expressing power and demonstrating respect, dignity, and caring for one another (Evans & Vaandering, 2016).

Research has shown that when teachers are inclined more towards controlling their students rather than supporting their autonomy, the students exhibit lower levels of self-esteem and intrinsic motivation. Controlling teachers tend to talk more and are more critical of their students, give more commands, and allow less choice and freedom (Edward Deci, as cited in Elliot, 2011).

Relationships tend to be challenging and unhealthy when one of the parties is inclined to exert power for personal gain. This may lead to simply getting something done or more aggressively resulting in bullying. According to the saying, "rules without relationships build rebellion" (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014, p.50) ,it is essential for adults and the youth to maintain a healthy relationship built on reciprocated respect without violating individual needs for power. In situations where there is a combination of high expectations and low support, people do things to each other, and the lack of expectation and support characterize a non-existent relationship. To be more aware of which approach they use when interacting with students, educators must know which part of the relationship window they are in.



Adopted from Evans & Vaandering, 2016.

Relationships are built, nurtured, and sustained in RJE schools through intentional processes, such as talking circles, conflict resolution, and resilience-building. A restorative mindset emphasizes relationships rather than rules. To belong, one has to be seen. To be significant, one has to contribute". RJE's circle process creates a sense of belonging for everyone, and the feeling of being recognized and valuable under any circumstances. Building relationships between teachers and students, and among peers, takes time, effort, and attention, and if ignored in favor of academic achievement will have adverse effects on students. "The kind of relationships among students and adults within a school community is a matter of intention: if we choose to nurture positive relationships, they will flourish"(Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015, p. 316). In the next part we will be more familiar with

the circle and its application as one of the main RJE practices for nurturing and maintaining relationships.

Introduction to the Circle



Figure 11

One of the key components of RJE is 'talking circles'. RJ is founded on communication and talking circles can provide this atmosphere for students. This practice has been derived from Indigenous traditions where sharing one's journey is considered to be a great teacher. Acknowledging the pain, laughter, and the love we experience can bring us closer together and help us learn from one another's experiences. Therefore, the Circle is sacred, as it symbolizes all things in nature (Stevenson, 1999).

This Circle experience has been adopted in educational contexts as the process facilitates dialogue within a community by ensuring that each participant participates equally and proactively in the process (Gregory & Evans, 2020). The Circle has the potential to strengthen trusting and caring relationships between adults and children, as well as among adults and children, in a way that is highly beneficial to lifelong cognitive and social learning. Circles can be utilized to facilitate relationship building, problem-solving, conflict transformation, or other processes that invite community participation. The most important benefit of this practice is that it benefits all people, regardless of whether they are emotionally healthy or not. Through regular talking Circles, we realize the healing potential of a healthy community that has the capacity to support all its members in a variety of difficult situations and foster relationships (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014).

The importance of Relationship Building in Circles

The relationship-building process of the Circle allows the students to learn from each other and share their thoughts, pains, fears, dreams, hopes, and expectations. The level of emotional safety increases when people take the time to create experiences of shared space and connection with one another. Thereby, it facilitates more profound truth-telling, enhanced self-exploration, and increases learning opportunities among the members of the Circle. Some important considerations for facilitating Circles include:

- By developing guidelines together, the group can experience finding common ground regardless of differences, which gives them an empowering feeling.
- There is no "straight to the point" approach in a Circle.

- In order to build relationships in a Circle, the Circle keeper must avoid discussing the sensitive issues at the beginning.

What Exactly is Being Practiced in Circles?

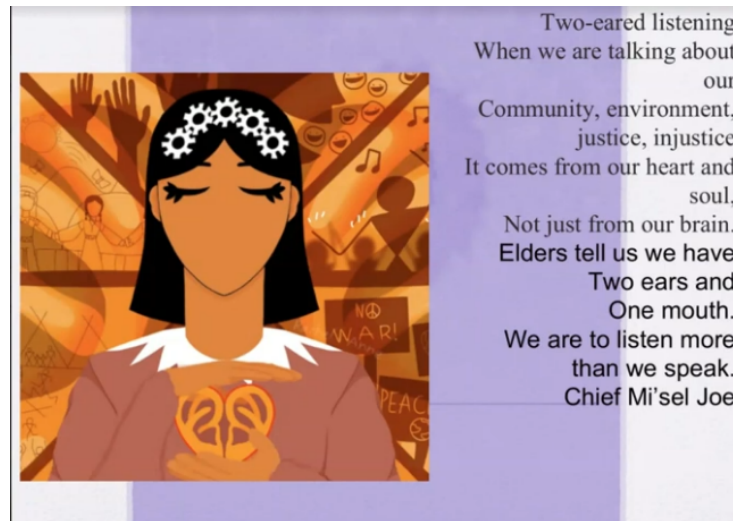


Figure 12

Respect: The intent of the Circle is to give everyone a voice, and to listen very closely to each other.

Equality: Each person has equal power, rights and responsibilities regardless of whether they choose to speak or not; no one is invisible in the Circle.

Empathy and Emotional Literacy: The Circle fosters and develops empathy in participants and nurtures their ability to relate to and reflect on each other's feelings and thoughts.

Problem Solving: In the Circle, participants learn that every participant has something to contribute, and their presence is essential to the success of the group as a whole. Problem solving happens in the Circle without the experts' help and through collective wisdom.

Responsibility: In Circle, participants practice responsibility and accountability to each other.

Self-regulation and Self-awareness: Participants learn to wait to speak and listen patiently without an immediate response. So, self-control is practiced, which opens opportunities for self-awareness.

Shared Leadership: The Circle promotes diversity, provides a space for multiple perspectives, and acknowledges multiple truths. In Circles we share leadership and decision making.

Self Confidence in Speaking: In Circles, students practice expressing their thoughts and feel valued. Even those who are not comfortable gradually develop self-confidence. Moreover, refugee and newcomer students with different levels of English can gradually feel comfortable as they build trust, practice ESL in Circles and develop the self-confidence to speak.

The Circle Process:

Though there is some flexibility in the Circle process, the following elements are essential when applied regularly; students know to trust their experience.

- The Seating arrangement
- Mindfulness moment
- Opening ceremony
- Centerpiece
- Talking piece
- Identifying values
- Generating guidelines
- Introduction/Check in round

- Check-out Round
- Agreements (if the Circle is making decisions) Closing Ceremony
- Closing ceremony
- Guiding questions

The Seating Arrangement

The circular seating arrangement enables all participants to see each other and reinforces equality and connectedness. Sitting in a row is substantially different from sitting in a Circle. When we are organized in rows, someone usually stands in the front and directs all the attention. When we see someone who faces us from behind a desk, our feeling is that the person has authority over us.

We feel more a part of the group when we sit in a Circle. Every member of the Circle contributes to its proper operation. Every time it is someone's turn to talk, that individual takes the lead in turn.

Mindfulness Moment



Figure 13

The first few moments of stillness help to detach participants from external distractions and ease the transition into a Circle space. A few breaths focused on one area or even a pleasant sound or tone can create this stillness. As some teenagers may not be comfortable with these moments in the first session, just short moments of stillness while keeping their eyes closed or open and asking them to think of something pleasant can bring them the sense of relaxation and help them remain focused throughout.

Opening Ceremony

The opening allows participants to become present in the Circle atmosphere and acknowledge their interconnectedness. A few examples of openings are short inspirational texts or poems related to the Circle topic. Before asking students to sit attentively, it may be helpful to incorporate movement to release energy.

Centerpiece



Figure 14



Figure 15

It is common practice for Circle keepers to use a centerpiece on a floor in the middle of the Circle to create a focal point that encourages speaking and listening from the heart. The centerpiece may include a mat or cloth and some items representing the core self, values, and guidelines, which are the group's shared vision. Observing inclusion and equality, the center can embed items representing participants' cultures or any item that may represent the individuals. Altogether, the main goal of the centerpiece is to bring warmth, inclusion, and hospitality. Explaining the meaning of the items placed in the centerpiece is very important to prevent any offense or misinterpretation. As a group, we can create centerpieces that feature more representations of the people in our Circle.

Talking Piece



Figure 16



Figure 17

A talking piece is a reminder for all participants that everyone in the Circle will have the opportunity to speak, and it regulates the pace of participation in the Circle. Having a meaning relevant to the values of the Circle or the plan of the Circle is extremely important for the talking piece to be powerful. The meaning and story are usually shared with the Circle participants. Guidelines for using a talking piece include:

- The person who holds the talking piece is invited to talk at that moment. Once finished, he/she passes the talking piece to the person next to him/her.
- A talking piece invites the speaker to speak continuously without being interrupted, while the listener concentrates on listening rather than thinking about how to respond.
- Through its physical passing from hand to hand, the talking piece ties the Circle participants together.
- Participating in the talking Circle does not make speaking obligatory, and participants can pass whenever they want. Alternatively, they may hold it for a moment of silence before passing it on.
- The talking piece distributes control of the process among all participants instead of only to the keeper.
- In situations where the facilitator needs to maintain the integrity of the Circle, the keeper may interrupt and speak without the talking piece
- Talking piece moves around the Circle in order. It doesn't move across the Circle.
- The guidelines of the talking piece are relevant for all the Circle participants, including the teacher/adult/Circle keeper.

Identifying Values



Figure 18

One of the foundations of the Circles are the values that promote positive relationships. Participants in the Circles identify values that they found essential to sustain healthy Circles and for the well-being of all. As a result, participants can reference these values when tensions arise and gradually nurture them in their relationship.

