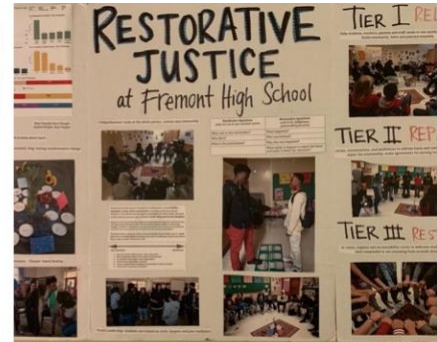


Restorative Justice Practices in Afterschool Programs



A Briefing Paper

By Sam Piha and Samantha Fasen

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Sam Piha (he/him) has served as founder and president of Temescal Associates since 2007. Sam began his career in 1974 as an afterschool worker, an experience that led to 13 years of classroom teaching and work as a child and family counselor and school social worker. Between 1989 and 2006, Sam managed school-based youth programs at the regional and national levels. He later founded Temescal Associates and The How Kids Learn Foundation, both dedicated to improving the quality of afterschool programs. Sam served as editor and contributing author of several important practice guides and journal articles on afterschool programming. Sam holds a master's degree in Social Welfare.



Samantha Fasen (she/her) joined Temescal Associates and the How Kids Learn Foundation in 2019 and has fully embraced her work with the afterschool field. She helps to coordinate and develop marketing campaigns and multimedia elements to reach a wider audience and share with people the importance of out-of-school time and youth development.



Ren Daraio (they/she) brings over 35 years of experience working in the field of youth development as a facilitator, trainer, and coach. She has experience training and coaching diverse audience groups, from afterschool practitioners and parents to funders and technical assistance providers. Prior to her work with Temescal Associates, Ren was the Deputy Director at the Community Network for Youth Development and a consultant for the Institute for Research and Reform in Education.



As part of our research on artificial intelligence in afterschool, we began experimenting with ChatGPT. We used this bot to gather some information for this briefing paper. For more info on artificial intelligence and afterschool, check out our other briefing paper entitled, [Learning About Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) in Afterschool](#).

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS

Temescal Associates is dedicated to building the capacity of leaders and organizations in education and youth development who organizations, and policy makers.

The How Kids Learn Foundation (HKLf) is a 501(c)(3) organization. It is dedicated to improving the effectiveness of settings that support the education and healthy development of youth. This includes schools and out-of-school time programs. The HKL Foundation provides educational and training activities that promote the capacity of organizations that support the education and healthy development of youth. Examples of activities include conferences, speaker forums, screenings of relevant films, training sessions, coaching sessions, the awarding of digital badges to acknowledge exemplar programs and the learning that happens within these settings. Activities also include the development and distribution of educational materials (papers, self-assessment tools, videos, program guides, etc.). You can see a [catalogue of the resources](#) we've produced for the afterschool field.

Front Cover Photos: Top left: [ED Source/ Tatiana Chaterji](#), top right: [Learning Policy Institute Blog](#), bottom right: [Learning Policy Institute](#), and bottom left from [www.pexels.com](#).

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Restorative Justice Practices in Afterschool Programs



Students at Fremont High School participate in a restorative circle.

Source- [Restorative Justice at Fremont](#)

INTRODUCTION

Restorative justice is a values-based practice. It creates a safe environment and builds trusting relationships, which are critical features of quality afterschool programs. These are the foundation on which afterschool programs can integrate restorative justice practices.

WHAT IS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE?

There are many ways that people describe restorative justice. Below are just a few.

According to Oakland Unified School District's (OUSD) [Restorative Justice Implementation Guide](#), *"Inspired by indigenous values, restorative justice is a philosophy and a theory of justice that emphasizes bringing together everyone affected by wrongdoing to address needs and responsibilities, and to heal the harm to relationships as much as possible."*

*Restorative justice is a philosophy that is being applied in multiple contexts, including schools, families, workplaces, the justice system, global conflict, and as a tool to transform structural and historic harms. Though only about 40 years old, the restorative justice movement is rapidly expanding, with tens of thousands of initiatives worldwide."*¹

"Many people mistakenly assume restorative justice is solely a conflict resolution process that comes into play after harm has occurred. Though school-based restorative justice offers a more equitable and respectful alternative for dealing with disciplinary infractions, it is also a

proactive strategy to create a culture of connectivity where all members of the school community feel valued and thrive. Restorative justice is a profoundly relational practice.”²

According to David Yusem, Restorative Justice Coordinator for OUSD, “Restorative justice views “harm” as a fracturing of relationships, rather than something that demands punishment. A restorative justice process is a way to uncover true needs and heal relationships via meaningful accountability.

How might restorative justice apply to a conflict? Restorative justice allows the impacted parties to talk about what happened, how they are feeling about it now, the impact it had on everyone, and ultimately what can be done to make it as right as possible. Restorative approach can help school communities avoid the need for exclusionary discipline and reduce repeated offenses. People who have been harmed often have questions that only the person that harmed them can answer. Often time these questions are simple like “why me?” or “what led you to do this to me?” The process allows for these and other questions to be answered and to begin the healing process.

