



THE RESTORATIVE PRACTICES --ADVOCATE--

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A NEWSLETTER for EDUCATORS

Restorative Expression

"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right doing, there is a field. I will meet you there." - **Rumi**

"We can find common ground only by moving to higher ground." — **Jim Wallis**

"Finding common ground is essential. Without it, people are merely strangers." — **UNKNOWN**

"Two intelligent people can always find common ground" — **Lina J. Potter**

"If we want to preserve the foundation of our democracy, it's vital that we find common ground that allows us to work for the greater good of this nation. This does not mean giving up our values. This does not mean swallowing a bitter compromise.." — **Tulsi Gabbard**

"You can work to help people, but you can't do a very good job if you don't know their story." — **Terry O'Connell** "Stories are the common ground that allow people to connect despite all our defenses and all our differences." — **Kate Forsyth**

"I do see music as complete refuge. As a universal home, complete common ground between everyone; It comes from a place that has no nation and no boundaries around it.." - **Abigail Washburn**

FOCUS>

By Rob Simon
Restorative Practices
Advocate & Consultant

Restorative Practices: A Common Ground Wisdom

Last school year (2024-25), **Superintendent Bielefeld** said of the implementation of **Restorative Practices (RP)** in USD 259:

"We have more work to do, but a strong foundation has been laid through our efforts over the past few years."

The Superintendent cited evidence of positive changes in school climate and relationships among students and staff through training teachers and staff in restorative justice principles, and developing plans to integrate belonging, and a culture of empathy, peace, and understanding. He also attributed RP success to these factors:

- strong leadership that models effective practice,
- the ability to build and restore positive relationships,
- comprehensive professional development for educators,
- a mindful approach to school culture, and
- effective communication plans that involve all stakeholders.

What I believe it is necessary to recognize and remember is that **restorative practices is a paradigm that provides us common ground** in what seems to be an increasingly divisive environment. How can anyone reasonably argue with prioritizing building relationships and community, and repairing harm and injustice when they arise?

Furthermore, RP in our school district has always been tied directly into **academic identity** and **social and emotional learning** and these are continuously being emphasized through the longstanding and ongoing frameworks of **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)** and **Positive Behavioral Interventions (PBIS)**. And, once again, it is difficult to imagine anyone being opposed to academic, social and emotional learning and successes.

So, as we recognize together that there is more work to do in pursuit of these powerful paradigms, please know that I remain at the ready to help any of you in achieving your restorative practices goals – whatever they may be. Reach me at rob.simon.rp@usd259.net.

We. Stay. The. Course.

CALENDAR

FROM YOU!

SHARE EVENTS OF VALUE! – If you should become aware of any scheduled events, trainings, conferences etc. that would be useful in enhancing our RP related **attitudes, skills** or **knowledge** please pass them on to be included in this newsletter. Write to rob.simon.rp@usd259.net.

For Your Information

The National Association of Community and Restorative Justice (NACRJ) is hosting their 10th Annual Conference in **New Orleans – July 7-10, 2026**. Touted as **"a powerful space for community building, learning, and transformation,"** you can get more information at nacry.org/2026-conference/.

COMMUNITY: The Structure of Belonging

By: Peter Block

In the welcome to this book, Peter Block's first two sentences say, "This book is written to support those who care for the well-being of their community. It is for anyone who wants to be part of creating an organization, neighborhood, city, or country that works for all, and who has the faith and the energy to create such a place." He then self-identifies as such a person, and just as quickly paints an accurate portrait of how communities everywhere are NOT doing well ... and declares that we are responsible for how things are AND how they can all be positively different. And this is just the welcome... but we would do well to be convicted by many insights in his book.

In ensuing chapters, he expounds on transformation, the context for community, and what it means to be a citizen, and then, Part Two of the book is entirely dedicated to "The Alchemy of Belonging." You will recognize that **belonging** is a major focus for the Wichita Public Schools currently, and is supported philosophically and practically by our recent and ongoing partnership with the **International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP)** which promotes **belonging** as part of an empowering triumvirate that also includes **voice** and **agency**. These, the IIRP says, are tied into the desire all of us have to be treated with dignity in our affairs, and is common to all human relationships.

