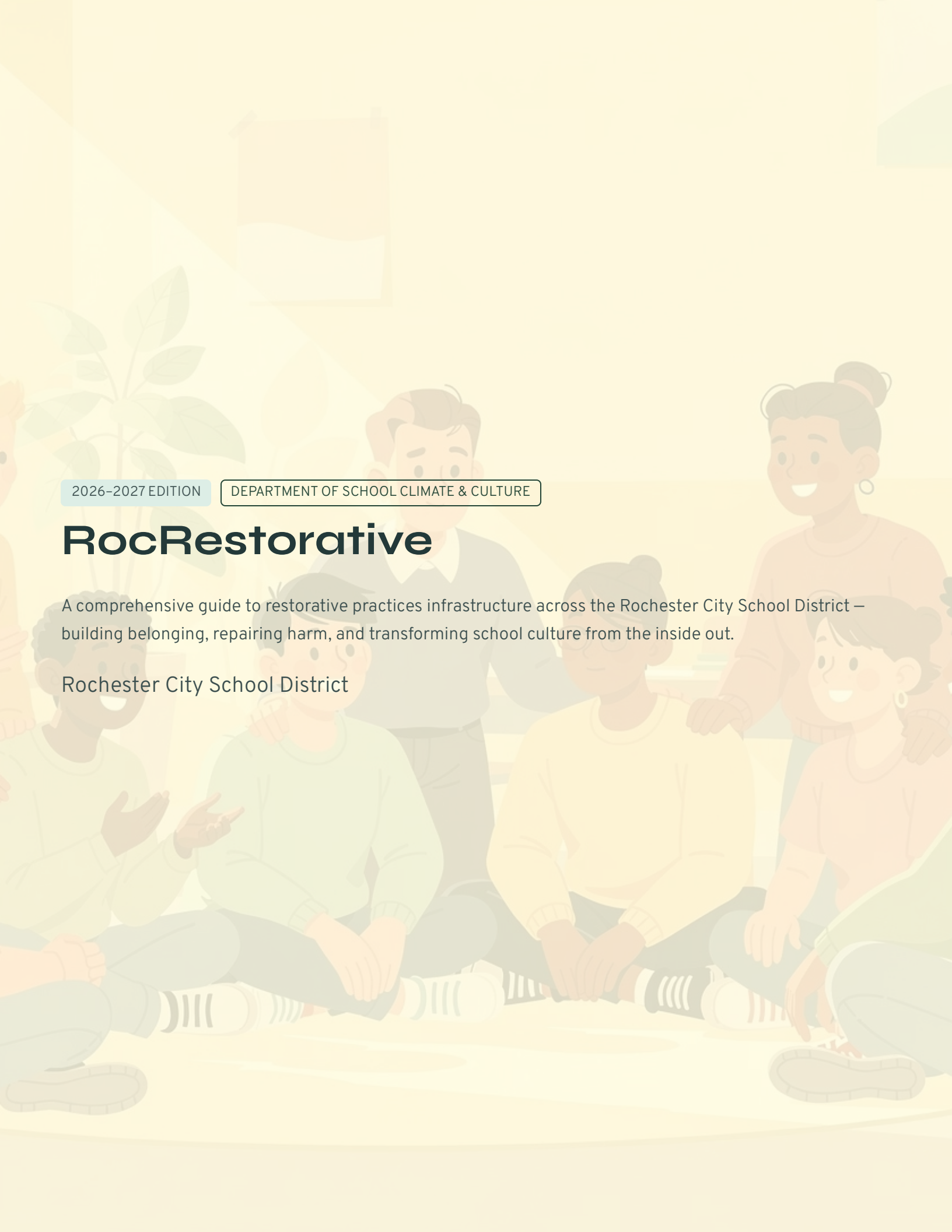




2026–2027 EDITION

DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL CLIMATE & CULTURE

RocRestorative

A comprehensive guide to restorative practices infrastructure across the Rochester City School District – building belonging, repairing harm, and transforming school culture from the inside out.

