

Culture COUNTS

Temperature Check - Measuring What Works

By Randi Downs

Now that some of you have introduced Restorative Practices into your classroom culture, it might be a good idea to “take the temperature” of the community. What has changed? Who is being affected and how? What shifts are occurring in the classroom?

In her article, “8 Tips for Schools Interested in Restorative Justice,” author Fania Davis offers the following questions for teachers to use as they collect data around the power of circles:

- Do they feel a greater sense of safety?
- An increased sense of belonging?
- Are relationships better among students and between students and adults?
- What about between the school, parents, and community?

Asking these powerful questions every quarter or so will help educators observe the positive changes happening when a group chooses to be restorative. Administrators can use these, too! Perhaps these questions can be offered at your next faculty meeting, so all of you can see the amazing ways a culture shifts when we circle up every day.

Davis, F. (2014). 8 Tips for Schools Interested in Restorative Justice. Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/restorative-justice-tips-for-schools-fania-davis>

“Rather than judging students, we should approach them with curiosity and empathy.”

– Dan Hesler,
Special Education Teacher
at Crown Road Campus

Enhanced Communication



Turn this page over to learn more about how students use circles to communicate in the classroom.

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Inspiration from Our Community

“In the circle we are all equal.

When we are in the circle....

No one is in the front,

No one is behind,

No one is above,

No one is below.”

~ Lakota Wisdom

*Thank you to Kim Capalongo,
Cortlandville Campus Social
Worker, for sharing this poem!*



Pictured: Students at Innovation Tech share their ideas and collaborate while sitting in a circle.

Learn More: A Life Space Interview

By Dan Hesler

After a crisis has occurred and the student is returning to baseline, staff have the ability to help the student learn from the event by conducting a Life Space Interview (LSI). Students are more open to listening and trying new skills when in the recovery phase and approached by a trusting adult. Many of the students we work with have difficulties with self-regulation, and the LSI is a specific tool to help teach a young person.

Author Susan Craig calls staff “emotional detectives;” rather than judging students, we should approach them with curiosity and empathy. Following the steps of the LSI provides a therapeutic framework for teaching replacement behavior.

Steps to the Life Space Interview:

- I – Isolate the conversation
- E – Explore the student’s point of view
- S – Summarize the feelings and content
- C – Connect feelings to behavior
- A – Alternative behaviors discussed
- P – Plan developed/ Practice new behavior
- E – Enter student back into the program

More information can be found in your TCI Workbook page W33-W42 and “Trauma -Sensitive Schools: Learning Communities Transforming Children’s Lives, K-5” by Susan Craig.

Restorative Practices at Play: Inspiration from Our Community

Here is an example of Restorative Practices, submitted by Early Childhood Education Career and Technical Education Program Teacher Melissa Kershner at Thompson Road Campus.

“One student a few weeks ago asked, ‘Mrs. K, can I start the circle today? I have a really good question for everyone.’ She then proceeded to ask everyone what they might do to show kindness as we were trying to brainstorm ideas for our classroom’s Rachel’s Door Challenge. They created a list, and we used some of the ideas as we designed our door.”



Pictured: The Early Childhood Education classroom door created by Melissa Kershner’s class, for Rachel’s Door Challenge.



Restorative Practices in the Classroom: Students in Margaret Lucero’s class at Innovation Tech practice circling up.