Specifically, as it relates to restorative practices, the fourth chapter in Block's book is on **The Restorative Community**. The chapter opens with Block saying, restoration is created by us initiating conversations with each other as a leverage point for an alternative future. He goes on to say, "The core question that underlies each conversation is, *What can we create together?*" Shifting the context from retribution to restoration will occur through language that moves in the following directions: from problems to possibility; From fear and fault to gifts, generosity, and abundance; from law and oversight to social fabric and chosen accountability; from corporation and systems to associational life; and from leaders to citizens."

Later in the chapter, Peter Block says, "When I say 'restorative,' I am not talking about returning to a prior time, fixing up an old building, or seeking to recapture a culture that we think once existed. Restoration is about healing our woundedness – in community terms, healing our fragmentation and incivility. It is only out of this healing that something new can emerge."

What can we create TOGETHER? The emphasis on creating together is key as we consider the foundational nature of conversations we must have regularly about how we create relationships in our schools, neighborhoods and larger communities that will work for all of us... and never more so than now.

For more: Peter Block, *COMMUNITY: The Structure of Belonging*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. San Francisco, 2008, 2009

For your...

RESTORATIVE
TOOLBOX



If you do not have the illustration pictured at the right readily available somewhere in your school-based workspace, we can fix that easily.

And WHY should we DO that?

Because **Restorative Practices (RP)** and education's **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)** are both fundamental to the work we do in the Wichita Public Schools. This diagram is a quick reminder at all times for how we go about doing what we do at every level of our restorative educational approach.

FORMAL

Formal
Conference

Small
Impromptu
Conference

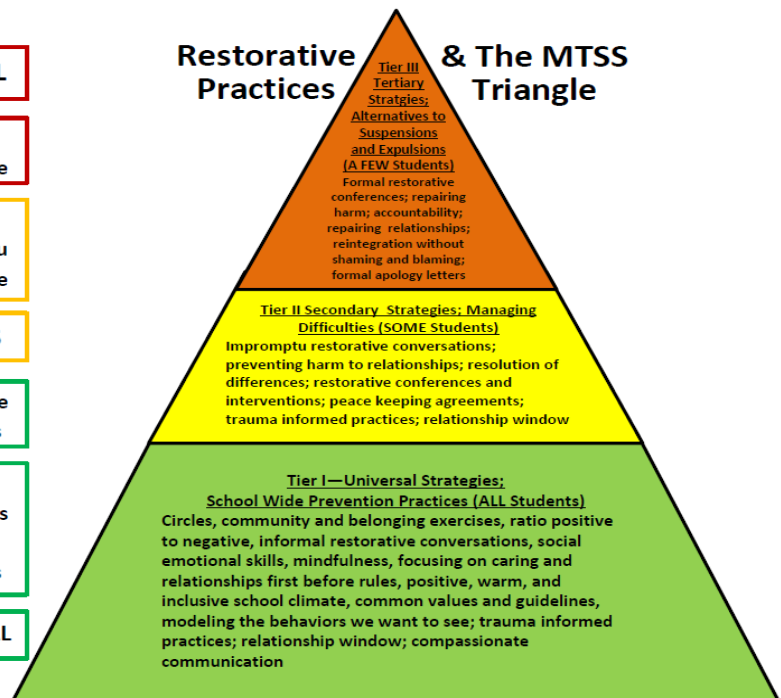
CIRCLES

Restorative
Questions

Affective
Statements
&
Questions

INFORMAL

Restorative Practices & The MTSS Triangle



More in: **20 THINGS School Staff Can Do Right Now That Are RESTORATIVE:** <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1A6zunyjoW9tKB6FIbhfprKj7R9ZrpSI>

For further info or questions: rob.simon.rp@usd259.net