



Teaching Disenfranchised Youth  
Encouraging Professional Collaboration  
*Karen Dz. Cox, M.A.*

Restoring Connections in the American Southwest



## Part One:

**Concerns & Classroom experience --**

**Real life lessons learned by a classroom teacher while applying Restorative Practices with Secondary Education students at an American Southwestern low-income high school with disenfranchised youth experiencing economic, cultural, immigration, literacy and behavioral challenges.**

## Part Two:

**Professional Learning Community –**

**Triumphs and Challenges of a Head of Academy discreetly applying Restorative Practice techniques and vocabulary to encourage and foster collaboration in the Professional Learning Community (plc) for which she is responsible.**

*The plc is a "round-table" team of educators that work together in a flat structure, as opposed to hierarchical, to better serve the needs of their student population.*





Opening  
Thoughts --  
from the  
Lakota

A young man  
asked his  
grandfather  
why life was  
so difficult  
sometimes...  
Grandfather  
replied...

*“Life can give you strength...facing the storms of life... You must stand up to the storm. You must face the wind and the cold...you must stand firm, for it is not trying to knock you down, it is really trying to teach you to be strong. Being strong means taking one more step toward the top of the hill...toward sunrise, toward hope...Keep going.”*





## Restorative Questions:

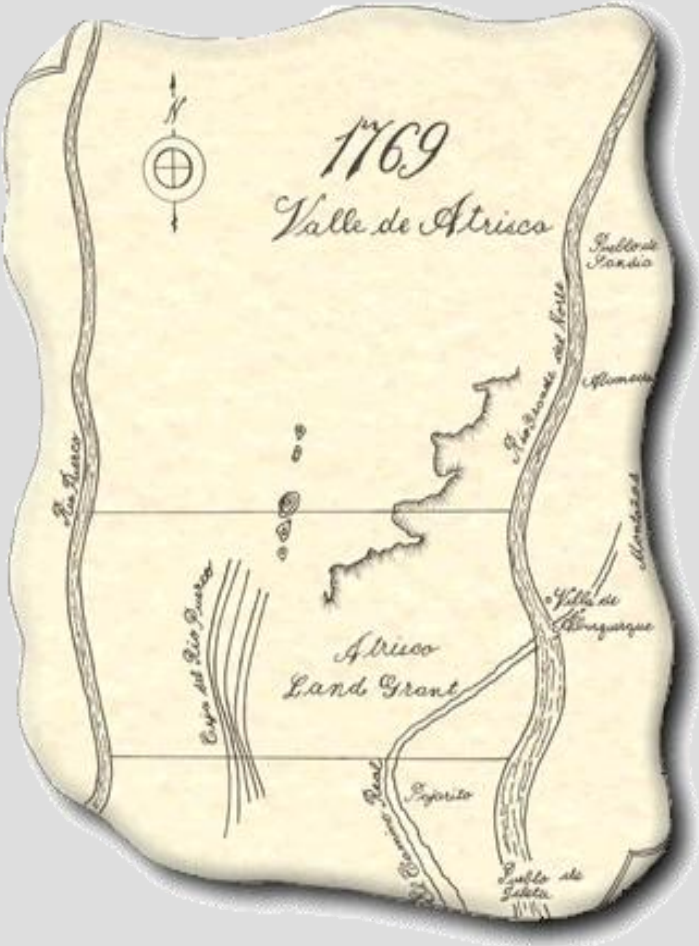
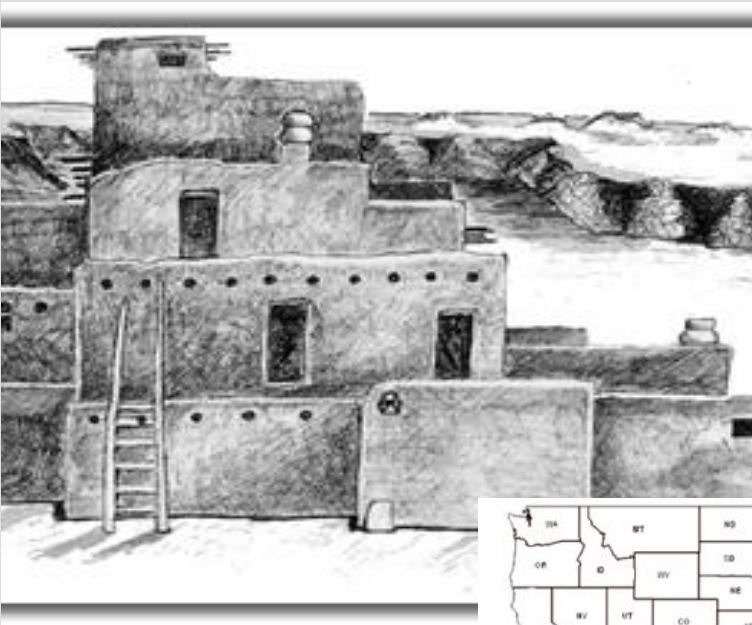
- What happened?
- What were/we/I they thinking at the time?
- What did we/I do?
- Who was affected by what we did?
- What happens next?

