

Restorative Justice Action Plan

Introduction

The secondary school in which I teach is an inner-city title one school. Being an inner-city school has some inherent challenges. Students arrive at school with a high level of baseline trauma which impacts the ability to learn and behave for an academic environment. The district has enacted a PBIS system and in most settings the PBIS system works to improve behavior for students. The PBIS system enacted is a token behavior economy at this school. Students are awarded infractions or leadership points based on classroom behavior and students can then take part in a market where they can purchase snacks and candy with their points. The grade level that has the most leadership points also gets a party at the end of the month. In conversations with the principal of the school, I have learned that this PBIS system has not impacted behavior or reduced suspensions at the school. Nor has the restorative justice program that was attempted before I became employed at the school.

I am a believer in having a warm demander with students and having high academic and behavior expectations, but to be able to hold students to high expectations the environment needs to be one in which they feel safe and secure. This is why I would like to add restorative justice techniques to the teacher's repertoire of classroom actions in addition to the system of infractions and leadership points enacted. School culture is a multifaceted problem, and one solution will not suffice. A multi-faceted, multi-tiered approach must be enacted to get the desired change in culture and behavior. (Lipscomb, 2023)

Beginning with the End in Mind

The goal of this action plan is to shift the culture of the school into a thriving, academically focused culture. Culture is a multi-faceted issue so there needs to be multiple metrics used to assess the school climate. The following metrics will be examined and the program regarded successful if met:

- a decrease in the rate of suspensions
- a decrease in the rate of discipline referrals
- an increase in iready and ixl lesson completions
- an increase in student body GPA
- an increase in proficient rating of state end-of-course exams
- an increase in mental health support as seen through referrals to counseling services provided in school
- improved rates of parent contact as seen through class dojo and the parent call log by teachers

Enacting Restorative Justice Practices in the Classroom

Restorative justice is a community-oriented approach to mending harm done that involves all those stakeholders in finding a solution. It may be easier for a teacher to call out one student as having committed harm and then give a consequence for that harm, but that omits the fact that everyone was harmed in some way. When one student disrupts the classroom affecting the learning, then all students should be involved in finding a solution

to that harmful disruption. This approach acknowledges that more than a harmer is involved and seeks to achieve an equilibrium for the community making it safer for all.

All teaching and support staff will become effective implementors of restorative justice techniques inside the classroom. To do this, weekly teacher-based teams will focus on learning and practicing techniques together in three stages of learning.

Stage One: Team-Based Reading and Reflection.

In this stage teacher-based teams will be responsible for learning and understanding restorative justice theory. The Little Book of Restorative Justice (Davis, 2019) will be read and reflected on a chapter at a time as a group and a study guide will be created with reflection prompts so teaching staff can come prepared to TBT's with their own deep reflections on the reading.

Stage Two: Group Circle Practice and Reflection.

In this stage teachers will be given applicable practices to enact in the classroom and will practice them on each other. The book, Using Restorative Circles in Schools (Wroldsen, 2019), will guide teachers through this practice with each other. Teachers will be provided with a question guide to prompt group reflection on how the circle practice went and how this can be applied to the classroom.

Stage Three: Restorative Justice Action and Group Reflection.

In this stage teachers will set out to practice circles and other restorative justice practices in the classroom and will actively reflect on their own data with each other in the TBT

meetings. A spreadsheet will be created for tracking behavior and referrals along with room for teachers to reflect on classroom interactions at the end of the day. This resource will be brought to the TBT to discuss with other team members.

Conclusion

Behavior focused professional development happens in a four-hour session once a year and may not be effective for impacting teacher behavior. This approach to learning restorative justice will hopefully enable and equip teachers to be better able to pursue restorative justice techniques in their classes in a way that suits them. Acknowledging the high level of trauma encountered daily is pivotal to creating a culture that can be responsive, inclusive, and safe. Culture change should and can begin with routines changes in the classroom.

References

- Davis, F. (2019). *Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice: Black Lives, Healing, and Us Social Transformation*. GOOD BOOKS.
- Lipscomb, S. T., Swander, W., & Mason, E. (2024). Building Cultures of Care in Schools: Centering Relationships at the Intersection of Trauma-Informed Education and Restorative Practices. *Contemporary School Psychology: The Official Journal of the California Association of School Psychologists*, 28(4), 653–669. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.kent.edu/10.1007/s40688-023-00481-5>
- Nina Wroldsen, & Berit Follestad. (2019). *Using Restorative Circles in Schools : How to Build Strong Learning Communities and Foster Student Wellbeing: Vol. English language edition*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.