

What are Restorative Justice Practices?

Restorative Justice Practices are based on the belief that that every person’s talents are needed by the community. Restorative Practices involve **community building, empowerment and intervention before and after harm** has happened while **preventing future conflict by creating a sense of belonging, safety and social responsibility**. Restorative Practices work best as a **whole school model**, used to **enhance teaching and learning**, and to **develop school self-governance, culture and positive school climate**. The practices **build healthy relationships** and **develop social, and emotional skills**. Harm affects everyone in a community. Only together can it be repaired, and trust must be rebuilt. When used in disciplinary interventions, Restorative Justice Practices employ standardized protocols to reconcile relationships, increasing trust and safety for the future. (1)

Benefits of Restorative Justice Practices

1. BUILD empathy and problem solving skills for positive relationships.
2. PROVIDE safe, supportive and caring learning environments.
3. REDUCE disciplinary problems and **interrupt the school to prison pipeline**. (1)



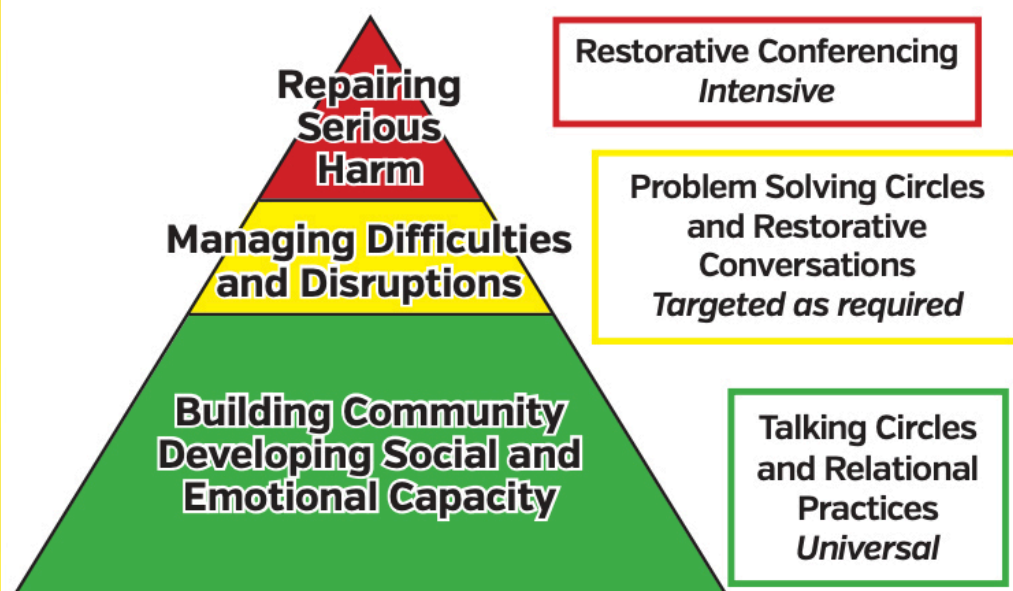
Why Restorative Justice Practices?

- RJ Practices defuse rather than escalate sensitive situations.
- RJ Practices foster empathy.
- RJ Practices create peaceful resolutions.
- RJ Practices teach social emotional skills essential for school, work and life. (1)

Restorative Justice requires a paradigm shift

Traditional School Discipline Asks...	Restorative Justice Asks...
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What rules was broken? 2. Who broke it? 3. What punishment is warranted? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who was hurt/affected? 2. What are their needs? 3. How do all affected parties together address needs and repair harm? Who is obligated to repair those needs? <p>(1)</p>

Restorative Justice Practices Whole School Approach



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

Suspending students for nonviolent misconduct does not benefit the misbehaving student or their peers.

Restorative justice can serve as a valuable tool to help students process nonviolent misbehavior. But violent misbehavior, even under restorative justice, often demands a period of time during which the student should be off the school property. (4)



Effective restorative justice programming does not remove penalties. Rather, it makes consequences more intentional. It is a common misconception that restorative justice does not support suspensions or further discipline. Rather, students may do an alternative suspension placement and complete constructive assignments that help them to process the incident. (4)

Five Mis-Implementation Models

Ways restorative initiatives can falter

- (1) **Mandated top-down initiatives** misaligned with values of RJE;
- (2) **Narrow approaches** focused on a single restorative practice;
- (3) **Colorblind or power blind approaches** to marginalizing dynamics;
- (4) **“Train and hope”** approaches that offer few implementation supports, and
- (5) **Under-resourced and short-term initiatives** that likely result in minimal buy-in, inconsistent practices, and teacher frustration and burnout. (3)

Spotlight: Fremont High School, Oakland, CA

In 2017, Fremont High in East Oakland had some of the highest discipline rates and lowest attendance in the city. Fights and conflicts were common occurrences. Only 1 in 4 graduates were qualified to attend public college in California. One in 3 dropped out entirely. But Fremont High is – literally – a different place now. With a newly rebuilt campus and an intensive focus on improving campus climate, Fremont has seen its enrollment jump 20% even as districtwide enrollment has dropped, and the number of students who qualify for college admission has nearly tripled.

Oakland Unified has been funding restorative justice at various schools for almost two decades, but in 2017 made a \$2.5 million investment to expand it across the district. That’s when Fremont High launched its comprehensive program. In addition to organizing circles, Tatiani Chaterji works with teachers to bring restorative practices to every classroom.

Chaterji, Fremont’s restorative justice facilitator at Oakland Unified School District, said she’d encourage all schools to adopt some form of restorative practices that go beyond conflict resolution. But she noted that many teachers have been doing it informally for years, long before restorative justice became a buzzword.

“Teachers already have these skills. It doesn’t have to be imposed on them,” she said. “We don’t need to reinvent the wheel. ... We can leverage the wisdom that’s already there.” (5)

Credits: (1) Boston Teacher’s Union (2017) <https://btu.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/4-BTU-Restorative-Justice-Brochure-1.pdf>. (2) Thorsborne, M. & Blook, P. (2013) Implementing Restorative Practices in Schools (3) Gregory, A & Evans, K. (2020) The Starts and Stumbles of Restorative Justice in Education: Where Do We go from Here? <https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/restorative-justice> (4) Fried, A. (2019) If You Won’t Do Restorative Justice Right, Don’t Do It. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-if-you-wont-do-restorative-justice-right-dont-do-it/2019/06> (5) Jones, C. (2022) At this Oakland high school, restorative justice goes far beyond discipline <https://edsources.org/2022/at-this-oakland-high-school-restorative-justice-goes-far-beyond-discipline/673453>