What happened?

*La Historia de Nuevo Mexico*

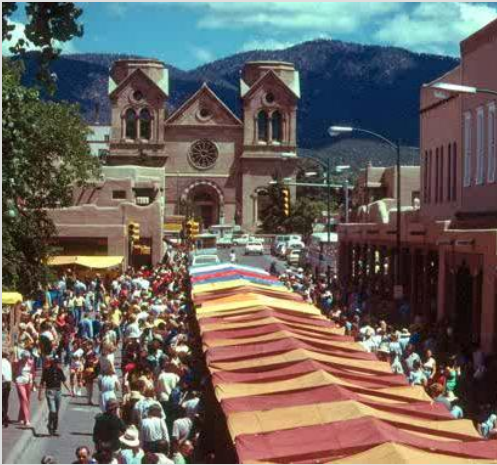
*Atrisco Land Grant*

*New Spain - Nueva España*





*What happened?*



## Iconic Images of New Mexico

Spanish-Native American Market + Route 66 + International Balloon Fiesta

*...across the river is another reality*

Challenges:  
National, Regional & Local

*What happened?*

One of the largest school districts in the USA

Title I School



Border & Immigration Issues –  
Southwestern US v. Mexico

Cross Roads of the United States –  
East meets West  
US v. Mexico

Socio-Economic Challenges & Recent Developments in ABQ:  
South Valley & West Side

Approx 93% Hispanic, 4% Native American  
Average income = \$17,000.00/yr

Gang Life  
Drugs

Approx. 63% 4 /yr graduation rate in school district

# Atrisco Heritage Academy H.S.

Founded 2008

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS)

Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

*Dr. Karen Sanchez-Griego, Principal w/  
John Hammil, Vice-Principal, Curriculum  
Mark Garcia, Athletic Director*

## ➤ Professional Learning Community

➤ An innovative, community-based educational reform model that consists of small learning academies collaborating with:

- Higher education institutions
- Local Business organizations
- Bringing together both private and educational community members and stakeholders
- Kellogg Foundation Grant
- \$121 million award-winning architectural facility

**GOAL: Increasing the academic and socio-economic success of New Mexico's greatest resource – young people.**

What were/we/I they thinking at the time?



## ***A Multidisciplinary Pipeline Approach Linking High School Students to College***



[www.ahahighschool.com](http://www.ahahighschool.com)

<http://www.wkkf.org/what-we-support/featured-work/atrisco-heritage-academy.aspx>

