

Restorative Justice: Whole School Implementation

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Restorative Language & Culture
December 6, 2017

Punitive Language

- Restorative values and questions are not commonly known or used by staff members
- The names of spaces in the building still reflect a punitive mindset: Suspension Room, Detention Room, etc.
- The names of interventions still reflect a punitive mindset: After-School Detention, Lunch Detention, Saturday Detention
- Educators frequently use deficit language as opposed to asset language when discussing students
- Educators refer to students as “misbehaving,” being “bad” or “problematic,” or “in trouble”

Restorative Language

- Restorative questions & affective statements (I feel...when...)are commonly known and used by all members of the school community, both in formal and informal spaces
- The names of spaces in the building reflect a restorative mindset: Peace Room, Restorative Office
- The names of interventions reflect a restorative mindset: After School Support or Intervention
- Educators use asset-based language when discussing students
- Educators discuss student behavior (as opposed to misbehavior) and students are told interventions are means of support, not a consequence of being “in trouble”
- Signage in the building promotes the use of restorative language

Where does your school fall on the spectrum?

Punitive

- Emotional response to behavior
- Deficit-based language
- Accusatory, blaming, shaming language in response to student or adult behavior
- Names of spaces and interventions reflect punishments rather than supports
- Behavior is discussed in the context of “What rule is being broken?”

Restorative

- Use of restorative questions/affective statements
- Asset- and solutions-based language
- Inquiring, probing questions in response to student or adult behavior
- Names of spaces and interventions reflect supports rather than punishments
- Behavior is discussed in the context of “What is this communicating to us?”

Punitive Culture

- Educators do not greet students. Educators are not seen having restorative conversations in the school building throughout the day.
- The tone and voice-levels of educators reflect a punitive and shaming environment.
- Educators are unable or unwilling to discuss the impact race has in decision-making.
- Student reputations dictate how they are treated in school.
- The climate of the room in which students are sent from class is punitive.
- Students and their families, and sometimes educators, do not have voice in school policies and procedures.
- School leaders and educators focus primarily on “rule-following.” Rules are designed only with the best interest of staff in mind and not students or their families.

Restorative Culture

- Educators greet students. They are regularly seen having restorative conversations throughout the school building. Community-building is given high priority.
- The tone and voice-levels of educators reflect a caring and supportive environment.
- All members of the school community are comfortable discussing the impact race has in decision-making and conflict.
- The room in which students are sent from class is designed to facilitate breaks and build social-emotional and conflict-resolution skills.
- Students, their families, and educators have voice in school policies and procedures, which are designed in response to student needs.
- Every day is a new day. Every class is a new class.

Where does your school fall on the spectrum?

Punitive

- Tone and voice-levels of adult-student interactions suggest shame/blame
- Student reputations dictate treatment
- Little discussion of the impact of race
- Little discussion of the impact of adult behavior
- Top-down decision making
- Rule-following

Restorative

- Tone and voice-levels of adult-student interactions suggest mutual respect
- Every day is a new opportunity
- Comfortably engage in conversations about race
- Consistent discussion of the impact of adult behavior
- Consensus decision making
- Community-building

Somewhere in the Middle...

- Restorative dialogue is used, BUT:
 - The intent is lecturing the student rather than inquiring about their behavior and impact
 - Students have no input in the repair of harm
 - The resolution is always an apology
- Restorative justice practices are seen as something adults do TO students.
 - Students have little voice
 - Adults do not consistently take responsibility for how their own behavior contributes to student behavior
- Restorative justice practices are only used in response to behavior, not proactively.
- While race is occasionally discussed with staff, race is rarely discussed with students and their families.
- A space is labeled “Peace Room,” but is used as a silent study hall for suspended students.

Strategies for Building Restorative Language

1. Revisit school handbook, messaging to families, staff handbook, etc.
 - Restorative questions
 - Language around “misbehavior” or “infractions” or “offenses”
2. Rename spaces and roles as necessary
 - Create signage for the building that reflects restorative values
 - Ensure the environment of spaces students may use to take a break from class are calming rather than prison-like
3. Modeling restorative language
 - Productive conversations about race
 - Conversations around the impact of adult behavior

Strategies for Building Restorative Culture

1. Use restorative justice practices with staff
 - Prioritize relationship building
 - Facilitate meetings in circle
2. Celebrate growth and success
 - Creative resolutions and interventions
 - Educators acknowledging the role race or their own behavior plays in decision making
 - Restorative champions
3. Greet students, staff, and families as they arrive each day

Systematize Restorative Language and Culture

1. Restorative Challenges
 - Random Acts of Kindness
 - Building new relationships
2. Caught in the Act
3. Cultural Assemblies
4. Participation in existing national campaigns
 - Anti-bullying month
 - LGBTQ Pride Month
 - Dignity in Schools' National Week of Action

Questions & Answers