

WHAT YOUR COLLEAGUES ARE SAYING . . .

“Schools are a community, and all communities experience challenges and success. One of the challenges we commonly face is supporting our educators in understanding how to meet our students’ social-emotional and behavioral needs in a way that provides proactive and sustainable solutions. *The Restorative Practices Playbook* is an outstanding resource any educator can use to start their journey toward positive change. This book is full of practical tools and examples that can support an individual teacher or create systemwide change. I highly recommend this book to all educators.”

—**Heath Peine**, Executive Director of Student Support Services,
Wichita Public Schools

“I haven’t been as excited about the implications of any book I have read as I have with *The Restorative Practices Playbook*. As we continue to evolve in our discipline methods as a district, this playbook offers a systematic guide that can help us to reflect and adjust our practices. We need to offer better solutions to support positive behavior in our schools, and this book provides action steps to make those changes happen.”

—**Kris Felicello**, Superintendent of Schools,
North Rockland Central School District

THE
RESTORATIVE
PRACTICES
PLAYBOOK

THE
RESTORATIVE
PRACTICES
PLAYBOOK

TOOLS FOR **TRANSFORMING**
DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-1-0718-8458-4

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022931835

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

22 23 24 25 26 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Visit the companion website at
resources.corwin.com/restorativepracticesplaybook
for downloadable resources, tools, and guides.

FOREWORD

Restorative justice work is social justice work. In *The Restorative Practices Playbook*, Dominique Smith, Douglas Fisher, and Nancy Frey highlight the power of genuine positive relationships among students and adults in schools. The authors provide readers with practical tools to encourage a sense of belonging and to foster connectedness among school community members. They provide readers with a toolkit to help educators feel safe being vulnerable to students and with each other and to allow students to be vulnerable and accept responsibility. These practices reduce conflict and enable schools to handle conflict in productive ways that emphasize growth, development, and learning rather than isolation and punishment.

In *The Restorative Practices Playbook*, the authors show readers how restorative practices positively impact schools and school-related outcomes. Students benefit from classrooms that function in predictable ways with predictable routines facilitated by a teacher they can trust to treat them with a predictable level of kindness and care. Even when events upend students' worlds outside of school, students must trust schools and the adults responsible for making schooling happen in ways that provide them with predictable routines and learning.

Dominique Smith, Douglas Fisher, and Nancy Frey show readers how restorative justice practices provide structures, processes, and functions schools can use to make things right when someone disrupts the school environment. These practices allow community members to repair harms and restore fractured relationships among each other. When done well, restorative practices help school community members protect core values and instructional time by diverting students from suspensions and expulsions and keeping them in classrooms. It is imperative that we keep all kids in school and ensure all students have equitable access to a free and appropriate public education.

I first met Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey the same way as many of you reading this foreword. I met them through their work. Before becoming an author, school principal, and professor, I was an English teacher. I knew Dr. Fisher and Dr. Frey through their research and writing on improving students' reading comprehension and writing. Later in my career, a high school I was leading got accepted into a competency-based education pilot program, which complemented a dual enrollment program I was determined to build with support from community partners. I dug deeper into Dr. Fisher and Dr. Frey's work at Health Sciences High and Middle College (HSHMC) to get curricular ideas and insight to revamp my school's curricular program. Connecting with Dr. Fisher and Dr. Frey through this foreword and other academic work is the universe working in mysterious ways.

Some time ago, I met Dr. Dominique through Twitter. (I'm not even kidding.) Dr. Dominique Smith is a school leader at HSHMC, and he sent a few members of his staff to hear me talk about my work in restorative justice. I connected with them, but I wasn't able to connect with Dominique at that time. Now, Dr. Dominique is "my dawg." For those who may not understand that colloquialism, Dr. Dominique and I have a wonderful appreciation for each other. Dr. Dominique and I connected about restorative justice online, via telephone, and it was clear that we were like-minded.

The work that this team has done on *The Restorative Practices Playbook* will help many children, educators, and schools. The ideas in the manuscript are wonderfully presented. The messaging about mindfulness, collaboration, and agency is needed. The playbook is written in an informative, easy-to-read style. Educators will find it a fantastic resource for reflection and action planning, particularly educators and school leaders new to restorative practices.