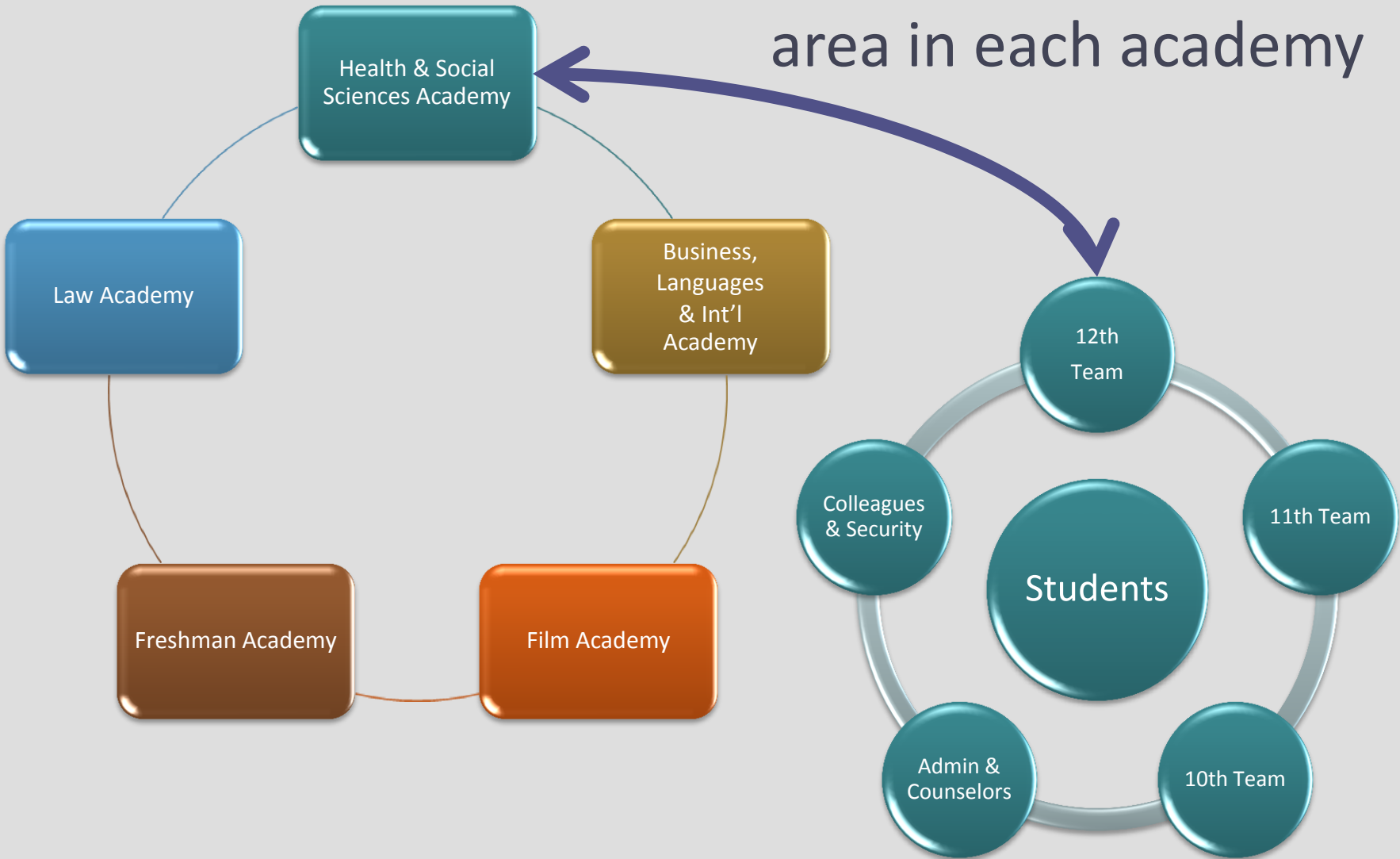


ATRISCO HERITAGE ACADEMY

*high school*



- Departments/Content area in each academy



- Colleagues = Admin, Teachers & Staff

# What did we/I do?

## Higher Education Institutions & Business Collaborative

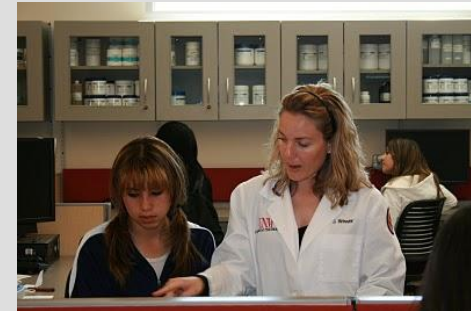


### Health & Social Sciences Academy

examples:

#### UNM Health Partners

- UNM Health Sciences Center
- UNM School of Medicine
- UNM College of Nursing
- UNM Hospital



### International, Business & Languages

#### Financial literacy

Credit union to open full-service branch at academy

<http://albuquerque.bizjournals.com/albuquerque/stories/2009/09/28/story2.html>

### AHA & UNM School of Medicine Collaboration

<http://www.abqjournal.com/west/1002226west10-10-09.htm>

<http://hsc.unm.edu/programs/diversity/>

- CASAA Center Alcoholism, Substance Abuse, & Addictions
- web-based curriculum & research project



- Law AHA Names New Law Center for Professor Montoya

<http://lawschool.unm.edu/news/archives/2010/february/montoya.php>

9<sup>th</sup> Graders at Atrisco Heritage Academy High Begin Year at Courthouse

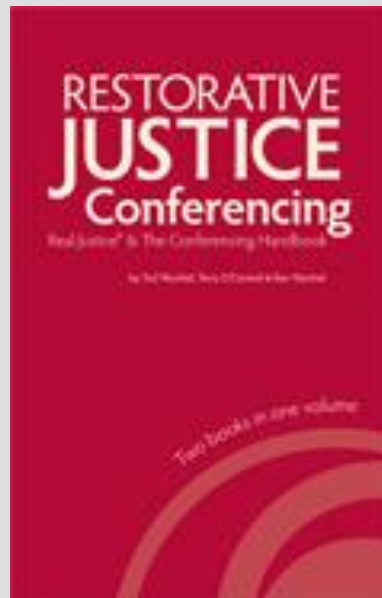
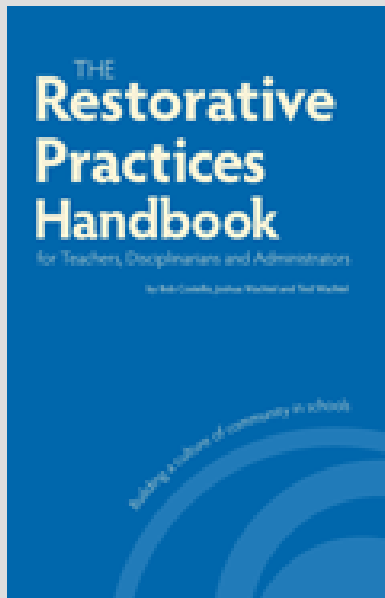
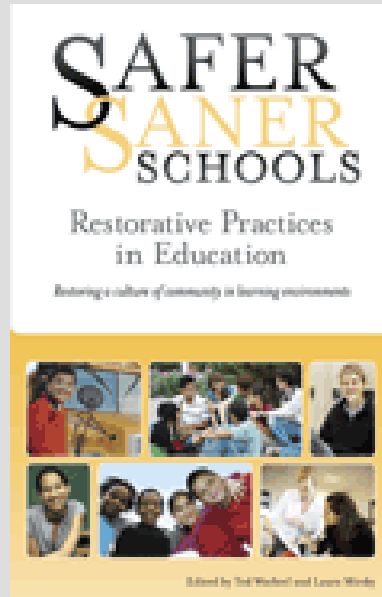
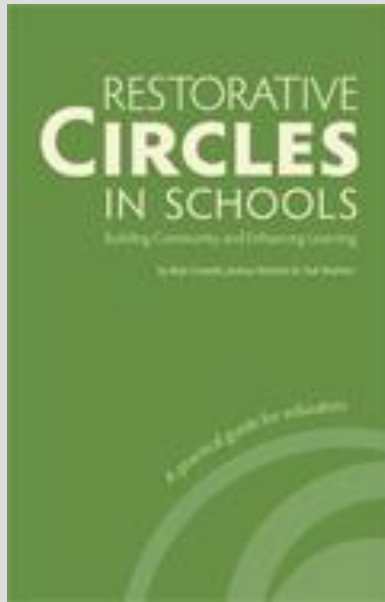
<http://lawschool.unm.edu/news/archives/2008/september/atrisco-journal.php>

