ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

SCHOOL-WIDE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

AND THE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL BENEFITS

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Restorative justice is a policy of community building; it holds that disciplinary issues result in a fracturing of relationships that need repairing. It focuses on relationship and empathy building and encourages students to take responsibility for their actions and the school climate, as well as work to create plans for restoration or reparation.



WHAT IT ISN'T

A response to harm or simply a disciplinary system. Restorative justice should be reflected in the school-wide climate, not simply as a reaction to wrong-doing.

What are the benefits?



Whole school implementation of Restorative Justice as been proven to increase students' feeling of comprehensibility (a sense of safety and a feeling of being understood at school), manageability (a confidence that things will be okay), and meaningfulness (when students can easily express themselves and feel heard). Additionally, students build "a sense over time that issues were manageable as they had experiences of solving them collectively. They also [build] skills that they [use] on a daily basis to manage stresses" (Reimer, 2020, p. 422).



In Minnesota, "behavioral referrals and suspensions in two schools" was reduced by 45 to 63% and academic achievement increased, through the use of "restorative circles, conferences, peer mediation, and other approaches" (Schiff, p. 127). In Denver, there was a 40% reduction in suspensions.

Why is this important?



1. This can help to increase equity in schools; "data show that black students are consistently suspended and expelled at three times the rate of white students, while students with disabilities are twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension as their non-disabled peers" (Schiff, 2018, p. 124).



2. When implemented effectively, student relationships with peers and teachers can improve, student sense of responsibility and ownership can be heightened, and their social-emotional knowledge can be furthered.





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Why school-wide Restorative Justice?

School-wide, rather than incident-driven RJ practices "build culture and climate based on mutually agreed upon restorative values of respect, trust, inclusion, tolerance, understanding (and more) which, when appled consistently and with fidelity, can result in fewer incidents of harm overall" (Schiff, 2018, p. 125). Incident-driven RJ can feel disjointed and doesn't result in any community or relationship building.

What does this look like in practice?

- Restorative Talking Circles
- Social-Emotional Classes
- Victim Impact Panels
- Helping students take responsibility for their actions and determine an action plan for reparations
 - Peer Mediations

8 Tips for implementation

- Assess Need
- **Engage the School** Community
- Hire a Restorative Justice Coordinator
- Begin Training
- School-Wide **Implementation**
- Institute Restorative Discipline
- Involve Students in Peer Restorative **Practices**
- Be sure to Evaluate

Restorative talking circles?

Done within a homeroom to build empathy and community (can also be done in response to a conflict). They start with a moment of mindfulness and a grounding in the shared guidelines. Students then "check-in" with each other before engaging in meaningful discussion about various issues.

Is there an example of a successful program?

The Alliance model has been used in a school where it was followed for eight years. This "model democratizes restorative approaches, as students assume the roles of practitioners" (Gonzalez et al., 2018, p. 210). This means that students are involved in the creation and dissemination of the program, which allows them even more ownership of their school community. Here, RJ practices are given as a part of the curriculum, but through "a multilevel system of primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions" (p. 209).

References