

Beethoven-Ohrenberger SPC Meeting 2.25.2021: Introduction to Restorative Justice and Practices In Schools



Building Connections
to Change Behaviors, Repair
Relationships and Improve Results



Presentation Objectives:

Currently, there are a number of misconomers about what Restorative Justice is and how it is used in school settings. The purpose of this presentation is to:

- Introduce the philosophy of Restorative Justice
- Explain a tiered system for implementing Restorative Practices in schools
- Have SPC members participate in a Tier One Community Building Circle
- Explain why schools are transitioning to a restorative model
- Provide attendees an opportunity to ask questions

What is Restorative Justice?

Restorative Justice (RJ) is an approach to responding to transgressions against a community's established values and norms. It is adapted from indigenous cultures around the globe and focuses on the creation and maintenance of healthy relationships.

When a relationship becomes strained, also viewed as "harm," a restorative healing process brings the affected parties together to uncover true needs and heal relationships via meaningful accountability.



Restorative Practices

Address and discuss the needs of the school community

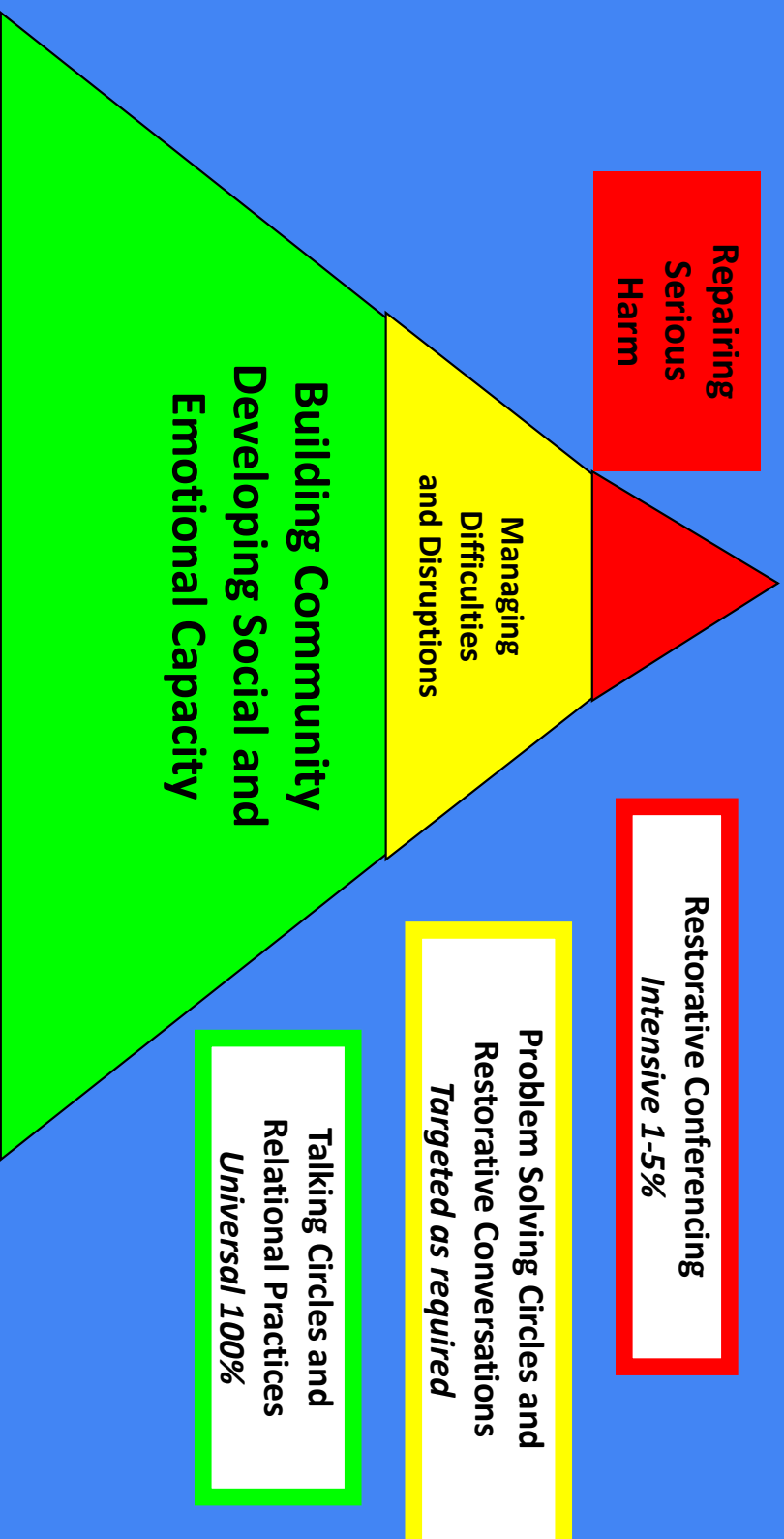
Build healthy relationships between educators and students

