



MAKING PRACTICES PUBLIC

## Restorative Practices Information

### Part I: Introduction

Restorative practices is a social science that studies how to gain social capital through informal and formal processes that proactively build relationships and a sense of community and belonging to prevent conflict and wrongdoing. Restorative practices also encourage students to develop social emotional skills to help make better decisions. There are several concepts that are helpful in explaining and understanding restorative practices, some of which are described briefly in this overview document.

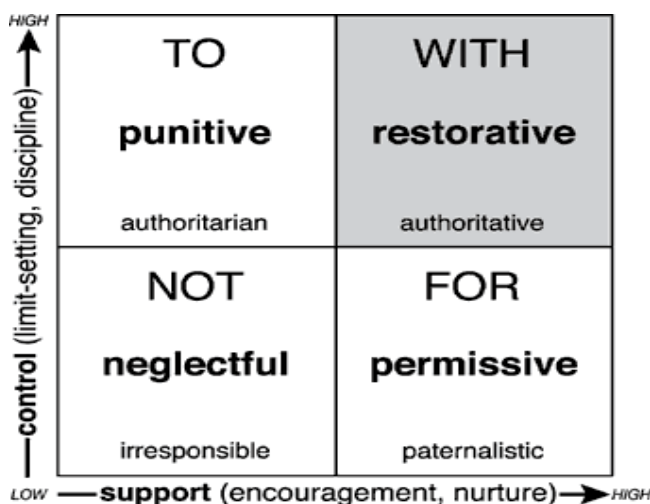


LMSD has carefully researched restorative practices through the work of the Achievement Imperative Taskforce. The framework focuses on developing community and managing conflict and tension by repairing harm and restoring relationships. To that end, the framework explicitly integrates many facets, including, but not limited to the Social Discipline Window\*, the Restorative Practices Continuum\*, Fair Process, the Compass of Shame, and Restorative Processes (Conferences, Circles\*, & Family Group Conferences. (Please note that those items where the asterisks are located are explained in this document.)

The fundamental hypothesis of Restorative Practices is that human beings are happier, more cooperative, and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to or for them.

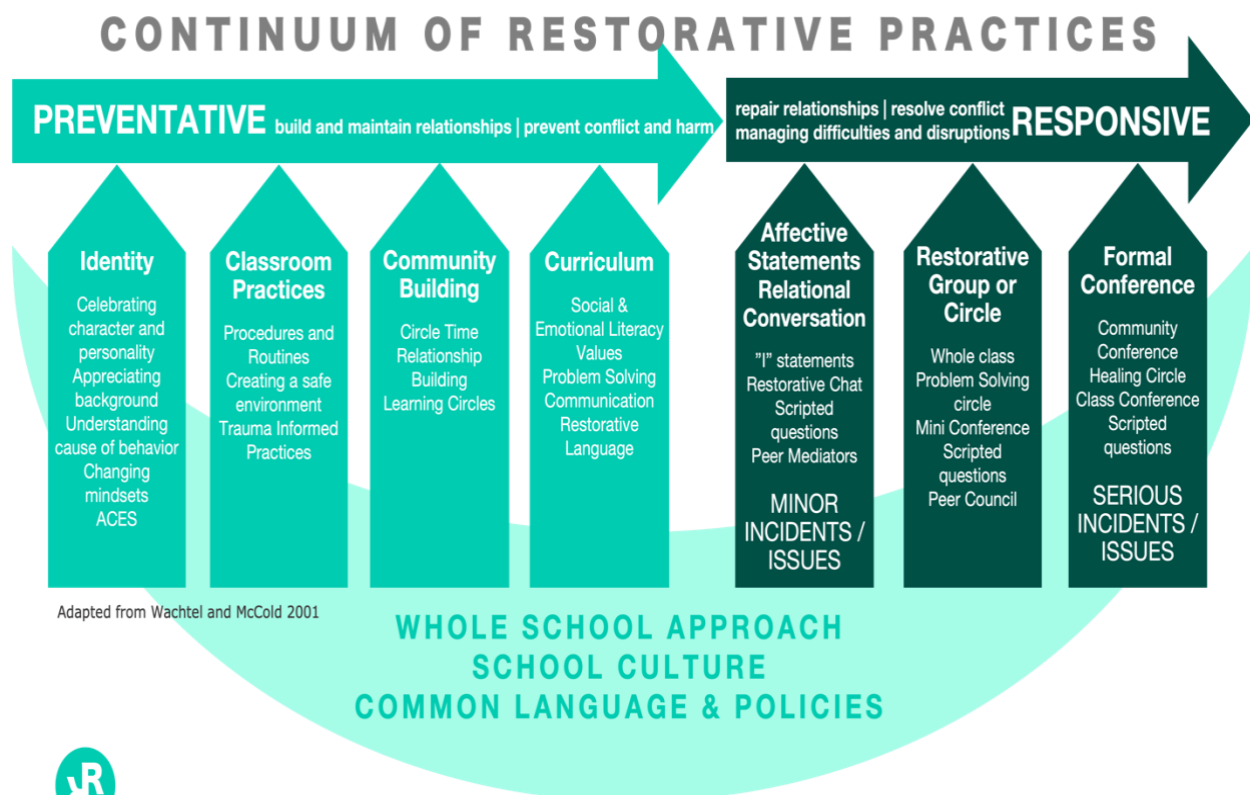
### Part II: The Social Discipline Window

