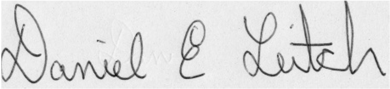


Restorative Practices in Classroom Discipline

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Restorative Practices in Classroom Discipline

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Chapter I

Introduction

Discipline is one of the key components in creating a learning atmosphere that enables a student to feel safe and to be the best student they can be. A school should be a place where a student feels safe and can rely upon staff members to provide an atmosphere in which everyone has a voice. Since the beginning of public learning institutions, there has been a wide array of discipline plans adopted by schools to enforce the rules and punish the offenders. From sitting in the corner with a dunce cap to modern “Zero Tolerance” policies, all discipline plans have the same goal in mind; to enforce school rules and try to prevent infractions from happening in the future. Achieving these goals and ensuring that all involved come out with a sense of justice and closure has traditionally been a difficult task. In my experience at the middle school level, both parties involved in an infraction, the victim and the offender, feel that they have been wronged. The victim has been wronged by the offender, and the offender feels wronged by the teacher and administration for suffering a punitive consequence.

Anyone who teaches can tell you that no discipline plan is one hundred percent effective. What works for one student may not work for another. A form of punishment that seems suitable for one situation may not seem appropriate for another similar situation. All students are intrinsically different, and there is no one size fits all program in disciplining them. Enforcing a discipline plan that is fair, consistent, and accounts for the variables in a given disciplinary situation is always the goal of educators and administrators. A recent discipline theory called “Restorative Justice” attempts to achieve this goal.

Statement of the problem:

Discipline in my classroom has until recently been a strictly traditional plan. Student breaks rule, student suffers punitive consequence. As a teacher, I am always trying to come up with new ways to improve my teaching and classroom management. I have noticed in the thirteen years that I have been teaching, that punitive disciplinary actions, while sometimes effective, leave everyone involved with a feeling of unfinished business, as if there were no closure to the incident.

The goal of my project is to completely replace my traditional classroom discipline plan with the restorative practices approach and then analyze the discipline referral data to determine its effectiveness.

Delimitations of the Research

This project was designed for and implemented in my eighth grade social studies class in the McFarland School District, outside of Madison, WI. The plan will be introduced and used in all six sections of my 8th grade classes.

Method of approach:

At the beginning of the school year, I will start by introducing the framework of my new discipline plan to the students in all of my Social Studies classes at Indian Mound Middle School in McFarland, WI and to their parents. After a full school year of implementing the new plan based on the Restorative Practice theory, I will determine if I feel the plan has been effective or not. I will base my evaluation on several factors, including: comparison of referral numbers to the previous year, an anonymous poll of students about how they felt about the plan and its effect on the classroom environment, and through observations of how I felt the year went compared to the previous year. I will also consult with the administration in my school to help in determining how they felt about the effectiveness of the new plan.

While the solutions to discipline issues in my classroom will vary, there are several strategies I will employ in dealing with them. A few of them include:

- Restorative conferencing between victim and offender.
- Writing reflection on incident and how it has affected others.
- Written behavior contract.
- Solution statement on how to make amends.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Restorative practice is a philosophy of discipline that emphasizes making amends for a disciplinary infraction rather than suffering a completely punitive consequence. The theory of this type of discipline is that the consequences of a given infraction should focus on the harms of wrongdoing rather than the rules that have been broken (Mika and Zehr, 2000). The underlying goal for the restorative theory is that the perpetrator restores, as much as possible, the harm that was caused to the person or persons the action was directed at. In short, the student must try to fix the situation and “Make it Right” (Mika and Zehr, 2000). The idea behind this theory is to give the victim a voice in the disciplinary process. The teacher, administrator, victim, and perpetrator all must agree on an appropriate course of action for the rule infraction to be addressed. When the agreed upon course of action has been met, the idea is that everyone in the process will be satisfied in the outcome, and that hopefully the victim will have a sense of justice, and the offender will have learned something from fulfilling the agreed upon solution. This approach tries to view the school as a community by promoting the qualities of positive human development, mutuality, empathy, responsibility, respect, and fairness (Umbreit, Vos, & Coaks, 2005). While it may seem daunting to achieve and teach this sense of community, I believe that a school is a perfect place to help reinforce these ideals. One of the key concepts of this approach is to make a clear distinction between a punishment for an action and a restorative “solution” to the problem (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel 2009).

