

WHAT ARE RESTORATIVE PRACTICES?

Restorative Practices build community and promote healthy relationships among educators and students by teaching the social-emotional and conflict-resolution skills necessary to reduce conflict.

In the past, schools primarily focused on traditional “zero-tolerance” policies, which rely on exclusionary and punitive disciplinary practices. These practices have been shown to reinforce racial inequalities throughout public education. These disparities can be seen in dropout and graduation rates, referrals to special and gifted education programs, and differences in school funding and resources.

On the other hand, Restorative Practices promote inclusiveness, relationship-building, and problem-solving through methods such as circle conversations for teaching and conflict resolution, and conferences that bring victims, offenders, and their supporters together to address wrongdoing. Instead of punishment, students are encouraged to reflect on and take responsibility for their actions and to develop plans to repair harm.

Poms & Associates work with districts throughout our state to implement Restorative Practices.

“This work has strengthened our school culture by providing students with opportunities to reflect on their actions, take responsibility, repair relationships, and remain engaged in their learning. More importantly, it has equipped our educators with practical strategies that foster positive classroom environments while maintaining high expectations for all students.”

- Penasco Superintendent Michelle Gonzales

Taos Municipal Schools also implemented restorative practices. Nicole Mora-Atencio, the School Improvement Coordinator, says, “**Relationship-building practices are being implemented across most classrooms, helping to strengthen connections between students and staff.**”

Because of Restorative Practices, this year Taos Middle School saw a staggering **42% decrease in discipline referrals**. Similarly, Dexter Middle school saw a **60% reduction in physical aggression or fighting**.

National studies also show the success of restorative practices. A study of Chicago Public Schools shows a **35% reduction of student arrests in schools** due to restorative practices programming.

A TRUSTED ADULT FOR EVERY STUDENT

A key component of restorative practices includes ensuring every student has at least one trusted adult at school, which strengthens safety, well-being, and academic success. Supportive relationships help students feel valued and encourage them to seek help, report concerns and issues, and stay engaged.

A trusted adult can help:

- Identify safety and mental health concerns early
- Improve attendance, behavior, and academic performance
- Reduce isolation, conflict, and disciplinary incidents

Ultimately, trusted adults build a safer, more connected school community.



WELLNESS ROOMS: A VITAL COMPONENT OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

The implementation of dedicated wellness rooms or spaces is increasingly common in Restorative Practices. They provide a vital space for supporting this important work.

Students might use the room to:

- Calm down before behavior escalates
- Practice breathing, mindfulness, or other coping strategies
- Identify and communicate what they are feeling
- Participate in a restorative conversation or circle
- Mediate conflict with another student
- Reflect on how their behavior affected others
- Develop a plan to repair harm
- Complete schoolwork while temporarily removed from class
- Connect with counseling, food, housing, or other support services



Raton is one of the districts in New Mexico that has implemented a wellness room, known as the 'Zen Den', as part of its Restorative Practices Program.

As for the Zen Den, students say it offers a space to go when they become emotional or upset.

“ I think that’s really good because it’s giving you room to have your own emotions and to make school a safe place to be. If a teacher sees that you’re doing bad or sad, they say, ' Do you want to go to the Zen Den? ”

- Hope, a Raton High School Student

Raton Superintendent Kristie Medina says teachers can now focus on giving students an education rather than sorting out conflicts.

“ We sit students down, we talk about it, we understand, we have empathy, and we all come to a conclusion and a solution on how we are going to resolve an issue. ”

-Kristie Medina, Superintendent of Raton Public Schools



CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO

LEARN MORE ABOUT RESTORATIVE PRACTICES BY CONTACTING:

Darron Walter

Safety and Security Consultant

dwalter@pomsassoc.com