

# Restorative Practices at Oriole Park School

Restorative practices are a priority at Oriole Park School! What exactly does that look like, and what does it mean for your students?

## There Are Four Goals of A Restorative Classroom Environment:

1. Students gain the skills and confidence to **communicate** openly and authentically.
2. Students show **empathy** for each other and seek to **understand different perspectives**.
3. Students **work together** to develop shared agreements about **how they will interact** with one another inside and outside of the classroom...and share accountability for those agreements.
4. Students **recognize when their words or actions have caused harm**, and participate in the process to **repair** them.

**Restorative mindsets** center around the idea that relationships and trust are at the center of the community. We want students to feel responsible to and for each other. Without strong and valuable relationships, there is nothing to restore when harm occurs. One way we are able to build relationships amongst students and staff members is by implementing **talking circles**.

According to the Center For Restorative Process, “We feel connected to other people when we sense that they *see us, know us, and care about us*. That’s what...circles are about: **being seen, being heard, being known, and developing affection**.” Circles at school may be used informally to discuss a variety of topics and get to know each other on a deeper level. Circles may also address specific themes or instances in which everyone needs to be given a chance to be heard. During a circle, the facilitator poses questions to which students are able to respond when they have the talking piece. Each child may choose to speak when they have the piece, although they are not required to share anything at any time. Guidelines for talking circles are developed by circle members and can be amended by any member at the beginning of any circle, with the goal that students feel comfortable enough to participate at all times. Questions range from opening, light-hearted questions to thought-provoking ones that explore core values. Through circles, students are able to speak and be heard, which leads to a sense of value within the community.

**Restorative Conversations** occur when something happens to cause stress on the relationships built within the school. These conversations look engage all parties in an active conversation about why the harm occurred and how it can be repaired. Restorative conversations typically have four parts.

1. What happened to cause the harm?
2. What was the harm-doer thinking at the time?
3. Who/what was impacted by the actions and how?
4. What needs to be done to make things right?



## *Try It At Home!*

- Celebrate daily displays of empathy! Encourage the building of relationships with all types of people (even those different than us) by having conversations about how our positive actions and displays of kindness affect others.
- Encourage students to use “I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_” when they have trouble communicating their feelings. Focus on individual feelings rather than placing “blame” on someone else.
- When harm occurs, ask children to think about the situation from another person’s perspective.
- Set aside family time to come up with a shared protocol for behaviors inside and outside of your house. Discuss how you want your actions to impact the world. Having a shared vision will help to hold each other accountable.
- Guide students to come up with their own ways to repair harm that they caused. Help them to think about who was impacted by their actions and how.
- During family discussion, practice and praise empathetic listening! “I heard you say...”, “I like what you said about...”, “I heard you said \_\_\_ and I think...” go a long way to show kids that they are listened to and cared for.

