

Bridging the Circle

Transition through Quality Circle Time

Lesson plans for years 6 & 7



Anne Cowling and Penny Vine

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Foreword

“Education must enable all pupils to respond positively to the opportunities and challenges in which we live and work . . .”

- QCA *The review of the National Curriculum in England: Consultation materials '99.*

One of the key experiences of change for pupils is to move from the smaller, familiar warm world of the primary school to the chillier, seemingly impersonal world of the secondary school. There is no doubt this transition can prove to be a very anxious experience. Children have real fears around the ‘initiation’ myths and truths of their local secondary school. Self-esteem can plummet and emotions soar.

Schools need to explore as many ways as possible to equip young people to meet the challenges of this move. Powerlessness and fear are huge inhibitors and many children fail as a result to reach their full academic, social, personal, moral, cultural or spiritual potential. The last ten years in primary schools have seen a groundswell of interest in the development of circle time. The actual practice may well be patchy, nevertheless many primary teachers are struggling, through the structures of circle time, to improve self-esteem, social skills, emotional literacy, a sense of citizenship and a feeling of being part of a team. In other words circle time, if run by a knowledgeable and skilled teacher, has the potential to meet the new 2000 agenda for education. However, up till now, this positive weekly experience in primary schools abruptly stops at the age of eleven. The real potential of this approach to help children build a bridge of understanding and confidence to move from the primary into the secondary world has only been explored by a small number of schools and local authorities. Help is at hand!

It is with a sigh of relief and huge pleasure that I can recommend this book by Anne and Penny. It has an enormous contribution to make to education. Through their own sensitive thoughtful research and their ability to work collaboratively and enthusiastically with Leeds teachers, they have created a series of lesson plans that can be immediately implemented. These lesson plans however are richer than merely a collection of ‘do-able’ ideas. Anne and Penny have given great attention to the aims, process, rationale and more importantly, the outcomes. Teachers can be confident of the knowledge, skills and values that they are helping the pupils to explore. In addition, they offer a selection of back up written work to support the emotional work facilitated by the circle lesson. Schools can be confident that they are working within the spirit of the new government initiatives and guidelines relating to PSHE and Citizenship.

I cannot recommend this book highly enough. It is vital that children perceive their educational experience to be a continuum of personal and social growth. This series of lesson plans will help them move confidently, responsibly and courageously from the primary to the secondary experience. Anne Cowling and Penny Vine deserve real congratulations for supporting children and teachers during this vital time. It is a contribution of ‘excellence’.

Jenny Mosley

Overview of Transition Lesson Plans – Primary

<i>AIM: To assist young people in the process of transition from primary to secondary school</i>	
Lesson	Details
1. Looking back – what have I achieved?	To help the students to reflect on all the different things they have achieved at primary school and to become aware of their strengths.
2. Looking forward – what can I achieve?	To help the students to become more aware of the range of positive opportunities and experiences that lie in front of them.
3. Losses and gains	To encourage students to think about the losses and gains associated with change, and to think of ways of managing the losses.
4. To examine in more detail some of the fears involved	To help the students to become aware of dealing with the unknown, recognising that they might not be on their own with their experiences. This is a problem-solving, empowering exercise encouraging positive attitudes, self-awareness and setting of goals.
5. How can I recognise when I need help?	To help with recognising feelings and acting in ways that are constructive.
6. Ending and beginning	To create a positive and prepared feeling about moving on whilst acknowledging apprehensive feelings. Ritualised ending.

Name

Date

Student Log

Transition - Circle Work

Primary Session no. 1

Looking back - what have I achieved?

How did I do?

Self Assessment

1. Rules: How did I get on with . . .

- a) respecting others (examples of non-respect: interrupting, put downs, inappropriate laughter or naming someone)? 1 2 3 4 5
- b) listening to what everybody else had to say? 1 2 3 4 5
- c) respecting group confidentiality over the week? 1 2 3 4 5

2. Game

a) What did I say for my achievement?

b) What else could I have said?

3. Round: What did I say?

Something I have learnt that I really value is . . .

Did I want to say anything else?

4. Silent Statement (did I cross the circle?)

- a) if you remember learning to tie your shoe laces yes no
- b) if you remember learning how to make friends yes no
- c) if you remember hurting someone and learning how to say sorry yes no
- d) if you remember lying about something and having to learn about being honest yes no
- e) if you remember finding something difficult to learn yes no

5. Open Forum: A child cannot remember any positive achievements

What did I say?

a) Would it help if

b) Something I could have said but didn't:

6. Game

a) Did I join in?

yes no

b) Did I listen to and follow instructions?

yes no

7. Round: What did I say?

The quality I gave to the class was

Something else I could have said:

8. Overall Performance

How did I get on with:

a) being honest about my feelings?

1 2 3 4 5

b) speaking clearly?

1 2 3 4 5

c) feeling OK about making mistakes?

1 2 3 4 5

d) not laughing when other people seem to be making mistakes?

1 2 3 4 5

e) not feeling embarrassed to speak out?

1 2 3 4 5

f) giving positive help to other people when they get stuck?

1 2 3 4 5

9. Did I . . .

a) give a warm signal to anyone?

yes no

b) receive a warm signal from anyone?

yes no

Teacher comment

What teachers say about: **Bridging the Circle**

'Excellent... I feel much more confident and in tune with year 6/7 thoughts, feelings and issues. All our year 7 tutors will start the year off with these circle time lessons plans'

'Now I have a much clearer idea of how I can enable children to make the transition with greater ease and knowledge'

'It opens children's eyes to problems that might occur and provides them with the tools to solve those problems'

'As a new learning mentor, it has given me a foundation for ideas to use across school and issues to be aware of regarding transition with many of the children I come into contact with'



Positive Press



Bridging the Circle, by Anne Cowling and Penny Waine. www.circle-time.co.uk