

Restorative Measures In Minnesota Schools

A brief summary

The use of restorative justice practices in Minnesota schools was first referred to in the 1995 Department of Education document *Unlearning Violence*. Since that time, the state agency has supported and promoted restorative measures in schools, youth programs and in communities. At the same time, communities, districts, administration, school resource officers and individual educators have incorporated or expanded their use of restorative principles and practices in their daily work with youth. Following is a list of restorative measures activities conducted by the Department of Education.

Commissioner's Recommendations 1997

The Department of Education's commissioner approved staff recommendations to promote the use of restorative measures as an alternative to suspensions and expulsions and to reduce violence in schools. In 1997, the agency units of Accountability and Compliance, Violence Prevention Education, Special Education and Learner Options collaborated in drafting the recommendations.

Recommendations included:

Providing training and technical assistance to schools on restorative measures and classroom management.

- 10 regional workshops: Pupil Fair Dismissal Act and restorative measures presented winter 1998; 2,000 participants, including administrators and staff,
- 10-15 workshops per year on the elements of restorative measures are presented at conferences or to individual districts or community groups,
- Consult with school staff on the use of restorative measures in schools by phone or email: 5-10 contacts per week,
- Staff participated in the development and field testing of a National Institute of Justice "Facilitating Restorative Group Conferencing" curriculum,
- Conducted three weeklong Seminars on Restorative Measures and Classroom Management, 2001, 2002, and 2003.

Seek funding and evaluation opportunities for schools.

- In-School Behavior Intervention grants 1999-2001: Four demonstration sites were evaluated over a 3 year application of restorative practices.
- Restorative Schools Grants 2002-2003: five districts and associations of schools received funding for staff training and evaluation of restorative practices; 1892 staff members participated in the trainings.
- Districts have funded restorative measures training and staff through Prevention and Intervention, Violence Prevention Education in the Schools and Safe and Drug-Free Schools funding (on-going as funds are available).

Encourage the consideration of use of restorative measures from multiple sources.

- MDE Community Education (1999) program conducted focus groups and produced a booklet to identify the common and complimentary areas of restorative measures, youth leadership and service learning.
- The Education Helpline for Parents (out of the Ombudspersons Office 1998-2000) and the Office of Dispute Resolution recommend the use of restorative measures for regular education and special education students and their parents who have disputes with schools over disciplinary action or special education issues.

- MDE and Minnesota Department of Health staff discussed with the Minnesota Coalition against Sexual Assault the use of restorative measures training and practice in schools around sexual harassment; a grant was awarded to Cleveland Quality Middle School in St. Paul (among others) and a *Sexual Behaviors Policy* was developed (2003).
- Minnesota Office of Dispute Resolution: Several special education mediators are cross-trained in circles, victim/offender dialogue and restorative or family group conferencing.
- MDE Special Education Unit provided a two-day circle training to special education mediators regarding post-hearing communication challenges.
- School Resource Officers in several districts provide family group conferencing facilitation as an option to suspension and expulsion.
- Restorative measures are listed as an alternative to regular school punishments in several school districts' student handbooks.

In addition, MDE staff has consulted with programs in Pennsylvania, Colorado, Wisconsin, Kentucky, Michigan, California, Florida, Vermont, New York, Wyoming, Illinois and Iowa, as well as Japan, Canada, the Bahamas, Jamaica, Cyprus, the United Kingdom and Australia, and connected Minnesota educators with other school administrators from around the nation who are interested in implementing restorative measures.

MDE Publications

Unlearning Violence (1995)

Restorative Measures: Respecting Everyone's Ability to Resolve Problems (1996)

Legislative Report: The In-School Behavior Intervention Grants, a three-year evaluation of restorative practices in schools (2001)

Restorative Schools: a summary of 5 training grants and their evaluation (2003)

Restorative Measures In Schools (International Community Corrections Journal, 1997)

Restorative Creativity: School Applications of Restorative Processes (Newsletter of the School Mediation Center, Boulder, Colorado, 2000)

Restorative Schools (Conciliation Quarterly, 2000)

Restitution I and II (e-newsletter, Scoop From the Loop, for the Chicago School District 2000 and 2001)

Restorative Practices in Minnesota School: an interview (E-Forum of Real Justice, 2002)

Aides, Administrators and All the Teachers You Can Get: A restorative training guide for schools (Victim Offender Mediation Association Newsletter, 2003)

PEASE Academy: the restorative recovery school (Minnesota Association of Alternative Schools Newsletter 2004)

You're The One Who Can Make The Peace mass media campaign: Restorative principles were included in the violence prevention mass media campaign materials produced for Minnesota schools, such as the booklets **Talk and Listen, You're The One** and the *Make The Peace School Tool Kit* (1997-2001).