



# RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

in the School District of University City

**A Guide for Students and Families**

*Transform the Life of Every Student Every Day!*

## WELCOME FROM UNIVERSITY CITY SCHOOLS

Dear Students and Families,

At the School District of University City, we believe every student deserves to feel safe, seen, respected, and connected - every single day.

Restorative practices are one of the most important ways we bring that belief to life. More than a discipline approach, restorative practices are about building strong relationships, strengthening community, addressing harm with accountability and care, and helping students learn, grow, and move forward.

In University City, we believe in: **Building Relationships. Repairing Harm. Restoring Trust.**

These words reflect our commitment to creating schools where belonging comes first, every voice matters, and mistakes become opportunities for learning rather than disconnection.

This guide is designed to help students and families better understand what restorative practices are, how they work in our schools, and how we can partner together to support healthy relationships both at school and at home.

Thank you for being an essential part of our community and for partnering with us in creating schools where every student can thrive.

With appreciation and partnership,



Gary Spiller, *Assistant Superintendent of Student Services and Innovation*

## WHAT ARE RESTORATIVE PRACTICES?

Restorative practices are strategies schools use to build strong relationships, prevent conflict, and fix problems when they happen. Instead of just punishing someone for breaking a rule, restorative practices ask deeper questions:

OLD WAY	RESTORATIVE WAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What rule was broken?</li><li>• Who broke it?</li><li>• What punishment do they deserve?</li><li>• "What is wrong with you?"</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who was harmed?</li><li>• What were they affected by?</li><li>• What needs to happen to make things right?</li><li>• "What happened to you?"</li></ul>

*Restorative practices are not "letting students off the hook." They actually ask MORE of students - to understand the impact of their actions, to take responsibility, and to repair harm. That takes real courage.*

## WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN OUR SCHOOLS?

Restorative practices happen every day - not just when something goes wrong. Here are examples you might see or experience:

EVERY DAY	WHEN CONFLICT HAPPENS	FOR SERIOUS SITUATIONS
Classroom circles - students share and connect	Restorative conversations with a trusted adult	Formal restorative conferences with families
Check-in questions at the start of class	Peer mediation - students help solve problems	Re-entry circles when returning to school
Community-building activities	Problem-solving circles	Healing circles for support and recovery



## OUR CORE RESTORATIVE VALUES

Restorative practices at University City are built on these beliefs:

<b>RESPECT</b>	<b>ACCOUNTABILITY</b>	<b>BELONGING</b>	<b>DIGNITY</b>
<b>EMPATHY</b>	<b>VOICE</b>	<b>REPAIR</b>	<b>COMMUNITY</b>

## ACCOUNTABILITY STILL MATTERS

### IMPORTANT FOR FAMILIES TO KNOW:

Restorative practices do NOT eliminate consequences or student discipline. Students are still expected to follow school rules as outlined by the district Student Expectation Guide and take responsibility for their actions. In University City, we believe safety is always the first priority. Some situations require both restorative support AND disciplinary consequences - and that is okay. Restorative practices are about doing more, not doing less.

## HOW WE ADDRESS HARM

When something goes wrong, we use a process that asks five key questions:

<b>1. What happened?</b>	<i>Everyone involved shares their perspective.</i>
<b>2. Who was affected?</b>	<i>We identify all the people who were hurt or impacted.</i>
<b>3. What was the impact?</b>	<i>We talk honestly about how the harm affected people.</i>
<b>4. What needs to happen to make things right?</b>	<i>We create a plan for repair and accountability.</i>
<b>5. What support is needed going forward?</b>	<i>We make sure everyone has what they need to move forward.</i>



## STUDENT VOICE MATTERS

In restorative practices, your voice as a student matters. You will have opportunities to:

Share your perspective and be heard. Learn communication and problem-solving skills. Be supported through difficult situations. Participate in making agreements for how your school community works.

*Note: Some restorative processes are voluntary. You will never be forced to participate, but you are encouraged to engage - because it works.*

## HOW FAMILIES CAN PARTNER WITH US

We believe students succeed most when schools and families work together. Here is how you can help:

### AT HOME YOU CAN:

- ▶ Ask questions instead of blame - try the restorative questions
- ▶ Listen without interrupting when your child shares
- ▶ Model respectful ways to handle disagreement
- ▶ Encourage your child to take responsibility when they make a mistake
- ▶ Celebrate growth, not just good behavior

### TRY THESE QUESTIONS AT HOME:

- ◆ What happened?
- ◆ What were you thinking at the time?
- ◆ Who was affected by what you did?
- ◆ What can you do to make things right?
- ◆ What do you need going forward?