Rochester City School District

I. Who We Are

RocRestorative is the restorative practices arm of the RCSD Department of School Climate & Culture. We are the people, systems, and structures that ensure restorative practices are not an afterthought or add-on – they are the **foundation of how we do school**. Our work touches every building, every classroom, every relationship in the district. We exist not to manage behavior, but to cultivate the conditions where belonging, accountability, and growth are possible for everyone.

We exist to ensure that:

- **Every student experiences belonging.** Schools must be places where young people feel seen, heard, valued, and safe – not merely supervised.
- **Every adult models relational accountability.** Culture is set by the adults in the building. When we hold ourselves to the same standards of repair and reflection we ask of students, transformation follows.
- **Every building has systems that repair harm rather than remove people.** Exclusion does not teach. Our structures ensure that when harm occurs, there is a clear, consistent, and humane pathway back to connection.

Our Three Core Beliefs

Relationships Before Compliance

Behavior is communication. Connection precedes correction. We lead with curiosity, not control – because students cannot learn from people they do not trust, and trust is built through genuine, sustained relationship.

Accountability Means Restoration

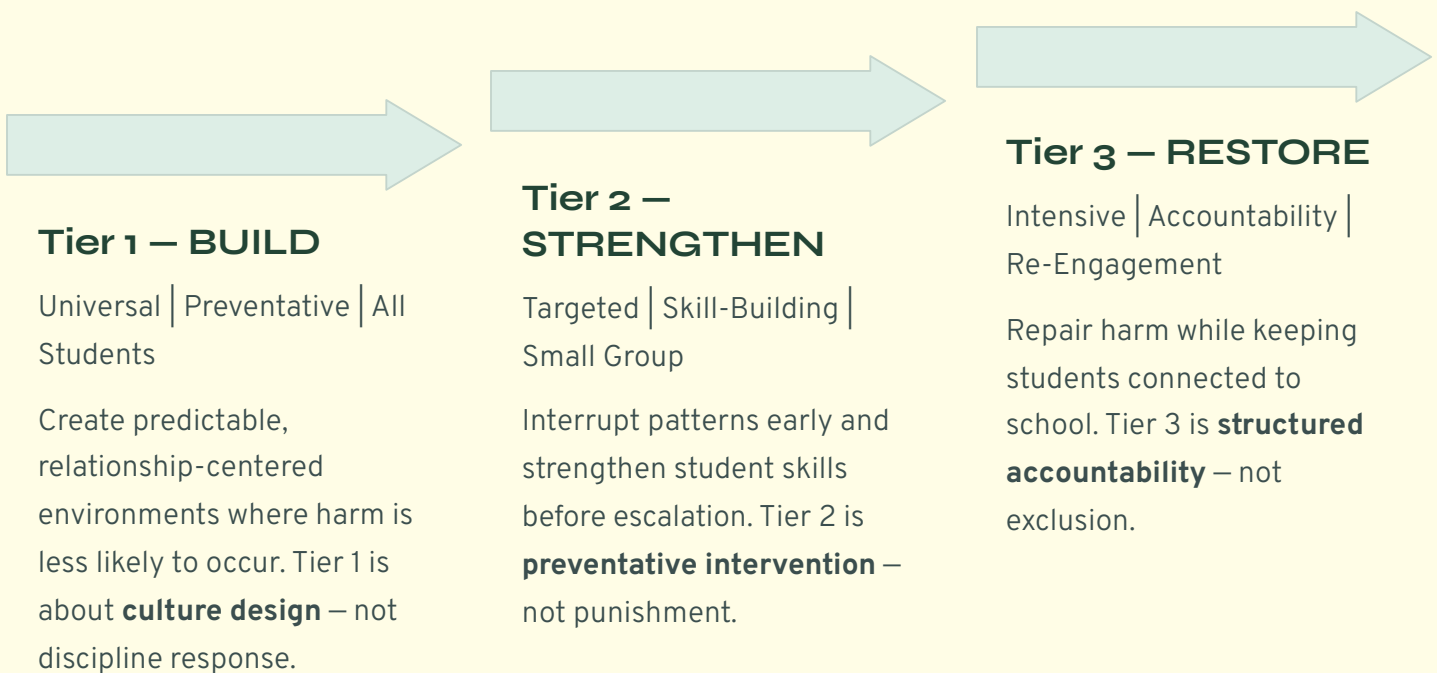
Harm requires acknowledgment, responsibility, and repair – not exclusion. True accountability invites the person who caused harm to understand its impact, take ownership, and actively participate in making things right.

