

Restorative Justice in Schools



**MT. MORRIS CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS
ELISABETH ANN JOHNSON HIGH SCHOOL**



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Elisabeth Ann Johnson High School



Grades 9-12

Number of Students: 535

Transient Population

About 80% free and reduced

15 minutes north of Flint

Mt. Morris experienced increased poverty rates as Flint lost automotive jobs

Safe and Supportive Schools



\$3 grant funded through the U. S.
Department of Education

\$38.8 million awarded to 11 states

Michigan received about \$6 million

26 High Schools in Michigan were awarded the
grant in 2011.



S3 Grant Focus is on Climate and Culture



School climate is like the air we breathe—it tends to go unnoticed until something is seriously wrong.

School culture is the values, shared beliefs and behavior of people in the school community.



Why Culture and Climate Matter



A positive school climate can...

Improve behavior

Improve attendance

Increase academic achievement

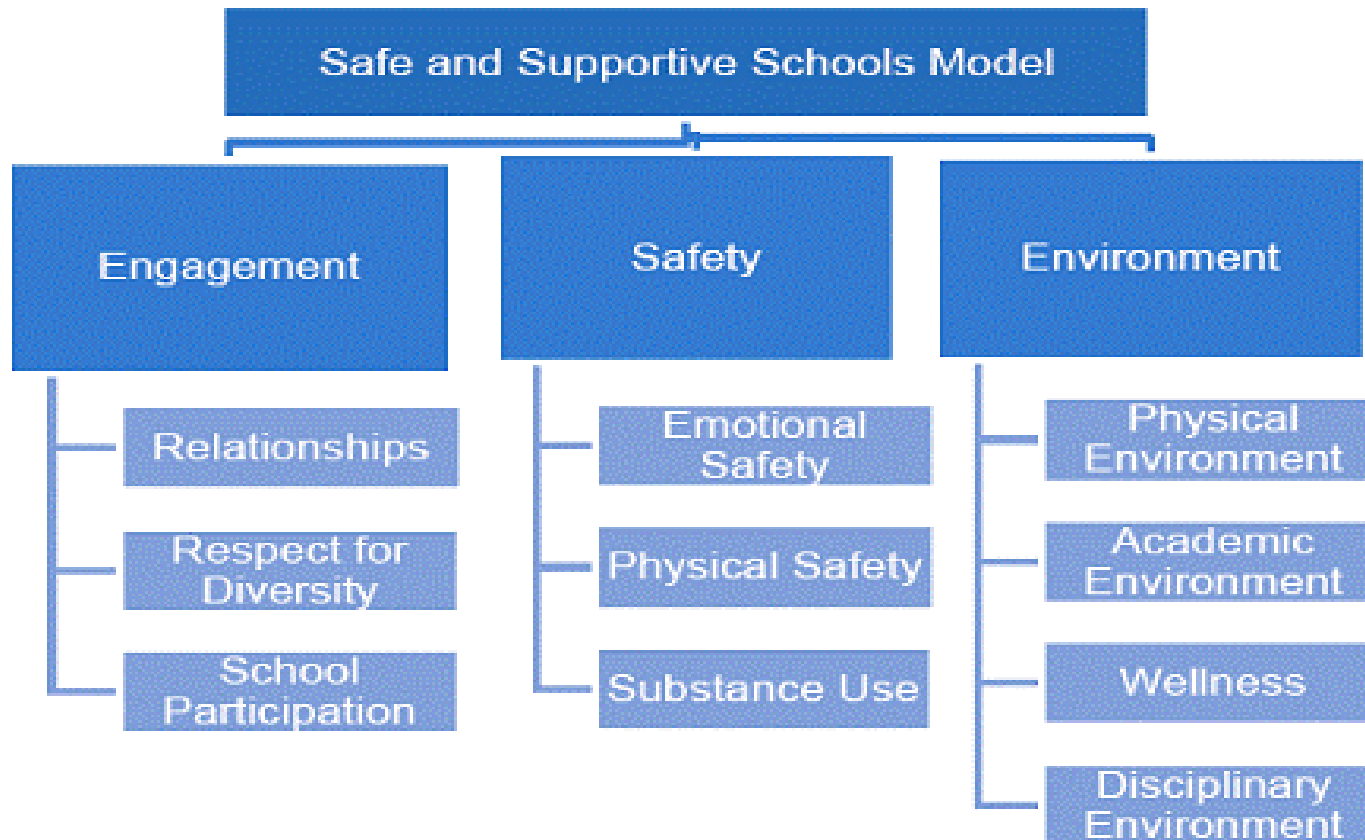
Improve retention rates

Improve rates of graduation

Increase students self-esteem

Decrease anxiety and depression