I do want to note that this book does not seek to take a deep dive into the intersections of race, implicit bias, and restorative practices. This book isn't written for that purpose. This is not the book that intends to explore restorative justice where it is equally (sometimes mortally) essential to be culturally competent as it is to be competent in one's subject matter pedagogy to be effective. This isn't that book. There are other books about restorative justice that immerse readers in discussions about the intersections of disproportionality, systemic discrimination, and restorative practices.

My colleagues have written a book that is exemplary at doing what it is designed to do. *The Restorative Practices Playbook* helps educators start or continue their restorative justice journeys, remain reflective about their practice, and make refinements to stay on track in their efforts. I am confident that *The Restorative Practices Playbook* will give schools tools to take important steps along their path to restorative practice.

My ministry in this restorative justice work is anchored in the belief that Jim Crow disciplinary practices in schools must end. Restorative justice provides waypoints to derail Jim Crow disciplinary outcomes. In this spirit, Dominique Smith, Douglas Fisher, and Nancy Frey provide readers with *The Restorative Practices Playbook*. This playbook is timely and much needed.

—Zachary Scott Robbins

School Principal, Clark County School District

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Corwin gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following reviewers:

Kris Felicello
Superintendent of Schools
North Rockland Central School District
Garnerville, NY

Heath Peine
Executive Director of Student Support Services
Wichita Public Schools
Wichita, KS

Zachary Scott Robbins
School Principal
Clark County School District
Las Vegas, NV

INTRODUCTION

Clarke is a new student who is very excited and a bit nervous about the new school. Clarke attended a rural, or as they say, “country school,” for several years. You find out Clarke’s father is a well-known farmer who is taking a role at the corporate office in the city. Clarke has worked on the farm for years and has lots of stories about equipment, animals, and crops. Clarke is especially fond of milk cows and wrote about the taste of fresh milk during a quick write. On the second day of attending the new school, someone realizes Clarke has a knife on the back of their belt.

Given your current school or district rules, what are you required to do? What course of action is required of you? Clearly, a rule has been broken and Clarke created an unsafe environment. As we will explore throughout this book, a punitive approach focused on the following questions:

- What law or rule was broken?
- Who broke it?
- What punishment is deserved?

In this case, Clarke clearly violated an important rule related to school safety. The question then is, what is the punishment? In many places, Clarke would be suspended. In some places, Clarke might even be expelled. After all, there was a knife on campus that created an unsafe place to learn. Some will argue that Clarke will only learn if there are exclusionary consequences for this action.

Do you agree with this course of action, given what you know about Clarke? What do you wish would happen differently? We shared this example because we hope you are thinking that there is a much simpler solution and one that will likely ensure that Clarke learns not to bring a knife to school. But the situations you encounter are often much more complex than this. And they deserve the same type of investigation as to the *why* before considering a course of action.

Before we continue, let’s consider another example. Nancy is at the airport and security pulls her bag from the line. They ask if there was anything sharp in her bag and Nancy replies, “No,” not remembering that she had been helping a friend over the weekend and has a utility knife in her bag. Of course, security finds it and shows it to her. She apologizes profusely and then is suspended from flying ever again. Okay, the suspension part’s not true. But they do ask if she wants to check the utility knife or throw it away. Once the problem is solved, they let her go on her way.

We are not advocating for weapons on campus (or airplanes) any more than we support students being disrespectful to teachers. But there are ways to ensure that students learn from the mistakes that they make. We are educators and our primary role is to teach. When students have unfinished learning, educators create opportunities for students to learn. Unfortunately, too often that role seems to stop when it comes to behavior:

If a student doesn't know how to read,

We teach that student how to read.

If a student doesn't know how to do math problems,

We teach that student to do math.

If a student doesn't know how to behave,

We punish that student.

Where is the teachable moment? Isn't that why we entered this most noble profession? To teach. That's what restorative practices are about. In this book, we focus on a set of practices that are designed to teach. That must include teaching prosocial behaviors based on strong relationships and a commitment to the well-being of others.