The Circle space is designed to help us move in the direction of our best self or core self—from wherever we are. In a Circle, everyone is accepted as they are and are supported to reach their best version and full potential. The following steps and points provide better insight for identifying values in the Circles:

- Ask students to name or write the values they consider important for the Circle.
- With the passage of the talking piece, the participants will share their chosen values and why they found them important. After sharing, students will put their chosen values in the Circle's center.
- Facilitators do not impose values on participants but engage them in the discussion about the values that matter to them.

- Typically, people identify values such as honesty, respect, openness, caring, courage, patience, and humility as the basis for the process.
- Introduce values before discussing difficult issues as it can transform the way people interact when discussing the issues.

Generating Guidelines

The guidelines are an agreement among the participants about how they expect each other to conduct themselves in the Circle and refer to the expected behavior that, according to the participants, makes the Circle a safe space for them in order to participate. There are no strict and rigid guidelines in the Circle, but rather supportive reminders of the behavior expected of those who are a part of it. The keeper may suggest several basic guidelines and ask the participants whether they approve of them or if they would like to add any additional guidelines.

Examples of some basic guidelines are as follows:

- Respect the talking piece
- Speak from the heart
- Listen from the heart
- Personal information shared in the Circle is confidential except where safety is at risk.
- Remain in Circle.

See the lesson plans in pages 82-102 for some basic guidelines.

Round

A "round" is one pass of the talking piece around the Circle. The keeper poses a question and generally invites one of the students to go first. However, as a participant, the keeper may answer first if they notice that the students do not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts. In this way, the keeper breaks the ice or models a response to clarify the purpose of the posed question giving the students an example of what their response could be.

The keeper then passes the talking piece to the person to their left or right, indicating which direction the talking piece will continue to move around the Circle.

In the first round, participants are invited to say their names as well as respond to the question. It is always okay for a participant to pass. The following parts give us ideas on how to do the rounds.

Introduction/Check-In Round. First, ask the participants to introduce themselves if they have not already been so. If participants already are familiar with each other, we can start check-in. Getting acquainted with the questions is the best way to start building relationships and allowing students to learn more about each other.

*Refer to the sample guiding questions for the examples (Pages: 84-103).

Check-out Round. Encourage the participants to share their feelings and thoughts about the Circle while passing the talking piece. If you are short on time, you could ask them to express their thoughts and learn from the Circle in just one word.

Agreements Round (if the Circle is making decisions). Decisions in the Circle are made by consensus. The standard of consensus in a Circle requires the decision to be one that every participant can live with. Agreements are typically recorded for clarity and for future reference. All Circle members are responsible for the successful implementation of the agreement. Sometimes, members of a Circle may agree to come to a decision which is aligned with all of them, and this decision may be required to be reported.

Closing Ceremony

As a closing, the participants are recognized for their efforts. Any activity in this section carries a sense of hope for the future. Closing ceremonies can be a final round where participants share one thing they appreciate about their time together, breathe quietly, or read an inspirational or calming poem or text (not recommended for first Circles with teenagers).

Guiding Questions. Each round of the talking piece begins with prompting questions or themes intended to stimulate discussion or reflection among the Circle members. In each round, each Circle member can respond to the question or theme. Below are some important points about guiding questions that need to be considered.

- Guiding questions are always open-ended in that there is no right or wrong answer, and hopefully everyone present can think of something to share.
- Guiding questions are carefully crafted to build relationships, explore issues, and provide ideas for the next Circles.
- Guiding questions are designed to encourage discussion. They begin with a lighter topic but then are intended to go beyond surface responses.

- Effective questions invite participants to speak from their own experience, tell stories from their lives, and focus on feelings and impact, rather than facts.
- Effective questions that invite participants to share difficult or painful events need to transition and conclude with talking about how to improve the situation in the present.
- High quality guiding questions are relevant: they cover topics that are relevant to students' lives.
- A high-quality guiding question can reveal unspoken questions in the life of youth; For example, "What does it mean to be popular?" is a question that is implicit in many students' minds but is perhaps rarely discussed openly.
- Simple and clear language is used.
- The goal of a guiding question is not advocacy but discovery; it is not a time for facts to be taught or argued about. For example, the question: "Why is it always best to be polite?" may be helpful, but it will lead to a conclusion; Instead ask: "How many of you have been told: it's best to be polite. "Share why you might have been told this." Or more generally ask "What makes relationships work out so well?" and then allow participants to conclude that politeness has a place if these ideas come out in the sharing.
- Guiding questions can be related to current events for which time is not planned in the curriculum. For example, stories of Indigenous schools or war in Ukraine made many students feel scared. Rather than ignoring or downplaying these concerns, ask them to share their concerns. "Does anyone have anything they would like to say about the news about Indigenous schools?"

- Guiding questions stimulate students' curiosity and motivate sharing and invite deeper exploration.

Examples of guiding questions:

Getting Acquainted

- Share a happy childhood memory.
- If you could be a superhero, what superpowers would you choose and why?
- How would your best friend describe you?
- What would you not want to change about your life?
- If you could talk to someone from your family who is no longer alive, who would it be and why? • If you had an unexpected free day, what would you like to do?
- If you were an animal, what animal would you be and why?
- Name two things or people who always make you laugh.
- I like to collect....
- If you could have a face-to-face conversation with anyone, who would it be and why?
- Describe your ideal job.
- Describe your favourite vacation.
- If you could change anything about yourself, what would it be?

Exploring Values

- Imagine you are in a conflict with a person who is important in your life.
- What values do you want to guide your conduct as you try to work out that conflict?
- What is your passion?
- What do you keep returning to in your life?

- What touches your heart?
- What gives you hope?
- What demonstrates respect?
- What change would you like to see in your community? What can you do to promote that change?
- A time when you acted on your core values even though others did not.

Storytelling from our lives

- A time when you had to let go of control.
- A time when you were outside of your comfort zone.
- An experience in your life when you “made lemonade out of lemons”.
- An experience of transformation when, out of a crisis or difficulty, you discovered a gift in your life.
- An experience of causing harm to someone and then dealing with it in a way you felt good about.
- An experience of letting go of anger or resentment.
- A time when you were in conflict with your parents or caregiver.
- An experience where you discovered that someone was very different from the negative assumptions you first made about that person.
- An experience of feeling that you did not fit in.

Questions Relating to Curriculum:

- The best/hardest thing about this science project is...
- The main character in the book we are reading is like/not like me when...
- These math problems make me feel...



Figure 19

The Keeper's Role

The facilitator of Circles (Keeper) assists in providing a collective and safe space for the participants that will allow them to speak honestly and openly. The keeper does this by leading the group through the process of identifying their values and guidelines, supporting proper use of the talking piece, and inviting all participants to play a role in maintaining the space and contributing to its growth. Some key points about the keeper's role are as follows:

- The keeper organizes the Circle, sets the time and place, invites the participants, selects the talking piece and centerpiece, or involves the students in selecting them, plans the opening and closing ceremonies, and prepares the guiding questions.
- Between rounds, the keeper stimulates more reflection in students through posing questions or topic suggestions while maintaining the quality of the collective space.

- The keeper's responsibility is to lead participants to explore different perspectives in the group. In this way, students may find many commonalities or hear from different standpoints and accept the differences.
- If a particular issue or disagreement is raised by the group, the Keeper is responsible that the Circle protocol is followed.

My Key Learnings as a Guest Circle Keeper in a LEARN Class

Talking Circles in a junior high school with refugee and newcomer students was an amazing experience for me. We learn a lot from our experience when we put our knowledge into practice. The following key points summarize my achievements and learnings from these talking Circles, and how they can be facilitated more effectively and successfully:

- Start with small groups and simple questions.
- Be mindful of the religions and look for opportunities to bring a sense of belonging for every member of the group through finding similarities and using items representing their cultures and traditions in Circle as items on centerpiece or talking piece.
- As students in LEARN and ESL classes usually have a low command of English, it would be better to introduce Circle with the help of a translator prior to facilitating any Circle. In this session, the facilitator introduces the talking Circle and avoids potential confusion, as spending time on translation brings about disengagement for students.
- When students learned about “Passing is OK,” I noticed this freedom gave them empowerment and trust.
- Having a Circle with teenagers is different from having a Circle with adults so the Circle needs to be managed very delicately to prevent developing reluctance to further

participation. This can be done through focusing on their authentic issues, having short Circles, engaging them in fun activities, and valuing all participants equally.

- Sometimes developing some habits in students takes time, like understanding the importance of mindful moments but in the right time they may show interest. We just need to give the students appropriate time.
- Students feel valued when they participate in talking Circles. They act wiser, and they learn. Because they are invited to share their views, there is no force to share their thoughts. As they practice some values, they gradually learn to respect all their peers and teachers and act wiser.
- Students can add whatever they find important to the guidelines. For example, in one of the Circles, some students laughed at a comment by a student and the offended student asked for adding “laughing with students rather than laughing at students” to the guideline.
- If students do not want to join the Circle, they can sit outside the Circle where they can benefit from the positive vibes of the Circle and can likely be interested in participating gradually.
- Circles are a safe and caring place for students to practice some agreed upon values. Educators do not have to expect everything to be perfect in the early Circles. Sometimes chaos may happen, and educators should be ready to address them based on RJE principles. Discussions regarding the difficulties can model how educators do not have power over students but can guide them using effective statements and reminding them of the guideline.

