



Testimonial & Tools

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[Testimonial]

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My most recent experience has been as a school coach in a Small Learning Community (SLC) at a public high school in New York City. In my work there, the director pointed out that while the SLC and school has had great success in their overall approach to discipline, they were still struggling to address recurring issues with a small group of African-American boys. As a result, she invited me to help her launch a Student Voice Advocacy Committee. This would include a representative group of educators across grade teams within the SLC.

At our first meeting in the spring semester, I conducted a workshop, which I led off with statistics on the abysmally high school dropout rate for young men of color. This led to a discussion of why the old paradigm of suspensions and other punishments wasn't working. We followed this with a reading of *Deepening Democracy* by Maria Hanzopoulos, engaged in a roleplay and reviewed the FAQ's in the Teachers Unite *Fairness Committee Toolkit* to help us debrief their questions.

What we decided was that the committee members would present this same workshop within their respective grade teams in order to share and get feedback from colleagues. To do this, we held a preparatory meeting where I presented my facilitator notes and background thinking. The teachers paired up, mapped out logistics and over the next three weeks, made their presentations. The response from colleagues was overwhelmingly positive although many questions remained.

By the time of our final meeting, one of the committee members had been recruited to become the Restorative Justice Coordinator (Fairness Committee Advisor), and then the whole committee wrote the proposal for a 9th grade pilot for the following year. The teachers developed a calendar, slowly building the infrastructure for phasing in a Fairness Committee. Some of the items on their To-Do list included: speaking with their Community Based Partner (CBO), viewing in grade teams the Teachers Unite film on Restorative Justice, recruiting and training students using team and leadership building activities, introducing Restorative Justice language in advisories, and reaching out to all parents at the beginning of the school year. The parent letter would explain the Fairness Committee goals while asking permission to have their children participate. The committee also created a budget for coverages, training activities and per session. The teachers believe that through these carefully plotted measures, they can create a strong foundation for greater student voice, self-reflection, communication, trust, and a more proactive sense of agency.

[Tools]



Staff Professional Development Workshops and Facilitators' Notes

See "Testimonial" for Context

Restorative Justice PD WORKSHOP I

AGENDA

1. Intro – the Director explains why we're considering Restorative Justice (RJ)
2. Protocol - discussion of article
3. Overview - why RJ is becoming increasingly popular in schools today
 - Student voice/choice/power
 - Creating greater buy-in from stakeholders
 - Developing schools for a democracy (John Dewey)-active learning & character education for a democracy
 - Paradigm shift from punishment to consequences
 - Alternative to suspensions
 - Change in the NYC DOE Discipline Code
4. Next steps (for follow up meeting) -
 - a) How can we use the reading & ideas as a lens to think about engaging and challenging students?
 - b) How do we approach grade teams with this idea, e.g., what parts resonate? Where should we start?
 - c) Other resources, e.g., social worker, deans, gym teachers, mentor students, CBO, sports teams, connections to advisory.
 - d) What are possible short/long term goals?

Restorative Justice PD WORKSHOP II

AGENDA

1. Review Agenda
2. Tuning Protocol – the Director facilitates
 - Dina presents from workshop notes [5 minutes]
 - Participants ask clarifying questions [10 minutes]
3. Open Discussion
 - How can we adapt this to turnkey in team meetings?
 - What is our goal, i.e. what do we want team members to understand after participating in this workshop?
 - What questions might get raised during the workshop?
 - What logistical concerns do we have?
 - What are our long-range goals if teachers feel positively about Restorative Justice?
 - What else?

Restorative Justice Facilitator's Notes

1. Agenda – review [1 min]
2. Intro: NYCLU handout/paradigm chart – statistics **[5 mins, 3:30-3:35]**
 - School to Prison Pipeline: Nationwide discipline policies that push poorer and/or disabled students of color out of school and into the criminal justice system, e.g., zero tolerance, police in schools, impact schools, scanning.
 - Look at statistics: Question ~ If suspensions are supposed to be a disciplinary corrective, what about this isn't working? What's wrong with this picture?
 - Paradigm chart: the system is based on the old paradigm chart/RJ is based on the new (retribution from victim to persecutor vs. consequences and making amends (taking responsibility) to person harmed and community.
3. Deepening Democracy article (pg 5) of Fairness Committee Toolkit ~ circle a sentence, phrase and word that stand out for you. **[10 mins, 3:35-3:45]**
4. Article debrief ~ go around **[15 mins, 3:34-4:00]**

John Dewey: “Education is a social process; education is growth. Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself” [i.e., we learn through our experiences – learning by doing according to Benjamin Franklin]. Dewey also believed that the purpose of education was to develop an informed, participatory citizenry for a democracy, i.e., educating the whole child.

