CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IS ABOUT RESTORATIVE DISCIPLINE

Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob, and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe.

—Frederick Douglass, Social Reformer, Abolitionist, Statesman

If we desire a society of peace, then we cannot achieve such a society through violence. If we desire a society without discrimination, then we must not discriminate against anyone in the process of building this society. If we desire a society that is democratic, then democracy must become a means as well as an end.

—Bayard Rustin, Civil Rights Leader

Classroom management in is about restorative discipline. By *restorative discipline*, we mean a disposition, a mindset, and an approach to discipline that builds upon the foundational idea that schools are places where students are expected to make errors and learn from them. These errors may be both in the learning of content and in learning how to be a good member of the school community. Instead of removing and excluding students from their educational setting as punishment, a restorative discipline approach supports students coming to terms with how their actions may have affected others, taking responsibility for these actions, and continuing to learn and grow. Moreover, a restorative discipline approach allows teachers and other educators to learn and grow from conflicts, whereas more traditional approaches focus almost all of the "correction" on students (Milner, 2014).

Our insistence on the use of restorative discipline as a means of addressing student behavior is deeply rooted in our belief that restorative discipline strategies are the ones most likely to lead us to justice and equity for all children in

U.S. schools. In particular, they may provide a means of disrupting and ending years of discriminatory practices that have adversely affected children in urban schools. Recall that in Chapter 1, we discuss a number of justice-centered issues that are at the heart of classroom management in urban schools. These issues have persisted even though clear evidence points to their harmful consequences for our children. These issues include disproportionate office referrals of students of color, those with learning differences, and those who live below the poverty line (Girvan, Gion, McIntosh, & Smolkowski, 2017; Skiba et al., 2011) and the disproportionate suspension and expulsion of these students (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2016). Restorative discipline appears to be the best way forward to address both of these deeply troubling issues by reconceptualizing educator responses to problematic student behavior. When problematic student behavior is addressed through a lens of restorative discipline, students have the opportunity to take responsibility for their actions without leaving the classroom and school community. This makes it more likely that students will continue to engage in learning opportunities and less likely that these students will begin the troubling pattern of detentions, suspensions, and expulsions that lead many children into the cradle-to-prison pipeline.

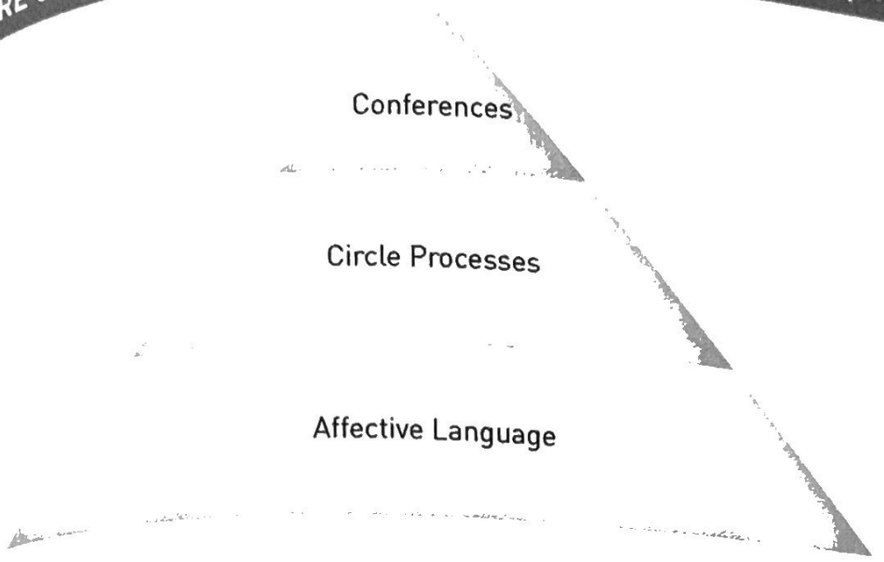
Restorative discipline involves a set of both formal and informal strategies intended to meet five goals (Advancement Project, 2014):

1. build positive relationships,
2. reduce and prevent harmful behavior,
3. resolve conflict and hold people accountable,
4. repair harm, and
5. address and discuss the needs of the school community

Ideally an entire school uses a restorative discipline plan and approach, as school administrators typically attend to the most troubling student behaviors, not teachers. By adopting a whole-school restorative discipline approach, educators can develop a schoolwide ethos that reduces conflict and preserves the dignity of individuals. Also, using this approach schoolwide helps students truly understand the goals of restorative discipline and benefit from its effects in a lasting way throughout the context of their educational experiences. However, even if an entire school does not use a restorative discipline approach, there are still methods teachers can use to build their knowledge, skills, attitudes, mindsets, and practices of restorative discipline within the bounds of their classroom.

Restorative discipline in schools can be viewed through a pyramid (see Figure 5.1). At the foundation of the pyramid is the use of affective language. These foundational interactions can be used in an ongoing and seamless

FIGURE 5.1 ■ Three Methods to Support Restorative Discipline



way in classrooms and school environments to serve as a constant reminder to students that they are part of a community at school. In the middle of the pyramid are circle processes, which can be used either proactively or reactively to strengthen relationships, discuss issues that affect school community members, or resolve interpersonal conflicts. At the top of the pyramid are conferences. Conferences can be used as a tool when relationships have been broken and are in need of rebuilding or when a student is exhibiting signs of personal crisis and may need support. Use of these methods in pre-K–12 classrooms can afford growth, learning, and rebuilding, both for the students who benefit from this classroom management approach and for the educators who implement this approach.

In this chapter, we discuss methods used at all three levels of the pyramid: affective language, circle processes, and conferences. Both classroom teachers and school leaders can use these methods to promote restorative discipline in school settings. It is important to note that we are suggesting that building these practices requires educators (both in individual classrooms and collectively) to develop the mindset, beliefs, attitudes, and dispositions necessary to practice justice.

Prior to discussing these three methods, we provide a brief background framing of the restorative discipline approach and describe why restorative discipline is a promising pathway forward to approach school discipline.

RESTORATIVE DISCIPLINE IS ROOTED IN RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Restorative discipline is an approach to school discipline that is rooted in the concept of restorative justice (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). Restorative justice is a conflict resolution philosophy that informs practice, and it emphasizes allowing people to come to terms with and remedy harm that they have

caused to others (Wachtel, 2016). Restorative justice also stresses giving those who have been harmed a voice in how to make things right again. Although a restorative justice approach to conflict resolution can be found within the religious and cultural traditions of many groups of people, its modern roots include projects of the Mennonites in the 1970s (Zehr, 2015b) and practices used in the New Zealand youth justice system in the late 1980s (Morrison, 2007; Wachtel, 2016). Although originally used to remedy offenses such as burglary and other property crimes, restorative justice measures are used today internationally within criminal justice systems to address offenses as grave as death from drunk driving, assault, rape, and murder (Zehr, 2015b). The two most commonly known methods of restorative justice include conferencing and circle processes. Whereas the Western legal tradition typically concerns itself with questions of which law or rule was broken, who broke it, and what the offender deserves as a punishment, a restorative justice approach focuses on the following questions (Zehr, 2015a, p. 254):

- Who has been hurt in this situation?
- What are their needs?
- Whose obligations are these needs?
- What are the causes of this situation?
- Who has a stake in this situation?
- What is the appropriate process to involve stakeholders in an effort to address causes and put things right for everyone involved?

This approach to conflict resolution is well aligned with the concept of public education, as it moves students whose behavior harms themselves or others toward the support structures that can help them make better future choices instead of excluding them and pushing them away (Schiff, 2013).

