

## 5 KEYS FOR GAINING PARENT AND FAMILY BUY-IN FOR RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

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January 9, 2017

The successful implementation of restorative practices requires the involvement and commitment of the entire school-community. Stakeholders include district and site administrators, both classified and non-classified staff, students, families and youth-serving community partners.

However, many educators do not engage families as stakeholders when introducing their restorative practices initiatives and plans. Since restorative practices is not a program or a curriculum, but rather a philosophy and a way of thinking and acting, introducing restorative practices to the students' families in an inclusive, collaborative and culturally sensitive manner is critical for success.

One of the cornerstones of restorative practices is the use of "fair process" which recognizes that people are most likely to support change when they're engaged and included in the process. According to Ted Wachtel of the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP), "Human beings are happiest, healthiest and most likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in authority do things with them rather than to them or for them".

In the case of families, it is critical they're involved early in the process, and that the administration is working with them. It's also important that families understand the reasoning for the schools moving away from a more traditional and punitive approach towards the restorative practices approach.

When school administrators fail to recognize the importance of building family engagement early in the process they run the risk of families feeling uniformed, confused and ultimately defensive - outcomes that can have negative consequences on the program's full adoption and ultimate success.

So, what are the keys for building and gaining family and parent support? Consider doing the following:

1. Host a series of introductory information meetings at a variety of times of day so that working parents have options for attending. These are opportunities for families to learn about restorative practices, and to contribute their ideas in the early stages of implementation;
2. Conduct webinars and social media campaigns to provide on-going opportunities for learning and additional input;
3. Identify and invite parent leaders to be a part of the leadership group responsible for the restorative practices planning and implementation;
4. Create information packets for students to take home that inform parents of the many benefits of restorative practices; also coach students regarding the importance of their parents being well informed;
5. Secure the services of a consultant to provide expertise, support, technical assistance and planning; there are many best practices that a consultant can help you incorporate into your planning so you don't have to reinvent the wheel.

In addition, we recommend using existing platforms of communication with families that you have found work well. School websites and newsletters, open houses, student activities, sporting events and other activities that parents typically attend, local news outlets, and parent teacher conferences are some examples of effective methods of communication.

Source:

<http://community-matters.org/blog/post/5-keys-for-gaining-parent-and-family-buy-in-for-restorative-practices>