

A Restorative Practices Guide

How Schools Can Build Community and Address Conflicts

BY CANDACE JULYAN AND JJ DURHAM



This guide was created as the final product of a grant that Communities for Restorative Justice (C4RJ) received to introduce restorative practices into Malden High School.

We are grateful to the Osterman Family Foundation for their generous support of the three-year pilot program. We also want to thank the many teachers, administrators, and students at Malden High School who helped to shape the direction and content of this guide, most particularly Marie Doehler, Rachel Gelling, Jane Sulick, Julia Gombos, Ron Janowicz, and Nate Lamar. A very special thanks is in order to Principal Dana Brown who gave so generously of his time and wisdom over the three years. We are confident that this good work will continue in Malden.

It is our hope that the lessons learned from this project, as reflected in this guide, will support other schools and school systems interested in adopting restorative practices.

Our thanks to all involved,

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COMMUNITIES FOR
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

www.C4RJ.com

Communities for Restorative Justice (C4RJ) is a community-police partnership that offers restorative justice to those affected by crime. In addition, C4RJ is available to offer assistance and training for those interested in incorporating restorative practices into their schools.

This guide is available for downloading and viewing at www.c4rj.com.

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How to Use This Guide

This guide begins with an overview of the ideas behind Restorative Practices (RP) in schools. It then examines and discusses the three main Restorative Practices commonly used in schools today:

- **Community Building Circles**—
a foundational practice
- **Restorative Chats**—
an early intervention practice
- **Restorative Conferences**—
a practice to address serious harm

The appendices offer many resources for getting started and sustaining these practices for the entire year.

We believe that training is a key element for the effective implementation of these ideas into a school or school system. If you have little or no experience in this field, we strongly urge you to take part in training sessions, using this guide as a continuing RP resource. Additionally, we recommend that the personnel responsible for utilizing these practices receive more in-depth training/coaching or form a group with colleagues to continue to develop and refine the skills required for implementation.

If you are a trained RJ or RP practitioner, we hope that this guide can be a resource in your work.



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Introduction to Restorative Practices for Schools

Restorative Practices have grown from the ideas of Restorative Justice (RJ), which is practiced in many cultures around the globe. In contrast to the criminal justice system that is driven by shame and punishment, Restorative Justice incorporates the values of inclusion, responsibility, reparation, healing, and reintegration into an approach for dealing with conflict and harm.

What does it mean to address a situation restoratively?

- To view harm and conflict as a violation of people and relationships
- To identify obligations that result from harm
- To engage all parties concerned in resolving the situation

Core Elements of Restorative Approaches

- Face-to-face encounters
- Focus on repairing harm rather than receiving punishment for breaking a rule
- Responsibility taken by the offender for harms to both the victim and the community
- Development of enhanced understanding for improved future behavior

The RJ process brings together the victim, the offender, and anyone else affected by a crime to identify the harm that has been done and find ways to address and hopefully repair that harm. They all sit together in a circle, usually without the barrier of a table between them. The process requires honesty and often creativity as the parties involved examine both

obvious and subtle aspects of the harm and consider ways that the relationships damaged by the crime can be restored. Many who have been involved in this process report that it is much more difficult and more powerful than the typical court experience. When restorative justice is used to address crime, the result involves an opportunity for the victim to be heard, an enhanced understanding by the offender of the ramifications of the crime, and often lowered rates of recidivism.

Restorative approaches help to shift the dominant social norms from “power over” to “power with,” talking “with” instead of talking “at,” and “we centered” instead of “I centered.”

How do these ideas apply to school situations?

School personnel have been drawn to these ideas as avenues for young people and adults to grow together and find creative and supportive ways to deal with the normal, and sometimes difficult, aspects of being a part of a community.

These practices address the inevitable conflicts that happen in any community and help both students and adults learn how to build meaningful relationships with one another. In her book, *Circle in the Square*, Nancy Riestenberg, a national expert on restorative practices in schools, explains it well.

“A restorative approach provides a way to build community, while also intervening with problems in a way that can be transformative for all involved. Restorative approaches help to shift the dominant social norms from “power over” to “power with,” talking “with” instead of talking “at,” and “we centered” instead of “I centered.” (p. xiii)

The Use of a Circle in Restorative Practices

A key element of this work—both in restorative justice programs and in the use of restorative practices in schools—is that participants work together in a circle. The circle has significance both as a way for everyone to see one another and as an indication that all participants are “equal.” The purpose of using a circle is to indicate explicitly an intentional process for communication. This “circle practice” has some key elements:

- **The talking piece**—to make it clear who has permission to speak
- **The guidelines**—created by the group to describe expectations for behavior
- **The keeper**—a facilitator for the process who is also a member of the group

Although teachers may often bring students together in a circle, without the elements above it is solely a group discussion. One significant aspect of circle practice is that it gives all participants an opportunity to speak without interruption and to tell their story. Sharing stories is a way in which participants can express their perspective and view the situation from someone else’s perspective. Often this sharing is the primary purpose of the circle. While some circles are used to address a conflict, other circles are used to

build community among its participants. A community can be any group of people with a common interest. Within the greater school community, there are many smaller communities such as each classroom, club, sports team, theatre group, etc. Circles can be used by any group to deepen relationships. When a community is built on respectful relationships and trust, it is easier to deal with problems that arise.

The Role of the Keeper

Critical to the success of circles is the “Keeper.” This circle member has the role of providing focus for the discussion and ensuring that the circle is a safe place to share. Although the Keeper serves as an organizer for the group, he/she is not there in an authoritative role, like a teacher. Rather the Keeper acts as a member of the group who approaches the discussion with honesty and reflection and is responsive without acting as a caretaker for any single circle participant. The Keeper’s duties include:

- Prepare for and facilitate the circle
- Set the tone and climate of the circle
- Open and close the circle
- Explain the circle guidelines
- Prepare the rounds/questions/activities
- Summarize and reflect after each round
- Pay attention to the energy of the circle
- Model circle participation
- Be a circle participant
- Manage the time

Being a circle Keeper is different from being a group leader or a teacher. Training, practice, and mentorship for being a Keeper is strongly recommended, especially when using circles to repair harm.

Community building is the foundation of this work and an important aspect of a restorative approach. It helps students (and adults) gain practice in talking with one another in a respectful and honest way.

Categories of Restorative Practices in Schools

This guide describes what these practices entail and what they look like when used in a school setting. While the restorative approach can be used in a variety of instances, it is typically used in two different types of situations.