Restorative Discipline: A Restorative Justice Approach to Discipline in Schools

Restorative discipline is a restorative justice approach to discipline in schools. An alternative to the punitive discipline system that removes students from a classroom and/or school community, restorative discipline is a relationship-oriented approach to managing behavior in schools (Morrison, 2007). Punitive discipline systems typically center upon the use of school-developed or teacher-developed rules that govern student behavior, and preestablished consequences (such as detention or suspension) are applied when a student breaks a school or classroom rule. As these consequences are applied, students are pushed away from the school community and toward the

TABLE 5.1 ■ Punitive Versus Restorative Approach to Discipline

Punitive Approach	Restorative Approach
School rules are violated.	People and relationships are violated.
Justice focuses on establishing guilt.	Justice identifies needs and obligations.
Accountability is defined as punishment.	Accountability is defined as understanding the effects of the offense and repairing any harm.
Justice is directed at the offender; those harmed are ignored.	The student who may have caused harm, those harmed, and school staff all have direct roles in the justice process.
Rules and intent outweigh the outcome.	Students who may have caused harm are held responsible for their behavior, repairing any harm they've caused and working toward a positive outcome.
No opportunity is offered for the offender to express remorse or make amends.	Opportunities are offered for offenders to express remorse or make amends.

Source: Adapted from San Francisco Unified School District (n.d.).

cradle-to-prison pipeline. Restorative discipline, on the other hand, stresses that students are members of a school community and that their actions affect other community members (see Table 5.1). When students engage in behavior that causes personal harm or harm to other members of the school community, the goal is to keep them as engaged as possible in school and classroom life and encourage them to self-correct (Davidson, 2014). When students do not self-correct on their own, restorative discipline seeks to give students the opportunity to accept responsibility for harms they have caused, endeavor to make things right to the extent possible, and return to the school community as members in good standing. These inclusive and supportive steps keep students away from the cradle-to-prison pipeline.

Restorative discipline is becoming a more common approach to solving disciplinary problems in U.S. schools. Although the concept is relatively new among schools in the United States, some schools in Australia, New Zealand, and Great Britain have been using discipline systems based upon the restorative discipline approach since the early 1990s (González, 2012). Restorative measures provide dignity and a sense of agency to students who traditionally must follow policies crafted exclusively by adults. They also offer a chance to address race and class disparities created by punitive discipline measures and function as strategies that may reduce repeat disciplinary infractions (Schiff, 2013). In

particular, some scholars believe a shift toward restorative discipline in U.S. schools may be the best way to end the racial bias endemic in U.S. schools today and more adequately serve the needs of students of color (Husband, 2016). Restorative discipline in schools may provide students of color and their families a forum to point out systemic inequities, bring root causes of student behavior to the surface, and allow more honest interactions between students and educators (Simson, 2014). Instead of excluding students from the school community when their behavior does not align with school and classroom norms and expectations and possibly even criminalizing the behavior, restorative discipline seeks to keep students within the classroom and also seeks to build a stronger overall school community. For these reasons, we are stressing that restorative discipline is a promising way forward in classroom management.

METHODS OF RESTORATIVE DISCIPLINE

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, restorative measures within a school community can be understood as a pyramid. The use of affective language that serves as the foundation of this pyramid promotes awareness of self, awareness of how one's actions can affect others, and opportunities for self-correction of behavior before small problems become large ones. Teachers can use affective statements and questions in an ongoing and seamless way in classrooms and wider school environments to develop students' social and emotional skills and consistently keep in the minds of students that they are part of a community at school. Affective language also helps educators remember that students, like all of us, are developing and becoming and are not "there" yet. These feeling-centered and emotion-centered interactions require comparatively little planning and may involve all students in the classroom or school. Circle processes occupy the middle level of the pyramid. Circle processes can be used either proactively or reactively to strengthen relationships, discuss issues that affect school community members, or resolve interpersonal conflicts. Some teachers use circle processes as part of their regular classroom routines as a means to build community among students. Use of these processes may require some planning and can involve an entire class of students at a time or more. Conferences occupy the top level of the pyramid. Conferences are typically used reactively in school settings to repair a relationship after harm has been caused. This relationship may be one that students need to repair with themselves, other students, staff members, or the school community as a whole. Conferences are the most formal type of restorative discipline measure, require the most planning, and involve the fewest students. Although conferences and more formalized circle processes may take more planning and preparation than less formal measures, they also provide a more lasting sense of completeness and closure when a student's behavior results in harm to others (Wachtel, 2016). Overall, a restorative approach to discipline positions students as actively engaged in the process from the onset, gives them a voice in disciplinary issues, empowers them to take more responsibility for their

actions, and teaches them the effective communication skills for success in the classroom and in other areas of their lives (Davidson, 2014). Moreover, these approaches can help teachers reflect about and develop skills in communication, relationship building, and understanding of their students as well.

Affective Language

The use of affective language, in a classroom or schoolwide, forms the foundation of a restorative approach to discipline. By *affective language*, we mean language that genuinely expresses feelings or emotions related to specific behaviors or actions of others. Affective language provides a structure for reinforcing desired behaviors and redirecting unwanted ones (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009). Affective language includes the use of both statements and questions that are integrated into the daily life of a classroom or a school community. Affective language can be introduced as early as preschool and can help establish a climate where positive relationships are fostered. The use of affective language helps students acknowledge the existence of difficult situations and feelings and is an important early step toward avoiding future and more serious conflict (Morrison, 2007). Affective language practices can be promoted within a single classroom or throughout an entire school to foster greater awareness of how one's actions affect others, empathy for others, and a sense of personal responsibility among students (Wachtel, 2013). These language techniques can be considered informal practices, as they do not take much planning and can be integrated into the rhythm of the school day rather easily.

Affective Statements

The first type of affective language practice involves the use of affective statements. The goal of an affective statement in restorative discipline is to help students understand how their actions have affected others, with the goal of building emotional intelligence and empathy (George, 2017). Affective statements can be used either to reinforce positive behavior or to redirect negative behavior, and they can be used with students whose actions are harming others or whose actions are harming only themselves. In either case, educators can use affective statements by following three steps (San Francisco Unified School District, 2010):

1. Self-identify how you are feeling or how you were affected by the behavior.
2. Self-identify the specific action or behavior you are responding to.
3. Bring together Steps 1 and 2 in an authentic expression of how you are feeling and how you were affected and the specific behaviors you are reinforcing or redirecting.

For example, teachers can make affective statements to students such as "James, I am very upset that you ripped pages out of your library book. When you rip the pages out, other students cannot enjoy the book after you."

Keys to the effective use of affective statements include

- focusing the statement on a specific behavior, not the intrinsic worth of the student engaged in the behavior;
- allowing students to see the consequences of their behavior;
- delivering statements privately if possible; and
- offering multiple positive statements to a student for every corrective statement given (Costello et al., 2009).

Students can be encouraged to make affective statements with one another as part of effective communication as well. Using the steps outlined above, students can communicate their feelings and emotions to one another either as positive reinforcement of a fellow student's behavior or to communicate how they have been negatively affected by another student's actions. Students can be encouraged to make affective statements using sentence stems such as the following (San Francisco Unified School District, 2010):

- I am so appreciative of you/your . . .
- I am feeling frustrated about/by/to see/to hear that . . .
- I am so excited to see/hear . . .
- I am angry about . . .
- I am having a hard time understanding . . .
- I am uncomfortable when I see/hear . . .

By practicing using sentence stems such as these, over time students can begin to develop the ability to make affective statements a regular facet of their communication with others. Teachers should model these statements and interactions. In addition, if these practices begin early in students' educational experiences, it more likely that these statements and language practices will continue through their entire educational experience.

Affective Questions

The second type of affective language practice involves the use of affective questions. Affective questions engage students more fully than statements, prompting them to reflect upon how their actions may have affected others. Moreover, the

questioning allows discursive exchange that can lead to deeper understandings of the situation (and the people involved in the conflict). The following collection of affective questions has been found to help students reflect upon their actions and express their thoughts and feelings. Just a few of these questions, or variations of them, should be used at a time. This series of questions can also be used in its entirety during a restorative conference, a more formalized process discussed later in this chapter.

Some questions educators can use when challenging a student's behavior (Costello et al., 2009, p. 16):

- What happened?
- What were you thinking of at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who has been affected by what you have done?
- In what way have they been affected?
- What do you think you need to do to make things right?