Culture Drives Outcomes

When belonging increases, discipline disparities decrease, attendance improves, and engagement rises. Culture is not a side project. It is the single greatest lever for educational equity and student success.

II. Our Restorative Practices Framework

RocRestorative operates within a three-tier restorative structure that is designed to be proactive, responsive, and restorative at every level. These tiers operate inside the district's broader climate and culture system, but this manual defines them specifically through a **restorative practices lens**. Each tier serves a distinct purpose, engages different levels of intensity, and produces measurable outcomes – but together, they form an integrated system that holds students in relationship rather than pushing them out.



The tiers are not a referral pipeline. They are concentric layers of care – the stronger Tier 1 is, the fewer students need Tier 2 or 3. Every investment in prevention is an investment in equity.

Tier 1 – BUILD: Community-Building Circles & Restorative Language

Tier 1 is the bedrock of everything RocRestorative does. It is universal, preventative, and designed for **all students and all adults** in every building. The purpose of Tier 1 is simple and profound: create predictable, relationship-centered environments where harm is less likely to occur. This is not about responding to discipline incidents – it is about designing a culture that makes belonging the default experience.

1. Community-Building Circles

Circles are the signature practice of restorative culture. When facilitated consistently and with intention, they become the heartbeat of a classroom community. Circles build psychological safety and voice – two non-negotiable conditions for learning.

Regularly Scheduled

Circles happen on a predictable rhythm – not only after conflict. Students come to expect, rely on, and look forward to circle time as a routine part of their week.

Structured & Intentional

Every circle follows clear guidelines and includes connection rounds and reflection prompts. Structure creates safety; safety creates openness.

Adult & Student Facilitated

Adults model facilitation first, and over time, students take on facilitation roles. Shared leadership in circles mirrors the shared ownership of culture we seek.

Embedded in Routine

Circles are not an interruption to learning – they are woven into classroom routines, advisory periods, and staff meetings alike.

2. Restorative Language Modeling

Language is the most powerful tool any educator carries. Restorative language shifts classroom power dynamics from compliance-based authority to relational trust. Adults consistently model four key communication shifts:

Instead Of...

- Judgments
- Commands
- Accusations
- Punishment

We Use...

- Observations
- Requests
- Curiosity
- Problem-solving

This shift is not about being "soft." It is about being **effective**. When students feel respected by the language adults use, they are far more likely to engage, regulate, and take responsibility.

Tier 1 – Professional Learning & Coaching

Restorative practices are only as strong as the adults who carry them. Tier 1 professional learning and coaching ensure that every educator has the knowledge, skills, and ongoing support to build restorative culture authentically and consistently. Professional learning is **not one-and-done**. It is cyclical – because adult growth, like student growth, unfolds over time and requires sustained investment.

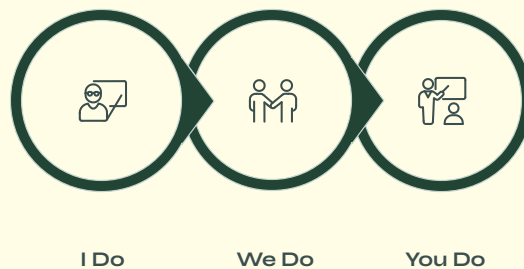
3. Professional Learning

Tier 1 adult learning is designed to build both mindset and skill. It moves educators from understanding the "why" of restorative practices to confidently implementing the "how" in their daily interactions. The learning sequence includes:

01	02	03
Introduction to Restorative Practices Foundational understanding of the philosophy, evidence base, and district commitment to restorative culture.	Restorative Communication Practical skill-building in observations, requests, empathic listening, and affective language.	Honest Expressions Deep practice with observations and requests – the building blocks of every restorative conversation.
04	05	
Community-Building Circles Series Hands-on training in circle design, facilitation, and integration into daily classroom routines.	Identity & Relationship Reflection Critical self-examination of bias, positionality, and the ways identity shapes our practice and our impact on students.	