5. Role Play: **[15 mins., 4-4:15]**

- Student/teacher (volunteers) – hand out script to each player and discuss (need to move towards a compromise with teacher taking the initiative.)
- Review Fairness Committee protocol (page 25), questions (page 26-27)

6. Debrief role play **[15 mins., 4:15-4:30]**

- What did this feel like?
- What did you like?
- How does this compare/contrast to present interventions at the Business SLC?
- What were your wonderings?

7. FAQ's [pages 16-19] **[15 mins., 4:30-4:45]**

8. SPHS Business SLC – General discussion **[15 mins., 4:45-5:00]**

- What did you notice about student voice in this approach (why important?)
- What might R/J look like within our school community?
- What other ideas do you have for bringing student voice into areas of school governance, e.g., students co-planning an event (i.e., making a proposal about an upcoming event – students present at their grade team meeting), students participating on faculty governance committees.
- When should we meet again and what do you think should be our focus?

RJ Student Voice Advisory Group Workshop

1. Introduction – School to Prison Pipeline
2. Article – Deepening Democracy
 - Circle a sentence, phrase and word that you find interesting
 - Share out
3. Role Play – Fairness Committee
 - What did this feel like?
 - What did you like?
 - What were your wonderings?
4. Fairness Committee Toolkit – FAQ, page 16
5. Debrief –
 - What did you notice about student voice in this approach (why important?)
 - What might RJ look like at SPHS?
 - Ideas for bringing student voice into other areas of school governance, e.g., students co-planning an event (i.e., making a proposal about an upcoming event - present at a grade team meeting), students participating on faculty governance committees

Old Paradigm / New Paradigm Handout

Old Paradigm: Retributive Justice

New Paradigm: Restorative Justice

Wrongdoing often defined as breaking the school rules/letting the school down.	Wrongdoing defined as harm done to well being of one person or a group by another or others.
Focus on establishing blame or guilt, on the past -what happened? who did it?	Focus on problem solving by expressing feelings and needs and exploring how to meet them in the future.
Adversarial relationship and process - wrongdoer in conflict with a person in authority, who decides on penalty	Dialogue and negotiation - everyone involved in communicating and cooperating with each other
Imposition of pain or unpleasantness to punish and deter/prevent	Restitution as a means of restoring both/all parties, the goal being reconciliation and future responsibility.
Wrongdoing represented as impersonal and abstract: individual versus school	Wrongdoing recognized as interpersonal conflicts with opportunities for learning
One social injury replaced by another	Focus on repair of social injury/damage
People affected by wrongdoing not necessarily involved; victims' needs often ignored; they can feel powerless. Matter dealt with by those in authority.	Encouragement of all concerned to be involved - empowerment
Accountability of wrongdoer defined in terms of receiving punishment	Accountability defined as understanding the impact of one's actions, taking responsibility, seeing it as a consequence of choices and helping to decide how to put things right.

Draft Proposal for a Fairness Committee

What is the problem being addressed?

We propose setting up a pilot Fairness Committee. The Fairness Committee is a non-traditional restorative justice model of school discipline. Parameters and protocols for discussion place emphasis on the violation of community norms and values rather than simply on the breaking of rules. Fairness seeks to create, through dialogue and by consensus, appropriate “consequences” for those violations, rather than simply mete out prescribed “punishments.”

As a model of restorative justice, the Committee endeavors to:

- 1) Inspire empathic and critical self-reflection, by confronting a member of the community with his or her actions and how they have affected others
- 2) Collectively determine how best to restore and mend the community in the wake of actions inconsistent with its values
- 3) Determine how to reintegrate the member of the community who has violated these values back into the fabric and culture of the school.

The Fairness Committee is a democratization of the traditional disciplinary process and includes all teachers and students within that community. It convenes on an ad hoc basis as follows: one teacher facilitator, two-three student committee members, and the two people who are involved in the norm/value violation. Any member of the community – teacher or student – can take another to Fairness.