- In the first Circles, include simple and fun activities so they get used to the process while they get to know each other better. This will impact the student's overall perception of Circles.
- As Circle keeper educators, we are not responsible for giving advice or solving problems. Instead, we are responsible for providing a safe and caring space for them to express themselves and empathize with their emotions and experiences.
- As educators, we have the habit of using terms such as " Classroom management and class control" but the purpose of the Circle is to engage all the members. By facilitating collective wisdom and decision making in a Circle, we are encouraging "classroom engagement".
- Energizer activities breaks the ice, promotes engagement and develop interconnectedness. Laughter and fun break through all the barriers.

By regularly using Circle in the community, we are not just building relationships or resolving conflict but "We are practicing basic ways of being that are fundamental to being successful together" (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014, p.57). Based on the needs and issues in each school community, different Circles may address them and practice accordingly. LEARN, and ESL classes have their own characteristics, needs, and vulnerabilities. The Circle can be applied for different purposes: developing friendships, integrating different communities in class, trauma-informed practices, newcomer inclusion & multicultural education, language acquisition & competence, resolving conflicts, sharing immigration stories, and refugee and newcomer parent involvement in the school community.

Part Three: The Miracle of Connection



Figure20

“The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts...the place where intellect and emotion and spirit will converge.”

Parker Palmer

As a student, I always struggled with math lessons and lacked self-confidence in those periods. One particular year from my school years stands out the most in my memory, and when I think of that class, only good things come to mind. In contrast to my other math classes, I did very well that year! Even at the age of fourteen, if anyone asked the reason behind it, I would reply that my teacher had made a strong "connection" with me. Nevertheless, I find it strange how a student who is weak in math can get a good score and understand math from a teacher better than other teachers! It is evident that this connection has magical power. Now think of refugee and newcomer students entering a new country, learning a new education system, and new language. How can this connection bring this sense of belonging to them and put them at ease? In some cultures, school is called a second home and plays a pivotal role in children's education. The LEARN and ESL teachers are the people who can create a profound impact on refugees and newcomer students by making an effective connection and motivating them to attend the class despite all the hardships that they bear in the first few months and even years after their arrival.

According to Boyes-Watson & Piranis (2014), having a positive attitude toward others affects how we learn. Modern brain research suggests that information with emotional content is more deeply ingrained in our memory. Similarly, children do not care about what you know until they know that you care for them. Additionally, the absence of emotional and physical safety in the classroom can disrupt cognition and negatively impact learning. It is obvious from these findings and experiences how teachers can positively impact students' learning through connections and are able to transform their lives.

Brene Brown (2010, p.19, as cited in Brummer et al., 2021, p.73) defines connection as "the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued." A connection with students can be magical but judging, comparing and evaluating students can break this precious bond . Rosenberg (2015, as cited in Brummer et al., 2021) believes that communication should aim to build connections rather than make people do things. The spirit of connection means giving our kids attention, listening to them, and valuing their contribution to problem-solving. It also means clearly stating that we are on their side regardless of our personal preference. Both who are struggling and those who are not can benefit from this relationship. Perhaps, some relationships have helped those not struggling to never be in that position. It is really painful to see some students who are not interested in going to school just because of the lack of this connection with the teacher. As human beings, connection is one of our first needs. In our daily interactions, we search for these "true connections," which have the power of healing. Educators need to be mindful of building relationships with students without focusing solely on academics but rather on building relationships based on common humanity. In order to establish a trusting relationship, students must get to know their teachers by connecting with their humanity, and not solely by connecting with their teaching styles. Suppose students ensure that they are valued and honored apart from their academic background and achievements. In that case, they are likely to develop an interest in any subject matter just because of that particular "connection" being made and it simply happens!

Empathy: Empathy is one of the critical components of RJE for creating a connection. Having the ability to understand and empathize with one another in the present moment is the key to a positive connection and a strong bond. In other words, it does not mean whether we

like or dislike the person we're connecting with and agree with their beliefs. Embracing empathy is about making others feel seen, heard, and valued without judgment. Indeed, empathy is an integral part of a truly positive connection.

Empathetic listening goes beyond just hearing words. To deeply and compassionately listen, it requires us to be aware of and be present to the person who is speaking to us in a relationship. When we deeply and compassionately listen, we are completely focused on our addressee. As long as we are present and aware, we do not need to jump to judgment or correct them. Students sometimes need to be heard compassionately, they do not need advice or interpretation. As described by Miller (2003, p.41)"When you listen with your heart, you concentrate on what the heart knows best and respond to most naturally. You focus on feelings.... A deep place in the other reaches out toward a deep place in you, hoping for a connection. Their heart calls to yours, and when you're at your listening best, your heart responds, I am here." Regardless of how people's feelings differ from your own, you keep being open to them even though your approach is completely different.

Caring Relationship: One of the core values in RJE is establishing a caring relationship. As students learn that we are in a caring relationship, they gradually develop trust. Glasser (1992, as stated in Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014, p.517) believes that "children will choose to learn only from teachers whom they have assessed to be part of their "quality" world." In other words, the teachers they trust are those who recognize and respect them. They choose to learn from these teachers because they regard them as caring individuals who attempt to meet their needs. Kids understand who cares for them. Children might not understand the language, but they feel the tone of speech and postures. Care is one of the core values of restorative justice. It

is imperative that students perceive their teachers as “caring teachers”. When teachers listen to them attentively and empathize with them, students feel safe in the school environment, and this brings them a sense of connection and belonging. Specifically talking about refugee and newcomer students, for instance, language barriers bring about many challenges for these students, and they really need to feel being cared for, and the benefit of that relationship is not realized if the individual does not perceive themselves as being cared for. The power of caring to this extent is important that "If the students see the teacher as caring, then they can accept whatever he does, no matter how coercive it may seem on the surface" (Glasser, 1992:39, as cited in Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014, p.525).

A teacher’s connections with the refugee community increases personal relations, a sense of belonging, and opportunities for success for refugee and newcomer students. Implementing restorative justice practices like talking Circles are among the influential initiatives that expedite and enhance the process. When schools are able to provide a safe and caring environment that is sensitive to the needs of culturally-, linguistically-, and religiously diverse learners, a more inclusive school and classroom results with a profound connection being made with students that is the first and foremost element for their integration into the school community. The Talking Circles, as one of the main components of RJE, "were created on the premise that people are "hardwired to connect" (Commission on Children at Risk, 2003, as cited in Schumacher,2014, p.9). I will introduce some RJE practical ideas for making this connection with students in the next section.

Practical Ideas for Making Connection with Students



Figure 21

Morning Pages

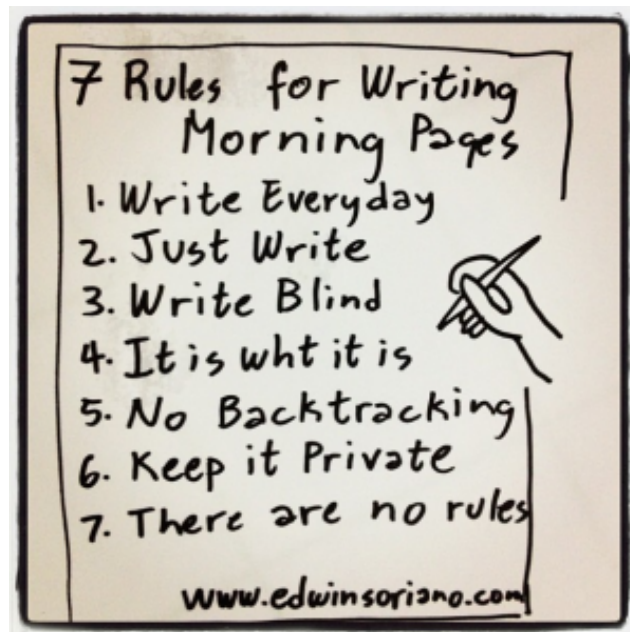
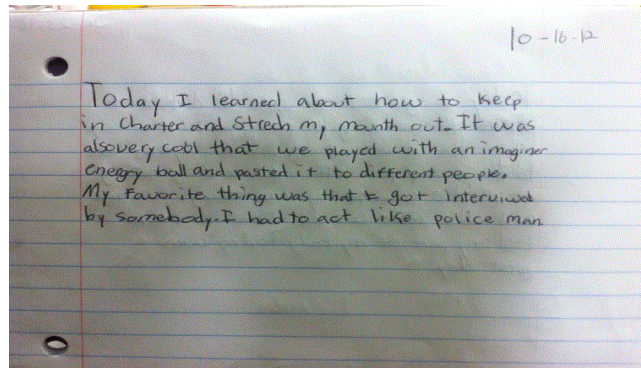


Figure 22

Morning pages (Fuller, 2016) is a censorship free, day-to-day activity that can be part of restorative justice pedagogy. In these journals, students are invited to share their refugee and newcomer experiences, feelings, and thoughts about living in a new country. With this writing activity, students and teachers interact, as the teacher responds to these morning pages regularly and follows the students' interests and desired topics for conversation. There is no

such thing as a red pen being used by teachers for correcting or grading the writing. This is simply a friendly conversation between a teacher and a student. Noddings (2012a, as cited in Ogilvie & Fuller, 2016) calls this interaction "active listening" and emphasizes it as a way of showing respect and care in these relationships. Students gradually develop trust, and teachers gradually learn a great deal about their students' world and needs, becoming able to better assist and support the students in their settlement process and integration into the community.

