

National Association of Community and Restorative Justice

Approved Unanimously by the Board of Directors (3/31/17)

NACRJ Policy Statement on Restorative Practices in K-12 Education

Policy

1. The National Association of Community and Restorative Justice (NACRJ) Board of Directors seek to promote policies and procedures that allow for restorative practices to be implemented in K-12 schools. In support of the policy position NACRJ is calling for:
 - a. All state education agencies to provide technical assistance to local school districts on the practice and implementation of “whole school” restorative practices.
 - b. Local education agencies, charter schools and non-public schools to adopt school or institution-wide climate practices to foster caring relationships and discipline policies that employ social engagement over social control.
 - c. Institutions of higher education to include the theory and practice of restorative processes in schools as part of teacher and school administrator licensure programs.
 - d. Adults working with youth to adopt restorative practices for their own use, including building healthy relationships between each other, and have policies in place to repair harm that may occur with conflicts between and among adults involved in educational systems.
2. In support of this policy, NACRJ seeks to create awareness among policy makers and educators at all levels of the potential of restorative practices in schools to strengthen relationships between students, faculty, administrators and staff; build community; increase the capacity for self-governance among students; respond to conflicts and harms in ways that repair harms caused by conflict and reduce the likelihood of future conflicts; and, promote a positive school climate in which students feel safe and able to focus on learning.
3. NACRJ also seeks to assist educational institutions:
 - a. To develop evidence-based internal operating policies and implementation practices that maintain fidelity to the theory, values and principles of restorative practices.
 - b. To design evaluation methodologies to assess the implementation processes, assess direct effects on school climate and student conduct and assess longer term impacts of restorative practices in educational institutions.

Rationale for the Policy Statement

1. The United States Departments of Education and Justice in 2014 issued a 'Dear Colleague' letter highlighting the inequities in many K-12 discipline practices, particularly for African American, Latino and students with special needs. In 2015, the White House held a summit

entitled *Rethink School Discipline* (for the published report see <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/rethink-discipline-resource-guide-supt-action.pdf>).

2. According to *Rethink School Discipline: Resource Guide for Superintendent Action* recent national school discipline data reveal that:
 - a. African American students are three times more likely than their white peers to be expelled or suspended.
 - b. Although African–American students represent 16 percent of the public school student population, they make up 33 percent of students suspended once, 42 percent of those suspended more than once and 34 percent of student s expelled.
 - c. African American and Latino students make up 40 percent of the student population but over 50 percent of the students referred to law enforcement or involved in school related arrests.
 - d. Black girls are suspended at higher rates (12 percent) than girls of any other race or ethnicity and most boys. American Indian and Alaska Native girls are suspended at higher rates (7 percent) than white boys (6 percent) or girls (2 percent).
 - e. Although students served under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* represent 12 percent of students in the country, they are more than twice as likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions as non-*IDEA* students (13 percent versus 6 percent), and they make up 25 percent of students referred to law enforcement and 25 percent of students who are the subject of a school-related arrest.
 - f. Students with disabilities (under the *IDEA*) represent 12 percent of students but nearly 75 percent of the students who are physically restrained in their schools.
 - g. Additionally, research has found that the overwhelming majority of suspensions are determined *at the discretion of local school officials and not mandated by state law or policy*.
3. NACRJ views such disparate impacts by race, ethnicity and gender as an unacceptable social injustice. When youth are placed on disciplinary school suspension (in-school or out-of-school), the very experience of being suspended is now recognized as key factor associated with increased offending and a longer-term pattern of anti-social conduct often leading to incarceration. The association between school suspensions, increased offending and subsequent incarceration is now widely recognized and referred to as the “school to prison pipeline.”
4. Restorative practices are important but missing elements in many schools. These practices are compatible with other school climate approaches such as Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and social and emotional learning. Restorative practices contribute to a positive school climate by building relationships between students and students and students and adults. With an increased sense of safety born of knowledge about each other, students are better able to focus on learning. Restorative practices also provide a set of approaches that address student misconduct when it occurs, provide a means for resolution and repair of the harms, and address the underlying circumstances.