- Practices related to community building
- Practices related to a specific harm

Community building is the foundation of this work and an important aspect of a restorative approach. It helps students (and adults) gain practice in talking with one another in a respectful and honest way. This is appropriate and important for all members of the school community. Practice having good conversations allows for better communication when there is some sort of difficulty or conflict.

The Triangle of School Restorative Practices, as detailed on the next page, identifies the various practices and notes the purpose for each. The bottom section of the triangle represents the practice of community building which is important for all students in the school. For any school applying restorative practices, the majority of time should be devoted to community-building circles that give students an opportunity to connect with others in an authentic way.

The upper levels of the triangle relate to intervention practices used to address conflicts. They are divided into two different approaches to harm. Restorative Chats are used for early intervention, addressing a problem before it becomes a serious offense. Restorative Conferences are practices used with a much smaller group of students for serious situations, often those that might lead to a suspension.

A Restorative Conference is a technique that can be used to address a wide variety of situations—serious fights, theft, bullying, conflicts between students and teachers, or other matters that require more attention than a simple chat. This type of restorative practice also requires considerable time, as we will describe in later pages.

NOTE: Another use of the restorative conference that we do not address in this guide is a way to incorporate students back to school after a suspension. The goal of a re-entry circle is to welcome the student back into the school community in a way that encourages him/her to move forward in a different way. This circle can involve parents, teachers, school administrators, counselors (from both in and out of the school), and friends. One aspect of this circle is to find a way to “wipe the slate clean” so that the student knows the past has been cleared as a result of the suspension. This requires that the student take responsibility for the action that caused the suspension and that the others in the circle join together with the student to develop a plan that allows the student to find a more successful path in the school community.

TESTIMONIALS

Community Building Circles created an environment where students and staff could build unique relationships that allowed barriers to be broken down and meaningful changes to happen within the school. (staff)

When I am in a circle, I am more able to focus on listening to others. (student)

In the ongoing Circle I hold with young men, it was a unique opportunity for them to take off their “masks” and be real and genuine with how they felt, what they thought about, and the goals they had for themselves. It was a safe place for them to open up and talk about their lives in a different way. (staff)

School Restorative Practices Triangle

PURPOSE

PRACTICE

Repairing Serious Harm

Restorative Conferences

Intensive
Intervention

Managing
Disruptive
Conflicts

Early
Intervention

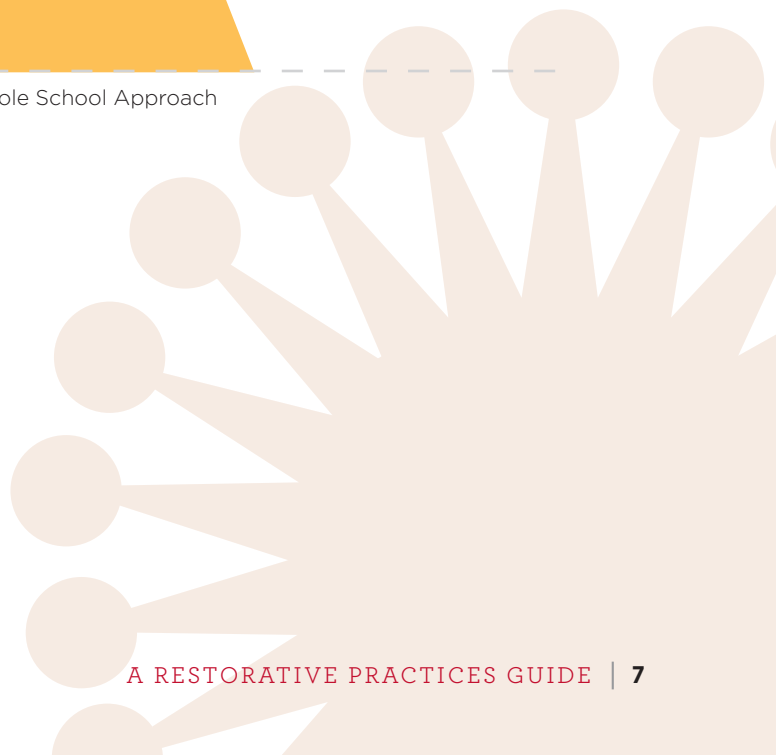
Restorative
Chats

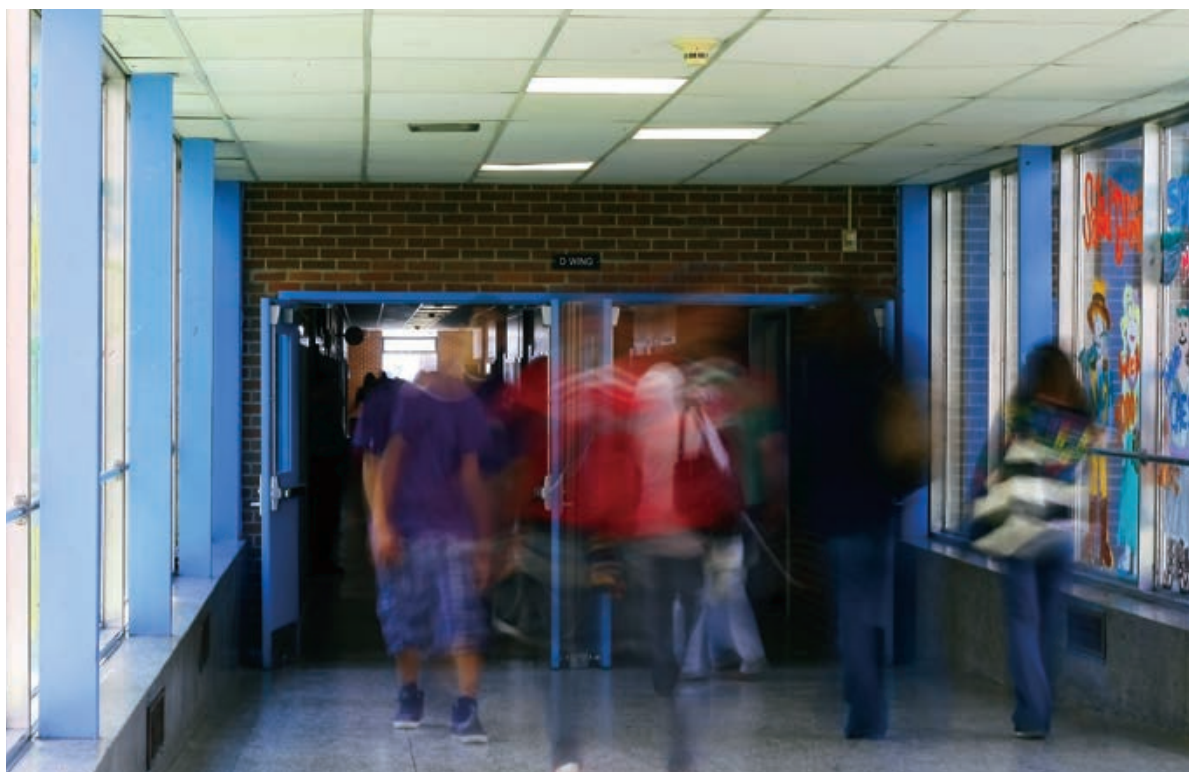
Developing
Social and Emotional
Capacity, Building
Relationships,
Improving School
Climate