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Does restorative practice replace consequences?

No. Restorative practices work alongside school discipline policies. Safety and accountability always remain priorities.



<b>What if a student refuses to participate?</b>	Participation in some restorative processes is voluntary. Staff will work to support participation, but no one is forced.
<b>What happens when serious harm occurs?</b>	Student safety comes first. Serious incidents may involve both disciplinary consequences and restorative supports - and that is appropriate.
<b>Does this mean students face no consequences?</b>	No. Accountability and repairing harm are at the center of restorative practices. It actually asks more of students, not less.
<b>Can families be involved?</b>	Yes. Families may be invited into restorative conversations <i>when it is appropriate</i> . You are partners in this process.
<b>How is this different from just talking it out?</b>	Restorative practices follow a structured process that centers dignity, accountability, and repair - not just conversation.
<b>What if my child was harmed?</b>	Your child's wellbeing comes first. We will never pressure a person who was harmed to participate before they are ready.
<b>Who do I contact with questions?</b>	Reach out to your school's main office, counselor, or student services coordinator. See contact information on the website.



## GLOSSARY OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES TERMS

These are key words you may hear related to restorative practices. We want to make sure everyone understands what they mean.

TERM	WHAT IT MEANS
<b>Restorative Practices</b>	Strategies that build relationships, prevent conflict, and repair harm in schools. They help students feel safe, heard, and accountable.
<b>Circle</b>	A structured conversation where everyone sits together, uses a talking piece, and takes turns sharing. Used for building community, solving problems, and addressing harm.
<b>Talking Piece</b>	An object ( <i>like a stress ball</i> ) that is passed around a circle. Only the person holding it speaks. Everyone else listens.
<b>Accountability</b>	Taking real responsibility for your actions and their impact - not just apologizing, but doing the work to make things right.
<b>Repair</b>	The process of making things right after harm has occurred. This might involve an apology, making amends, or changing behavior.
<b>Harm</b>	Hurt or damage caused to a person, a relationship, or a community - physically, emotionally, or socially.
<b>Reentry Meeting</b>	A meeting held when a student returns to school after a suspension or significant absence. It helps the student reconnect and have a plan for success.
<b>Community Building Circle</b>	A circle used to build relationships and belonging - not in response to a problem. These happen regularly in classrooms.
<b>Restorative Conference</b>	A more formal meeting that brings together the person who caused harm, the person harmed, and sometimes families and staff to create a plan for repair.
<b>Peer Mediation</b>	A process where trained student peers help two or more students resolve a conflict with guidance from an adult.
<b>Proactive Practices</b>	Things done before problems happen - like circles, check-ins, and relationship building - to prevent conflict.
<b>Responsive Practices</b>	Things done after harm has occurred - like restorative conversations and conferences - to address impact and repair trust.
<b>Dignity</b>	The quality of being treated with respect and worth. Restorative practices are designed to preserve everyone's dignity - even when holding people accountable.
<b>Belonging</b>	Feeling like you are truly part of a community - valued, seen, and included. A core goal of restorative practices.
<b>Facilitator</b>	The trained adult ( <i>or sometimes student</i> ) who leads a restorative circle or conference. They ensure everyone is heard fairly.
<b>Equity</b>	Making sure every student gets what they need to thrive - not just treating everyone the same.



**MTSS**

Multi-Tiered System of Supports - a framework schools use to make sure all students get the level of support they need.

**THE SDUC RESTORATIVE PROMISE**

*Every child who walks through our doors carries a story we may never fully know.*

*Every adult who shows up each day carries a weight we may never fully see.*

*OUR RESTORATIVE CORE exists because of one belief, held without exception: that people are not their worst moment, that harm can be repaired without being erased, and that accountability and belonging are not opposites — they are partners.*

*This is not a program with an end date.*

*It is who we are becoming, together, one relationship at a time.*

*When one of us is harmed, all of us are diminished.*

*When one of us is restored, all of us are strengthened.*

***I am because we are.***

*This is our promise — to every student, every family, and every adult who chooses this work:*

***YOU BELONG HERE.***

*Even after mistakes.*

*Even after conflict.*

*Even after hard days.*

***YOU BELONG HERE.***



## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

### **We Are Here to Help**

If you have questions about restorative practices in our schools, please reach out:

#### **School District of University City - Office of Student Services**

Main Office: Contact your child's school directly

Website: [www.ucityschools.org](http://www.ucityschools.org)

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