Reduce, prevent, and improve harmful behavior

Resolve conflict, hold individuals and groups accountable

Repair harm and restore positive relationships

Restorative Practices: A Tiered Approach



Adapted from *Implementing Restorative Practices in Schools* by Margaret Thorsborne and Peta Blood

Restorative Talking Circles:

A foundational restorative practice is the Talking Circle. Circles are an effective way of building a community where people feel connected and develop communal ownership of the classroom.

This kind of connectedness creates an environment where authentic engagement and deep learning can happen. Students may bring their cultural values into the space, creating a shared ownership of the classroom.



The Structural Elements of a Circle:

- **Ceremony:** Opening and closing activity to mark the Circle as a special space that is different from an ordinary meeting.
- **Centerpiece:** A centerpiece creates a focal point that supports speaking and listening from the heart, such as items representing core values.
- **Guidelines:** Participants create their own guidelines about what they need to feel safe and speak their truth.
- **Talking Piece:** Only the person holding the talking piece can speak, which circulates consecutively around the Circle. No one is ever required to speak.
- **Facilitator/Keeper:** Monitors the quality of the collective space and stimulates the reflections for the group, but does not control the issues or determine the outcome.
- **Decision-Making by Consensus:** All parties must consent to (be able to live with) any agreements.

Tier One: Community Building Circle Practice

1. Introduce norms and ask group to agree to them.
2. Introduce your name, your child(ren)'s name(s) and what grade they are in.
3. Check in: What is an activity or hobby that brings you joy?
4. What is a small challenge you have faced during quarantine?
5. What is something you are looking forward to when the quarantine is over?



Tier One: Sample Circle Prompts

(universal implementation for all students)

Circle Prompts recently used in a Black History Month lesson:

1. What is one theme you heard about in the video that you think is important?
2. The students spoke about fighting for rights. What is a right you think is worth fighting for?
3. One student mentioned that when she watches violence on TV she worries about her brother and father, especially when they're not home. What is a fear that you have when it comes to violence or prejudice?
4. Why is it important for all Americans to learn about Black History?
5. What is an action you can take to show people at the Beethoven/Ohrenberger schools that they are important and loved?

Tier One: More Sample Restorative Activities

1. Circles to create classroom norms
2. Circles included in morning/homeroom meetings
3. Circles in small group work in class
4. Circles for parent/teacher conferences
5. Circles for planning fun activities
6. Circles to check in with each other and brainstorm support strategies



Tier Two: Sample Restorative Activities

(Implementation for target individuals/groups)

- 1. Circles in social and academic support groups**
 - a. Students practicing social skills during a lunch group meeting
 - b. Students and teachers together to identify academic skill gaps and co-design interventions
- 2. Circles to mediate small individual or group conflicts**
 - a. Students/teachers working to address minor harm (cause and impact) and restoration (resolution and healing)
- 3. Circles for parent/teacher conferences**
 - a. Students, parents and teachers sharing successes and areas for improvement in a structured way
- 4. Circles in clubs/sports teams**
 - a. Group working to establish norms, expectations, goals/strategic planning, resolving conflict, etc.