4. Universal Coaching

RocRestorative coaches are embedded in schools to ensure that professional learning translates into daily practice. Coaching is non-evaluative, capacity-building, and responsive to the unique needs of each building and educator. Coaches operate using a gradual release model that builds independence over time.



Through this model, coaches model circles in classrooms, co-plan with teachers, observe and provide feedback, support action plan alignment, and facilitate staff circles. The goal is always the same: **sustainable internal capacity** so that restorative practices live in the hands of every adult, not just the coach.

Tier 1 Adult Expectations

Every adult in the building commits to these non-negotiable practices:

- Build relationships before addressing behavior
- Facilitate circles regularly
- Use restorative language
- Reflect on bias and impact
- Participate in professional learning

Tier 1 Outcomes

Increased Student Belonging Students report feeling seen, safe, and valued in their school community.	Reduced Classroom Removals Fewer students are excluded from instruction for behavioral concerns.	Increased Emotional Vocabulary Students and adults develop richer language for expressing needs and feelings.
Improved Staff-Student Trust Relationships deepen, and students are more willing to seek adult support.	Improved Climate Survey Results School climate data reflects a more positive, inclusive learning environment.	

Tier 1 builds the foundation for everything else. Without strong universal culture, targeted and intensive supports cannot succeed.

Tier 2 – STRENGTHEN: Targeted Interventions

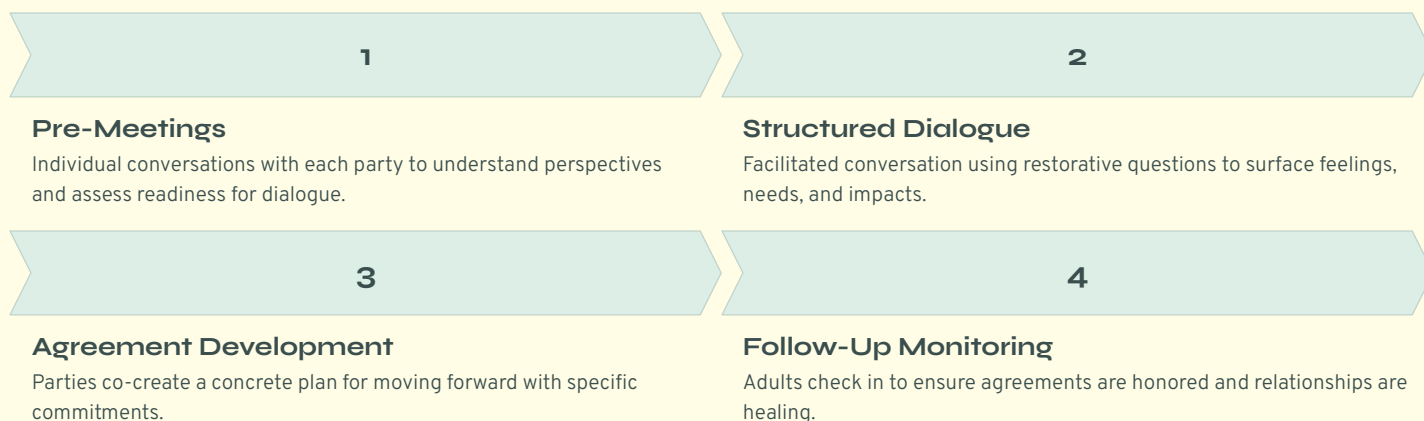
When Tier 1 culture is strong, most students thrive. But some students need additional support – not because something is "wrong" with them, but because they are communicating a need that universal systems alone cannot meet. Tier 2 is designed to **interrupt patterns early and strengthen student skills before escalation**. It is preventative intervention, not punishment. Every Tier 2 practice is rooted in the same relational principles as Tier 1, but delivered with greater intensity and specificity.

1. Skill-Building Restorative Circles

Small group circles are structured, intentional sessions that go beyond community-building to target specific relational and self-regulation skills. These circles focus on conflict resolution, communication skills, emotional regulation, accountability, and peer relationship repair. Groups are identified through data – referral patterns, attendance trends, and teacher observations – and participation is framed as a strength-based opportunity, never as a consequence.

2. Solution-Focused Mediation

When conflict is emerging but not yet escalated, solution-focused mediation provides a structured pathway to resolution. This is a proactive tool that prevents small tensions from becoming major incidents.