## Albuquerque Studios

w/ Film Academy

videos: **High Expectations & Race to the Top**

# What did I do? Restorative Justice Week Long Intensive Spring 2008



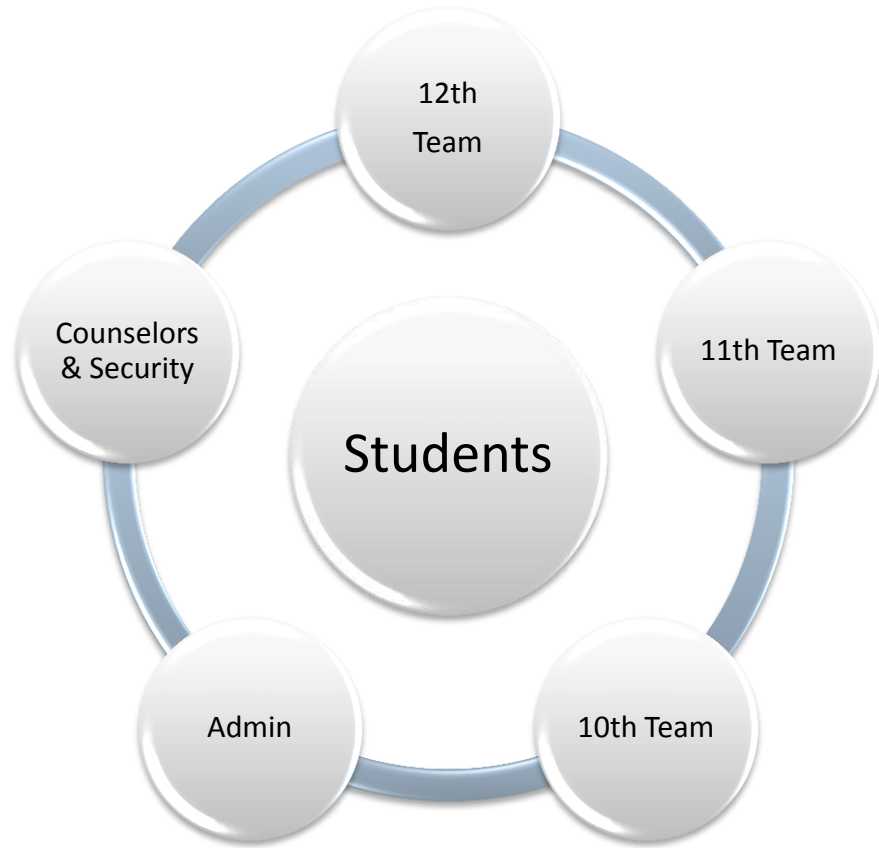
## SaferSanerSchools Program Whole-School Change Through Restorative Practices

### Benefits of Using Circles

- ✓ with a modest time investment circles can be used to:
  - ✓ create a positive classroom community at any grade level
  - ✓ manage classroom behavior
  - ✓ engage students in their education and improve academic achievement
- ✓ circles teach students:
  - ✓ that their classroom is a community
  - ✓ how to build trust
  - ✓ to support each other's learning
  - ✓ to hold each other accountable
- ✓ deliver curriculum