There are several steps in the restorative process when it comes to discipline. The first step is a written reflection about what happened and how it affected others. This process involves the student that caused harm or violated a rule answering what are called affective questions in order to seek affective responses. Seeking these “affective” questions and answers is crucial to the process of restoring the harm done (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel 2009).

Probably the most effective and most crucial strategy in this type of discipline is the restorative conference. In this type of conference, victim and offender sit down with a mediator to discuss what happened and how it affected the victim and others, including the offender. The facilitator of the conference is always someone that has not been involved in the incident, usually an administrator. The facilitator asks a series of open ended questions from a script. The reason for the script is to minimize the facilitator’s input into the discussion and let the participants guide the conversation (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel 2009). The goal of the conference is for all involved parties to come to an agreement on what needs to happen to make amends and make the situation right. The task of introducing the notion of restorative justice to my students was made much easier for me by the introduction of a novel to our Language Arts classes titled *Touching Spirit Bear* by Ben Mikaelson. The book’s main character is Cole and he is a very troubled teen that has been in trouble with his school, his parents, and the law for a very long time. No punishment seems to make any difference to him. The notion of restorative justice is tried with him as a last result. The book’s central theme is one of reflection on one’s own actions, and ultimately making amends for those actions. The book touches on Native American notions of reflection and justice. He is sent to an island to reflect on a bullying incident in which he caused serious physical harm to another kid. Long story short, through a series of events on the

island, which includes a bear attack, Cole comes to the conclusion that all of the problems he has had, and all of the actions he has taken have had serious effects on those around him and he must make efforts to make amends and repair the damage he has caused.

Chapter III

Application & Conclusions

My discipline plan prior to implementing the restorative practice approach was pretty basic. The classroom rules and expectations were explained the first day of school and a letter was sent home to parents that also explained the policy. The traditional plan allowed the student two warnings for breaking classroom rules. After the second warning, the student was asked to leave the class and a referral would be written and sent to the office and parents would be notified about the incident.

Punishments were basic. Any time that a student was asked by me to leave the classroom, they were to make up the time with me either after school with parent approval, or at lunch time. For more serious infractions, the office would intervene and determine the punitive punishment such as lunch detention for a week, or half or full day in school suspension, or in the most serious infractions, full day or more out of school suspension.

The restorative practice approach addresses the same behaviors as my old discipline plan, but with the underlying goal of addressing not only the actions, but the effect of the action on others, and also attempts to teach the student about why their actions were wrong. At the beginning of the '11-'12 school year, I adopted this theory and began the process of fully implementing this change into my classroom. The first step in the process was to clearly outline my classroom rules and expectations (Appendix K). Establishing these classroom discipline parameters is key in maintaining a good learning environment from day one. This began with a classroom discussion based on a few guiding questions: What makes a good classroom

atmosphere? Aside from the rules listed on the wall, what other rules do you think are important in keeping our classroom a positive learning environment? Based on the discussion stemming from these questions, I went into the new restorative discipline procedures for the year and the idea of restorative justice.

In my class, I established four steps to the restorative process:

Step One: Identify what happened.

Step Two: Identify who has been affected.

Step Three: Identify a solution that will **“make things right”**

Step Four: Figure out how things can be done differently in the future.

When a student is guilty of a discipline infraction, I remove them from class and have them fill out a “Think Sheet” (see Appendix J). The purpose of the think sheet is to let the student identify what they did wrong on their own before I discuss the issue with them. After they have filled out the “Think Sheet”, I discuss with them their solution to make the situation right. If we both agree on their solution, I have them take the sheet home and get it signed by a parent. Failure to follow through on behalf of the student results in a call home to discuss the matter with the parents and possible administrative involvement. In many cases, a simple letter of apology was the mutually agreed upon step to make things right. In these cases, if a student had trouble in writing the letter, a template was provided for them that helped to guide them along in the writing process (see Appendix C).

