



3. Restorative Circles: Building Relationships in the Classroom

Competency

Educator models and implements Restorative Circles to build authentic relationships with students.

Key Method

The educator establishes clear norms and expectations for relationship building by forming proactive circles and conferencing with the students to review their progress.

Method Components

Restorative Justice

Inspired by indigenous practices, Restorative Justice (RJ) is a philosophy and theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by conflict and wrongdoing. It provides an opportunity for everyone impacted by an incident to come together in a safe space to address their feelings and needs, and reach a resolution that repairs the harm and restores relationships.

Restorative Justice is based on the idea that “because crime hurts, justice should heal” (Braithwaite). The harm should not be matched by further harm but by restorative efforts.

Restorative Justice was introduced as part of the criminal justice system over 35 years ago, and was later adopted into the school system as an alternative to exclusionary disciplinary actions. The mission of Restorative Justice is to:

Repair: crime causes harm and justice requires repairing that harm



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Encounter: the best way to determine how to do that is to have the parties decide together

Transform: this can cause fundamental changes in people, relationships, and communities

(See more information in the Research section)

Guiding Principles

Restorative Justice is guided by these 7 principles. Restorative Justice:

1. Acknowledges that relationships are central to the building community
2. Builds systems that address misbehavior and harm in ways that strengthens relationships
3. Focuses on the harm done rather than only rule-breaking
4. Gives voice to the person harmed
5. Engages in collaborative problem solving
6. Empowers change and growth
7. Enhances responsibility

With the adverse impact of zero-tolerance discipline policy and the development of the school-to-prison pipeline, school districts across the country have looked for different ways to improve school climate and alternative ways for addressing misbehavior.

Restorative Justice in Schools (often referred to as Restorative Practice) is a set of practices and values that holistically prevents and repairs harm, builds community, and relationships resulting in a positive, supportive school climate.

Repairing Harm

Repairing harm is foundational to restorative practices. According to the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), Restorative practices is an emerging social science that studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities. Repairing harm is the first step in strengthening relationships that have been compromised by the intentional or unintentional actions or words.

School Wide Implementation

The following beliefs are foundational to successful implementation of Restorative Practices:

- Aim first to build classroom communities that are supported by clear agreements, authentic communication, and specific tools to bring issues and conflicts forward in a helpful way.
- Provide specific pathways to repair harm by bringing together those affected by misbehavior in a dialogue to address concerns, to achieve understanding, and to come to agreement about setting things right.



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Restorative Justice (practices) school implementations also needs to focus on:

- Building healthy relationships between students and school staff, as well as among adults within the school community
- Support student's healthy social and emotional development
- Create safe spaces for difficult conversations, deep emotions, and healing
- Shift the focus from intervention to prevention of disciplinary infractions
- Shift the paradigm from punitive to restorative disciplinary practices that repair harm and reduce suspensions, expulsions, and arrests

School culture and climate is the leading factor in deciding if a student is restored or punished. The entire school community (i.e., students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members) needs to participate in the following best practices:

- Define common expectations for student behavior
- Teach and model Restorative Practices
- Allow a space for the learners' choice and voice
- Model and allow learners to resolve conflict

Restorative Circles

"Circles are an alternative process of communication, based on traditional discussion and healing practices of aboriginal peoples in Canada and the Southwestern United States. While circles have been adapted for many communities and to serve many purposes, they share essential features:

- everyone in the circle is equal and has equal opportunity to speak
- decisions are made by consensus
- everyone agrees to abide by guidelines established by the group based on shared values, in order to work toward a common goal

Additionally, circles are generally established as sacred space; circles open and close with words of reflection, and people may be invited to symbolically cleanse themselves before entering the circle; such a cleansing is particularly effective in culturally oriented circles." (Circle Keepers Manual, Roca, Inc 2014)

See Resource Section to download the complete manual

Supporting Rationale and Research

Drewery, W., & Winslade, J. (2003) "Developing Restorative Practices in Schools: Flavour of the month or saviour of the system?" Presented at AARE/NZARE Conference, Auckland, Australia. Retrieved on July 27, 2018 from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.214.7827&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

Fronius, T.; Persson, H.; Guckenbug, Sara; Hurley, Nancy & Petrosino, A. (2016). Restorative Justice in U.S. Schools: A Research Review. West Ed and Prevention



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Research Center.

https://jprc.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/RJ_Literature-Review_20160217.pdf

Morrison, B; Blood, P. & Thorsborne, M. (2005). Practice Restorative Justice in School Communities: The Challenge of Culture Change. *Public Organization Review: A Global Journal*, 5: 335-357, #2006. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/5153816_Practicing_Restorative_Justice_in_School_Communities_Addressing_the_Challenge_of_Culture_Change

Resources

[Circle Keeper's Manual-Restorative Circle information](#)

[Lesson Plan template for Restorative Circle implementation](#)

[Restorative Circle Process Facilitator Script](#)

[Restorative Circles: Creating a Safe Environment for Students to Reflect Video](#)

[Restorative Justice: Resources for Schools: Explore resources and case studies that demonstrate how to bring restorative justice to your school or classroom](#)

[Restorative Practices Circle Video](#)

[Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles](#)

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn the micro-credential, you must answer the questions with a passing score in Parts 1 and 3, and receive a proficient for all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

(400-500 words)

Please answer the following contextual questions to help our assessor understand your current situation. *Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.*

1. Why did you choose this micro-credential?
2. How do you plan to implement Restorative Circles to foster building relationships within your classroom?



