



Iowa City Community School District
RESTORATIVE COMMUNITIES GUIDE
2025



**IOWA CITY COMMUNITY
SCHOOL DISTRICT**
All In for All Kids

The ICCSD Community

Our District serves more than 14,000 students and is the 4th largest school district in the state of Iowa. We cover roughly 133 square miles with 20 preschool sites, 20 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, 3 comprehensive high schools, 1 alternative high school, 1 online school, and our Transition Services Center, a program for special education students ages 18-21.

Within each of those 133 square miles and 48 buildings is our community. And within each of those buildings are more, smaller communities. Each of those 14,000 students, and thousands of staff members and their families are our community, too. We value and support each and every one of them, and this guide is for all of us.



A Restorative Vision

Our mission is to move towards transformational education to support our staff, students, and stakeholders. This document will guide our work to wrap our district's community in accountability of courageous social honesty, rooted in restorative practices in all of our buildings.

Beginning with an understanding of what restorative practices are and how to develop a restorative mindset, the guide also includes resources and tools for administrators, educators, staff members, and students to begin evaluating existing practices, as well as resources for strengthening the restorative community in our own schools. This guide was adapted by the ICCSD Restorative team from a wide variety of resources linked and cited in this document.

What are Restorative Practices?

Restorative Practices, (also referred to as Restorative Justice) are some of the most powerful ways that educators can be proactive and build healthy relationships with students, families, and staff in the school community.

Restorative practices focus on students and staff working together to build community, resolve conflict, and promote inclusion, cooperation, equity, and respect in our educational environment and beyond. These practices promote self-regulation and encourage behavior that is supportive and respectful while expecting accountability to repair the harm caused by our actions. In a Restorative Community, students and staff:

- value positive relationships
- model empathy
- value student voice
- view unexpected behaviors as opportunities for learning needed skills
- recognize the importance of repairing damaged relationships
- use active listening

- avoid judging, lecturing or blaming
- practice self-awareness
- Focus on the future

Restorative Practices exist on a continuum and focus on building and maintaining positive relationships throughout the school community, developing a safe, supportive and collaborative learning environment. Practices vary from informal to formal, routine to specialized, and can be approached systematically in three tiers, as may be familiar in other educational frameworks such as MTSS and PBIS.

Restorative Practices are also aligned with the High Reliability Schools framework, specifically in Level 1 which guarantees a safe and supportive school environment and Level 2 which focuses on the quality of classroom instruction through building healthy relationships between the teacher and students.

The universal tier, Tier One, supports all students and staff in building relationships and building community through whole school language and practices such as community building circles or morning meetings, common positive behavior expectations (PBIS), explicit instruction in Social Emotional Learning, and routines like warm welcomes or optimistic closures. Tier two is targeted for students who need more support repairing or reaffirming relationships through problem-solving procedures like restorative questioning, or perhaps who are part of leadership groups like the Justice League or Empathy Warriors. Only 1-5% of students will experience the intensive tier of restorative practices when a plan to re-enter a community is required, or a restorative conference with administration, family members, and others may be necessary.

A Restorative Vision

Our mission is to inspire transformative growth within our educational environment, empowering our staff, students, and stakeholders. This document aims to guide our collective efforts to foster a community grounded in

accountability and courageous social honesty, rooted in restorative practices throughout all our buildings.

To begin, we offer a foundational understanding of restorative practices and strategies for cultivating a restorative mindset. Additionally, the guide provides resources and tools for administrators, educators, staff members, and students to assess existing practices and identify pathways for strengthening the restorative community in our schools. This guide has been thoughtfully adapted by the ICCSD Restorative Team, drawing from a diverse array of resources linked and cited herein.

Beginning with a foundational understanding of restorative practices and fostering a restorative mindset, this document is equipped with a wealth of resources and tools designed for administrators, educators, staff members, and students alike. Together, we can thoughtfully evaluate our current practices and enhance our restorative community within our schools. This guide has been adapted by the ICCSD Restorative team, utilizing a diverse range of expert resources referenced throughout.