Communication with Students and Exploring Their Interest



Figure 23

The RJE emphasizes the importance of fostering a positive relationship between students and providing a caring environment for them. Based on my daughter's teachers' positive impact on her through "Relationship First," I am convinced that understanding the world of students can be a valuable tool for supporting them, engaging them more effectively,

and establishing a strong bond with them. Students should first be assured that teachers will treat them as individuals and take time to show them that they care about what is important to them and what is happening in their lives. Educators should look for every opportunity to learn about students' backgrounds and explore their interests. Through those interests, likes, and dislikes, educators can look for a variety of methods to engage their students. I have compiled a list of simple steps educators can take to build these strong relationships that can impact refugee and newcomer students' attitudes regarding any subject taught by their teachers and allow them to feel a part of a caring environment that can foster their development.

- Talk to them about their favorite video game characters, their most beloved sports figure or hero, or of their love of cooking.
- Share with them your love for pets, books, and anything of your liking.
- Have lunch with the students
- Attend their sporting event and show interest.
- Tell them about your favorite music, talk to them about your favorite books, and read them the stories that were your favorite.
- Listen to their stories, the hard times they had in their camps, or their immigration process (Listening is considered a kind of healing for people who are listened to).
- Show interest in learning their native language, at least learn simple words and ask them to write your name in their native language.
- Celebrate students' birthdays, even just singing a birthday song with the other students.
- Hold simple traditional and religious events for refugees and newcomers.
- Provide spaces for students in school to practice their religious ceremonies.

- Ask students to give presentations, even very simple ones, about their cultures and traditions.
- Hold traditional food events for parents.
- Ask students to bring pictures of their parents' siblings and extended families to class, talk about them, and show them to their peers (these are what refugee and newcomer families have left behind due to an imposed immigration.)
- Let them present the art of their country and culture either by bringing some items to class or through the Internet.
- Let them show their country and its beautiful places on the Internet or in the pictures that they might have.
- Hang pictures of their home country on the ESL & LEARN class walls.

The following two stories have been taken from the book "Best practices in early literacy instruction" (Barone, D. M., & Mallette, M. H.,2013)

Kevin was a student that was unwilling to cooperate during his reading recovery lessons. He was not interested in reading, and the intervention teacher did not insist on him and asked him to put his book away and struck up a conversation with him. The teacher asked about Kevin's interests. First, he gave some generic answers, but the teacher asked deeper questions like the kind of music he may like. Again, he resisted giving clearer answers, and the teacher again asked about what kind of music he liked and gradually broke the ice, as he revealed that he likes "Rap" music. When the teacher asked if he liked Little Willie, the rapper, and Kevin got thrilled, and his eyes lit up when he learned about his commonalities with the teacher.

He gradually expressed his interests in basketball, race cars, and wrestling. Kevin was a huge fan of World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) and knew all the wrestlers and their moves. Kevin was initially hesitant to reveal his true interests. Going to the park and Chuck E. Cheese are generic answers that children often provide to appease teachers. It was not until the teacher revealed that she knew a little bit about his world that Kevin began to trust her and disclosed more about himself. All of Kevin's passions were decidedly masculine. Reading many recovery books, he does not find the tough characters interesting. Mostly they show sweet stories of children and animals engaged in idyllic adventures. Later, the teacher worked hard to find books that reflected Kevin's masculine interests. With his mother's approval, the teacher regularly downloaded pictures of his favorite wrestlers from the Internet, and he wrote a book describing the various wrestlers and their moves. Kevin taught the teacher about the wrestlers he loved. The teacher made this deep connection with Kevin by identifying his passion. Once the teacher knew his world, Kevin developed an interest in reading and attended his Reading Recovery lessons. Kevin left the program with a sense that reading, and writing were tools he could use to pursue his interests, and he began to view himself as a reader and a writer.

In the case of Martin, the teacher used exaggerated language when she wanted to introduce books to the boy, like parentese, Ms. Camp's *teacherese*, and Martin resisted this way of talking and reading. Martin was an African-American 6-year-old student. After visiting his home, it turned out that Martin was a responsible young man. His mother was a single mother of three children and Martin was the oldest. He had multiple responsibilities at home. Besides completing his homework, he helped his mother with the baby and assisted with household chores. Clearly competent, he played a valuable role as her assistant. After observing Martin at

home, the mediating teacher noticed that the way Martin's teacher approaches him in Reading Recovery is different. Therefore, after learning this information from Martin, the teacher knew well that their way of addressing Martin did not work and they looked stupid to him as he is a boy who considers himself as a man due to the absence of his dad and his role in his household.

Talking Circle



Figure 24

Considering the emphasis of restorative justice on interconnectedness and reciprocity, it is essential that dialogic interaction remains at its core. Based on this, talking Circles are one of the most respectful forms of interaction in RJE (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Hopkins, 2011; Pranis, 2005, as cited in Ogilvie & Fuller, 2016). In this form of interaction, "students are encouraged to dialogically engage with concepts so that they are not passive recipients of knowledge but act as "subject[s] in the world and with the world"" (Freire & Macedo, 1998, p.

85). Talking Circles are a method of engagement that is respectful, democratic and effective. By using RJE practices, critical thinking will be promoted among students, and they will find this form of engagement more enjoyable and effective.

Talking Circles can serve a variety of purposes. The first Circle should focus on building relationships and trust among students. These talking Circles allow students to reflect on their important issues, academic needs, and social concerns. They can share their immigration stories of the good, dark and difficult times and understand that they will feel better by sharing. There are three different forms of Circles which are described below:

Community/Trust-Building. The purpose of these Circles is to foster relationships, set expectations, and build trust within the school community. These Circles are the foundation of RJE Circles in the school culture. There are many different types of community Circles, including community dialogue, team building exercises, relationship building, and even gratitude Circles to appreciate one another. These Circles act as preventative Circles for harm and conflicts in school.

Healing/ Restorative Circles. These Circles, also known as responsive Circles, are designed to address harm, conflict, trauma, and grief. There are times when we need to support and comfort each other after experiencing a loss or tragedy. These Circles offer an excellent opportunity to discuss diverse social issues, such as racism, homophobia, violence, and classism. The healing Circles provide a safe and caring environment to address harm in the presence of those who have been impacted and aim to bring justice to everyone.

Academic Circle. In academic Circles, teachers can bring up any subject to discuss and learn about. Students can talk about the lessons with which they are struggling. For example, academic Circles can be about teaching and learning ESL, where students can actively participate in. As stated by Brumer et al. (2021), teachers can engage students in meaningful dialogues in different ways in these Circles, such as by discussing the content after a didactic lesson (Brumer et al.,2021).

Below you can be more familiar with different lesson plans and structures of different Circles.

Samples of Community/Trust-Building Circles
Circle Plan # 1 - Warm up - Introductory Session

Purpose: Introducing talking Circles to students

Class/Group:

Date:

Approx Time	Activity	Details
	Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write guidelines on a card for the center of the Circle. -Arrange the centerpiece with the help of students. -Make sure there are enough chairs. -Arrange everyone in a Circle of chairs.
	Talking Piece	Soft toy to evoke soft feeling.
~7min	Welcome	<p>Say: Today, I am excited to be with you to introduce you to talking Circles. In these Circles, we plan to nurture relationships.</p> <p>Ask: What do you think that means?</p> <p>Ask: Why do you feel it might be important to know more about each other?</p> <p>Say: We use a talking piece to help us take turns in a circle. For today, I chose the talking piece. On other days, you can bring the talking piece. This talking piece is the first toy I bought for my daughter. That's why it's important to me. The guidelines for using a talking piece are very simple.</p> <p>Say: We pass the talking piece around the Circle, and when you get it, you can speak; when you don't have it, you are listening. Let's give that a try as you share what is important to you. If you don't want to share, you can pass it on to the next person.</p> <p>Thank you! In this Circle, we practice listening when we don't speak.</p>
~5 min	Values	<p>Think of some good qualities that make our relationship with people better.</p> <p>Say: I will mention one of them that I like: "Kindness" Do you have anything in your mind?</p> <p>After receiving some answers, put the values on the centerpiece and tell them. We call these values.</p>

Approx Time	Activity	Details
~3 min	Check-in Circle	How do you feel about sitting in a Circle today?
~5 min	Check-up	How did you get your name? Share any stories you have heard about it and your feelings about your name.
~5 min	Round 1	Share what was your favorite toy in childhood?
~5 min	Round 2	What good or interesting thing have you found in living in St. John's?
~5 min	Fun Activity	Toothless Fruit: Each player gives themselves the name of a fruit and shares their choice around the Circle. Player, One begins by saying their fruit name and then the fruit name of another player, but they must not show their teeth when they speak. Roll your lips over your teeth to do this. If the other players see their teeth, they must point and say "teeth teeth teeth," all the while covering their own teeth with their lips.
~2 min	Check out Round	Share one thing you enjoyed about this Circle.
	Decisions Reached/ Things to remember for the next Circle...	Ask students to bring an object which represents the land they are living in for the next Circle for the talking piece.

