

Introduction to Restorative Communities

What are Restorative Communities?

Restorative Communities are spaces that are physically, intellectually and emotionally safe, trauma-informed, and committed to social and racial justice. Restorative Communities are composed of respectful and responsible adults and students working towards educational equity and excellence. Restorative Communities intentionally promote a positive and healthy school culture by building, strengthening and (when harm occurs - including institutional and historical harm) repairing relationships through social-emotional learning, circle practice, and restorative dialogue. Restorative Communities honor diversity, identity, and human rights.

The Three R's of a Restorative Community

- **Respect**
- **Relationships**
- **Responsibility**

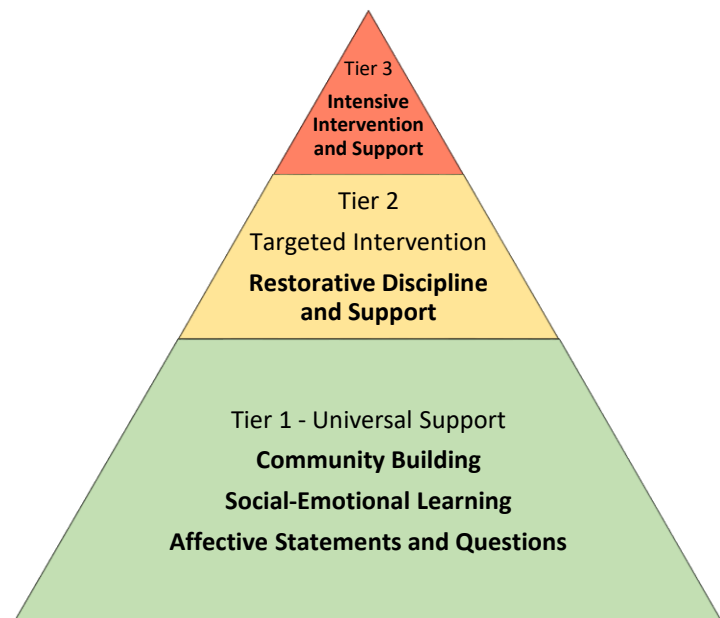
What is Restorative Justice (or Discipline) in Schools?

Rooted in the restorative justice model of some international criminal and juvenile justice systems, restorative justice in schools is an approach to heal harm. In schools, restorative "justice" can also be understood as restorative "discipline," the intervention tiers of restorative practices.

Traditional Discipline	Restorative Discipline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who broke the rule? • What rule was broken? • What punishment does the offender deserve? • The person harmed (victim) is not involved • Rules, fault and punishment are key 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who was involved and how? • Which relationships have been harmed? • What do participants (particularly those harmed) need? • Everyone impacted has an opportunity to create an agreement to heal and prevent future harm • Relationships, respect and responsibility are key

What are Restorative Practices?

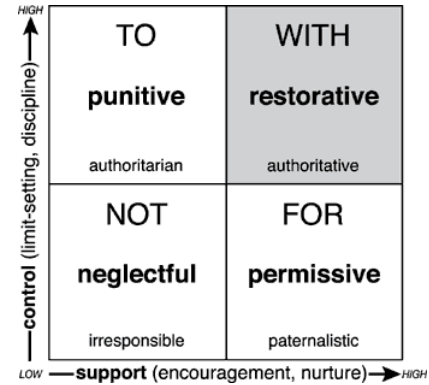
Restorative practices are a collection of actions that aim to build, maintain, and when necessary, repair relationships. At a universal and preventative level (Tier 1), all staff and students can build and maintain relationships through community building and curriculum circles, social-emotional learning, affective statements, and non-violent communication. At a level of targeted intervention (Tier 2), when harm or significant challenges occur, restorative practices may include active listening, motivational interviewing, conflict circles, circles of support, or individual restorative conferencing and dialogue. For the most severe harms (Tier 3), typically after a student has been removed from class or school, the highest level of support may include a re-entry circle or restorative community conference and on-going circles of support to re-integrate the student into the school community.



What is a Restorative Approach?

“The fundamental hypothesis of restorative practices is that human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them.”

- International Institute for Restorative Practices



What are the Key Terms of Restorative Communities?

- **Affective Statements:** Expressions of personal feelings, both positive and negative, describing how one is affected (e.g. “I feel ___ when ___.”).
- **Affective Questions:** Questions asked to understand how people are affected (impacted) by an incident. These questions seek to understand feelings and needs. (“Who do you think has been affected and how?”).
- **Active Listening:** Words and body language that invites thoughtful reflections (e.g. restating, summarizing, minimal encouragers, effective silence).
- **Restorative Dialogue/Motivational Interviewing:** Collaborative conversations aimed at strengthening a person’s own motivation and commitment to change or to attain a specific goal. Questions are open-ended to invite conversation to uncover and address the root causes of conflict and challenging behavior.
- **(Tier 1) Circle:** Proactive circles where participants are invited to respond to open-ended questions related to community building, curriculum, issues, support, or celebration. The format typically includes discussing circle agreements, using a talking piece, and responding to a check-in question, round questions, and a check-out question/closing.
- **(Tier 2) Support/Issue Circle:** Using the circle agreements, support/issue circles address on-going social-emotional needs for students experiencing similar types of trauma or challenge.
- **(Tier 2) Harm/Conflict Circle:** After preparing individuals involved (using restorative dialogue and inviting individuals to voluntarily participate this circle), harm/conflict circles use the circle agreements to discuss, understand, and repair harm. Participants draft agreements to heal the harm and the circle keeper follows up soon thereafter.
- **(Tier 3) Re-entry Circle/Community Conferencing:** For students who have been away from school or class (either because of suspension, opportunity transfer, incarceration or other), a re-entry circle uses the circle agreements to welcome the student back to the school/class community and share resources and support to avoid repeating the harm. A community conference may invite additional members of the community, family, and/or specialized services.

