

# Beyond Circles

Becoming a restorative justice school involves many interconnected pieces. The use of circles is an important part, but there are many other elements of a restorative justice culture which are necessary to focus on during implementation. A restorative justice school centers relationships among all members of the school community and is responsive to its stakeholders, welcoming ongoing feedback. Additionally, schools grounded in restorative justice measure and reflect high levels of youth and family involvement, as well as staff satisfaction and retention. The following non-circle strategies can provide an impactful starting place to build from.

## *A restorative justice school...*

Uses **restorative language** in informal conversations and common interactions throughout the school day

**Example:**

*I-statements; Non-violent communication; Checking in with students, staff and families; Using asset-based language; Avoiding use of "good" vs. "bad" students*

Establishes **clear expectations** for all members of the school community

**Example:**

*Not sending young people out of the classroom; Greeting students at the door*

**Aligns with other initiatives** that build on the principles of restorative justice

**Example:**

*Trauma-informed practices; Culturally responsive curriculum; Anti-racism training; Inclusion of all learners (special education, ESOL)*

Uses **hiring** as a tool for strengthening the restorative justice mindset among staff

**Example:**

*Intentionally screening for restorative justice values during the interview process; Supporting educators in finding alternative placements if they don't align with the restorative justice paradigm; Hiring staff that is representative of the student population*

Encourages and listens to **youth voice** and creates multiple avenues for youth leadership

**Example:**

*Including young leaders in developing policies and procedures; trusting young people to know their own needs (bathrooms, nurse, breaks); RJ classes or clubs*

Encourages and listens to **staff voice** through a variety of forms of feedback

**Example:**

*Including educators in the leadership team; Providing professional development based on identified needs from staff members*

Holds **community building** events and prioritizes **community engagement**

**Example:**

*School days spent in relationship-building activities rather than academics; Neighborhood and family potlucks; Seeking out community partnerships; Intentionally engaging impacted families*

Uses the **physical environment** to reflect its values and community

**Example:**

*Student art and photographs in the hallways; Information about RJ available to anyone in the building; No young person seated in isolation*