Before we continue, it's important to clear up a confusion. We have been asked far too many times, *What about consequences? Are there ever consequences for the actions that students take? What if they hurt someone? What if they destroy property?*

THERE ARE WAYS
TO ENSURE THAT
STUDENTS LEARN
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WE ARE EDUCATORS
AND OUR PRIMARY
ROLE IS TO TEACH.

Restorative practices are about healing. They are about re-establishing the learning environment. Of course, there are consequences. That may even include time away from school for calming down and making plans. We just understand that some of the traditional consequences that schools use do not result in any new learning.

Doug's high school English teacher was frustrated with one of Doug's writing assignments. In front of the whole class, the teacher told Doug that he would spend the rest of his life "flipping burgers." Frustrated and hurt, Doug threw a pencil at the wall and walked out of class.

He was then sent to the principal, who asked if Doug had done what was written on the referral, which he admitted. Doug was suspended for three days. No one at school asked Doug why he did it. What did Doug learn from this suspension? Well, one thing he learned was to never trust that teacher. Doug missed that class a lot after that day but made up the grade in the summer. The hurt and lack of belief that the teacher showed were never addressed. Perhaps the teacher intended something else and a quick conversation could have resolved the feelings. Perhaps the teacher had not considered the impact of a statement made in frustration and a conversation could have enlightened that

teacher. What if Doug had heard that his actions scared the teacher and had a chance to learn about the impact of his actions? Why were so many opportunities missed? Opportunities to spend time figuring out what went wrong, why, and how to resolve it.

So where do we start? How might we create restorative classrooms and schools?

It starts with *why*. But, although we could, we are not going to provide you with an extensive literature review about the impact of restorative practices. We don't find that as compelling as asking you: What is your *why*? When you find your *why*, you will know how restorative practices can help you accomplish your vision.

Simon Sinek's "Start With Why" is among the most-watched TED Talks. His message is clear: your *why* is what drives you and gives you purpose. So, what is your *why*? When is the last time you thought about it? Consider the following prompts. Take some time to reflect and add your own thoughts.



RESTORATIVE
PRACTICES ARE
ABOUT HEALING.
THEY ARE ABOUT
RE-ESTABLISHING
THE LEARNING
ENVIRONMENT.

Why did you become an educator?	
What makes you a great teacher or leader?	
What do you hope for your students?	
What goals do you have for yourself as an educator?	

We have asked countless numbers of people a simple but most meaningful question: *Why are you an educator?* Again and again, individuals light up and tell us their *why* with a story:

- For the kids
- To be the adult I never had
- To be just like my third-grade teacher who saved my life
- To fight for students with disabilities because my brother didn't have a chance
- To make a difference in the lives of others
- To showcase that learning is fun
- To share science in a way it has never been seen before
- To allow *all* voices to be heard
- To help create the next generation
- To see a student's eyes light up when they finally get it
- To change lives
- My family were all educators and I knew I could make a difference
- To give students a person they can count on



As we read these *whys* and reflect on our own, we see a trend. Educators come into this profession for the love, care, and ongoing growth of students. These are known as the moral rewards of teaching. And they are a powerful force for satisfaction in our roles and the generally positive feelings we have about our chosen work.

WHAT MIGHT BE
DIFFERENT IF THE
VALUED ADULTS IN A
YOUNG PERSON'S LIFE
REMAINED AND WORKED
THROUGH THE TROUBLE?

Dominique's *why* has always been *to be that adult who doesn't leave*. In part, restorative practices allow him to realize his *why*. Far too often, adults leave when students get in trouble. What might be different if the valued adults in a young person's life remained and worked through the trouble? What if we came to understand that exclusionary practices prevent us from realizing our *why*? That there are more effective ways for building, maintaining, and repairing relationships. And that there are rewards that come from watching students learn how to navigate the complex words of social skills and relationships. As Dominique says,

I get to listen to students.

I get to hear their stories.

I get to ensure that students have another chance.

Importantly, restorative practices are not just a way to create long-term change in students. These practices are fortifying for you, the educator, who has the opportunity to address the intentional and unintentional harm that inevitably comes from supporting the development of other humans. In part, restorative practices allow you to have your say, to provide others an opportunity to make amends, and for you to leave school feeling good about your accomplishments.