Restorative Practices Planning: What Approach Fits Your School/District?

Designed For Maryland Schools

Which Restorative Practices (RP) Implementation Approaches make the most sense for your school/ district at this time? Below are possibilities, followed by opportunities and challenges that each presents:

1. Piloted use in one or more classrooms (or schools), based on interest and motivation of staff

* Impetus: Motivated staff member(s) brings some knowledge of RP practices, is trained professionally *or* educates self in the underlying principles of RP and the use of RP tools
* Resources and Costs: Minimal training and materials
* Action Steps:
  + Staff member(s) begins using regular circles for community-building (and possibly content)
  + Staff member(s) employs various RP tools during interactions with students (e.g., affective statements, restorative questions impromptu restorative circles)
  + Staff member(s) collects and compares discipline data to prior years ‘data
  + Staff member(s) collects and share testimonials and surveys of students and staff with administration and staff
  + Staff member(s) works with administration to identify resources and next steps
* Challenges: This minimalist approach is only a starting point, and its measurable impact is limited to the class(es) and staff member(s) involved. In addition, it is difficult to assess the pilot teacher(s) implementation.
* Time Frame: This approach can happen immediately and can begin at any point during the year.

1. Infusion of RP by Grade Level

* Impetus: Administration may decide to unroll RP in one grade, likely 6th grade in a middle school or 9th grade in a high school, often grades with challenging disciplinary data
* Resources and Costs: This is less expensive than instituting “whole school RP,” because there are fewer staff to train. Costs include: Staff time (stipends if not regular hours) or substitute teacher time (if during school hours); professional trainer fees (from $1000 to $3000 per day for two days for onsite training of approximately 30 – 40 staff); materials, time and fees for coaching and support (cost and format varies). . If off-site training, prices vary by location and provider.
* Action Steps:
  + Leadership provides two days of training for grade team’s staff and behavioral support team so the support team’s approach to discipline is consistent with restorative approaches introduced in the classroom
  + Tools: affective statements, community building circles, restorative questions, possibly social emotional curriculum to reinforce skills
  + Behavioral specialists supporting this grade use restorative tools such as restorative conferences
  + Grade level staff uses circles for community-building and content
  + Time is allocated for follow-up grade learning support. Group meetings and individual coaching are provided as needed.
  + Discipline data is compared to grade’s prior year data
  + Testimonials and surveys of students and staff are collected and shared with administration and staff
  + Administration identifies next steps and resources needed
  + Eventually and depending on local resources, administration may use formal community conferences conducted by trained facilitators from outside partnering organizations
* Challenges: Lack of consistency between different grades in terms of how discipline policies are implemented, especially in high school with overlapping staff and classes between grades. Finding time for coaching and grade level support. Ensuring administrative support and investment at every level. Lack of consistency for all discipline-related positions supporting participating grades. Punitive discipline measures delivered in non-restorative ways may create a sense of inequity and violate the trust of the community. Time Frame: Depends largely on the consistency of the entire team’s use of RP, and the support provided them by administration and the behavioral team as they transition. Can take 2-3 years for significant data shifts in the participating grade

1. Use by Student Support Team: behavioral specialists, counselors, social workers, administration (such as Assistant Principal)

* Impetus: Administration seeking improvement in discipline data including referrals, suspensions and expulsions, and specific problems such as large incidences of fights, bullying, cyberbullying
* Resources and Costs: Practice development time and coverage of duties so school behavior team can be trained at once, may need to pay staff stipends or substitute teachers, professional trainers fees for onsite training (from $1000 to $3000 per day for approximately two days), training costs from offsite training (see above); materials, time and fees for coaching and support (cost and format varies)
* Action Steps:
  + Provide two days of training for school behavioral support team together with district level school support specialists , so district specialists can provide some support in implementation and data analysis
  + Tools: affective statements, community building circles, restorative questions, possibly social emotional curriculum to reinforce skills
  + Provide training in facilitating restorative practices
  + Behavioral specialists may assist teachers in dealing with challenging students, modeling and managing problems of severe misbehavior
  + Time allocated for support discussions with others implementing RP at similar levels (may be orchestrated by district people or consultant trainers)and individual coaching as needed
  + Discipline data gathered and compared to prior years
  + Testimonials and surveys of students, parent and staff collected and shared with administration and staff
  + Administration identifies next steps and resources
  + Consideration of whether to build capacity in the school or district to develop RP leaders who can be used to train in the school
  + Eventually and depending on local resources, administration may use formal community conferences conducted by trained facilitators from outside partnering organizations
  + Expand capacity of the behavioral specialists through additional training in formal conferences
* Challenges: Behavioral specialists may develop stronger relationships with challenging students and this may not necessarily translate into stronger relationships between teachers and students. Failure to focus on the prevention side of RP toward building stronger relationships among the students. Results will be limited without full RP implementation through teacher training and support.
* Time Frame: Implementing use of RP by behavioral specialists can be introduced in first year but growing it into whole school for full impact may take additional 2-4 years