Restorative Justice: Improving Relationships and Addressing Discipline Issues



Restorative Justice

Changing the Disciplinary Environment



The Heart of the Matter



When confronted with student disruption, do we seek *judgment* or do we seek to *intervene*?

What is Restorative Justice?



- Restorative Justice is a Philosophy geared toward resolving conflicts by giving offenders an opportunity to right the wrong they caused.
- Emerged initially from the criminal justice system
- The process of repairing harm through RJ can benefit victims, offenders and the entire community.
- RJ recognizes that closure and emotional healing can take place when we address the impact misbehavior has on people and relationships.

What are we teaching with suspension?



*There can be no keener revelation
of a society's soul than the way in
which it treats its children.*

-Nelson Mandela

Benefits of Restorative Justice



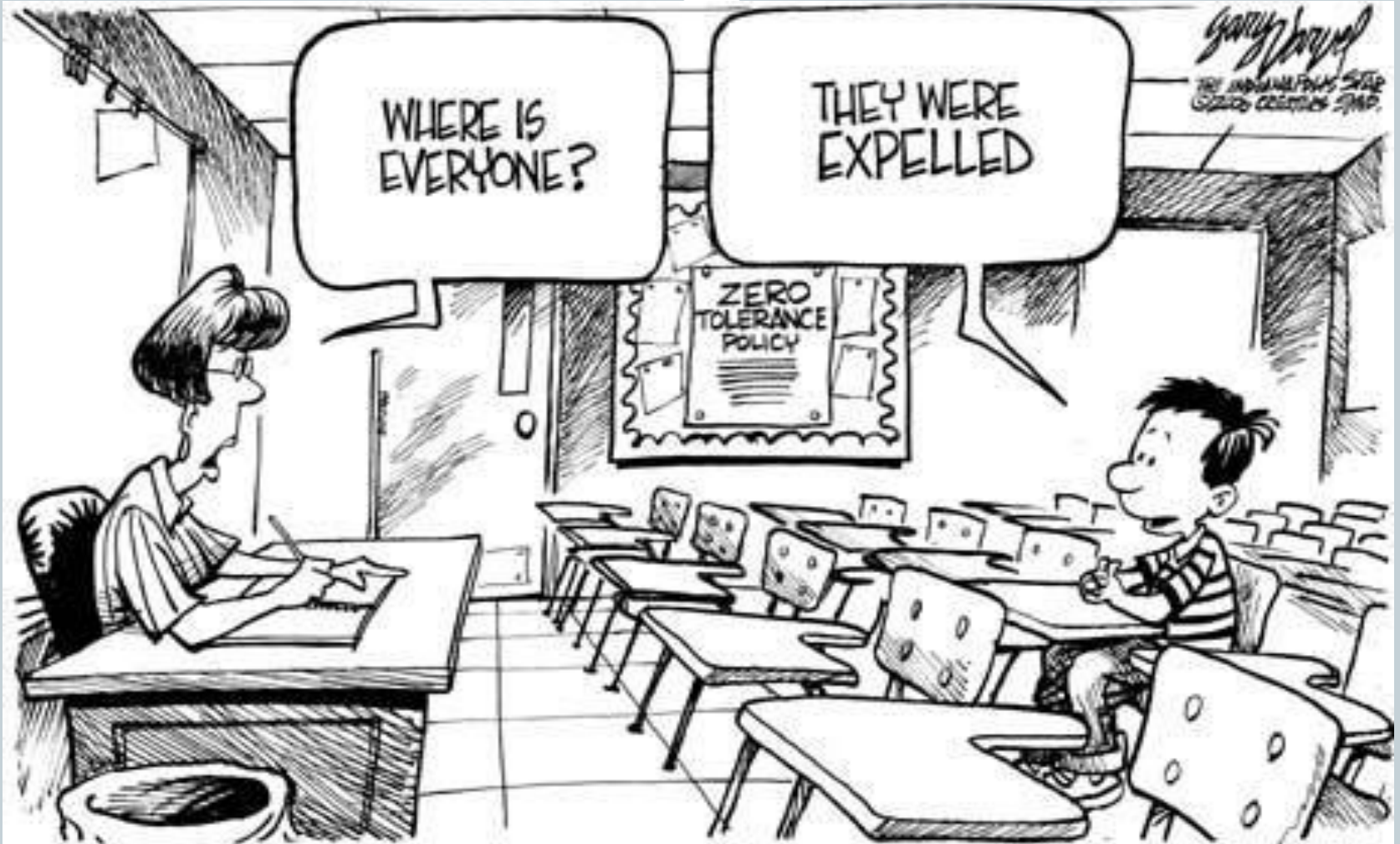
- Helps students take ownership of behavior
- Gives youth a mature way to resolve conflicts while recognizing that young people make mistakes
- Helps them realize how their actions can have an effect on others
- Gives students an opportunity to repair harm
- Fewer referrals and suspensions

