



## 2. Building a Positive Classroom Community with Affective Language

### Competency

Educator models and supports students to use affective language to build a positive classroom community that is founded on mutual respect and caring..

### Key Method

Educator uses affective verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to cultivate and build positive adult-child relationships and thus a positive classroom community.

### 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:



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Repair: crime causes harm and justice requires repairing that harm  
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 and Resource 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 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.



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- Provide specific pathways to repair harm by bringing together those affected by misbehavior in a dialogue to address concerns, achieve understanding and come to agreement about setting things right.

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, 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

## Affective Language

Educators should model and continually use language that builds and sustains relationships by:

- Using intentional, positive language
- Avoiding sarcasm
- Noticing how your students are reacting and paying attention to their emotions
- Expressing authentic empathy

In restorative practices, the way in which a school community interacts and communicates with one another becomes even more important. Using affective language refers to the way an educator expresses feelings and talks to students. It is a way of pointing out behavior issues in a manner that creates more connection between student and educator. Affective statements do not place blame, but instead shape conversations in which stakeholders take responsibility for their own actions.

## Non-Affective Statements

- "Don't talk to me in that tone of voice!"
- "You shouldn't do that."
- "Sit down and be quiet."
- "Turn your assignment in on time or you'll get a lower grade!"



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### Affective Statements

- “It makes me frustrated when you use that tone with me.”
- “I feel sad when you say something like that to \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “I get angry when you talk and joke during my lecture.”
- “It means a lot to me when papers are turned in on time.”

### Affective Questions

- Can you explain what happened?
- How did it happen?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- What was your part in it?
- What was the harm caused?
- Who was harmed?
- Who do you think was affected?

### Verbal Communication

Verbal communication encompasses any form of communication involving words that are spoken, written, or signed. Educators should demonstrate the use of verbal communication that helps encourage or discourage a behavior while improving or maintaining the relationship between the adult and child. Examples of verbal communication techniques that may be used to build a positive community include:

- Using “I” statements
- Tone of Voice
- Asking Affective questions
- Paraphrasing
- Using Empathetic statements
- Using Affective statements

### Non-Verbal Communication

Educators and students can sometimes effectively communicate their intent without saying a word. Non-verbal actions may also impact the classroom community in a positive or negative way. People may also further use non-verbal cues to communicate. Examples of non-verbal communication techniques that may be used include:

- Body Language
- Proximity
- Facial expressions
- Active Listening
- Eye contact



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# Supporting Rationale and Research

Costello, Bob; Wachtel, Joshua; Wachtel, Ted (2013-12-11). *The Restorative Practices Handbook for Teachers, Disciplinarians and Administrators*  
[https://books.google.com/books/about/The\\_Restorative\\_Practices\\_Handbook.html?id=M-9kPgAACAAJ](https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Restorative_Practices_Handbook.html?id=M-9kPgAACAAJ)

*The Restorative Practices Handbook is a practical guide for educators interested in implementing restorative practices, an approach that proactively builds positive school communities while dramatically reducing discipline referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. The handbook discusses the spectrum of restorative techniques, offers implementation guidelines, explains how and why the processes work, and relates real-world stories of restorative practices in action.*

Deakin, J., & Kupchik, A. (2018). Managing Behaviour: From Exclusion to Restorative Practices. In *The Palgrave International Handbook of School Discipline, Surveillance, and Social Control* (pp. 511-527). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.  
[https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-71559-9\\_26](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-71559-9_26)

Fronius, T.; Persson, H.; Guckenburg, Sara; Hurley, Nancy & Petrosino, A. (2016). *Restorative Justice in U.S. Schools: A Research Review*. West Ed and Prevention Research Center. Retrieved on July 27, 2018 from  
[https://jprc.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/RJ\\_Literature-Review\\_20160217.pdf](https://jprc.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/RJ_Literature-Review_20160217.pdf)

Gregory, A., Clawson, K., Davis, A., & Gerewitz, J. (2016). The promise of restorative practices to transform teacher-student relationships and achieve equity in school discipline. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 26(4), 325-353.  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10474412.2014.929950>

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](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/5153816_Practicing_Restorative_Justice_in_School_Communities_Addressing_the_Challenge_of_Culture_Change)



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# Resources

Affective statements

[Affective statements](#)

[Teaching empathy through affective language](#)

[Using restorative questions in the classroom](#)

[RP Affective Questions-Impromptu Conference](#)

Responsive Classroom

[Empathy is the Key](#)

[Restorative practices to resolve conflict and build relationships](#)

Other Resources

[Restorative practices: Fostering healthy relationships & promoting positive discipline in schools](#)

[Taking Restorative Practices School-wide: Insights from three schools in Denver](#)

[School-Wide Restorative Practices: Step by Step](#)

## Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

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

### Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

(300-500 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. Describe your views and beliefs on classroom management?
  - a. What is your view on disruptive behavior(s)?
  - b. What is your belief on discipline? Should students have a voice?
  - c. Do you believe in a more student-centered classroom, or a more traditional classroom?