Circle Plan # 2 – Our New Land

Purpose: Introducing talking Circles to students

Class/Group:

Date:

Approx Time	Activity	Details
	Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write guidelines on a card for the center of the Circle. -Arrange the centerpiece with the help of students. -Make sure there are enough chairs. -Arrange everyone in a Circle of chairs.
	Talking Piece	Shell/ Shell necklace
~7min	Welcome	Greet students and share today's topic –Our New Land and the First residents of Canada
	Guidelines	<p>There are lots of things happening in the time we speak and listen. What do you feel is important for this time together?</p> <p>The student's answers will be written on different pieces of paper, and the teacher will include some of the basic guidelines below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone has the right to speak. 2. Speak from the heart. 3. Listen from the heart. 4. The talking piece holder is the speaker. Once finished, pass it. 5. Passing is Ok. If you wish, you can talk later. 6. No judgment 7. Respect privacy <p>Review the guidelines by having a student volunteer to read them.</p> <p>Which one of the guidelines that I mentioned did you like more? Share your feelings and thoughts and why you think it is important in these Circles.</p> <p>Say: If there is any question about the guidelines, ask. Gradually we will be more familiar with them.</p>

Approx Time	Activity	Details
~ 5 min	Values	Think of some positive qualities you may need from people when entering a new land.
~3 min	Check-in Circle	Say: Come back to the Circle and let's do a very quick Circle to share one thing you like to do for fun. Remember the guidelines and values we shared.
~5 min	Check-up	<p>Invite each student, in turn, to think about and then share one thing they love about the natural environment in their area.</p> <p>Say: For example, if you live in a city:</p> <p>Think about the trees; the birds; the bugs; the moss that lives between the cracks in the concrete; parks with grass, plants, and flowers; the sky, clouds, or light; squirrels, jungles, and ponds.</p>
~5 min	Video:	<p>A video about indigenous people would be played.</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CISeEFTsgDA</p>
~5 min	Check out	Ask: What new thing did you learn from the video? Share your thoughts.
~5 min	Fun Activity	SIMON IN A BIND: This game is a version of the old 'Simon Says,' which is still under copyright. Explain that this game is all about taking care of others. Players stand in a Circle and link elbows with those on either side and must remain linked for the game's duration. The facilitator (or take turns around the Circle) gives instructions like Lift elbows as high as they can, bend as far as you can, scratch your ear, scratch the person's ear next to you, touch your nose, walk around the Circle to the right, hop up and down, Squat down, Sit down.
~2 min	Decisions Reached/ Things to remember for the next Circle...	Ask students to bring an object that represents them for the next Circle. Ask if anyone is interested in bringing a talking piece for the next session and choose it yourself if there are no suggestions.

Circle Plan # 3 - Who am I?

Purpose: To promote self-reflection at a level deeper than normally experienced and help increase self-awareness.

Class group:

Date:

Approx Time	Activity	Details
2 min	Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write guidelines on a card for the center of the Circle. -Arrange the centerpiece with the help of the students. -Make sure there are enough chairs. -Arrange everyone in a Circle of chairs.
	Talking piece	Relaxing ball
2 min	Welcome	<p>Greet students and share today's topic: Who am I really?</p> <p>Say: Today, we want to explore ourselves more and reflect on ourselves deeper. At the end of the Circle, we will see that we will have become more aware of ourselves and will have shared our experiences of this exploration.</p>
	Guidelines	<p>Have a brief review of the guidelines/ ask one of the students to read them and request all students to respect the guidelines in this session, which are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone has the right to speak. 2. Speak from the heart. 3. Listen from the heart. 4. The talking piece holder is the speaker. Once finished, pass it on. 5. Passing is Ok. If you wish, you can talk later. 6. No judgment 7. Respect Privacy

Approx Time	Activity	Details
~ 5 min	Values/ Mindful moments	<p>Lay out the value cards in the Circle. Then pick up the "trust" card.</p> <p>Say: Think about someone you trust. Put a picture in your mind of that person. What did they do that made you trust them? Quietly, in your heart/mind, be thankful for that person.</p>
~ 5 min	Land Acknowledgement	<p>Ask students what they learned about indigenous people in the last session, introduce the "land acknowledgment" concept, read them, and provide a translation. Let the students know that this is a sign of our gratitude, and although we will not read it every session, we will have it in our hearts. It is good to let the students know the names of those tribes.</p> <p>Land Acknowledgement:</p> <p>We acknowledge that the land on which our school is situated is in the traditional territories of diverse Indigenous groups, and we acknowledge with respect the diverse histories and cultures of the Beothuk, Mi'kmaq, Innu, and Inuit of this province.</p>
~ 5 min	Check in	<p>Ask: Share the object you have brought that represents you and let us know why it represents you.</p>
~ 5 min	Energizer	<p>Once you have stated your name, complete an action like clapping or jumping. The next participant repeats previous actions and adds his/her own action. The repetition of actions will continue in order until someone forgets the action. Participants may help each other remember the order of the actions. If the actions are forgotten, the group starts new with the person who forgot them.</p>
~ 5 min	Main activity	<p>Ask students to think and say three things about themselves, filling in the rest of this sentence.</p> <p>I am.....</p> <p>Ask students who are willing to share their complete answers. They can share all three answers, just one answer, or even nothing.</p>
~ 5 min	Energizer	<p>Be unique</p> <p>This classroom game is about being unique and getting to know each other better. Every student has to say something unique about themselves. For example: "I have four brothers." If one or more students have four brothers, the students who</p>

		share the "not-so-unique" aspect must sit down. The goal is to share very special things about yourself that no one else has.
Approx Time	Activity	Details
~ 5 min	Check-out:	(Optional, depends on the remaining time) By doing this exercise, have you learned anything about yourself that you have not noticed before?
~ 2 min	Decisions Reached/Things to remember for next class.	Mention the topic of the next Circle which is "daily emotional weather report" and ask them if they have any suggestions for a talking piece.

Notes:

Facilitator: _____ Follow-up Needed: Yes No

Thank everyone for participating in the Circle today.

Modified and adapted from: Circle Forward (Boyes-Watson & Pranis,2014), Module # 5.7, p.197

Circle Plan # 4 - Daily Emotional Weather Report Circle/Session # 1

Purpose: To assist participants in becoming more aware of the emotions and thoughts that underlie their behavior and to increase participants' ability to recognize, label, and modulate their feelings.

Class/Group:

Date:

Approx Time	Activity	Details
~ 2 min	Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write guidelines on a card for the center of the Circle. -Arrange the centerpiece with the help of the students. -Make sure there are enough chairs. -Arrange everyone in a Circle of chairs.
	Talking Piece:	Puppet
~ 5 min	Welcome	<p>After greeting the students, explain that when interacting with people or having daily thoughts, maybe we have some positive experiences or maybe some unpleasant ones.</p> <p>Say: We may not be in the habit of thinking about or even remembering the feelings we have.</p> <p>Say: It may not be something you think of doing on a day-to-day basis. But a big part of controlling our behavior is first seeing what feelings are underneath our behavior.</p> <p>Say: To do that, we have come up with "The Daily Emotional Weather Report" to see what is happening inside us and be aware of it.</p> <p>Say: I'm sure you will have a wonderful experience in this Circle today (with passion and excitement).</p>

Approx Time	Activity	Details
~ 4 min	Guidelines	<p>Have a brief review of the guidelines/ ask one of the students to read them and request all students to respect the guidelines in this session.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone has the right to speak. 2. Speak from the heart. 3. Listen from the heart. 4. The talking piece holder is the speaker. Once finished, pass it on. 5. Passing is Ok. If you wish, you can talk later. 6. No judgment. 7. Respect privacy.
~ 6 min	Values	<p>Lay out the value cards in the middle of the Circle (Centerpiece). Pick up the RESPECT value card.</p> <p>Say: “for our next Circle round, I want you to think about an example where YOU experienced RESPECT from another person. This can have happened recently or a long time ago. Tell the students that “I will give you 30 seconds to think quietly about your idea.” After 30 seconds, ask: “Is there someone who would like to start?” invite them to pick up the talking piece from the center and begin to share. After this round, ask them: “What did you notice about what people said? How were the answers the same or different?” Pass the talking piece again. Get the talking piece back and say: Thank you for sharing. Our final round for this part of today will be your answer to how you feel when you are respected. Give them a bit of time to think again. [pause for at least 15 seconds]. Then ask who would like to start. When you get the talking piece back, say: “thank you and invite them to participate in the moment of mindfulness.”</p>

Approx Time	Activity	Details
~ 6 min	Mindful Moments/ Optional	<p>Introduce Mindful moments as part of RJE practices. Mindful moments can be introduced to students in a separate session.</p> <p>Explain the mindful moments and the importance of meditation and relaxation for our health.</p> <p>Ask students if they know anything about mindful moments or meditation! Some may relate them to their religious practices, like Muslims. Confirm that, for example, praying can be a kind of meditation and mindful moment, too, but this meditation is somehow different. We will just try to relax and let go of thought, focus on our breaths and be present. A video would be played. They will have their first practice.</p> <p>YouTube Video https://youtu.be/w3Aol2CCsdo</p> <p>Ask them about their experience.</p>
~ 7 min	Check-in Circle	<p>Say: Our focus for today is on feelings. Sometimes it is really hard to talk about our feelings, so we can make that easier by using a comparison to something else. One way to do this is to compare our feelings to the weather. Here's a short video to show you what that is about.</p> <p>https://www.bgcharlem.org/single-post/feelings-forecast</p> <p>Say: Does anyone have any questions about what they saw?</p>
~ 5 min	Main Activity	<p>Now ask: What kind of weather can show your current feeling?</p> <p>Explain: For example, if I am tired today, I might say I'm feeling "foggy." There are no right or wrong answers, and all you have to say is your weather. You don't need to explain why you chose your weather forecast unless you want to."</p> <p>Examples: Foggy/ Cloudy/Sunny/ Rainy, Stormy, etc.</p>

~ 4 min	Check-out	Ask students to share what they learned from this activity.
Approx Time	Activity	Details
~ 4 min	Energizer	Ask students to show their weather report by pantomime! (Optional)
	Decisions Reached/ what you need for next time.	We will discuss our emotional weather report for the next Circle.

