

Authentic Engagement of Students and Families

(summary of [RP Partnership webinar](#))

All Voices are Valued

Restorative Practices is based on the principle that “all voices are valued and everyone is heard.” So, it’s important that we include student and family voices as we implement restorative practices in schools.

We Shouldn’t Wait

However, many schools take the approach that “we’ll wait until the adults get it before including students”—and this is a mistake because it becomes something we do TO students instead of doing it WITH them. We need to engage all students not just select students or the leaders in the school.

Historical Disengagement

Some students and families have been historically disengaged from school so there is a need to go slow and be steadfast in building connection and community, both with families and students. In order to authentically engage students and families, we need to build or re-build trust. We may have forgotten how to engage students in the conversation to truly get their voices heard.

Getting Started

Start by asking the question, “What do you think your role could be in bringing restorative practices to your school?” If you get silence, keep asking. The muscle may be weak and needs priming.

Spectrum of Engagement

Low: **Informing** (keep them informed)

Mid: **Listening** (get feedback)

High: **Including** (co-creating)

Exceptional: **Empowering** (true ownership)

Applying the Spectrum to the RP Partnership’s Implementation Benchmarks:

Benchmark #1: Common Understanding of Why

- 1) Inform students at a school assembly
- 2) Listen to students with the circle prompt, “what does it mean to be part of a restorative school?”
- 3) Include students in the Back to School night in Circles which allow people to talk about school culture and climate
- 4) Empower students and families to lead or co-lead the Back to School night and share what it means to be a part of this school community

Benchmark #2: Foundational Structures

- 1) Provide students and families with the handbook of policies and procedures
- 2) Ask them for their feedback on policies and procedures

- 3) Invite them to participate in the staff review of policies and procedures
- 4) Ask them to identify policies and procedures that are ineffective and get their ideas for change and then give them power to change it.

Benchmark #3: Collect and Analyze Data

- 1) Present climate and culture data at PTA meetings
- 2) Get feedback from students and families about the data
- 3) Get students to analyze the data in math classes, hypothesize root causes and then provide suggestions
- 4) Students and families help create and administer surveys to various stakeholders in the school community.

Benchmark #4: Training/Professional Development

- 1) Families are given the PD calendar for the staff
- 2) Families are invited to observe relevant PDs that the staff attend and are able to give feedback
- 3) Students create roleplays to use and they participate and provide feedback
- 4) Students lead PDs on strategies to build relationships with students

Benchmark #5: Restorative Language and Culture

- 1) Teachers call or send postcards home with positive news about how their student upheld restorative values in the classroom or at school.
- 2) Families complete mini-school climate surveys every time they are in the building to provide feedback on school culture and RP implementation.
- 3) Students and families are part of creating posters and visual images for the school and are also part of the hiring process to interview for a restorative mindset.
- 4) Students and families lead gatherings to discuss the impact of race and adult behavior on students.

Benchmark #6: Inform Families and Students of the Shift to Restorative Practices (N/A)

Benchmark #7: Prevention and Proactive Measures

- 1) Students and parents are invited to assemblies
- 2) Students nominate peers and staff who embody what it means to be restorative and become the Student or Staff of the Week
- 3) Families are invited to gatherings at school to build relationships with one another and staff.
- 4) Students and families are trained in Circle-keeping.

Staff PD Activity: Student Engagement

1. Where does your school fall on the spectrum of engagement for students?
 - a. What are you currently doing?
 - b. What is one way you can engage them more deeply by the end of the year?
2. Which students are we engaging?
3. Think of an area of RJP implementation that your team is currently struggling with the capacity to deliver. How could the engagement of young people help move the

needle on this? (e.g., Problem: lack of follow up after a restorative agreement; Solution: assigning a student mentor to follow up and check in to see if things are still O.K.)

Staff PD Activity: Family Engagement

1. Where does your school fall on the spectrum of engagement for families?
 - a. What are you currently doing?
 - b. What is one way you can engage them more deeply by the end of the year?
2. How can we re-engage families that have little faith that the school community has been designed to serve them?
 - a. Communications home (see sample script [to build relationships](#) and [in response to a concern](#) at RP Partnership/Resources)
 - b. Communications among staff that are asset based
3. Think of an area of RJP implementation that your team is currently struggling with the capacity to deliver. How could the engagement of families help move the needle on this?

(thanks to the RJ Partnership and Allison Meier for the information from this webinar. For more information, check out <https://rjpartnership.org/webinars/>)