

Life Skills through Restorative Circles

A collaboration between
Enfold Proactive Health Trust and Innisfree House School
Bangalore



Highlights of Feedback received on the Pilot Programme
May 2019 - March 2020

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About

Enfold Proactive Health Trust

Enfold Proactive Health Trust, a non-profit in Bengaluru founded in 2001, aims to address issues like gender based violence and sexual abuse, through education, awareness, rehabilitative support for survivors of child sexual abuse, and restorative processes with children in schools and the juvenile justice system. **The organization works towards creating safe spaces, where each gender is equally valued and respected, every child is safe and people of all genders feel empowered and accountable.** This is achieved through strong field-based engagement, given that since 2002, the organization has worked directly with children and adults in colleges and schools, and has built strong associations with national and international agencies like UNICEF, UNESCO, and several State Governments.

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About

Innisfree House School

Innisfree House School was established in 1985 and is situated in Jayanagar in Bengaluru. The school believes in working on all aspects of the child's development including safety, well being, mental health and academics. **The school adopted the Restorative Circle practice in 2019 to create safer spaces for students and staff to express themselves and to enable social emotional learning in their school community.**

Acknowledgments

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The Enfold team that worked on designing tools, collecting feedback, analysing data, and writing this report are **Swagata Raha, Shivangi Puri, and Arlene Manoharan**. They were assisted in this task by **Ruchira Ramakrishnan** and interns **Klara Helbo Lunde** and **Deepika Bhardwaj**. **Mina Ahmady** and **Shagira Selva** assisted with the analysis of the written feedback. **Amitha Nighat, Eldrida Lewis, Shivangi Puri** and **Swagata Raha** were involved in shooting and editing the video of the teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

Since 2016, consultants at Enfold Trust have been trained by international experts on various forms of Restorative Practice including Restorative Justice, Restorative Circles, Harm Circles, and Victim Offender Dialogues. The Restorative Practices team at Enfold was established in 2018 with a view to introduce restorative practices in different settings such as schools, child care institutions, the juvenile justice system, and the wider community.

Restorative Justice in education is about “facilitating learning communities that nurture the capacity of people to engage with one another and their environment in a manner that supports and respects the inherent dignity and worth of all.”¹ Under the restorative approach, misbehavior in the classroom is viewed as a social and emotional learning opportunity for students. Instead of punishment and exclusion, restorative processes focus on value-based dialogue to set things right and repair relationships.

With a view to launch a pilot initiative on introducing Restorative Circles in schools, Enfold approached Innisfree House School (IHS) in 2019. Enfold has enjoyed a long and mutually enriching relationship with IHS, conducting life skills based sessions on personal safety and sexuality for the students and conducting training for teachers and staff, since 2003. The school had been using On Track workbooks (a series on life skills and personal safety) co authored by Enfold’s Co-Founders and Prof. Dr. Shekhar P. Seshadri, NIMHANS² to teach Life Skills since 2008. IHS welcomed this initiative enthusiastically, once again demonstrating their pioneering spirit and enthusiasm to explore and adopt evidence backed ideas that have a scientific foundation which help enhance the wellbeing of students. The school requested Enfold for detailed information about Restorative Practices, about Enfold’s experience in this area and the plan for evaluation of the impact of the program. After due diligence, permission was granted to proceed with this pilot program.

This report presents the highlights of the feedback from teachers and students at IHS about their experience of Restorative Circles and the recommendations for the way forward. The team at Enfold Proactive Health Trust came away deeply inspired after hearing the students and teachers share their experience and perspectives on Restorative Circles. We sincerely hope that IHS will continue to use Restorative processes and sharpen its practice in the school at all levels, so as to move towards embedding a Restorative culture in the school.

¹ Katherine Evans & Dorothy Vandering, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education - Fostering Responsibility, Healing, and Hope in Schools* (2016), p.8.

² Seshadri, S. Saksena, S. Saldanha, S. (2008) On Track - a series on life skills and personal safety, Macmillan Publishers India Ltd.