# What did we/I do? Who was affected by what we/I did?



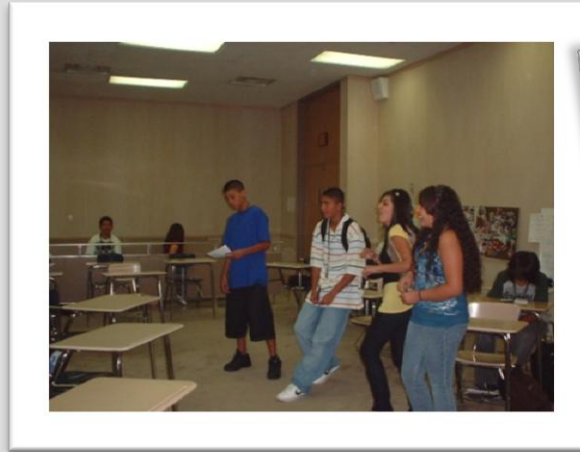
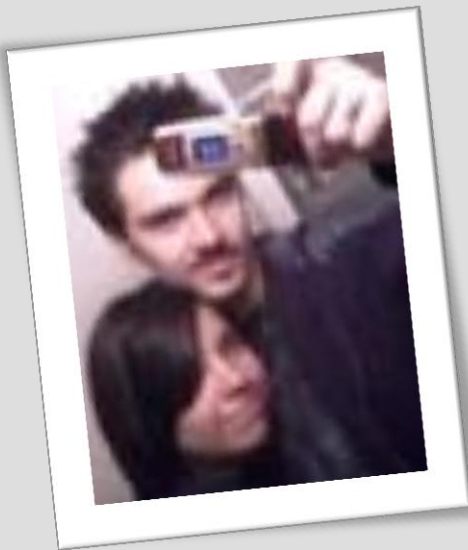
ATRISCO HERITAGE ACADEMY  
HIGH SCHOOL



ACADEMY OF HEALTH  
& SOCIAL SCIENCES



What did we/I do? Who was affected by what we did?



## Restorative Practice in the Classroom

*Using Counselors Language & Circles in the Classroom*

“Challenging class”

- Explain “safe learning environment”
- Explain boundaries (“bubble”)
- apply use of object and timer
- language usage protocols
- teacher models first
- Use Restorative Practice questions
- Double-circles (inner & outer)
- Allow for saboteurs
- Don’t force students to participate but give them opportunity at end & ask again, and then once again
- Use Common Sense
- Practice, practice, practice
- Patience, Patience, Patience

International Toastmaster format:  
1 each type of comment  
positive & “area of improvement”  
or  
like & don’t like

What did we/I do? Who was affected by what we did?

## Restorative Practice in the Classroom

*Using Counselors Language & Circles in the Classroom*



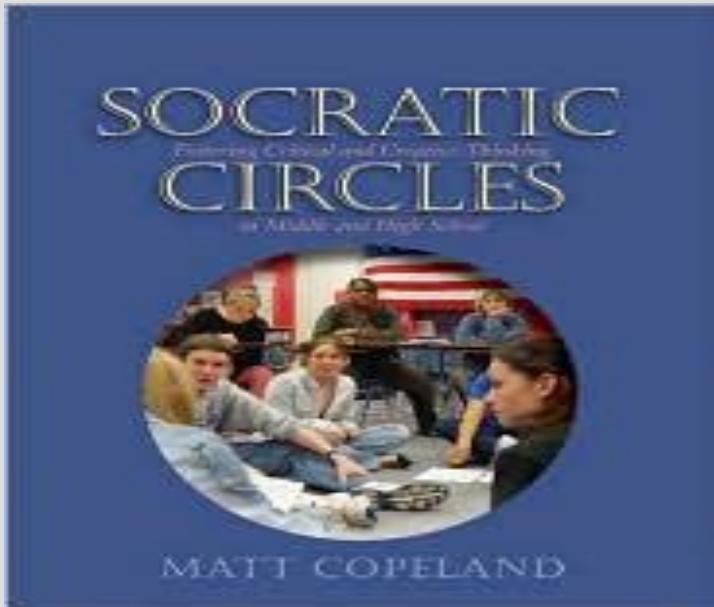
### “On Task & Focused Class”

- Discuss or introduce difficult behavior or issues that may impede classroom learning
- Explain “safe learning environment”
- Use Common Sense
- Seminar Discussion --
  - Socratic discourse
  - Student-initiated discussions
  - Student led circles





# What did we/I do? Who was affected by what we did?



Socratic Circles:  
Fostering Critical and  
Creative Thinking in  
Middle & High School

Orchestrate  
Direct  
Lead  
Teach  
Facilitate  
Give Hope...