The process creates equity by giving everyone a space to talk and be heard and by addressing the root cause of harm. We often say harmed people harm people, so it is important to uncover and address the original harm too. The restorative talking circle process is often implemented to start this conversation.”³

“Afterschool and summer learning programs can mitigate risk and support the development of protective factors that help keep young people out of the juvenile justice system. Moreover, the afterschool field can also serve as alternatives to detention that keep youth from re-offending. Through programming opportunities, partnerships, and coordinated efforts, afterschool programs keep young people safe, connect them to the supports they need, and help build protective factors and positive social relationships that lead to bright futures.”⁴

According to Nathalie Kirsch in [Restorative Practices for School Discipline, Explained](#), “Restorative practices are also related to social-emotional learning and multi-tiered systems of support. Commonly used restorative practices like [conversation circles and restorative conferences](#) rely on social and emotional learning to build community. Conversation circles are informal discussions that facilitate community-building by encouraging students to speak and listen to one another respectfully. Restorative circles are formal, structured meetings to discuss past conflict and how to move forward amicably.”⁵

HOW TO USE THIS BRIEFING PAPER

This paper is designed to raise understanding and awareness of restorative justice practices and identify ways afterschool leaders can integrate them. We recommend that program leaders share this paper with organizational leaders and program staff and consider the best ways to respond to personal harm and conflicts among youth participants.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

The definitions provided here to assist in understanding some frequently used terms in this paper. Although there are many practices in the field that are considered “restorative” and many terms used to describe those practices, we’ve opted for a brief description of key terms used in the literature.

- **Afterschool Programs:** Community-based and school-based youth programs that are conducted before or after the school day and during the summer. These programs are also referred to as afterschool, out-of-school time (OST), youth programs or summer learning programs.

- Active listening: A technique that requires the listener to restate or paraphrase in the listener’s own words what she or he heard from someone else. ⁶



Source: Restorative Justice at Fremont High School

- Restorative Justice: Restorative justice views “harm” as a fracturing of relationships, rather than something that demands punishment. A restorative justice process is a way to uncover true needs and heal relationships via meaningful accountability. ⁷
- Restorative Circle: A facilitated meeting that allows students and others to come together for community-building, problem solving, resolving disciplinary issues, receiving content instruction, and discussing concerns related to difficult topics, such as violence in the community or racial tensions. ⁸
- Restorative Practices: Restorative justice practices can take various forms, including victim-offender mediation, family group conferencing, peace circles, and community reparative boards. These practices are applied in different settings, such as schools, communities, and criminal justice systems, with the aim of reducing recidivism, fostering empathy, and promoting a more just and compassionate approach to resolving conflicts.
- Bullying: Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behavior that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening. ⁹
- Conflict Resolution: When conflicts occur, facilitators can guide the involved parties through a restorative dialogue, allowing them to express their feelings, perspectives, and needs. This process promotes understanding and empathy, leading to more constructive resolutions that focus on repairing harm and rebuilding relationships.
- Equity and Fairness: The term “equity” refers to fairness and justice and is distinguished from equality: Whereas equality means providing the same to all, equity means recognizing that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances. ¹⁰
- Restorative Conferences: A Restorative Conference is a mediated dialogue between harmed individuals and those responsible for causing the harm. The goal of the conference is to provide the victim(s) with an opportunity to be made whole and for the offender(s) to take primary

responsibility for repairing any harm done. Typically, a conference concludes with a written agreement which outlines specific actions that will be taken by the offender(s).¹¹

- **Restorative Questioning:** The use of open-ended questions to help individuals process an incident and reach a solution.¹²
- **Discipline Disparities:** A growing body of research has shown that Black, Hispanic, and students whose parent's incomes are below the federal poverty threshold are disciplined more often and severely than their white peers or those with higher socioeconomic status.¹³
- **Repairing Harmful Behavior:** When a participant engages in disruptive or harmful behavior, restorative justice provides an opportunity for that individual to understand the impact of their actions on others and take responsibility for their behavior. This process helps to shift the focus from punishment to learning and growth.
- **Peace Room:** A “safe space” created in a school where restorative circles and conferences may be held. Peer mediation — utilizing student peers to facilitate dialogue or restorative justice practices between students to address an issue and come to a solution to avoid future conflict.¹⁴

THE PRINCIPLES OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

We asked [ChatGPT](#), “What are restorative justice principles?” It responded, “*The principles of restorative justice often include:*

- **Repairing Harm:** *The primary focus is on addressing the harm caused by the offense and finding ways to make amends to the victim and the community.*
- **Inclusion:** *All stakeholders, including the victim, offender, and community, have the opportunity to participate in the process and have their voices heard.*
- **Voluntariness:** *Participation in restorative justice processes is typically voluntary, and all parties must agree to take part.*
- **Collaboration and Empowerment:** *The process encourages collaboration and shared decision-making, empowering the affected parties to find solutions that meet their needs.*
- **Accountability:** *Offenders are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and are held accountable for their behavior.*
- **Long-Term Healing:** *The focus extends beyond immediate resolution to address the long-term healing and well-being of all involved.”*



Source: Restorative Justice at Fremont High School

HOW DOES RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WORK?

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, “Restorative justice uses highly trained facilitators to help connect the responsible party with the harmed party as well as with supportive family and community members. The group works together to determine the appropriate response and, if possible, repair involved.