3. Help Zone Support & 5. Re-Engagement Support

Help Zone Support provides staff training in structured support spaces where students can access regulation strategies, reflection protocols, and reintegration conversations. These spaces are not "time-out rooms" – they are intentionally designed environments where students build the self-awareness and skills to return to learning successfully.

Re-Engagement Support is activated for short-term removals or repeated referrals. It includes scripted restorative conversations, family communication, reintegration planning, and monitoring plans. The message to students is clear: *you belong here, and we are going to work together to get you back on track*.

Tier 2 Adult Expectations & Outcomes

Adults Will:

- Identify patterns early
- Refer students appropriately
- Participate in restorative conferences
- Monitor agreements
- Track data

Expected Outcomes:

- Reduced repeat referrals
- Reduced escalation to Tier 3
- Increased student problem-solving capacity
- Increased peer accountability
- Reduced disproportionality in discipline

Tier 2 strengthens skills before crisis. It is the bridge between universal prevention and intensive intervention – and it keeps students connected to their community.

Tier 3 – RESTORE: Building-Level Accountability & Repair

When serious harm occurs, the instinct in many school systems is to remove the student. But removal without repair teaches nothing – it only displaces the problem and damages trust. Tier 3 is designed to **repair harm while keeping students connected to school**. It is the most intensive level of restorative support, reserved for situations involving serious incidents, ongoing conflict, harm impacting multiple parties, or safety concerns. Tier 3 is structured accountability – not exclusion.

A. Building-Level Tier 3

Formal Restorative Conferences

Restorative conferences are the cornerstone of Tier 3. They bring together the person who caused harm, the person(s) harmed, and supporting community members in a structured process designed to achieve acknowledgment, accountability, and repair. Conferences are facilitated by trained staff and follow a clear six-step structure:

1 Pre-Meetings

Individual conversations with all parties to prepare them for the conference, assess safety, and clarify the process.

2 Harm Acknowledgment

The person who caused harm hears directly about the impact of their actions – not through a report, but from the people affected.

3 Impact Statements

Those harmed share their experience – their feelings, their needs, and what would help them feel safe moving forward.

4 Accountability Planning

The group collaboratively identifies what the person who caused harm can do to take responsibility and begin repair.

5 Repair Agreement

A written agreement with specific actions, timelines, and monitoring adults is developed and signed by all parties.

6 Reintegration Timeline

A clear plan for the student's return to full participation in the school community, with built-in check-ins and supports.

Harm Repair Plans

Written agreements are not symbolic – they are operational documents. Every Harm Repair Plan includes specific actions the student will take, a clear timeline, a designated monitoring adult, and a follow-up date. **Accountability must be visible and measurable**. When students see that the community takes repair seriously, they learn that their actions matter – and that they have the power to make things right.

Family Conferences & Individualized Re-Engagement

Families are essential partners in Tier 3 work. They participate in reflection, reintegration planning, agreement development, and ongoing monitoring communication. Restorative work is relational – not internal. It extends beyond the school walls to include the people who matter most in a student's life.

For students returning after a suspension of 5+ days, a placement change, hospitalization, or extended absence, an **Individualized Re-Engagement Plan** is required. This includes a staff alignment meeting, a student reflection conversation, family communication, a classroom reintegration strategy, and a monitoring plan.

- ❑ **Re-entry without a plan is not restorative.** Every student deserves a structured, supportive pathway back to their school community – one that addresses the harm, strengthens the relationship, and sets the student up for success.

The Restorative HUB – District Tier 3 Support

The Restorative HUB is the centralized Tier 3 support structure for the Rochester City School District. It exists to provide expert-level restorative services that supplement and strengthen building-level capacity. The HUB is **not an alternative placement** – it is a repair and reintegration infrastructure designed to keep students connected to their home school while providing the intensive support that serious situations require.

HUB Services



Mediation

Expert-facilitated mediation for complex interpersonal conflicts that require neutral, skilled facilitation beyond what buildings can provide independently.



Restorative Conferencing

Formal conferences for serious incidents, multi-party harm, or cases requiring cross-building coordination and specialized expertise.