Adapted from Restorative Practice, NSW Government education.nsw.gov.au

Developing a Restorative Mindset

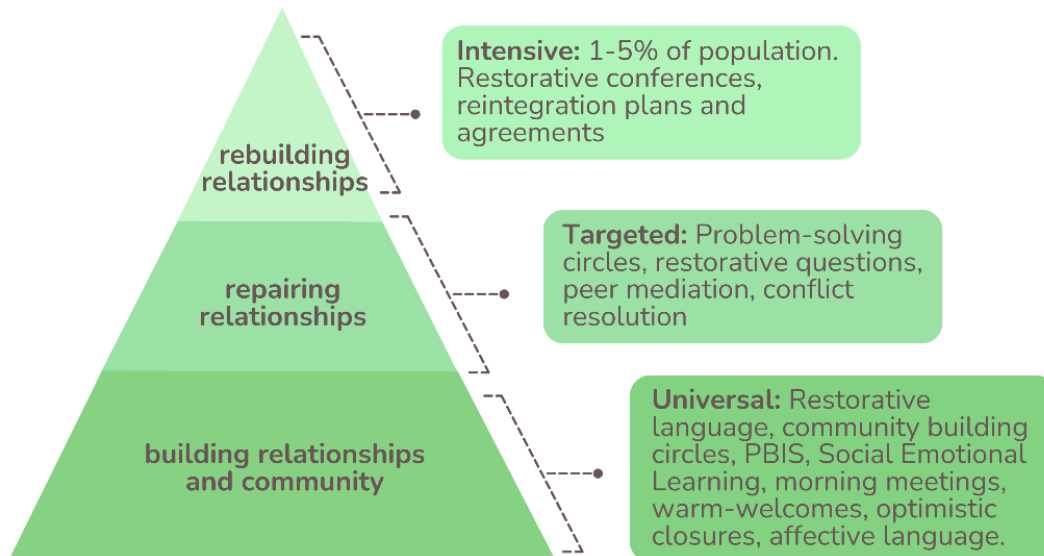
To cultivate and sustain a restorative community, it is essential for educators to first embrace a restorative mindset.

The Chicago Public Schools' Restorative Practice Guide and Toolkit describes a restorative mindset as an understanding of community and one's role within it. Key values and concepts that inform a restorative mindset include:

- Prioritizing relationships and trust as central to community interactions
- Acknowledging that every community member is responsible to and for one another
- Welcoming diverse perspectives and ensuring that all voices are respected

- Recognizing that healing is a vital process for restoring community cohesion
- Encouraging accountability for those who cause harm and supporting their active role in making amends
- Fostering conflict resolution through genuine dialogue and collaborative problem-solving that addresses root causes and the needs of those involved.

We invite each member of our ICCSD community to engage with this restorative vision and mindset as we work collaboratively towards creating a more interconnected and supportive educational experience for everyone.



adapted from Restorative Practice, NSW Government education.nsw.gov.au

Developing a Restorative Mindset

In order to support and maintain a restorative community and implement restorative practices, educators must begin to develop a restorative mindset.

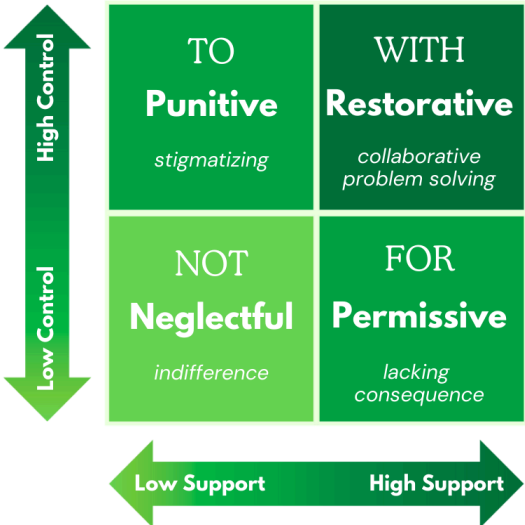
The Chicago Public Schools' [Restorative Practice Guide and Toolkit](#), describes a restorative mindset as “how a person understands community and one’s role in the community. The values and concepts that underlie a restorative mindset include:

- Relationships and trust are at the center of community

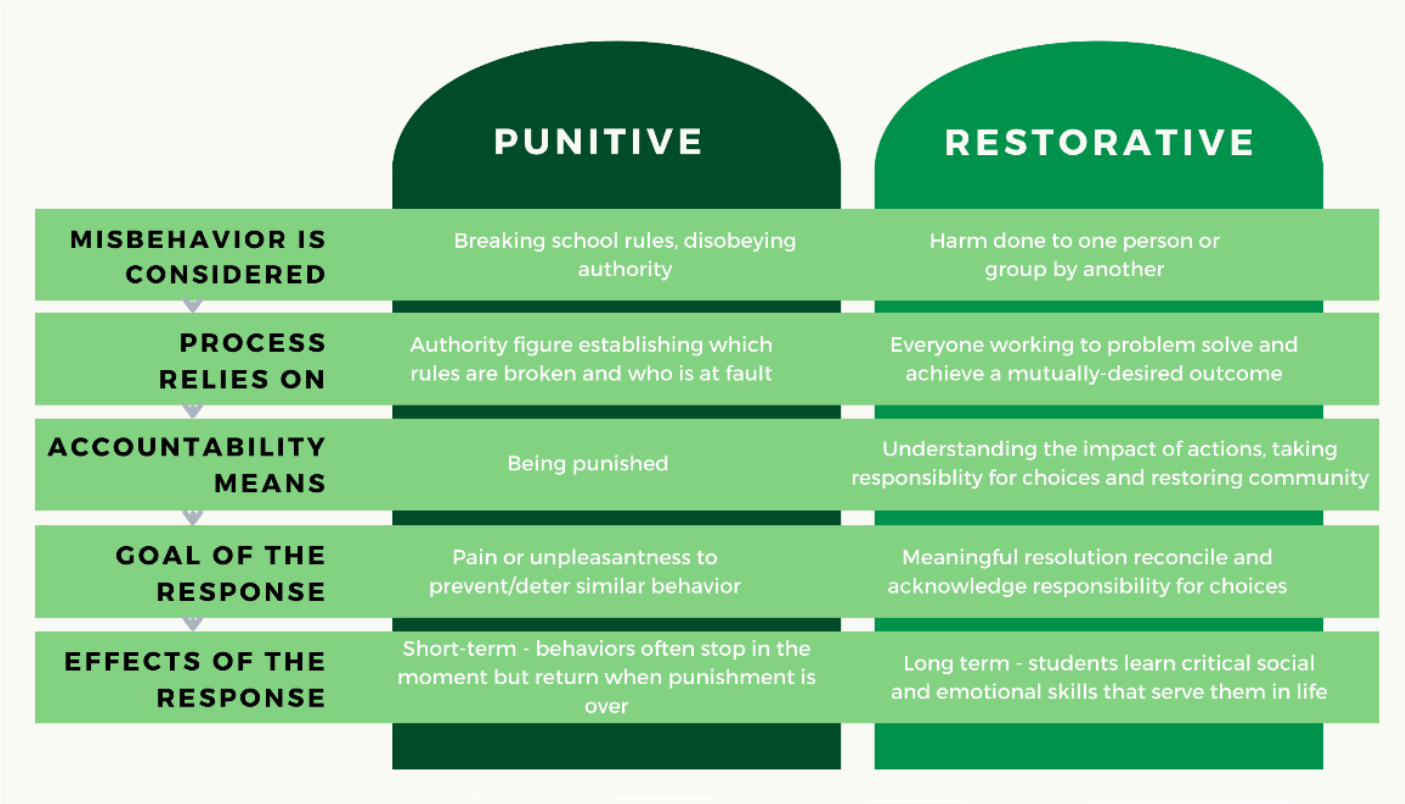
- All members of the community are responsible to and for each other
- Multiple perspectives are welcomed and all voices are equally important
- Healing is a process essential to restoring community
- Harm-doers should be held accountable for and take an active role in repairing harm
- Conflict is resolved through honest dialogue and collaborative problem-solving that addresses the root cause and the needs of those involved” (p. 18)

Restorative Mindset	Non-Restorative Mindset
Intentionally builds relationships and trust within a community	Assumes relationships and trusts exist automatically
Values and welcomes multiple perspectives	Sides with a perspective that aligns with their own values, beliefs, or truths
When harm is caused, the harm-doer is asked to take an active role in repairing it	When harm is caused, the harm-doer is punished or excluded
Interpersonal conflicts are resolved by dialogue that gets to the root of the conflict and finds the best ways to move forward. It includes all parties involved	Interpersonal conflicts do not need to be resolved; they disappear, or are resolved by screaming, violence, or other unhealthy mechanisms
When harm is caused, those affected are acknowledged as needing support	<i>Adapted from the Umoja Student Development Corporation</i>
Believes that ownership of a conversation or process should be collective	

Educators will be familiar with McCold and Wachtel’s (2003) Social Discipline Window, or its precursor by Baumrind and Braithwaite, which describes the relationship between support and control in classroom management. For many, a shift towards a restorative mindset means one away from a punitive approach; instead of doing



something “to” a student for causing harm, a restorative school would ask students to work “with” each other to resolve the conflict.



adapted from CPS Restorative Practice Guide and Toolkit

Evaluating Existing Practices

Considering the Social Discipline Window above, and the elements of a Restorative Mindset, you have likely identified several practices in your own building that are restorative; many existing routines, procedures, and practices in our schools are restorative.

Examples of Restorative Practices

Restorative Practices center on relationships, respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration, and aim to work WITH people, not do things TO them, FOR them, or neglect them.