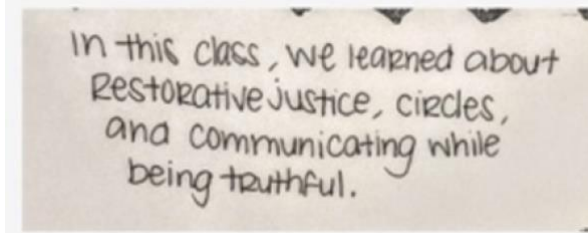
Once everyone agrees to participate in the process, the facilitators work separately with all parties to prepare them for a restorative conference. In this conference, the parties discuss what happened.

- The person harmed has an opportunity to share how they were affected and what they need to heal.
- The young person assumes responsibility for causing harm and articulates what they need to reduce the likelihood of it happening again.
- The facilitator helps participants reach an agreement that meets everyone’s needs. Solutions might include financial restitution, replacing items that were broken or lost or completing certain chores on behalf of the person or community harmed.”¹⁵

BENEFITS OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES

We asked ChatGPT, “What are the benefits of restorative justice?” It replied, “There are many benefits to restorative practices. Let's have a look at seven key points that make restorative practices the top choice in reinforcing a healthy school climate:

- **Help students take responsibility.** When students take ownership of the conflicts they created, they develop self-awareness of how their actions can negatively affect someone. Instead of blame-shifting, students realize where they went wrong and find positive ways to repair their mistakes. They'll become productive members of society who understand the difference between right and wrong.
- **Make students aware of consequences.** For every negative action, there is a consequence. When students discover what they could lose, they might think twice about their actions and reactions.
- **Teach students conflict resolution.** Solve problems through communication, patience and understanding instead of fighting. Encourage them to talk about their feelings, brainstorm good solutions and set goals to maintain peace
- **Build emotional skills.** Make students feel heard and emotionally validated by cultivating [social-emotional learning](#) skills. Focus on self and social awareness, emotional management, relationship skills and responsibility.
- **Help students practice empathy.** Show kids empathy and teach them to restore peace to frayed relationships. Students learn by observing, so why not demonstrate empathy to your class by showing them you care?
- **Teach students to embrace forgiveness.** How many times have you heard that forgiveness isn't about condoning someone's wrongdoing, but learning to let go of its harmful emotional impact? Explain to your class that forgiveness involves releasing their anger toward the person who wronged them.
- **Show the importance of communication.** Demonstrate how to have pleasant conversations. Show your students how to take turns during conversations. They need to understand it is polite to listen without interruptions.



Source: [Restorative Justice at Fremont High School, Transforming Relationships and School Culture](#)

- **Build strong relationships.** Restorative justice is crucial for improving relationships between students, teachers, and school administrators. Social and emotional learning (SEL) strategies can help educators to foster good relationships with their students. Show students that you genuinely care about them, work toward building trust and spend time getting to know their parents.
- **Teach students how to respect different cultures and beliefs.** Use photos, videos and current events to develop [culturally responsive teaching strategies](#). It's vital for kids to learn respect for other cultures and understand that nearly everyone has different practices and beliefs. Encourage your students to make friends from a variety of cultures to help them appreciate how other people live their lives.
- **Help community building.** [Restorative circles](#) play an important role in addressing challenges that students face. Begin by creating a safe space for students to learn empathy, patience, and compassion for others. Use your students' input to decide which topics of discussion they want to address, such as mutual respect and problems surrounding racism.
- **Encourage students to face fears.** Let your students know everyone has fears and concerns. Help your class to overcome their fears through distracting physical or mental activities and conversation. Explain that there are ways to arrive at a solution for every problem.”

“Restorative justice programs that address racial and ethnic disparities use data to target disproportionalities, extend eligibility to people with prior offenses, avoid subjective criteria and seek out facilitators and program leaders who represent the youth and communities they serve.”¹⁶

ChatGPT continues, “Overall, restorative justice offers a more holistic and compassionate approach to addressing harm, emphasizing healing, reconciliation, and personal growth. By focusing on the needs of individuals and communities, it has the potential to create positive, lasting change in the lives of those involved and the wider society.”

Restorative Justice Also Offers an Alternative to Exclusion

According to [Rosalyn Sword](#), “Restorative conferences could also be used as an alternative to exclusion (Russell, 2015). This is by no means a ‘soft option’ – having to face up to a group of people that you have affected is much more difficult than simply avoiding confrontation through being excluded (Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2002).

Traditional methods of discipline can also be counterproductive; for example, sending a child out of the room for being disruptive in a lesson that they don’t like gives them what they want – a way out of the lesson. It is better to make the child think about why they behave in that way, what the underlying problem is, and how it can be solved. Additionally, even if a serious incident occurs, and you have to give the student a formal punishment, consider having a restorative conversation as well. This helps the child better understand how they have affected others.”¹⁷

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN AFTERSCHOOL YOUTH PROGRAMS

We asked ChatGPT, “How is restorative justice used in afterschool youth programs?” It responded, “Restorative justice can be a valuable and effective approach in afterschool youth programs for addressing conflicts and behavioral issues among young participants. By incorporating restorative justice principles into these programs, facilitators and staff can create a supportive and inclusive environment that encourages positive behavior, builds stronger relationships, and fosters personal growth.