Academic Continuity

Structured academic engagement during suspension periods so students do not fall behind while repair work is underway.



Drop-In Engagement

Flexible, structured engagement opportunities for students in transition or crisis – providing stability and connection during difficult moments.



Family Partnership

Deep engagement with families as partners in the restorative process – not as recipients of notification, but as co-creators of solutions.



Cross-Department Coordination

Collaboration with mental health, special education, attendance, and other departments to ensure holistic, aligned support for students.

Building Capacity Through the HUB

The HUB's ultimate goal is not to become a permanent dependency for schools – it is to build **sustainable internal capacity in every school**. The same gradual release model used in coaching applies here:

I Do

HUB staff model restorative conferences and mediations for building teams.



We Do

Building staff co-facilitate alongside HUB specialists, building confidence and skill.



You Do

Building staff lead independently, with the HUB available for consultation on complex cases.

Tier 3 Outcomes

Tier 3 restores dignity while maintaining accountability. It sends a powerful message: **you caused harm, and you belong here, and we will walk through this together.**

III. Student Leadership Structures

Student leadership is embedded across all tiers of RocRestorative – not as an extracurricular or reward, but as a **core component of the restorative infrastructure**. Students are not passive recipients of culture. They co-create it. When young people are given the skills, structures, and trust to lead, they transform the culture of their schools in ways that adults alone cannot achieve.

Student voice is not a nice-to-have – it is a restorative imperative. Students who have been harmed by systems need to see themselves reflected in the solution. Students who have caused harm need pathways to give back and rebuild trust. Student leadership provides both.



Circle Champions (Grades 4–8)

Circle Champions are trained to facilitate community-building circles, model discussion rounds, and support younger peers. They bring authentic student voice into Tier 1 practices and multiply the number of skilled circle facilitators in every building. Their leadership strengthens the foundation of school culture from the ground up.



RocResponders (Grades 9–12)

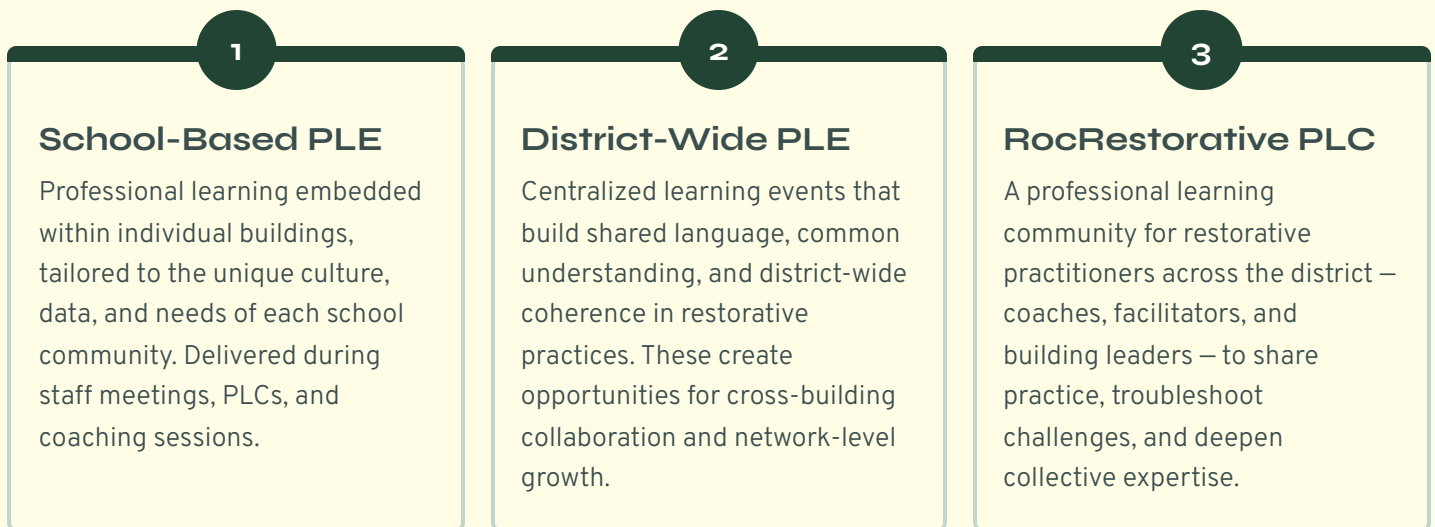
RocResponders are trained in empathic listening, restorative questioning, peer conflict navigation, and de-escalation. They extend adult capacity by serving as trusted peers who can intervene in low-level conflicts, model accountability, and create a culture where students hold one another with care and honesty.

