

Restorative Justice Practices in School Discipline Policies

What is Restorative Justice?

Restorative Justice is a theory of justice that focuses on repairing the harm done to the victim. It occurs through a cooperative process that includes all stakeholders.

Why are Restorative Justice practices being used in schools?

The previous trend towards 'zero tolerance' has led to increased youth violence. (see attached articles). Exclusionary measures of dealing with children is counterintuitive to the goals of public education, which are to educate all students. As Catholics, we believe that all children can learn and that our duty is to teach them the skills they need to function in society. Restorative justice practices offer a viable alternative that is more appropriate to the school setting.

What does it look like?

- Conferencing/Victim/offender mediation
- Victim assistance
- Offender assistance
- Restitution
- Community service
- Circles
- Town hall meetings

How does it respond to infractions?

- Steps are taken to identify and then repair the harm done
- All stakeholders are involved in the reparation
- The problem is dealt within the community
- Serious infractions continue to have outside involvement (e.g. police)

What are the four key values?

- **Encounter:** opportunities are created for victims, offenders, and community members to meet and discuss the offence and its results
- **Amends:** the offender is expected to take steps to repair the harm they did
- **Reintegration;** the goal is to restore both victims and offenders to the group as contributing members of society
- **Inclusion:** opportunities are provided for group or family conferencing, victim and offender mediation or classroom peace circles.

