



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT IMPLEMENTING RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

1. ***What are Restorative Practices? What is Restorative Justice Education?***

Restorative Practices focus on building, maintaining, and when necessary, repairing relationships among all members of the school community when harm occurs. Restorative practices encourage accountability that emphasize empathy and obligation to repair harm, and is designed to foster a climate of belonging and security and keep students learning in the classroom. The restorative approach is based on a set of guiding principles and practices for the school community. It sees relationships as central to learning, growth and an inclusive, respectful school culture. It is a paradigm shift from traditional rule-based, punitive discipline systems to a system where growth and transformation are the main goals.

Restorative Justice Education (RJE) is a whole-school approach that prioritizes relationships, builds community, creates just and equitable learning environments, supports struggling students, teaches peaceful conflict resolution, and repairs relationships after a harm has occurred.

2. ***What specifically are you asking of teachers and administrators?***

Teachers are asked to do four things:

- 1) Hold Connection Circles with students (1x week elementary; 1-3x/week middle; 1x/week high. Start by holding Circles either 1x/week for 2 weeks OR as listed above for 6-8 weeks for middle and high) and Problem Solving/Responsive Circles as needed;
- 2) Use Affective and Relationship Building Statements with students on a daily basis (including greeting students at the door and taking the first 2 weeks of school to build your classroom community);
- 3) Hold Restorative Conversations with students instead of sending them out of class; and
- 4) Use these skills with colleagues to build/maintain a culture of trust.

Administrators and Support Staff are asked to do four things:

- 1) Be a part of an Implementation Team that meets regularly, uses data to assess progress and set goals, and makes bold leadership decisions to prioritize implementation (principal especially needs to lead the effort the first year);
- 2) Hold Restorative Mediations and Conferences for issues that are more serious and/or involve two or more students;
- 3) Supports teachers in their use of Restorative Practices through ongoing professional development, coaching, and a clear commitment to creating and maintaining a restorative school culture that includes an accountability system to monitor roll out and fidelity; and
- 4) Hold Staff Circles to help build the school community and trust among staff.

3. ***Would we have to give up / stop implementing existing alternative disciplinary practices we are currently using at our school (e.g., peer mediation)?***

Restorative Practices can be used alongside a number of existing disciplinary practices. Peer Mediation is considered a restorative practice, so this would not have to be given up. Restorative Practices can also be used along with other alternative disciplinary practices, including PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports). Restorative Practice models suggest changing disciplinary practices that are based in a punitive, exclusionary, compliance model of discipline, as restorative approaches can provide new and creative approaches to classroom and school behaviors and rules.

4. ***As a busy educator with a full plate and a classroom size increasing again next year, can you tell me how much more time these restorative practices will take on a daily and regular basis (for Tier 1 and Tier 2 practices)? At what point are the classroom benefits achieved, at what point do the time savings outweigh the time expended?***

The suggested minimum requirement for teachers is to hold Connection Circles once a week for 15-30 minutes. Ideally, middle school teachers would hold Connection Circles 2-3x/week. Other practices can be implemented as able, such as having 5-10 minute informal conversations with students about discipline or classroom issues. Relationship building practices, such as using students names, getting to know their lives, and using restorative language when correcting behavior don't take time when using but may take time to learn. Problem Solving Circles often take 30-50 minutes. Classroom benefits are often achieved within 2-3 months of sincere, consistent application.

5. ***Would "traditional" disciplinary practices also be used? When and how?***

Yes, "traditional" disciplinary practices could also be used if needed and when used in conjunction with restorative practices. Students may still be suspended but their days out of school are often decreased and the intent of suspension is for self-reflection and self-regulation not punishment. The main effort is to reduce the need for punitive/exclusionary discipline practices. Consequences are still a part of discipline but they are co-created (being held accountable) rather than imposed from above. Implementing restorative practices is not meant to be just a kinder and gentler way of excluding and punishing students. A paradigm shift is required and expected, though this may take time to be fully implemented.

6. ***How will fidelity to the model be achieved, especially if school context and school-based decision-making will be used by school-based Implementation Teams?***

The restorative approach is a philosophical approach that has flexibility in implementation as long as the philosophy is adhered to. There is no "one size fits all" method of implementation. School context is important to consider and be used when implementing with fidelity. Fidelity is achieved by ongoing training, coaching, and support in an environment where risk taking is embraced.