Curriculum Suggestion

Utilize these first --

Differentiated,  
Interdisciplinary &  
Cross-curricular instruction

What did we/I do?

Who was affected by what we did?

## Bilingual Strategies

### Literature Circles: Getting Started

#### FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE



- In a bilingual classroom, Peralta-Nash and Dutch explain that the strategy helped students become stronger readers.
- Strong classroom strategy coupling collaborative learning with student-centered inquiry.
- When students engage with texts and one another this ways, they take control of their literacy in positive and rewarding ways.

***Students learned to take responsibility for their own learning...reflected in how effectively they made choices and took ownership of literature circle groups.***

***They took charge of their own discussions, held each other accountable for how much or how little reading to do, and for the preparation for each session.***

***The positive peer pressure that the members of each group placed on each other contributed to each student's accountability to the rest of the group. (36)***

#### Further Reading

Peralta-Nash, Claudia, and Julie A. Dutch. "Literature Circles: Creating an Environment for Choice." [Primary Voices K-6 8.4](#) (April 2000): 29-37.

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/literature-circles-getting-started-19.html?tab=4#tabs>

## Using Talking Circles in the Classroom with all Student Populations:

- Native American, Hispanic, Gifted, Special Education



• Research shows that Native American students learn more effectively with is a reflective process built into the class structure.

• A talking circle will promote **reflection** – especially when students are encouraged to speak up.

• Talking circle classrooms allow for their **experiences to be acknowledged** and encourage **peer sharing** and teaching, and same for the instructor.

• Talking circles are a well known **method of healing** in Native American populations.

• Participants sit in a circle so each individual will be able to make eye contact with everyone –

*Be aware many Native communities do not encourage eye contact.*

• **Object** of some sort passed around and whoever has the object gets to speak, one participant speaks at a time and no one is expected to have any answers or offer any advice.

• The notion of speaking while everyone listens respectfully is a **powerful modality**. As human beings', having someone listen to us, is often the only help we need and the only thing we will accept.

• <http://blogs.nwic.edu/teachinglearning/2010/04/26/using-talking-circles-in-the-classroom/> photos by Dean Leh





What did we/I do? Who was affected by what we did?

**This format promotes the collaborative approach, creating a community of learners.**

- Many indigenous students have had negative experiences within the traditional/hierarchical educational systems which may not have fostered any real **sense of connection**.
- It is the instructor's professional responsibility to promote a **safe learning environment** in the classroom setting.
- Incorporating a **talking circle format** in the classroom is an effective way of creating a safe environment while allowing students to engage more fully.
- The circle of students also require getting **involvement and interaction** with each other.

**What did we/I do?**  
**Who was affected by what we did?**



## Communication in the PLC Collaborative

*Democratic "round table" collaborative discussion of students & issues*

- Hierarchical Structure v. Collaborative initiatives
  - Within School District & School
  - Traditionally trained v. PLC Collaborative Model
  - Reluctance to use restorative language yet are practicing restoratively
- Academy Head role @ AHA HS:
  - Acting as Facilitator not Administrator
- Examples:
  - Organic v. Structured Teams
  - Conflicts between adult



## Restorative Practice With Adults --

- Model communication verbally and non-verbally
- Language usage & meeting protocols
- Beware of inflammatory or emotional language (don't get off track)
- Apply use of object and/or timing
- Don't force participation but give opportunity to contribute at end
- Allow for saboteurs
- Practice, Practice, Practice
- Patience, Patience, Patience