Here's how restorative justice is commonly used in afterschool youth programs:

- **Conflict Resolution:** Restorative justice practices can be employed to address conflicts that arise between youth participants. When conflicts occur, facilitators can guide the involved parties through a restorative dialogue, allowing them to express their feelings, perspectives, and needs. This process promotes understanding and empathy, leading to more constructive resolutions that focus on repairing harm and rebuilding relationships.
- **Building a Positive Community:** Restorative justice helps in building a positive and supportive community within the afterschool program. Regular restorative circles or meetings can be held where participants can discuss their experiences, successes, and challenges, promoting a sense of belonging and accountability within the group.



Source: Restorative Justice at Fremont High School

- **Repairing Harmful Behavior:** When a participant engages in disruptive or harmful behavior, restorative justice provides an opportunity for that individual to understand the impact of their actions on others and take responsibility for their behavior. This process helps to shift the focus from punishment to learning and growth.
- **Empowering Youth Voices:** Restorative justice values the input of all individuals involved in a conflict, including the youth participants. This approach empowers young people to have a say in resolving issues that affect them directly, fostering a sense of ownership and investment in the community.

- **Preventing Escalation:** By addressing conflicts and issues promptly and proactively, restorative justice can prevent minor problems from escalating into more significant incidents, promoting a healthier and safer program environment.
- **Skill-Building:** Restorative justice practices can teach important social and emotional skills to youth, such as active listening, empathy, communication, and problem-solving. These skills are not only useful within the afterschool program but can also positively impact their lives outside the program.
- **Reducing Discipline Disparities:** Restorative justice can help reduce discipline disparities and ensure that all youth are treated fairly and equitably. Instead of resorting to traditional punitive measures, restorative justice focuses on addressing the root causes of behavior and finding appropriate solutions.
- **Parent and Guardian Involvement:** Restorative justice practices can also involve parents or guardians, keeping them informed and engaged in the conflict resolution process. This collaboration strengthens the support system around the youth and reinforces positive behavior at home and in the program.

Overall, integrating restorative justice principles into afterschool youth programs creates a more inclusive and nurturing environment that supports the emotional and social growth of young participants. It encourages accountability, responsibility, and compassion, leading to stronger connections and a sense of community among the youth involved.”

CHALLENGES OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

According to [RJ World Local](#), “In today’s fast-paced education system, restorative practices (RP) are becoming increasingly important as a way to address conflicts and build positive relationships in schools. However, implementing Restorative Practices effectively requires ongoing professional development and training for program staff. There are numerous challenges that stand in the way of effective Restorative Practices implementation:

- Lack of time and energy to organize professional development
- Inadequate initial and ongoing professional development
- Limited access to experts and leading-edge learning.
- Training required in how to incorporate restorative practices into existing curricula and programs
- Lack of understanding or buy-in among staff on the importance of restorative practices “¹⁸

WHAT CAN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS DO TO GET STARTED?



Source: Temescal Associates

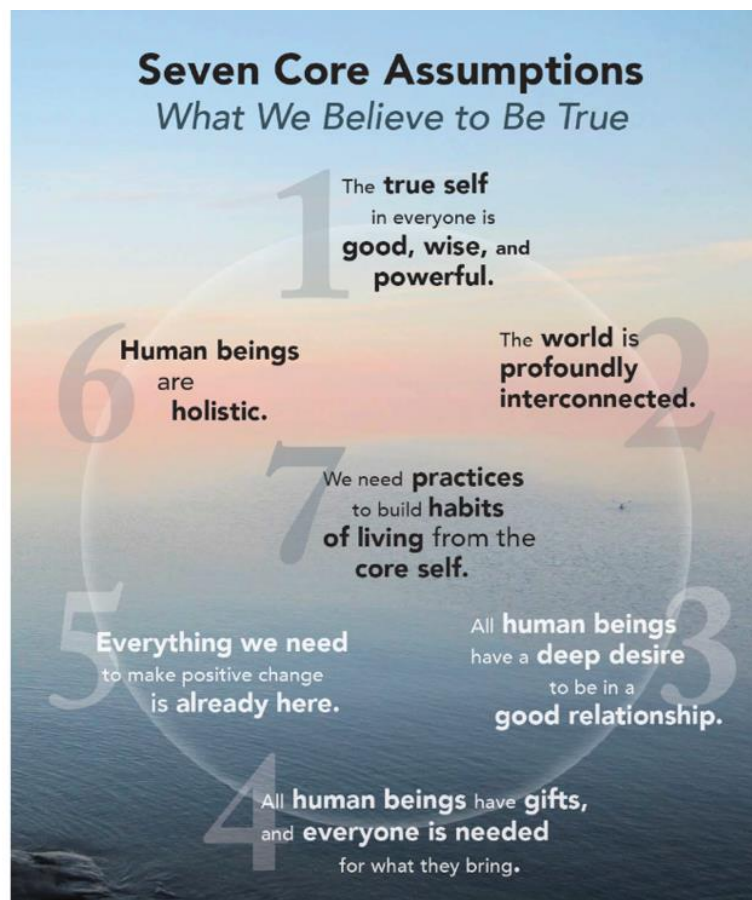
Tips For Program Leaders

- **Hire caring, knowledgeable and diverse staff.**
- **Values:** Quality afterschool programs are very explicit about their values and norms. This is foundational to restorative justice. These often are referred to as agreements and involve youth in determining what builds trusting relationships.

