

Restorative Practices



Problem Solving Circle

- Talking piece is used going around the circle
- A number of rounds of questions are used
- Clear Circle Expectations upheld
- The responsibility of the problem is shared by the community
- The community shares in the repairing of the problem

BOTH Formal Conference and Problem Solving Circle

- Sit in a circle
- All are given voice
- Has high accountability
- Seeks to repair the harm to the community
- Focuses on the problem not the person
- Fosters awareness of how others are affected and that forgiveness and healing can happen

Formal Conference

- Pre Conference for each participant
- All participants agree to come
- Specific seating arrangement
- Questions go to offender first then to the offended
- The offender and the offended have supporters with them
- Others in the Community that were offended may be invited
- An agreement on how the offender will repair the harm is signed
- Held for very serious behaviors

As educators come to the Restorative Practices workshop, they are introduced to 5 Practices. Learning about these 5 Practices brings overlap in some of the Practices. What seems to be most confusing is how a Problem Solving Circle is any different than a Formal Conference. There is a big difference in that Formal Conferences take a great deal of time and thought in setting up because of all participants being pre-conferenced first. This means sitting down individually with anyone we think should be invited to the conference both offended and offender(s) and going through the Restorative Questions. Each person answers the questions of "What happened?" "What were you thinking of at the time?" "What are you thinking of now?" "Who or how have you been affected?" and "How can this be made right?"

It is a practice for the conference to come, plus they are given an understanding of how the conference works. At the end of each pre-conference the participant will be asked if they are willing commit to attend and participate in the conference. Because this is such an intense process, Formal Conferencing is used for the very serious behaviors such as theft, drugs, violence, to name a few.

If you are interested in more information on Formal Conferencing I would highly recommend the book *Restorative Justice Conferencing* by Ted Wachtel, Terry O'Connell and Ben Wachtel. For more resources and information on Restorative Practices see our website www.wishschools.org

—Submitted by Christine Kleiman