



Restorative Practices

In 2017, Michigan lawmakers passed the Restorative Justice Law (Act 316). This law stipulates that before choosing suspension for students, school administrators must first assess and address discipline situations using other strategies.

Restorative Justice is not a program. It is a philosophy and approach which engages all affected parties in resolving conflict and addressing harm caused by misconduct. Everyone affected by the misconduct comes together and determines the best way to resolve the negative situation. Our school staff was trained, this year, in the *Restorative Practice* model. This approach looks at a “**restorative approach**” to student behaviors while fulfilling our school values. The aim of the restorative practices is to develop our school community and to manage conflict and tension by repairing harm and building relationships.

Restorative approaches are based on four key features:

- **Respect:** listening to other opinions and learning to value everyone;
- **Responsibility:** taking responsibility for your own actions;
- **Repair:** developing the skills within a school community so its individual members have the necessary skills to identify solutions that repair harm;
- **Re-Integration:** working through a structured, supportive process that resolves the issue and ensures behavior is not repeated, allowing students to remain in the environment while also achieving all of the above.

For effective teaching and learning to take place, we believe that there should be good relationships within the school. The restorative approach puts repairing harm done to relationships at the heart of our staff’s work with students. This allows us to build, nurture and repair relationships.

The restorative approach gives us two main opportunities:

- It primarily provides those who have been harmed (victim) with a forum to ‘have their say and be heard’, which is vital to the healing process.
- Secondly, it presents the offender (harmer) with an onus of **responsibility** for their actions, an opportunity to make some form of **retributive** acknowledgement.

One main tool in the restorative approach is the **Restorative Conversation**. This is the place where the two parties are able to discuss the situation with the intent of restoring things to a good learning environment. The conversation takes the form of questions.

To respond to challenging behavior:

- 1) What happened?
- 2) What were you thinking about at the time?
- 3) What have your thoughts been since?
- 4) Who has been affected by what you did?
- 5) In what way have they been affected?
- 6) What do you think you need to do to make things right?

Restorative Conversation (continued)

To help those harmed by others actions:

- 1) What did you think when you realized what had happened?
- 2) What have your thoughts been since?
- 3) How has this affected you and others?
- 4) What has been the hardest thing for you?
- 5) What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

The conversations show that actions have natural consequences to how people are feeling which has an influence on how they are able to learn. Discussing these will encourage students to accept responsibility and repair relationships.

If you have any questions about the *Restorative Practices* model, please see this Michigan Department of Education [weblink](#) for more information or you can contact any one of the Kolb Elementary Restorative Practices Coordinators:

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