1.1. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PILOT PROGRAM

Capacity Building for Teachers and Counselors on Restorative Circles:

Following the approval from the IHS management, a team from Enfold comprising Dr. Sangeeta Saksena, Arlene Manoharan and Swagata Raha conducted a five-day training workshop for 13 teachers and two counselors from 20-25 May 2019. The objectives of the experiential training program were:

1. Identifying and defining life skills as detailed by the World Health Organization (WHO).
2. Understanding how students can experience and strengthen life skills through Restorative Circles.
3. Understanding the role of Restorative Approaches in education, especially, in a school setting.
4. Experiencing facilitation of life skills through the Restorative Circle process.
5. Understanding how teasing, bullying, and other types of harm which may take place in a school setting could be addressed through Restorative Circles.

During the first two days, participants were oriented to the possibility of using Restorative Circles as an effective means through which Life Skills could be taught to students and the entire school could work towards strengthening a Restorative culture. A culture in which every student, teacher and administrative staff is treated with dignity, respect, equality, non-discrimination etc. and relationships are cherished, and are deepened so as to co-create a deeper sense of community. They were introduced to the Circle elements, and enabled to experience Circle process, while sharing their thoughts and feelings on topics such as 'Building Relationships and Shared Values', 'Enhancing Self-Awareness in Conflict Situations', 'Enhancing Responsibility and Accountability', and introduced to Restorative Circle Process in Education in other countries. On the third day, participants were invited to facilitate Circles in smaller groups, and then to share and discuss this experience with the others. They were then helped to gain a deeper understanding of what is not Restorative Justice. On days 4 and 5, participants were supported in facilitating Circles on their own in smaller groups, on topics such as relationships,

“(Circle) is a place where you know, a safe space to share stuff, a fun way to get to know people and get things off your chest.”

- Student from Class 9

success and failure, power, anger, bullying, and on changing beliefs. Participants were then invited to share their thoughts and suggestions on the way forward.

Facilitation of Restorative Circles by Teachers and Counselors of IHS: The team of teachers and counselors that had been trained then started facilitating weekly Circles from June 2019 for students from classes 1 to 10. Members of the Enfold team observed a minimum of three Circles facilitated by each of them, and provided detailed feedback to each one in writing. A half-day workshop was also conducted for teachers of classes 1 and 2 to enable them to assist the facilitation of Circles with these very young students in the school. The team also facilitated a follow up Reflection Circle on 11 July 2019 with these staff to enable them to share their experience of facilitating Circles, share what worked and the challenges they faced, and discuss these. Subsequently, the Enfold team prepared recommendations for life skills through Restorative Circles for use by the teachers and the Enfold team. The Enfold team kept in touch with the IHS counselors and helped them to resolve doubts or challenges that were being faced by staff who were facilitating Circles, as and when required.

1.2. METHODOLOGY FOR FEEDBACK COLLECTION ON THE PILOT PROGRAM

With a view to document the impact of the pilot program in IHS, the Enfold team adopted the following method to obtain students' views and capture their experience:

- A feedback survey form was administered to all the students (a total of 450 students), from classes 3 to 9, at the end of the school year. Responses from class 10 were not collected as their classes finished earlier in the academic year. The lockdown due to COVID-19 made it difficult for feedback to be collected from students of class 10.
- Class-wise focus group discussions were conducted with 20% students who were randomly selected. 96 students from Classes 3-9 participated in the discussions in March 2020. The lockdown due to COVID-19 made it difficult for feedback to be collected from students of class 10.

Interviews were conducted with nine of the trained staff on 30 October 2019 to document their experience and the insights they had gained from facilitating Restorative Circles with students. Additionally, a Focus Group Discussion was also facilitated in March 2020 with all the staff who had facilitated Restorative Circles in the school.

BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH RESTORATIVE CIRCLES - TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE

The teachers and counsellors shared their experiences of facilitating Restorative Circles in their classrooms in October 2019 and March 2020. Reflecting on the purpose and value of Restorative Circles in schools, they shared :

- Circles enabled creation of a **safe and comfortable space for students to express unpleasant feelings, build relationships, identify conflicts and learn how to resolve them in a way that made them more empathetic and respectful towards each other.**
- Through the Circles, **difficult issues like name-calling, consent, regret and anger could be discussed**, issues that would otherwise be harder to address in their capacity as teachers.
- As per the training they had received, they had facilitated the Circles by trying to co-equalize power with the students, and this helped **them to gain the students' trust and confidence.**

CULTIVATING EMPATHY THROUGH RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