Prevention
& Skill Building

Community
Building Circles

Adapted from Brenda Morrison's Whole School Approach





Community Building Circles

The circle started with a lot of slow deep breaths. It was the start of finals week and everyone felt a bit tense so the deep breaths were a welcome relief. Next came the “weather report” check-in. The internal weather of those in the room ranged from “sunny” to “a big storm is on the way.” As the talking piece went around the circle, students began to relax into the rhythm of the circle. “What strategies do you use to make it through finals week?” “What is the hardest part of finals week for you?” “What could you do to help someone else during this week?” “What do you wish someone would do to help you?” The last round was an opportunity to say one word on how they felt about today’s circle—“made me feel better—oops that is more than one word!” “relaxed” “hopeful” “be glad when the week is over!” The closing, a quote, “Take charge of yourself today. Nothing is impossible; the word itself says ‘I’m possible,’” brought a smile to a few faces.

In this section, we address the ways in which Community-Building Circles form the foundation for all restorative practices in the school. In the appendix are specific resources to assist in the design of these circles. This section explains what they are, starting with the scenario above.

The idea behind these practices is building, strengthening, and/or deepening relationships among the participants. Community-building circles help participants understand and appreciate one another's experiences and points of view by providing an atmosphere where participants can share their stories and learn from each other. This type of connection does not happen in a single circle. Community-building circles usually meet for multiple sessions—for a quarter, a whole semester, or the entire school year.

Components of a community-building circle include many of the elements described earlier:

- The placement of chairs in a circle, ideally with no other furniture
- The role of “a Keeper” to facilitate the circle and also act as a participant
- The use of a talking piece
- A sense of ceremony with the use of openings and closings
- Agreed upon guidelines for how participants will behave
- An appreciation that all participants in the circle are equal

Community building circles might be used for:

- Relationship or team building for specific groups
- Classroom learning
- Guidance or counseling groups
- Dialogues on specific topics or themes

Generally, community-building circles do not have a purpose other than giving participants an opportunity to speak their thoughts and hear the thoughts of others. The goal is the group interaction itself, rather than a specific agenda or outcome. The Appendices include many resources to support the work of community building circles, from outlines and scripts for designing circles (Appendices 1 and 2), as well as suggestions for openings and closings (Appendix 4) and themes or topics that can be adapted for specific circles (Appendix 5).

NOTE: *The common practice is to pass the talking piece to the left (same direction as the sun's path in the sky). Be aware that this makes the seat to the left of the Keeper the “hot seat” as that person always has to respond first. They always have the option to pass and comment later and should be praised for their courage to sit in that seat.*

Community-building circles help participants understand and appreciate one another's experiences and points of view by providing an atmosphere where participants can share their stories and learn from each other.



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Restorative Practices Related to Harm

In this section we address the practices related to harm. Appendices 1 and 2 provide detailed outlines and scripts for designing these circles.

These practices involve a smaller subsection of the school and are specific to addressing a conflict. In both of these categories of practice it is useful to begin by allowing all the parties involved to share their perspective on what happened and how the situation can be repaired/resolved. Many practitioners find the following guiding questions to be a helpful way to frame the conversation:

- What happened?
- Who has been hurt?

- What are their needs?
- Whose obligation is it to address these needs?
- What are the causes?
- Who needs to be there?
- What is the best process to make things right?

The practices related to harm break down into two categories:

- Informal practices to address a minor conflict (restorative chats)
- Formal practices to address a more serious conflict (restorative conferences)

Possible applications for these types of practices include:

- **Informal Chats:** to provide an opportunity for parties to hear one another and consider alternative ways to interact
- **Healing Circles:** to provide an opportunity to talk about what happened, who was affected, and how to move forward in a positive way
- **Alternative to Suspension:** to examine a serious incident that created harm and find a way that the individual responsible can repair the harm
- **Return from Suspension:** to provide an opportunity for the student who was suspended to re-enter the community with an understanding of what happened, how it can be repaired, and how to prevent it from happening again

It is important that any restorative conference only take place if the offender is willing to take responsibility for his/her actions. If they are not ready to do that, the likelihood of success is low.

TESTIMONIALS

I liked watching friendships and connections form between students who otherwise would have never met. *(staff)*

I think circles help students practice having conversations (not just texting, snapchatting, or communicating via social media). *(staff)*

It was really helpful to co-facilitate a restorative conference with Candace. I learned a lot and the debrief afterward really helped me understand this process better. *(staff)*

I wish we had done this when I was a freshman. It would have made a big difference in how we all talked with one another. *(student)*



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Restorative Chats

“Sandra and Tanisha were best friends...until they weren’t. One day Tanisha just stopped talking to Sandra without any explanation. Sandra was extremely upset and couldn’t concentrate in her classes. Sandra went to her counselor to talk about the situation. Tanisha was not interested in ending her friendship with Sandra but occasionally needed a break from the intensity of their constant interaction. The counselor asked each girl to describe what she saw to be the problem and what ideas she had to resolve it. After a bit of time they came up with a good solution and the counselor agreed to assist the girls in managing their agreement and their friendship going forward.

This restorative chat is a good example of how to use a chat to prevent a greater problem such as the girls using social media to insult each other, or having friends get involved and choose sides. While not always required, this chat was held in a circle using a talking piece. Some chats may happen in the hall or even the lunchroom.

Restorative chats are informal ways to address everyday conflicts. Conflicts might be between students or between teachers and students. While circles, whether for community building (proactive) or conferencing (reactive), are more formal and structured, restorative chats are informal ways of dealing with minor incidents in a way that utilizes and models the values of restorative practices. These chats can help de-escalate bigger conflicts and when used regularly can have a cumulative effect on school climate.

Restorative chats involve:

- Treating everyone with dignity and respect
- Giving everyone involved in a specific incident a voice
- Creating a safe space to address the issue and consider solutions
- Giving participants an opportunity to reflect on what has happened and its impact
- Asking participants to take responsibility for the harm and its repair

Restorative chats can help:

- Build positive relationships among students
- Build positive relationships between students and adults
- Enhance social and emotional skills of students
- Enhance problem-solving skills of students

It is useful to begin by allowing all the parties involved to share their perspective on what happened and how the situation can be repaired/resolved.

TESTIMONIALS

We weren't talking a lot until the circle lady came. I don't know why but after that we all seemed to have things to say to one another. *(student)*

The conference helped me understand each part of a larger issue. It became clearer. *(staff)*

Community Building Circles built a stronger sense of community and teamwork. *(staff)*





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Restorative Conferences

Ahmed was a cheerful and engaging young man in most settings; in Ms. Lincoln’s class, he was surly, uncooperative, repeatedly skipped class, and last week left the classroom cursing Ms. Lincoln. In addition, he was at risk for failing this class, though he was a solid B student in all other classes. The principal decided to hold a restorative conference instead of suspension or detention. The RJ consultant met with both Ms. Lincoln and Ahmed before the conference, explaining the purpose of the conference—to uncover the problem and find ways to resolve it. In a second meeting with Ahmed, he revealed that the problem started on the first day of school when Ms. Lincoln, who has a playful demeanor, was gently teasing some students. Ahmed thought she was making fun of him and let that impression of Ms. Lincoln dominate his thinking. He agreed that he needed to find a way to share this with her. At the conference, Ahmed apologized and explained the reason behind his behavior. Ms. Lincoln offered a heartfelt apology for her part in this misunderstanding. Both came up with some agreements about how they would interact for the next month to see if they could move toward a more workable relationship. Within a few weeks, Ahmed was as cheerful and engaging in Ms. Lincoln’s class as he was in other aspects of school.

A restorative conference provides a forum for discussing and resolving difficult incidents, either among students or between students and staff. Sometimes the situation is very serious, with the possibility of suspension, and sometimes the situation is merely troubling, like the example above, without requiring suspension. Unlike the situation above, many restorative conferences require parental involvement. In all cases, the conference is more formal than the community-building circles and restorative chats; however, it retains some of the foundational practices discussed earlier:

- A circle configuration
- A Keeper
- A talking piece
- Guidelines

Some *differences* that are specific to restorative conferences are:

- Pre-conference interviews (with offenders, victims, key participants) take place usually the day before the conference to determine who should be present and the issues to be discussed.
- The selection of conference participants ensures that victims and offenders have people they consider to be supporters in the circle.

- Attention to the seating arrangement that takes into account the tensions among the participants.
- Keeper-controlled questions to specific members of the conference at the beginning of the circle help to shape and identify the core issues.
- Written agreements, generated by the whole group, bring a sense of closure.

Key elements for this process include:

- Primary focus is on the harm that was done, rather than a rule that was broken.
- Offender accepts personal responsibility for his/her actions and hopefully gains an understanding that will improve future behavior.
- All the parties that have been affected by the incident have an opportunity to express their perspectives.

There are four key questions that form the focus of the conference.

- What happened? (*from all the various perspectives*)
- What was the impact of that event on others?
- How can we move forward?
- How can we do things differently in the future?

TESTIMONIALS

I have learned so much from RJ practices. It has been a learning experience for both adults and kids. People I thought would be skeptical, found it helpful. One teacher even said it was the best meeting he had ever had with a child. I was blown away. (*staff*)

My biggest surprise of circles is that adults are more resistant than the teenagers. I would go into a circle assuming that it was not going to go well and it would end up extremely positive and helpful. (*staff*)



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Structures That Support Restorative Practices

While much about restorative practices will feel familiar, it is important that all school personnel (administrators, counselors, and teachers) realize that effective implementation of these ideas requires a structure of ongoing support. The following are critical:

1. **Training and continued support**—Both teachers and administrators will be much more effective with these ideas and practices if they have an opportunity to learn about the ideas together and have a regular time available to reflect on what has gone well and what needs improvement. Consider having groups of colleagues meet regularly to share both their successes and challenges.
2. **A champion in the school**—It is critical that there be someone in the school with the time and ability to assist with the inevitable logistics that these practices require.
3. **A clear plan**—Consider the type of implementation model that will work best in your school, such as one or more of the following ideas:
 - A pilot with a specific group within the school
 - A team that works together to implement the ideas
 - A restorative conference team that becomes particularly skilled at these practices
 - An accommodation for teachers to consider this work as a replacement for a specific, required administrative duty, such as hall or cafeteria
 - An exploration about the pros and cons of having an outside consultant or staff position to implement this work

APPENDIX 1

Outlines

We are grateful to the many people who for the last decade have been articulating and refining the elements outlined in these next pages. Much of the following is adapted from *Restorative Justice Pocketbook and Little Book of Restorative Discipline for Schools*. See the bibliography for specific references and full citations on these publications. Appendix 1 provides outlines; Appendix 2 provides more detailed descriptions.

Community Building Circles Outline

1. Welcome
2. Opening
3. Check-in round
4. Review guidelines
5. Rounds involving storytelling/specific topics
6. Check-out round
7. Closing

Restorative Chat Outline

1. Questions to the offender
2. Questions to the victim
3. Questions to both the offender and the victim

Restorative Conference Outline

1. Welcome and explanation of purpose
2. Introduction of specific guidelines
3. Introduction of participants and their role at the conference
4. Explanation by the offender of what happened (including what he/she was thinking prior to and after the incident)
5. Explanation by the victim of what happened (including what he/she was thinking prior to and after the incident)
6. Invitation to supporters to speak
7. Request to offender/victim of how things could be put right
8. Request to others to offer ideas of how to create an agreement between the parties
9. Creation of a written agreement with a time to check back and see how things are going
10. Check-out round

Circle Prep Sheet (To be used with any of the circles described)

adapted from Oakland Unified School District www.ousd.org

1. **Opening** (How will you open this circle?)

2. **Introduction of the talking piece** (What object will you use and why?)

3. **Check in** (What question will you ask?)

4. **Guidelines** (What will you propose for guidelines?)

5. **Discussion rounds** (How will you introduce the ideas?)

6. **Check out** (How will you ask people how they are feeling?)

7. **Closing** (What will you use/do to close the circle?)

APPENDIX 2

Scripts

Community-Building Circles

The outline for the first community-building circle is a bit different from subsequent circles and it may help to give it a script of its own. The purpose of the first meeting is to get members interested in and enthusiastic about participating in circles. The first circle is an opportunity to set the tone for what is to come and to practice using a talking piece.

Script for a First Community-Building Circle

1. **Welcome:** Welcome everyone to the circle and thank them for taking the time to attend. Explain the following:
 - The purpose of the circle is to build relationships and build community in the school.
 - The use of circles comes from traditions used around the world and is a different way to have a conversation.
 - Circles use a common structure and process, including the use of a talking piece.
2. **Opening:** Explain that the opening is a way to separate the circle from everyday life. Conduct a brief opening ceremony you have chosen such as a centering or brief breathing moment, a quote that is relevant to the purpose of circles, or the like.

For first Circles:

Introductions and practice using the talking

piece: Explain that in circle we use a talking piece. Only the person with the talking piece can speak; everyone else listens. Invite everyone to introduce themselves with their name and something non-threatening, for example something they like to do in their spare time.

The Keeper should go first and model the behavior she or he is looking for before passing the talking piece to the left. *Be sure to praise circle participants for their understanding and use of the talking piece.*

3. **Check-in Round:** This round is used as an icebreaker round and to get participants accustomed to using the talking piece. It is important to keep this round light and easy. You could use a sentence stem such as “something that makes me happy is ____” or “my favorite season is ____.”
4. **Review Guidelines:** See Appendix 3 for Guidelines.
5. **Rounds:** Prepare 5-7 rounds of getting-acquainted questions that are easy, fun, light, and non-threatening. You may not use all your rounds, but better to be over prepared than to have to think up rounds on the spot. See Appendix 4 for suggestions for topics to explore.

6. **Check-out Round:** It is useful to have a final round before the closing that gives participants an opportunity to reflect on the circle. Depending on the amount of time available, it could be as short as, “How would you describe today’s circle in one word?” or, if time permits, “What is one thing you learned today in circle?”
7. **Closing:** Include a closing quote and thank everyone for their participation.

Script for Subsequent Community-Building Circles

1. **Welcome:** Welcome circle participants back to the circle
2. **Opening:** Conduct a brief opening ceremony such as a centering or brief breathing moment, a quote that is relevant to the purpose of circles, or a short group activity (see Appendix 4) such as “The Wind Blows.”

3. **Check-in:** This is an opportunity for everyone to settle into the rhythm and idea of the circle by hearing everyone’s brief thoughts on a light topic. One favorite is “Weather Report,” where each participant does a quick scan of how they are feeling and describes it as weather—cloudy, sunny, high winds, hurricane, partly sunny, etc. Another might be asking each participant to say something they are looking forward to in the coming weekend or coming week. The point of the check-in is to have an easy, light-hearted, short opening to the circle.

As always, the Keeper starts this round and models the behavior and an appropriate level of intensity.

4. **Review Guidelines:** See Appendix 3 for suggested guidelines.
5. **Rounds:** Prepare 5–7 rounds of for each circle. You may not use all your rounds, but better to be over prepared than to have to think up rounds on the spot. See Appendix 5 for suggestions for topics to explore.

Consider developing a theme for each circle and having each of the questions that you all consider together focus on the same theme—for example, concerns of teens today, challenges of social media, stories about some aspect of family life, dreams of future occupations or places to visit.

6. **Check-out Round:** It is useful to have a final round before the closing that gives participants an opportunity to reflect on the circle. Depending on the amount of time available, it could be as short as, “How would you describe today’s circle in one word?” or, if time permits, “What is one thing you learned today in circle?”
7. **Closing:** Have a closing activity or quote, and thank everyone for their participation.

Consider developing a theme for each circle and having each of the questions that you all consider together focus on the same theme—for example, concerns of teens today, challenges of social media, stories about some aspect of family life, dreams of future occupations, or places to visit.

Script for Restorative Chats

It is important that the adult initiating the restorative chat asks open-ended questions and really tries to understand the students' points of view about both the situation itself and what led up to the situation.

For example, the opening question could start with "What happened?" to all parties involved. This helps all begin to see the different perspectives on the situation. It is important to not take sides, but simply gather information. The questions can look different depending on who instigated the conflict (the offender) and who received the harm (the victim). Be prepared for times when students may be both offender and victim.

1. **Questions for the offender(s):**

What happened?

What were you thinking when you _____?

What were you feeling?

What were you hoping would happen when you did that?

What have you thought about since?

How do you think ___(victim) felt when you _____?

Do you think anyone else has been affected by what you did?

What do you think is the harm here?

2. **Questions for the victim(s):**

How did you feel when (offender) did _____?

What did you think when this first happened?

What do you think now?

What do you think is the harm here?

3. **Questions for both:**

What do you think could happen to make things better?

Does this feel okay for both of you?

What ideas do you have to prevent something like this from happening again?

Do you need any help from me?

How can we all move on and put this behind us?

NOTE: Reflection and repairing relationships take time. Asking the offender in a respectful tone his/her thought process implies that you are looking for reflection about the offender's actions. The question does not invite a denial of what happened. Rather, these questions provide opportunities for thinking and learning and can help develop empathy and understanding of our own and other's motivations and behaviors.

Script for Restorative Conferences

Preparation for all participating parties in a restorative conference is critical. This provides all parties with an opportunity to learn about the circle process, as well as to vent and share their perspective about the situation. Find ways to empathize with their perspective, ask open-ended questions, and summarize their main points when they are finished. These meetings will also help to shape the questions and the flow of the conference itself.

1. **Welcome and explanation of purpose:**

Welcome everyone and thank them for taking the time to address the issue. Explain that the purpose of this conference is to understand and resolve a conflict. Set a positive tone for the conference (if desired with an appropriate quote or poem).

2. **Introduction of specific guidelines:**

Remind everyone that the person holding the talking piece is the only one who may speak. If possible, try to use an object that will have

some meaning to the group as the talking piece. Propose a set of core guidelines for participants to follow, such as: respecting the talking piece, speaking with honesty and respect, turning off cell phones, and honoring privacy/confidentiality. Ask each person if she/he can agree to the proposed guidelines and/or offer an additional guideline. See Appendix 3 for suggested guidelines.

3. **Introduction of participants and their role at the conference:** Using the talking piece, have all participants in the circle introduce themselves with their name and their role in the conference. This is particularly important if there are a number of people from outside of the school community (parents, etc.)

4. **Explanation by the offender:**

- What happened?
- What led up to this incident?
- What were you thinking before the incident?
- What are you thinking now?
- What do you think the impact has been?