Variations on these questions might look like the following: "What were you thinking of when you took Mia's snack off of her desk? How do you think she has been affected? What do you think you need to do now to make things right?" Questions such as these allow students to have a voice in interactions with teachers when their behavior is being redirected. This encourages the development of a sense of accountability for one's actions and empathy for others. Moreover, it gives students permission to make errors and to get it right after they have messed up without worrying about consequences that could be more punitive.

In addition to redirecting a single student's behavior, affective questions can also be used to resolve conflicts between students. This can be accomplished by first asking each student affective questions separately and then bringing them together and asking them the same questions so that both students can hear how they have affected each other. In cases where it is apparent that the harmful behavior was largely the part of one student, questions such as the ones below might be asked of the student who has been harmed (Costello et al., 2009, p. 16):

- What did you think when you realized what had happened?
- What impact has this incident had on you and others?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

Bringing students together through the use of affective questions for reflection and dialogue represents an informal restorative conference. Restorative conferences will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

Although educators who use affective language practices may not feel like they are doing much at first, research would suggest that they are actually having a powerful effect on school culture and discipline (Guckenburg, Hurley, Persson, Fronius, & Petrosino, 2015). In the following vignette, Mr. Harris uses both affective statements and affective questions while interacting with students in his daily teaching practice. Use of affective language practices creates a classroom or a school environment that fosters awareness, responsibility, and empathy. Creation of this environment may significantly decrease the need for more formal discipline methods (Wachtel, 2016).

VIGNETTE A: AFFECTIVE LANGUAGE USE IN THE THIRD GRADE

Mr. Harris teaches third grade in a neighborhood of St. Louis, Missouri. His literacy lesson for the day focused on using pictures in books to help students figure out meaning. He started his lesson by asking, "In the books that you have read this year, have you seen any maps, pictures, or illustrations?" Mikala raised her hand and said, "I read chapter books like *Nancy Drew*. Sometimes the chapters have pictures." Mr. Harris continued, "Raise a quiet hand if pictures help you figure out what a book is about." Shawn, Elise, and Isaiah also raised their hands and proceeded to describe various books and their pictures. Mr. Harris explained how he was recently reading the book *The BFG* by Roald Dahl, and it talked about a snozzcumber. He wasn't sure what a snozzcumber was, and used the illustration to figure out that it was kind of like a cucumber. He then said, "Remember, diagrams and illustrations can help you to learn new words. Okay, everyone get started on the first part of your work!" Students moved into a variety of activities: reading alone, reading to a partner, and vocabulary cut-and-paste activities. Within a few moments, students were sitting all over the room, alone and in pairs sitting on the floor, and at tables. Mr. Harris began to circulate among all of the groups.

Although most students in the room were engaged in their reading work, Emma was not. Instead of reading on her own, Emma had taken her cell phone out from her desk and was playing her favorite video game. Mr. Harris approached Emma and said, "Emma, I am very disappointed that you are playing a game on your phone instead of reading. You are usually such an independent student and you typically make better choices." Emma rolled her eyes, but then she put her phone away and opened her book.

Fifteen minutes later, Mr. Harris called everyone back to their desks and asked students to "raise a silent hand" if there was a picture in the

book they read. About half the students raised their hands. Mr. Harris told the students to tell their neighbors what their illustrations were about, if they had seen any. Then as a large group, he asked a few students to explain what they saw and how it helped them understand the book. He then directed students to begin their next activity.

Jeremiah and Brian sat down together, and Jeremiah began to read aloud to Brian. But after a few minutes, Brian was no longer paying attention to Jeremiah. Instead, Brian was trying to catch the attention of Tiona, who was sitting at the next table. As Mr. Harris approached the two boys, he saw a look of frustration on Jeremiah's face as the student glanced at his partner, Brian. Mr. Harris called Brian over and asked him, "What's happening here?" Brian looked at him blankly and said, "Jeremiah is reading to me." Mr. Harris continued, "Have you been listening to him?" Brian responded without making eye contact, "No, not really." Mr. Harris asked Brian, "So what have you been thinking about?" Brian responded, "I was . . . I was . . . just trying to ask Tiona for her green pen." Mr. Harris said, "So . . . what do you think you need to do to make things right?" Brian responded, "I . . . I probably need to tell Jeremiah that I'm sorry I disrespected him . . . he is just trying to read to me. And I need to listen to him. And get that green pen later." Mr. Harris responded, "That sounds about right to me. Can you please do that?" Brian returned to where Jeremiah was sitting and said, "Sorry, Jeremiah, you were reading aloud for me and I wasn't even looking at you. I'll listen better now." Jeremiah raised his fist, bumped it against Brian's fist, and opened his book again. Mr. Harris then approached Jeremiah and said, "Jeremiah, I have been listening to you read. You are really doing well sounding out words that are unfamiliar to you. I am impressed by your persistence in finishing this story." Jeremiah smiled and looked down at the page. He returned to reading again, Brian was listening, and Mr. Harris walked away.

Fifteen minutes later, Mr. Harris asked all of the students to return to their desks again. He asked them to think about the books they were reading and how pictures helped them understand the books. He then told them, "Take 30 seconds and talk to the person next to you about how the pictures helped you." Once they finished their brief conversations, he asked students to share with the class experiences they had with any pictures that helped them a lot. Bethany responded that her book had a picture of children sitting around a campfire, and that helped her understand that the children were on a camping trip in the forest. Mr. Harris responded, "Bethany, I am really impressed that you followed that book's storyline! That book has a lot of vocabulary words in it that we don't normally use. Great work using the pictures to help you understand the story!"

Later in the day, while students were at recess, Mr. Harris thought about the students in his class and how he could continue to promote

a sense of awareness, accountability, and empathy through his use of affective language. He wondered,

- What opportunities did he miss to make positive affective statements to students other than Jeremiah and Bethany? For instance, how could he be more nurturing of his stronger readers like Mikala, Shawn, Elise, and Isaiah?
- How could he shift his interactions with Emma from affective statements to affective questions, so that she might reflect more deeply on her own behavior?
- This was not the first time that Brian was more interested in Tiona's attention than the lesson at hand. Tiona did not seem to like the attention from Brian and appeared uncomfortable when he pestered her a lot. Should he talk with Brian more at length about his interactions with Tiona? Should he check in with Tiona to see how she is feeling about the attention she gets from Brian?

As we see in this vignette, a teacher's use of affective statements and questions can promote a classroom culture that supports self-awareness of students' actions, helps students become more aware of how their actions affect others, and promotes a sense of community among learners. Mr. Harris redirected Emma's behavior using a corrective affective statement. He engaged Brian with affective questions that led him to correct his own behavior. And he affirmed the successes of Jeremiah and Bethany with affective statements that focused on specific actions the students took that were worthy of praise. Using affective language can improve classroom management, as students develop senses of themselves as class community members who can contribute to the group overall in positive ways while growing in their abilities to manage their own distracting behaviors.

Affective Language Practices Improve Classroom Management in Urban Schools

The research literature related to restorative practices (Costello et al., 2009; Guckenburg et al., 2015; Morrison, 2007; Wachtel, 2013, 2016) has demonstrated that affective statements allow teachers to recognize and encourage positive behavior and redirect unwanted behavior before it escalates. Teachers can also encourage students to use affective statements with one another, which is a communication skill that will benefit them their entire lives. Using

affective questions allows teachers to lead students to reflect on their actions and how their actions affect others. Affective questions also lead students to self-correct before small problems become big ones. Use of affective language creates a classroom or school culture and promotes awareness of self, awareness of others, and the belief that students can correct and grow past their mistakes. These foundational ideas promote development over punishment and may avoid many of the racially biased pathways that are part of a punitive discipline system.

