When we embarked on the work of Restorative Practices, I knew it would be a significant shift in the district’s operation and mindset, and that it would require considerable training and cooperation from all members of our organization. But I also knew if we adopted this new practice, and implemented it districtwide, the benefits and rewards would be felt not only by our students, but also by our families and community.

Now in the first year of full implementation, I am inspired by examples of how these efforts are impacting school culture and how students are becoming more involved and aware of behavior and discipline issues. They are building relationships with their teachers and peers and learning to navigate conflict and solve problems collaboratively.

I sincerely appreciate how district staff has embraced this new practice and has been innovative in putting it into action with both students and colleagues. Together, we are building environments based on communication, understanding and mutual respect. This work will improve our schools and impact generations to come. Thank you.

30-year veteran cosmetology teacher Julie White recently shared during Day-Two training that the circles she regularly does are "the best thing she's ever done in her classroom."

Have you heard the phrase Restorative Practices?

If you haven’t heard about Restorative Practices, you must not be working in any of our 140+ schools. By now, it is a phrase that should flow easily off your tongue, as you embrace this concept to build community, enhance relationships and extend a voice to all in your learning environment.

About two years ago, our district began looking at ways to address and improve the learning conditions in our schools. After much research, studying best practices from other districts, participating in courageous conversations with each other and a self inventory of our own mindsets, we moved forward with a restorative approach.

We learned about the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), a group already engaged in this work, and discovered that the institute’s work was aligned with ours. We dove intentionally into issues and explored what would yield the most favorable outcomes. We engaged the leadership teams from schools. We spent an entire year in the exploratory phase, inviting a team from every school during the summer of 2017 to learn about Restorative Practices. In the summer of 2018, IIRP trained one person from each school to become the site-based licensed trainer. The start of this school year, we began our Year of Implementation.

Thanks to each of you!
All across our district there are Restorative Practices stories coming to life. There are examples of students grappling with tough issues in civil a manner, and there are climate and cultural shifts occurring through the power of the circle conversations. This page highlights a few examples. Please share your stories, pictures, tidbits and experiences. We will print as many as possible in future newsletters to show others how Restorative Practices are being used as we transform our district TOGETHER!

A FISHBOWL EXPERIENCE

Circles can be used to resolve issues among students, who sometimes suggest consequences that fit incidents better than those suggested by adults. Students may also learn about fair processes. Here is a recent experience of one teacher....

We had a fishbowl restorative circle when we got back to the classroom after lunch on Friday. It went really well! A student spoke first about how an incident impacted him. Then, the three girls who had witnessed the incident spoke one-at-a-time. Then, the three culprits spoke. Interestingly, those three thought the restitution should be to simply not engage in the negative behavior again. When the rest of the class got to share their ideas, it was decided that the students would miss three days of Walk & Talk. It also came out during the discussion that one of the girl observers had dared them to do it. She gave me her tag after the circle broke up because she felt she should have a consequence as well. A bad experience was turned into a good one, and a message was sent to the class about how future poor choices would be handled!

Restorative Practices in Action

Largo Middle School began a new tradition for the 2018-2019 school year that illustrates the school’s commitment to building positive school culture through Restorative Practices. At the start of each week, staff members are invited to participate in a community-building circle that mimics the classroom circles teachers will facilitate with their students for the upcoming week. Not only does this build social capital among staff, it provides the adults additional opportunities to deepen their knowledge of the Restorative Practice continuum. Students not only benefit from participating in the weekly circles and restorative activities that build connectedness to the school community but also from the positive relationships between staff.
A Principal Shares...

**Elementary Students Take Ownership**

As we continue our restorative journey, the use of restorative questions is really important. The impact the questions and answers have on both parties is helping our kids to grow, take ownership of their behavior and right their wrongs.

Recently, we had four boys involved in a fight during P.E. After talking with them, I asked what would happen if we don’t sit down to discuss the incident. All said they would probably fight again. We talked it through. They made the situation right with the P.E. coaches and each other. Their consequences were no P.E. for the week and a lifetime ban on football, and they were okay with that.

—Elementary School Principal Kris Sulte

It Can Be Done...

After our last Restorative Practices training on Oct. 15, during instructional rounds, multiple teachers were observed incorporating circles in their classrooms the very next day!

My assistant principals are utilizing circles in building bridges and restoring relationships, as well as strengthening bonds peer-to-peer, and with students and teachers.

As a school leader, I am incorporating circles during my Monday leadership team weekly meetings (e.g. observational rounds checkpoint, safety chats with our SROs, and plus/delta sharing for greater fidelity in our “big rocks”), department chair and Academy Lead Data chats.

—High School Principal Jane Lucas

RP in P.E.

Our P.E. department is participating in restorative circles outside with their students. It brings a calm to P.E. that’s been missing. Students fill out Redirect sheets if the need arises at the picnic table, answering restorative questions. The P.E. teacher circles around to the student and listens to what happened as the student reads their answers, often learning a lot more about the incident. There is a brief discussion between the P.E. teacher and student, and, if the student is ready, he/she is restored back into P.E. participation.

—Elementary School Principal Suzanne Hester

PCS By the Numbers...

During the summer of 2018, our district engaged in the monumental endeavor of training every instructional staff member in Restorative Practices over two days. This is how it adds up...

- **6800+** Teachers trained
- **300+** Principals and Assistant Principals
- **160+** District Administrators including the Superintendent and his executive leadership team
- **143+** Licensed IIRP trainers (One per school)
ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS....

On Sept. 12, in an effort to inform and engage the community about this great work, PCS invited community partners and representatives to participate in a day of Restorative Overview. Attendees included police officers from the various municipalities, members of the clergy, leaders of community organizations and after care providers. Additionally, district personnel in attendance included the Area MTSS, a school board member, four area superintendents, our deputy superintendent, district administrators, our schools chief of police and representatives from the Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association. The facilitator for the six-hour session was from IIRP, the Rev. Dr. Henry McClendon.