



JANUARY 2017

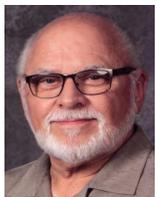
Coordinator's Corner

As we enter 2017, our two school newsletters have been merged into one, the appearance is different, and our focus will be on revised objectives.

The Restorative Practices program is now in its fifth year at New Haven High School. For this current school year we created a like program now provided at Endeavour Middle School as well. Each functions from separate Offices of Student Conflict Resolution.

The entire program has a greater importance this year with the recent passage of legislation that allows local school district boards greater discretion when deciding on punitive actions for students. A major aspect of the new state adopted guidelines that take effect in August is an emphasis on use of the processes of restorative practice.

I look forward to the near future as we access added resources that will allow us to utilize those concepts now widely recognized as being effective and productive ways to address student conflict while teaching long-term life skills. What will not change is my invitation to you to ask questions and offer your comments. Please do not hesitate to do so.



David Gillis
Coordinator
Office of
Student
Conflict
Resolution

The Peacemaker

New Haven Community Schools / Office of Student Conflict Resolution

Legislation Emphasizes Restorative Practices

Under legislation signed by Governor Rick Snyder in mid-December, local school boards will now have more discretion when making decisions on punitive actions for students, such as suspension or expulsion.

Under existing state law, many districts employ a "zero tolerance" policy, meaning there is no ability to consider a student's age, developmental disabilities or intent when deciding on punishment.

"We are giving school districts the flexibility to consider many factors when making decisions on disciplinary actions for students," said the Governor. "No longer will every student be immediately suspended or expelled due to misconduct. This is similar to measures we have taken to reform our criminal justice system by emphasizing restorative justice."

House Bills 5618-5621 and

5693-95, sponsored by state Reps. Andy Schor, Al Pscholka, Adam Zemke, Lisa Posthumus Lyons, Martin Howrylak, David LaGrand and Peter Lucido, respectively, will require school officials to consider situation-specific factors before suspending or expelling a child. These factors may include age and disciplinary history, whether the child has a disability, and whether the behavior threatened the safety of another student or staff member. The legislation also encourages the practice of restorative practices or lesser punishment if they properly address the violation.

The bills reflect cooperative agreement between the education community, probate judges and the ACLU. They are now referred to as Public Acts 360 through 366 of 2016.

While New Haven Community Schools will review how

the newly passed legislation will impact its operations, they are far ahead of the curve on the strongly urged use of restorative practices.

In cooperation with The Resolution Center in Mt. Clemens, the school district adopted a restorative justice program for New Haven High School in early 2012. Since then, the program has grown to include many of the processes of restorative practices. They are now offered from the Office of Student Conflict Resolution.

For the current school year, the program was implemented at Endeavour Middle School, which now utilizes the processes of restorative conferencing and conflict coaching. Its first class of student "Peacemakers" was recently graduated. The student-based peer mediation and peacemaking circle processes will soon be used at the school.

Two "Peacemaker" Classes Completed

Eleven new student "Peacemakers" have been added to the peer mediation and peacemaking circle processes within the school district.

At New Haven High School, six students completed the multi-hour training program offered over a seven week period. The "Peacemakers" team at the

high school now numbers 19. A total of 30 students have been trained since the program's inception.

Five students completed the first offering of the training at Endeavour Middle School and will serve as the "core" of the team-building process.

The four-session training program consists of three

sessions addressing the restorative justice model, the mediation process structure, communication techniques and intervention guidelines. The fourth and final session focuses on the peacemaking circle function, including benefits, values and facilitation responsibilities.

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New Haven Community Schools Had the Vision

Almost five years ago a report issued by the Comptroller's Office in New York City offered a blueprint for replacing the Department of Education's failed zero-tolerance policy with restorative justice practices. The change, as the report indicated, would help middle school students stay in school and remain on the path to college and career readiness.

Research completed for the report found that middle school students received 68 percent more suspensions than did high school students. The report urged that middle schools adopt a restorative justice approach to discipline that combines added support with high expectations and accountability. These approaches not only give students ways to understand and make amends for negative behavior, but also seek to reduce the severity and frequency of future incidents, create a more positive school climate, improve educational outcomes, and help keep students on the

path to high school graduation and far beyond.

Some of the recommendations made in the report related to training school educators in the various processes of restorative justice; expanding the number and roles of middle school counselors and social workers; targeting interventions for students with behavior issues; eliminating suspensions for minor infractions and those that last for more than 10 days; and greater empowerment for principals to oversee school discipline.

The International Institute for Restorative Practices wholeheartedly supported the recommendations offered in the report. IIRP indicated that the data demonstrates that restorative practices and other allied approaches to school climate offer a powerful new vision for pro-social development and discipline in schools.