Circle Processes

As in all forms of restorative discipline, circle processes focus on promoting strong relationships and a sense of community among students and school staff. The most popular restorative justice method used in schools (Zehr, 2015a), circle processes can be used both proactively as part of daily classroom and school routines and reactively to solve problems. Greenwood (2005) describes the circle process as

> a distinctive kind of space for restorative dialogue. . . . Circles are fashioned in such a way that interconnectedness, interdependence, and equality within the participants are encouraged to share a sense of mutual responsibility for the well being of the community and the individuals within it and an understanding that what happens to one affects all. (p. 2)

Circle processes draw upon more traditional forms of problem solving than typically used in the Western legal tradition (Winn, 2013). In many African societies before European colonization, crime was not considered a state issue, and most problems were solved through negotiation between offenders, people harmed by the offenders, and the families of both parties (Drozdek, 2010). This circle approach is supported by the African concept of *ubuntu*, which suggests that a person exists only because that person is connected to others (Skelton & Frank, 2001). Customary courts in southern Africa operated in a way that focused on determining what wrongs had been committed and how best to make amends (Dlamini, 1988)—the very heart of the restorative circle process.

Circle processes are used by many North American indigenous groups to remedy conflicts and give community members a significant role in tasks such as repairing broken relationships, sentencing offenders, and addressing situations in the wider community that may have given way to the incident at hand (Zehr, 2015a). Circle processes are used in the Yukon province of Canada as an alternative to formal sentencing proceedings (Lilles, 2001). In the Navajo Nation, circle processes are used when individuals believe that wrongs have been committed against them, and they want the situation to be made right (Yazzie, 1994). Circle processes are also used as spaces of healing

for problems such as alcoholism and violent behavior. Using circle processes in this way increases public safety by holding offenders accountable to others as they make amends and reintegrate into the community, and also increases the safety of offenders by providing a forum and mechanism to address community concerns about the reintegration (Van Ness, Morris, & Maxwell, 2001). Among the Anishinaabe people in Manitoba, Canada, circle processes are used to address problems such as these in a way that cares for the person who committed the harm and helps the person end destructive behavior (McHold, 2001).

Research suggests that restorative circles are effective ways to deal with conflicts in U.S. school settings. Ortega, Lyubansky, Nettles, and Espelage (2016) conducted interviews with students and staff at one U.S. high school that used restorative circles to solve problems. Participants reported positive outcomes such as greater student ownership of the conflict resolution process, improved relationships, interruption of the school-to-prison pipeline, prevention of additional destructive behavior, and engagement in meaningful dialogue. These researchers also found that it is important for students to participate in circle processes voluntarily, as circle processes in which students are compelled to participate do not tend to work. In Minnesota, the state commissioned a study of four school districts that piloted restorative discipline programs over a 3-year period. This study was part of a statewide response to escalating expulsion rates in Minnesota schools. Findings indicated that using a circle process to resolve conflicts was an effective alternative to exclusionary measures such as suspensions and expulsions (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, 2002).

Amstutz and Mullet (2005) described steps to be used for implementing circle processes in school settings. Students sit in chairs in a physical circle, and a facilitator leads the meeting. Although descriptions of circle processes in the classroom typically enlist the teacher as the circle facilitator, students might serve as facilitators as well. The facilitator makes an introduction and reminds students and any additional staff present of the values embodied in the circle process. Values expressed typically center upon the idea that everyone in the circle is connected by core values but that each person has a right to his or her individual beliefs. Beliefs, of course, can and do change (Milner & Woolfolk Hoy, 2003). Circle processes also highlight values such as accountability, honesty, responsibility, and compassion. To begin, the facilitator poses a question or topic to the group and then passes the talking piece. Circle participants can talk only when holding the talking piece, and only one person can talk at a time. Participants can pass the talking piece if they do not want to talk. The facilitator both opens and closes the circle process. Although most descriptions of classroom circle processes do not include any type of personal or silent reflection time after the circle closes, students may benefit from an opportunity to reflect either

in silence or through writing on topics that are particularly sensitive or personal.

Circle processes may be particularly powerful tools to shape school culture because they shift the dynamic most students expect in the classroom and wider school building. Traditionally, students sit in classrooms in straight rows. Most of their interactions are with a teacher who stands at the front of the room, and they interact only minimally with other students. When circle processes are used, this dynamic completely shifts. Students are seated in a circle interacting with one another and with the teacher on more equal footing. This act alone—sitting in a circle—promotes a greater sense of equality, community, connection, inclusion, and fairness among students (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2010).

Circle Processes as a Daily Educational Routine

Circle processes can be used as a daily part of the educational routine. Using the basic steps outlined above, circle processes as regular classroom practices can promote intragroup relationships and develop a common understanding of ideas, values, and expectations among class members. Both teachers and students can have input that shapes the values and expectations of class members. Teachers can call for circles to talk about troubling events in the news or community, to discuss a book the class is reading, or to brainstorm ideas about how best to use what they are learning in science to develop a class project. In circle processes such as these, students can take more prominent roles and teachers can shift from the role of "authority" to the role of facilitator, participant, and learner. These shifts can build community and connection among students who are learning together.

Some teachers find circle processes great ways to start or end the school day, or both. Students can be guided to reflect on what they are learning and call attention to any problems they are having with new content, share personal highlights of the school day, discuss and resolve minor tensions with fellow classmates, describe what is going on in their lives outside the classroom, or simply talk about ideas that are important to them (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). Many early childhood teachers call these experiences "morning meetings," where students are able to talk with one another. Morning meetings have been reported as essential opportunities for helping students anchor themselves for success, especially at the start of a week such as on Mondays after students have been away from school for more than a day. Using circles in these routine ways builds student comfort with the process and builds community among learners.

Circle Processes Can Solve Problems

Circle processes can be used to solve problems among students and address issues of student behavior. Circle processes bring together students and

sometimes school staff to discuss a conflict. The goal of a circle process used for problem solving is to provide a remedy for harm done by a student, understand how the harm affected specific individuals and the school community overall, propel students to take responsibility for their actions, and allow students to acknowledge how their behavior has affected others in the school community (Mergler, Vargas, & Caldwell, 2014). Problems such as fighting, teasing, bullying, and other types of misbehavior can be remedied through circle processes. Students are held accountable to one another in identifying a harmful or unwelcome behavior, to identify and acknowledge the effects of the harm or behavior, and work toward a resolution to repair the situation. Discussions that occur within a circle process can be wide ranging. This can occur as people participate with different viewpoints on the conflict and may have a variety of ideas about situations within the school or community that need to be addressed so that incidents like the one in question do not continue to occur (Zehr, 2015a). We encourage teachers to use circle processes in a proactive and preventive way, so that small conflicts in the classroom do not become large or explosive ones.

Circle processes for problem solving are similar to circle processes for learning in that all participants sit in a physical circle, a facilitator introduces and closes the process, and the group uses a talking piece that students agree is significant (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). When using a circle process to resolve a problem, any of the affective questions (or restorative questions) may be helpful as starting points. The following three questions may be the most essential for addressing behavior problems in a circle setting (Costello et al., 2009, p. 44):

- What happened?
- What harm resulted?
- What needs to happen to make things right?

Although variations can certainly be used, these questions get to the heart of the matter: it allows students to admit their part in a problem and opens the doorway to allow them to make things right. Even if students do not know how to make things right after their behavior has caused harm to others, other students within the circle may provide ideas, guidance, and insight. This shifts the role of the teacher entirely from being an enforcer of the rules to being a facilitator when community problems arise. The teacher may have to model the use of affective language if a student struggles with righting their wrongs.

VIGNETTE B: CIRCLE PROCESS FOR PROBLEM SOLVING AMONG SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS

Mrs. Morrison was upset. For the third time this week, someone had used a blue permanent marker to scrawl the phrase "Davis SUCKS" on a desk in the classroom. And it was only September. Why was graffiti a problem already, this early in the school year? As Mrs. Morrison had just wiped all of the desks clean at the beginning of the day, she believed that the person responsible was one of the students right in front of her, in her first block prealgebra class. She decided to call a class circle to discuss the matter.