For example, the RYSE Youth Center has “[House Agreements](#),” which applies to staff and youth participants as well.

- *Be Open Hearted*
- *Embrace the Opportunity to Build New Relationships at Your Own Pace*
- *Practice & Center Liberatory Practices, Community, & Belonging*
- *Practice Language That Promotes Love, Kindness, Respect, Peace, Belonging, Joy, Solidarity, & Unity*
- *Explore New Things at Your Own Pace*
- *Do What You Can to Ensure the Physical & Emotional Safety of Yourself & Others*
- *There Should Be No Selling, Exchanging, or Using of Drugs or Alcohol at RYSE & We Are Here to Support & Work with You if or When This is a Challenge*
- *Be Considerate of Yourself, Others, & the Space*
- *Resolve Conflicts Peacefully & Respectfully*
- *Practice Consent for Yourself & Others: Physical/Verbal Affection & Appreciation*
- *Grow Into Your Own Leadership & Collective Power*
- *Be Accountable for Your Actions & Impact*
- *Take Space to Care for Our Individual & Collective Needs Including Physical, Spiritual, Mental, & Emotional Wellness* ¹⁹

The OUSD Restorative Justice Team calls their agreements, *Seven Core Assumptions*. (see below.)



Source: OUSD Restorative Justice Team

- **Create a program culture that promotes positive youth development:**
 - Introduce efforts to prevent meanness and promote kindness.
 - Really listen to young people.
 - Build positive relationships among adults and youth.
 - Provide opportunities for all youth to express themselves.
 - Promote positive peer interaction, respect and support.
 - Provide opportunities for youth to make their voices heard in policy discussions.
- **If the afterschool program is school-based,** engage the School Community to build awareness and explore a shared school-wide Restorative Justice approach. Educate others in your networks, including parents, family members and the larger community.

*“A collaborative planning process engaging as many of the members of the school community as possible builds a strong foundation. Seek broad support and generate interest and commitment through education and trust building. If you already have school climate interventions in place, how will restorative justice work with them? Describe restorative justice as a proactive means of promoting a positive, healthy, and orderly school environment, where everyone involved learns and practices self-discipline, empathy, and accountability. RJ is not merely a conflict resolution process that comes into play after harm has occurred -- it is a positive program climate strategy.”*²⁰

- **Consider hiring or assigning a dedicated Restorative Justice Coordinator**

Afterschool leaders have to decide if all of their staff will be equally trained or if they want one person to have a deeper knowledge than the others. This coordinator can participate in advanced trainings and work to train their peers.

Fania E. Davis in her article, [8 Tips for Schools Interested in Restorative Justice](#) adds:

- **“Assess Need**

Are negative behavior, suspensions, and expulsions in your program higher than they should be? Is there disparity in your program's discipline practices based on race or disability? Does your program offer a safe, fair, and positive learning environment?

Are staff, parents, students, or community members unhappy with discipline practices and outcomes? Are they concerned about the negative impact of punitive discipline? For example, suspending students just once triples the likelihood they will end up in in the juvenile justice system, and doubles the chance they will drop out. High school dropouts are 75 percent of state prison inmates.



Source: Temescal Associates

- **Begin Training**

Plan a series of trainings, starting with an introductory session for staff. Ideally, the introductory training prepares the program to implement proactive, community-building processes school-wide. At the next level, a smaller group is trained to facilitate restorative discipline processes to address rule infractions and to be used as an alternative to suspension. Though facilitation by an insider is preferable, if this is not available, training can be facilitated by experienced consultants or community-based organizations. Also, it's important to create a “learning community” that allows practitioners and youth to continually reflect throughout the year on what is working, what are areas of growth, and what tweaking is needed.

- **Expose staff to the scientific evidence**

(School Climate, the Brain and Connection to School). Brain studies show that punitive responses activate a fight/freeze/flight brain response, shutting down children's ability to learn. Restorative responses create a brain state of relaxed alertness that optimizes the ability to think creatively and learn.

- **Involve Youth in Peer Restorative Practices**

Train youth to promote and facilitate circles. Empower them to create a safe and respectful space to talk through instead of fighting through differences. Develop adult capacity to share power with youth and recognize the opportunities where youth can work in authentic partnership with adult allies to improve the effectiveness of the program's restorative justice initiative.



Source: [OUSD, Claremont Middle School Restorative Justice Peer Leaders](#)

- **Be Sure to Evaluate**

To make sure you're on track, review and analyze data quarterly. Compare past and present data on physical altercations, suspension rates and incidents, racial disparities in school discipline, standardized test scores, and truancy. Survey staff and youth regarding how they feel about the program:

- *Do they feel a greater sense of safety? An increased sense of belonging?*
- *Are relationships better among youth and between youth and adults?*
- *What about between the program and parents?*
- *How is it working? What changes have you seen?"*²¹

Restorative Justice in Schools: SEL in Action

David Yusem, Restorative Justice Coordinator for Oakland Unified School District, writes, *“There is no plug and play model for implementing restorative justice practices at a school. Restorative justice implementation is profoundly related to the eco-system of each school or district. Schools must first assess the environment for readiness. Administrators, teachers, students and parents can identify what factors conducive to restorative justice are already in place and what they can do better. All staff should be trained and receive coaching and feedback throughout the year.*

The [OUSD Restorative Justice Implementation Guide](#) is a navigational tool we developed in Oakland in partnership with [Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth \(RJOY\)](#) to help members of the school community identify indicators such as: What’s working in our school? What could we do better? What positive things are happening that RJ can support? What do we need to rethink?

