

Restorative Practices

Overview

All humans are hardwired to belong. Just as we need food, shelter and clothing, we also need strong and meaningful relationships to thrive. **Restorative Practices (RP)** is an emerging social science that studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities.

Every member of a school community has a sphere of influence. This sphere contains an interwoven network of relationships that can influence decisions, policy and practices. The outcomes ultimately depend on the strength of the **relationships** between students, teachers, administrators, families and community members. Within such a network, RP are a positive, disruptive force to realizing greater equity in education and stronger relationships. They provide greater balance and strength to the youth-adult partnerships in learning, greater opportunity for building empathy, bridging differences, and strengthening more just, joyful, and sustainable communities. Restorative practices are truly a form of participatory democracy in that they build and heal communities, and serve as a means to work through, resolve, and transform conflicts.

RP largely originated as an alternative approach to punishment (Restorative Justice). However, as it has been implemented around the world, it has become clear that RP is most powerful when implemented before conflict arises. When implemented holistically in schools and communities, RP helps to develop a culture where everyone's voice is heard and valued and relationships become the cornerstone of the community. Instead of top-down punitive practices that further erode relationships, RP places emphasis on relationships, collaborative problem solving and collective responsibility. Students, teachers and administrators alike become facilitators of transformative discussion and develop a culture of support. In essence, RP should be understood as a way to build a culture in which healthy relationships thrive and conflict is transformed into healing and learning.

Authentic youth engagement with RP requires a shift in the mental models that both adults and youth have about each other. It requires respecting and valuing the unique gifts that come from each group, and valuing the positive results that come from working together. When implemented with fidelity, RP can improve school culture and climate for youth and adults, improve academic outcomes, close achievement gap to keep youth in a learning environment, significantly reduce absenteeism and ensure all students are productive contributing members of the community.



Rubric for Restorative Practices

| | Not Evident | Emerging | Developing | Thriving |
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| What Does It Look Like (Evidence that Restorative Practices exist) | <p>Adults & youth believe that the most effective way to change behavior and maintain order is through punishment.</p> <p>Staff and leadership do not know about Restorative Practices.</p> <p>Restorative circles are not evident in any aspect of the school community.</p> <p>Punitive disciplinary systems managed by adults only are used (suspension, detention, etc.).</p> | <p>Adults and youth have begun to examine their mental models having to do with discipline and relationship building.</p> <p>District staff are made aware of and become interested in Restorative Practices and a group of staff are trained in restorative circles.</p> <p>District staff begin to experiment with ways to increase belonging and equal voice in their classrooms.</p> | <p>Together, a small group of youth and adults are trained in Restorative Practices and circles. This group of committed learners has developed a supported circle process for conflict resolution within the school.</p> <p>Students and staff examine existing policies, culture and climate through a restorative lens.</p> <p>Additional opportunities for training are being explored.</p> <p>Some disciplinary issues are addressed through teacher or staff led Restorative Practices.</p> <p>Some staff have established community building circles as part of their class culture.</p> | <p>Adults and youth have examined their mental models and have shifted their thinking about effective ways to inspire and encourage humans to change behavior.</p> <p>Adults & youth believe that positive relationships lie at the heart of a positive school environment</p> <p>Together, youth and adults are trained in restorative practices and circles.</p> <p>Ongoing training and practice is evident and supported systemically. Students and teachers are given ongoing deeper learning opportunities to become resident experts of restorative practices.</p> <p>Restorative circles are commonplace in academic classes and in extracurricular experiences.</p> <p>Points of conflict, throughout the district, are addressed in a restorative manner.</p> |
| Youth-Adult Partnership (How adults and youth work together) | <p>Adults assume full responsibility for school/classroom expectations, control and management.</p> | <p>Selected youth are asked for input and feedback about Restorative Practices, serving as assistants to adults.</p> | <p>Adults plan the Restorative Practice agenda and youth facilitate or serve as circle keepers.</p> <p>Some youth have input into decision making. Youth are given a voice but not a vote on policy and procedures.</p> | <p>Youth and adults plan and facilitate Restorative Practices as reciprocal partners.</p> <p>The organization's culture or by-laws supports youth governance.</p> |
| Equity Considerations (Important considerations that should be resolved so that all students have access) | <p>The school is beginning to seek ways to address issues of equity. Disciplinary measures are applied inconsistently and unfairly.</p> | <p>Youth voice and experience are occasionally valued and respected.</p> | <p>Time out of class is significantly reduced.</p> <p>There is an intentional shift to share power with youth about issues that affect them.</p> | <p>The school culture reflects inclusivity and freedom. A clear shift in power has occurred and youth and adults collaborate on issues that impact the school community.</p> <p>Every participant is treated with respect and dignity.</p> |