At Davis Middle School in Charlotte, North Carolina, many teachers use circle processes throughout the day. Davis students regularly begin their school days in homeroom with an opening circle. Sometimes their homeroom teachers pose questions about what they are doing in their classes, and sometimes the teachers ask them questions about their lives outside of school. They particularly used circle processes a lot at the beginning of the school year, as they endeavored to build community among students coming from three different elementary schools. So when Mrs. Morrison told her class, "I need everyone to circle up, I have a concern that we need to discuss," everyone knew what to do. All of the students picked up their chairs, placed them in a circle at the front of the room, and sat down facing one another. Mrs. Morrison then reminded everyone that Davis Middle School is a community of learners connected by common beliefs in academic excellence, perseverance, and kindness, but that everyone in the community also has a right to their individual beliefs. She also reminded the students that Davis Middle School uses a circle process to highlight the importance of accountability, honesty, responsibility, and compassion for others.

After this introduction, Mrs. Morrison opened the circle by saying, "I am upset because for the third time this week, I believe that someone in this group wrote 'Davis SUCKS' on one of the desks in this room, using a permanent marker. How do you all feel about this?" She then passed the small inflatable globe to Jenna, the student who was seated on her right. The globe was the talking piece they used in Mrs. Morrison's room during circle processes. Jenna held the talking piece for a moment, said nothing, and then silently passed it to Silas, who was seated on her right. Silas said, "Permanent marker is tough to remove. I feel bad for Mrs. Morrison if she is the one scrubbing the marker off of the desks." Silas passed the globe to the student on his right, Jamar. Jamar said, "Well, I know who did it. I think that person should own up to it." He passed the ball to Aniyah who said, "Well, I don't know who did it, but it makes me feel bad to see that because I like going to school here." She passed the globe to Maira, next

to her, who said, "I like going to school here too. I don't think our school sucks. I don't understand why someone would write that." After a few more students participated, the globe was passed to Eli. Eli said, "Well, I don't like going to school here. My old school had a soccer team but this school doesn't have one. They told all of us that came here from Greene Elementary that Davis had a soccer team, and it doesn't. So, I can't play soccer like I did at Greene. All of the other middle schools have a soccer team. This school sucks." The group was silent. Mrs. Morrison then said, "So Eli . . . what happened?" Eli responded, "Well, I hate it here because I can't play soccer. So I have been writing that because it is true. Davis sucks." As the globe was passed around the circle, Brandon and Colin, who also had come to Davis from Greene Elementary, admitted that they had also been writing the same message around the school, for the same reason. Mrs. Morrison then said to the three boys, "Well, first of all, I want to acknowledge how much I respect your honesty, and I am impressed by the courage you have to admit this within our class circle. No matter what else we talk about now, you are honest and courageous, and I am proud to be your teacher. I can see now that the three of you have been very disappointed and frustrated, and I understand why. Can you see any harm to others that have resulted from your actions?" Eli responded, "No," and then he passed the globe. When the globe came around to Brandon, he said that he thought that Mrs. Morrison was harmed because she had to wash the desks off every time it happened. After he passed the globe, a few other students commented that Aniyah and Maira were harmed because seeing the graffiti made them feel bad about their school. And then other students commented that it made them feel bad too.

Mrs. Morrison than asked the group, "So what needs to be done here to make things right?" Colin thought that he, Brandon, and Eli should apologize to Mrs. Morrison and the class for the graffiti. Colin went first, and apologized wholeheartedly to Mrs. Morrison and the class. After a few moments, Brandon spoke up and said that he was sorry too, and that he didn't mean any harm to anybody. Finally, Eli spoke again and said he was sorry that his actions meant Mrs. Morrison had to clean the desks and that some students felt bad about what he wrote. Brandon then offered to stay through the morning break period and clean the latest writing off of the desk so that Mrs. Morrison didn't have to do it herself again.

Then Aniyah said, "Mrs. Morrison, what can we do to start a soccer team at this school? Maybe Eli, Brandon, and Colin would like our school more if Davis had a soccer team." The class then moved into an animated discussion about how they could best go about organizing a school soccer team. After an initial plan had been made, and students agreed to talk with their parents about their idea, Mrs. Morrison closed the circle process. All of the students—including Brandon, Eli, and Colin—were smiling. The bell rang, and students put their chairs away and filed into the hallway. Brandon grabbed a spray bottle and rag from the closet and

began to clean the writing off of the desk. As students left the room, Mrs. Morrison wondered:

- Could she or her students do more to make the students who came from Greene Elementary feel welcome at Davis Middle School?
- Who else in the class might be having a difficult transition from elementary school to middle school? Could she find out by holding more circle processes to build community among students?

As we see in this scenario, circle processes have the potential to build community among students and teachers, solve problems, and even identify contextual problems that gave way to undesired behavior.

Circle Processes Can Improve Classroom Management

When used proactively, circle processes can build community among learners and enable students to become sources of ideas and knowledge for one another. This shifts the role of teacher from class authority to class facilitator and learner. When circles are used to solve problems, they allow students to explain their actions and intentions and promote student accountability in making things right. Perhaps most powerfully in urban settings where more students experience systemic inequities related to race and poverty, circle processes can expose the roots of problematic behavior and promote creative community solutions to contextual problems.

Conferences

Conferences are used within a restorative discipline model when relationships have been broken and are in need of repair, when serious harms have been committed, or when students demonstrate behavior that indicates that they may be experiencing personal crisis and need targeted support. When conferences are used to resolve conflicts, they afford students (and possibly staff) the opportunity to meet face to face, discuss what each person believes happened and why, talk about how each person feels about the situation, decide what needs to be done to make things right again, and agree how to avoid a similar situation in the future (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005).

Restorative conferencing in schools is a practice borrowed from the criminal justice field. The most well known conferencing model in the U.S. criminal justice system is victim-offender conferencing. In this model, conferences are arranged between people who have committed offenses, those who have been harmed, and supporters of each party. Victim-offender

conferences allow both offenders and those harmed to speak directly to one another, ask questions of one another, and discuss their future intentions (Hansen, 2005). Internationally, the most well known program related to restorative conferencing may be South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which served to attend to the injustices of that country's apartheid system (Gade, 2013). Through public hearings arranged by this commission, some South Africans who were identified as experiencing human rights violations at the hands of the South African government gave public statements about their experiences, and some government officials responsible for human rights violations publicly accepted responsibility and asked for amnesty from legal prosecution (Fullard & Rousseau, 2009). Restorative conferencing offers a powerful avenue to address conflict by focusing on accountability for one's actions and making things right to the extent possible.

A conferencing model has been found to be effective in addressing the wrongdoings of youth in a variety of countries worldwide (Van Ness et al., 2001). Restorative conferencing is an integral part of the youth justice system in New Zealand, where the process used builds upon Maori traditions to build character among youth who have made mistakes and strengthen the community overall (McHold, 2001). In this model, youth who admit to breaking the law and their families meet with a youth justice coordinator instead of a judge. Those harmed by the young person's actions, family members and supporters of those harmed, and police officers may also participate. The group is tasked with coming up with a remedy for the harm that has been caused. A similar model has been used successfully in some areas of postapartheid South Africa as well (Skelton & Frank, 2001). A key feature of restorative conferencing in addressing the behavior of youth appears to be allowing youth to feel "reintegrative shame" in front of their family members. In other words, the conferencing process allows them to experience negative feelings about their actions and accept responsibility for their actions in front of their family members, have an opportunity to make things right, and experience family support as they reenter society in good standing (Zehr, 2015a).

Successful implementation of restorative conferences requires attention to three key ideas. First, the conferences must be facilitated by someone who can attend to the needs of all of the parties involved and is seen as impartial (Shaw & Wierenga, 2002). Second, conferencing in schools typically involves only the affected parties, school personnel, and in some cases family members of involved students. This is the main distinction between conferencing and circle processes: circle processes involve more community members, but conferences typically involve only the parties directly involved and their families. And third, facilitators should use open-ended and student-centered questions that prompt students to talk and restore broken relationships. The set of questions at the top of the next page extends the set of questions shared earlier in

the "Affective Language" section of this chapter. Questions to ask in a restorative conference can include the following (Davidson, 2014):

- Tell me what happened. What was your part in what happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- How were you feeling at the time?
- Who else was affected by this?
- What have been your thoughts since?
- What are your thoughts now?
- How are you feeling now?
- What do you need to do to make things right? Repair the harm that was done? Get past this and move on?
- What can we do to support you?
- What might you do differently when this happens again?