It is difficult to implement restorative justice on a piecemeal basis. Restorative justice is a school wide phenomenon and more effective to implement if most, if not all, of the teachers are trained in circles and receive coaching support as they learn the art of circle-keeping. Student leadership can expand to include restorative practices for community building and responding to harm and conflict.”²²

EXAMPLES OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES IN AFTERSCHOOL YOUTH PROGRAMS



Source: [Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships & Promoting Positive Discipline in School](#)

We asked ChatGPT, “What are examples of restorative justice practices in afterschool youth programs?” It responded, “*Restorative justice practices can be adapted and applied in various ways within afterschool youth programs to address conflicts, promote positive behavior, and build a sense of community. Here are some examples of restorative justice in afterschool youth programs:*

- **Restorative Circles:** Afterschool programs can regularly hold restorative circles where participants come together to discuss their feelings, experiences, and challenges. These circles can provide a safe space for open communication, allowing youth to share their perspectives, build empathy, and strengthen relationships.
- **Conflict Mediation:** When conflicts arise between youth participants, trained staff or peer mediators can facilitate restorative dialogues between the involved parties. The process aims to help them understand the impact of their actions, take responsibility, and find constructive ways to repair harm and move forward.
- **Community Service Projects:** Restorative justice can involve engaging youth in community service projects as a way to make amends and give back to the community. Such projects not

only contribute positively to the community but also instill a sense of responsibility and accountability in the participants.

- **Restitution and Repair:** In cases where harm has been caused to individuals or property, restorative justice can involve an agreement for restitution or repair. For example, if a participant damages another participant's belongings, they may work together to repair or replace the items.
- **Group Decision-Making:** Afterschool programs can implement restorative justice principles in decision-making processes. For instance, when setting rules or addressing behavioral issues, involving youth in group discussions and problem-solving can promote a sense of ownership and responsibility for maintaining a positive program environment.
- **Peer Support Programs:** Restorative justice can be applied through peer support programs, where older or more experienced youth act as mentors or mediators to help their peers address conflicts and challenges in a restorative manner.



Source: Ever Forward Club

- **Personal Reflection and Goal-Setting:** Restorative justice practices can include individual reflection and goal-setting sessions for participants. Encouraging youth to reflect on their behavior, its impact on others, and setting personal goals for growth can be empowering and motivating.
- **Family Involvement:** Restorative justice practices can extend beyond the afterschool program and involve families or guardians. In some cases, bringing parents or caregivers into the restorative process can strengthen the support system around the youth and promote consistency between home and program environments.
- **Restorative Language and Communication:** Staff in afterschool programs can use restorative language and communication techniques to create a more supportive and empathetic atmosphere. This involves actively listening to participants, using "I" statements to express emotions, and encouraging open dialogue.
- **Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Workshops:** Afterschool programs can organize workshops or activities focused on peace-building and conflict resolution skills. These workshops can help participants learn constructive ways to handle conflicts and communicate effectively.

The implementation of restorative justice in afterschool youth programs should be tailored to the specific needs and dynamics of the program and its participants. Training staff and volunteers in restorative justice principles and techniques is essential to ensure the practices are applied effectively and ethically.”

Applying Restorative Justice Practices in Afterschool

“Restorative justice allows the impacted parties to talk about what happened, how they are feeling about it now, the impact it had on everyone, and ultimately what can be done to make it as right as possible. Restorative approach can help school communities avoid the need for exclusionary discipline and reduce repeated offenses. People who have been harmed often have questions that only the person that harmed them can answer. Often time these questions are simple like “why me?” or “what led you to do this to me?” The process allows for these and other questions to be answered and to begin the healing process. The process also creates equity by giving everyone a space to talk and be heard and by addressing the root cause of harm.”²³

In [What is Restorative Practice in Schools & Social Work?](#), Rosalyn Sword reflects on how restorative justice can be applied in schools and youth programs. She writes, “One key area where a restorative approach might be effective is when addressing incidents of bullying. These situations are complex – while many people believe that bullies require punishment, this can be ineffective, or make the situation worse. Bullies might become resentful of the punishment, rather than understanding why they have been given it. Additionally, those who bully often have unmet needs themselves (as do many children who misbehave). They might be using their actions to convey their feelings, rather than words. In order to truly solve the problem, we need to recognize these needs, and discuss how to satisfy them.

In these cases, you could choose to have a small meeting with only those students who are directly involved. However, you might choose to include the whole class in a circle or conference. You should ask the bully to describe what happened and think about what harm has been done. Then, ask the victim how they have been affected, and what would put things right. Remember not to alienate the bully or make any generalized remarks about them as a person; it is only their actions at that point that should be discussed.