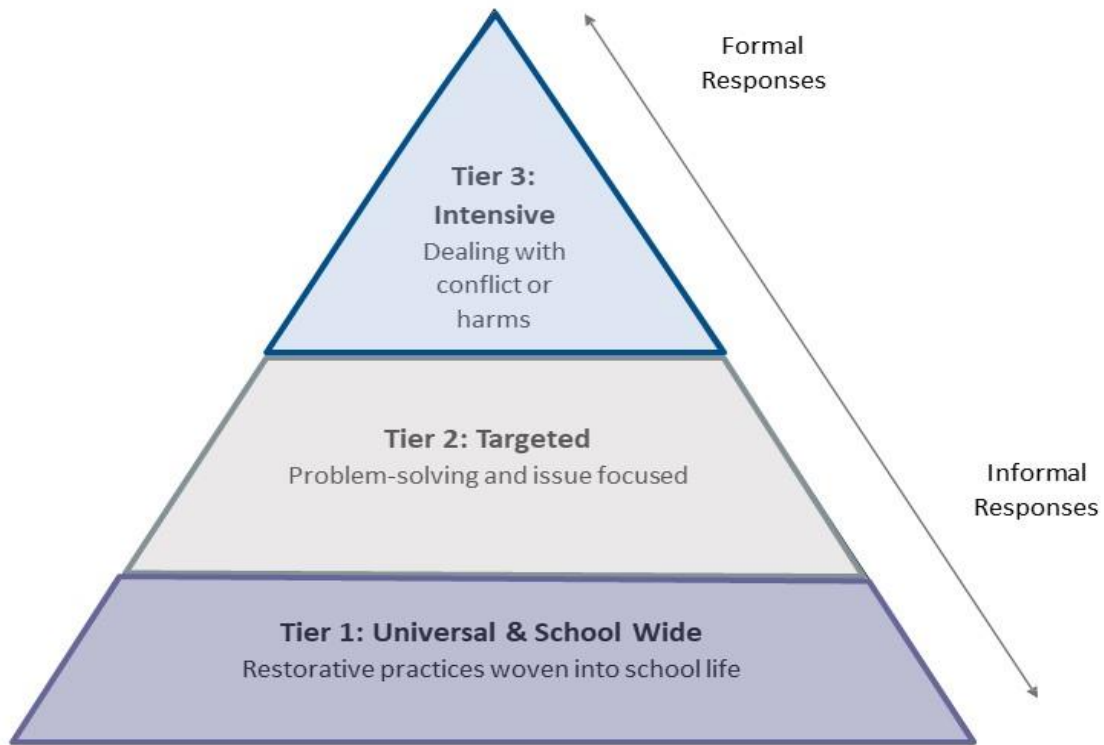
Implementation and Management Guidelines

Addendum to the NACRJ Policy Statement on Restorative Practices in K-12 Education

I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Increasing numbers of policy makers and educators readily acknowledge that punitive disciplinary approaches do not work and are often counterproductive. Many educators are seeking new ways to support a student's social, emotional and academic growth and are turning to restorative practices in K-12 education (RPE). RPE is called many things, including but not limited to: restorative practices (RPs), restorative justice in education (RJE), restorative measures, restorative actions, and school-wide restorative practices (SWRPs). In this document, the term *restorative practices in K-12 education* (RPE) will be used. However, more important than the label is a deep understanding of what RPE is. RPE articulates the philosophical foundation of techniques and practices used to create a compassionate and positive school climate where all school community members are valued and included. School community members include, but are not limited to: teachers, staff, students, administrators, boards members, parents, families, neighbors, community members, law enforcement, youth justice and diversion programs, and other community resources.

People implementing school-wide restorative practices often refer to the three-tiered intervention pyramid first presented as a public health framework and now widely used in the field of mental health. Tier 1 (the bottom tier) represents universal interventions that span all school environments, support all students, and typically include programs or practices that are proactive and preventative in nature. Tier 2 (the middle tier) represents targeted interventions that are problem-solving and issue-focused. These processes are of moderate intensity and are usually short term. Tier 3 (the top tier) represents intensive interventions of high intensity and longer duration. Students receiving Tier 3 restorative interventions may require additional support from social workers, counselors, and other professionals. The pyramid also illustrates that restorative practices lie on a spectrum ranging from informal to formal as they move across the tiers.



The purpose of this document is to provide a common understanding of RPE by enumerating *Ten Essential Elements of whole-school RPE, Implementation Guidelines, and Additional Resources* so schools and school districts implement RPE with fidelity, being mindful of local contexts and cultures.