Notes:

Facilitator: _____ Follow-up Needed: Yes No

Thank everyone for participating in the Circle today!

Modified and adapted from: Circle Forward (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014), Module # 5.6, p.192

Also adapted from:

<https://www.bqcharlem.org/single-post/feelings-forecast>

<https://www.catcorner.co.uk/post/weather-forecast-feelings>

Circle Plan # 5- Daily Emotional Weather Report Circle/ Session # 2

Purpose: To assist participants in becoming more aware of the emotions and thoughts that underlie their behavior and to increase participants' ability to recognize, label, and modulate their feelings.

Class/Group:

Date:

Approx Time	Activity	Details
~ 2 min	Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write guidelines on a card for the center of the Circle. -Arrange the centerpiece with the help of the students. -Make sure there are enough chairs. -Arrange everyone in a Circle of chairs.
	Talking Piece	Puppet
~ 5 min	Welcome	<p style="text-align: center;">Greet everyone, be aware of new participants, and show the excitement that they have joined us.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Say: We learned about weather reports and compared them with our feelings. Now, we know it's ok if our emotions, like the weather, change sometimes.</p> <p>Ask: Do you remember the inside weather we saw in the video?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Say: Now, let's share how you can get back from a thunderstorm to a warm breeze or sunny weather. Does anyone want to share his / her thoughts?</p>

Approx Time	Activity	Details
~ 7 min	Guidelines	<p>Say: We will have a brief review of the guidelines/ ask students if they remember them.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone has the right to speak. 2. Speak from the heart. 3. Listen from the heart. 4. The talking piece holder is the speaker. Once finished, pass it. 5. Passing is Ok. If you wish, you can talk later. 6. Respect privacy 7. No judgment <p>Ask: What does judgment mean to you? Pass the talking piece to the ones who want to share their thoughts.</p> <p>Show a picture of a barbie and ask students to say some words about the picture.</p> <p>Say: When we see something, most of the times we form judgement in our minds whether or not it is beautiful or ugly, good or bad.</p> <p>Say: The fact we see about them is like this- the barbie who has blonde hair and blue eyes! That is always true. However, our judgment might sometimes be wrong as we do not know about the person and their life.</p> <p>Say: You see one of your classmates for the first time, and he had a bad day. He is neither smiling nor talking. What judgment can be made about him? Share your thoughts.</p> <p>Then we will know more about him and that special day for him. So, we see that we have made a judgment.</p> <p>Say: In our talking Circles, we practice having no judgment on our friends.</p>
~ 7 min	Values	<p>Lay out these value cards in the middle.</p> <p>Pick up the "empathy" value card.</p> <p>Say: Think of a scenario where you are terrified of a cat, dog, or bird, and that can be because of different reasons. But your friend loves that animal. Your friend wants to be with you but also wants to be beside that animal you are scared of. What do you expect from your friend?</p> <p>Say: Think for 30 seconds, and ask: Is there someone who would like to start?" Invite them to pick up the talking piece from the center and begin to share.</p> <p>Then ask if they learned anything from their friends' thoughts and reflect on this question.</p>

		Say: So, when we feel emotion with someone, even if we are not in the same situation, we see the problem from their lens or put our feet in their shoes and hence, we are empathizing with them.
Approx Time	Activities	Details
~ 5 min	Energizer	Play the game of different actions like jumping, clapping, raising hands, and moving the body, and ask all students to repeat the last actions and add their own actions. It will continue till one forgets, and the game will start again.
	Main activity First round	<p>Say: Yesterday, we wrote down times when we felt like certain kinds of weather. Today we are going to share a few more ideas about this. We will focus on “snow or rain.”</p> <p>Say: Think of a time when something happened that made you feel like it was raining/snowing inside of you. When you get the talking piece today, you are invited to share what happened. Remember not to use the names of other people. If you want to talk about another person in your story, say, “someone I know” or “someone in my family.” Give them 30 seconds to think of an idea. Pass the talking piece.</p>
~ 5 min	Second Round	In this round, ask: Now think quietly about this time. What things helped you get back to your rainbow or sunshine when you feel rainy or snowy?
~ 5 min	Check-out:	Ask: What did you learn from this activity today? Was there something you learned from your friends about changing your rainy feelings to sunshine?
~ 3 min	Decisions Reached: what you need for next time.	We will have a friendly dialogue for the next Circle to learn more about each other. Any suggestions about the talking piece?

Notes:

Facilitator: _____ Follow-up Needed: Yes No

Thank everyone for participating in the Circle today!

Modified and adapted from: Circle Forward (Boyes-Watson & Pranis,2014), Module # 5.6, p.192

Also adapted from:

<https://www.bgcharlem.org/single-post/feelings-forecast>

<https://www.catcorner.co.uk/post/weather-forecast-feelings>

Circle Plan# 6 - Practices for Building Relationships

Purpose: To build a sense of connection among those in the classroom by sharing moods, feelings, and moments of joy and pain; increase awareness of what is going on for others in the classroom; create space to acknowledge and release tensions related to external situations that may otherwise be distracting.

Class group:

Date:

Approx Time	Activity	Details
	Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write guidelines on a card for the center of the Circle. -Arrange the centerpiece with the help of the students. -Make sure there are enough chairs. -Arrange everyone in a Circle of chairs.
	Talking Piece	An angel hanging decoration
	Welcome	Greet everyone, be aware of new participants, and show the excitement that they have joined the Circle.
~ 7min	Guidelines	<p>Say: Ok, let us start with the guideline. Today, we will talk about "speaking from the heart"!</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Everyone has the right to speak. 2-Speak from the heart. 3-Listen from the heart. 4-The talking piece holder is the speaker. Once finished, pass it on. 5- Passing is Ok. If you wish, you can talk later. 6- Respect privacy. 7- No judgment. <p>Say: Think about a time when you thought you could speak from your heart.</p>

		<p>First question: How did you feel after speaking from your heart?</p> <p>Pass the talking piece to the speaker.</p> <p>Second question: How was the atmosphere different that you could speak from your heart?</p>
Approx Time	Activity	Details
~ 6 min	Values	<p>Pick up the "support" value and ask: Think of a time you felt someone supported you. What was your feeling at that time? Can you describe the situation?</p> <p>Think for twenty seconds and share your experience with us. What did you learn from your friends' answers?</p>
~4 min	Get to know question	Ask: If you were a cartoon character, who would you be?
~6 min	Energizer	<p>1- Form a Circle with people where each member must put their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them.</p> <p>2- The facilitator will describe the following commands:</p> <p>3-Apple means everybody jumps forward at the same time (don't break the Circle)</p> <p>4) Orange means everybody jumps backward.</p> <p>5) Banana means everybody jumps back, turning 180 degrees so they will put their hands over the shoulders of the person behind. The facilitator tells them to turn left or right just to create a pattern, and people don't get confused when doing the movement.</p> <p>Easy mode: the facilitator will be giving commands at a slow pace. ex., apple! Banana! Apple! Orange! with few seconds between commands.</p>
~ 5 min	Main Activity First Round	<p>Ask: What are the roses and thorns in your life in the past week?</p> <p>Explain that by "rose," you mean beautiful moments and experiences & by "thorns," you mean unpleasant ones.</p>

		Ask: Who wants to start by sharing a rose from last week?
5 min	Second Round	Ask: Can you think of some values we have learned in Circles that can be helpful when we know about each other's rainy days?
Approx Time	Activity	Details
5 min	Check-out	Ask: Is there anything you learned from the Circle that you want to share with us?
	Decisions reached, What you need for next time.	Any suggestions for the next plan of our talking Circle?

Notes:

Facilitator: _____ Follow-up Needed: Yes No

Thank everyone for participating in the Circle today!

Modified and adapted from Circle Forward (Boyes-Watson & Pranis,2014), Module # 4.1, p.141

Plan # 7- Exploring Cultural Responsiveness in the School Circle

Purpose: To provide feedback to school staff about the experience of students regarding cultural responsiveness; to create a safe space for students to discuss their concerns about cultural acceptance; to develop youth leadership in Circles.

Class/Group:

Date:

Approx Time	Activity	Details
	Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Write guidelines on a card for the center of the Circle. -Arrange the centerpiece with the help of the students. -Make sure there are enough chairs. -Arrange everyone in a Circle of chairs. -All the participants have been asked to bring one item that represents their culture to the Circle. Put them on the centerpiece.
	Talking Piece	Choose one of the items brought by the students as a talking piece.
	Welcome	Greet everyone, be aware of the new participants, and show the excitement that they have joined us.