Everyone should agree with the proposed solution – including the bully – and should discuss how to prevent something similar from happening again in the future. Afterwards, you should monitor the situation; if it does not improve, you may need to intervene again.”²⁴



“I was bullied in high school. The bullying took the form of humiliation, physical assault, and mental torment. At the time, it was simply thought of as “kids being kids.” Not a single administrator or teacher did anything to check in, help me, or stop the bullying. Many of my teachers laughed it off when they witnessed it. This had an impact on my self-esteem and my beliefs about people’s intent – at work and in other aspects of my life. At the same time, I have always had the ability to see the many sides of conflict. Since elementary school, I have been the go-to mediator with peers, co-workers, and beyond. I have been building my empathy muscle my whole life.”²⁵

Sword goes on to discuss using restorative justice to address arguments on the playground. *“If two students had an argument in the playground, the teacher could help them think about the situation using restorative questions:*

- *What happened? – ‘I told Emily that I don’t want to be friends with her any more.’*
- *What were you thinking and feeling when you did that? – ‘I was angry that she wouldn’t play the game I wanted to play.’*
- *What have you thought about since? – ‘I am upset that she never wants to play what I want to play, but I didn’t mean to make her cry.’*
- *Who has been affected by what happened, and how? – ‘Emily got upset and started crying, and she sat on her own for the rest of break time.’*
- *How could things have been done differently? – ‘I could have told Emily that I really wanted to play that game and we could play hers afterwards, or found somebody else to play with.’*
- *What do you think you need to do to make things right? – ‘I should say sorry to Emily and try not to say anything mean next time, even if she doesn’t want to play.’*

*Emily would then be asked restorative questions, such as how the incident made her feel and what her part in it was.”*²⁶

“You could also use restorative approaches in other situations of conflict, instances of disruptive behavior, or friendship issues.”²⁷

More On Restorative Talking/Check-In Circles

OUSD’s Restorative Justice Coordinator, David Yusem advises, *“One restorative practice that is supporting SEL is the use of restorative talking circles. Circles are an effective way of building a community where people feel connected and develop communal ownership of the program. This kind of connectedness creates an environment where authentic engagement and deep learning can happen. Youth may bring their cultural values into the space, creating a shared ownership of the program.*



Circles typically start with an opening practice, for example a few minutes of mindfulness, to create an intentional space. The opening is followed by a “check-in” with each of the members of the circle. When first establishing the circle, the group may co-create shared guidelines and discuss personal and shared values. This lays the foundation for a rich and meaningful dialogue followed by a check out and closing.

If the circle is a response to harm or conflict, we may discuss what happened and the impact. We eventually discuss how to make things as right as possible and come up with a plan to repair the relationships and re-weave the fabric of the community. The ability to make something right – or as right as possible – is a gift that all people impacted by harm deserve.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE FEELINGS CHART



Source: OUSD Restorative Justice

Simply by sitting in a restorative circle in the classroom, students learn valuable social and emotional skills such as patience, empathy, active listening, and impulse control. These skills fall into the five SEL competencies that the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (CASEL) supports schools in teaching and practicing: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision making, and relationship skills.”²⁸

“Benefits of restorative circles:

- * Are intrinsically democratic, allowing all voices to be heard.**
- * Reinforce social skills, such as common courtesy and mutual respect.**
- * Develop good listening and speaking skills.**
- * Increase awareness of how one’s words and actions affect others.**
- * Provide a safe forum for strong feelings, while minimizing aggression.**
- * Reduce blame and resulting paralysis.**
- * Eliminates ‘elephants in the room.’**
- * Create protocols for restitution and repairing harm.”²⁹**



Temescal Associates and the How Kids Learn Foundation have posted a number of LIAS Blogs on the power of talking/ restorative justice circles. These can be viewed at this link: <http://blog.learninginafterschool.org/search?q=CIRCLES>

Involving Parents/Guardians

Engaging parents and caregivers is an important part of the Restorative Justice effort. Parents/guardians play a critical role in the development of social and emotional skills. Consider building a parents/guardians component into the program where parents or guardians participate in sessions that focus on how restorative justice is used in the program and how restorative justice techniques can improve family communication and parenting skills.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE: VOICES FROM THE AFTERSCHOOL FIELD

By Guest Contributor: Melissa Mendez Ochoa, Executive Director, Oakland Leaf
(This was originally published by [Oakland Leaf](#).)



Source: Oakland Leaf

Restorative Justice Is About More Than Conflict Resolution

When talking about Oakland Leaf's approach to youth development, we often use the term restorative justice (RJ). While RJ, as a concept, has become relatively mainstream, most people only have a fuzzy idea of what it is in practice. In western culture, people tend to think of RJ as a contemporary way of resolving conflict – an alternative to the current punitive justice system.

At Oakland Leaf, we see RJ as much more than a set of conflict resolution or behavior management tools. We draw from RJ's roots in indigenous peacemaking practices that provide a holistic framework for not only repairing harm, but also nurturing and sustaining individual relationships and community bonds. Oakland Leaf has RJ Coordinators at all six of our afterschool program sites, and the grounded, loving support they provide our students on a daily basis is some of the most inspiring work I've ever observed.