In order to be an effective means of conflict resolution, it is important that restorative conferences held in schools meet the following four goals, described by Zehr (2015b). First, participation of all students must be voluntary. Second, the student whose behavior harmed others must have admitted at least some responsibility for the incident before meeting with anyone who feels harmed. Third, during the conference, the harm caused by the person's behavior must be acknowledged by all parties, and there must be discussion of how to make things right again. And fourth, at the end of the conference, all parties that were in conflict must sign their names in agreement to specific steps in the future to avoid similar harms.

Restorative conferences can also be used when a student's behavior indicates that he or she may be experiencing personal crisis, even if his or her actions have not harmed others. The following set of questions is a means of allowing students to explore problems they may be wrestling with and encouraging them to make things right within themselves (Davidson, 2014):

- Tell me what's been happening. What has not been working for you?
- What are you thinking about this situation?
- How are you feeling about this situation?
- How is this getting in the way of your learning? Feeling okay about school? Being the person you want to be at school?
- What do you need to learn or to do to make things better? Make things right? Reset and get back on track?
- What can we do to support you?
- What might you do differently the next time you find yourself in this situation?

Probing questions such as these may help students sort through their feelings and attitudes about difficult family situations, personal dilemmas, or simply resistance they have about managing their own behavior within the school community. Moreover, the answers to these questions can help school personnel provide the kinds of supports necessary to support not only students who have been harmed but also those who have caused the harm.

Restorative conferences have been used successfully to address many of the problems when zero-tolerance policies have fallen short. These problems include school truancy, allegations of defiant or disrespectful behavior, property theft or damage, bullying, assaults, and problems involving weapons or drugs (Morrison, 2007). The restorative conference model has been found to be particularly effective for addressing the problem of bullying, as it attends to the developmental needs of the bully as well as students who are harmed by bullying, and it may get the pattern of bullying to stop (Molnar-Main et al., 2014). However, it is important that conferences held to stop bullying be very well facilitated, and separate conferencing with the bully and the student harmed may be needed instead of bringing the two together in order for the student harmed to feel safe (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). Even in cases as complex as gang conflicts that spill inside school walls, a conferencing model can still provide a way forward (Smith, 1993). However, in these cases, outside facilitators with credibility among the parties in dispute (such as former gang members now involved in conflict resolution endeavors) may need to become involved (Sweeney, Schmadeke, & Meisner, 2017).

VIGNETTE C: RESTORATIVE CONFERENCING AFTER A FIGHT

Jasmine had just about had it. Every time she went through the lunch line, Marisa would take something off of her tray right after she paid for it. Marisa appeared to think this was funny. Jasmine had told her before to stop, but she just kept on doing it, day after day. Jasmine had thought that by the time she was in 11th grade she would not have to deal with childish behavior like this from her classmates, and she was frustrated.

Things came to a head in the cafeteria Friday afternoon while many of the students waited for pizza from the lunch line. Marisa walked past Jasmine as soon as Jasmine paid for her pizza, grabbed the slice of pizza off of Jasmine's tray, and took a big bite. She then returned the half-eaten pizza slice back to Jasmine's tray. Jasmine glared at Marisa and then pushed Marisa back into a stack of chairs lining the wall. Both Marisa and the chairs fell over and one of the chair legs smashed against Marisa's face, cutting it. Another chair fell on top of Roberto, who was standing next to Marisa with his lunch tray and tripped when Marisa fell. A teacher grabbed Jasmine and escorted her to the principal's office. A teacher's aide helped Marisa and Roberto up and walked them to

the nurse's office. After the nurse treated the cut on Marisa's face and checked over Roberto, she escorted Marisa to the school counselor's office. Both girls knew that they would now have to discuss their part in this conflict with school staff. Roberto returned to lunch.

Mr. Samuels, the school principal, called Jasmine into his office. Mr. Samuels could tell that Jasmine was very upset. He asked her, "Jasmine, can you tell me what happened?" Jasmine explained to Mr. Samuels that Marisa had been taking food off of her lunch tray for weeks, and that when she grabbed her pizza slice today, Jasmine had simply had enough. She told Mr. Samuels she pushed Marisa. She was not intentionally trying to hurt Marisa, she just reacted. Mr. Samuels then asked Jasmine what she was feeling at the time. She said, "Angry. Marisa has been taking my food for weeks and I've asked her to stop a number of times. Why does she think this is funny?" Mr. Samuels then asked Jasmine, "Who else has been affected in this situation?" Jasmine thought for a minute and said, "Well, Marisa was affected for sure, because I pushed her. And Roberto kind of got pulled into it. Literally . . . Marisa pulled him down on accident when she fell."

Mr. Samuels then asked Jasmine, "So, what are your thoughts about this situation now?" Jasmine responded, "Well, I still am sick of Marisa's childish behavior, but I probably shouldn't have pushed her." Mr. Samuels followed up, "How are you feeling now, Jasmine?" Jasmine told Mr. Samuels that she was feeling calmer. Mr. Samuels then asked Jasmine, "What do you need to do to make things right?" She said, "I should probably apologize to Roberto and maybe buy him some pizza from the cafeteria, since he didn't get any. I know I need to apologize to Marisa for pushing her, but I'm still angry that she has been bothering me for weeks." Mr. Samuels then said, "So what needs to happen in order for you to get past this problem?" Jasmine responded, "Marisa needs to apologize for taking my lunch. And she needs to stop." Mr. Samuels said, "Okay. That seems fair. One more question: What might you do differently if a situation like this happens again?" Jasmine thought for a moment and then said, "I could just tell her to knock it off instead of pushing her. I could talk to you about it too, I guess." Mr. Samuels agreed that both of those options would be more effective than pushing Marisa again. Finally he asked Jasmine, "Is there anything I can do to support you?" Jasmine thought for a moment, and said that she was okay. He asked Jasmine if she would be willing to have a conference with Marisa about what happened, and she agreed to do so.

Although the nurse had cleaned Marisa's face and placed a bandage on her cheek, it was still a bit sore as Marisa talked with Mrs. Atherson, one of the school counselors. Mrs. Atherson began by asking Marisa, "So what happened?" Marisa explained that she was joking with Jasmine and Roberto, and then Jasmine pushed her into the stack of

chairs. She lost her balance and pulled Roberto down too as she fell. Mrs. Atherson then asked her, "So what was your part in what happened, Marisa?" Marisa said, "Well, I was just joking with Jasmine and I took a bite of her pizza. But Jasmine took it to a whole other level, and she got really mad. So I guess my part was just joking with someone who can't take a joke." Mrs. Atherson asked her, "Well, what was the joke about?" Marisa said, "About eating lunch." Mrs. Atherson continued, "So Marisa, what were you thinking about when you took a bite of her pizza?" Marisa responded, "I was thinking I was hungry!" When Mrs. Atherson asked Marisa, "How were you feeling when you did this?" she responded, "Well, I was feeling pretty good at first because I had managed to get some pizza even though my mom hasn't sent me to school with money for lunch in weeks. But after Jasmine pushed me, I was pretty embarrassed that I fell and there was so much attention on me." Mrs. Atherson asked Marisa who else was affected by what happened. Marisa thought that Roberto was definitely affected because she pulled him down when she fell, and Jasmine was affected because Marisa had been joking with her. Marisa thought that some of the other students standing in line for pizza that day were also affected, because they saw Marisa trying to joke with Jasmine.

