

Buffalo Hide Academy August Board Report 2023

School year 2023/2024 started off with great momentum! Our first week averaged greater attendance than any year yet post-COVID. As is our style, we started the first week with “orientation” activities to help the students learn our BHA values and practices, since our school is a little different than other schools. Students were split into two groups, one of which was asked to tell their story in a “Story Robe” project, and the other group was asked to create a SMART goal to start to think about making the most out of their time in school this year. Following are some descriptions of the projects:

Goal Setting

Students worked on SMART goals. They learned what SMART stands for and how this relates to goal setting. We talked about setting goals that are:

S - specific

M - measurable

A - attainable

R - relevant

T - timely

All students set some goals for this school year. Students then created posters that represented their goals. The posters included information that stated the goal, the steps to reach that goal, and why this goal is important to them.



Story Robes

As the 2023 School Year begins here at the Buffalo Hide Academy the students have diligently begun to engage in telling their story. As has been the tradition for the last 13 years at the Academy, students share their life stories and journey in both the Written Creation Story Assignment and the more artistic expression form of the Story Robe Assignment. Each of these opening assignments allow students to tell their stories so that the staff and their peers can better understand who each member of the Academy family is, where they've come from and what has shaped their life so far. This also allows the students to reflect on their personal experiences and journey in life to this point, so that they can begin to see themselves as an individual who has many valuable experiences and insights into the world around them that are worth sharing. These assignments help build an accepting and diverse community at the Academy where we better understand the myriad of personalities that we share a space with throughout the school year. When we understand and know the talents, obstacles faced, and accomplishments of those in our community we can build respectful relationships and shared spaces to grow as individuals and a community. Below are a few of the Story Robe Creations of some of this year's Academy Students.



Charlie's Report

We're off to a great start at BHA so far this year. As of today, (9/5/23) we have 90 students enrolled and all are working toward earning their diplomas. We currently have 52 Seniors, 30 Juniors, and 8 Sophomores. We'll have several students that have opportunities to finish throughout the year after each quarter as well. Several of our underclassmen have an abundance of credits and may be looking to graduate early down the line (we'll be in touch about that!).

The vibe so far has been awesome. Many students have commented how different it feels to go to school at BHA. Many of them report that they simply feel "safe" here. Our weekly class meetings on Wednesday afternoons reinforce the values of our school community, and it gives us an opportunity to provide invaluable group guidance in terms of our mental health goals. Our mental health model is embedded within the science of attachment, regulation, and life skills competency and serves our community tremendously well.

We lean into creating and maintaining healthy relationships with our students and families and recognize those relationships as the medium for which we get everything done here. Our coursework and academic classes become easy and manageable once we've established a healthy and benevolent relationship with every student. So as the old saying goes, "so far so good" this year.

Another exciting development for us at BHA is the addition of our new teacher, Jake ArrowTop. Jake's originally from Heart Butte and taught out there for a few years, and we were lucky enough to hire him to be our new social studies/English instructor. He's been awesome so far and naturally has a warm and welcoming personality. We're psyched he's with us now, and we all look forward to collectively helping some students and families this year.



Matthew's Role this Year

Matthew Johnson will be working with building Principals and Directors to help implement Restorative Practices.

Restorative practices is a concept that focuses on building and keeping healthy relationships to improve school climate.

Following is a simple guide to some of these concepts:

INTRODUCTION TO RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

WHY RESTORATIVE PRACTICES?

- ✗ Blame, shame, punishment, and exclusion are not working for our youth, our teachers or our communities.
- ✗ Pushing youth out of our spaces and communities is the opposite of what they need.
- ✗ Misbehavior is an opportunity to learn needed skills that we aren't seizing enough!
- ✗ Restorative practices are effective at addressing the disproportionality of discipline on students of color.
- ✗ Restorative practices give us new tools replace outdated and ineffective methods of punishment and suspension.

