



BUILDING COMMUNITY IN SCHOOLS

Servant-Leadership, Restorative Justice, and Discipline Reform

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In the United States, educational quality varies widely across school districts. For decades, many Americans have questioned education quality (Pulliam and Patten 2007; Urban and Wagoner 2009; Webb 2006). The twentieth century saw over thirty national reports and over 300 state and federal task forces look at how schools could improve (Giroux 2004). Despite these efforts, many remain dissatisfied with education in America (Strauss 2012).

Successful schools, however, do exist among the 13,924 school districts and 98,916 public schools in America (Number and Enrollment 2009). Successful schools are those with superior leaders who foster a sense of community in their buildings (Ubben, Hughes, and Norris 2011). Marzano, Waters, and McNutly (2005) found that by placing in a school a principal who was one standard deviation higher in leadership than average, by itself increases student achievement by 10 percent (64). As Busted and Lopez (2013) noted, “The positive news is we can fix this. It’s about finding better school leaders—principals and superintendents. Great principals and superintendents, like great managers in any kind of organization, drive workplace engagement. And right now we have far too few great school leaders” (para. 12).

Most current attempts at educational reform focus on testing outcomes and punishing schools that fail to meet standards, rather than focusing on school climate and leadership issues that could improve public education for all students. However, by identifying outstanding educational leaders and training them in areas such as servant-leadership, school districts could take a major step in promoting tolerance, improving staff and student morale, and producing better schools by building supportive educational communities. One component of this is adopting restorative justice practices into schools to better connect administrators, faculty, and students. This paper will outline challenges faced by educators and school leaders in American



schools today, address how servant-leadership and restorative justice could help build community and alleviate some of these difficulties, and conclude with a discussion of one specific technique, the usage of restorative circles, to build school community.

CHALLENGES IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TODAY: LOW FACULTY MORALE AND VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

Being a school administrator today may be one of the most demanding jobs in America. Fullan (2008) pointed out principals must “be all things to all people” (140). However, their ability to create an atmosphere in their school cannot be overlooked; as Barth (1990) wrote, “Show me a good school, and I’ll show you a good principal” (64). Principals get most of their work done through other people (Tschannen-Moran 2004), usually teachers. However, teachers today face unprecedented challenges that make a principal’s job even more imperative. Up to 50 percent of all new teachers leave the profession within their first five years, with almost 10percent of them not even making it to the end of their first year (Ingersoll 2012), and with some urban districts seeing turnover as high as 80 percent in a teacher’s first six years (Simon 2012). This turnover costs American public schools over seven billion dollars each year (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future 2007). Many teachers leave because of stress caused by trying to manage student behavior (Claassen and Claassen 2008), whether caused by overwhelmed administrators, unengaged parents, or lack of adequate training in teacher preparatory programs (Kopkowski 2008). Lack of support from administrators and poor working conditions in schools are major reasons why teachers leave the classroom (Rose and Gallup 2006). Teacher job satisfaction has hit its lowest point in twenty-five years, while more than three-fourths of principals believe their jobs have become too complex for them (Watson 2013). Busteded and Lopez (2013) found that teaching ranks eighth out of fourteen professions for work environment. Teachers rank last, behind coal miners, construction workers, and truck drivers, in saying their “supervisor always creates an environment that is trusting and open.” They are also last in saying they were “treated with respect all day yesterday,” and experience the second-highest stress of all occupations, trailing only physicians.

While schools create stressful environments for adults, students can experience problems that are even more pronounced. Students in schools are mirror images of our society, one that includes many ills (Brumley 2012).



One of the biggest threats in schools today is violence from students in the school who feel rejected. This can come in several forms. One could be bullying. Bullying is one of the most common forms of violence in schools and leads to a wider cycle of violence (Morrison 2007). Studies of school “rampage” shootings found that two-thirds of the shooters had been bullied at school, and all but one suffered from social marginalization; it is estimated that as many as 160,000 U.S. students are absent from school each day because of fear of attack or bullying (Newman 2004). The American Medical Association found that nearly 30 percent of students in grades six through ten had been involved in bullying, as a victim, perpetrator, or both (Nansel et al. 2001). Twenty-four percent of sixth graders specifically reported being bullied, with bullied students more likely to experience academic failure and to carry a weapon for protection, increasing the possibility of a violent and tragic event on school grounds (DeVoe and Kaffenberger 2005).