When Mrs. Atherson asked her, "What are your thoughts about this situation now?" Marisa responded, "Well, I guess Jasmine really didn't think my joke was funny. And Roberto probably didn't appreciate getting pulled into it." Mrs. Atherson continued, "So how are you feeling now?" Marisa said, "Well, I'm pretty mad at Jasmine still—even if she didn't think my joke was funny, she should not have pushed me. That was really embarrassing. There were a lot of people watching." Mrs. Atherson then asked, "So what needs to happen to get past this incident? What do you need to do to make things right?" Marisa thought for a moment and then said, "Well, I need Jasmine to apologize for pushing me. But I think I should probably tell Jasmine I'm sorry for swiping pieces of her lunch. I wasn't trying to make her mad, I just don't have money for lunch so I've been swiping bites from a few different people who always get the full lunch." Mrs. Atherson then asked Marisa, "What needs to happen for you to make things right with Roberto?" Marisa said that she should definitely apologize to Roberto for pulling him into the incident. She also said she should try to get Roberto some pizza since she dumped his tray, but she did not have the money to do so. Mrs. Atherson said she appreciated Marisa's thoughts on the matter and then asked her, "What can our school do to support you?" Marisa thought for a moment and then said, "Well, it would be nice if I could get some lunch without having to make it so obvious that I don't have the cash." Mrs. Atherson said she thought she could arrange for that. Marisa also asked if Mrs. Atherson could help get Roberto a lunch today as well, and Mrs. Atherson agreed

to do so. Finally, Mrs. Atherson asked her, "What might you do differently if you need something like lunch and you don't have the money to get it?" Marisa sighed and said, "Maybe talk to you. Or Mr. Samuels or a teacher. To see if I can get a loan or a free lunch or whatever instead of swiping bites." Mrs. Atherson smiled and said, "That's a good idea, Marisa." Mrs. Atherson then asked Marisa if she would be willing to have a conference with Jasmine. Marisa agreed, and the conference was set for the next morning.

The next morning, Jasmine, Marisa, Mr. Samuels, and Mrs. Atherson met in the school conference room. Marisa admitted to Jasmine that she was wrong to swipe bites of her lunch, and she would stop doing it. Jasmine said she appreciated that Marisa said that. She also told Jasmine that it was really embarrassing for her to have so much attention on her when Jasmine pushed her. Jasmine also thanked Marisa for her apology, and then admitted that she was wrong to push Marisa into the chairs. She apologized to Marisa for pushing her. She also told Marisa how much it bothered her when Marisa took items off of her lunch tray. She told Marisa, "I work after school so that I can pay for my lunch and lunch for my two younger brothers. I work hard for that money and it really upsets me when you disrespect me by messing with my lunch." As the girls talked, they agreed that Marisa would not take anything else off of Jasmine's lunch tray, and if Jasmine gets frustrated with Marisa that she will tell her instead of pushing her. At the end of the conference, Mr. Samuels wrote down an agreement, and both girls signed it. After Mr. Samuels wrote both of them passes to enter their first period classes late, the girls left the conference room and went to their classes. Mr. Samuels and Mrs. Atherson remained for a moment, reflecting on the conference they had just held for the two students. They wondered:

- Did they do enough to protect Jasmine from Marisa's irritating behavior?
- Did they need to do more to make sure that all students who needed it had access to the school's free lunch program? How could they find out who else was not buying lunch because they could not afford it?
- Would Marisa really stop taking food off of Jasmine's tray, or was she just saying what the school staff wanted to hear?
- How should both girls make things right with Roberto? Should Mr. Samuels and Mrs. Atherson arrange a separate conference with Jasmine, Marisa, and Roberto now that the two girls had moved past their conflict?

Although restorative conferencing will not eliminate all conflicts between students, it allows students to explain their part in what happened and have a voice in how the situation is resolved. In a school that relies upon exclusion to address conflicts between students such as this one, it is likely that both Jasmine and Marisa would have been excluded from their classes for a period of time as a result of their behaviors. This might have led to both academic challenges and perhaps more discipline problems. This would not have resolved their conflict and the teasing and pushing may have continued in the future. Exclusion also would not have exposed the underlying context that caused the problem: that Marisa did not have money to buy lunch for herself.

Restorative Conferences Can Improve Classroom Management in Urban Schools

Restorative conferences provide students the support they need to resolve conflicts they have within themselves, with other students, and with the larger school community. It provides students a chance to explain themselves and allows students the opportunity to make things right again after harms have occurred. Restorative conferences have great potential for urban settings, as they allow for systemic issues related to race or poverty to be identified. Restorative conferences also allow discussion of contextual roots of behavior, and they give attention to strategies for conflict resolution that may be overlooked in punitive systems. By approaching this situation through a restorative discipline lens, both the conflict between the two girls was resolved and Mrs. Atherson was able to address the underlying problem: that Marisa was hungry and needed help to get lunch. If a punitive discipline approach had been used, both girls would likely have faced consequences for their actions, but they might have never talked about how to stop future incidents, and the underlying problem of Marisa's consistent hunger and lack of lunch money might never have been discovered.

IMPLEMENTING RESTORATIVE DISCIPLINE

Clearly teachers have many competing priorities that may dissuade them from implementing restorative discipline measures. Teachers are constantly pressured to cover enough content and prepare students well for state assessments. Teachers may also not feel supported by their colleagues or administrators in implementing restorative discipline measures. However, the time and energy investment required to operate within a restorative discipline environment is worth the effort. Teachers who make this investment in their students will see positive results in terms of their classroom environment as a whole and in the experiences of their students. Additionally, teachers will know that when they use restorative discipline strategies to address student

behavior, they are leading their students closer to the experience of justice and equity that all children deserve in U.S. schools. Consider students in the first vignette who benefited from Mr. Harris's use of affective language in the classroom. Both Jeremiah and Bethany were praised for their academic efforts, and Emma and Brian were gently corrected in a way that will likely curtail future misbehaviors. In the second vignette, Mrs. Morrison was able to resolve the issue of classroom graffiti through a circle process without sending Eli, Brandon, or Colin to the office. Furthermore, her students welcomed the opportunity to investigate how to get a school soccer team so that the three boys felt more at home in the Davis Middle School community. And finally in the third vignette, principal Mr. Samuels and counselor Mrs. Atherson were able to resolve the altercation between Jasmine and Marisa through the restorative conferencing process. Through this process both girls were able to make amends for their unwanted behaviors and agree not to repeat the same interaction in the future. Through this process, the root cause of the problem—that Marisa was hungry and had no means of buying lunch—was discovered and addressed by the school staff. None of these successful outcomes would be as likely under a punitive discipline model.

Teachers and administrators interested in adopting a restorative discipline model can benefit from the experience of other educators who have implemented this type of system. In this section, we discuss keys to implementation. A review of literature on the topic of restorative discipline authored by Fronius, Persson, Guckenburg, Hurley, and Petrosino (2016) indicates that restorative discipline initiatives have been implemented across many states and school districts nationwide, to varying degrees. This review also indicates that five states in particular—California, Illinois, Colorado, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania—have the longest history of implementing restorative discipline systems and have had the most success in systems that are both large scale and sustainable (p. 19). Although little rigorous research has been done on the impact of restorative discipline practices, and funding to study it seems to be scarce, key studies in the state of Minnesota, in Denver Public Schools, and in the school system of Queensland, Australia, indicate that the method is an effective alternative to reliance on suspensions and expulsions (Suvall, 2009). In Denver, findings also indicate that achievement test scores increased during the period of time when restorative discipline measures were implemented. Although researchers note that this may be a coincidence, it also may be a by-product of reduced school exclusion (González, 2015). Of course, restorative discipline practices are not perfect procedures, and do not always lead educators to reach the goals they set in conflict resolution. For this reason, we will also discuss critiques of restorative discipline approaches in this section.