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2. Describe the current climate of your classroom or school as related to addressing behavioral issues.
3. What are the demographics of your students (include cultural background)?
4. What do you hope to gain from using more affective language?

**Passing:** Response provides reasonable and accurate information that justifies the reason for choosing this micro-credential to address specific needs of both the teacher and the student. Educator describes what they hope to gain from earning this micro-credential.

## Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this micro-credential, submit the following **three artifacts**. Using the strategies discussed in *Key Methods*, compare and contrast your classroom environment before and after you worked on the micro-credential.

### **Artifact 1: Unit of Study**

Create a series of lesson plans that teach students about using affective language. Your lesson plan should include:

- Unit description
- Unit outcomes
- Grade Level
- Materials and Resources Needed
- Pre and Post Assessment
- Letter to parents explaining what affective language is and announcing the upcoming unit
- 3 to 5 lessons

### **Artifact 2: Pre/Post Assessment Analysis**

Analyze the results of your pre and post assessment. You should include both qualitative and quantitative data to answer the following questions: (2-3 sentences, or bullet points for each question)

Pre-assessment:

1. What strengths do my students bring to the table?
2. What are my students' biggest gaps in skills and/or knowledge around affective language?
3. What challenges do I foresee in teaching these lessons?

Post-assessment

1. What new strategies, knowledge, and/or skills have my student learned?
2. What gaps still exist?
3. What were the actual challenges to teaching this lesson?



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**Artifact 3: Student Work Samples**

Upload three annotated student work artifacts that show that they understand how to use affective language. Your annotations should be short (no more than 3 sentences) and should include:

1. What outcome does this work illustrate?
2. What level of understanding does this example illustrate?

## Part 2. Rubric

	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<b>Artifact 1: Unit of Study</b>	<p>Unit description is Grade level appropriate and describes what will happen during this lesson.</p> <p>Unit outcomes are grade level appropriate and measurable.</p> <p>Unit Plan includes a section that lists all of the materials and resources.</p> <p>Pre and Post Assessment is grade level appropriate and directly connected to the outcomes of this lesson.</p> <p>Letter to parents announcing the upcoming unit of study is appropriate for its intended audience, explains what affective</p>	<p>Unit description is Grade level appropriate and describes what will happen during this lesson.</p> <p>Unit outcomes are grade level appropriate.</p> <p>Unit Plan includes a section that lists some of the materials and resources.</p> <p>Pre and Post Assessment is grade level appropriate and connects loosely to the outcomes of this lesson.</p> <p>Letter to parents announces the upcoming unit of study, but may not be appropriate for the intended audience or doesn't</p>	<p>Unit description is missing and/or not Grade level appropriate</p> <p>Unit outcomes are not grade level appropriate or measurable.</p> <p>Unit Plan does not include a section that lists materials and resources.</p> <p>Pre and Post Assessment is not grade level appropriate and is not directly connected to the outcomes of this lesson.</p> <p>Letter to parents is missing.</p> <p>Fewer than 3 lessons</p> <p>Lessons do not directly tie into the</p>



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	<p>language is, and how it will support your classroom community.</p> <p>3-5 lessons that are directly tied to the unit outcomes and grade level appropriate.</p>	<p>explain what affective language is or how it will support your classroom community.</p> <p>3-5 lessons that are loosely tied to the unit outcomes and grade level appropriate.</p>	<p>unit outcomes and are not grade level appropriate.</p>
<p><b>Artifact 2: Pre/Post Assessment Analysis</b></p>	<p>Both Pre and Post assessment analysis references qualitative and quantitative data points derived from the assessment results.</p> <p>Pre-assessment analysis identifies strengths, gaps, and challenges.</p> <p>Post assessment analysis identifies areas of growth, gaps, and next steps.</p>	<p>Pre and Post assessment analysis does not reference both qualitative and quantitative data points that are derived from the assessment results.</p> <p>Pre-assessment analysis is missing one of more of the following: identifies strengths, gaps, and challenges</p> <p>Post assessment analysis is missing one or more of the following: areas of growth, gaps, and next steps.</p>	<p>Assessment analysis does not reference data derived from the assessment.</p> <p>Pre-assessment analysis is missing 2 or more of the following: identifies strengths, gaps, and challenges.</p> <p>Post assessment analysis is missing 2 or more of the following: areas of growth, gaps, and next steps.</p>
<p><b>Artifact 3: Student Work Samples</b></p>	<p>3 student work samples are uploaded and annotated with outcomes and level</p>	<p>Annotations are not clear and/or do not have both the outcomes and the level</p>	<p>Less than 3 student work samples are uploaded and annotations are missing</p>



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## Part 3 Reflection

(300-500 word limit)

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. What are your next steps for continuing to increase your student understanding and use of affective language?
2. How has teaching this unit on affective language helped to improve your classroom community. Give specific examples.
3. How has completing this micro-credential changed your views and beliefs about classroom management?
4. How will you continue to model the use of affective verbal and nonverbal communication in your day-to-day classroom activities?

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



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