As threats of physical violence have increased, schools have implemented zero-tolerance policies. Skiba and Peterson (1999) wrote that zero-tolerance is “intended primarily as a method of sending a message that certain behaviors will not be tolerated, by punishing all offenses severely, no matter how minor” (373). Unfortunately, an analysis by the American Psychological Association (2008) found that zero-tolerance policies have not made discipline more consistent or uniform, have not led to an overall decrease of discipline problems in schools, and do not take into account the development level of youth. Their research found that the only thing zero-tolerance has been linked to decreasing is the school climate of learning. The problems associated with zero-tolerance policies, including expulsion for minor offenses, coupled with their disproportionate enforcement on minority students and those with disabilities, has led the Obama administration to call on schools across the United States to rethink their enforcement of zero tolerance, and to use the tool only as a “last resort” (Rich 2014).

In addition to permanent removal, schools have also turned to suspensions to alleviate discipline problems. Over the last thirty years, suspensions at K–12 schools in America have more than doubled (Carr 2012). However, for suspended students, the root cause of the original problem remains unaddressed. Additionally, students not only have their schooling disrupted, they are also not deterred from future prohibited action (Sugai and Homer 1999), and are more likely to be involved in greater levels of disruption (Wu et al. 1982). This punishment, in addition to increasing shame, actually decreases feelings of guilt (Gilligan 2001). Students are also more likely to enter the



formal criminal justice system later (Morrison 2007). Suspensions are found to be effective only when students participate in a program that aids their transition out of the suspension (Wilcox, Brigham, and Nicolai 1998).

More troubling, African American students are 3.5 times more likely to be suspended than Caucasian students (New Data 2012), suggesting that there is a racial bias in school discipline in America. Additionally, zero tolerance and increased suspensions have ushered in a new role for police in schools. As police officers have become regular presences in schools, so too have criminal citations. In Texas, officers currently write over 100,000 citations a year for offenses formerly handled by school authorities as noncriminal matters, with citations disproportionately written for minority students (Eckholm 2013).

Discipline should be focused on prevention, not punishment (Whitaker 2003), yet the current response to incidents of school code violations, bullying, and physical threats has been removal and separation. Unfortunately, this has failed. As Morrison (2007) noted, “Security devices, while often seen as preventative measures, treat the problem at a behavioural level, not the relational level. . . . rather that work on relational issues, it is much easier to erect barriers and other devices that separate ‘us’ from ‘them,’ even when the enemy is one’s self” (51).

Gilligan (2001) stated that “we will have to renounce our own urge to engage in violence—that is, punishment—and decide that we want to engage instead, so as to facilitate maturation, development, and healing” (118). Restoring the community with restorative justice when it has been harmed accomplishes this. The heart of restorative justice is healing, addressing alienation, and restoring healthy relationships (Morrison 2007). To begin to accomplish restorative justice, a spirit of servant-leadership must already be present in the school community.

SERVANT-LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS

Several characteristics of servant-leadership, identified by Spears (1998), relate to education. One of the most important is building community. Bausch (1998) observed, “servant-leaders can only develop our fullness as a person as part of a community, both through serving others and working with others in communities” (230). Greenleaf (2002) envisioned a society of leaders who could foster community, embrace diversity rather than try to force conformity, and develop others and seek restoration (Ferch 2012). Unfortunately,



with its emphasis on standardized testing for accountability and controlling leadership, this is the opposite of current education reform (Nichols 2011).

Successful principals must look beyond this. Brumley (2012) contended that a principalship is a calling to provide and serve. He stated that principals should view problems as opportunities for improvement, and issues as ways to bring people together toward commonality. For Brumley, effective principals change lives in a positive way, through democratic policy, authentic relationships, and empowerment of people to become more human, more aware of others. They do not try to dominate colleagues through their status or education; rather, they value others, build relationships, empower goodness, and lead their organization to become healthier, while building teacher leadership. Wallace (2008) reminded us that being a principal is about the “people,” advocating for students and “loving” the staff (19–20).

