

Restorative Practices

Elementary School Restorative Practices

Reflection Sheet: Teacher

In this video, we visit PS 142 in New York City to observe Restorative Practices in classrooms and hear what some of their teachers and students have to say about Restorative Practices. Use the following questions to reflect on the information presented about elementary school level Restorative Practices.

- 1. The video opens with a view of Ms. Esperon leading the rainstorm exercise in her classroom restorative circle. What value do you see about leading an exercise like this with a class? What skills do you see being built?

- 2. Ms. Esperon tells us, "Restorative practices help kids advocate for themselves because it gives them the language. Instead of just, you know, tossing a book on the table and saying 'I'm mad!' now they can say, 'You know what? I think I need a break. I feel overwhelmed.'"
 - What does she mean by "gives them language"? How do you give students language? How do/might Restorative Circles support your current practices?
 - Have you ever witnessed a student of yours do something similar to the student in Ms. Esperon's story? How did the student handle the emotions at the time? Did the student have the language to express the emotions?

3. Ariel Bender, a fourth-grade teacher, tells us, "(Restorative Practices) allowed students to relate to each other; it allowed students to relate to teachers; it allowed teachers to relate to students. And I feel, when I can make that connection with another person, regardless of their title, teacher or student, a safe bond is built, or an added connection is created."

- How do you build bonds and connections within your classroom?
- How do/might Restorative Circles support your current practices?

4. Cindy Vaquero, a fourth-grade student, says, "I want to come to school because I get to express my emotions with people that I trust." Do you think your students can say the same thing about your classroom and your school? Why or why not?

5. Nestor Bencosme tells us, "Restorative Circles makes me feel calm, and like, I wouldn't know how to breathe out the stress without it." Discuss the stress your students deal with on a daily basis. Discuss the image of "breathing out the stress" and how it could be used in your classroom.

6. Jaime Szymanski, principal of PS 142, says, “We wanted to work on creating a community in our school that created a safe environment and taught into ways that students could either develop strategies or language, and, or both, and then better ways for them to express themselves when they’re feeling certain ways.” What is the value of this goal for any school or classroom?

7. The last student voice we hear belongs to third grader Nataly Perez. “It’s important to talk about your feelings because there is a lot of people who feel alone in this world and if you talk to somebody about your feelings, you could ... they could open up the world to you. And they could help you with whatever you need...” How did her words affect you? Why?

8. If your school participates in Restorative Circles/Practices, talk about the ways they help you. If your school does not participate in Restorative Circles/Practices, talk about what you think they might give you and your students.
