

Restorative Practices as Classroom Ethos

“Restorative Classroom Practices” is not an add-on program for the purposes of behavior management, nor does it provide just another tool in the teacher’s toolbox for us in dealing with student behavior. In fact, Restorative Classroom Practices represents an ethos that permeates all aspects of classroom organization and relationships that children experience within and outside of the classroom. Fundamentally, Restorative School Practices signify a rejection of *punishment and retribution* as educational responses to challenging behavior and conflict. Punishment and retribution approaches to problem behavior and conflict typically characterize the criminal justice system in many countries, but they do not reflect educational goals that acknowledge the classroom and school as social communities and children as members of their communities who require support, not exclusion.

In contrast to retribution, the primary aim of Restorative Practices is the development of positive relationships and peaceful resolution of conflict for teachers and students. Restorative Classroom Practices are not simply a behavior management system, though it includes the key elements of positive behavior management...While Restorative Classroom Practices utilizes strategies developed and validated through decades of behavior management intervention research, it differs from behavior management approaches by starting from a relationship perspective where the focus is on context, organization, and culture. It is not strictly a bottom-up approach that emphasizes descriptions of acceptable and unacceptable behavior within deficit intervention

frameworks. Nor is it top-down in asserting classroom rules set by the teacher whereby violations are viewed as transgressions against rules. Instead, Restorative Classroom Practices are people-focused, accepting that positive and supportive relationships are crucial for learning to occur in educational environments. Conflict must be addressed by making amends, or relationships will otherwise be damaged and even broken.

Restorative Classroom Practices also goes beyond being simply a philosophy or set of principles. Restorative Classroom Practices concurs with the societal goal that the primary purpose of schools is to *educate*. This responsibility to educate goes beyond basic [academic] skills such as literacy, numeracy, and subject knowledge. It includes education for citizenship and becoming contributing members of one's community. This, restorative practices are grounded in educative principles for providing all members of the school community with skills and understandings about positive social interactions and relationships that support learning and peaceful resolution of problems and conflict.

The Teachers Guide to Restorative Classroom Discipline (Meyers and Evans)