Restorative practices may include:

- greeting students by name
- positive classroom management strategies
- selective vulnerability
- active supervision
- collaborative problem-solving
- peer mediation
- culturally responsive curriculum
- structured one-on-one conversations
- community building games
- warm welcomes
- check-ins or mood-meters

Restorative practices and PBIS can work hand in hand to build a positive community through teaching expected behaviors and how those behaviors impact others. Many other traditional classroom management strategies can also be viewed through a restorative mindset.

Classroom Practice	Restorative Mindset
<p>Physical Arrangement</p> <p>Traffic patterns are clearly defined</p> <p>Furniture arrangement accommodates all needs and are arranged for maximum visibility and access</p> <p>Materials are clearly labeled, easily accessible, and organized for ease of use</p>	<p>Provides access for everyone to interact in the community. Encourages collaboration and relationship building with others within a welcoming and safe space rather than, creating uncertainty, a sense of coddling that inhibits interactions with multiple perspectives, or a clinic overly focused on processes.</p>
<p>Establishing Expectations, Rules, and Routines</p> <p>Aligned with community-wide expectations</p> <p>Observable, measurable, positively stated, clearly defined,</p>	<p>Everyone has a voice in defining the school-wide expectations through agreed-upon classroom rules and procedures. This creates a community that is responsible for each other and the productive processes of collaboration. Rules and procedures are established as positively stated and pro-social agreements with everyone. Routines support regulation, can develop social-emotional</p>

Classroom Practice	Restorative Mindset
<p>and prominently posted</p> <p>A plan and schedule to actively include everyone in the creation and revisiting of expectations and procedures</p>	<p>competencies, and can strengthen relationships.</p> <p>This builds a community around values and norms rather than uncertainty, mere suggestions on how we relate to each other, or top-down demands.</p>
<p>Active Supervision</p> <p>Scan: Emotional and physical safety</p> <p>Move: All areas with intention</p> <p>Interact: Connect, encourage, reinforce, and pre- correct</p>	<p>Provides a sense of belonging for everyone with physical and emotional safety. Interactions develop and strengthen relationships rather than feeling alone, inhibiting independence like a hovering helicopter, or forced compliance like a guard.</p>
<p>Encouraging Appropriate Behavior</p> <p>Feedback through behavior specific praise statements aligned with community expectations</p> <p>Group and individual acknowledgements to reinforce agreed upon skills</p> <p>5:1 praise to correction ratio</p>	<p>Focuses on authentic strengths and connection. Provides a foundation to building relationships, and keeps adults in a growth mindset. Positive specific feedback builds a sense of belonging and connection. It encourages everyone to do what was agreed upon rather than experiencing the uncertainty of unclear boundaries, short lived connections through flattery, or harming trust due to harsh criticism.</p>
<p>Responding to Problem Behavior</p> <p>Continuum of responses includes: re-teaching of skills, providing choice, redirection, and conferencing</p> <p>Feedback is specific and positively stated and connects to community expectations</p>	<p>Acknowledges the need to put repairing harm done to relationships and people over the need to assign blame or give out punishment, rather than unclear boundaries leading to feeling unsafe, rescue without ownership, or assign blame without repair.</p>
<p>Engagement and Opportunities to Respond</p> <p>Increase opportunities for individual and group responses</p> <p>Opportunities to respond include verbal, written, and action</p>	<p>Active participation with high rates of involvement increases opportunities to make connections and build relationships. All voices are equally important. Intentional use of strategies that allow for all voices to be understood rather than encouraging ideas to be hidden, doing fluffy activities that fill space instead of create meaningful connections, or establish a dominant voice that tells but does not listen.</p>

Adapted from Lincoln Public Schools, Midwest PBIS 2021

Is it Restorative?

Consider other classroom and school practices, procedures or rules in your building through a restorative mindset lens. Which of the following factors are present or missing?

- community, belonging, interconnectedness, trust, and vulnerability
- active listening, valuing student voice, equity of voice
- empathy, avoiding judgment, view unexpected behaviors as opportunities for learning needed skills
- self-awareness, taking responsibility for our actions and their impact on our community, restoration
- repairing relationships, healing rather than blame, focus on the future

What practices in your building could be adjusted to better reflect a restorative mindset?




Tools for Implementation

Tier One

Common Language

Community Focus: whenever possible, focus common language on how our actions impact our community as a whole, and the value we place on our relationships. A strong, healthy community requires all of its members to work together to make it so.

Affective language: Using “I” statements and feelings statements help us with self-awareness, accountability, and emotional regulation.