How would this be implemented?

Role Plays for Fairness Committee

SCENARIO #1 - Cutting

STUDENT: JASON/LEILA

You are a student at the Green School Academy where students go to lunch at different times. You have your math class at the same time that your girlfriend/boyfriend Leila (Jason) goes to lunch. Although you like your math class and have always been a good student, you've been cutting so that you can hang out with Leila (Jason). Your teacher Ms. Johnson has spoken with you several times already, she seems really annoyed and now she is bringing you to the Fairness Committee.

Things to think about:

- What happened? What's been happening?
- What were you thinking while this was happening?
- What have you been thinking about since then?
- What do you think needs to happen now to make this right?
- How can we involve everyone who has been affected in finding a way forward?
- How can everyone do things differently in the future?

*NOTE: At the Fairness Committee, after you explain your side of the story, be ready to move towards a solution.

TEACHER

TEACHER: MS. JOHNSON

You are Jason/Leila's math teacher. Jason/Leila has been cutting your class. You've spoken to Jason several times about this. Jason/Leila had been a good student and often played a leadership role in class. You used to have a good relationship with him/her. Now you are worried that this student is falling so far behind that he/she won't be able to catch up. You're also worried about how this affects your other students in class. You decide to bring Jason/Leila to Fairness.

Questions to think about:

- What happened? What has been happening?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- How were you feeling while this was happening?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- Who else has been affected by this?
- What do you need now to feel better and move forward?

*NOTE: At the Fairness Committee, after you explain your side of the story, be ready to move towards a solution.

Parental Consent Form
Letter To Be Typed on School Letterhead

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The Business Community at XYZ School is pleased to announce that we have organized a Fairness Committee in our community in order to ensure that our ninth graders have a safe, caring, strong community to learn in. Fairness Committee is a non-traditional restorative justice model. The way that this works is when community norms and values have been violated, Fairness seeks to create, through dialogue and by consensus, appropriate “consequences” for those violations. In situations where a community norm has been violated, any member of the community, including teachers and students, can bring each other to the committee. The group then facilitates a conversation ending with how each party will make the situation better so that we can move forward. The committee seeks to address small infractions before they reach a point where our regular discipline structures come into place.

Possible consequences include:

- Making up work with a teacher before/after school
- Cleaning up any drawing/graffiti/etc. (if a student defaces property)
- Redoing an assignment (for example, if cheating is suspected)
- Community service (delivering supplies, filing papers, assisting teachers in tidying classrooms)
- Apologizing verbally or in writing to a student, teacher, or class who has been harmed
- Assisting with clean up in the cafeteria (if a student throws food, consistently leaves trash on tables and floors, etc.)

The Fairness Committee is a democratization of the traditional disciplinary process and includes teachers and students. It typically convenes six people: one teacher facilitator, a teacher and two students on the committee, and the two people who were involved in the norm/value violation. Any member of the community – adult or student – can take another to Fairness. Any student or teacher may bring another community member to Fairness. Through meeting as a group and discussing issues, the Committee tries to 1) inspire empathic and critical self-reflection, by confronting a member of the community with his or her actions and how they have affected others; 2) collectively determining how best to restore and heal the community; and 3) build college-ready problem solving skills.

Our committee stems from our belief that young adults in our community can recognize and make amends for any harm done so that they can focus on their academic success. For this reason, if a student has been referred to the Fairness Committee, we hope that the situation can be resolved at that point. We ask that you sign this form consenting to allow your child to participate in the Fairness Committee if the need arises. Please keep in mind that the student must also agree to participate and that no one can be forced to have these meetings. Please also be assured that you will continue to be contacted in the event of any consistent infractions including lateness, cutting classes, etc. and that Chancellor’s Regulations will be followed for all other discipline matters that go beyond the scope of the Fairness Committee.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

To Be Typed on School Letterhead

FAIRNESS COMMITTEE PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Name of Student: _____

Cohort: _____

I, _____, hereby consent for my
(parent/guardian's name) son/daughter to participate in the 9th
Grade Fairness Committee at XYZ High School if the need arises.

(Signature of Parent/Guardian)

(Date)

(Parent/Guardian Phone Number)