

Restorative Practices Principles

The following principles reflect the values and concepts for implementing restorative practices in the school setting. Under each principle are some of its important implications.

1. Acknowledges that relationships are central to building community.

- Restorative practices seek to strengthen relationships and build community by encouraging a caring school climate.
- Every student, teacher, administrator, staff member, and parent/guardian is a valued member of the school community.
- Students should be involved in a process of naming the values and principles to live by within their school community.

2. Builds systems that address misbehavior and harm in a way that strengthens relationships.

- Schools establish policies to provide a safe place for learning. Real safety however comes from fostering and maintaining caring relationships.
- Policies should reflect the values and principles agreed to by the school community.
- Policies need to address the root causes of discipline problems rather than only the symptoms. The causes of misbehavior may be multiple and each should be addressed.

3. Focuses on the harm done rather than only on rule-breaking.

- Misbehavior is an offense against people and relationships, not just rule-breaking.
- The solution to the offense needs to involve all of those harmed by the misbehavior.
- The person harmed is the center of the primary relationship that needs to be addressed. Secondary relationships that may have been impacted might include other students, teachers, parents, the administration, and the surrounding community.
- Much misbehavior arises out of attempts to address a perceived injustice. Those who are victimized also feel they have been treated unjustly. Discipline processes must leave room for addressing these perceptions.

4. Gives voice to the person harmed.

- The immediate safety concerns of the person harmed are primary.
- Those harmed must be given an opportunity to have a voice in the resolution of the harm.

5. Engages in collaborative problem solving.

- All of us act to satisfy our human needs (for belonging, freedom, power, and fun). Students choose behaviors to meet these underlying needs.
- Family, students, and communities are encouraged to help identify problems and solutions that meet needs.
- Misbehavior can become a teachable moment if everyone is involved.

6. Empowers change and growth.

- In order for students to change and grow, we must help them identify their needs and assist them in finding alternative, life giving ways of meeting those needs.
- Interpersonal conflict is a part of living in relationship with others.
- Conflict presents opportunity for change if the process includes careful listening, reflecting, shared problem-solving, trust, and accountability structures that support commitments to work at relationship building.

7. Enhances Responsibility.

- Real responsibility requires one to understand the impact of her or his actions on others, along with an attempt to acknowledge and put things right when that impact is negative.
- Consequences should be evaluated based on whether they are reasonable, related to the offense, restorative, and respectful.
- Students should continually be invited to become responsible and cooperative.
- Some students choose to resist participation in a process that will allow for change and may need adults to support and guide them in decision-making concerning their accountability.