From the Superintendent

I want to thank Pinellas County Schools staff and the community for your hard work in the implementation of Restorative Practices. Restorative Practices is not a quick fix that can be put in place and then forgotten. Rather it is a tremendous cultural shift, in our schools and in our country, that requires both time and effort to take hold and yield results. I am confident that as we stay the course with Restorative Practices, the improvements we have already seen will grow exponentially.

All principals and nearly 5,600 instructional staff members have been trained in Restorative Practices, and this year we trained more than 300 food and nutrition staff members and bus drivers. We are working to ensure that every staff member who works with our students has the knowledge and tools needed to put Restorative Practices into effect.

After studying best practices, we opted to have our own certified Restorative Practices trainer in each school. This has required considerable investment on the part of the district and staff members who chose to become certified. Currently we have 192 trainers in the district licensed through the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP). We feel strongly that having the knowledge in-house will enable us to sustain and grow our practice to include all departments and new employees as they come on board.

I continue to be inspired and energized by the Restorative Practices success stories I hear from throughout the district. Together we are making a difference in the lives of our students, families and colleagues. Thank you for your commitment to this worthwhile endeavor.

Dr. Michael A. Grego, Superintendent
School leaders lead schoolwide RP session

Clearwater High School students started the 2019-20 school year by participating in several Restorative Practices events to help foster a positive school climate and community. Before school started in August, the school’s student Freedom Ambassadors engaged in a three-week Leadership Summit. In addition, Clearwater High hosted athletic team captains from all sports for the annual Athletic Summer Leadership Conference which was held in the school’s auditorium. At both conferences, students participated in circles, groups, community building activities, and impromptu conversations which are a part of the Restorative Practices curriculum.

During the leadership meetings, students were given lessons and activities to grow them as leaders. The student-leaders shared their experiences as students at Clearwater High and suggested ways that the school could continue to meet the needs of all our students. They also planned the school’s restorative school-wide expectations event which was held Sept.13.

The school-wide expectations morning was a Project-Based Learning event that was student-led. Restorative circles and team-building activities were utilized. The students took to the football field where they created circles. To create interaction between the students, a variety of games were played. Some of those games were: Rock, Paper, Scissors; All Star; and Head, Shoulders, Knees, Cup. A few of the games focused on listening and working together. Those games were “Rhythm Detective” and “Mr. Fox.” After each game was played, students then debriefed and discussed why listening and working together are important.

The student-leaders also created a Kahoot survey for which the students completed. The 22-question survey centered around a student’s knowledge of the school and its rules. Some of the questions were: Where do you go when you are late to class? If you see someone suspicious you should...? If you have five absences do you still qualify for exemption during exam? Is it required to have school insurance when participating in a sport?

Empowering students through Project-Based Learning as leaders in restorative practices, and increasing student expectations in academics, behavior and athletics is something Clearwater High continues to do.

Morning Math at Skyview

Skyview Elementary is implementing PBIS/ Restorative Practices by providing students a daily opportunity to practice and review math learning 20 minutes before the tardy bell rings. Students are invited into their learning community to work on number routines, word problems or play math games with partners or in groups. Students are at school early to get their breakfast and are eager to get to class where they feel they belong and are welcomed.
Mount Vernon Elementary has started a peer mediation program. Ten fifth-graders were handpicked to participate in Peer Mediation training. These students were selected based on their leadership skills and growth mindsets. This training was completed by Mary Knight-Martin, LCSW, from the district’s Prevention Office and the school’s social worker and counselor, Mrs. Trotter. The peer mediation system will be used to teach students the principles and techniques of conflict resolution in a restorative way so they can solve their own minor conflicts. This is a process by which two students involved in conflict meet in a private, safe and confidential setting to work out problems with the assistance of a trained student mediator. The student mediators have named themselves the Counseling Patrol Unit or CPU.

Goal setting creates supportive classroom

A fourth-grade class at Perkins Elementary has started a goal-setting program to help create a shared sense of accomplishments amongst students. Every Monday morning, students write down two personal goals on a sticky note that they would like to accomplish for the week. The goals are shared and students place the goals on their desks so everyone is aware of what they are working towards for the week. This helps students to encourage one another.

Fridays are for reflection and celebration. The fourth-graders share if they met one or both of their weekly goals and discuss their challenges or strategies for success. On Friday, students also problem solve and help others who may have had difficulty meeting their goals. The students have become supportive and encouraging to each other.

Breathing into relaxation

Students in a second-grade class at Perkins Elementary are being taught deep breathing exercises and relaxation techniques. Once students are relaxed, they form a circle discussion on “When we might use this calming activity.” The teacher reminds the students that the breathing tool can be used during safety or tornado drills because their energy level is usually elevated during those times.

Restorative practices work when they are implemented school wide and integrated into the fabric of the school community. When the whole school is infused with restorative strategies, it becomes easier to address issues faster and respond in a thoughtful way because the caring and supportive culture is already present.

- NEA edjustice
Restorative areas created at M.K. Rawlings Elementary

M.K. Rawlings Elementary students now have two areas in a classroom where they can go to collect themselves when things are not moving in the right direction. There is the calming corner and a restorative space. The calming corner is by student choice and is a place for them to calm down and take a few minutes to relax. This allows for self-regulation of a student’s emotions and feelings. It is also a time when students use breathing techniques and get themselves refocused and ready for learning.

The restorative space is used when students need to be redirected by the teacher. They sit at a desk and use the steps that are on a poster provided in that area. First, they use the calm down steps that were taught by their teacher. Next, they take time to reflect and put this down in writing. The last step is to restore, whether it is with a classmate, or the teacher.

Anona Elementary is growing mindfulness schoolwide

Last year, Anona Elementary School’s fifth grade team began engaging students in mindfulness activities to help build their social-emotional learning competencies. The responsive and restorative sessions were so successful at growing lifelong skills for whole child education, that the team continued them this year. They have even started to expand them. Recently, Ms. Lee’s fifth grade class partnered with Ms. McHugh’s first grade class to build school community across the grade levels. The fifth-graders are using what they have learned to teach mindfulness to their younger schoolmates.

Growing leaders using circles

In Mrs. Garris’ first grade class at Shore Acres Elementary, Genevieve was selected as the VIP for her facilitation of circles. Mrs. Garris has worked to build leaders in this process. In class, students participate in an activity called a daily spinner. If the spinner lands on math, the students discuss what they are learning in math that week. They also do lots of movement activities like “Bump, Snap and Wiggle.” Mrs. Garris has worked to encompass relationship building, culturally relevant practices, and teaching strategies while growing leaders in her room through morning circles.