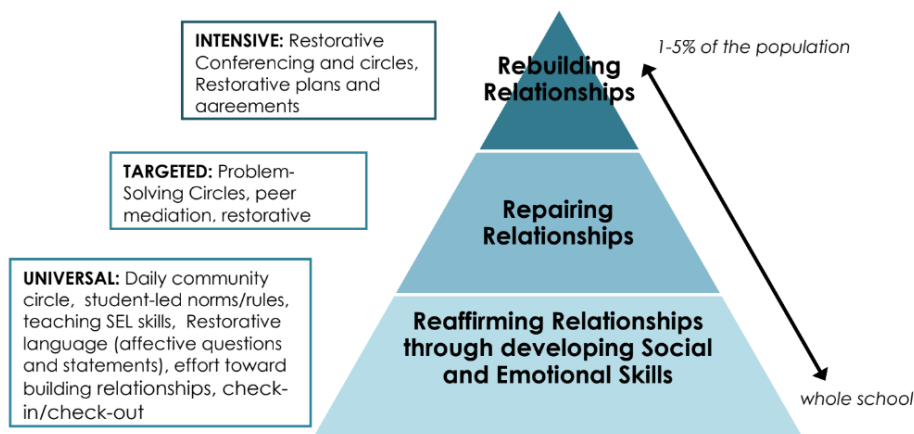
RESTORATIVE PRACTICES PRINCIPLES

The following principles reflect the values and concepts for implementing restorative practices. Under each principle are some of its important implications.

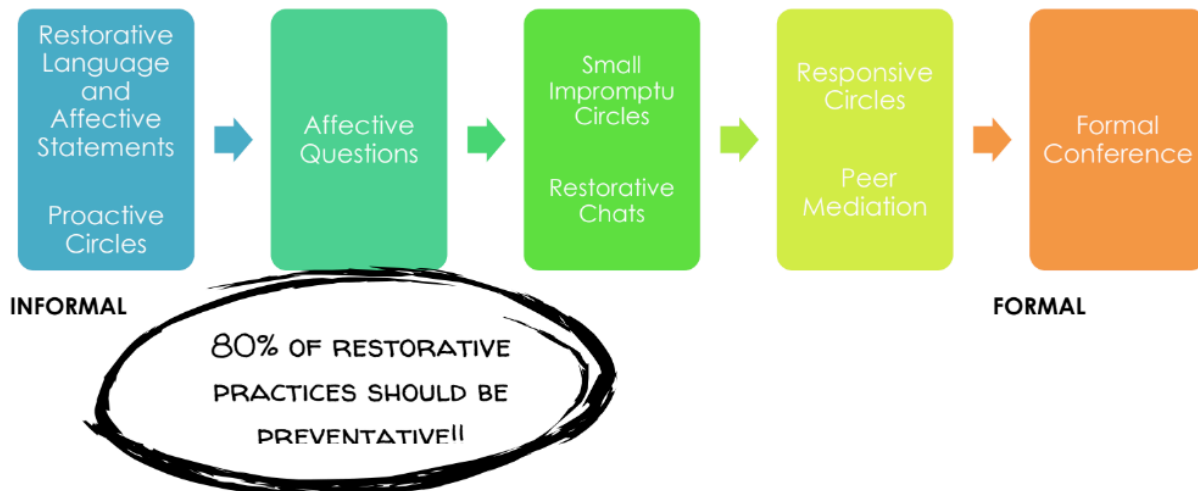
- 1. Acknowledges that relationships are central to building community.**
- 2. Builds systems that address misbehavior and harm in a way that strengthens relationships.**
- 3. Focuses on the harm done rather than only on rule-breaking.**
- 4. Gives voice to the person harmed.**
- 5. Engages in collaborative problem solving.**
- 6. Empowers change and growth.**
- 7. Enhances Responsibility.**

Modified from San Francisco Unified School District Restorative Practices Whole-School Implementation Guide

WHAT MIGHT A RESTORATIVE SETTING OR SCHOOL LOOK LIKE?



modified from source, iirp



"The underlying premise of restorative practices is that people are happier, more cooperative, more productive and more likely to make positive changes when those in positions of authority do things with them rather than to them or for them." (The Restorative Practice Handbook, Costello and Wachtel)

PROACTIVE STRATEGIES

WHY CIRCLES?

"Storytelling is fundamental for healthy social relationships. To feel connected and respected we need to tell our own stories and have others listen. For others to feel respected and connected to us, they need to tell their stories and have us listen. Having others listen to your story is a function of power in our culture. The more power you have, the more people will listen respectfully to your story. Consequently, listening to someone's story is a way of empowering them, of validating their intrinsic worth as a human being." -Kay Pranis

Circles, by their very structure, convey certain important ideas and values without the need for discussion.