"... each and every emotion can be expressed very easily because the motto of the Circle is - first thing is not to be judgmental. If I cry also, my students and my colleagues, (they) will not judge me. That empathy is there; that trust building is there. I felt very comfortable to share every moment with my students and with my colleagues. That made me trust that Circle and to build this within my students. First of all, I should get that trust about this Circle. Later I was able to build that trust within my students." -Teacher of Class 6

"I have observed that in each Restorative Circle, students learn to be true to themselves and they respect others and then they also show share and care and this is very important as these are the basic virtues on which the community lives. So I think it is a basic need that students have to develop while they are growing up and thus it is important." -Teacher of Class 3

“ The Circle brought the class closer and it helped many people to solve their problems, understand their mistakes, become a group and stand with each other. ”

- Student of Class 7

During the Focus Group Discussions (FGD), the teachers shared their experience and challenges of facilitating Restorative Circles. They

expressed that initially some of the students were shy to talk about their feelings, some were disruptive and some would simply lose interest in the conversation. Most were able to figure out a way to get students to open up by making use of a diversity of strategies such as demonstrating patience, spending time talking to them individually asking them how they would like the Circle process to be, assigning specific roles to each student to enable them to feel more involved, etc. Gradually over time, the students began opening up and expressing what they felt and were more involved in the discussion. For example, a teacher shared, "Initially I did not have any response. There were a couple of students who used to make fun of the responses. But then I had to deal with them individually, so I just told them the importance of the Circle. And then I did not have any issues. I gave them responsibilities to make the Centre." Another teacher shared, "In the beginning they did not share at all, but towards the end they started sharing. Most of them shared and were true to what they were saying... They could understand (anger management), and all of them had stories, and all of them came to the point that when we are in trouble we go to our trusted people (parents or teachers)."

Some teachers shared about the specific changes they observed in students. One shared how the process had helped students develop social skills - "There is a particular boy in my class who is extraordinary academically, but socially not so much. But now after sitting in a Circle with his friends, he now speaks about his favourite movies, books, people,... which wasn't the case initially." Another shared about the subtle change she noticed in "one child who did not share at all and kept saying "what is the point of talking about emotions and our feelings." By the end of the year, he helped arrange the Circle and I felt at least that was a change."

The teachers observed that students were genuine in their expression of their thoughts and feelings in the Circle - "They were all true to their feelings and experiences, they said what they felt. Whatever experience was shared was also kept in the Circle, I never heard of them taking it out of the Circle." Some teachers also shared that they observed a sense of unity within the classroom - most students enjoyed sharing and listening to each other's stories and looked forward to the games they played together in the Circle.

As regards challenges faced, the teachers sometimes found it difficult to navigate through their role as a teacher in the classroom on the

"We have become more considerate about others' feelings... and think about what we would feel if we were in their position. So before saying anything we think about it."

- Student from Class 7

one hand and as a facilitator of Circles on the other, wherein they had to be an equal participant. For instance, one teacher shared “It was challenging because we had continuous classes, so shifting our mindset between classes was difficult.”

IMPACT OF RESTORATIVE CIRCLES ON TEACHER’S RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

“I felt more close to my kids. Whatever we discussed, unconsciously stayed in the Circle.” -Teacher of Class 6.

“I got to know my students better, and they indeed know us better now as both of us open up during the Circles and they feel good when they get to know that their teachers have also gone through such things,.. that she has also faced these problems. So they don’t feel that I am the only one. And when they share their experiences with me, I feel that I am a part of their lives, it’s both ways and that’s beautiful... I have become a better person when it comes to remaining calm in any kind of tough situation so it is helping me in my personal and professional life.” -Teacher of Primary and Pre-school Students.

“It (the Restorative Circles) really does help the students as well us the facilitators. It actually makes us realise what we are doing, what is okay and what is going wrong and how do we correct ourselves.” -Teacher of Classes 1-5.

“Restorative processes for me is like empowering ourselves, and students feel more comfortable, more free. ...they are more free than ever... not just the students but the parents who come for the parent-teacher meetings tell that there is a kind of a change that they see in the child and may be it is because of their age that they go back and share their experiences that happened in the Circles and parents also feel good. There was one parent who came back and she told me that maybe the Circle process is helping my child, could you please do it more often. ” -Teacher of Class 7 & 8.