Keys to Implementation

The most effective implementation of a restorative approach to discipline appears to rely on a few key factors: a building-level approach as opposed to

a classroom-level approach, buy-in from the entire staff, and a clear implementation plan. First, a building-level approach is recommended because restorative discipline is more effective when implemented by an entire school community, not just one teacher (González, 2015; Simson, 2014). Although single teachers can use affective language practices, circle processes, and restorative conferencing on their own without any administrative support, these disciplinary methods are far more effective when adopted schoolwide (Davidson, 2014). This is the case because adopting restorative discipline schoolwide can shift the overall culture of the school and provide a much more coherent experience for students as they move from class to class. Adopting a restorative discipline approach on a schoolwide level may be a daunting process, as it requires that the school redefine discipline policies and modify the student code of conduct (Schiff, 2013). The second key to success is buy-in from all staff members. This is most readily accomplished through extensive and ongoing staff training in restorative discipline where staff learn about the effects and influences of the shift in practices. A significant and ongoing commitment to staff training is essential because if some staff members remain "stuck" in the use of punitive discipline, the overall culture of the school will not shift (González, 2012; Simson, 2014). And finally, enacting a restorative approach to discipline schoolwide requires a clear implementation plan. Findings from the study of Denver Public Schools indicated that beginning with a small pilot phase of the approach, extending it gradually, and moving to widespread adoption allowed educators, community members, and students to realize the values and benefits of a restorative approach to school discipline (González, 2015). An implementation rollout period of 3 to 5 years is recommended for schools considering adopting a restorative discipline approach schoolwide (González, 2012; Shaw & Wierenga, 2002). It is important to note that schools should study the effects of the program not only by examining student test scores, attendance, and grades but also by listening to the voices of staff, students, and family members about the effects of the shift.

Critiques of Restorative Discipline

Although restorative discipline does offer educators a relationship-based way of solving problems in schools without resorting to exclusionary practices, this approach is not without critique. For instance, Ortega et al. (2016) offer a critique of the circle process to solve problems in schools, sharing findings from an empirical study. Students in this study reported that they sometimes felt frustrated by the circle process when it was used for problem solving. They reported this frustration as caused by a belief that other students in the circle were not authentically participating but rather saying what facilitators would want to hear in order to end the process. For this reason, circle processes that are not truly voluntary may not be effective means of solving problems. Simson (2014) offered two additional critiques of the restorative discipline approach.

First, restorative discipline methods do not offer the traditional procedural protections such as due process to those harmed that participate in school hearings or other court systems on the basis of a punitive discipline model. In this way, restorative discipline methods may be constructed as continuing to oppress those harmed by the actions of others. Second, some believe that restorative discipline measures may place too much importance on shaming students involved in misbehavior. A heavy focus on shame may not be appropriate for students facing challenges such as living significantly below the poverty line, alcohol or drug addiction, or mental health problems. Students who engage in harmful behavior amid these powerful forces may require an assessment of their actions that includes attending to these significant challenges and less of an emphasis on them experiencing shame.

Overall, it seems that a restorative approach to discipline takes a significant commitment on the part of a teacher and/or a school in order to be effective. When used schoolwide, time and training to ensure that all staff understand and will use the process are essential. Although it is not a panacea to end conflicts within schools and not a perfect process, restorative discipline offers an alternative to punitive discipline measures that remove students from learning and set them apart from the school community. In our opinion, restorative discipline offers educators the best opportunity to address student behavior while also moving U.S. classrooms and schools away from the cradle-to-prison pipeline and closer to the ideal of justice and equity for all U.S. students.

RESTORATIVE DISCIPLINE IMPROVES CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Classroom management indeed calls for a restorative discipline model. Restorative discipline is built upon the foundational idea that schools are places where students are expected to make errors and learn from them, both in the learning of content and in learning how to be good members of the school community. Of course, no approach to discipline is perfect, and restorative discipline is no exception. Although this approach highlights the normalization of making errors and promotes the idea of students seeing themselves as good members of a school community, it does not necessarily address what happens when the concept of "what it means to be a good member of the community" is problematic. In other words, what happens when students feel oppressed, marginalized, or discriminated against in a school environment and are "misbehaving" as a result? However, this approach shows much more promise than what has been the approach through exclusionary practices. Over the past 40 years, U.S. schools have relied upon exclusionary practices such as suspension and expulsion, which are components of the punitive discipline process. Although schools first did so as a more humane alternative to corporal punishment and public embarrassment, punitive discipline and exclusion have had many damaging effects on too many students, especially those of color and those living below the poverty line.

Whereas exclusion takes students away from the support of the school community, restorative measures highlight the importance of students' owning up to mistakes in behavior, understanding the harms they may have caused, and endeavoring to make things right again. In doing so, students are supported by the school community as they grow and learn instead of being rejected by the school community for mistakes they have made (or that others have perceived that they have made). Furthermore, educators are learning about student needs in the process.

At either the classroom level or the school level, educators can promote restorative discipline through three methods. First, the use of affective language in the classroom or the school can reinforce positive behavior, redirect unwanted behavior, and lead students to reflect on how their actions have affected others. Affective language practices allow educators to address problems while they are still small and relatively easy for students to self-correct.

Second, circle processes can be used either proactively or reactively in classrooms or school buildings. It is very important that educators in urban settings understand that circle processes can be used prior to the occurrence of behaviors as well as after they occur. Again, relationship building is at the core of this approach. When used proactively, circle processes can develop a deep sense of community among learners and educators. Teachers can use circle processes as a regular feature of their class routines as a means to stimulate discussion, increase student input, and shift their own role from class authority to class facilitator and learner. When used reactively, circle processes can result in the resolution of conflicts in a manner owned by students. Solutions may address deeper contextual problems and even systemic inequities once these circumstances are uncovered.

And third, restorative conferences can be used when relationships have been broken or serious harm to individuals or the school community has occurred. The restorative conference model allows students to explain their thoughts and feelings at the time of the unwanted action, gives them the support they need to make things right again, and offers them a pathway to rejoin the school community in good standing. Keep in mind that circle processes can be enacted with large groups, and conferences can be enacted with just the few students who are involved in the situation, and affective language can be used in both of these processes. Overall, these methods offer a promising alternative to the use of suspensions and exclusions that are negatively affecting so many students today. Indeed, the use of restorative discipline strategies instead of punitive discipline approaches may represent our best way forward for marginalized students such as students of color, those with learning differences, and those who live below the poverty line. By addressing student behavior without punitive and exclusionary consequences that unfairly target these marginalized young people, we may disrupt the flow of these students from entering the cradle-to-prison pipeline, affording greater justice and equity for all.

Key Ideas and Recommendations			
Restorative Practices (Overall)	**Affective Language**	**Circle Process**	**Conference**
Relationship-based approach to discipline; presumes students can become aware of how their actions affect others, self-correct some behavior, and make things right when others are harmed	Use of statements and questions to express feelings or emotions related to behaviors or actions of others (Costello et al., 2009)	Group process that can be used proactively as part of daily classroom and school routines and reactively to solve problems	Used when relationships have been broken and are in need of repair or when serious harms have been committed
Provides an alternative to punitive systems that may unfairly exclude students of color and students living below the poverty line from classrooms and schools (Schiff, 2013)	Encourages students to self-correct their own behavior before small problems become large ones needing greater disciplinary action; can both affirm positive behavior and redirect unwanted behavior	Promotes student accountability for actions and allows creative community responses to problems or conflicts; develops greater awareness of how one's actions affect others; shifts teacher role from rule enforcer to facilitator	Affords students opportunity to meet face-to-face and discuss what happened and why, how each person feels, how to make things right again, and how to avoid a future similar situation (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005)
Key implementation considerations: Building-wide approach better than class by class; extensive staff training needed for teacher buy-in; rollout period of 3 to 5 years recommended (González, 2012, 2015; Shaw & Wierenga, 2002; Simson, 2014)	Affective statements help students understand how their actions affected others (San Francisco Unified School District, 2010); affective questions prompt students to reflect on how their actions affect others, resolve conflicts (Costello et al., 2009)	Participants sit in a physical circle, facilitator introduces and closes process, starts by posing an open-ended question, group uses a talking piece (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005)	Keys to success: voluntary participation; responsible students acknowledge actions before meeting with those harmed; harm acknowledged by all during conference; parties discuss how to make things right again; parties must sign agreement to steps to avoid future harms (Zehr, 2015b)

REFLECTING ON THE CHAPTER . . .

1. Teachers might take some time to reflect upon a recent interaction with a student where the teacher addressed a relatively minor discipline issue such as not paying attention or talking with classmates during an inopportune time. How could this discipline conversation be different if the teacher uses an affective statement or an affective question to address the behavior?

(Continued)