Both programs are designed with intentionality: students are recruited from diverse backgrounds, including those who have themselves experienced conflict or harm. Leadership is not reserved for the "well-behaved" – it is available to anyone willing to learn, grow, and serve their community. This is restorative practices in action.

IV. Professional Learning Structure

Restorative practices cannot be sustained by policy alone – they live or die in the daily actions of adults. That is why professional learning is one of the most critical investments RocRestorative makes. Learning is **ongoing, cyclical, data-informed, and aligned to school action plans**. It is never one-and-done, and it is never generic. Every learning experience is designed to deepen both mindset and skill, so that restorative practices become second nature for every educator in the district.

Three Learning Pathways



Learning Domains



V. Coaching Model

RocRestorative coaches are the connective tissue between professional learning and daily practice. They operate across all three tiers, embedded in schools to ensure that restorative practices are not just understood but consistently implemented with fidelity, intentionality, and heart. Coaching is **non-evaluative, capacity-building, aligned to fidelity, and responsive to data**. Coaches are not supervisors – they are partners in the ongoing work of culture transformation.

Quarterly Coaching Cycle

Every coaching relationship follows a structured quarterly cycle that ensures continuous growth, accountability, and alignment with building-level goals. This cycle keeps the work focused and forward-moving.

Action Plan Review

Coach and building team review the school's restorative practices action plan, assess progress, and identify priorities for the quarter.

Adjustment

Based on data and reflection, the team adjusts strategies, targets, and supports for the next quarter.



Classroom Modeling

Coach models circles, restorative conversations, and language in real classroom settings while educators observe and learn.

Co-Facilitation

Coach and educator co-facilitate circles and restorative practices together, sharing leadership and building confidence.

Data Reflection

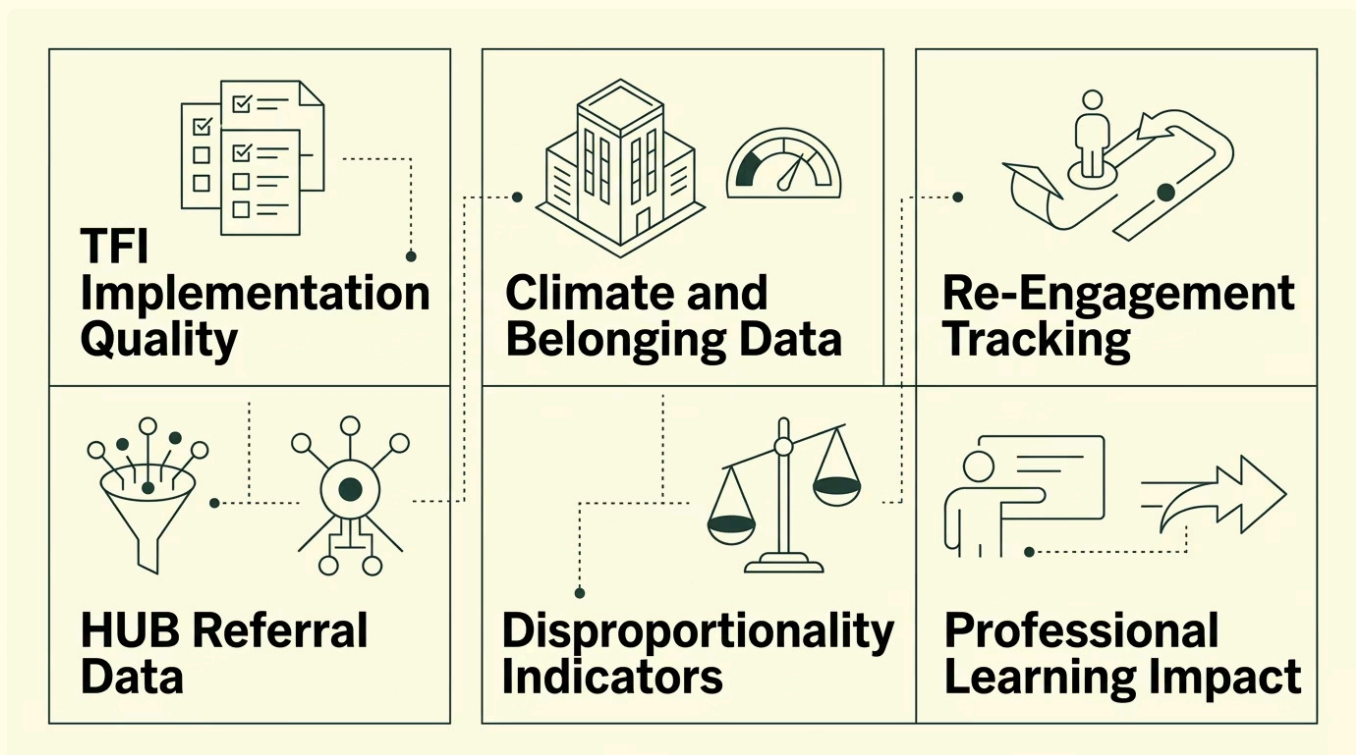
Coach and team examine climate data, referral patterns, circle frequency, and fidelity measures to assess impact.