~ 5 min	Guidelines	<p>Say: Ok let's start with the guidelines. Who is willing to read them for us?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Everyone has the right to speak. 2-Speak from the heart. 3-Listen from the heart. 4- The talking piece holder is the speaker. Once finished, pass it on. 5- Passing is Ok. If you wish, you can talk later. 6- Respect privacy. 7- No judgment. <p>Say: Think about a time when you have been judged. How was your feeling?</p> <p>Look at the values now.</p> <p>Ask: What do you need from that person who has judged you to feel better?</p>
Approx Time	Activity	Details
~ 4 min	Values	<p>Pick up the "love" value and tell the students: We all have a love of our country in our hearts, the country from where we have come. Now, let us be quiet for a few seconds, feel that love in our hearts, wish for peace, send love for our countries and people, appreciate our countries for the time we were there, and think of our good memories there. Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, and Iran.</p>
~ 4 min	Get to know question	<p>Ask them to show what they have brought to this Circle that represents their cultures.</p>
~ 6 min	Energizer	<p>Each person thinks of an adjective that describes them, such as: "I am excited, Eric." The next person says: "I am kind, Michelle, and he is excited, Eric." The next person says: "I am jolly James. He is excited, Eric, and she is... Oh no! I forgot!" So, I'm out for the round. The students go around the Circle and see if they can remember everyone's adjectives.</p> <p>If this Circle is at the difficult level of the specific LEARN or ESL class, you can choose any other energizer of the students' interests, as they usually come up with ideas like "musical chair."</p>

~ 5 min	Check in	Complete it! Something good about being a teenager is
5 min	Main Activity/ First Round	What does culture mean to you? Please share your thoughts and views.
	Second Round	Ask: Think of two important things that you want people to know about your culture or its associated values.
	Third Round	Ask: Do you feel other students and staff generally respect your culture? Please share your experience or give us an example of an experience at school that you felt was very respectful of your culture.
4 min	Check Out	Was there anything new you learned from other cultures today? Share with us.
	Decisions Reached: What you need for next time.	

Notes: _____

Facilitator: _____ Follow-up Needed: Yes No

Thank everyone for participating in the Circle today!

Modified and adapted from Circle Forward (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014), Module #9.1, p.357

Circle Plan # 8 - Last Year Reflection & Appreciation Circle

Purpose: To build relationships through positive recognition; increase skills in giving compliments; increase awareness of strengths.

Class/Group:

Date:

Approx Time	Activity	Details
~ 2 min	Preparation	-Write guidelines on a card for the center of the Circle. -Arrange the centerpiece with the help of the students. -Make sure there are enough chairs. -Arrange everyone in a Circle of chairs.
	Talking piece	A heart

	Welcome	Greet everyone, be aware of new participants, and show the excitement that they have joined you.
~ 4min	Guidelines	<p>Say: We will have a brief review of the guidelines.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Everyone has the right to speak. 2-Speak from the heart. 3-Listen from the heart. 4-The talking piece holder is the speaker. Once finished, pass it on. 5- Passing is Ok. If you wish, you can talk later. 6- Respect privacy. 7- No judgment. <p>Ask: In this last year's Circle, please share which one of these guidelines you found helpful in your real life and think will be helpful to you in your relationships.</p>
~ 5 min	Values	<p>Ask: What is something that makes you a good friend?</p> <p>Ask: Look at the value cards and see if you can find that quality in those values. If not, say that quality.</p>
Approx Time	Activity	Details
~ 6 min	Energizer	<p>Smile, Clap, Hurray!</p> <p>Instructions: Explain to the students that they will do the corresponding action when you call out a number from the chart. H- stand up and shout "Hurray!" and sit down, C-stand up and give three quick claps and sit down, S-stand up and look at the person close to you and give them your best Hollywood smile! To start, you may want to read the numbers in order. (You can also change the actions for the letters. i.e., H-high five, C-clap behind your back, S- shout your name.</p> <p>You can write them on the board if it's difficult for ESL students to remember them.</p>
~ 5 min	Main activity First round	<p>Say: We are in the last days of school; if you look at the days you have had this year, would you please share one or two things that you did better than last year? Or did you discover any strength in yourself?</p>

~ 5 min	Second Round	Ask: What are the things you could have done better this year?
~ 5 min	Check-out:	Say: For this last Circle, we want to express our appreciation for our friends. Say: I will call your friends' names one by one. Please share what you appreciate about any of your friends that I call.
~ 5 min	Thoughts	Is anyone willing to share thoughts about these seven Circles? How did you find them?

Notes:

Facilitator: _____ Follow-up Needed: Yes No

Thank everyone for participating in the Circle today!

Modified and adapted from: *Circle Forward (Bayes-Watson & Pranis,2014), Module # 4.3, P.145*

Practical RJE Practices for Making Connection with Parents



Figure 25

Home visits

Engaging refugee families and communities within a school during the first few years following their arrival can be challenging. There are some home visits conducted by supporting agencies like the Association for New Canadians to refugee families in Newfoundland. However, the school teachers are not present during these visits. Although these visits significantly contribute to families' settlement, they are different from parent and teacher interactions and the connection that can be made between family and school community.

- The first step is for the teacher to contact the family through a translator, or if the family can communicate in English, the teacher can contact them directly.

- The teacher can ask the family how they are comfortable having a relationship with the school and suggest different ways, including meeting in school, home visits, coffee shops, etc.
- If families accept home visits, educators can set a time to visit them at home with the presence of a translator if it is applicable.

What Can be Discussed in the Home Visit. During the home visit, the teacher can give adequate information about the education system in Canada. This information can include introducing the inclusive education system and how this inclusive system is defined. For example, the presence of students with various disabilities in the public education system, the presence of students from different nationalities in school, and the presence of students of different religion and sexual orientation in school. Below you can find some of the topics:

- Teachers should inform parents about the assignment system of schools. Many parents are concerned about this, and in their perspective, as their children are ESL learners, they need more practice at home. I have witnessed a student refusing to attend school due to not being asked by the teacher to do some homework. In some students' view, going to school means doing a pile of assignments at home, based on the culture and education system of their home country.
- Teachers should provide information about the assessment method for students and explain it in detail to parents. Some terms are quite new for parents and elaborating on them is a big help and makes them feel less confused.
- Parents can bring up their concerns to the teacher during these home visits and know how they can effectively be involved in their children's education.

- Most of these families are not comfortable being in school due to their hectic schedules and lack of confidence in attending an English-speaking educational environment, home visits provide them with a safe and caring environment to share their stories, concerns, fears, and expectations.

Benefits of Home Visits for Teachers. It is evident that teachers spend a large amount of time with students during the day at school. However, through home visits, there is more opportunity for teachers to focus on individual students and learn more about them and their families. The connection teachers develop with students and families is in a way that is impossible without these home visits. The list below indicates some of these benefits.

- Teachers can get a good insight into the different dimensions of students' characters, likes, dislikes, and academic backgrounds.
- Home visits allow teachers to learn more about the social and financial standing of the families, their culture, and religion.
- Families can talk about their hopes and dreams for their children that give teachers better insight into how to guide parents and students more effectively.
- Students and families feel more connected to school and are more comfortable going to school.

As stated by Fuller (2016) "Home visits are a restorative teaching tool that allows me to better understand home life and histories of students and the ways that family and community can be better integrated into the school experience for better school engagement because student needs and ways to support students in both places become visible"(p.85).

As a newcomer and a parent, and as someone who has attended these home visits, I know how many of these parents crave these home visits and need to discuss their issues and needs. Being in a relationship with teachers always brings warm feelings for families. Receiving support from teachers when you arrive in a new country where you don't know anyone can have a lot of positive effects on parental and student settlement, adjustment to a completely new environment, and emotional support that is invaluable. These efforts by teachers make a significant difference for refugee and newcomer children, as well as their parents. They feel happier, connected, and prepared for school. They improve the quality of life for refugee and newcomer children and their families and bring them a sense of belonging, which is one of the main goals of RJE.



Figure 26

Circles with Parents

"We believe that, in human societies, all gifts are indispensable to the wellbeing of the whole. Interdependence is essential for survival" (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2014, p.315).

In my view, as a parent and as an international education student, Canada's inclusive education system, with its multicultural nature, requires an even greater partnership between schools and immigrant parents. In the school community, this partnership is like a puzzle. In the absence of one party, schools cannot achieve their highest efficiency and potential. However, refugee and new immigrant parents have some barriers to their partnership with the school community. The first and foremost barrier is language. Some parents have very constructive perspectives and experiences that they are unable to express. Some parents overlook their wisdom and knowledge, but schools need all of these gifts, assets, ideas, and support to make the school environment more inclusive, utilize parents' knowledge and experience, and bring a sense of belonging to both the students and the parents.

One of the most effective initiatives for parent involvement is 'talking Circles.' These Circles open the space for them to have their voices heard in their children's school. Considering the significance of parent engagement in the school community, the school administration can implement RJE talking Circles in the school setting. A Circle fosters a healthy relationship between parents and the school and empowers parents to contribute their knowledge and gifts to the process of educating their children. Also, parents have the opportunity to form relationships with other parents in Circles to support each other in the extremely challenging task of raising their children. Participating in Circles with the school will equip parents and

community members with skills they can use in other areas of their lives. When students observe their parents participating in the talking Circle with the same values and guidelines, they will be inspired to employ this culture in other settings and the use of Circles will be widely developed in society (Boyes-Watson & Pranis,2014).

Samples of Talking Circles with Parents

Family Engagement - Circle Plan # 1

Purpose: To support the development of strong school–family relationships to maximize the success of the child(ren) in school; to increase clarity about the roles of family and school staff.