-  [Empathetic Listening and I Statements - CPS Guide and Toolkit.pdf](#)
-  [Teaching Students to use I feel statements.docx](#)
-  [Affective Statement Sentence Stems Student Copy.docx](#)

- [W Constructing an Affective Statement handout.docx](#)
- [PDF Restorative Communication Handout.pdf](#)

Defining Respect: the word “respect” has different connotations to different people. Some believe it is earned, some believe it must be given no matter what. Having a common definition of respect is essential.

- [Respect Lesson - Character Counts!](#)
- [Respect Lesson and Activities - The Responsive Counselor](#)

Classroom Values and Norms

Alongside PBIS expectations, classrooms and other building communities should discuss and create their own values and norms for a safe, collaborative culture. These norms and values can be revisited, updated, and changed as new members of the community join, or as the community changes in other ways. Norms and values help hold a community accountable to itself.

- [Creating Classroom Norms With Students | Edutopia](#)
- [5 Tips for Creating Collectivist Classroom Culture](#)
- [List of common classroom values](#)
- [Developing Classroom Values Collaboratively With Students](#)

Community Building

Warm Welcomes and check-ins



- [Starting Each Class With a Warm Welcome | Edutopia](#)
- [10 Student Check-In Activities to Connect and Understand - Social Emotional Workshop](#)
- [Building a Better Check-In](#)
- [NewRoot Ice-Breakers and Check-in Questions for Remote Learning.pdf](#)

Games & Activities



- [Philosophical Chairs - Edutopia](#)
- [Community Building Games List - Created by Staff at SEJH](#)
- [Restorative Games](#)
- [GROK Cards](#)
- [Games and Energizers](#)





Morning Meetings and Community Building Circles

Circles and morning meetings in Tier One are not for resolving conflict, but for building relationships; you cannot restore a community before you have built one. Morning meetings and community building circles capitalize on the power of connection through storytelling. Restorative Justice expert Kay Pranis explains, “storytelling is fundamental for healthy social relationships. To feel connected and respected we need to tell our own stories and have others listen. For others to feel respected and connected to us, they need to tell their stories and have us listen. [...] The circle represents a fundamental change in the relationship between students and authority figures. It creates a cooperative atmosphere in which students take responsibility for their actions. Students respond because they feel respected and realize that what they say matters.” The following resources are for developing community building circles and/or morning meetings from a restorative perspective.

- [What Is Morning Meeting? | Responsive Classroom](#)
-  10 Days of Building Community and Circle Capacity Curriculum.pdf
-  Classroom Circle Guide - CPS Guide and Toolkit.pdf
- Other types of Tier One circles include: Celebration circles, Welcome circles, Curriculum circles, Decision Making circles, Norm-setting circles.

Circle Support Resources

-  Would You Rather Questions
-  Circle Question Ideas.pdf

-  Community Building Questions Kay Pranis.pdf
-  Blob Bridge.jpg
-  Blob Soccer.jpg
-  Blob Tree.jpg
- [Feelings Wheel](#)
- [Feelings Chart](#)

Tier Two

Restorative Questions

Staff and students can be trained to use the Restorative Question protocol for any interpersonal conflicts. There is a set of questions to ask the person who has been harmed, and a different set to ask the person who has caused harm. Both sets of questions ask not only what happened, but about how both people were feeling and how they think the other people might have been feeling, with the aim of making the situation better.


Questions for the person harmed:

- What happened?
- What did you think when you realized what had happened?
- What impact has this incident had on you and others?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

Questions for the person who caused the harm:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking of at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who has been affected by what you have done?
- In what way have they been affected?
- What do you think you need to do to make things right?

Ideas for implementing the Restorative Questions school-wide include training paraprofessionals, custodians, bus-drivers, food-service workers and volunteers, and having students practice with role-playing situations.

- [Printable Question Cards](#)
-  Restorative Conversations - CPS Guide and Toolkit.pdf

Tier Three

Flow Chart

Please note that some aspects of tier three practices may not be transparent to all stakeholders to protect the confidentiality of students who may be involved in disciplinary action; however, teachers and other support staff may be asked to participate before, during, or after the process to help a student re-integrate into a community after a suspension or other disciplinary action.

Restorative Student Support Team

Unlike a traditional disciplinary situation in which an administrator may make a decision unilaterally to suspend a student for an infraction, a Restorative Student Support Team would meet to consider alternative options. This team would consist of a combination of administrators, teachers, counselors, and other advocates for the student. Alternatives to a traditional suspension may include placement in “safe seats” in other classrooms for a period of time, asynchronous assignments completed at school, or some other creative solution to keep the student in school and connected to their community.