

Building a Restorative School Community: A Comprehensive Guide for Educators and Administrators



Circle Forward - 2024 Revised Edition: Building a Restorative School Community by Carolyn Boyes-Watson

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

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In today's increasingly complex and challenging educational landscape, it is imperative that schools create safe, supportive, and inclusive environments where all students feel valued and respected. Restorative school communities provide a framework for achieving this goal by fostering a culture of respect, responsibility, and reconciliation.

This article explores the key principles and practices of restorative school communities and provides practical tips for educators and administrators on how to implement them. By embracing a restorative approach, schools can create more positive and productive learning environments, reduce discipline problems, and improve student outcomes.

What is a Restorative School Community?

A restorative school community is one that is built on the principles of restorative justice, which emphasizes repairing harm, building relationships, and restoring balance. In a restorative school community, students, staff, and parents work together to create a safe and supportive environment where everyone feels valued and respected.

Restorative school communities are characterized by the following key principles:

- **Emphasis on relationships:** Restorative schools prioritize building strong relationships between students, staff, and parents. These relationships are based on trust, respect, and mutual understanding.
- **Recognition of harm:** Restorative schools acknowledge that harm can occur in any school community. When harm occurs, the focus is on repairing the harm and restoring balance, rather than on punishing the offender.
- **Involvement of all stakeholders:** Restorative schools involve all stakeholders in the restorative process, including students, staff, parents, and community members. This ensures that everyone has a voice and that all perspectives are considered.
- **Focus on accountability:** Restorative schools hold students accountable for their actions, but they do so in a way that is fair, respectful, and restorative. The goal is to help students understand the impact of their behavior and to make amends for the harm they have caused.

Benefits of Restorative School Communities

There are numerous benefits to building a restorative school community, including:

- **Improved school climate:** Restorative schools have a more positive and supportive school climate, which is characterized by increased student engagement, reduced absenteeism, and fewer discipline problems.
- **Reduced discipline problems:** Restorative schools use a more restorative approach to discipline, which focuses on repairing harm and restoring balance rather than on punishment. This approach has been shown to be more effective in reducing discipline problems and improving student behavior.
- **Improved student outcomes:** Restorative schools have been shown to improve student outcomes, including academic achievement, social-emotional development, and college and career readiness.

How to Build a Restorative School Community

Building a restorative school community is a process that takes time and effort. However, it is a worthwhile investment that can have a profound impact on the school climate, student behavior, and student outcomes.

The following are some practical tips for educators and administrators on how to build a restorative school community:

- **Start by creating a shared vision for your school community.** This vision should be based on the principles of restorative justice and should articulate the values and goals of your school community.

- **Involve all stakeholders in the process of building a restorative school community.** This includes students, staff, parents, and community members. It is important to get everyone on board with the vision and goals of the restorative school community.
- **Provide training for staff on restorative practices.** This training should cover the principles and practices of restorative justice, as well as how to implement restorative practices in the classroom and school.
- **Create opportunities for students to participate in restorative practices.** This could include holding restorative circles, using restorative language in the classroom, and involving students in decision-making processes.
- **Develop restorative discipline policies and procedures.** These policies and procedures should be based on the principles of restorative justice and should focus on repairing harm and restoring balance rather than on punishment.
- **Monitor the progress of your restorative school community.** This includes collecting data on school climate, discipline problems, and student outcomes. This data can be used to make adjustments to your restorative practices as needed.

Building a restorative school community is a challenging but rewarding endeavor. By embracing the principles and practices of restorative justice, schools can create safe, supportive, and inclusive environments where all students feel valued and respected. This leads to a more positive school climate, reduced discipline problems, and improved student outcomes.

Additional Resources

- International Institute for Restorative Practices
- International Institute for Restorative Practices
- Edutopia: Restorative Practices: A Guide for Educators



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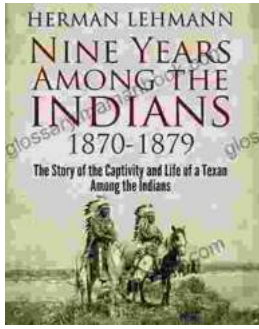
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