In conversation with some of our RJ coordinators last week, I was reminded of what a critical resource they have been to our students these past several months. By sharing a few of the interventions they described to me, I hope to shine a spotlight on – and paint a clearer picture of – Oakland Leaf's restorative justice work:

An afterschool program class of 20 students was experiencing ongoing challenges related to bullying behavior and conflict between students. The RJ Coordinator organized a circle about anger and healthy ways of managing and expressing it. Students passed around a talking piece and shared why they were personally having a hard time and why they thought the group was struggling. Consistently, this go-round revealed underlying issues such as hurt feelings or conflict from earlier in the school day, fatigue, or students missing their parents, among other challenges. After this, students shared how they tend to express and respond to different emotions and what the outcomes tend to be for various kinds of expression. Next, the RJ Coordinator said "Now we know what is happening. What do we need for ourselves – from another person, from the instructor, or in general – to be able to move forward in a positive way?" Students shared things like "When I get mad, I need a break and some some alone time", "I need my friends to say something nice to me", and "I need some one-on-one time with a grownup". The last part of the circle involved everyone making a commitment to what they would do to help the group move forward in a more healthy way. Students made commitments such as "I will ask for space when I need it", "I will try to be more understanding when someone says or does something I don't like", and "I will share my appreciation when others are stepping up in positive ways". The RJ Coordinator has since regularly checked in with this group and each student, reminding them of their commitments and creating spaces for them to share progress and challenges.

A 5th grade teacher reached out to one of our RJ Coordinator's about a student that she suspected was being bullied during the school day. Our RJ Coordinator was able to build a strong relationship of trust with this student through daily check-ins. The student confided in her that he was having a hard time interacting with his peers and making friends, and that he felt isolated and alone. The student's dread about school began to wane once he had a caring adult he felt comfortable turning to on a daily basis for support and a sense of safety. Through ongoing coaching from the RJ Coordinator, he began to improve his social and communication skills and started making friends.

One of our afterschool program soccer teams lost their first two games and students began lashing out, blaming each other for the loss. The negative interactions and hostility began to impact the overall morale of the class. The RJ Coordinator designed and facilitated an RJ circle specifically about teamwork

and community. Students talked about what teamwork looks like, sounds like, and feels like. They discussed how they can simultaneously be supportive and hold each other accountable, on and off the field. Students also talked about what can be learned from “losing” in competitive sports and how to deal with hard feelings in healthy ways. They left the circle with renewed bonds and new tools to identify and cope with feelings of disappointment and frustration.

I hope these examples of Oakland Leaf’s everyday application of restorative justice principles and practices provide you with a bit more insight into the power and potential of this work.

MORE ABOUT...



Melissa Mendez Ochoa is the Executive Director at Oakland Leaf. She grew up in Napa Valley and made the move to the East Bay when she decided to attend the University of California, Berkeley. Melissa earned her master’s in business administration from the Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley. In the of Spring of 2019, Melissa became Oakland Leaf’s Executive Director. In her free time, she is in active alumna of TRENZA UC Berkeley and an avid sports fan of the Golden State Warriors, San Francisco Giants, and San Francisco Niners.



Oakland Leaf serves more than 800 students annually through daily afterschool programming at seven high-need East Oakland elementary and middle schools, paid internship programs for high school students, and a summer camp. With an emphasis on social-emotional learning, academic support/literacy, creative expression, movement and sports, connection with nature, STEM, and social justice, they are supporting Oakland youth and families to be lifelong leaders creating positive change in their own lives, their communities, and in the world.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!



- What is happening in your area regarding restorative justice?
- What kinds of things are you doing to implement restorative justice practices in your program?
- Would you add any additional resources that would be valuable to afterschool stakeholders?

Email us at info@temescalassociates.com.

RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE ABOUT RESTORATIVE JUSTICE



Source: www.pexels.com

There are many resources/ links in the body of the paper and the end notes. Below are some additional resources that may be useful. (Many more can be found by searching the internet.)

Books/Program Guides

- [Living Justice Press- *Heart of Hope*](#)
- [OUSD's Restorative Justice Implementation Guide](#)
- [OUSD Peer Restorative Justice Program Guide, 2nd Edition](#)
- [Learning in Afterschool & Summer Blogs on Talking Circles](#)
- [Vermont Restorative Approaches Collaborative- *Articles, Books, and Other Resources*](#)
- [SFUSD- *Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles*](#)

Articles

- [Sean Darling-Hammond, *Fostering Belonging, Transforming Schools: The Impact of Restorative Practices*](#)
- [Learning Policy Institute- Restorative Justice Practices](#)
- [Annie E. Casey Foundation, *What is Restorative Justice for Young People?*](#)

Websites Providing Restorative Justice Information, Curriculum, Materials, Etc.

- [OUSD Restorative Justice](#)
- [Restorative Justice at Fremont High School, Oakland, CA](#)
- [PeaceBuilders Program](#)
- [Communities in Schools National Report: *Community Matters, Focus on School Discipline*](#)
- [Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth \(RJOY\)](#)
- [The Conflict Center](#)

Afterschool Programs That Are Currently Using Restorative Justice Practices?

- [Oakland Leaf](#)
- [Oakland Unified School District](#)
- [RYSE Youth Center, Richmond, CA](#)
- [Fremont High School, Oakland, CA](#)
- [Prime Time Palm Beach County, FL](#)
- [The YMCA of San Francisco, CA](#)

END NOTES

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¹³ National Institute of Mental Health, *Study Furthers Understanding of Disparities in School Discipline*, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/news/science-news/2022/study-furthers-understanding-of-disparities-in-school-discipline>

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²⁹ Restorative Solutions, *Why Restorative Practices*, <https://www.restorativesolutions.us/schools/why-restorative-practices>



Source: Restorative Justice at Fremont High School