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3. Describe your classroom setting. Does the classroom setting allow for inclusion, collaboration, and idea sharing?
4. Describe your classroom and school community. How, if at all, are you or your school community already using Circles and/or other Restorative Practices?

Passing: Response provides personal examples that address the reason for choosing this micro-credential to address specific needs of both the teacher and the student.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this micro-credentials please submit the following artifacts as evidence of your learning. *Please do not include any information that will make you or your students identifiable to your reviewers.*

Artifact 1: Implementation Plan

Create an implementation plan for using Restorative Circles in your classroom. Your plan should include:

- Purpose for Circle
- Circle norms, rules, and expectations (created with the students)
- 3-4 strategies that promote student engagement
- Purpose and use of the circles within your classroom (when and why)
- How outcomes for the circles are defined with your students
- Success criteria for circles
- Description of process and components of your circles (shape of circle, check-in round, Introduce the Four Circle Guidelines, Talking Piece, Circle Agreements, Closing Round)

Artifact 2: Facilitator Script

Write a facilitator script for classroom circles that includes:

- An introduction
- How to start a circle
- Participant participation, and a closing

Artifact 3: Student Reflections

Execute your implementation plan and facilitator script over a period of 2-3 weeks. After your students have had time to participate in two to three circles, ask them to write a short reflection.

You may use one of the following prompts, or write your own:

- How does student behavior affect others?
- Why are all students important to the classroom community?
- How have Restorative Circles helped you?



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Submit 3 examples of 3 different student's work. Combine all student work into a document or PDF for uploading.

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: Implementation of Action Plan	<p>All components are included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Problems in your classroom that you foresee circles helping to solve -Circle norms, rules, and expectations (created with the students) -3-4 strategies that promote student engagement -Purpose and use of the circles within your classroom (when and why) -How outcomes for the circles are defined with your students -Success criteria for circles -Description of components and process that includes: 	<p>Most components are included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Problems in your classroom that you foresee circles helping to solve -Circle norms, rules, and expectations (created with the students) -3-4 strategies that promote student engagement -Purpose and use of the circles within your classroom (when and why) -How outcomes for the circles are defined with your students -Success criteria for circles -Description of components and process that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- shape of circle --check in round 	<p>Only a few components are included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Problems in your classroom that you foresee circles helping to solve -Circle norms, rules, and expectations (created with the students) -3-4 strategies that promote student engagement -Purpose and use of the circles within your classroom (when and why) -How outcomes for the circles are defined with your students -Success criteria for circles -Description of components and process that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- shape of circle --check in round



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- shape of circle --check in round --Introduction to the Four Circle Guidelines --Talking Piece -- Circle Agreements --Closing Round 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Introduction to the Four Circle Guidelines --Talking Piece -- Circle Agreements --Closing Round 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Introduction to the Four Circle Guidelines --Talking Piece -- Circle Agreements, --Closing Round
Artifact 2: Student Reflections	<p>Student reflection shows a developmentally appropriate understanding of how their role and behaviors affect others.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Shows the importance of Restorative Circles and how they support the building of relationships within the classroom.</p>	<p>Student reflections provide an overview of their participation in the Restorative Circle, but do not make a connection to the effects of other’s behaviors or the impact of circles on the classroom community.</p>	<p>Student reflections are vague and/or do not show a connection between how the behaviors of others affect the classroom community and/or do not show an understanding of the value of circles.</p>
Artifact 3: Script	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -An introduction -How to start a circle -Participant participation, and a closing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -An introduction -How to start a circle -Participant participation, and a closing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -An introduction -How to start a circle -Participant participation, and a closing



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	<p>Script allows maximum opportunities to involve all parties to participate in the Restorative Circle process.</p> <p>There are opportunities to address the harm that occurred and/or opportunities to repair and build relationships within the classroom community.</p>	<p>Script allows a few opportunities to involve all parties to participate in the Restorative Circle process.</p> <p>There are a few opportunities to address the harm that occurred and/or opportunities to repair and build relationships within the classroom community.</p>	<p>Script does not allow for opportunities to involve all parties to participate in the Restorative Circle process.</p> <p>There are no opportunities to address the harm that occurred and/or opportunities to repair and build relationships within the classroom community.</p>
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Part 3 Reflection

(300-500)

Use the word count as a guide to write a personal reflection about your work on this micro-credential. For tips on writing a good reflection review the following resource:

[How Do I Write a Good Personal Reflection?](#)

Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.

1. How has the implementation of Restorative Circles within your classroom supported the relationship between you and your students? What did you learn about them?
2. In what ways did the students show competence and engagement during the Restorative Circle? Please provide specific examples from your observations.
3. Given your experiences, will you use Circles in your practice moving forward?

Passing: Reflection provides evidence that this activity has had a positive impact on both educator practice and student success. Specific examples are cited directly from personal or work-related experiences to support claims. Also included are



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specific actionable steps that demonstrate how new learning will be integrated into future practices.



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