

Restorative Approaches in Schools Project

Fact Sheet

The Restorative Approaches in Schools Project is a crime-prevention initiative being led by the departments of Justice and Education.

Why a Restorative Approach in Schools?

- School is a big part of a young person's life. A restorative approach in school requires students to think about themselves and how they deal with one another, and to work on developing healthy relationships and learning how to manage conflict.
- Adopting a restorative approach in a school can have a positive ripple effect into the home and the community.

What are the benefits to students?

- A child's first year, first month, first week, and even their first day in school will have a significant impact on how they view schooling for the rest of their lives and on how they view themselves relative to their peers. A restorative approach in the early school years and continued throughout a child's education will have a strong influence on the individual.
- Students will have more opportunities to figure out how to be in appropriate relationships and to manage diversity. This has important implications for how students get along and will play a role in reducing bullying behaviours.
- A restorative approach gives students better skills and knowledge for problem solving.
- Students will largely avoid the stigma of being "sent to the office" or being suspended. We should not underestimate the negative side effects of a child's experience at school if that experience involves multiple trips to the principal's office or suspensions from school.

What results will students and families see?

- A restorative approach in schools offers new knowledge, methods and skills for problem solving. Children using these restorative skills latch on to them and thrive, leading to better behaviour and relationships overall.
- Schools that use this approach report that students often solve problems on their own without adult intervention.
- Parents will notice that their children are demonstrating a different way to resolve conflict at home. Parents with children in schools using a restorative approach report more

harmony at home as they and their children practice the same skills that teachers and students are using at the school.

What results will schools see?

- A restorative approach in schools helps students become more attached to their school, which encourages education and discourages absences or “dropping out,” giving students a better chance at being successful in life.
- A restorative approach in schools works alongside and supports all the other things we are doing to keep kids in school.
- A restorative approach in schools gives back time to educators so they can focus on teaching.
- A consistent restorative approach reduces the level of stress around relationships, whether student-to-student or student-to-teacher.
- A common thread that runs through almost every conflict that schools deal with is the perception that only one side is being heard, that one side is being valued over the other. A restorative approach reduces that perception and supports faster and more satisfying conflict resolution.

What are some of the methods that are used?

- A collection of *restorative practices* support a restorative approach in schools. Some examples of restorative practices are:
 - *affective statements and questions (language that describes how something made someone feel – sometimes students are not aware of the impact their behaviour might have on others).*
 - *restorative conversations (conversations that help teachers support an open dialogue starting with questions like “Can you tell me what happened and how you became involved?” instead of “Why did you do that?”).*
 - *restorative meetings (staff meetings and parent/School Advisory Council meetings that are organized to encourage authentic engagement through the use of circle processes).*
 - *restorative conferences (formal responses to serious incidents led by a facilitator that involves all parties including support persons).*
 - *classroom circles (circles are structured but semi-formal opportunities for connection among students. They can include, check-in circles and check-out circles to gauge how students are feeling at the beginning and at the end of the day, circles to establish classroom norms, circles to discuss academic goals, circles to address behaviour problems or even proactive circles. They are an effective tool to build community in a classroom).*