

Restorative Practices Ideas **to Support the Return to On-Site and Concurrent Learning During COVID**

The return to on-site learning brings with it a mix of relief, celebration, and challenge as we get ourselves and our students re-accumulated to yet another “new normal” that requires support and responsivity to our students, parents, and staff remote learning experiences. We wish to create and hold space to continue processing the trauma and stress created by the quarantine, while also celebrating the milestone of a return to campus.

Transitioning back to the school building is a new start, so make relationship building and connection between you and your students and among students the highest priority to reestablish a safe, inclusive learning community.

We start this with ideas for working with staff, for once a staff feels safe, connected and resourced, they are more able to work more effectively with students.

For Working with Staff:

- Read *A Restorative Vision for Schools* article with your colleagues and discuss
- Talk about what is needed from Admin to support the transition back to the building and meet goals and expectations through the end of the semester
- Discuss how teachers can support one another such as establishing a buddy-classroom system for teachers to provide support for each other’s students and to co-facilitate Circles
- Discuss, encourage and support the importance of staff self-care
- Conduct Staff Circles using prompts to connect first and manage anxiety and stress second. Prompt scaffold example:
 - 1) What is a go-to movie, T.V. show, music or game that you find comforting, uplifting, amusing, or a general good distraction during these challenging times?
 - 2) What are you proud of in your own response to these challenging times?
(personal and/ or professional)
 - 3) What are your greatest concerns about transitioning to a concurrent learning environment? What do you need to feel supported?
- Provide intentional space and time for staff to meet to share and brainstorm during the transition, such as Circles, brown bag lunches, PLC time, “Listening Tours”, etc.
- Ensure that administrators are behind the effort to build strong relationships with students and to hold Circles before diving right into academics
- Have an honest conversation on the tension between academic benchmark expectations (for the next 40 days and June) and maintaining a healthy, relational community that supports a connected learning environment

Sample Circle Prompts with Staff:

- What is a go-to movie, T.V. show, music or game that you find comforting, uplifting, amusing, or a general good distraction during these challenging times?

- What are you proud of in your own response to these challenging times? (personal and/or professional)
- What are your greatest concerns about transitioning to a concurrent learning environment?
- Have you experienced any losses from COVID? How are you managing the grief that arises from this?
- We're all a little bit or perhaps even a lot on edge as a result of the pandemic. How can we come together as a staff and support each other? What agreements might be helpful for us?
- What do you need to feel supported? From your colleagues? From administration? From yourself?

Resources:

1. Restorative Practices in Schools Manual:

- Connection Circle Prompts for Staff p. 23
- A Restorative Vision for Schools p. 68

2. Handouts:

- Responsive Restorative Practices and Remote Learning
- 5 Minute Chat with Student
- How to Build Relationships with Students During COVID

For Working with Students:

- Circle facilitators should be trained practitioners. Have teachers who are new to facilitation pair-up with trained/experienced facilitators or sit in the Circle as a participant with another adult as facilitator
- Be intentional about getting all voices in the room, particularly during concurrent learning.
- Give students opportunities to come up with Circle prompts
- Use prompts to create connection first and process stress and anxiety second (scaffolding prompts to create a safe space for sharing)
- State the circle guidelines clearly at the start of each Circle and refer back to those agreements in response to disruptions, rather than calling individual students out
- Be personal and direct—talk with you students openly about the challenges they are likely experiencing with the return to the school building around anxiety, fear of getting behind academically, transitioning back to a school schedule after being at home, (including talking about the stress of school from home, while also acknowledging that some students have found it easier)
- Focus on support and problem-solving vs. consequences when addressing student behaviors

- Reassure students that you will be taking things slow and paying attention to their needs
- Include counselors in your Circles if you anticipate the need for trauma support
- Create a Peace Corner or “Me Time” space in your classroom where students can go to self-regulate and reflect
- Know which adults your students are most connected to and make sure they have easy access to those adults
- Be open to have teachers share which students they have trusting relationships with and which may need support from other adults
- For secondary schools, coordinate with your teachers around frequency of Circles and prompts to avoid overwhelm and redundancy
- Use Circles for academic purposes: formative assessments, collaborate learning, connecting content with personal experiences
- Consider reestablishing classroom norms with your students: discuss the classroom agreements that are important to in-classroom vs. remote learning. Ask students what they need and what they can do to help each learn well and care for each other
- Allow and normalize any strong emotions that may come up; use deep listening skills such as slowing down, allowing pauses, not trying to fix but seeking to be present and to understand, and referring when necessary

Sample Circle Prompts with Students:

- What do/did you like about doing school from home?
- What is/was hard for you?
- What are you most excited about to be back in school?
- What are you most concerned about?
- What do you need from your classmates?
- What do you need from me as your teacher?

You can use these questions as Circle prompts and/or create a worksheet for students to complete individually and then share as a group or with you individually.

Resources:

1. Restorative Practices in Schools Manual:

- How Relational Am I? p. 30
- Circle Prompt Ideas p. 15-21
- When Good Circles Go Bad p. 69-79
- Reflection/ Assessment After Using a Restorative Practice p.47

2. Handouts:

- Panorama Website
- Formative Assessment Circle Handout
- Classroom Norms Handout