

Supporting Every Student Learning Series

CONVERSATION GUIDE

An Introduction to Restorative Practices

Part 2. Justice, Identity and Belonging

(with Dr. Brenda Morrison, Centre for Restorative Justice, Simon Fraser University)

Understanding restorative practices can contribute to the creation of welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments.

Key understandings:

- Restorative practices are about *reaffirming* relationships, *repairing* relationships and *rebuilding* relationships.
- Reaffirming relationships goes beyond supporting students—it may include building relationships among and between members of distinct communities within the broader school community, including teachers, parents, administrators, community members, professionals, and community groups.
- Making values explicit in the classroom is essential—it helps students understand rules from a different point of view.
- Students can explore values in response to reflective questions. These reflections can be recorded and displayed (possibly as art pieces) in the classroom as visual references.
- Trust, respect, honesty, humility, sharing, courage, empathy, inclusivity, forgiveness and love are positive values that people identify again and again, given the right conditions (the conditions are often based on identity and a sense of belonging and justice).
- Asking students reflective questions about how they can contribute to a positive learning environment can contribute to a positive school culture.
- Sitting in circle as a group has the potential to contribute to a sense of belonging.
- Relationships are an ongoing process that people negotiate every day of their lives.
- Conflict in relationships arises naturally and should be seen as an opportunity for learning and growth.
- Educators have to model repairing relationships for students by setting norms, identifying values, and creating opportunities for students to learn about power.

Justice, Identify and Belonging

Key understandings (cont.):

- Helping students to solve their own relationship problems helps create ‘up-standers’—as opposed to ‘by-standers’.
- Repairing relationships can be done in a number of ways, including through classroom circles and with the support of teachers or other trained professionals.
- When engaged in rebuilding student relationships, educators need to:
 - create a sense of justice and belonging in a non-judgemental space
 - pay particular attention to how the student is experiencing the intervention
 - find a way to honour the voice of wisdom and look for ways to repair the harm.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

- How would you describe the universal supports in place for students in your school to help create a sense of belonging? How could these supports evolve to better meet the needs of students?
- How would you describe the shared sense of community at your school among:
 - Teachers?
 - Parents?
 - Community members?
- What could be done to build or enhance this sense of community?
- How could conflict within your school community be used as an opportunity for learning and growth?

For more information:

- See Alberta Education’s [resources on restorative practices](#) including a [video](#), [conversation guide](#), and [external links](#).