Class/Group:

Date:

Approx Time	Activity	Details
	Preparation	-Write guidelines on a card for the center of the Circle. -Arrange the centerpiece with the help of parents. -Make sure there are enough chairs. -Arrange everyone in a Circle of chairs. -Based on the needs of the parents, arrange for one or two translators to attend the Circle.
	Talking Piece:	

~ 3 min	Welcome	<p>Welcome parents to the Circle and let them know that through these Circles, we aim to foster relationships between the school and families and engage them in various activities, problem-solving, and decision-making.</p>
Approx Time	Activity	Details
~ 5 min	Guideline	<p>Explain: We suggest several guidelines to have a more peaceful and efficient atmosphere for these Circles. Introduce the following guidelines:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone has a right to speak. 2. Speak from the heart. 3. Listen from the heart. 4. The holder of the talking piece is the speaker. Once finished, pass it. 5. Passing is Ok. If you wish, you can talk later. 6. No judgment. 7. Respect privacy. <p>Ask: Are you happy with these guidelines? Do you want to add anything to our guidelines to help us have a good conversation? Add any suggestions to the list and check with the group to see if everyone is okay with the additional guidelines.</p>

~ 5 min	Values	<p>Say: Please share a value you think is very important in the school-family relationship—and why that value is important.</p> <p>Ask: When you have finished explaining your value, please place your value in the Center.</p> <p>When the round is finished, read all the values and thank everyone for bringing these values to the Circle.</p> <p>Say: These values and guidelines create a very strong foundation for our work together on behalf of all of the children. When we see things differently, these values and guidelines will help us listen carefully and find our way through our differences.</p>
~ 4 min	Energizer	Share a fun memory of your childhood/your child.
Approx Time	Activity	Details
	Main Activity	Sharing Needs on Both Sides—Parents and School Staff
~ 5-8 min	Round 1	<p>Ask: Tell us who you are, how long you have been associated with the school, and what your hopes for this Circle are.</p>
~ 5-8 min	Round 2	<p>Ask: Why does family engagement with the school matter?</p> <p>Review the key ideas shared and the actions proposed.</p>
~ 5-8 min	Round 3	<p>Ask: On this round, I want just the parents to respond. What do you need from the school to support your full engagement in your child's education?</p> <p>Keep notes on a board or notebook.</p>

~ 5-8 min	Round 4	Ask: This time around, I want just the school staff to respond. What do you need from the family to support your work with the students? Continue with notes.
~ 5 min	Check out	Ask: Where would you like this conversation to go from here? Summarize suggestions; clarify what will happen next.

Thank everyone for participating in the Circle today!

Notes:

Facilitator: _____ Follow-up Needed: Yes No

* Modified and adapted from: Circle Forward (Bayes-Watson & Pranis, 2014), Module # 8.4

More Topics to be discussed in this Circle include:

Round:

Ask: Where have you experienced difficulties or challenges around family-school engagement?
What are the barriers to family-school engagement?

Do a second pass on this question if there is a lot of energy or if it feels like there is more to be said.

Round:

Ask: Identify one step you can take that will help reduce one of the barriers around family-school engagement. Keep notes.

Review the key ideas shared and the actions proposed.

Family Engagement - Circle Plan # 2 Building Bridges to a New Immigrant Community Circle

Purpose: To build relationships with adults in a new immigrant community, strengthen the ties between school and family, and learn about the culture and circumstances of the immigrant community in order to effectively support their children in school.

Class/Group:

Date:

Approx Time	Activity	Details
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	Before the Circle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit a few members of the immigrant community to help organize and conduct the Circle. • Ask for their advice regarding the opening, centerpiece, and talking piece for the Circle. • Ask for their advice about how to invite members of the immigrant community to a dialogue with the school. • Ask about any cultural protocols that might be incorporated into the welcome and opening of the Circle. Extend the invitation. Arrange for a translator if that is necessary.
	Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write guidelines on a card for the center of the Circle. • Arrange the centerpiece with the help of parents. • Make sure there are enough chairs. • Arrange everyone in a Circle of chairs. • Based on the needs of the parents, arrange for one or two translators to attend the Circle.
	Talking Piece:	
~ 4 min	Welcome	<p>Welcome parents to the Circle and let them know that through these Circles, we aim to foster relationships between school and families and engage them in various activities, problem-solving, decision-making, and learning from them.</p>
Approx Time	Activity	Details

~ 5min	Guidelines	<p>Explain: We suggest several guidelines to have a more peaceful and efficient atmosphere in these Circles.</p> <p>Introduce the following guidelines:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone has the right to speak. 2. Speak from the heart. 3. Listen from the heart. 4. The holder of the talking piece is the speaker. Once finished, pass it on. 5. Passing is Ok. If you wish, you can talk later. 6. Pass is Ok. If you wish, you can talk later. 7. Respect privacy. 8. No judgment <p>Ask: Are you happy with these guidelines? Do you want to add anything to our guidelines to help us have a good conversation? Add any suggestions to the list and check with the group to see if everyone is okay with the additional guidelines.</p>
~ 5 min	Values	<p>Ask: Name a value that is important to you when you are having a discussion about your children, and that is important in your culture, tradition, or religion.</p> <p>Write a list of those values as the participants name them, and then place the list in the center.</p> <p>Say: These values and guidelines create a very strong foundation for our work together on behalf of all of the children. When we see things differently, these values and guidelines will help us listen carefully and find our way through our differences.</p>
	Main Activity	Learning from Immigrant Community Members to Form Respectful Relations
Approx Time	Activity	Details
~ 5min	Check-in Circle	Ask: What was your favorite hobby in your childhood?

~5-8min	Round 1	Ask: Please introduce yourself and tell us about your household—children or other family members who live with you.
~5-8min	Round 2	Ask: Tell us about the country you come from. What were the good things about living there? What circumstances made it necessary to leave that country?
~5-8min	Round 3	Ask: What things are difficult for you to understand in this country or in the school community?
~5-8min	Round 4	Ask: What is important for the school to know or understand about your children? Or What things would you want the school to do to be respectful of your culture?
~ 5 min	Check out	Ask: Do you have an interest in an ongoing dialogue with the school? If so, what would be the best way to do that? Summarize any intentions for follow-up.

Thank everyone for participating in the Circle today!

Notes:

Facilitator: _____ Follow-up Needed: Yes No

* Modified and adapted from: Circle Forward (Bayes-Watson & Pranis,2014), Module # 8.7

**It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will
determine the significance of the life we lead.**

“Nelson Mandela”



Figure 27

Conclusion

Potential of ESL and LEARN classes for refugees and newcomers

Overall, acknowledging that educators must consider all dimensions of students, especially refugees, with their particular needs, challenges, vulnerabilities, backgrounds, and burdens, the significance of strategies and pedagogies that ESL and LEARN teachers can employ in the classroom will become evident. Boyes-Watson & Pranis state (2014, p. 513)," human beings are integrated wholes." LEARN and ESL classes are not a setting for just delivering literacy and numeracy. In addition to our minds, we also learn with our bodies, emotions, and spirits. Mental and emotional state affects our physical state. The well-being of our spirit affects our feelings and thoughts, and how we view our relationships with others and perceive ourselves influences our memory and cognition.

LEARN, and ESL classes can be a safe and healing place for newcomer students and their families and contribute to their integration into the new community while attempting to address migration-related issues. There is no doubt that RJE practices can positively affect the integration of this community into the school. They can help students and their families cope with school pressures and allow them to prepare for life in society with a better understanding of the world around them.

Considering all the above facts, Learn and ESL educators with an RJ mindset can incorporate effective methods, strategies, and practices into their lesson plans. They can focus more on refugees and newcomer relationships in LEARN and ESL classes through restorative practices like talking Circles and promote the significance of human beings' interconnected essence. As refugees and newcomers have experienced a wide array of hardships and

challenges, LEARN and ESL classes can be the best way to serve them by immersing them in RJE pedagogy and practices, developing their problem-solving skills in a caring environment, and dealing with hardship and frustration constructively.

Whole shifting in the mindset of the school community, including parents

As discussed in this guide, parents can have a major impact on their children's academic achievement and the development of certain life skills. RJE is grounded in a whole school approach. The concept of interconnectedness embeds all members of the school community.

We cannot expect to implement RJE in ESL and LEARN classes without engaging parents in these practices and giving them enough training about this philosophy. This is what a whole school approach to RJE means. Many refugee and newcomer parents have not had any chance to learn about effective parenting and friendly relationships with their children. Their involvement in their children's academic and social development can make drastic changes in the student's future. So, by joining our hands together, we can start to form tiny steps and make significant changes in people's lives.

We live in an age marked by so much violence and unrest. While working on my project, I was shocked by the news of the Robb Elementary School shooting tragedy. What crossed my mind at that time was: what could have been done differently to prevent this tragedy? How could this scenario be different if this guy had some people around who had good "relationships" with him and could refer to them when he was overwhelmed with negative thoughts and feelings? Moreover, who truly knows which one of us at which moment is drowning? And then this poem that could be peace for my mind crossed my mind: "The woods are lovely, dark and deep, but I have promises to keep and miles to go before I sleep" (Robert

Frost, 1978). All of us educators must realize that we have an incredible amount of power, so we must take even small steps to make a positive impact on the lives of our students and be that miracle maker!

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