After the student and I have established that they are going to take the right steps in terms of making amends, I help them come up with a plan to hold up their end of the agreement. The plan might consist of a restorative assignment that they complete to hopefully understand why the behavior they displayed is not acceptable. There are an infinite number of possible restorative

assignments that can be utilized to further this end, which is what makes this system so nice, because you can tailor fit a restorative assignment to a particular student.

Another disciplinary technique is to create a behavior contract for the student. This is usually used for a student with repeated infractions that have not been resolved using other methods. The contract will include the reason for the behavior contract, a list of behaviors that the student may not engage in, and a list of possible consequences for not abiding by the agreement. The contract is agreed upon and signed by the student, a parent, the teacher, and the associate principal.

For more serious infractions such as fighting, bullying, harassment, or even smaller infractions that seem to be repeated over and over, the office and parents are contacted and a restorative conference is held with the offender and the victim. The purpose for the meeting is to identify the issue, let the person affected express their feelings, and for both parties to agree upon an appropriate consequence or outcome. This involves a facilitator who follows a restorative conference plan that involves the victim, offender, parents and teacher/administrator. The following steps are involved in organizing the conference:

1. Information about the incident is sent home to parents along with an invitation for them to attend the conference. (see Appendix I)
2. A preconference is conducted by the facilitator and both parties involved. (see Appendix D&E)
3. The conference is conducted and all parties involved sit together and conference about what happened and what happens next. (see Appendix F).

Questions for the conference are generally open ended, with the goal for them to help all parties completely express their thoughts. Questions can be added for specific conferences, but a general list is usually used for getting the discussion started. (see Appendix G & H).

After one year of implementing the new discipline plan, my conclusion is that the use of restorative practices in the classroom has been a success for me.

During the '10-'11 school year when I was still using my traditional punitive discipline plan, I recorded 26 discipline referrals over the course of the school year. Types of violations included disruptive in class, violation of school cell phone policy, non-compliance, and being disrespectful/rude (Infinite Campus, school district of McFarland). Punishments for these incidents were pretty straightforward, most involved making up time with me after school, lunch detention, or after school detention. What my statistics showed me were that of the 26 discipline referrals for the '10-'11 school year, 80% centered around the same three repeat offenders (Infinite Campus, School District of McFarland). My conclusion was that the punitive punishments that they received were not effectively addressing the issues surrounding the incidents.

During the '11-'12 school year things went a little differently. This is the year that I first fully implemented the strategies explained earlier in the paper. During the '11-'12 school year, my number of referrals dropped to 12 (Infinite Campus, School District of McFarland). By utilizing the restorative practice approach, I was able to handle many situations in class restoratively rather than submit a referral to the office and simply letting them handle it. The twelve referrals were for more serious incidents which involved breaking not only classroom rules, but school wide rules as well. A few examples of the more serious infractions I dealt with

were for repeated disruption of class, cheating, inappropriate use of computers, and repeated cell phone violations. Even in these more serious cases, the restorative process was utilized by me and the administration, and was largely successful. I selected two examples of assignments that I had students use, one was for repeated disruptive behavior (see Appendix A) and another was for improper misuse of a computer (see Appendix B). In both cases, the students were able to complete the assignment and I believe that they were able to learn from the incidents.

I was involved in four restorative conferences with students about incidents that happened in my class. In two of these cases, the restorative conferencing procedures and guidelines were utilized and each conference had a mutually agreeable solution in making things right. I wasn't quite sure what to expect when going into these conferences, but it was really helpful for all involved to openly discuss their feelings and perspectives about what happened. In these cases, I don't think the underlying issues would have been resolved if it hadn't been for the conference.

