

Lessons from District-Wide Implementation of Restorative Practices In Denver Public Schools

Why learn from Denver?

- Fastest growing urban school district (90k students, 75% SOC, 70% FRL, 185 schools, 5200 teachers)
- First state-funded \$1m+ RP pilot 2006-2011, 7 school sites with f/t RP coordinators
- RP implemented district-wide with 2,700+ educators trained (since '08) to lead RP in their buildings
- 15 schools currently “buying” their own RJ coordinators w/o grant funding, many more with partial FTE
- District-level staffing: RJ coordinator, with “network partner” support for every school that includes RP
- 13% of students with office referral received RP in 2012-2013

Community partnership: political will for RP as the solution to a problem

- *Discipline reform = paradigm shift.* Punitive, exclusionary, racially discriminatory approach to discipline is deeply rooted in school culture and social policy (zero tolerance, war on crime)
- *System change is driven from the grassroots,* the most directly impacted students and families--Padres & Jóvenes Unidos launched Campaign to End the School-to-Jail Track in 2003
- *Civil rights movement to end educational racism*—STPP, the pushout/dropout crisis, opportunity gap. Engine for demand / need.

Formats: Circles vs Dialogs

- Denver’s model is rooted in victim-offender mediation, not circle practices
 - Office referral > RP Pre-conferencing > RP Conferencing > Repair > Follow-up
- RP Conferencing + Repair as diversion from office referral, then classroom based RP Dialog
- RP as a spectrum of practices (see RP Guide for Educators)--many paths, fidelity to philosophy not form

RP Staffing Sustainability, Infrastructure: Teams and Ecosystems

- Funding / grants required? History, 4-5 years to reset a school culture, need readiness criteria
- Staffing required? RJ Coordinator, HS vs MS vs ES, how much FTE is doing RP in the building
- Criteria for success, criteria for readiness:
 - Building leadership committed (or genuinely open) to “restorative justice”
 - Informal classroom level RP + Formal admin RP
 - In-school intervention room
 - Behavior referrals go to an intervention team that incl RP (dean, soc, psych, nurse, SPED, etc)
 - Prevention / intervention ecosystem (front office scheduler, RTI, PBIS, etc)

Multistakeholder Collaboration: District, Teachers Union, Community, University, Advocacy...

- District—push from central to administrative level in every building; setting policy parameters/levers (JK-R, IGA); training, staffing
- Community: engine for policy change & enforcement/implementation (civil rights conversation, Know Your Rights); hotspot schools; problem solving RP inside buildings (teacher-student, broken, awareness); peer advocacy; readiness criteria
- Teachers: what tools, training, resources, support are needed; problem solving inside buildings; peer advocacy; readiness criteria
- Policy advocates, university, SPED advocates, service providers, judicial leaders, juvenile defenders, law enforcement,



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