Understanding the Language of Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice uses a range of practices to manage student behavior. Examples include:

* Informal restorative conversations and restorative inquiry through restorative mediation

* Community Building Circles

* Restorative conference circles

The term Restorative practices used in education means: Restoring good relationships when there has been conflict or harm, and building community that reduces conflict and harm.

Restorative Justice offers a framework where existing good practices can grow and develop.

Such approaches provide effective methods to building community and responding to student misconduct. These practices help students understand consequences that lead to reducing the frequency and severity of inappropriate behavior.

Restorative language, *Restorative questions, Affective Statements,* and *Restorative conversations* promote speaking and listening skills, as well as encourage open dialogue.

Restorative language also can help when conversations are difficult and people have different points of view. (Please record unfamiliar terms in *The Language of Restorative Justice* section at end of this manual)

Restorative questions involve exploring what prompted the harm caused and then looking for ways to repair the harm done.
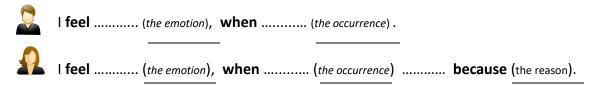
For example:

1. *"What happened?"*
2. *"What were you thinking at the time of the incident?"*
3. *"What have you thought about since?"*
4. *"Who has been affected by what happened and how?"*
5. *"What about this has been the hardest for you?"*
6. *"What do you think needs to be done to make things as right as possible?"*

Restorative questions lead to *Restorative conversations* which take place between staff, teacher and a student, or an adult staff member and a student, following an incident that caused concern to one or more people. Such dialogue replaces a punitive response to student misconduct and promotes a way of listening and responding to other points of view. It also involves using open body language and listening with empathy.   The listener takes a neutral perspective and aims to help the individual take responsibility for his/her actions and identify what needs to be done to make things as right as possible.
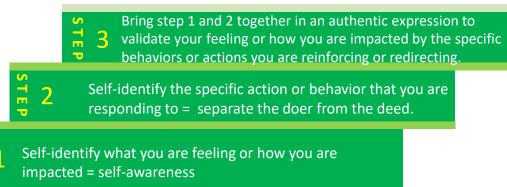
Affective Statements can be used at any time. Using affective statements will improve the school communities emotional literacy, which further improves communication, social skills, written work and reading. When the school community uses affective statements they gain a greater understanding of emotions and the feelings of others.

Affective statements tell the listener, how the person feels and why it makes them feel that way. These are also called "I" statements and when used effectively, they can effectively reinforce positive actions and explain feelings without assigning blame or shame.

I **feel** ……….. (*the emotion*), **when** ..……….. (*the occurrence*) .

I **feel** ……….. (*the emotion*), **when** ..……….. (*the occurrence*) ……….. **because** (the reason).

It is important that adults model these every day in their interactions with students. Instead of saying, "Thanks for sharing your ideas", we might say, "*I am very happy that you shared your ideas with the class.*" In circle, an example of an "I statement" might be, "*I feel disappointed when people talk without the talking piece because we all agreed at the start of circle to only speak when you have the talking piece*." This example demonstrates how an affective statement expresses how a person feels and the reason they feel that way. Affective statements are an effective way to teach students how to express their emotions appropriately.

The following 3 steps will assist in the construction of an **affective statement** when responding to behavior either to reinforce positive behaviors or re-direct misconduct with any member of the school community:

STEP 3 Bring step 1 and 2 together in an authentic expression to validate your feeling or how you are impacted by the specific behaviors or actions you are reinforcing or redirecting.

STEP 2 Self-identify the specific action or behavior that you are responding to = separate the doer from the deed.

STEP 1 Self-identify what you are feeling or how you are impacted = self-awareness

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Example: "John, I get very distracted when you continuously tap your pencil on the table. It makes it difficult for me to concentrate."