“ I used to feel afraid going to the teacher with my problems. But now I feel more safe with my teacher.”

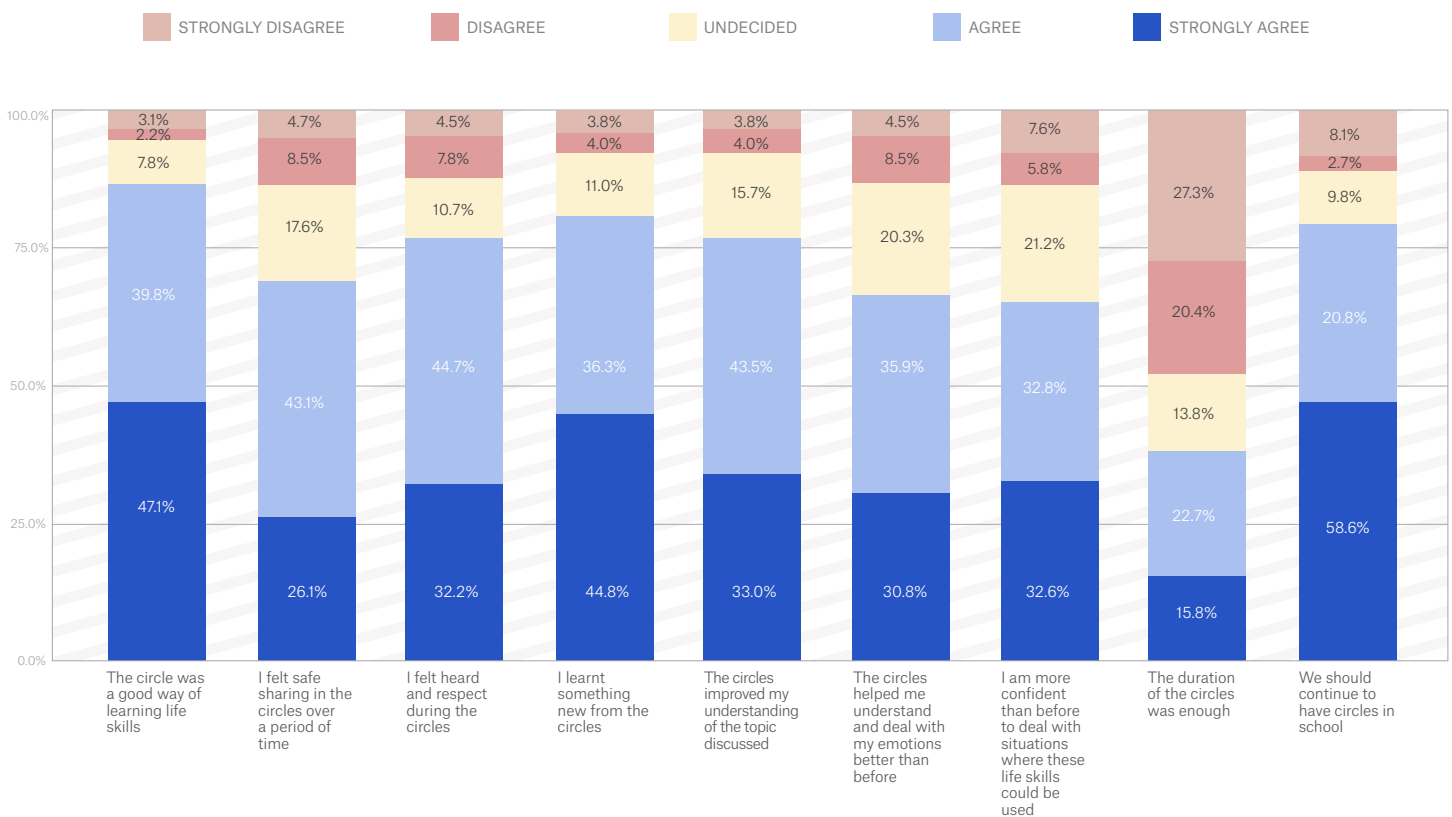
- Student from Class 5



STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF AND PERSPECTIVES ON RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

Based on the written feedback from **450 students** from across **classes 3-9** and the FGDs with **96 students**, it emerged that the majority considered the **Restorative Circles a positive experience** - one that helped them express themselves and also understand their classmates better. The graph below captures their views on specific aspects of the Circle process.

