

Finley Middle School

Restorative Justice

Restoring Relationships &
Accountability in Our
School Community



What is Restorative Justice?

Definition: A philosophy focused on repairing relationships, promoting accountability, and fostering understanding.

Key Practices:

- Reflective practices
- Restoring relationships between students, staff, and the community

Purpose of the Program

- **Goal:** Hold students accountable for their actions; Develop positive, supportive relationships to prevent conflicts and create a better learning environment.
- **Focus:**
 - a. Understand that choices have consequences.
 - b. Teach that consequences can be either positive or negative.
 - c. Help students learn from mistakes and make better choices.
 - d. Repair relationships with those affected.
 - e. Create mutual understanding between students and staff.

	<u>In School Suspension</u>	<u>Restorative</u>
Purpose	Punitive, to remove the student from class	Rehabilitative, to repair harm and promote accountability
Focus	Isolation	Reflection, relationship repair, and making amends
Student Experience	Isolated, often with minimal engagement or reflection	Active involvement in discussion and conflict resolution
Relationship Repair	None, the student is removed from social interaction	Key focus on repairing relationships
Long-Term Impact	Limited, may increase resentment or isolation	Positive, fostering empathy, responsibility, and growth.
Staff Involvement	Limited to supervision	Active facilitation of reflection and restorative talks
Accountability	Through punishment (removal)	Through dialogue and understanding impact

Implementation at Finley:

2022/2023 School Year:

- **Full Implementation of Circle Discussions with Specific Topics**

Fall 2023:

- **Team Leadership Training for Implementing Restorative Justice**
 - Online state program that was attended by all members of the Restorative Circle Committee

January 2024:

- **Attended NYSMSA Long Island Conference**
 - Gained new insights and strategies for enhancing restorative practices within the school system.

March 2024:

- **Oceanside Middle School Visit**
 - Observed and learned from Oceanside Middle School's successful implementation of restorative justice programs.
- **Pilot Program at Finley Middle School**
 - Implemented a pilot restorative justice program at Finley, using strategies learned from Oceanside.
 - Focused on addressing selected discipline infractions through restorative methods.

Implementation at Finley:

June 2024:

- **Team Meeting for Process Refinement**
 - Met with the restorative justice team to streamline and refine the program's procedures:
 - Determined criteria for who receives a restorative session.
 - Clarified roles: facilitator, reflection leader, and presentation team members.

Summer 2024:

- **Renamed and Revamped the ISS Room**
 - Changed the room name from ISS (In-School Suspension) to the "Restorative Room" to align with the new approach.
 - Renovated the room to create a more inviting, calming space.
 - Added a Smart Board to enhance the restorative experience.

September 2024:

- **Full Implementation of Restorative Justice**
 - Officially launched the restorative justice program across the school, with all staff trained and practices fully integrated into the disciplinary process.

How Restorative Justice Works

Engage Parents/Scheduling

Parent engagement takes place as soon as a Code of Conduct violation is reported. If founded, a restorative session is scheduled.

Independent Reflection

Students are given an opportunity to reflect independently. This allows them to think critically about their actions, the consequences of those actions, and their emotions at the time of the incident.

Reflection with Counselor

After the independent reflection, a **counselor or restorative facilitator** will work with the student to help them explore their thoughts and feelings more deeply. This staff member will guide the student through a more structured conversation to ensure they fully grasp the impact of their actions.

Research Project

Students complete a learning project based on the offense they committed. The purpose of this project is to help students reflect on their actions and understand the impact of their behavior.

Example: Research project, watch videos, read articles.

Presentation

Before the student presents, administrators, dean, teachers, staff members, and student sets an intention for the meeting. This shows the student they have support, creating a positive and collaborative environment focused on their growth and success. Student shares their reflection in the form of a presentation.

Reflective Practices: Questions for Reflection

During a restorative session, students reflect on the following questions:

1. **What happened?**
2. **What were you thinking at the time?**
3. **Who has been impacted by your actions? How have they been impacted?**
4. **If this happened anywhere else, such as a public setting or outside of school, what could have happened?**
5. **How could this have been handled differently?**
6. **What do you think you need to do to make things right?**

Reflection Questions

What Happened?

Please explain in your own words what happened.: **I got into a fight, I went onto a different bus that wasn't the bus i was assigned to. The bus driver had to stop the bus. This was completely premeditated on my part I knew there was going to be a fight and I did not wish that i got into one knowing there was a chance that I was going to get into one.**

What were you thinking at the time?

I felt mad that there was a false rumor being spread about me I had no idea that there was a rumor about me until I saw people coming up to me asking about the situation I was thinking that I needed to post publicly in order to make her privately respond to me.

Who has been affected by your actions and how?

Me, [redacted] my parents and J [redacted] were affected. Me and [redacted] were affected because we both got in trouble for stealing. J [redacted] got his stuff stolen so that's how he got affected. And my parents got affected because they were in work and they got a call while there in work which could have gotten them worried.

If this happened in a public setting or the "real World" outside of school, what could have happened?

Other people could of got hurt from what i have said, some could be impacted and they could be bullied and I could get hurt from people that are mad at me for what i have said.

How could this have been handled differently?

I think this could be handled differently if I were to give the tag to [redacted] than none of this would have happened.

What do you think you need to do to make things right?

Say sorry to [redacted] again and control my anger by stepping away and telling an adult about what is happening in the situation. Moving forward if i find myself getting nger i will talk to my best friend krystal or go talk to my counselor.

Why Involve the Whole School Community?

Fosters a Collaborative School Culture: Including all parties builds trust and open communication, strengthening relationships among students, staff, and parents, creating a positive school environment.

Encourages Ownership and Accountability: Restorative practices involve all parties in problem-solving, promoting shared responsibility, empathy, and constructive resolutions.

Supports Positive Behavioral Change: When all stakeholders participate, it prevents future conflicts, reinforces positive behavior, and sets role models for students.

Is It Working?

Total number of students that have participated in a Restorative Session - 29

Monthly Breakdown:

- September - 9
- October - 14
- November - 10
- December - 3

Potential reasons for a Restorative Session: physical altercation, racial slurs, social media postings, inappropriate language, stealing.

Repeat Offenders

6 students have had more than one Restorative Session and only 1 of them for the same offense.

Next Steps:

- Some of these repeat students have participated in the Huntington Youth Court system

Conclusion & Next Steps

Restorative Justice focuses on repairing relationships, fostering accountability, and involving the entire school community.

Next Steps:

- Continue fostering a restorative culture at Finley Middle School.
- Encourage student and staff involvement in ongoing reflection efforts.
- Create an environment for students who are struggling emotionally to have a safe space in the building.