Nichols (2011) wrote that servant-leaders try to create an environment where there is shared power, autonomy, stewardship, and service; he stated that poor school results are due to those who fail to build strong educational communities in an imperfect world. Covey (1998) pointed out that empowerment helps build community, and servant-leaders empower others through creating high-trust cultures. Trust among members of the school community is important (Blum and Libbey 2004; Houston and Sokolow 2006), and Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that trust was the most important factor in determining if schools would make and maintain gains in student achievement. Tschannen-Moran (2004) asserted the behavior of the leader fosters or diminishes trust in schools. To develop trust, school leaders must show vulnerability, benevolence, honesty, and openness, as well as competence, including holding people accountable. As she observed, “principals and teachers earn the trust of their students first and foremost by demonstrating their care. . . . even if the process of education at times requires discipline and correction of misbehavior” (137). This caring cannot be underestimated; Nelsen, Lott, and Glenn (2000) stated, “research has shown that the greatest predictor of academic success is the students’ perception of ‘does the teacher like me?’” (34).

As education changes, schools must be run more democratically, with more opportunities for both teachers and students to participate in the administration of the school (Crippen 2005; Culver 2011). Horn (2000) wrote, “There is a need for leaders who can build consensus and egalitarian community respectful of difference, rather than for managers who are grounded in industrial age theory and practice that promote the control and elimination of difference” (1).



Ferch (2012) asserted that communities where servant-leadership is practiced self-perpetuate, allowing solutions to suffering and conflict to emerge; thus, one of the critical areas for principals is to build a culture of servant-leadership in their schools. Some positive research already exists on this subject. Servant-leadership has been shown to improve school climate and teacher satisfaction by building community and authenticity (Black 2010; Cerit 2009), improve teachers' commitment to school (Cerit 2010), improve low-performing schools by helping people "understand self" and "build bridges" (Hunter-Heaston 2010), and improve the mentoring of new teachers (Steinbeck 2009). Principals themselves endorse servant-leadership principles as being important to administer their schools (Valdes 2009), and servant-leadership connects to other prominent leadership theories. Crippen (2005) advocated an adoption of Senge's systems thinking to facilitate servant-leadership, as Senge's (2006) five core disciplines closely align with Greenleaf's concept of the servant as leader. Additionally, principals identified as servant-leaders utilize Kouzes and Posner's (2007) five leadership practices to a high degree (Taylor et al. 2007).

One example of how servant-leaders create community is in dialogue. Ferch (2012) wrote that servant-leaders approach people first by listening and trying to understand them, but most importantly, by accepting them, because "In acceptance, empathy; in empathy, listening; and in listening, understanding" (42). In dialogue, people suspend their beliefs in conversations to understand another and forgo their desire to defend their interests, and exercise their power over others. Through this process, reconciliation can occur. Listening in itself can also lead to healing of individuals and communities. Ferch added that leaders must embrace their own brokenness and internalize self-responsibility for system health. By engaging in dialoging, principals can also help to encourage the practice among teachers and students (Brumley 2012). Hopkins (2004) observed that a listening school is warm and welcoming, and the appropriate listening behavior starts with school leaders and flows from them. It also gives students an opportunity to use speaking and listening skills to build a sense of belonging.

The improvement of school community for faculty would have positive benefits for students. Nichols (2011) quoted Hank Levin, who said, "Our view ... is that if you can't make a school a great professional place for staff, it's never going to be a great place for kids" (74). Once adopted, servant-leadership affects students in a school as much as adults. To learn better strategies, students must observe adults in their lives



living these values. By building a servant-leadership community among educators, students enjoy the benefits of the community, and when adults practice and model servant-leadership, students adopt its key principles (Tate 2003).

Servant-leadership for youth has been linked to higher efficacy and self-esteem (Grothaus 2004), and to generosity of spirit and perceived interdependence (Bowman 2005). When students feel genuinely a part of a community, their sense of belonging helps heal them and reach a sense of self-actualization (Herman and Marlowe 2005). School connectedness and the bonds students have with their school have been linked as an important factor in the psychological health and emotional well-being of youth (Blum and Libbey 2004; Kelm and Connell 2004; McNeely, Nonnemaker, and Blum 2002), with social inclusion found to build human potential and social responsibility (Williams, Forgas, and Hippel 2005). Conversely, rejection has been found to lead to lower intelligent thought (Baumeister, Twenge, and Nuss 2002) and increased aggressive behavior (Twenge et al. 2001). One way to build community is to implement restorative justice in school disciplinary procedures to restore community when community rules have been violated.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Most criminal justice systems today are rooted in a belief that took hold in England after the Norman invasion, that crime was a violation against the state and required someone be held accountable and punished. Ignored were victim's needs. Schools have followed a similar system of having predetermined punishments for offenses (Claassen and Claassen 2008; Thorsborne and Vinegrad 2009). Unlike the criminal justice system, which views crime as a violation of the law and the role of the state as to impose punishment, restorative justice views offenses as a violation of people and relationships, with the role of authorities being to help repair harm (Zehr 2002). Zehr wrote that while the best-known example of restorative justice is the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, New Zealand has made restorative justice the centerpiece of its juvenile justice system since 1989. Zehr defined restorative justice in this way: "Restorative justice is a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible" (37).