1. Whole School

* Impetus: Principal/District seeks major shift in school climate and discipline data or district or MSDE impresses the need for these shifts
* Resources and Costs: Practice development staff time (stipends if not regular hours) or substitute teacher time (if during school hours); professional trainer fees (from $1000 to $3000 per day for two days for onsite training of approximately 30 – 40 staff); materials, time and fees for coaching and support (cost and format varies). . If off-site training, prices vary by location and provider.
* Action Steps:
* Identify time and budget for two day training of all adults who interact with students in the building, including paraprofessionals, secretaries and cafeteria and janitorial staff
* Establish Professional Learning Groups within school for regular internal support meetings
* Identify the Restorative Coordinator to serve as the on-the-ground supporter or Champion of RP
* Provide first day of training as a start for all staff, second day focused on circles for all classroom teachers and behavioral and administrative team. Tools: affective statements, community building circles, restorative questions. Encouraged use of social emotional curriculum to reinforce skills
* Provide training in facilitating restorative practices to behavioral team and select teachers
* Allocate time for support group meetings and individual coaching as needed
* Administration adopt the use of restorative tools for staff interactions, such as circles for some staff meetings and parent discussions
* Discipline data comparison between current and prior year
* Testimonials and surveys of students, parent and staff collected and shared with administration and staff
* Engage experienced RP coaching to support the use of quality practices of all
* Expand capacity of the RP Coordinator through additional training in order to increase knowledge base and ability to conduct staff trainings in subsequent year
* Eventually and depending on local resources, administration may use formal community conferences conducted by trained facilitators from outside partnering organizations
* Challenges: Takes full commitment of administration to support staff buy-in and assert accountability even among the naysayers. Transfer of leadership can result in shifting priorities and loss of accountability for supporting a restorative environment.
* Time Frame: 2-5 years for full implementation

1. Cluster of Schools in a District

* Impetus: District leadership or MSDE impresses the need for shifts in schools’ climate and discipline data.
* Resources and Costs: Cost depends largely on number of schools targeted in the district. Practice development staff time (stipends if not regular hours) or substitute teacher time (if during school hours); professional trainer fees (from $1000 to $3000 per day for two days for onsite training of approximately 30 – 40 staff); materials, time and fees for coaching and support (cost and format varies). If off-site training, prices vary by location and provider.
* Action Steps:
* Determine best candidate schools based on needs for improvement, school leadership motivation, perceived strength of school leader and district plan to keep the leader in place for at least 3 years.
* Identify time and budget for two day training of all adults in each school who interact with students in the building, including paraprofessionals, secretaries and cafeteria and janitorial staff
* Establish Professional Learning Groups within school for regular internal support meetings
* Identify the Restorative Coordinator to serve as the on-the-ground supporter or Champion of RP
* Provide first day of training as a start for all staff, second day focused on circles for all classroom teachers and behavioral and administrative team
* Build district team expertise in order to serve as additional support as needed
* Provide training in facilitating restorative practices for Restorative Coordinators at school level as well as district level RP leaders
* Eventually and depending on local resources, administration may use formal community conferences conducted by trained facilitators from outside partnering organizations until school develops this internal capacity which requires additional training and coaching
* Allocate time for support group meetings and individual coaching as needed
* Administration adopt the use of restorative tools for staff interactions, such as circles for some staff meetings and parent discussions
* District leadership may also adopt use of restorative tools within its own organizational management
* Discipline analysis between current and prior year and non-participating schools with similar demographics
* Testimonials and surveys of students, parent and staff collected and shared with administration and staff
* Engage experienced RP coaching to support the use of quality practices of all
* Expand capacity of the RP Coordinator and District support persons through additional training in order to increase knowledge base and ability to conduct staff trainings in subsequent year
* Challenges: Significant cost and need for ongoing support
* Time Frame: 3-5 years depending on turnover of staff and district leadership