Equality (everyone has equal seating)

Safety and trust (no one is hidden)

Responsibility (everyone has a role in the outcome)

Facilitation (circle reminds the leader to facilitate rather than lecture)

Ownership (participants know that the circle is theirs)

Connections (built when students are heard)

"THE CIRCLE REPRESENTS A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS AND AUTHORITY FIGURES. IT CREATES A COOPERATIVE ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH STUDENTS TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR ACTIONS. STUDENTS RESPOND BECAUSE THEY FEEL RESPECTED AND REALIZE THAT WHAT THEY SAY MATTERS."

TYPES OF PROACTIVE CIRCLES (80% of circles should be proactive.)

Check-in (how are you feeling today, highlight or low point of weekend, what are you looking forward to this week? Etc)

Check-out (what was your favorite thing about today, what are you looking forward to, give a compliment to someone for something good they did this week)

Integrating Circles with Course Content (introducing new subjects, what do we already know about this subject, processing challenges/emotions together, review for a test,)

Proactive Behavior Discussions (before a field trip, assembly, or potentially challenging situation. (What are your expectations for your own behavior? What's been happening in school that we need to discuss? What can you do if you want to act out in a certain way? What do I need to know about you to be a successful teacher? Any Social Emotional Learning topics that need to be addressed)

Games- to give students a brain break, to break the ice, to get to know each other, to cover course material

General Proactive Circles- when a new student moves in, when someone leaves the school, when there is a significant change

Tips: Let the group establish their own norms. If speaking out of turn may be an issue, use a speaking piece.

Insist on a real circle so all can be seen.

RESTORATIVE LANGUAGE

Utilizing the language of Restorative Practices consistently among the school staff and the parent/family community is a simple and effective approach to reinforcing the core values of relationships, responsibility, accountability and community. **We are a community.**

Recognizing that the strength and health of the community (among students, staff, and families) directly impacts school climate and academic achievement. Every member of the community is important and contributes greatly. Each person's actions affect the health of the community.

Recommendation: constantly refer to the student, staff, and family groups as a "community", and stress the importance of having a strong, healthy community. Seize opportunities (good and bad) to bring the classroom community together (check-ins, community circle, teambuilding activities, etc).

x What is the relationship like?

Reinforcing the importance of positive relationships is essential to the development of a strong community. Positive relationships lay the foundation for cooperation, skill development and learning.

Recommendation: constantly inquire about the strength of the "relationship/s" between/among students, staff, and families. Celebrate positive relationships, and when challenged, specifically ask, "what is the relationship like between students, yourself and your students, a particular student and his/her classroom peers, staff members...etc". Self-reflect on your own relationships with school community members and ask others to reflect on their relationships. Check your own behavior when it is not conducive to building a healthy relationship.



When problems occur, we go further down the continuum to:

AFFECTIVE STATEMENTS

This is a way of explaining how someone's choices affect you. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate that you care about students and humanize yourself. It brings you closer to the person rather than further away. They build relationships, connect people, and help prevent things from escalating. This is a great opportunity to truly exercise your influence to help students.

EXAMPLES OF AFFECTIVE STATEMENTS:

TYPICAL RESPONSE	AFFECTIVE STATEMENT
Be quiet.	I'm feeling irritated that you were talking when I was leading the training. I worked hard on this and think you will really like it when you learn more about it. Will you raise your hand when you want to talk?
Stop teasing him!	It made me uneasy to hear you teasing him. Respect is an important thing to me and to our community. Can you tell me what is going on with you two?
Don't touch her.	I feel really uncomfortable when I see you touching Clare in the hall. I value all students feeling safe and secure. Would you be willing to talk about what is going on between you two?
Good job.	I am so proud of this class for working together so well. You all are showing me that you care about collaboration as much as I do!

YOUTH CAN/WILL LEARN THESE TOO. HERE ARE SOME SENTENCE STARTERS TO ENCOURAGE THE USE OF AFFECTIVE STATEMENTS:

I am so proud to see/hear...	I am so excited to see/hear...
I am so appreciative of you/your...	I am so grateful that/for.....
I am so touched that you... that....	I am worried about/by/to see/to hear
I am concerned about.....	I am feeling frustrated about/by that...
I am feeling irritated by.....	I am angry about.....
I am so sorry that.....	I am upset that ...
I am having a hard time understanding...	I am uncomfortable when I see/hear.....
I feel sad because I heard.....	I am uneasy about
I am feeling distracted by.....	