Educators could find much to embrace in restorative justice. Amstutz and Mullet (2005) noted, “Situations requiring discipline in our schools can, in fact, be opportunities for learning, growth, and community-building” (3), yet for most administrators, lack of creativity often leads to missed opportunities in effectively addressing discipline problems. They stated “that lack of creativity led to discipline that was more about our need for control or quick resolution rather than about our children’s lifelong learning. When dealing with a conflict we often do not view it as an opportunity or a teachable moment but, rather, something to get through” (17–18).

Restorative discipline, however, is creative and more than just a way to deal with poor behavior. One way is that it is emotionally intelligent justice (Morrison 2007). It requires individuals to think of their actions and helps them build empathy with victims (Roberts 2008). As Amstutz and Mullet (2005) wrote, “restorative discipline does not seek to deny consequences for misbehavior. Instead, it focuses on helping students understand the real harm done by their misbehavior, to take responsibility for the behavior, and to commit to positive change” (21). Restorative justice does that by making offenders confront the ramifications of their actions in the presence of those harmed, publically accept responsibility for their actions, and work to repair the damage to effect long-term, meaningful change and rehabilitation in the offenders. The restorative approach relies on mutual respect, a belief in people’s ability to resolve their own differences if given support, and inclusive problem-solving (Hopkins 2004).

Restorative justice is not quickly or easily implemented or administered. As Roberts (2008) asserted,

The principles of restorative justice are not just the stuff of lily-livered, bleeding hearts. Quite the opposite. These principles demand a much higher degree of commitment and involvement on the part of school personnel, the aggrieved, the aggressor, parents, and concerned parties within the greater school community than simply administering a punishment that, in all likelihood, only admonishes the guilty party for getting caught. The application of restorative justice is hard, deliberate work. It takes time. It takes planning. It requires risk on the part of all participants to publically express concern for what has happened and accept responsibility for being a part of the solution. (87)

Riestedberg (2012) pointed out that while schools may not be able to address the negative experiences students face outside the school day, they can establish an environment that supports them and allows them to prosper regardless. Servant-leaders strive to create environments where acceptance,



empathy, and justice exist, and where forgiveness can be asked for and granted to build and restore a community (Ferch 2012). They do this by example, and by building trusting relationships. As Ferch stated, “The work of forgiveness is a work of tenacity, often against logic, that results in the opportunity to see our own impact on others, our own faults, and take responsibility for our faults, ask forgiveness, and become more true” (30).

One of the critical attributes servant-leaders possess is empathy, being able to see through the eyes of another; another is seeing people as unique, and accepting them even if they might not accept their behavior (Ferch 2012). This must be the attitude adopted by school leaders. Brumley (2012) called on principals to possess educational grace; “principals should consider the redemptive and corrective impact of grace” (90). He went on to say “the enlightened principal views mistakes as opportunities for growth in recognition of each individual’s incompleteness” and calls for teaching alongside corrective action, and granting people opportunities to move forward (91). Restorative justice recognizes the need to protect someone’s spirit, while holding them accountable for their actions (Riestenberg 2012). Hopkins (2004) observed that restorative justice helps foster good relationships, mutual respect, and a sense of belonging by allowing for repair of damage and for “mutually acceptable ways of moving forward” when harmful behavior or conflict occurs (13), rather than just “putting a lid back on” problems by challenging the notion that punishment will change behavior (29–30).

Everyone can acknowledge that schools need discipline to ensure order and to allow learning to occur. Students need to experience consequences for breaking rules; however, teachers and administrators must remember that since an adolescent’s brain is not fully developed, impulsive behavior will occur. Correcting inappropriate behavior can produce chemical changes in the brain that can lead to new habits for young people (Thorsborne and Vinegrad 2009). Parents would endorse such an approach. While parents accept the idea of discipline in schools, they do not accept corrective measures that make children feel worse about themselves and do not lead to growth (Claassen and Claassen 2008). One specific technique that is gaining in popularity in schools is the regular usage of circles to restore members and build community.

USAGE OF CIRCLES IN SCHOOLS

Amstutz and Mullet (2005), Hopkins (2004), Morrison (2007), Riestenberg (2012), and Thorsborne and Vinegrad (2009) advocate the usage of “circles” with members of a school who share a common interest in restoring harmony



to their community, as a starting point for restorative justice in education. Circles are led by a trained facilitator, who serves to protect the interests of all participants, rather than acting as the leader. Hopkins asserted that these circles should be a regular feature across a school community, to foster a sense of respect and belonging. Failure to engage regularly in these practices will result in circles becoming a “tool,” with no sustainability and without building trust to deal with crises when they occur. The advantage for teachers is that they allow honest discussion to take place, rather than having participants be dominated. Circles have been used in Minnesota (Riestenberg 2012); Oakland, California, Portland, Oregon, and Chicago (Brown 2013); Britain and Pennsylvania (Hopkins 2004; Thorsborne and Vinegrad 2009); and Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (Morrison 2007) in a variety of types of schools. They all have the same purpose, to repair harm when rules were violated.

The circles are not about therapy, but rather offer a place where people can be present for others who have been hurt and offer care and healing (Riestenberg 2012). Restorative conferences and the circle give participants a chance to practice empathy and to recognize harm that has occurred. The circles follow a six-step model of engagement, reflection, understanding, acknowledgement, agreement, and arranging for follow-up (Thorsborne and Vinegrad 2009).

As Riestenberg (2012) stated, restorative justice demands that we think about the community and relationships. “In restorative schools, people who harm others are held accountable to the person they hurt as well as to the school community, not just to the student handbook” (6). Normal rule enforcement in schools only deals with the violator of rules, not those influenced directly or indirectly by their actions. Additionally, one-size-fits-all consequences can neither address all harms nor build a positive school community. If the purpose of rules is to enforce good relationships with people, then response to harm should be repairing the harm. Restorative schools look for the “teachable moment” to guide students, rather than punishing and separating them. Merely punishing the offender does not foster accountability, meet the victim’s needs, or address the causes of wrongdoing (Thorsborne and Vinegrad 2009). Additionally, restorative justice in circles can even out power imbalances so that all parties can work together to restore the community through developing solutions to problems (Morrison 2007).

Zehr (2002) wrote that the primary purpose of restorative justice is to provide victims of incidents with information, truth telling, empowerment, and



restitution. He noted that restorative justice forces offenders to acknowledge their behavior, to accept responsibility for their actions, and to transform themselves when they identify the root causes of their behavior. It also allows them to reintegrate back into their community, rather than alienating them further and pushing them away. Restorative justice helps prevent exclusion from the community through shame, which can exacerbate discipline problems and weaken their connection to school (Riestenberg 2012). Short-term solutions that punish offenders rarely lead to longer-term changes in behavior. In fact, the shame associated with punishment can actually lead to future problems (Amstutz and Mullet 2005). Separating the person from the act allows those at a restorative justice conference to deal with the action without further shaming the perpetrator and allows the offender to rid him- or herself of the shame of their act. Failure to allow this forces shame to be internalized and can further a cycle of alienation (Morrison 2007), but the restorative justice process through the usage of circles is a form of a reintegration ceremony that can restore a person to a community by helping to dispense with shame and move toward healing (Braithwaite and Mugford 1994).

It is sometimes overlooked that victims need an opportunity to be reintegrated back into the community as well (Morrison 2007), and restorative justice provides this opportunity. Hopkins (2004) stated that what most people who have been harmed want is a chance to have their story listened to, to be apologized to, and to be assured the behavior will not happen again. Restorative justice allows for reconciliation, which can reduce fears of further victimization. Restorative justice allows the victim to be heard and offered compensation, and allows the offender to acknowledge the action and apologize for wrongdoing. Those who have done something harmful want the opportunity to be able to make amends and restore the relationship; otherwise, they would not have agreed to participate in the restorative justice process.