While new Michigan legislation that takes effective this year encompasses

the recommendations offered in the NYC report, the New Haven Community Schools was well in front of the change curve. With the implementation of restorative practices in both New Haven High School and Endeavour Middle School, school officials have shown a tremendous vision in a commitment to youth. It shows an understanding that our students deserve environments where there is a greater opportunity to learn, thrive, and realize their potential to become productive citizens.



Faculty Advisors Offer Program Consistency and Sustainability

A major objective of the Restorative Practices programs within the school district is to provide sustainability and consistency at both New Haven High School and Endeavour Middle School during its growth period and thereafter. It has been determined that the best way to achieve this objective is with the involvement of faculty members.

Another goal, specifically for the Peer Mediation and Peacemaking Circle services of the Offices of Student Conflict Resolution is to ensure that all members of the schools' community – students, teachers and staff – have input into the various alternative processes for addressing issues and problems. It is understood that the objectives and goals can be better reached when there is a special focus from the faculty.

The first Faculty Advisors appointed to assist the Office of Student Conflict Resolution two years ago were Trent

Barr, now Assistant Principal at the high school, and Noelle Divosso. Mr. Barr stepped down from the position and Ms. Divosso now serves as the senior member of the team.

Joining the advisory group at the high school this year are educators Dayna Polehanki and John Hepper. And, at the middle school, Kristina Moran and Jason Hann were recently appointed Faculty Advisors. All showed a keen interest in the conflict resolution processes and the Restorative Practices program within the district.

Our Advisors will be working to help expand the interest in and use of our various conflict resolution processes among students. They will be provided additional training and guidance to bring about sustainability over time. The support from and cooperation of peer educators for their efforts is very important. As we move forward, yours will be greatly appreciated.



Noelle Divosso



Dayna Polehanki



John Hepper



Kristina Moran



Jason Hann

The Six Concepts of Restorative Practices

Within many public school systems today there is an ongoing effort to find a way for students to coexist peacefully. But how can undesirable behavior be addressed so that victims and offenders find a way to live together? How can conflict be reduced and a meaningful peace be achieved within the school community? Where is truth and forgiveness and must justice precede both?

From these questions regarding what objectives post-conflict situations should pursue, some additional questions emerge: (1) Is it necessary to punish the offenders and should the consequences be uniform? (2) If punitive sanctions are the answer, what are they designed to achieve? (3) Are the objectives of punishment to fulfil some moral obligation to bring the offender to account, to deter future offenders, or to contribute to some other more meaningful goal, such as reconciliation? The student conflict environments within school systems cannot avoid these questions.

It would seem that most post-conflict efforts aim for like outcomes. Even when the objectives appear to be the same, the methods of achieving objectives are often different. There is, therefore, a vital need to delineate the key concepts that constitute important post-conflict objectives for transformation.

Possibly the need is to examine the concepts relating to **truth, justice, reconciliation, forgiveness, healing** and **peace**. Often many who discuss and/or practice various transformational justice themes tend to combine some of these concepts and ignore others. As an example, concluding that healing and peace are reconciliation while disregarding the need for forgiveness in the process. Each concept has its place and each is a necessary consideration in the overall success of the process.

The processes for the discovery of **truth** after conflict can be categorized as how truth is told, how truth is heard, and how truth is finally perceived. The

telling of truth relates to how a person articulates the circumstances surrounding the situation. The hearing of truth is how others receive and respond to the truth-tellers presentation. The perception of the truth told is the ways in which others external to the situation recognize it.

The models relating to the concept of **justice** are often separated into three categories: retributive, deterrent, and restorative. Retributive justice maintains that the offender must be punished so as to create an accounting for the offense and to provide what is supposedly deserved based on an established rubric.

The deterrent model of justice offers that punitive sanctions are necessary to discourage an offender from committing the same or related unacceptable behavioral act in the future. The restorative model dictates that the offender necessarily must realize consequences for the offense. Those consequences should be facilitated in ways that will permit and even promote a rebuilding of relationships between the offender and the offended.

Justice models can be further divided into formal and negotiated categories. In the formal category, justice is arrived at using a pre-determined policy or procedure. For the negotiated method, justice is achieved open discussions relating to the situation. Here the emphasis is on debating the different versions of truth and coming to a satisfactory conclusion. It should be noted that the formal and negotiated methods of justice are not mutually exclusive.

The concept of **reconciliation** involves much more than a simple non-violent separation of parties. It requires the restructuring of relationships and the creation of a new foundation for future engagements. Reconciliation is both a process and a desired conclusion. It requires the par-

ties to the conflict to interact with each other, putting forth a cooperative effort to discover solutions to issues and to overcome difficult circumstances. If successful, the concept brings about a direct and honest concentration of the root cause of the conflict. In the process, feelings of grievance and anger are discovered and, thereby, become easier to mend.

Forgiveness is a form of renewed relationship between the offender and the offended and is often confused with reconciliation. Forgiveness may guide the parties to conflict resolution but does not require the parties to reconcile. It asks only that the victim set aside feelings of resentment and a desire for revenge.