5. **Explanation by the victim of what happened:**

- What happened?
- What led up to this incident?
- What were you thinking before the incident?
- What are you thinking now?
- What has the impact been for you?

6. **Invitation to supporters to speak:**

- How have you been affected by this incident?

7. **Request to offender/victim of how things could be put right:**

- What ideas do you have to repair the harm?
- What if any problems do you see with this idea?
- What is needed to ensure success?

8. **Request to others to offer ideas of how to create an agreement between the parties:**

- What ideas do you have to repair the harm?
- What if any problems do you see with this idea?
- What is needed to ensure success?

9. **Creation of a written agreement with a time to check back and see how things are going:**

Have the group come to a consensus on a plan for resolving the issue. Discuss who will monitor the plan and what, if any, follow up will be needed.

10. **Check-out/Closing:** Invite participants to express their feelings/thoughts/appreciation at the end of the conference. If time is limited, suggest that they share one word that reflects their experience. Be sure to express gratitude for the time and energy that everyone put into the conference.

APPENDIX 3

Circle Guidelines

Circles have a structure and a process based on a set of guidelines or agreements for how participants behave in the circle. All circles should use the core guidelines, which ensure that everyone feels safe in the circle. Circles often create additional guidelines that express values important to all group members.

Examples of core guidelines and how to explain them:

1. **Respect the talking piece.** Only the person with the talking piece talks. This allows us to show respect for one another. When you don't have the talking piece, you are listening to the person who does have the talking piece.
2. **Honor confidentiality.** This allows us to feel safe in sharing. (What is said in the circle stays in the circle.) At the end we will decide, as a group, what and how to share what we discussed.
3. **Participate, don't dominate.** It is important for everyone to have a chance to talk. We all must share the time together, so please keep your comments brief. It is always okay to pass.
4. **Speak from the heart.** Speak honestly and from your own experience.

Additional guidelines come from the circle by asking participants what else they need in order to feel safe in participating. These guidelines might be about shared values such as honesty, trust, respect, courage, empathy, etc. Other guidelines might be more specific behavioral agreements such as no whispering to a neighbor, no giving looks to others in the circle, or no giggling.

Circle guidelines can be posted in the room or written and used as a centerpiece for the middle of the circle. Everyone must agree to the circle guidelines. The process of setting guidelines by consensus is a community-building activity in and of itself. This activity might take multiple sessions to complete.

NOTE: Consider having all circle participants (both students and adults) turn off their cell phones as one of the guidelines.

Everyone must agree to the circle guidelines.
The process of setting guidelines by consensus
is a community-building activity in and of itself.

APPENDIX 4

Circle Openings and Closings

Openings and closings can be in the form of quotes, poems, or short activities. As the circles progress, students may have ideas or come up with ways that they would like to start the circle process. Be sure to keep a record of new ideas that you can use again over time.

As the circles progress, students may have ideas or come up with ways that they would like to start the circle process. Be sure to keep a record of new ideas that you can use again over time.

Quotes

- We tend to forget that happiness doesn't come as a result of getting something we don't have, but of appreciating what we do have. —*Unknown*
- What you do speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you say. —*Ralph Waldo Emerson*
- Be careful with your words. Once they are said, they can only be forgiven, not forgotten. —*Unknown*
- Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you handle it. —*Charles Swindoll*
- People will forget what you said; people will forget what you did; but people will never forget how you made them feel. —*Maya Angelou*
- Every good thing that happened in your life happened because something changed. —*Unknown*
- When you talk, you are repeating what you already know. But if you listen, you may learn something new. —*Unknown*
- Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak. Courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen. —*Winston Churchill*
- We can complain because roses have thorns, or rejoice because thorns have roses. —*Antoine de Saint-Exupery*
- Do not do to others what angers you if done to you by others. —*Socrates*
- Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success. —*Henry Ford*
- In a real sense, all life is inter-related. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the inter-related structure of reality. —*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

- Our days are happier when we give people a piece of our heart instead of a piece of our mind. —*Unknown*
- Do not overlook negative actions merely because they are small; however small a spark may be, it can burn down a haystack as big as a mountain. Do not overlook tiny good actions, thinking they are of no benefit; even tiny drops of water in the end will fill a huge vessel. —*The Buddha*
- Peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of creative alternatives for responding to conflict—alternatives to passive or aggressive responses, alternatives to violence. —*Dorothy Thompson*
- Sometimes we stare so long at the door that is closing that we see too late the one that is open. —*Unknown*
- The days you are the most uncomfortable are the days you learn the most about yourself. —*Mary L. Bean*
- Happiness cannot come from without. It must come from within. —*Helen Keller*
- Remember no one can make you feel inferior without your consent. —*Eleanor Roosevelt*
- Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around. —*Leo Buscaglia*
- Knowledge is knowing what to say. Wisdom is knowing whether or not to say it. —*Unknown*
- Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the only one getting burned. —*The Buddha*

- Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies. —*Nelson Mandela*
- How you make others feel about themselves, says a lot about you. —*Unknown*
- Never be afraid to try something new. Remember amateurs built the ark; professionals built the Titanic. —*Unknown*

Activities

1. **“The Wind Blows”**—This is a way to mix up the seating arrangement in a playful way. It is a variation on musical chairs, so you need one less chair than the number of participants. The first person who is “It” says, “The wind blows for anyone who (for example) . . . has a pet.” Everyone who has a pet stands up, the person who is “It” takes one of their seats, and everyone else needs to find a new seat. Whoever is left standing becomes the new “It” and proposes a new category for what folks need to stand up for—for example “anyone wearing red.” Continue for a number of rounds of this.
2. **“The Wave”**—This is a way for participants to pay attention to one another and create a group pattern. The first person starts an action (for example, clapping), the person to the left of that person repeats it, and so on around the circle until it gets back to the first person, who then changes the action, say, patting their head. This action moves person-by-person around the circle until it returns to the original person, who once again changes to another action, for instance, tapping a foot. In order for this to work, one needs to pay attention to the person to one’s right and change actions as that person changes actions. This creates the sense of a wave moving around the circle in sound or motion depending on the action.

APPENDIX 5

Sample Prompting Questions and Topics

It is always important to carefully select which questions or topics to pose to the group depending on their needs. Consider and be prepared for the fact that some of the circle prompts may bring up a lot of emotions for the circle members. Have a plan for how to follow up and address these emotions with additional resources within the school and community.

