

## Restorative Discipline Best Practices

While some schools see themselves as already engaging in restorative practices, the following guidelines serve as a means of assessing where across the restorative continuum a particular campus or administrator operates.

- ***Restorative Discipline is a philosophy and system-wide intervention that places relationships at the heart of the educational experience.***

Restorative Discipline utilizes a relational ecology that finds its strength through nurturing motivational bonds of belonging that support individual development and social responsibility. This paradigm gives the harm or conflict “back” to the parties most involved.

- ***The goal of Restorative Discipline is to change the school climate rather than merely respond to student behavior.***

While utilizing a multi-tiered model of influence and intervention, the energy of RD begins at Tier 1 with a focus on changing school climate. Restorative practices are utilized for community building, teaching course content, decision-making, values clarification, problem-solving, and acknowledging new, returning and departing members of the community, as well as resolving conflict. Restorative practices are utilized by all members of the school community: administrators, teachers, students, support staff, volunteers, parents and community stakeholders.

- ***Restorative Discipline requires a top down commitment from school board members and administrators.***

School board and administrator buy-in and communicating / modeling that buy-in, prevent RD from becoming another initiative around which there’s a flurry of excitement with no follow up, support or accountability. A committed administrator who can “voice the vision” can instill in others the optimism, critical thinking, and strategic planning necessary to successful and fruitful implementation. An enthusiastic and knowledgeable administrator leads the way for teacher buy-in, demonstrates community building by applying RD practices in teacher and administrator interactions such as staff meetings, oversees the creation and use of the leadership response team, provides leadership in the midst of change and challenge, and promotes data collection and analysis to undergird restorative work. Finally, administrative support and commitment assures the necessary long-range planning and resources to support the expected three to five year rollout. It should be noted that this element of RD best practices mirrors those of PBIS including working with all staff, data collection and commitment to a multi-year rollout.

- ***Restorative Discipline uses a whole school approach. All administrators, teachers, all staff, and students should be exposed to and/or trained in restorative processes with periodic boosters.***

RD is a restorative justice-based, whole school disciplinary response that focuses on changing school climate through the building of community at the classroom and campus levels. It is more than a tool or technique that gets applied to a specific incident or individual student or exclusive classroom. Relational trust, RD's core concept, is developed and practiced by all community members who must be trained initially and then supported through additional training, support activities, reinforcement and periodic boosters.

- ***Restorative Discipline engages parents/caregivers as integral members of restorative conferences and circles.***

RD practitioners are expected to become proficient in community engaged restorative circles and family-group conferencing, which typically include parents and caregivers as participants.

- ***Restorative Discipline uses an internal leadership response team to spearhead the implementation and help support necessary dialogue.***

An active leadership response team serves as a planning and implementation body facilitates circles involving more complicated or serious incidents or those in which family members and caregivers participate, and coordinates needed trainings and boosters. Team members are often school administrators, the on-site RD coordinator, counselors, family service coordinators, school resource officers and committed teachers and parents.

- ***Restorative Discipline calls for an outside restorative justice coordinator to serve onsite.***

Implementation fidelity requires an RD Coordinator who is "of the community" more than representative of campus employees and who, in fact, may not even be directly employed by the school. Whether full or part-time, the RD Coordinator's only role is to assist the campus and surrounding community in RD application and implementation. The Coordinator must be able to move freely among administrators, teachers, students, staff, parents and community members in order to model, assist, and as needed, challenge and critique.

- ***Restorative Discipline has a data system to analyze trends and inform early interventions.***

A data collection system is necessary both to measure outcomes as well to identify implementation gaps and challenges. This practice mirrors the PBIS expectation that teams “systematically collect, summarize, and analyze data to drive the decision-making process and identify problems.”

- ***Restorative Discipline focuses on the harms, needs and causes of student behavior, not just the breaking of rules and dispensing of punishment.***

A fully restorative campus uses circles and other restorative interventions at Tier 2 and Tier 3 levels and applies RD principles in every conflict and issue of harm in order to give stakeholders a voice and to create a contextual response to the matter under consideration. To the degree possible within district guidelines, the parties involved determine the parameters and nature of how the wrong-doer will be held accountable and the form amends-making will take. Circle facilitators are carefully selected and trained to be able to create “safe spaces” where the work of Restorative Discipline can take place.

- ***Restorative Discipline places a fundamental attention on harm and the subsequent needs of the victim.***

Restorative Discipline reflects a problem-solving and relational approach that focuses on restoring to the degree possible, the victim to wholeness and the offender back to the community. Repairing the harm both literal and relational is central to responses to negative behavior.

- ***Restorative Discipline places an emphasis on meaningful accountability in matters involving harm and conflict.***

Responses to conflict and issues of harm focus energy on accountability plans that are meaningful in terms of the harm that occurred, the needs and concerns of the victim and the community, the development of empathy, and the needs and deficits of the wrong-doer as evidenced by the nature of the conflict or issue of harm. Furthermore, accountability plans are recorded and monitored for successful completion with a subsequent plan should the plan not be completed or in the event of further problems.

- ***Restorative Discipline takes time. It is dialogue driven and rests on the steady establishing and deepening of relationships.***

Research and experience suggest that three to five years of intentional and concentrated work is needed to make a campus fully restorative.

- ***Restorative Discipline calls for collaboration with community-based restorative justice programs, local businesses, and agencies that serve youth, including community and faith-based programs, law enforcement, and public health and mental health entities, local Community Resource Coordinating Groups, justice system representatives and other stakeholders.***

Restorative Discipline maintains that schools belong to and are part of a wider community. Partnering with local programs and agencies illustrates this principle, provides a way for the community to invest in the school and its students, and broadens the range of people who can be influential or serve as a positive influence on a student's life.



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