Understanding Restorative Justice



- Can be preventative or restorative
- Recognizes the need for reintegration meetings after suspensions
- Kids still need structure and limits
- Schools do not have to abandon all rules and regulations to implement RJ
- Recognizes that people can't change the past, but if they can learn from the past they might change what they do next

Traditional Discipline



Zero Tolerance Policies



- A single suspension in 9th grade is associated with a 32% risk for dropping out of school, according to the U.S. Department of Education
- The drop out rate for those suspended is doubled compared to students receiving no suspensions.
- Harsh punitive responses do more harm than good often leading to labeling, stigma and little comprehension regarding the impact their misbehavior has had on others.
- Students of color and with a history of learning disabilities are disproportionately suspended.

When did we begin implementing RJ?



- Spring of 2013
- Prior to this we toured another district that had been using RJ with success
- We also did a considerable amount of research and planning to determine how we should begin in our district
- Primarily using this in our Jr. High and High School

Where did we receive our training from?



**Our school received training from Bill Sowers
The Christopher & Virginia Sower Center for
Successful Schools*

phone: 248-225-4399

www.thesowercenter.com

E-mail: bsower@thesowercenter.com

RJ Conferencing and Circles



- Community Building Circles
- Peace Circles
- Progressive Discipline Circles
- Conferences, see script in “Restorative Justice Conferencing- Real Justice & The Conferencing Handbook” by Ted Wachtel, Terry O’Connell and Ben Wachtel (Excellent book)
- Reintegration Meetings
- Reflection Forms/Behavior Plan of Action (see handout)

Traditional Discipline vs. Restorative Justice



- Discipline imposed by authority
- Little focus on empathy or forgiveness
- “Harmer” is considered the “*problem*”
- Does not teach how to correct behavior
- Does not contribute to school climate



- Student takes responsibility
- Empathy is encouraged
- Forgiveness is possible
- “Harmer” is part of the *solution*
- Attempt to repair the harm
- Contributes to improved school climate

Tools Needed for Implementation



- Referral forms
- Sign-in sheet with time entered
- Talking piece
- Script
- Rules
- Examples of values
- Surveys after they complete the circle
- Paper for contract
- Document time returned to class



Restorative Justice Conferencing Circle



- Must take place voluntarily by all parties involved
- Important to get positive influences of “harmer” involved in process
- Focus on harm done not the “rule that was broken”
- Allows “harmer” to realize how behavior effected more than just themselves or those involved



Additional RJ Practices



- Using RJ language to help prepare students to return to class.
- Students accustomed to avoiding conflicts with teachers by staying in the office the entire hour, or escaping by going to our ISR room.
- Teachers and students are learning to have re-entry conversations to allow students back into class.
- At our last data review we had the out of class time down to 12 minutes.