FEEDBACK FROM 450 STUDENTS ON CIRCLES FACILITATED BY TEACHES AND COUNSELORS AT INNISFREE HOUSE SCHOOL 2019 - 2020



3.1. RESTORATIVE CIRCLES AS AN EFFECTIVE MEDIUM TO LEARN LIFE SKILLS

• 87% agreed the Circle was a good way of learning life skills, 7.8% were undecided, and 5.3% disagreed. 76% agreed that the Circles improved their understanding of the topic, 15.7% were undecided, while 7.8% disagreed. Most students expressed that the Circles helped them, feel respected, heard as equal participants and confident that whatever they say won't be shared outside of the Circle, enabling them to share their feelings more openly. They also felt good when others shared an experience similar to theirs. For instance, one of them expressed, "You can feel better about yourself because even others have problems."

• **Values:** Students stated the Circles helped them learn the importance of respecting themselves as well as one another, and they gained the confidence to share their experiences with others. They said that they learnt the **values of courage, equality, respect, patience, helpfulness, kindness, politeness, listening to others, caring for one another, respecting confidentiality, and being non-judgmental.** They also learnt to speak the truth, respect others' feelings, and accept that everyone is unique in their own way. The Circles have helped them in facing problems independently, boosting their self-confidence, and being more thoughtful before taking action.

• **Emotional regulation:** 67% agreed that the Circles helped them understand and deal with their emotions better than before, 20% were undecided, while 13 % felt the Circle did not. Students shared it helped them manage their emotions better as they learnt how to deal with anger, overcome fear, manage disappointments, be more sensitive, confident, and strong. Some students shared that conversations about emotions during Circles helped them become more accepting and accommodating of others, cope with new situations calmly, and exercise patience.

• **New learnings:** 81% agreed they learnt something new from the Circles, 11% were undecided, while 7.8% disagreed. Students shared that the **Circle helped them broaden their perspectives** and become more open-minded. By hearing their classmates' talk about their difficulties, many students could relate to the experiences being shared and felt they were not alone. It made it easier to understand and help each other as well. Some shared that hearing how others had dealt with a similar situation, gave them a different perspective and helped them reflect on how it could be handled differently. Students shared that they learnt about seeking help from safe adults for their personal safety.

• **Self-awareness:** Students shared that the Circles gave them an opportunity to learn more about themselves and to express themselves better. The students discovered themselves, realised they are unique,

“ The silent kids never used to talk and speak freely, now they have totally changed - they feel heard and respected. ”

- Student of Class 4

and some discovered they were helpful, polite, important and brave. Many shared that it enhanced their confidence and communication skills. Some students also shared that they had noticed that it helped their quieter classmates to open up. Most students stated that the Circle had changed their attitude or beliefs or behaviour about themselves, their friends, family, teachers and people in general. Some students said it helped them develop a positive outlook, gain confidence, and become more empathetic.

STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS ON THE CHANGES THEY NOTICED IN THEMSELVES DUE TO THE RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

"I used to feel I am not special. After everyone spoke (in the Circle), I felt that each person is special." -Student from Class 4.

"I used to be selfish before. I have started sharing now." -Student from Class 4.

"It changed my attitude and ideas about certain topics. I have become more mature and accepting towards others' opinion likes and dislikes." -Student from Class 8.

"My behaviour has changed, I was very naughty before. There was a Circle done only with a few students from my class- which really helped me reflect on my actions." -Student from Class 8.

"Now I do not react to something without thinking. I think about how the other person in front of me will feel before I react." -Student from Class 8.

"I have stopped thinking that the grass is always greener on the other side... all of us have gotten our own difficulties." -Student from Class 9.

"I understood that all people are different in their own ways, in the way they think and the way in which they share their experiences." -Student from Class 9

"Before I used to think very low of myself but the Circles changed the way I thought of myself. Now I feel much better and wish to have more of these (Circles). I could recognise the qualities in me which helped me to increase my self confidence." -Student from Class 9.