II. TEN ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE VISION OF SCHOOL-WIDE RESTORATIVE PRACTICES IN K-12 EDUCATION

1. **RELATIONSHIPS MATTER MOST.** A restorative school prioritizes, nurtures and maintains healthy relationships between all members of the school community and creates a healthy school climate where conflict can be resolved peacefully. Building strong and trusting relationships among the staff is of utmost importance. A restorative school engages both students and adults to recognize, celebrate and build on all that is good about their school, and to examine and change harmful beliefs, pedagogies, norms, policies, implicit biases and practices that marginalize, oppress, or exclude any group or individual.

2. **EVERYONE IS EMPOWERED.** All staff and students are empowered to make choices based on common values. Because each school's culture is unique and valuable, RPE involves the whole school community in deciding what they want their school to be like.

3. **POWER IS SHARED.** RPE guides administrators and educators to clarify their beliefs about children and issues of power. RPE promotes a distributive and democratic power sharing model and inclusive processes throughout the school and in the classrooms so all voices can be heard. All school community members are encouraged to take leadership positions and work together for positive change. Administrators at all levels (board and central office, building and departmental level, and bargaining units) realize that doing things *with* others instead of doing things *to* them or *for* them will result in more positive outcomes.
4. **BEHAVIOR IS COMMUNICATION.** All behaviors are a form of communication, and challenging behaviors demonstrate a breakdown of relationships and unmet needs. RPE supports staff and students by considering the context and circumstances of behavior, and guides them to self-reflect, self-evaluate, self-correct and make amends. Restorative approaches foster intrinsic motivation to act in ways that benefit the self and school community; they do not manipulate or coerce blanket compliance with rules and regulations.
5. **HEALING COMES THROUGH REPARATION AND SUPPORT.** RPE helps school community members build resilience as they navigate through the school experience. All members internalize and model restorative values while developing inner strengths. They build the social skills needed for self-regulation and healthy communication. When harm occurs, RPE ensures that the voices of the person(s) harmed, the person(s) who did the harm, and other members of the school community are heard so that solutions are constructed by those involved. Therefore, those who have been harmed can heal, and those who have committed harms are held accountable to making things right.
6. **RESTORATIVE SCHOOLS BELIEVE IN THEIR STUDENTS.** Adults work together to support every student. They hold an optimistic view of all students as inherently good and as people who can grow to be responsible members of the school, local and global communities. Adults understand that children learn best when they are encouraged, when they take responsibility for themselves and others, and when they feel like they belong. Adults also understand that stigmatizing shame, punishment and exclusion breed anger and resentment that can potentially result in acts of extreme violence.
7. **RESTORATIVE SCHOOLS ARE SAFE PLACES.** A restorative school culture anticipates, monitors, intervenes and addresses conflict, violence, mistreatment, bullying and harassment of

any kind. RPE consistently addresses stereotyping and unfair treatment based on gender, religion, racial/ethnic group, appearance, sexual identity, socio-economic level and special needs. By building relationships between all members of the school community, interconnectedness replaces isolation and inclusiveness replaces marginalization.

- 8. EDUCATION IS HOLISTIC.** Restorative practices are trauma-informed practices that prioritize relationships and promote healing by acknowledging that emotional, physical, psychological, and social skills and needs are both primary and fundamental to success and well-being. Restorative schools integrate mindfulness, social and emotional learning (SEL), visual and performing arts, and wellness practices.
- 9. CURRICULUM IS INCLUSIVE AND MULTICULTURAL.** The school's curriculum and instructional materials reflect the diversity of the students and how they learn. Staff and students learn to explore multiple truths and perspectives together. Curriculum, electives, and extra-curricular activities provide all students with a wide range of opportunities to develop their own talents and interests. Restorative schools acknowledge multiple ways of knowing and multiple intelligences.
- 10. INSTRUCTION IS RELATIONAL AND RESTORATIVE.** In a restorative school, teachers make learning more fun and meaningful by employing relational-based pedagogies including collaborative learning, project-based learning, service learning and experiential learning. Students are given daily opportunities to co-construct knowledge and actively participate in learning processes based on inquiry, discovery, construction of meaning, collaboration and application of their learning to become self-directed, open-minded thinkers and learners.

III. IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Every school has its own processes for introducing new initiatives and building the capacity of staff and students to integrate and embrace the initiative. Changing school culture, pedagogy, policies, and practices can take 3-5 years, especially when turnover is high. Change comes with challenges. Educational change theories and implementation science offer frameworks for successfully implementing RPE. The implementation framework provided here is a basic guide to help schools think about what is needed to organize and develop their own detailed plan.

STAGE 1:
Assessment
and
Exploration

- Assess the school’s relational ecology and leadership styles for readiness. Examine leadership styles, cooperation among staff, and how people treat each other and respond to change.
- Examine existing discipline policies and reduce suspensions, especially for defiance/willful defiance. Repeal and reject zero tolerance discipline policies. Examine existing disciplinary data and determine if any group(s) of students is disproportionately disciplined. Rewrite disciplinary policies and student codes of conduct to reflect restorative discipline.
- Assess what organizational and structural changes may be necessary, including allowing ample time for introductory and advanced training and support, creating a dedicated room for circles and conferences, merging community building circles with regularly scheduled activities and allowing time for repairing relationships through conferences and circles.
- Re-evaluate the need for uniformed, armed school police and consider unarmed school resource officers trained in restorative practices and de-escalation techniques.
- Explore internal and external funding sources.

STAGE 2:
Capacity
Building

- Commit to learning as much as possible about RPE, implementation science and program evaluation (formative and summative).
- Seek out and develop connections to community organizations who can support implementation efforts through training and volunteerism.
- Build relationships with local leaders, including educational policy makers and leaders of community-based organizations.
- Create a structure of support to ensure that implementation is sustainable. This could involve state education departments, school boards, area superintendents, parent organizations, etc.
- Identify motivated staff ready to initiate the shift to RPE in a way that makes sense for your school. Allow individual members of the school community to become change agents and lead the implementation process.
- Recruit and hire culturally diverse and relational-oriented leaders, support staff, and teachers. Ensure the school is adequately staffed with social workers and support staff experienced in supporting high-needs students.
- Continue assessing the school community’s capacity to both implement and evaluate RPE.

STAGE 3:
Planning

- Establish a core planning team comprised of staff, community members, administrators, parents and students.
- Create a calendar for planning meetings.
- Develop goals, outcomes and targets.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft a strategic plan that includes a logic model for change, an annual budget, implementation procedures, timeline, formative evaluation, identification of outcome measures, training, etc. • Plan to evaluate formative and summative outcomes, such as decreased suspensions and office discipline referrals, changes in relationships and implementation fidelity. • Establish an evaluation team that may include internal and/or external evaluators.
<p>STAGE 4: Initial and Full Implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train all staff members (including administrators) in RPE and dedicate the first year to building and repairing relationships among the adults in the school. Provide adequate and ongoing training and support for all school personnel. • Address staff turnover by creating healthy relational-based environments that support staff and leaders, especially new or struggling teachers. Foster respect among staff by holding regular staff circles. • Create a welcoming school environment. Post student and staff artwork/projects on the walls, and ensure everything posted sends a positive message to staff, students, parents, and community members. • Establish, publish, teach, and revisit procedures for implementing RPE. Engage staff in developing guidelines to clearly and collectively communicate processes and procedures. • Develop clearly defined roles and responsibilities for RJ Coordinators and other personnel whose responsibilities include training and implementation support. • Establish processes for reintegrating and welcoming students back into the school community, especially after a suspension or removal for disruptive behavior. • Continually monitor and evaluate progress according to the strategic plan. Address issues impacting implementation fidelity.

**STAGE 5:
Evaluation**

- Continually collect and analyze data based on theories of change and pre-determined outcomes and targets.
- Review implementation fidelity and the effectiveness of new and/or existing policies and practices.
- Share findings with school community and invested stakeholders.
- Develop ongoing recommendations for improvement.

* *NOTE:* The strategic plan should include both formative and summative evaluation methods that are integrated throughout the entire implementation process. Although a linear model is presented, evaluation may require schools to “circle back” and make adjustments before moving forward.

IV. RESOURCES

It is important to learn as much as possible about Restorative Practices in K-12 Education (RPE) before implementation. The following list, while not exhaustive, represents a range of resources in a variety of forms.

Note: This reference list and following list of resources is as of July 13, 2018 and may be updated with additional listings when and if they are identified.

