Restorative Practices in Action

Webinar Presenter: Bonnie Robbins, School Counselor, Shawn Vincent, Principal
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Learning outcomes:

• Explain restorative practices and how they will affect your school.
• Access a toolbox of materials and ideas to utilize in your school.
• Implement community and problem-solving circles in your program.

Whittier Middle School Profile

• Communities: Poland (5,376), Mechanic Falls (3,031), Minot (2,607)
• Opened in 1999
• Current enrollment: 262 students
• Average class size: 18.8
• Students with IEP: 18%
• Economically disadvantaged: 37%
What is Restorative Practice?

- **Goal:** The Restorative Approach uses both proactive and responsive practices to build strong relationships, a respectful climate and culture, personal accountability, engagement, empathy and honest communication.

What it's not:

- replacement for disciplinary system
- punitive (eye for an eye)
- equal, both parties may not have been damaged
A Tale of Two Schools
Carlos had a heated argument with his parents before leaving for school, so he’s running late. Let’s see the difference that restorative policies and practices can make.

Zero-tolerance education system
- He is greeted by metal detectors and a police search.
- His teacher spoids him in front of the class. Carlos talks back, and is given a detention.
- A school police officer detains and arrests both students.
- Carlos is held in a juvenile detention facility all afternoon, missing school. He now has an arrest record and is facing suspension.

Restorative practices-based education system
- Teachers and administrators welcome him and his fellow students as they enter.
- His teacher waits until after class to speak with Carlos to learn more, and sets up a meeting with his school counselor.
- Student peer mediators and support staff intervene, have the students sit down together, and de-escalate the situation.
- Carlos and the other student agree to help clean the cafeteria during a free period. Carlos meets with his counselor and parents after school to help resolve the conflict at home.

Learn more about restorative practices: www.oticampaign.org/restorative-practices

ASCA National Model
Whittier Middle School: 2017-2018

Weekly community circles facilitated by teachers

Restorative & Resolution Circles facilitated by school counselor and/or admin

Circles are initiated by students, staff, school counselor, admin and even parents

Data

Instructional Days Lost to Suspension

Circles

Role/Responsibilities of the facilitator

This role IS about:
- Sharing power
- Guiding
- Modeling
- Non-judgement
- Listening
- Structured Dialogue
- Time equally shared by all

This role is NOT about:
- Power over others
- Bossing
- Bullying
- Hurrying
- Avoiding
- Debating
- Free for all
The Talking Piece

“Everything in the Circle is an invitation—when you have the talking piece you are invited to speak, but you may pass. When you do not have the talking piece you are invited to listen.”

-Greg Lewis, Teaching and Learning in Circle, 2003

Agreements

- Bring your full attention to the circle
- Everyone will have a turn to speak, equally
- It’s OK to pass, you will have another chance to speak
- Address your comments to the whole group
- Stay on topic
- Be honest, open-minded and non-judgemental
- Listen and speak with respect for others
- No interrupting the speaker or side conversations
- Respect privacy and confidentiality
Community Circles

- Builds and strengthens relationships in school community
- Structured conversation
  - Talking piece
  - Physical circle
- Breaks down barriers
  - between staff and students
  - authentic dialogue
  - make personal connections

Where should you use them?
- classrooms, teams, clubs, small groups
- homeroom/advisory period
- staff meetings, parent meetings

Who should use them?
- teachers in academic classrooms or class meetings
- school counselors for group work
- administrators for staff meetings and democratic decision-making
Problem Solving Circles

- Form of community circles that provides a safe place for addressing difficult issues/conflicts either between teachers and students, among students and/or among staff.

- Promotes:
  - understanding
  - resolving conflict
  - processing difficult events

- Restorative
  - script provided for the circle facilitator
  - helps to process harm done and may help with healing and moving forward
Resolution Circles

- Used for in-class, when harm is done to another student, offered in place of detentions or repair after a suspension or incident

- Includes:
  - Trained facilitator with a guided script
  - any person directly harmed by the student’s actions
  - other students affected by the harm done

- Agreements
  - how to say "I'm sorry"
  - signed agreements
Restorative Circles

To respond to challenging behavior

1. WHAT HAPPENED?
2. WHAT WERE YOU THINKING OF AT THE TIME?
3. WHAT HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT SINCE?
4. WHO HAS BEEN AFFECTED BY WHAT YOU HAVE DONE AND IN WHAT WAY?
5. WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU NEED TO DO TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT?

Restorative Practices

- Address and discuss the needs of the school community
- Build healthy relationships between educators and students
- Resolve conflict, hold individuals and groups accountable
- Reduce, prevent, and improve harmful behavior
- Repair harm and restore positive relationships

Additional Supporting Strategies

- Reminder Cards
- Restorative Room
- Whittier handbook

The goal: to keep kids in class!
Scenarios:

Student states her best friend has stopped talking to her and is gossiping behind her back. She doesn’t know what happened.

A student posts harassing messages about another student on social media. The student took a screen-shot of the messages and brought it to you to help problem solve.

Two students get into a physical altercation in the hallway. Both are angry. Do you have a circle? If so, when?
Be aware... 5 Reasons Restorative Practice fails in schools

1. Lack of Planning: You can’t just “wing it”!
   - need staff buy in
   - inconsistent progress checks
   - logistics not identified: the who, when, where, how
   - no school wide roll out

2. Lack of Vision...CHANGE IS HARD!
3. Lack of Training
4. Lack of Support
5. Lack of Time and Money
10 ways you can begin using circles on Monday!

1. Envision/plan how you can arrange circles in your classroom/office
2. Select a talking piece
3. Have students brainstorm a list of agreements
4. Try a check-in Circle or fun community-building circle
5. Explain and use the reminder card (more for classroom use)
6. Try one of the “personal connection” strategies
7. When talking with students about their behavior, “drop the why” and replace with “what” or “how”
8. Schedule or have a check-in circle with colleagues
9. Try a quick restorative conversation to check in with a student who seems to need some attention
10. Try an Affective Statement, Ex. I feel disrespected when you speak over me because I don’t feel heard.
“Circles bring us together to share who we are beyond our appearances. They’re places of listening-of hearing what it’s like to be someone else. They’re also places for being heard- for expressing what’s on our minds and hearts and having others receive it deeply.”

*Peacemaking Circles, From Crime to Community*, 2003

“Dialogue is a process of genuine interaction through which human beings listen to each other deeply enough to be changed by what they learn.”

- Harold Saunders, *A Public Peace Process*

“People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they do not know each other; they do not know each other because they have not communicated with each other.”

Reverend Martin Luther King

**Sources**

- University of Maine, Peace & Reconciliation Studies
- Restorative School Practices Collaborative of Maine
- The Little Book of Circle Processes, K. Pranis, 2005
- The Little Book of Restorative Discipline for Schools, L. Stutzman Amstutz & J. Mullet, 2005
- [http://schottfoundation.org/restorative-practices](http://schottfoundation.org/restorative-practices)
Want more info? Contact us!

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