Tier Three: Responses to Serious Harm (Implementation for high needs individuals/groups)

How might restorative justice apply to a conflict?

Restorative justice allows the impacted parties to talk about what happened, how they are feeling about it now, the impact it had on everyone, and ultimately what can be done to make it as right as possible.

Restorative approach can help school communities avoid the need for exclusionary discipline and reduce repeated offenses. People who have been harmed often have questions that only the person that harmed them can answer. Often time these questions are simple like “why me?” or “what led you to do this to me?” The process allows for these and other questions to be answered and to begin the healing process.

Traditional Discipline vs. A Restorative Approach



Support

Tier Three: Sample Restorative Responses:

Incident	Traditional Approach	Restorative Approach
<p>Physical Fight with clear aggressor and victim</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both sets of families notified • Disciplinary hearing with aggressor and family • Aggressor is suspended from school • Re-entry meeting with aggressor and family where school official states expectations for safe re-entry • Possible additional sanctions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both sets of families notified • Disciplinary hearing with aggressor and family (restorative approach) • Aggressor possibly suspended from school • Victim and family identify needs for healing (resolution and safety) • If suspension occurs, re-entry meeting with aggressor and family where group identifies needs for healing and determines safe re-entry expectations together • Possible additional sanctions • Circle held between students, allies and staff to discuss reasons behind and impact of fight, needs for healing and proposed resolution with commitments made by Circle participants to ensure safety moving forward • Report back to both families

Incident	Traditional Approach	Restorative Approach
<p>Possession of classified substance paraphernalia and weapon (marijuana grinder, rolling papers and pepper spray)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family and police notified ● Disciplinary hearing with student and family ● Student is suspended from school between 2-4 weeks ● Expulsion hearing requested ● Family likely withdraws student from program ● Expulsion hearing occurs and student is either expelled or returns to school with re-entry safety plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family and police notified ● Disciplinary hearing with student and family (restorative approach) ● Re-entry meeting with student and family where group determines safe re-entry expectations and additional sanctions including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --daily check ins and outs with principal --loss of locker privileges for at least one month --create and present 3-5 minute presentation on impact of drugs in schools to entire 8th grade Participate in re-entry meetings with each teacher to repair harmed relationships --daily lunch meetings with school official and 1 friend until presentation is complete --Minimum 4 sessions with school social worker ● Weekly check in with family to monitor progress

Sample Post Harm Circle Prompts:

1. Check-In Round: Introduce yourself and tell us how long you have been at this school or in this community
2. What value can you bring that would help us work through this conflict successfully?
3. Can you agree to try to follow these guidelines in our circle today?
4. Based on what you know about this situation, what happened?
5. What has been the hardest part for you?
6. Have you done anything to make the situation worse?
7. What can you do to make the situation better?
8. What do you need to repair any harm from this conflict and move past the conflict?
9. What do you need from others to move past this conflict?
10. Can you agree to support these ideas for moving past the conflict?
11. How will you know if things are getting better?
12. Check-Out Round: Share some wisdom that you learned from the Circle today

Final Thoughts:

1. Restorative Practices are based on healthy relationships and shared power among stakeholders
2. Schools implement RP to empower students by building their agency through social and emotional skill development
3. Restorative Justice aims to repair harm (strained relationships) by holding aggressors accountable, giving victims voice, and promoting healing through a collaborative problem solving process (pulling students in rather than pushing them out!)
4. RJ does not completely remove traditional sanctions in response to harm. Instead, it uses a different lens to view relationships and responding to harm
5. The transition to RP and RJ takes time and the Beethoven/Ohrenberger schools, like many others, are on the journey towards building our restorative tool kits





Questions: