

Reshaping School Climate Utilizing A Restorative Approach

Luce Elementary has always valued strong relationships with staff and with our school families. However, we have never systematically built a school-wide program or process to foster the growth and development of restorative practices throughout the school. In the past several years the demographics of our school has changed. Due to the change we knew that we had to respond to the children's needs and needs of our teachers in a different way.

Therefore, the purpose of this action research project is to use restorative practices to build social discipline through participatory learning and decision making. This will aid in strengthening civil society, providing effective leadership, restoring relationships and repairing harm, with an emphasis on instructing teachers how to help students repair harm when their behavior is outside of school expectations.

By giving teachers tools to help students deal with their own trauma and behavior, we hope to help make better choices and realize that every behavior has an impact. Allowing teachers to react using restorative instead of punitive discipline will allow students to take responsibility for their behaviors. As we began our training of staff we began to realize that our staff needed to build trusting relationships with colleagues. The stress of a pandemic and just everyday living our teachers/staff needed to be able "unpack" their backpacks with people they trusted. We began utilizing Restorative Circles with teachers and staff by first creating expectations and rules for the circles. This opened the eyes of teachers/staff understanding, plus made us realize that the expectations we had for our students put our students in uncomfortable situations until they learned to trust.

Our Wondering on Restorative Practices;

- How to alter punitive discipline to better meet the needs of our students
- How to train teacher to alter their reactions to discipline issues, especially with students that experienced trauma
- How to implement restorative practices with teachers as well as students
- How to promote teacher buy in to start using restorative practices
- Does it work, Will it work?

In order for our team to pinpoint where to start we began with a staff survey on the first day of school to identify the current needs of teachers and then students. We discovered the trauma based needs that teachers and staff did not know how to respond to or help students work through. I applied for a grant on Restorative Practices to train a team of teachers to be able to train the rest of our staff.

In August our staff filled out a survey with following questions:

- What should we always see?
- What should we never see?
- What might we see?

- What personal change can we challenge ourselves with this year?

February: What are you already doing that resembles Restorative practices?

- What are your concerns about Restorative Practices?
- What is one thing you are excited about to try before the next meeting?
- What have you already tried that resembles Restorative Practices?

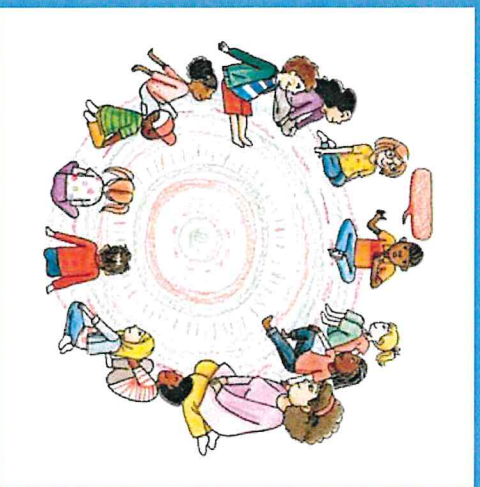
Our results showed that the staff was ready to and willing to move forward with restorative practices. They were willing to unlearn and relearn how to respond to the behaviors of their students. By implementing restorative circles in our faculty meetings, teachers are willing to reflect, both individually and collectively with peers. Providing time for teachers to experience a restorative circle as a team has shown the power of restoration. We have created a morning pledge that fosters accountability for our actions. By utilizing the pledge, students are learning how to express themselves with words instead of actions. Teacher and student discussions have become purposeful about behaviors and choices.

Luce Elementary will continue moving forward is reshaping our school climate by utilizing a restorative approach. We will continue to be proactive in our morning meetings, relationship building, by providing safe spaces where students can learn how to become aware of their feelings and vocalize those feelings. Providing more training for restorative practices and being consistent K-5 with the implementation of restorative practices will be key to our success.

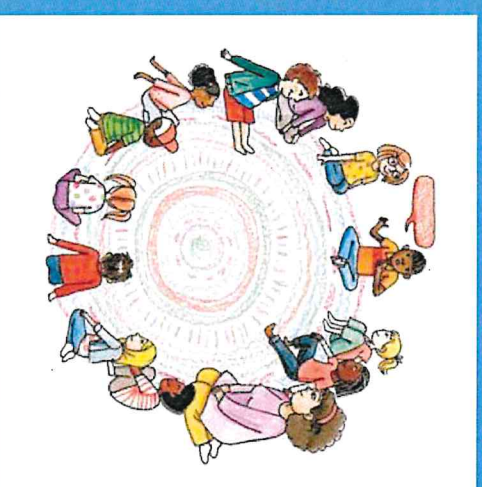
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Understanding Childhood Trauma (2021) Institute of Child Psychology
<http://www.healthiersf.org/RestorativePractices/Resources/>
<http://restorativeworks.net>

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Background Leading to this Inquiry

We have always valued strong relationships at Luce Elementary; however we have never systematically built a school-wide program/process by which to foster the growth of restorative relationships throughout the school.

With ever changing demographics of our school, we knew that we had to respond to children's needs and teacher needs in a different way.

Purpose of This Inquiry

Therefore, the purpose of this action research project is to use restorative practices to build social discipline through participatory learning and decision making. This will aid in strengthening civil society, providing effective leadership, restore relationships and repair harm, with an emphasis on instructing teachers how to help students repair harm when their behavior is outside of school expectations.

By giving teachers tools to help students deal with their own trauma and behavior, we hope to help students make better choices and realize that every behavior has an impact. Allowing teachers to react using restorative measures instead of punitive discipline will allow students to take responsibility for their behaviors

Our Wondering

- How to alter punitive discipline to better meet student needs
- How to train teachers to alter their reactions to discipline issues, especially with students that have experienced trauma
- How to implement restorative practices with teachers as well as students
- How to promote teacher buy in to start using restorative practices
- Does it work, Will it Work?

Our Actions

- identify needs of current students and teachers
- found trauma based needs that teachers did not know how to respond to or help students work through
- apply and receive a grant for Restorative Practices Train the Trainer
- choose a team to be trained
- participate and complete training
- begin training the school staff and trained team beginning to implement Restorative Practices

Data Collection

Staff Surveys

August: What should we always see?

What should we never see?

What might we see?

What personal change can we challenge ourselves with this year?

February: What are you already doing that resembles Restorative practices ?

What are your concerns about Restorative Practices?

What is one thing you are excited to try before the next meeting?

What have you already tried that resembles Restoratives Practices

Results

Staff Reponse gave information about the readiness of staff and the willingness to move forward with Restorative practices

Our Discoveries

- Teachers are willing to unlearn and relearn how to respond to behaviors
- Teachers are willing to reflect, both individually and with peers, to keep making progress toward using restorative practices
- Students are learning to express themselves with words and have adopted the school pledge
- Teachers are using the school pledge and to foster accountability
- Teachers and students have become purposeful with discussion about behaviors and choices

Where Are We Heading Next

- *Continue proactive approaches like morning meetings, relationship buildings, safe spaces, awareness of feelings and trauma informed discipline.
- *Staff Implementation of Restorative Practice skills with other staff
- *Using Restorative Circles with students and implement into faculty meetings
- *Finding ways to manage time when using Restorative Practices
- *Continued Training

Bibliography

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