There were a few problems and issues that I encountered using the restorative approach. Of the four restorative conferences I was involved with, two conferences were with the same student for the same behavior. In this case, I felt that the restorative approach was made difficult by the fact that the student in question was not learning from the restorative solutions that had been agreed upon in the conferences. The student was saying the right things in the meetings and completing the restorative assignments, but the student was not correcting the behavior. In this case it was agreed upon that there would be no more restorative conferences, and a behavior plan was implemented that spelled out clearly the consequences that would occur if the student were not able to comply. The student's parents were involved in the process and even with the plan in place, it did not work flawlessly.

I had all students write an anonymous reflection about how they felt about the discipline plan and about the class atmosphere toward the end of the '11-'12 school year. The overall consensus was that the new discipline plan was fair and they felt that consequences were definitely appropriate. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive in regards to how the year went in terms of understanding how restorative justice works and the effect of it on our classroom. A majority of the students felt that they were treated fairly and that the restorative approach made more sense to them than simply serving a detention or losing their recess privileges. They also felt that having a voice in deciding what actions they needed to take to make amends was fair and really helped to teach them about why what they did was wrong. A majority of students thought that the classroom environment was positive and they felt that the plan helped to make the room easier to stay on task in.

As I stated in the introduction, no discipline plan is perfect. There are gray areas in every approach to discipline that a teacher takes. While restorative practice is not flawless, of the approaches I have tried over the years it seems to be the fairest and most common sense approach that I have tried. Based on my implementation of the practice over the last couple of years, I would call it a success for me, and I will continue to use and improve it.

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Appendix A

Solution for Disruptive Behaviors: Teacher's Shoes

Student: _____

Date Due: _____

Directions: Choose one of the scenarios listed below. Pretend to be the student's teacher and follow the prompts to write a referral addressing that student's behavior.

Scenarios

1. A student blurts out "Cheese Curds!" in the middle of class while the teacher is demonstrating a problem on the board. When asked to stop, the student apologizes and then blurts it out again.
2. A student makes duck noises during silent reading time. When asked to stop, the student apologizes and then makes the noises again.
3. A student throws a pencil against the white board while the teacher is demonstrating a problem on the board. When the teacher asks whoever did it to come forward, no one comes forward. Another student later reveals the identity of the student who threw the pencil.

Referral:

Student Behavior - What did the student do that was inappropriate?	
Teacher Response - How did you respond?	

What was the student's consequence?	
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How did the student's behavior make you, as the teacher, feel?

Appendix B

Solutions for Computer Misuse

Student: _____

Date Due: _____

As we have discussed, you have violated the McFarland School District Computer Use Policy. Our goal is to help you understand this policy and the rules so that you may have the privilege of using our computers and the internet. In order to facilitate this learning, you may choose from one of the assignments below and complete the following project by the assigned date. Please let me know what questions you have.

Option(s) Selected: _____

Date

Due: _____

1. **Network Login:** You will read the "Network Login Script, which describes the rules that you agree to follow when you log in to the school computers. You will provide a presentation such as a written report, poster, or power point reflecting on these expectations and how your behavior relates to these expectations. You will present to a significant audience which may include your parents, building staff members affected by this incident, and/or a representative from the district technology department (see separate sheet with procedures).
2. **Staff Interview:** You will interview a representative from the district technology department regarding expectations for computer use in the district. You will write a minimum of 10 questions that will be approved by administration. You will conduct the interview and share what you learned with a significant audience which may include your parents, building staff members affected by this incident, and/or a representative from the district technology department.
3. **Research Project:** You will conduct a research project where you read articles discussing the misuse of technology in schools. You will present what you learned to a significant audience which may include your parents, building staff members affected by this incident, and/or a representative from the district technology department.
4. **Restorative Conference:** You will participate in a restorative conference with those individuals who were affected by this incident. During this conference you will listen to them describe how they were affected by this behavior. You will also be given the opportunity to share what you have learned from this experience and make it right.