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Getting-acquainted topics

- Share a happy childhood memory.
- What superhero would you choose to be and why?
- How would your best friend describe you?
- What would you not want to change about your life?
- If you could talk to someone from your family who is no longer alive, who would it be and why?
- If you had an unexpected free day, what would you like to do?
- If you were an animal, what animal would you be and why?
- Name two things or people who always make you laugh.
- What do you like to collect?
- If you could have a face-to-face conversation with anyone, who would it be and why?
- Describe your ideal job.
- Describe your favorite vacation.
- If you could change anything about yourself, what would it be?

Exploring values

- Imagine you are in conflict with a person who is important in your life. What values do you want to guide your conduct as you try to work out that conflict?
- What is your passion?
- What do you keep returning to in your life?
- What touches your heart?
- What gives you hope?
- What demonstrates respect?
- What change would you like to see in your community? What can you do to promote that change?
- Describe a time when you acted on your core values even though others did not share them.

Storytelling about what has shaped us (to build community)

- A time when you had to let go of control.
- A time when you were outside of your comfort zone.
- An experience in your life when you “made lemonade out of lemons.”
- An experience of transformation when, out of a crisis or difficulty, you discovered a gift in your life.
- An experience of causing harm to someone and then dealing with it in a way you felt good about.
- An experience of letting go of anger or resentment.

- A time when you were in conflict with your parents or caregiver.
- An experience when you discovered that someone was very different from the negative assumptions you first made about that person.
- An experience of feeling that you did not fit in.

Storytelling relating to curriculum

- The best/worst thing about this science project is . . .
- The main character in the book we are reading is like/not like me when . . .
- These math problems make me feel . . .
- What I understand/I don't understand about the people in this historical event is . . .

Experiential Learning Circles

Experiential learning is a participatory “learning-by-doing” methodology. Through this approach, participants initially engage in shared experiences, followed by a reflective circle to identify lessons learned. The ultimate goal is for participants to transfer the understanding, knowledge, and skills experienced in the activities into real-life contexts.

Experiential learning is fundamentally different from a teacher/lecture approach. Knowledge and wisdom are not “given” to participants by the facilitators. Instead, participants glean the lessons from their direct experience. The facilitator’s role is to maintain necessary structure and guidance by presenting a sequence of activities through which participants learn from their own experience and discussion together. In a given activity, participants walk away with individual and unique learning based on their own experience and their interpretation of it. Since this may be the first time for some participants to engage in an experiential process, the facilitators may need to provide extra encouragement for them to embrace this new way of learning.

Activity

Facilitator explains the activity, and participants do the activity.

Circle process

After they complete the activity, participants reflect on their experience in a circle process. The Circle Keeper debriefs through conversation. Even though the lessons to learn from the activity may appear obvious, participants can gain a lot through a focused conversation. There is no perfect formula for facilitating an Experiential Learning Circle, but here is a simple 3-step process that will work well for most situations. Think of each step as its own “round.”

1. How did it go?

By asking a general observation question like this, the facilitator gives participants an opening to share their immediate observations and thoughts and to “replay” the experience in their mind and out loud for others to hear. This helps to establish a shared reference point from which to build. Participants also identify significant aspects of the experience and can learn about other participants’ unique experiences. Some general guiding questions for this round may include:

- I noticed _____. What was going on for you during that time?
- What were you thinking when you _____?
- What did you notice?
- How did you feel about _____?

2. What worked?

Rather than spending valuable time identifying what did not work (for example, where participants failed in an activity), focus on what worked—what they did well. While there is nothing wrong with recognizing shortcomings and learning from them, focusing on successes is a more economical and emotionally satisfying experience for the learners. Furthermore, in focusing on what worked and the changes they made to find success, participants are more likely to transfer lessons back to the “real world.” Some general guiding questions include:

- What did you (individually and as a group) do well?
- What can you attribute _____ success to?
- What did you change/adjust to make _____ work?
- How did you find a solution that worked?

3. What are the lessons/implications for “real-life” situations?

Ultimately, the circle should lead participants to identify lessons learned/experienced that are relevant to their lives outside of the circle. Helping them bridge the gap between the circle activity and its implications for “real life” is one of the most crucial steps in facilitating experiential learning activities and circles. This step also can be quite difficult for participants. The circle Keeper’s job is to help them connect the dots. This is not a time for the Keeper to tell the participants what they learned or should have learned. Rather, good questions will enable them to identify the lessons for themselves. Some guiding questions include:

- In what way was this experience similar to what you’ve experienced in your community?
- How is this activity like _____?

Experiential learning is fundamentally different from a teacher/lecture approach. Knowledge and wisdom are not “given” to participants by the facilitators. Instead, participants glean the lessons from their direct experience.

- What are the lessons from this? The “takeaways”?
- Why do you think we did this activity? What’s its value?

What follows are some examples of activities that can be done as a group for circle reflection.

Magic Carpet

Group size: 5–15

Time: 10–20 minutes

Supplies: Tarp/blanket/towel—size dependent on group size.

Setup: Lay the tarp/blanket/towel on the floor.

Directions: Have participants get onto the tarp/blanket. Explain that they are on a magic carpet. The carpet has taken off and is hovering 100 feet above the ground. However, it’s unable to move forward or descend to the ground. You realize that the carpet is upside-down. Without stepping off the magic carpet for even a moment, participants must flip the carpet over. *If referring to the tarp as a magic carpet seems inappropriate for the group, give participants the instructions/objective without the magic carpet reference.*

Maze

Group Size: 5-15

Duration: 15-30 minutes

Supplies: Computer/Construction Paper for maze (number varies depending on size of maze)

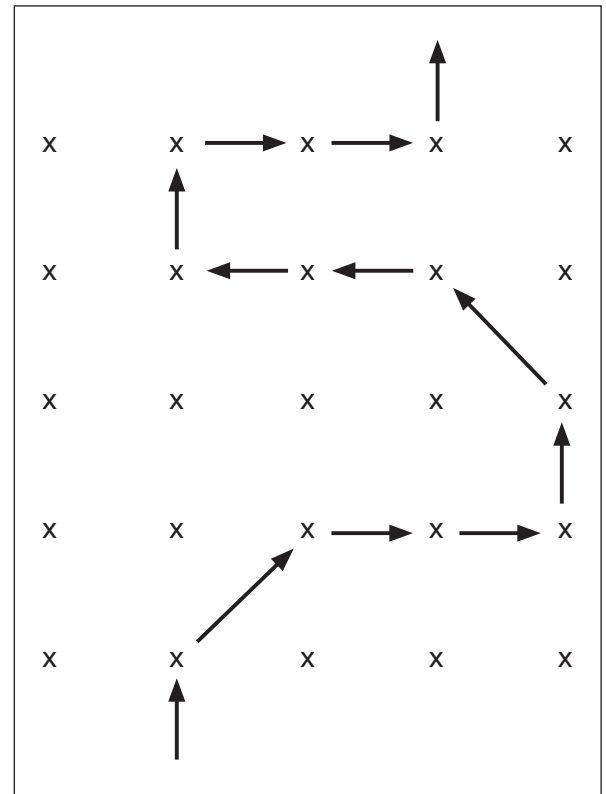
Setup: Arrange the paper in a grid on the ground. Make sure the spacing and size of the paper allows participants to comfortably step through the maze. For small groups, or to make the activity shorter, make a smaller grid (4x5 or 5x5). For larger groups or to make the activity longer, make a larger grid (6x6 or larger). Develop the “map key” ahead of time.

