

Using Restorative Justice to Repair Harm and Facilitate Reentry of Students After a Disciplinary Issue

Adina Davidson
Jodie Elgee
Jillian Meade

Objectives

Participants will:

- ❖ Learn the principles of Restorative Justice in relation to school discipline
- ❖ Experience aspects of the circle model
- ❖ Learn about how Restorative Justice is used at each level of MTSS in Boston Public Schools
- ❖ Understand the intersection with SEL- including commonalities and differences- re: curriculum/approach, skills/values, authority/shared voice

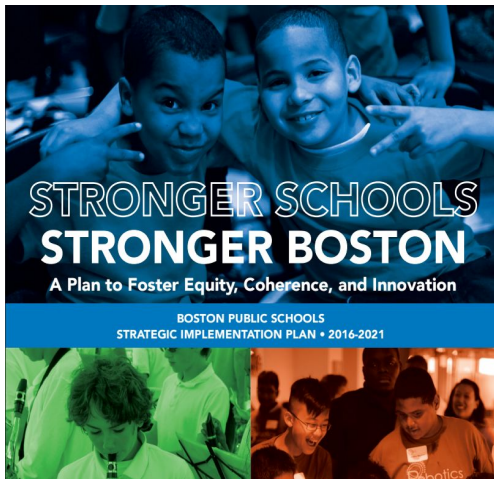
Safe and Welcoming Schools is a Key Strategy for Addressing the BPS Problem of Practice:

BPS does not consistently provide **authentic learning opportunities for students who are most marginalized** to develop into self-determined, independent learners, able to pursue their aspirations. Our failures lead to disengaged students and significant achievement gaps.

We must ensure that 100% of those students are ready for college, career, and life.

Serving the Development of the Whole Child

SUPERINTENDENT'S STRATEGIC PLAN



ESSENTIALS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL EQUITY



Essential 1: CREATE SAFE, HEALTHY
& SUSTAINING LEARNING
ENVIRONMENTS

DISTRICT WELLNESS POLICY Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model



- Cultural Proficiency
- Food & Nutrition
- PE & PA
- Health Education
- Healthy School Environment
- Safe and Support Schools
- Health Services
- Staff Wellness

ESSENTIALS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL EQUITY



Essential 1: CREATE SAFE, HEALTHY &
SUSTAINING LEARNING
ENVIRONMENTS

- Inclusive Schools
- More rigorous classes
- Culturally linguistically sustaining PK-12 schools
- Instructional programs for the whole child

Why should we
CARE?



Opportunity to:

- Promoting safe & welcoming schools and learning environments
- Creating sustainable discipline strategies
- Keeping students who are most marginalized in school
- Providing students with more opportunities to develop into self-determined learners

District Goals

RJ in Boston Public Schools (2014)

In 2014, in anticipation of the forthcoming M.G.L. [Chapter 222](#) legislation, Boston Public School edited its [Code of Conduct](#) to reflect a *philosophical shift in looking at discipline as punishment but rather as education*.

This fundamental change was reflected in the focus of *Multi-Tiered System of Supports* (MTSS) with a primary emphasis on Tier 1 supports and the progressive use of discipline. Included in the list of measures aimed at the development of safe and supportive schools was among others, the use of **restorative justice**.

BPS/ Suffolk Making it Right Grant

This grant was applied in 4 schools in 2014 and it generated pockets of RJ work throughout the district, however, there was no comprehensive plan to roll out RJ across the district with fidelity.

National Institute for Justice/Grant

BPS Succeed Boston/American Institute for Research and Center for Restorative Justice at Suffolk University to provide restorative justice services to 30 BPS schools

BTU

As a result of the Restorative Justice service needs, BTU has formed the Restorative Justice Learning Community (RJLC), and as part of their agreement with the district have built 4 full time positions within the district to support RJ work in the schools as part of the current contract.

What is Restorative Justice?

Restorative Justice brings people together to reconcile and build relationships when harm has been done. A major tenant of Restorative Justice is that harm affects everyone in the community- the “victim/s”, “whoever does the harm” and the larger community. Therefore decisions about how to repair the harm must be determined by the people affected, as they are the only people who truly know how to make things right.

Restorative Justice aims to build understanding, explore how the wrongdoing has impacted those involved, and to develop agreements that increase trust, safety and understanding so that things are better in the future.

Traditional vs. Restorative Model

Traditional approach asks...

What rule was broken?

Who did it?

How should we punish them?

RJ approach asks...

Who has been hurt/affected?

What are their needs?

Who is obliged to meet these needs?

How is Restorative Justice Used?

