



326 Deerfield Street
Greenfield, MA 01301
413-774-7469
fax: 413-774-7264
mediation@communityaction.us
www.mediationandtraining.org,
www.communityaction.us
A program of Community Action Pioneer Valley

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AT THE BEMENT SCHOOL

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES are ways of pro-actively developing relationships and community, as well as repairing community when harm is done. They support school connectedness, the belief that adults and peers in school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals. School connectedness makes young people more likely to have better academic achievement and less likely to engage in risky behaviors. Key values behind restorative practices include a focus on the school as a community, recognition of the importance of social and emotional learning (building self- and social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making), and a commitment to accountability (helping people understand the impact of their actions, take responsibility for their choices and work to repair the harm done.)

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES can include: 1) using “affective” or empathetic language (talking about feelings of our own, asking about and deeply listening to others’ experiences, being willing to talk about the impact of others’ behavior on us; 2) engaging in dialogue or circles to build understanding and community; 3) restorative conversations (guiding a student to reflect, consider problem-solving approaches); 4) conferencing, restorative justice or other approaches to deal with harm, and/or to welcome individuals back into the community after harm has occurred.

CIRCLES can be used in a lot of ways, but have so far been mostly used at Bement to build community. In this simple form of the circle, the facilitator (or “keeper”) can be an adult or young person. They welcome people to the circle, remind them of guidelines (speak from the heart, listen from the heart, respect the talking pieces, pass if you like). They then ask a question, give everyone a moment to think about their response, and then invite everyone to share in turn as they receive the talking piece being passed around the circle. The number and focus of the questions used are decided before the circle. At the end of the sharing, the facilitator thanks everyone for participating.

LINKS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT RESTORATIVE PRACTICES:

- <https://www.iirp.org>
- <https://www.c4rj.org/>
- https://blog.cps.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/CPS_RP_Booklet.pdf
- <http://www.livingjusticepress.org/>

APPROACHES TO CONFLICT:

1. Avoidance
2. Aggression/assertiveness or accommodation
3. Compromise or collaboration

WORKING TOWARDS COLLABORATION:

- *De-escalate, choose a win/win approach*
- *Listen, try to understand needs and feelings, ask questions*
- *Express yourself (sometimes with I-statements)*
- *List multiple options for dealing with situation*
- *As possible, agree on best options and details*
- *Check in, repeat as necessary*

GOOD LISTENING

- Listen without interrupting
- Show positive body language and good eye contact
- Summarize what the person said without judgments
- Don't make assumptions about the person or the conflict
- Pay attention to feelings the person might be experiencing
- Avoid giving advice or suggestions, or telling your own stories
- Ask relevant questions if you don't understand
- Notice the person's tone of voice and body language
- Don't get distracted or fidget
- Other ideas?

EXPRESSING YOURSELF ("I Statements"):

I feel _____ (feeling, emotion - not thought*)
When you _____ (objective description of situation)
Because I need/want _____ (need - heart of the issue, not position).
(Optional) Could you _____ (specific, doable request)?

** Watch out for "like", "that" or "you" in the first blank – often that creates blaming statements.*

CHECKING TO SEE IF YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT SOMEONE ELSE IS EXPERIENCING ("You Statements"):

Are/were you feeling _____ (feeling, emotion))
When _____ (objective description of situation)
Because you are/were hoping for/wanting/needing _____?