

## New Directions in Whole-School Restorative Justice Implementation

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### What is the study about?

The authors of this article presented the three areas of Restorative Justice that have already been conducted (RJ as a theory and set of practices, associations and outcomes of RJ, and processes and strategies of implementation of RJ). The authors focus their research on a charter school in the Milwaukee Public School system, Alliance High School. They follow and document the 7-year implementation process for Restorative Justice within this school.

### What did they find?

The authors report that since the 1990's, RJ has been changing and includes a diverse set of practices. They located Alliance school, which uses a whole-school implementation in which they call "Restorative Approaches". They not only outline the model for beginning and continuing Restorative Approaches but they add a new dimension of including restorative approaches in the curriculum and shifting to students as circle leaders

#### Seven Year Outline at Alliance High School for Implementing Restorative Justice

*Year 1 (2011-2012):* RJ trainer became an Alliance staff member and teacher, course seats were reduced to ensure fidelity, new English course curriculum was created to include RJ practices, students and staff created a plan for the movement between tiers of RJ, all staff participating in RJ professional development and participated in staff circles

*Year 2 (2012-2013):* updated curriculum was given to new group of students, students created quarterly student-led whole school circles with staff

*Year 3 (2013-2014):* the updated course was given to another group of students, increased the continuum of services in all tiers, created a capstone project between the English and Art department, created an Advanced course in RJ for students which would be a Social Studies elective, new student and parent circles were facilitated at orientation

*Year 4 (2014-2015):* transitioned from initial stages of implementation to full implementation

*Year 5 (2015-2016):* continued the whole-school model and refined the RJ course sequence, a new assistant principal was placed at Alliance who came from experience in punitive practices so they worked to integrate her into the school culture, students partnered with a Montessori school to teach RJ implementation

*Year 6 (2016-2017):* the founder and school leader left which led to a change from a teacher-led school to an administration-led school, students expanded the work in the RJ course in response to new leadership, circles increased to respond to conflict and foster a restorative climate, advanced students completed capstone projects on RJ

*Year 7 (2017-2018):* continued staff engagement with the leadership shifts, further professional development opportunities, design and implementation of a continued three-course curriculum on RJ.

## Why is the Study Important?

- This RJ implementation includes two rare components: RJ integrated within the curriculum, not in addition to and significant student leadership and voice
- The case study documents the *entire* 7-year process that outlines several challenges that all schools face (administration shifts, community involvement)
- Alliance School was the first antibullying instruction in the Nation
- Alliance School demographics includes: 3% American Indian of Alaskan Native, 4% Asian, 54% black of African American, 17% Hispanic/Latino, 0.5% Pacific Islander, 19% white. In addition, 75% of students are economically disadvantaged, 50% self-identify as LGBTQ, over 30% are students with disabilities

## What can School Social Workers Do?

- partner with community agencies to improve professional development for staff
- include students in discussions during the beginning stages of RJ implementation
- identify and begin conversations with key school administrators to address the need to integrate RJ practices into curriculum
- create and implement the flow between the three tiers of Restorative Approaches
- facilitate circles with community members, families, and new students

## What can Special Education Teachers Do?

- introduce circles in their classrooms
- include students with disabilities in discussions during the beginning stages of RJ implementation
- identify RJ practices that can be delivered at a high intensity for special education students
- assists in the development of the three-tier system for Restorative Approaches
- facilitate circles with parents of students with disabilities
- work with school administrators to integrate RJ in specialized instruction for special education students