Directions: Participants are to move through the maze from one end of the grid to the opposite end. To do this, they need to figure out the path. The facilitator has the key and will not share it with the participants. Movement through the maze follows these guidelines:

- Progress only by unit steps, which can be lateral, forward, or diagonal. There is no backward movement on the maze. (It is helpful to demonstrate what can and cannot be done.)
- One person on the maze at a time.
- Participants who make a correct step may then attempt to figure out the next step. Participants remain on the maze until they make a mistake.
- When participants make an incorrect step, they retrace their steps to get off the maze.
- Participants get in a line (which can wrap around the maze) and take turns on the maze in sequence. Everyone has equal turns on the maze.

- Participants are not allowed to speak once the activity has begun, but they are allowed to help/support/encourage/coach each other through nonverbal means.
- Participants are encouraged to spend a few minutes creating a plan before the “no speaking” rule commences.
- Once the code has been cracked, all participants move through the maze (the one-person-at-a-time-in-the-maze guideline no longer applies).

Example maze route:



Partner Draw

Group Size: Any number

Time: 10–20 minutes

Supplies:

- Simple drawings
- Paper
- Writing utensils (markers, crayons, pencils, etc.)
- Table and chairs

Setup: Create several simple drawings for each group to use. The drawings may be non-sensical (shapes, designs, etc.) or of an image (house, tree, bicycle). You may make the drawing as simple or as complex as appropriate for the participants in the circle.

Instructions: Participants are grouped into pairs of partners. One of the partners is the “Drawer” and the other is the “Speaker.” Let participants know that both members will have an opportunity to do both parts. For an odd number, form a group of three with two “Drawers.” After participants decide their roles, tell them their jobs:

The **Speaker** stands with his/her back to the Drawer. The Speaker holds a simple drawing that the Drawer is not allowed to see. The Speaker is not allowed to look at the Drawer or their drawing. Without showing the Drawer the drawing, the Speaker explains to the Drawer how to draw the drawing.

The **Drawer** sits at a table with a blank piece of paper and various writing utensils (crayons, markers, etc.). The Drawer listens to the Speaker and draws the drawing that the Speaker describes. The Drawer is not allowed to look at the Speaker or at the Speaker’s drawing.

After participants have completed one round of the activity, the Drawer and the Speaker look together at their drawings. They discuss what happened, noting possible changes in strategies. Next participants switch roles and repeat the process with a new drawing.

NOTE: An internet search for “group initiatives” or “team-building activities” will uncover many more such activities.



APPENDIX 7

Resources

Articles Focused on Schoolwide Implementation

Oakland Schools page with a wealth of articles, <http://www.ousd.org/Page/1054>

www.wested.org/wpcontent/files_mf/1447101213/resourcerestorativejusticeinusschoolssummaryfindingsfrominterviewswithexperts.pdf

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/11/magazine/an-effective-ut-exhausting-alternative-to-high-school-suspensions.html?_r=0

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/restorative-justice-tips-for-schools-fania-davis>

Web Resources

Panel discussion of the RP program in Malden, <https://goo.gl/v17q47>

Videos of RP in Oakland, CA schools, www.rjoyoakland.org/restorative-justice

Minnesota DOE site full of resources both video and written, <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/SchSafety/RestorativePractices/index.html>

International Institute on Restorative Practices website, www.safersanerschools.org

Multiple articles/podcasts, <http://rjoyoakland.org/resources>

Overview of how to use restorative practices in schools and within a district, <http://healthyschoolsandcommunities.org/Docs/Restorative-Justice-Paper.pdf>

UK Implementation Pack for bringing restorative justice into schools, www.esc20.net/users/O114/docs/SchoolImplementationPack%20RestorativeJustice4SchoolsUK.pdf

Books

Amstutz, L. S. & Mullet, J. (2005) *Little Book of Restorative Discipline for Schools*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.

Ashley, J. & Burke, K. (2009). *Implementing Restorative Justice: A Guide for Schools*. Chicago, Ill: Criminal Justice Information Authority.

Boyes-Watson, C. & Pranis, K. (2014) *Circle Forward: Building a Restorative School Community*. St. Paul, Minn: Living Justice Press.

Hopkins, B. (2004). *Just Schools: A Whole-School Approach to Restorative Justice*. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Pranis, K. (2005) *Little Book of Circle Processes*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.

Riestenberg, N. (2012). “*Circle in the Square: Building Communities and Repairing Harm in School.*” St. Paul, Minn.: Living Justice Press.

Thorsborne, M. & Vinegrad D. (2009) *Restorative Justice Pocketbook*. Alresford, UK: Teachers Pocketbooks. Available as an eBook at teacherspocketbooks.co.uk

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A Restorative Practice Guide

How Schools Can Build Community and Address Conflicts

Schools deal with conflict on a regular basis including everyday issues of students managing their friendships, potential misunderstandings between teachers and students, and the more serious concerns of bullying and harassment. Everyone in a school community is affected by how conflict is addressed.

More and more schools are revisiting their discipline policies. Many are turning to Restorative Practices as an alternative way to deal with conflict. Growing out of the Restorative Justice movement, these school practices introduce new approaches for addressing the inevitable conflicts within a school community.

The intent of this guide is to provide an introduction to the use of restorative practices and to provide school personnel with a resource for designing and implementing these ideas. Our hope is that this guide will be used in conjunction with training and support as we believe that conversations, hands-on experiences, coaching, and workshops all combine to increase the effectiveness of restorative practices.

Communities for Restorative Justice (C4RJ) is a community-police partnership that offers restorative justice to those affected by crime. In addition, C4RJ is available to offer assistance and training for those interested in incorporating restorative practices into their schools.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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THIS GUIDE IS AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD AND VIEWING AT WWW.C4RJ.COM.