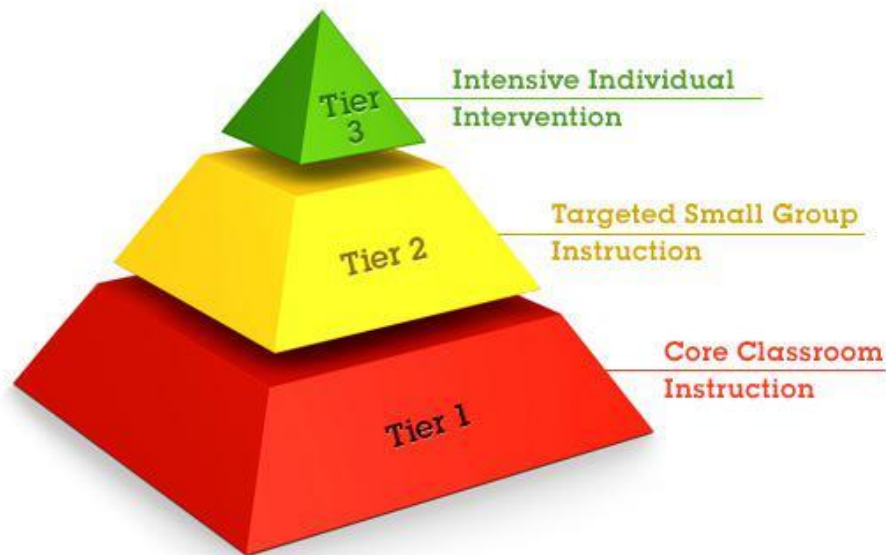
RJ practices include:

- Circles to build community, foster positive relationships, develop SEL and support learning
- Repairing the harm, taking responsibility, and meeting the needs of all affected

Practices for repairing harm:

- restorative mindset
- problem-solving circles
 - harm circles
 - conferencing
- restorative chats
- support circles

RJ implementation through MTSS



3 Tiers of Support

- Reentry circles
- Intensive support circles
- Restorative conferencing
- Conflict & harm circles
- Community building circles
- Restorative mindset
- School culture shift

Why RJ as a model for Discipline?

What the research tells us:

- ❖ School Connectedness
- ❖ Reducing Suspensions
- ❖ School to Prison Pipeline
- ❖ Improving School Climate
- ❖ Increasing SEL skills

Re-thinking discipline

“... short-term [punitive discipline] fix is based on fear. It focuses only on the rule that was broken and the punishment deserved. Instead of trying to make things right, it responds to the original harm with an additional harm. It doesn't get at root causes, doesn't try to repair the damage to relationships, and fails to prevent recurrence. ...In fact, it makes our schools neither safer nor smarter, and has a disproportionately negative impact on students of color.”

Fania Davis (Oakland RJ)

Indigenous Roots of Restorative and Circle Practices

Reflects ancient beliefs and practices of Indigenous peoples on many continents. Building community based on shared values and shared humanity. People in the community treat each other like relatives, where everyone belongs, and everyone matters. Practices help us move in the direction of our best selves.



RJ Helps Build Trusting Relationships

If we want young people to be accountable for their actions and to repair damage to relationships in the event of a conflict, then we need to develop relationships in the first place. There needs to be something there to repair. Belinda Hopkins



Model Circle



Seven Core Assumptions



What did you notice?

Elements of a Circle

- Ceremony:** Opening and closing activity to mark the circle as a special space that is different from an ordinary meeting
- Centerpiece:** A centerpiece creates a focal point that supports speaking and listening from the heart, such as items representing core values.
- Guidelines:** Participants create their own guidelines about what they need to feel safe and speak their truth.
- Talking piece:** Only the person holding the talking piece can speak, which circulates consecutively around the Circle. No one is ever required to speak.
- Facilitator / Keeper:** Monitors the quality of the collective space and stimulates the reflections for the group, but does not control the issues or determines the outcome.

What Makes Circle Different

Circle	Conferencing
Talking piece regulates the dialog	Facilitator directs the dialog – particularly in the early stages
Explicit discussion of values before discussing issues	No discussion of values
Group creation of guidelines	Facilitator provides ground rules and asks group for additions
Do not jump directly to the issues	Process goes directly to the participants to identify the issues
Deliberate marking of the space as a space apart through opening and closing ceremony	No use of ceremony but rather opening and closing consistent with pre-meetings
Facilitator is also a participant	Facilitator does not participate as a stakeholder

Restorative Justice Practices Embody:



Respect

Equality

Empathy and emotional literacy

Problem solving

Responsibility

Self-regulation and self-awareness

Shared leadership

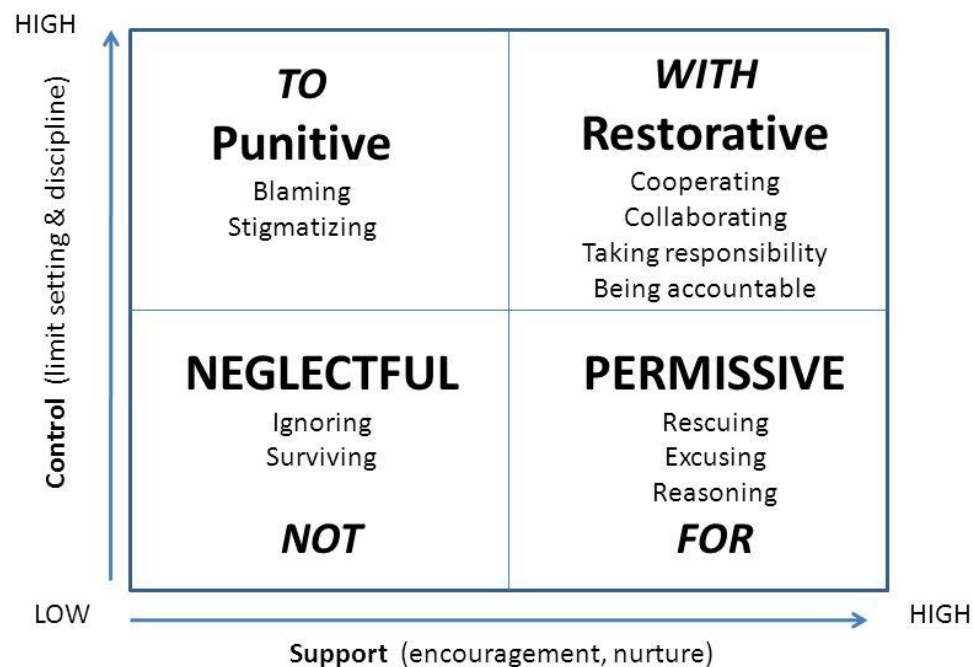
RJ Assumptions

- ☐ Most people want to be in good connection
- ☐ Everyone is equally valued in the relationship
- ☐ People most affected by a conflict should determine how to repair things
- ☐ When (young) people do harm, instead of pushing them away, pull them closer
- ☐ Relationships are more likely to thrive when doing **with** people, as opposed to doing **to** or doing **for**

Hurt People, Hurt People

Social Discipline Window

Ted Wachtel, International Institute for Restorative Practices



4 Questions

- ☐ **What happened?**
- ☐ **What were you thinking/feeling?**
- ☐ **Who's been affected by this?**
- ☐ **What needs to happen now, so that the harm can be repaired?**

As humans, we have a lot of experience with harm...

Think of a time when you were harmed....

- ☐ What did you feel?
- ☐ What did you need to make these right?

Think of a time when you caused harm.....

- ☐ What did you feel?
- ☐ What did you need to make these right?

Harm Circle Example



Harm Circle

Restorative Discipline Shifts

Telling	→	Listening
Knowing the answers	→	Being Curious
Institution/third party trying to restore balance	→	Those affected trying to restore balance
Focus on wrongdoer	→	Focus on those harmed and those who caused harm
External coercion	→	Internal motivation

RJ at Succeed Boston



Established in 1987, Succeed Boston, also known as the Counseling and Intervention Center, has served more than 25,000 Boston Public Schools students who have been involved in the most serious Code of Conduct violations. Succeed is a short-term, non-residential, diagnostic and intervention program that incorporates restorative circles, trauma informed practices, mindfulness and stress reduction, violence prevention, and social emotional learning (SEL) curriculum.

We believe that if we provide students with an environment where they feel safe and respected they will learn decision-making skills and reflect on past behavior that will prepare them to be successful in school career and in life.

RJ at Succeed Boston

Successes:

- Tier 1 - Morning community building circles with all students
- Tier 1 - Regular circles exploring harm, values, and taking responsibility
- Tier 2 - Affinity group circles for Spanish speaking students
- Tier 2 - Harm circles for students involved in the same incident
- Tier 3 - Reentry circles with partner middle schools
- Student facilitated circles
- Staff community building and conflict circles

Challenges:

- Limited time with students in a short term program
- Difficulty coordinating reentry circles with short turnaround
- Differing levels of knowledge and experience with RJ in wider district
- Time and commitment to the authentically engaging in the process



