

Discipline, Consequences, Interventions, Restorative Practices

Definitions of Common Terms

Discipline

Discipline means to instruct, to train in accordance with the rules, an activity or exercise to improve a skill. Equipping students for behavioral and social success is a school-wide responsibility which requires the commitment and efforts of all adults — not just a select few are perceived as “disciplinarians.”

Consequences

A consequence is the relation of a result to its cause. Every day thousands of consequences occur at school — a class is acknowledged for being ready to work when the bell rings, a teacher banter with a student who disrupts instruction, a staff member corrects (or fails to correct) a student who is out of dress code. In order to effectively respond to human behavior — both staff and student — it is critical to possess a clear understanding of how consequences work, how to apply them with intention, and how to evaluate their effectiveness. It is also important to understand that “consequences” and “interventions” are not synonyms. There are four types of consequences:

- **Penalty – to LOSE something DESIRED**
- **Punishment – to RECEIVE something UNDESIRED**
- **Negative Reinforcement – to AVOID something DESIRED**
- **Positive Reinforcement – to GAIN something DESIRED**

Despite our best intentions, the true nature and effectiveness of a consequence can only be determined by evaluating the outcome. For example, a teacher who notices a student is off task may decide to implement the classic consequence known as the “evil eye.” One student responds with, “oops teacher, I’m sorry” and gets back to work while another student laughs and says, “You look funny when you do that! Do it again!” Why did the same consequence produce an opposite effect? The first student perceived the consequence as a punishment while the second saw it as a positive reinforcement. That is why it is impossible to make statements such as a “suspension is a punishment.” Depending upon the student, a suspension may function as a penalty (losing the privilege of coming to school), a punishment (receiving the stigma of being sent home from school), a negative reinforcement (successfully avoiding having to go to school), or a positive reinforcement (gaining free time at home). It is critical that educators be adept at thoughtfully implementing and evaluating the effectiveness of the consequences they deliver.

Intervention

Behavior interventions are specific actions taken for the purpose of changing the behavior of either an individual or a group of people. Schools may intervene in several ways:

- Increase the Explicitness and/or Frequency of Instruction - The more behaviorally at-risk a person, group, or school is, the more explicit the instruction.
- Acknowledge and correct behaviors
Examples include:
 - Based on a review of school-wide data the staff decides to re-teach the expectation of respect and to increase the levels of acknowledgement and correction of this expectation in all settings.
 - A PBIS Team member provides staff development to the campus supervisors on active supervision practices. The administrator supports the instruction by providing specific feedback and clarification to the campus supervisors whenever possible.

- The counselor provides 8 weeks of individualized skill development to a student on a single skill such as Accepting Criticism/Feedback. The counselor and teacher(s) meet regularly to discuss progress toward skill mastery.

Modify the Environment - Environmental factors and dynamics which inadvertently support and/or promote misbehaviors may be addressed in a number of ways. Examples of environmental modifications include:

- changing school-wide policies/practices such as dress code, or the use of electronic devices
- implementing new procedures
- changing schedules
- creating formal traffic patterns
- changing interactional patterns
- adopting new instructional practices

Address the Function – Problem behaviors may be addressed by identifying and addressing the purpose or function of the behavior. This requires understanding what students are able to gain or avoid by using the misbehavior.

Examples include:

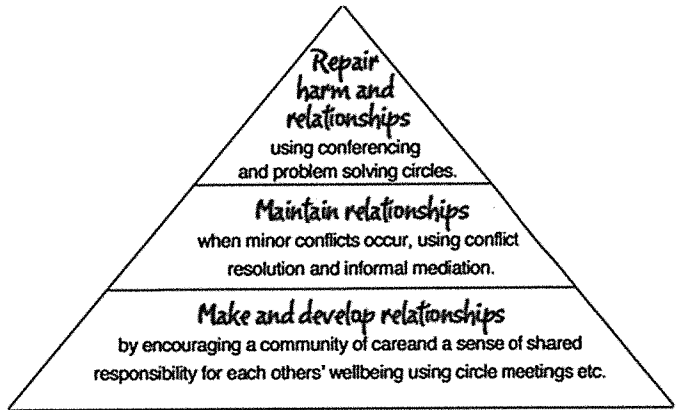
- The 9th grade team is concerned that Rob routinely disrupts instruction in 3rd and 5th periods. After discussing the behavioral specifics, the team realizes that Rob attempts to derail instruction in every classroom by loudly voicing his complaints regarding everything from the length of passing period to the poor quality of food in the cafeteria. Several teachers respond to this tactic by refusing to engage in the conversation saying instead, “remember to use the skill of Giving Criticism or Feedback,” which has proven to be largely effective. The 3rd and 5th period teachers realize they are engaging in content with Rob by either defending their own actions and/or telling him to stop disrupting the learning of others which results in him insisting, “no I’m not.”
- The PE staff is concerned that a large number of students are not dressing for PE. The team realizes that, by directing students to sit on the wall during PE, they are being allowed the opportunity to avoid PE as well as to freely converse with their friends. Although the consequence was intended to function as a penalty it has, in reality, acted as a negative and positive reinforcement system. The PE staff decides that all students will participate in PE whether or not they dress but students who dress for PE will earn a group-wide benefit.

Making modifications to the environment is a powerful tool in changing class, group, and individual behaviors.

Restorative Practices Overview

What are Restorative Practices?

Restorative Practices effectively foster supportive and safe school climates by preventing, addressing, and changing behaviors that hurt individuals, families, schools, and communities. Because they provide structures and skills needed to create and maintain positive relationships, Restorative Practices help strengthen the communication between adults on campus. They are also the preferred approach to address student behavior issues because they reflect the importance of relationships among students and between teachers and students. These approaches provide students with opportunities to develop self-discipline and positive behaviors in a caring, supportive environment. A restorative approach sees conflict or misbehavior as an opportunity for students to learn about the consequences of their actions, to develop empathy with others, and to experience making amends in such a way that strengthens community bonds that have been damaged.



On a Restorative Practices continuum, informal practices include affective statements and questions that communicate people's feelings, and allow for reflection on how one's behavior has affected others. Impromptu restorative dialogues and circles are more structured, while formal conferences require more preparation and include more representation from the community such as family members. Restorative Practices are used in the classroom to help create a caring and supportive environment with a focus on relationship building. They are also used to re-enter students into school after suspension, expulsion or incarceration.

Examples of Restorative Practices

Affective Statements and Questions- Statements and questions that appropriately communicate people's feelings, and allow for reflection on how their behavior has affected others.

Restorative Dialogue- A structured conversation used to resolve conflict or appreciate others and asks some version of the following questions:

- From your point of view, what happened?
- What do you remember thinking at the time?
- How have you and others been affected?
- What feelings and needs are still with you?
- What do you think should happen next?

Classroom Circles- A group discussion format which is a mainstay of Restorative Practices and can be used in a variety of ways including but not limited to:

- Building community
- Making agreements
- Solving problems
- Exploring class material

Restorative Discipline and Other Means of Correction- More formal actions taken by site administration that maintain high behavioral expectations for which all students are held accountable and may be used in lieu of, or in addition to, traditional means of discipline such as suspension. They may include:

- Restorative conferences
- Behavior support plans
- Peer mediation
- Restitution
- Community service
- Referrals to counseling, mentoring, or after-school programs