7. ***How will parents, guardians and other community members be involved?***

This is dependent on the school's desires and capacity to engage them. Engaging the community in this project may be a critical factor in creating a successful and

sustainable program that meets the needs of the school and its community. We will work with the implementation team to design a plan for effectively engaging the community so that the program is culturally relevant.

8. ***Will restorative practices impact academic achievement?***

Yes. We have seen over and over that those teachers who embrace this philosophy and method of interacting with students find that their students' test scores increase in the first year. When relationships are build and strengthened, when students learn how to engage in productive dialogue with their teachers, when teachers learn how to share power in the classroom, and when students practice critical thinking and emotional expression, test scores increase.

9. ***What is the evidence/research basis for implementing restorative practices in schools?***

Research shows a reduction in suspensions, expulsions, and (negative) behaviors/incidents and improvements in perception of school safety and academic improvement. Those teachers who embrace this philosophy and method of interacting with students find that their students' test scores increase in the first year. Strengthened relationships, student engagement in productive dialogue with teachers, teachers sharing power in the classroom, and student practice of critical thinking and emotional expression contribute to increased test scores and academic achievement. (Also, see handout on Statistics That Prove It Works)

10. ***How will we know this won't be just another program that comes and goes?***

We work with schools to set up an effort that is specifically designed to use best practices of implementation science, which seeks to develop programs that last over time and are implemented with fidelity. We encourage schools to take their time and build the program over a span of 3-7 years. The four key elements of success are: 1) Principal Vision & Commitment, 2) Staff Buy-In, 3) Ongoing Professional Development, 4) RP Coordinator.



Restorative Practices in Schools

Ending the School-to-Prison Pipeline & Stats That Prove It Works

We're Doing Discipline Wrong

There's NO evidence that "punishment/reward" systems do anything to teach our students the behavioral and relationship skills they need to be successful (academically and socially). In fact, our traditional punitive systems are deeply harmful to students, families, schools and entire communities.

Suspended or Expelled?

- 6x more likely to repeat a grade
- 5x more likely to drop out
- 3x more likely towards juvenile justice

Arrested in school?

- 2x more likely to drop out

First time in court?

- 4x more likely to drop out

Equity issues

- Black = 4x more than whites
- Native American = 3.5x more than whites
- Latino = 2x more than whites

Recidivism nationally:

First-time offender is...

- over 80% likely to re-offend criminally
- over 85% likely to re-offend in schools
- (US Dept. of Education, Advancement Project, Dignity in Schools Campaign, Council of State Governments Justice Center, compiled by Padres & Jovenes Unidos, 2015)

SO, WHAT'S THE ANSWER?

Restorative Practices: Shifting away from punitive and retributive systems is effecting change, improving outcomes, and making schools safer.

Does It Work?

Denver Public Schools (CO):

- Suspensions down 40%-80%
- Absenteeism down 50%
- Tardiness down 60%
- (Baker, 2009)*

Cole Middle School (CA):

Suspensions down 87%

Expulsions down 100%

Reduced fights and built relationships

(UC Berkeley School of Law's Center for Social Justice, 2010)

West Philadelphia High School (PA):

Violent acts and serious incidents down 52%

Suspensions down ~70%

(IIRP, 2009)

Chicago Peace Center (IL):

80% of students showed academic improvements

significant changes in behavior and attitude

Flagstaff Charter Academy (CO):

Dramatic changes academically and socially:

Sense of Safety

2009 = 51% of 250 students felt "always safe" or "almost always safe"

2015 = 85% of 900 students felt "always safe" or "almost always safe"

Sense of Belonging

2009 = 72% of 250 students felt they belonged

2015 = 90% of 900 students felt they belonged

Recidivism Rates

2009 = each teacher averaged 10+ incidents/day

2015 = <2 incidents/day

Behavior Concerns

2009 = 15% of 250 students involved in 80% of misbehavior

2015 = 3% of 900 students involved in 80% of misbehavior

State CDE Rank

2009 = #388

2015 = #1

(Flagstaff Academy, 2014)

IT WORKS. IT'S WORTH DOING...

*(*For more information on references listed, please contact us.)*

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