The social discipline window describes four basic approaches to maintaining social norms and behavioral boundaries. The four are represented as different combinations of high or low control and high or low support. The restorative domain is characterized by doing things **with** people, rather than **to** or **for** them. (See the Fundamental Hypothesis under “Background”). This hypothesis maintains that the punitive & authoritarian **to** mode and the permissive & paternalistic **for** mode are not as effective as the restorative, participatory, engaging **with** mode.



### Part III: Restorative Practices Continuum

Restorative practices are comprised of a range of formal (e.g., formal conferences) and informal processes. The informal practices include affective statements that communicate people’s feelings, as well as affective questions that cause people to reflect on how their behavior has impacted others. Impromptu restorative conference, groups, & circles are somewhat more structured but do not require the preparation of a formal conference. The aim of restorative practices is to develop community and to manage conflict and tensions by repairing harm and building relationships. The continuum and its processes make up an 80/20 rule; that is, 80% of the interactions in a restorative framework are proactive and 20% are responsive. Organizations that only use the reactive approaches without building social capital proactively are less successful than those that do.



Adapted from Wachtel and McCold 2001



### Part IV: Circles

A circle is a versatile restorative practice that can be used proactively, to develop relationships and build community, or in response to wrongdoing, conflicts, and problems. Circles give people an opportunity to speak and listen to one another in an atmosphere of safety, decorum, and equality. Circles have a variety of applications such as conflict resolution, decision making, problem solving, academic instruction, information exchange, and relationship development.



## Part V: Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: Why Restorative Practices? Lower Merion School District is committed to providing a safe, supportive, & inclusive learning environment for all students and employees. We firmly believe that a deep sense of belonging is fundamental to our work. This commitment is embedded in the District's official policies as well as the goals of our strategic plan. This is further undergirded by our work with Challenge Success. Our goal, therefore, is to ensure that every student and employee feels dignified and has a sense of belonging no matter what school community they are a part of in LMSD.

Q2: What are the benefits of Restorative Practices? At its core, restorative practices improve the quality of relationships between individuals in a given ecosystem. Using this approach can proactively help individuals to avoid or minimize conflict and help us to manage it better when it does arise.

Q3: Is it true Restorative Practices replaces disciplinary measures? No, this is a common misunderstanding. The aim of restorative practices, as stated above, is to improve the quality of relationships. To that end, when there is harm done and a relationship is affected, restorative approaches seek to bring parties together, understand what happened, and why, and to determine how to make things right moving forward. Restorative practices values dialogue, making amends and repairing harm as an important facet of the disciplinary process, in addition to, not in lieu of our responsibility to address it. The Latin root of the word discipline (discipline) means "instruction given, teaching, learning, & knowledge." Learning occurs through the affective statements and questions, and consequences are embodied in the determination of how to make things right.