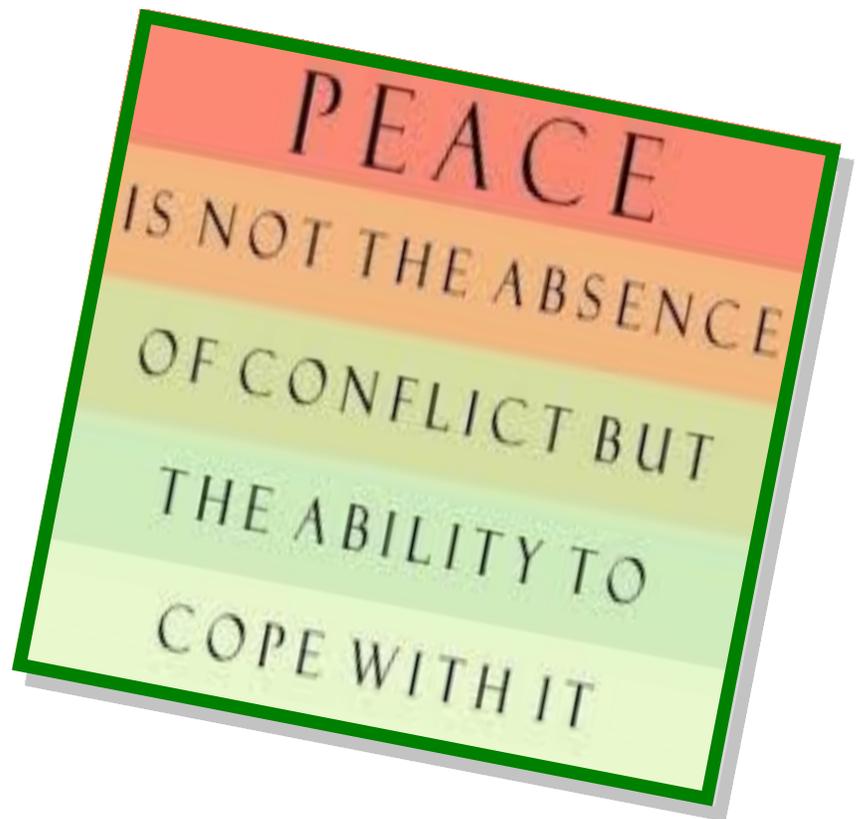
The concept of **healing** is incorporated into the practice of transformational justice. It relates to very crucial questions of individual identity. Many suggest that it is necessary in conflict resolution for both the offender and the offended to recognize personal worth; to identify meaningful principles and values in relationship to self and others. The concept of healing addresses these issues and must be seriously considered in the conflict resolution process.

An initial as well as a final objective of the conflict resolution process is **peace**. To this end, restorative practices have been effectively used in conflict resolution as a major tool of peacebuilding. In numerous post-conflict situations, restorative practices has been identified as source for the creation and maintenance for solidifying peace, building trust, and causing positive interaction between former advocates.

As a conclusion to this brief overview, a clear examination of the use of transformational justice processes or, more broadly, restorative practices will provide evidence of the effective incorporation of **truth, justice, reconciliation, forgiveness, healing** and **peace** in the conflict resolution process.

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The Peacemaker
is a publication of the
New Haven High School
and
Endeavour Middle School
Offices of Student
Conflict Resolution



"Peacemaker" Classes Completed (continued from page 1)

High school students completing the recent course presentation are Evian Daoud, Amanda Martin, DeJuan Richard, Liliana Romero, Cameryn Smith and Delisea Wade.

Students of Endeavour Middle School who finished the first offering of the course are Keirra Dilbert, Quinton Folson, Rylee Gyrley, Sydney Romain and Hunter Zuk.

The "Peacemakers" within both schools take on responsibilities that encompass the peer mediation process, facilitation of peacemaking circles as "circle-keepers", and a special effort to encourage and promote peacekeeping among students. This latter function is an ongoing effort that is supplemented with various informational workshops and subject orientations during the school year.

The *Peer Mediation Program* is one

aspect of Restorative Practices within the Office of Student Conflict Resolution (OSCR). OSCR offers alternative processes to normal discipline violation of the *Student Code of Conduct* and other issues of less than acceptable behavior. It is, simply, a means of "repairing the harm" instead of just "taking the punishment."

Understanding the peacemaking processes provides life skills that helps students to use communication skills, cooperation, critical thinking and realistic decision-making to solve disputes and other issues. When students are able to solve their own problems peacefully, the more responsibly they tend to behave in the future. Helping peers to do the same enhances those positive behaviors. Mediation training and working as a mediator also provides leadership skills that can be used throughout life.

Current plans for this school year call for the presentation of two additional courses beginning in mid-February. One will be presented at the high school and the other at the middle school. Recommendations for "peacemaker" candidates are taken from current peer mediators as well as faculty, staff and administrators. Contact David Gillis, the program coordinator for more information.