• **Improved interpersonal relationships:** Most students shared that the Circles helped them learn something new by listening to the experiences of their classmates. Students shared that they felt they were able to cope with difficult emotions better after the Circles and that these also improved their relationship with friends, family members, classmates and teachers. Some shared it has helped them make new friends. Most students said the Circles helped them learn

something new after hearing the experiences of their classmates. Some shared that they were more open to sharing their personal items with their friends, while others shared they were able to make more friends.

• **Conflict resolution:** Most students said that the Circles helped in dealing with situations of conflict with friends, family members, or others. It helped them listen to all sides, understand other viewpoints, remain calm and patient, and gain confidence to cope with challenges. Some students shared that they've learnt to fight less, to listen to others, and to understand the root of conflict. One student even shared that the Circle served as the "Student Council" and helped resolve conflict with friends.

• **Confidence in applying life skills to deal with situations:** 65% students agreed they were more confident than before to deal with situations where life skills could be used, 21.2% were undecided, and 13.4% disagreed. The different ways the Circles helped students in real life situations was by helping them control their anger, manage their emotions better, manage exam and other stress, express themselves clearly, gain confidence, stand up for themselves against bullies in a respectful manner and support their friends too, enhance friendship, and helped one student resolve conflict with another friend.

WHAT THE RESTORATIVE CIRCLES MEAN TO STUDENTS

"I feel happy when I share my feelings with my friends. I don't feel happy when I don't share my feelings and I keep it inside myself." -Student from Class 3.

"[The Circle] is like a box of room freshener. When you open the box, the fragrance spreads everywhere. The Circle is like that. It has opened my mind to so many things." -Student from Class 4.

"We used to share only with our best friends. Circle is a time where everyone becomes your best friends - because you can share." -Student from Class 5.

"... it teaches you how to trust others. In the beginning of the year, I was [an] introvert and not sharing, keeping a lot of stuff for myself. But now I have learned how to trust." -Student from Class 6.

"It has made me understand that I am not the only one facing problems." -Student from Class 7.

"It makes you self aware, one can talk about emotions, share one's emotions and also learn how to manage them." -Student from Class 8.

"When we started, it gave me a different perspective for the same incident, promoted reflection and offered a different point of view..." -Student from Class 9.

“ [The Circle] is like a box of room freshener. When you open the box, the fragrance spreads everywhere. The Circle is like that. It has opened my mind to so many things.”

- Student of Class 4

3.2. RESTORATIVE CIRCLES AS A “SAFE SPACE”

“ Before I used to think very low of myself but the Circles changed the way I thought of myself. Now I feel much better and wish to have more of these (Circles). I could recognise the qualities in me which helped me to increase my self confidence.”

- Student of Class 9

- 77% felt heard and respected during the Circles, 12.3% did not, and 10.7% were undecided.
- 69% felt safe sharing in the Circle over a period of time, while 13% did not, and 18% students were undecided.
- During the FGDs, many students expressed that the Circle was a safe space for them to share their thoughts and feelings freely, and that they felt heard and respected.
- The design of the Circle, where they could see and hear everyone, was appreciated by some students who found it better than sitting in the “normal way”
- They viewed the Circle as a way of getting to know each other’s feelings, thoughts and experiences. They also felt more open and able to speak about different things especially for students who were introverted and would not normally speak up.
- It was also stated that the Circles bring a calm soothing feeling, which also relieved exam pressure.
- Few students also shared their discomfort about sharing and being teased thereafter. One student said, “I thought of it that sometimes it is not really open because you have to think a 100 times before you share anything, because you never know what is going to happen.”

STUDENTS’ VIEWS ON THE IMPACT OF RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

“After the Circle a person was troubling someone else, and usually we would let it go, but now the whole class tells the other person not to trouble him.”
-Student from Class 7.

“We have become more considerate about others’ feelings... and think about what we would feel if we were in their position. So before saying anything we think about it.” -Student from Class 7.

“The silent kids never used to talk and speak freely, now they have totally changed - they feel heard and respected.” -Student from Class 4.

“The trouble makers have started to respect others.” -Student from Class 8.

“It helps me not to be angry and also to control my anger” -Student from Class 4.

“Not everyone who looks happy has to be happy. It is OK to be sad.” -Student from Class 9.

“After the Circles, I have learnt to pause and examine the situations and consider what to do after thinking .” -Student from Class 5.