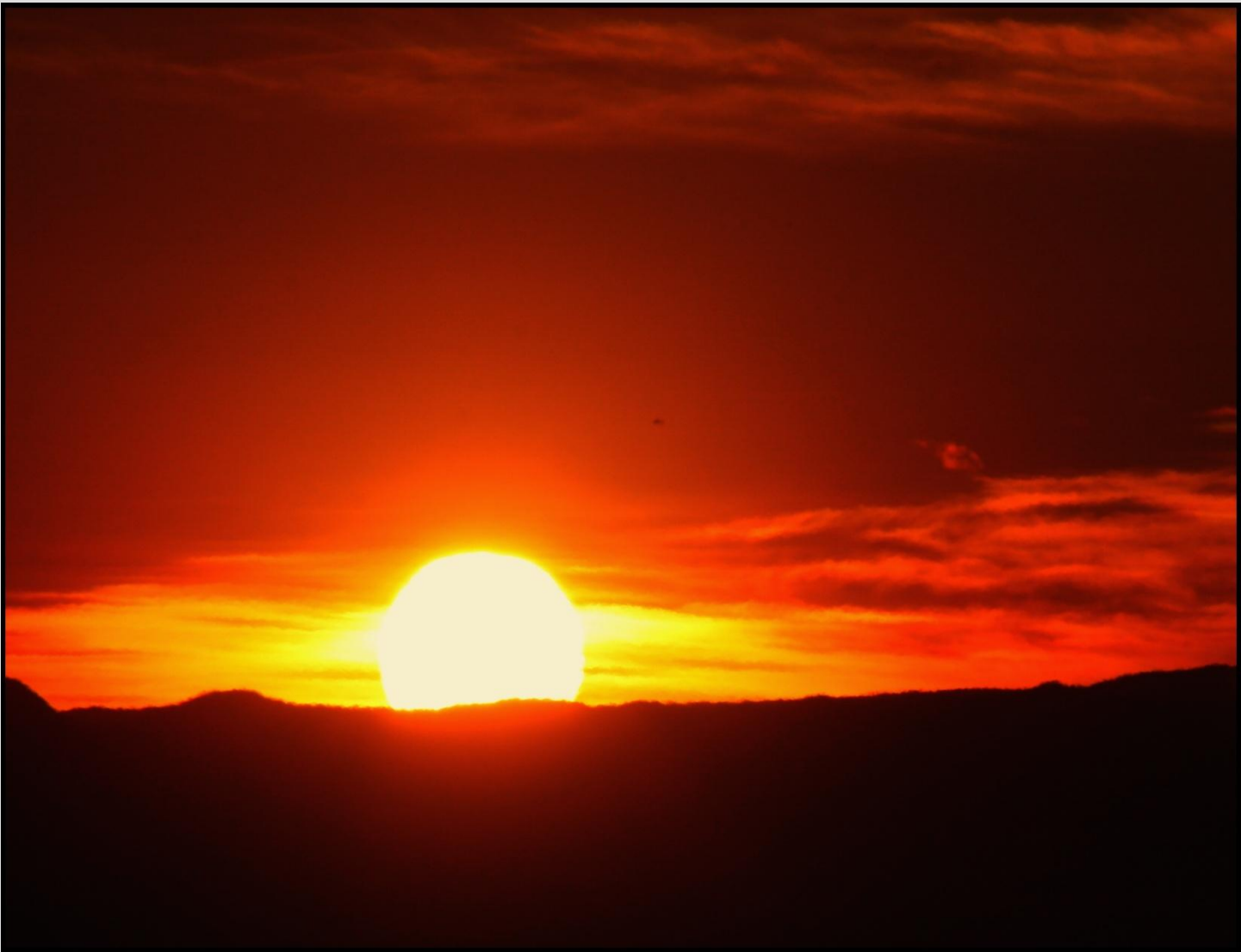




**Result: Students, Educators & Community Stakeholders take responsibility for environment being created.**







What happens next?

*Keep Going*

- ✓ Restorative Classroom
- ✓ Restorative Academy
- Restorative School
- Restorative School District



## Restoring Connections in the American Southwest

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR  
**RESTORATIVE PRACTICES** A GRADUATE SCHOOL  
Restoring Community in a Disconnected World