The key aspect of the restorative process is to restore the offender and offended to a level of common humanity by bringing people together who have been harmed by the behavior and allowing them to discover a solution. Restorative justice focuses on repairing the harm and providing support to all parties in the process (Thorsborne and Vinegrad 2009).

While circles can be used for more serious violations, opportunities for restorative dialogue occur daily and can help bring teachers, students, and administrators closer together by resolving differences. These skills may be foreign to educators and need to be taught and modeled (Hopkins 2004),



because unlike the academic curriculum at schools, the social curriculum is often underdeveloped (Claassen and Claassen 2008). Many schools do not teach children good conflict-resolution skills, leaving them to learn informally. Restorative justice allows people to develop social capital by productively engaging in conflict (Morrison 2007).

LIMITATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Restorative justice is not a “plug-in program”; it requires a commitment by the adults in the school. Efforts will fail if students do not have a preexisting positive relationship with the adults in their school (Thorsborne and Vinegrad 2009). For restorative justice to work in schools there must be professional development, careful implementation, and institutional support; specifically, the involvement of school leadership is essential for success. This is in part because the program will need time to grow, and will probably create some initial tensions (Morrison 2007; Thorsborne and Vinegrad 2009). Circles cannot occur if the wrongdoer refuses to admit their involvement or if people do not feel safe participating in the process (Thorsborne and Vinegrad 2009). Preplanning is critical so that people are not revictimized (Hopkins 2004). Additionally, when the parties affected by a violation either cannot or will not meet for the restorative justice process, regular discipline imposed by officials is used (Claassen and Claassen 2008; Riestenberg 2012). Further, teachers, like other professionals, can only offer advice; they cannot force anyone to do anything, such as participate in restorative justice (Roberts 2008).

Restorative justice does take more time to successfully implement, but can have a large impact on a school climate (Amstutz and Mullet 2005). Hopkins (2004) observed that a school run on restorative lines is one in which problems are addressed directly, and where conversations are easier to have. The process can be as meaningful for the adults in the school as the students. In fact, “adults need to feel respected and valued and to have high self-esteem to be able to respect, value, and affirm their students effectively” (55). The restorative process can be used to help two members of the teaching staff reflect on a situation that has caused them concern. Called a “restorative debriefing,” the failure to provide such opportunities for reflection and development can lead to staff burnout (74). Additionally, servant-leadership and restorative practices can help overcome mistrust between teachers and administrators (Nichols 2011).



Amstutz and Mullet (2005) wrote that schools that have a restorative environment have restorative justice practices in adult-to-adult relationships and say that faculty-administration relations must be based on restorative practices before they are used on students. They claimed,

Restorative discipline provides a framework to support learning communities by modeling and encouraging responsible behavior and discouraging harmful behavior. Schools that view conflict as a teachable moment and an opportunity for growth intentionally design environments and processes that value relationship-building and community-building. The process begins with examining the models used not only for children but for adults: the teachers, administrators, and staff persons. If children do not see these processes practiced among adults and within the procedures they experience, they will not believe in the value of transforming conflict. (35)

CONCLUSION

Morrison (2007) reminded us that “It seems clear that securing and nurturing safe school communities is both sublimely simple and dauntingly complex” (46). However, the evidence is clear that for schools to succeed, school leaders must build a true educational community. Those schools that have removed physical barriers and instead spent time to develop relationships in school community have indeed seen a decrease in school violence (Deeney 2013). The key was educational leaders willing to implement those changes.

Wallace (2009) told us that “Leaders are in the business of building bridges, not burning them” (12), and school principals who act as servant-leaders have the ability to build strong communities for their faculties and students. By integrating restorative justice into their school communities, they can help build and repair relationships. Through this, their students and their staff can reach Greenleaf’s (2002) ultimate goal, of being “healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants” (27). Schools can become safe, supportive environments where meaningful student learning can occur, and faculty receive the support they need to build learning communities that engage and reach all students in their school. As Whitaker (2003) wrote, “If we take this opportunity to teach students the *behaviors* that repair a situation instead of escalating it, our job becomes easier—and their lives become better” (104). Failure to use such an approach can result in underperforming schools and a perpetual cycle of harmed relationships that will continue to impact our schools and our society.



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