This cycle repeats throughout the year, creating a rhythm of modeling, practicing, reflecting, and refining that mirrors the very restorative principles we teach. Coaches do not deliver a program and leave – they walk alongside educators in the sustained, sometimes difficult, always rewarding work of building a restorative school community.

VI. Fidelity & Accountability

Restorative practices are **district infrastructure – not optional programming**. That distinction matters. Infrastructure requires measurement, accountability, and continuous improvement. If we do not track what we do and assess whether it is working, we cannot claim to be serious about equity, belonging, or student outcomes. Fidelity measurement ensures that restorative practices are implemented consistently across the district, and accountability structures ensure that the work is sustained over time.

What We Measure



Each of these data points tells a story. Together, they paint a comprehensive picture of whether our restorative infrastructure is achieving what it was designed to do: reduce exclusion, increase belonging, close equity gaps, and build a culture where every student and every adult can thrive. Data is not used punitively – it is used restoratively, as a mirror that helps us see where we are, celebrate our growth, and identify where we need to invest more deeply.

-  **A note on disproportionality:** One of the most important functions of our accountability system is tracking whether restorative practices are reducing – not reproducing – the racial and demographic disparities that have historically defined school discipline. If our data shows that certain groups of students are still being excluded at higher rates, that is a signal to examine our systems, not our students.

VII. What RocRestorative Is

RocRestorative is more than a set of practices or a department within the Rochester City School District. It is a commitment – a promise to students, families, and educators that we will do the hard, sustained work of building schools where every person is valued, every relationship matters, and every harm is an opportunity for growth. It is restorative infrastructure rooted in belonging.

✓ Relationship-Centered

Every practice, every strategy, every system begins and ends with relationship. We do not do restorative work *to* students – we do it *with* them.

✓ Equity-Driven

We name and confront the disparities in our systems. Restorative practices are an equity strategy – intentionally designed to disrupt the patterns that push our most marginalized students out.

✓ Skill-Building

We teach the skills that make community possible – empathy, communication, accountability, conflict resolution, and self-regulation – for students and adults alike.

✓ Accountability-Focused

Restorative does not mean permissive. We hold high expectations for behavior, and we provide the structures and support to meet those expectations with dignity.

✓ System-Embedded

Restorative practices are not an add-on or a pilot program. They are woven into every tier, every building, every policy, and every professional learning cycle in the district.

✓ Data-Informed

We measure what matters, reflect on what we find, and adjust our course. Data is our compass – not our weapon.

✓ Capacity-Building

Our goal is not dependence on specialists – it is a district where every adult has the knowledge, skills, and confidence to lead with restoration.

RocRestorative is restorative infrastructure rooted in belonging.

It is how we build schools worthy of our students – schools where harm is met with humanity, accountability is paired with care, and every child knows they have a place.