AS PROBLEMS BECOME INCREASINGLY COMPLICATED, IT BECOMES TIME TO ASK SOME QUESTIONS.

AFFECTIVE QUESTIONS:

Asking these questions puts the thinking, work, and learning back on the group. It allows problems to become times to learn these necessary social emotional lessons. These questions help us understand what is motivating behavior, what is really going on in a student's life, and how to get them thinking critically about how to solve the problem at hand.

To respond to challenging behavior:

- "What happened?"
- "What were you thinking about at the time?"
- "What have you thought about since the incident?"
- "Who do you think has been affected by your actions?"
- "How have they been affected?"
- "What do you think you need to do to make things right?"

Questions to help those harmed by other's actions:

- "What did you think when you realized what happened?"
- "How do you feel about what happened?"
- "What impact has this incident had on you and others?"
- "What has been the hardest thing for you?"
- "What do you think needs to happen to make things right?"

RESPONSIVE CIRCLES*



*WHEN SOMETHING NEGATIVE HAPPENS, USE THAT OPPORTUNITY TO GATHER A GROUP
IN A CIRCLE TOGETHER TO:*

1. Think about what happened that didn't work and have people take responsibility for what they did to contribute to that problem.
2. Ask what kind of atmosphere students and teachers want in their classrooms.
3. Reflect and think about what each person is going to do to help attain that ideal.

When to use them? Something was destroyed, students are being unkind to one another, students are talking too much during class, something disappeared, someone cursed at a teacher, someone made a slur, students are late to class consistently.

***these can be used for teacher, parent, and community concerns...not just students!**

TIPS FOR RESPONSIVE CIRCLES:

- Don't start with blame.
- Keep it simple. Ask, "What harm has been caused" and "what needs to happen to make things right?"
- Circles can be sequential, popcorn, or fishbowl style.
- Don't feel like you need to control the conversation.
- Be vulnerable. If your feelings were hurt, the students should know that.
- Once the group has a good idea or solution, write it down as a poster or contract
- If the culprit is never uncovered, that person still heard the harm that was done and likely will not do it again.
- Trust the circle, "The circle is a container that is strong enough to hold just about anything that is poured into it. Discover what is possible."

SAMPLE CIRCLE PROCESS OUTLINE

- State the purpose of the Circle
- Discuss Ground Rules (suggested examples):
 - Listen and speak with respect
 - Only tell your truth
 - Use school/org-appropriate language
 - Respect people's privacy; only tell your own story
- Use of a talking piece
 - Significance of the object used
 - Speak only when you have the talking piece
 - No cross talk of any kind, verbal or nonverbal
 - Facilitator may need to speak (if time is an issue)
 - Share the time fairly
 - You may pass and we'll come back to you
- Questions / Rounds
- Closing the Circle

Some useful questions for general issues (not in response to a specific issue)

- 1. Start with something positive like "what is one good thing that has happened today?"*
- 2. What are the main issues that are causing us to be here today and what is one thing you have done to maintain this as a problem?*
- 3. What are you willing to do to make this better, not just tomorrow but for the long term?*

FORMAL RESTORATIVE CONFERENCES

These are for the most serious offenses. The main difference is the amount of planning. The conference facilitator must meet with all parties in advance of the conference to explain the structure of the meeting and to ensure that the offender has taken full responsibility for his or her offense and will not re-victimize the people he or she has already hurt. They answer questions, anticipate special needs, and arrange a place to hold the conference. Also, it is encouraged to share a snack and "break bread" together afterward. The facilitator may be a neutral party (including volunteers trained in restorative conferencing). This is the main focus of our Level 2 workshops.

RESOURCES:

4 Key elements of Successful Implementation

1. Principal Vision & Commitment
2. Staff Buy-In
3. Professional Development
4. Full-Time RP Coordinator

Full report: <http://localprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Restorative-Practices-Insights-From-3-Denver-Schools.pdf>

<http://www.healthiersf.org/RestorativePractices/Resources/>

<http://rjposters.com/about-rjposters/>

<http://iirp.edu>

<http://www.safersanerschools>

<http://restorativeworks.net>

<http://www.edutopia.org>

<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/SchSafety/RestorativePractices/>

<http://schottfoundation.org/restorative-practices>

<http://www.restorativejustice4schools.co.uk>
(click on implimentation pack)

<http://www.peacelearningcenter.org>

*** <http://www.pbisworld.com>

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