



12 Indicators of Restorative Practice Implementation:

Checklists for Administrators

Presented at the NACRJ Conference

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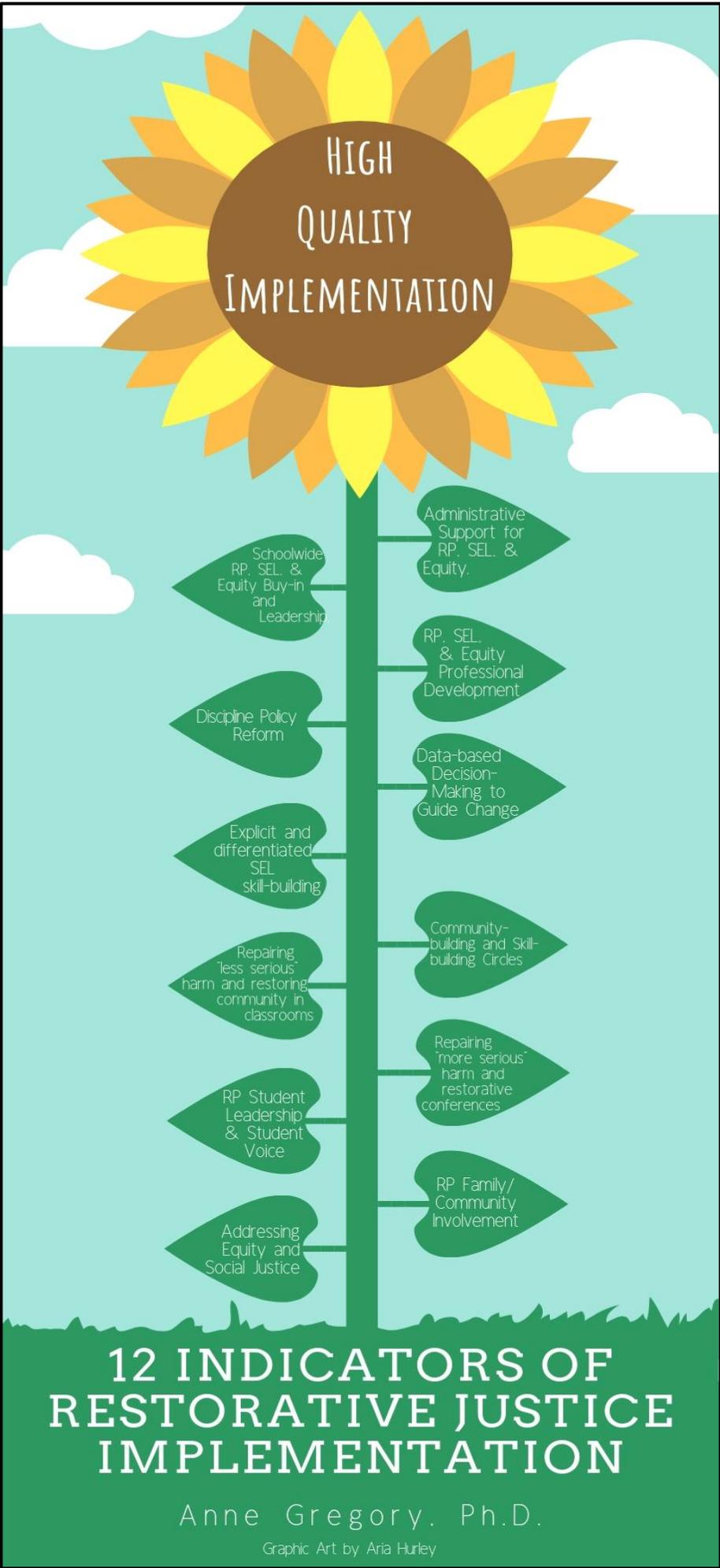
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Introduction

Schools across the country are implementing restorative practices (RP). Based on indigenous traditions, RP in schools require a paradigm shift away from a punitive approach to student behavior and toward a relationship and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) approach. Given gender and racial disparities in discipline, schools also integrate efforts to increase equity.

RP is about building community, addressing conflict, and repairing relationships. It is not a static program relegated to a class period or one adult leader. RP fall along a prevention-intervention continuum. Some practices *prevent* infractions through building community and other practices *intervene* after infractions have occurred.

The challenge of shifting mindsets

When students break the rules or disrupt learning, educators may have an impulse to remove students from class or school. Yet, such exclusion can worsen student trajectories. Given racial disparities in discipline, it can widen achievement gaps.

Administrators are challenged to shift mindsets and to transform policy and practice. Students and staff need support in developing SEL skills. They need time to consider how they can, as a collective, strive for greater equity.

RP implementation requires comprehensive strategic planning

RP implementation can falter under stretched resources and lack of implementation supports. The *12 Indicators of Restorative Practice Implementation* was developed to offer guidance to administrators and their teams. The aim is to help teams understand the scope of implementation supports and to consider RP, SEL, and Equity initiatives in tandem.

The *12 Indicators of Restorative Practice Implementation* come from case studies of four schools shifting their schools toward community-building and restorative approaches to discipline. The *Indicators* were developed through grounded theory analysis of interviews with 18 educators implementing RP. We interviewed nine Principals, seven RP Coordinators, and two RP Principal Coaches. Educators self-identified as 55% female, 45% male, 56% Black or African American, 28% White, and 6% Hispanic. On average, interviewees had over 20 years of experience as educational professionals.

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Administrative Support

Administrative Support for RP, SEL, & Equity

Administrators consistently demonstrate through actions and words that RP, SEL, and Equity initiatives are a priority. They help facilitate implementation through concrete actions.

Administrators:

- ❑ Espouse *and* model an equity, relationship-building, and skill-building approach to student and staff behavior.
- ❑ Make bold leadership decisions to prioritize implementation.
- ❑ Offer concrete logistical and resource support to initiatives.
 - They designate space for restorative interventions;
 - They schedule time for PD, circles, and task force meetings;
 - They allocate appropriate staffing.
- ❑ Create accountability systems to monitor implementation roll out and quality.

Schoolwide Buy-In and Distributed Leadership

Schoolwide Buy-in and Distributed Leadership

A majority of staff demonstrate a collective investment in RP, SEL, and Equity initiatives, with shared leadership advancing implementation.

- ❑ RP, SEL, & Equity initiatives are not isolated “programs.” Relationship-building, skill-building, and equity principles guide everyday practice.
- ❑ Leadership is distributed amongst diverse groups (e.g., students, admin, teachers, staff).
- ❑ A team regularly meets to strategically advance initiatives.
- ❑ Staff have processes in place to collaborate *and* communicate when addressing misconduct in a restorative manner.
- ❑ Use strategies to increase buy-in, such as:
 - Learn by doing: Staff participate in adult circles themselves;
 - Announce small wins with staff;
 - Discuss among staff whether personal or cultural values conflict with initiatives (e.g., norms around power and hierarchy).

Professional Development

RP, SEL, & Equity Professional Development

Teachers, support staff, and administrators receive *continuous* professional development (PD) in the use of RP, SEL, and equitable practices.

- ❑ Professional development is not a “one-off” workshop. PD is ongoing.
- ❑ Training is multi-format: brief workshops, consultation, classroom coaching, full-day.
- ❑ RP coaches build school’s capacity with revised policy/procedures. Coaches are proactive. They minimize “putting out fires.”
- ❑ RP coaches regularly consult with admin on how to use fair process and support adult learning.
- ❑ When possible, security staff receive PD in relationship-building/repairing and de-escalation.

Discipline Policy Reform

Discipline Policy Reform

Collective input leads to revised school policies and procedures that reduce the punitive and exclusionary responses to misconduct. Revisions focus on prevention, teaching behavioral expectations and skills, and repairing harm and relationships.

Written school policies and procedures:

- ❑ Articulate an RP-oriented mission and vision of the school;
- ❑ Focus on prevention and teaching skills;
- ❑ Describe repairing harm and being accountable to the community;
- ❑ Clarify when teachers address misconduct in classrooms and when they seek support;
- ❑ Define procedures for safety, including when a student might be removed from class or school;
- ❑ Describe how teachers are informed when their students participate in restorative interventions;
- ❑ Offer alternatives for suspension and re-entry circles for returning students.

Data-Based Decision-Making

Data-Based Decision-Making to Guide Change

Monthly, the school leadership team reviews discipline and restorative conference data. The team disaggregates data by student groups to ascertain action steps to increase equity.

- ❑ Analyze disaggregated discipline data regularly for trends and overrepresentation.
- ❑ Develop documentation and follow-up systems for restorative conferences.
- ❑ Present data to diverse groups, including students, for joint analysis and problem-solving.
- ❑ Use data findings to improve school climate and school policies/procedures.

Social Emotional Learning Skill-Building

Explicit and differentiated Social Emotional Learning (SEL) skill-building

All students receive explicit instruction in SEL skill-building and have access to additional SEL supports when needed. Staff have opportunities to develop their own SEL skills.