5. Compare the two games of Whoodamath and one game that you played during class [appropriate game]. Describe the following:
 - a. Educational strategies used when playing each game.
 - b. Educational benefits [at least THREE] of engaging in this appropriate, but prohibited game.
 - c. Reasons that the game of your choice is prohibited by the district.
 - d. Advice you would give to a classmate as to when approved, educational games should be played.

6. If you have another option, please let us know and we will consider it.

Appendix C

Letter of Apology Skeleton

Unkind Words

Please write something to share with the student who was impacted by your behavior. Be sure to include the following components:

1. Dear _____
2. Apology: "I want you to know how sorry I am for..." _____
_____.
3. Explain what you were thinking at the time: "When I said it, I was thinking..." _____
_____.
4. Explain what you have thought about since: "I now realize..." _____
_____.
5. Final apology and plan for the future: "I know that this probably hurt you a lot and I am sorry. I learned a lot and can promise I will..." _____
_____.
6. Sincerely: _____



RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Pre-conference Interview Guidelines – Offended person

- Introduce everyone present at the pre-conference by name and who they are (student, principal, counselor, school psychologist, teacher)
- Explain the role of the facilitator(s)
 - To provide support to all parties
 - To keep the environment safe
 - To allow everyone to speak
 - Explain what will transpire during the Restorative Conference and explain the ground rules of a safe environment (TRIBES Community Agreements and Appendix B, #5)
- Stress confidentiality
 - No details are recorded or shared without the permission of all parties (NOTE: the Interviewer will want to record key facts to guide Restorative Conference)
 - The **exception** to confidentiality is the need to report legal violations and if anyone is in danger of being harmed
- Ask student to describe what happened
 - Ask clarifying questions to pinpoint any possible disputed facts
 - Encourage student to share feelings he/she has or has had as a result of injury
 - Ask about impact that this episode(s) have had on you/your family
 - What does student want from offender? (apology, behavior, etc.)
- Prepare student for meeting/conference
 - What do you want to say?
 - What questions do you want answered?
 - Other
- Let the student know what support is available
 - Pupil Services and Administrative support
 - Other school support
 - Family support
 - Help with referral to outside counseling (if indicated)
 - Other
- Ask the student if she/he has any other issues or questions to discuss
- Thank the student for being willing to participate in the Restorative Conference

Appendix E



RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Pre-conference Interview Guidelines - Offender

- Introduce everyone present at the pre-conference by name and who they are (student, principal, counselor, school psychologist, teacher)
- Explain the role of the facilitator(s)
 - To provide support to all parties
 - To keep the environment safe
 - To allow everyone to speak
 - Explain what will transpire during the Restorative Conference and explain the ground rules of a safe environment (TRIBES Community Agreements and Appendix B, #5)
- Stress confidentiality
 - No details are recorded or shared without the permission of all parties (NOTE: the Interviewer will want to record key facts to guide Restorative Conference)
 - The **exception** to confidentiality is the need to report legal violations and if anyone is in danger of being harmed
- Ask student to describe **what happened**
 - What was said? Who was involved?
 - What were the details leading up to the incident?
- **What were you thinking about at the time?**
- **What have you thought about since?**
- **Who do you think was affected?**
 - Yourself, classmates, teachers
 - Parents, school administration
 - other
- **How do you think that they were affected?**
 - How do you think you affected them regarding their daily routine?
 - How do you think you affected them regarding their thoughts and attitudes?
- **What will you do to make things right with those you affected?**
 - What might you say or do to insure that they understand your actions?
 - What might you say or do to ensure that they understand your desire to be a continued member of the class?