“It’s a place where you know everyone, a safe space to share stuff, a fun way to get to know people and get things off your chest.” -Student from Class 9.

3.3. WHAT STUDENTS LIKED ABOUT THE RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

The students like the sense of calm, joy, and energy they experienced in the Circles, as well as the ease with which they could share their thoughts and feelings. They appreciated the opportunity to share memories and stories from their own life and to listen to others. They got to know their peers better, resolved problems with their friends, and felt comforted that others have also had similar problems or experiences. Some students said they felt less lonely by listening to others. The students liked the feeling of being respected as an equal that the Circle enabled and ensured. Maintenance of confidentiality helped them share their stories as they knew it wouldn't be shared outside the Circle. Many students shared that they liked the Talking Piece, as it taught them to listen and have patience, and also gave them an opportunity to bring their special objects and share a story about why it was important to them.

"The Circle taught me I am special even if people say that I am not."
-Student from Class 3.

"I love the Circles. It was a very wonderful way of expressing your thoughts, feelings and ways you deal with your life. I want the period of life skills and the Restorative Circles to continue for all the years."
-Student from Class 3.

"I am more educated with diverse opinions and understand situations better." -Student from Class 3.

"You can pour your heart out." -Student from Class 7.

"It's a different place without interruptions. It's calm and organised."
-Student from Class 9.

"Everyone else in the Circle listens to you. No one outside (the Circle) listens to you, it just doesn't happen outside. It's a conversation that doesn't happen regularly." -Student from Class 9.

"I really like the Talking Piece and the freedom we had to choose one. It was also like a part of the person's life was in the Centre - it was great when they shared the story about the Talking Piece." -Student from Class 9.

"... it teaches you how to trust others. In the beginning of the year, I was [an] introvert and not sharing, keeping a lot of stuff for myself. But now I have learned how to trust."

- Student of Class 4

3.4. WHAT STUDENTS DID NOT LIKE ABOUT RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

Most students shared that they did not like disruptions during the Circle and felt disrespected when other students mocked, teased, or passed comments in the Circle. Some students did not like it when others spoke out of turn and did not respect the Talking Piece. Few

students shared that they did not like questions that were unclear, 'boring', personal questions, and those that they perceived as framed in order to target their specific behaviour. They also didn't like it when topics were repeated. Many students felt that 40 minutes was not enough as Circles need to be for a longer duration. Some students found the Check-ins too abstract - for example asking students to express how they are feeling in the form of a weather report, or to express their feelings using a movie title or a book title. There were a few students who expressed that they did not gain anything from the Circle and found them "boring" or "bad". They expressed their difficulty in understanding the topics discussed in the Circle and suggested having a variety of interesting fun topics.

3.5. CHANGES STUDENTS OBSERVED IN THEIR CLASSROOM DUE TO RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

"I learnt what I can do when I am sad and angry. I can draw or read books." -Student from Class 4.

"We can be united, we are not just boys and girls, but we are together." -Student from Class 4.

"Not only I, everyone has different situations to deal with on the same topic. I might have a whole iceberg of problems but few people have a bigger iceberg." -Student from Class 6.

"The Circle brought the class closer and it helped many people to solve their problems, understand their mistakes, become a group and stand with each other. So I want the Circle to continue more till 10th. It helped me a lot." -Student from Class 7.

"The class is generally more friendly and it's (Circle) a nicer way to talk to each other." -Student from Class 9.

"People are less judgmental and they actually get to know each other and learn to seek advice from one another." -Student from Class 9.

"Before the teacher was a person standing in front of the class, but during the circle, now we can speak freely and we got to know them better."

- Student of Class 7

3.6. SHOULD IHS CONTINUE WITH RESTORATIVE CIRCLES?

- 79% agreed that Circles should be continued in the school, 10% were undecided, and 11% felt it should not.
- 48% felt the duration of the Circle was not enough, 38% felt it was, while 2 % were undecided.
- During the FGDs, the children were near unanimous in their view that Restorative Circles should be continued in IHS.

"I love the Circles. It was a very wonderful way of expressing your thoughts, feelings and ways you deal with your life. I want the period of life skills and the Restorative Circles to continue for all the years."
-Student from class 3.