- ❑ Students develop SEL skills using sequenced and engaging curricula and activities.
- ❑ Adults are *proactive* in identifying student needs for extra support.
- ❑ SEL supports are tailored to individuals.
- ❑ SEL supports are formal (skill groups) or informal (check-ins about SEL goals).
- ❑ Staff develop their own SEL skills through:
 - Regular opportunities for perspective-taking about diverse lived experiences;
 - Identifying emotional triggers during conflict;
 - Raising awareness about how implicit bias impacts decisions;
 - Improving relationship-building skills with students and staff;
 - Participating in adult community-building circles.
- ❑ Administrators acknowledge stress on teachers, particularly in regards to balancing initiatives.

Community-Building and Skill-Building Circles

Community-Building and Skill-Building Circles

Circles build SEL skills and sense of community between and among students and staff.

Circles challenge traditional hierarchy by honoring all voices equally.

- ❑ Circles are widespread, and consistently held (at least once a week for 20 minutes).
- ❑ Circles have a low adult to student ratio (1 adult:15 students or fewer).
- ❑ Participants discuss relevant topics including those related to power, privilege, and equity.
- ❑ High quality circles feel safe, nurture belonging, lift up student voice, and offer opportunities for learning and critical thinking.
- ❑ Staff have regular opportunities to be in circle together.

Restoring Community in Classrooms

Repairing “less serious” harm and restoring community in classrooms

Less serious harms are addressed through interventions before students are asked to leave instruction and before punitive sanctions are applied.

- ❑ All staff use restorative chats and restorative questions to help students problem solve throughout the school day.
- ❑ Responsive circles and mediation address low-level incidents when they occur.
- ❑ Teachers intervene in the classroom whenever possible and reach out for support from RP staff/admin for agreed-upon reasons.
- ❑ Efforts are made to identify developing conflict and intervene early before it escalates.

Restorative Conferences

Repairing “more serious” harm and restorative conferences

Formal restorative conferences use a problem-solving process that aims to identify needs and actions to restore and repair.

- ❑ A school policy clarifies processes for repairing harm and how responsible parties are held accountable.
- ❑ Restorative interventions are trauma-informed.
- ❑ Restorative conferences include:
 - Voluntary participation of all those affected by incidents;
 - Pre-meetings to orient participants;
 - Restorative questions to reflect on harm done;
 - Problem solving to identify student needs and next steps for making amends;
 - Jointly agreed-upon action plans to build skills or repair harm, when appropriate;
 - Action plans logically link to harm caused or agreements broken;
 - Follow-up to ensure action plans completed and harm repaired.

Student Leadership and Student Voice

RP Student Leadership and Student Voice

Student leaders have opportunities to lead RP, SEL, and Equity initiatives. On a regular and schoolwide basis, student concerns and opinions are solicited.

- Students participate in RP leadership training.
- Student leaders are from diverse groups (e.g., varying achievement, race/gender, extracurricular interests).
- Community-building circles are sometimes led by students.
- Students have regular opportunities to offer feedback on school climate and discipline.
- Student advocacy and agency is nurtured and honored.

Family/Community Involvement

RP Family/Community Involvement

Widespread outreach explains and demonstrates RP to students, their families, and the community at large. Family members participate in a handful of RP activities each school year.

- ❑ Tenets of RP are shared via multiple platforms with families and community members.
- ❑ Students have opportunities to lead RP activities with families and community members.
- ❑ Families have multiple opportunities to participate in circles and to lead RP. Opportunities are inclusive of diverse cultures, languages, and work schedules.
- ❑ Families participate in restorative conferences, when appropriate.

Addressing Equity and Social Justice

Addressing Equity and Social Justice

School staff engage in courageous conversations around race, equity, identity, cultural awareness, implicit bias, and/or systemic injustices.

Conversations are not an end point; they are part of a continuous cycle of reflection and action that lead to proactive steps to increase equity in school policy and practices.

- ❑ Explicit focus on equity may include:
 - Increasing student agency and leadership opportunities;
 - Changing policies/practices that have an unfair impact on some student groups;
 - Engaging students and adults in open dialogue about marginalizing institutional practices.

- ❑ Courageous conversations may address:
 - Implicit bias, microaggressions, stereotype threat, racism;
 - Staff's own cultural or racial identity and how it affects interactions;
 - Within school practices or policies that lead to inequity;
 - How systems and structures outside of school affect school inequity (immigration policies, neighborhood gentrification, wealth gap).

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