- Let the student know what support is available
 - Pupil Services and Administrative support
 - Other school support
 - Family support
 - Help with referral to outside counseling (if indicated)
- Ask the student if she/he has any other issues or questions to discuss?
- Thank the student for being willing to participate in the Restorative Conference
- Schedule the Restorative Conference



RESTORATIVE CONFERENCE GUIDE

Conference Procedure

- Introduce everyone present at the conference by name and title (student, counselor, parent, etc.)
- Explain the role of the facilitator(s)
 - To provide support to all parties
 - To keep the environment safe
 - To allow everyone to speak
- Stress confidentiality
 - No details are recorded or shared without the permission of all parties
 - Exception to confidentiality is the need to report law violations and if someone is in danger of being harmed
- Read the Consent to Participate form and ask all parties to sign and date
- Present the Ground Rules
 - Don't interrupt when someone is speaking (respect the Talking Piece)
 - Nothing intentionally hurtful is allowed
 - Everyone has the right to pass (to not answer questions)
 - Other (Tribes Community Agreements, persons present)
- Explain what will transpire during the conference and then ensure this happens
 - Victims go first (if more than one victim, they decide in what order)
 - Talk about what happened
 - Share feelings
 - Ask questions of the offender(s)
 - Offenders go next (if more than one offender, they decide in what order)
 - Discuss what happened
 - Share feelings
 - Answer and ask questions
 - All participants use the Talking Piece to talk without interruption
- If an agreement of any kind is reached, write it down and ask for signatures
- Schedule a follow-up meeting
- Summarize the conference
 - Review the discussion and agreement (if any) reached
 - Commend the parties on their willingness to participate in this challenging process
 - Thank everyone for attending and honoring the Ground Rules
 - Remind participants of the confidentiality promise

Appendix G



RESTORATIVE QUESTIONS

What happened?

How did it happen?

What was your part in it?

Who do you think has been affected?

How were they affected?

What needs to happen to make things right?

How can the harm be repaired?

Appendix H



RESTORATIVE QUESTIONS IN DETAIL

What happened?

- What was said?
- Who was involved?
- Where did this happen?
- What were you and others doing at the time?
- What happened just before the incident?
- What were the details of the incident?
- What happened afterward?

How did it happen?

- What were you thinking about at the time?

What was your part in it?

- Why did you choose this behavior?

Who do you think has been affected?

- Names of students
- Names of adults at school
- Names of community members (including parents)

How were they affected?

- How do you think their daily routine was affected?
- How do you think their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes were affected?

What needs to happen to make things right?

- What might you do or say to ensure that they understand your actions?
- What might you do or say to ensure that they understand your feelings now?

How can the harm be repaired?

- What is your plan for now and the future?
- How might you respond in similar situations?
- How might you avoid similar situations?



RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Parent Invitation to Conference

Date: _____

To: _____

Your student _____ has been referred for a Restorative Conference due to an incident occurring on _____ with another student or students. We request your presence at a conference that will include the offender and offended student(s), a Restorative Conference facilitator from school, parents/guardians of all involved parties, and other teachers, administration, and staff as needed.

We are available to discuss the situation with you, and your participation is voluntary. The students are responsible for their own communication, aided by the school facilitator. You will have the opportunity to speak after the students have finished.

Many victims and offenders find that meeting together provides a meaningful way to participate in the solution to their problem. They can ask questions and explain how they were affected by what happened. Meeting with the offended student can help offenders understand how their behavior impacts other people. Please call with any questions or concerns.

This Restorative Conference is scheduled for:

Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

Sincerely,

Restorative Conference Facilitator

Appendix J

Classroom Conduct **“Think Sheet”**

Name: _____

What happened? Explain the incident.	
Who was affected by your actions? How were they affected? Explain.	
What will you do to make this situation “right”?	
What will you do differently in the future?	

Student Signature _____

Parent Signature _____

Appendix K

Classroom Guidelines

1. Come to class ready to learn and with the proper attitude. (Leave all negativity outside the door.)
2. Come to class with all necessary materials. **(You will not be allowed to leave during class to get them)**
3. Do not interrupt others when they are speaking. (especially me)
4. No talking during class.
5. Stay in your seat during instructional time.
6. Keep hands, feet, and other objects to yourself.
7. Treat everyone with **RESPECT**.

Possible consequences for violating our classroom “laws”

1. Written apology letter to the class explaining why your actions were wrong.
2. Call home to parents.
3. Make up time after school.
4. Administrative involvement in creating a “solution” to the problem.

*note: any extreme or over the top violations will result in a discipline referral and an automatic phone call home.