Referrals



- Students who have had Peace Circles often refer their friends for this support.
- Posters are in the hall advertising Peace Circles.
- We explain RJ to our incoming 8th graders so they know this is how we solve conflicts.
- Teachers use support referral forms which help us to better understand what happened.

Progressive Discipline Script



1. What is something about _____ that you are proud of?
2. What are your hopes for _____?
3. What are your concerns for _____?
4. How have you been personally affected?
5. Student question: what can you do to make things right?

* Student contracts are based on the answer students give to the 5th question.

*Script was developed by Roseville Middle School

Community Building Circles



Community Building Circles



- What is your favorite food?
- Where in the world would you like to travel or live?
- “I can tell a story about...”
- What do you like most about yourself?
- What is one thing that most people don’t know about you?
- What is something that you really appreciate?
- What is most important to you in life?
- What is something that really bothers you?
- What is one thing you hope to accomplish in your life?

How Often are we using RJ?



- 22 Peace Circles from Sept. 2013-March 2014
- 49 students participated in circles
- 21 days of suspension averted when we Used RJ to address Verbal altercations and Skipping
- No students recommended for expulsion this year
- Only three actual fights this year

Student Perception Data



Post-survey Results

94% of participants said they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the outcome of the circle.

92% of respondents said the Peace Circle resolved the issue “well” or “very well.”

Behavior Referral Data



Behavior referrals first semester:

| | |
|---------|---------------|
| 2011/12 | 618 referrals |
| 2012/13 | 439 Referrals |
| 2013/14 | 362 Referrals |

- * Consistent reductions in behavior referrals.
- * Our enrollment was only down by 38 students in 2013/14 compared to 2012/13

Appropriate Referral Expectations

Classroom Redirection Teacher Discretion

- Tardiness
- Head down/sleeping
- Not participating
- Not prepared for class
- General Profanity
- Electronics redirection
- Misbehavior for Substitute
- General disrespect
- Leaving class early
- Misuse of pass

Minor Referral

Andy/Jeff

- Throwing objects not considered dangerous
- Excessive talking or outbursts
- Dress Code
- Disrupting the educational process of others
- Repetitive inappropriate language directed toward classmates or out loud in class
- Acting out or not seriously involved in classroom responsibilities
- Bullying
- Skipping
- Repetitive actions of any teacher discretion
- Excessive absences/tardies
- Tardy Sweep

Minor Referral: Kere/Vicky

- Suicidal ideation/self-injury,
- Disrupts the educational environment but does not require consequences
- Visually upset or angry
- Chronic difficulty with peers
- Often unmotivated, disengaged, tired or repeatedly disruptive
- In need of referral for outside services i.e., food, clothing, eye glasses
- Sudden change in behavior or significant drop in grades
- Sad/Depressed
- Environmental Concerns that are impacting learning/emotions

Major Referral

Andy/Jeff

- Fighting
- Bullying repetitive
- Truancy
- Profanity directed toward the teacher/staff
- Theft
- Drugs/Tobacco
- Ethnic slurs
- Weapons
- Vandalism
- Sexual Harassment
- Throwing dangerous objects
- Electronics refusal

Restorative Justice



- RJ is beginning to change Our school culture and climate.
- Students and parents are providing positive feedback
- Data is promising.
- We recommend this to other schools

*** This is not just another program that is here now and will be gone tomorrow.

*“Change is a process,
not an event”*

-Unknown