BOOKS

- Amstutz, L. & Mullet, J. H. (2005). *The little book of restorative discipline for schools*. Intercourse: Good Books.
- Boyes-Watson, C. & Pranis, K. (2015). *Circle forward: building a restorative school community*. St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press.
- Burnett, B. & Thorsborne, M. (2015). *Restorative practice and special needs: A practical guide to working restoratively with young people*. London, UK and Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Brown, M. A. (2018). *Creating restorative schools: Setting schools up to succeed*. St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press.
- Claassen, R. & Claassen, R. (2008). *Discipline that restores*. North Charleston: BookSurge Publishing.
- Costello, B., Wachtel, J., & Wachtel, T. (2009). *Restorative practices handbook for teachers, disciplinarians and administrators*. Bethlehem, PA: International Institute for Restorative Practices.
- Costello, B., Wachtel, J., & Wachtel, T. (2010). *Restorative circles in schools: Building community and enhancing learning*. Bethlehem, PA: International Institute for Restorative Practices.
- Craig, S. (2017). *Trauma-sensitive schools for the adolescent years: Promoting resiliency and healing, Grades 6-12*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Craig, S. (2016). *Trauma-sensitive schools: Learning communities transforming children's lives, K-5*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Evans, K. R. & Vaandering, D. (2016). *The little book of restorative justice in education*. New York, NY: Good Books.
- Hansberry, B. (2016). *A practical introduction to restorative practices in schools: Theory, skills and guidance*. London, UK and Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Hopkins, B. (2004). *Just schools: A whole school approach to restorative justice*. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

- Hopkins, B. (2011). *The restorative classroom: Using restorative approaches to foster effective learning*. London, UK: Optimus Education.
- Kelly, V. & Thorsborne, M. (Eds.) (2014). *The psychology of emotion in restorative practice: How affect script psychology explains how and why restorative practice works*. London, UK and Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Kotter, J. P. (2012). *Leading change*. Boston, Mass: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Kotter, J.P., & Cohen, D.S. (2002). *The heart of change*. Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press.
- Morrison, B. (2007). *Restoring safe school communities: a whole school response to bullying, violence and alienation*. Sydney: The Federation Press.
- Pranis, K. (2005). *The little book of circle processes*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.
- Riestenberg, N. (2012). *Circle in the square: building community and repairing harm in school*. St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press.
- Smith, D., Fisher, D. & Frey, N. (2015). *Better than carrots and sticks: Restorative practices for positive classroom management*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD
- Thorsborne, M. & Blood, P. (2013). *Implementing restorative practices in schools: A practical guide to transforming school communities*. London, UK and Philadelphia, PA.
- Thorsborne, M., Riestenberg, N., & McCluskey, G. (Eds.). (2019) *Getting more out of restorative practice in schools: Practical approaches to improve school wellbeing and strengthen community engagement*. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Wadhwa, A. (2016). *Restorative justice in urban schools: Disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Zehr, H. (2002). *The little book of restorative justice*. Intercourse: Good Books.

TRAINERS AND CONSULTANTS

Note: An up-to-date comprehensive list of trainers and consultants does not currently exist as of 6/2018. We recommend starting with this list then also searching for local and regional trainers, community-based organizations, or university centers near you. You may also contact NACRJ for referrals to practitioners in your area.

[List of trainers and consultants in your state](#)

FEDERAL POLICIES (US)

[US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights “Dear Colleague” letter](#) of January 2014 regarding restorative justice as alternative to zero tolerance discipline policies.

SAMPLE SCHOOL, DISTRICT, OR STATE POLICIES & RESOURCES

[Colorado Restorative Practices in Schools Guidelines, Principles, Practices, Implementation and Training](#)

[Denver School-Based Restorative Practices Partnership: School Wide Restorative Practices: Step by Step](#)

[Illinois Balanced and Restorative Justice](#)

[Minnesota Department of Education: Restorative Practices](#)

[Oakland Unified School District: Restorative Justice](#)

[San Francisco Unified School District Restorative Practices](#)

IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE RESOURCES

[The National Implementation Research Network Active Implementation Hub](#)

VIDEOS

[Restorative Justice in Oakland Schools: Tier One. Community Building Circle:](#)

[Restorative Welcome and Re-entry Circle](#)

A search on YouTube will bring up a myriad of [videos on restorative justice practices in schools](#)

A search on YouTube will bring up many [videos about trauma and trauma informed practices](#)

INFORMATION HUB FOR CANADIAN SCHOOLS

[Restorative Practices Consortium Resource Project](#)