RJ at the McCormack Middle School

Background

- 450-500 students; 32% African American; 7.2% Asian; 55% Hispanic, % percent White
- 89% High Needs- programs for newcomers, and students with particular intellectual and emotional needs
- Has been @ Level 3
- Has had high rate of suspension, absenteeism, had been in turn-around status
- History of much staff turnover- 3 principals over past 6 years, and strong staff
- Pockets of RJ and PBIS over the past 10 years- increasingly school wide- Suffolk, IIRP
- Opportunity for expansion of RJ efforts through initiative in 2014 - BPS/ IIRP /John Hopkins
- Some grassroots and administrative support
- Trinity Counseling Center got involved 4 years ago- supporting a clinical caseload of 20 students, and participating in school climate efforts
 - Tenets: Restorative, Trauma Sensitive and Racial Equity

RJ at the McCormack Middle School

Successes: Sense of culture changing- more kindness happening

- Tier 1 most advanced -change of schools values, Monday 1st period circles
- SEI (newcomers) and TLC (emotional impairment) programs use RJ practices as part of their core processes and procedures
- Tier 2 increasingly used (group circles) for attendance, academics and other challenges
- Tier 3 processes for harm or recurring difficulties, but not in uniform way, some transformative moments- need for validation, healing in being understood, power of true apology
- Staff: monthly dedicated RJ time with teaching teams; circle keeper pool; Climate team, staff circles

Challenges: Children are mirrors of the world they grow up in...

- Differing ideas about discipline and how adults and young people should be in relationship
- Infrastructure- procedures, time, staffing etc. -not fully developed
- Inadequate training for staff, students, caregivers
- Lack of time- and at worst, people feel over-taxed, under resourced, ill prepared
- Belief in quick fix vs paradigm shift- circles are not just about the furniture!
- No sense of being part of village-larger community- with parents, families, neighbors

Reflections about the Change Process (conversation with Kay Pranis)

Deep change takes time. Real trust needs to grow. Change of a whole community is like a slow drip. It needs to gets in the water. Not everything is totally successful. But over time, there's a ripple effect that comes from people having a common focus, and a shared set of practices.

- Making change has to grow organically. It won't thrive if it's forced, mandated or imposed. The more we control things, the less it will work. We can't thrive that way. Our volition, spirit and will don't like being coerced, and will fight back, directly or indirectly.
- Put energy into working with people who are interested and it will grow naturally, as long as there is a vision to move towards. Think about whatever you do as a "pilot" and focus on moving forward.
- Modeling is the best way to influence people.
- Appreciate the complexity of the system, and leverage what you can, from wherever you are.
- Have quick restorative interactions, check-in's. Ask restorative questions- What happened? What were you thinking? Who was affected? What needs to happen to make it right?
- Create regular opportunities to keep learning, and share strategies with each other.
- Don't take on too much too soon, and learn from everything.

Intersection with other “micro and macro practice approaches

“Doing with” as opposed” to “doing to” or “doing for”... mental health and social justice

Social injustice as Trauma: Implicit and explicit impacts of racism, gender, sexual identity biases, ability, age, language- the use of power- interpersonal and systemic inequality and discrimination of any kind- affect wellbeing and relationships. Much to change.

Trauma Informed Practice: Antidote to traumatic stress is relational trust; helps lower the threat in the room; from shame to affirmation, from lack of agency to contribution, from hopelessness to possibility and from distrust to positive connection.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT): RJ focus on thoughts, feelings, behavior- what were you thinking? How did you affect people? Allows for multiple truths. Good place to start.

Motivational Interviewing: Motivation to change comes from within person. Not as effective when imposed from the outside. Create sense of trust and connection, “so there will be a relationship there to repair.”

Strength Based: Draws on the best of what is, to envision and develop what could be- rather than focusing on what isn't, what can't be and on all of our imperfections.

Narrative: Everybody has a story; there are multiple truths, including dominant cultural beliefs that we often aren't aware of

Collaborative Problem Solving: People are “doing the best they can”- consider lagging skills; doing thing “with” each other

Systems Thinking: Context, context, context- “people create each other”, as do systems

Restorative Justice Training & Resources

- Circle Forward, Building a Restorative School Community, Carolyn Boyes-Watson/Kay Pranis
- The Little Book of Restorative Discipline for Schools, Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz/Judy H. Mullet
- IRIS-Institute for Restorative Initiatives @Suffolk
<http://www.instituteforrestorativeinitiatives.org/who-we-are.html>
- IIRP-International Institute of Restorative Practices: <http://www.iirp.edu/>
- Restorative Justice in Oakland Schools: Implementation and Impacts 2014
- Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles,
www.healthiersf.org/RestorativePractices
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8_94O4ExSA (Colorado)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZtdoWo1D3sY> (Oakland)

Questions?

Adina Davidson adavidson@trinityinspires.org

Jodie Elgee jelgee@bostonpublicschools.org

Jillian Meade jmeade2@bostonpublicschools.org

Succeed Boston, aka Counseling and Intervention Center, 617-635-8123