"Circles should be held all over the world. Everyone should know about it. We should put it up on Google." -Student from class 4.

Yes, people who don't speak up or are alone as they have no friends - when they get to share their feelings, then they don't feel lonely."
-Student from class 5.

"As we are going to high-school everyone is going to be more focused on their studies and not express their feelings, so if the Circle is there it will give time for them to think about themselves." -Student from class 7.

"It's a great way to share your thoughts and it should be done with everybody everywhere." -Student from class 9.

"Not only I, everyone has different situations to deal with on the same topic. I might have a whole iceberg of problems but few people have a bigger iceberg."

- Student of Class 6

IV

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY IHS

Based on evidence presented in this report, which clearly demonstrates the tremendous value of Restorative processes in helping the school achieve its vision and mission of inculcating a solid value system in its students, Enfold Proactive Health Trust would like to make recommendations for consideration by IHS. These are as follows:

- 1. Formalize a policy that Restorative Circle practice will be embedded into the education system in the school,** so as to sustain the pioneering process of championing the 'Restorative Justice Approach in Education' in India.
- 2. Re-organize the teaching schedules** so as to not only allocate more time for both students and staff to sit in Circle, but to also increase its frequency.
- 3. Invest in capacity building on Restorative processes,** so as to enable:
 - All teachers, counselors, and non-teaching staff to become skilled in Restorative Circle practice, and to also consider using restorative elements while teaching/counseling and during staff meetings.
 - Select teachers/ counselors and student representatives to become skilled in facilitating Harm Circles as a way of resolving interpersonal conflict restoratively.
 - Select students and teachers/ counselors can be deputed for further training, field visits, webinars/conferences on Restorative Justice, within India and abroad.
 - An orientation may be held for all school staff (teaching and administration) on the Restorative process and on how it could contribute to co-creating a safe, child friendly and restorative culture in the school.
- 4. Consider implementation of the suggestions provided by students for the improvement of Restorative Circles,** specified in the box below.

5. **Evolve a system whereby students are encouraged and supported to share their suggestions** for Circle topics and questions, as well as for soliciting feedback about the Restorative processes.
6. **Evolve a system whereby students are supported to facilitate their own Circles.**
7. **Evolve a system where students selected from every class are supported in becoming Restorative Ambassadors**, a role that requires them to proactively promote a restorative culture among the students in all spaces within the school (classroom, playground, common area, while on the school bus, during school outings, during inter and intra school events, etc).
8. **Evolve a system whereby teachers/counselors who are found to be having exceptional skills in building a Restorative culture are affirmed and conferred the title of Restorative Ambassadors**, so that they are officially recognized as role models.
9. **Establish an egroup/network of student alumni and staff committed to taking forward the Restorative spirit and values beyond the borders of the school**, (including the students who have recently graduated from the 10th class, who were not able to participate in the FGDs or feedback survey).
10. **Evolve a system wherein both students and staff could contribute to a blog** through which examples of positive restorative behaviour that took place in the school is showcased, with due regard to the principles of confidentiality, privacy and safety.
11. **Invest in documenting, researching and publicizing the outputs and outcomes achieved by the school through the use of Restorative approaches.** This could help consolidate the insights and learnings that are derived over time to be **widely disseminated and to influence policy, law and practice related to education in India.**
12. **Invite corporate social responsibility (CSR), and other sources to help bolster the funding available for this path breaking initiative.**

STUDENTS'S SUGGESTIONS FOR ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF THE RESTORATIVE CIRCLE PROCESS

- The duration of Circles should be increased so that there is sufficient time for everyone to share.
- The frequency should be increased.
- To increase students' participation, they should be asked to come up with questions and vote for topics. To elicit topics from students, they may be invited to drop their suggestions for the topic or problems in a suggestion box as this will also help ensure their anonymity.
- Students should be encouraged to keep their own Circles.
- The Circles can be made more engaging by including games, activities, or movement-based activities.
- Questions should be designed in ways they don't elicit single word responses.
- Topics should not be repetitive and a variety of topics should be considered.
- Consider conducting Circles in locations other than the classroom.

“ I love the Circles. It was a very wonderful way of expressing your thoughts, feelings and ways you deal with your life. I want the period of life skills and the Restorative Circles to continue for all the years. ”

- Student of Class 3