



COMMUNITY CIRCLE

Restorative Practices in Fairfax County Public Schools



Vol. 1, Ed. 1, Spring 2010

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This newsletter is written and distributed to support and encourage the use of restorative practices in FCPS.

For more information about FCPS' restorative practices, presentations or trainings, contact:

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Promising Restorative Practices Pilot at Westfield High School



Dave Jagels, Westfield HS AP & Restorative Justice Coordinator

Nearly every day, Dave Jagels, an energetic, good-natured assistant principal at Westfield High School in Chantilly, Virginia, disciplines students who have broken a school rule or regulation. Up until the 2007 school year, Jagels and other Westfield staff members dealt with these students much like staff at other area schools. They would find out which school rules were violated and would then apply the appropriate consequences to the offending students.

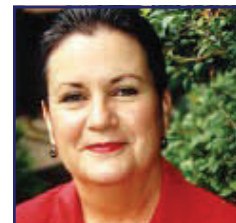
Jagels still does this. But now he's also a self-described proponent of a unique disciplinary option which Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is just beginning to explore, called restorative practices.

Restorative practices are methods that allow those who have caused harm and those who have been harmed to engage in open communication. Participants can own their harmful actions, acknowledge the other students' points of view, and work toward healing and making things right.

First and foremost, restorative practices in schools are presented as learning opportunities for students. Says Jagels, "I like it for a variety of reasons. You know, kids want to talk. Giving them a safe environment to talk about conflict...it's a lifelong tool. If you can show kids how to successfully mediate and discuss and dialogue about their issues, I think it's going to carry on throughout their lifetimes."

Since 2007, FCPS, in partnership with local nonprofit organization Northern Virginia Mediation Services (NVMS), has made it possible for Jagels, other Westfield HS administrators, and any FCPS staff member to provide restorative practices for students. These services allow students to participate in structured dialogue with other students who may have harmed them, make wrongdoers accountable for their actions, and plan how [cont. on p. 2]

OF NOTE: Highly Successful Restorative Practitioner from Australia to Present April 30, 2010



Margaret Thorsborne will talk about her history of successfully implementing restorative practices in schools and integrating restorative practices with other behavior management systems such as Positive Behavior Support.

Ms. Thorsborne is a founding director of Restorative Practices International, a facilitator of restorative practices in schools for many years, and an engaging public speaker who has presented to audiences in many countries. She will present her experience and expertise to the general public on **April 30th, 3:30-5:30 p.m.**, at the **NVMS Center at 4041 University Dr., Suite 201, Fairfax, VA 22030. This event is free.** ◇



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Restorative Practitioner Spotlight: Karen Lieberman

How have you used restorative practices in FCPS?

I went through training in restorative practices in 2004. At the time I was working for the Summit program, an elective program for students with chronic behavior issues. After training I immediately began integrating restorative practices into the way I worked with students in that program.

When students exited our program and re-entered their base schools, I involved them in restorative conferences with the administration and staff members there. We began to notice that those students who had conferences had greater success and longevity in general education programs. Through the conferences, more staff members became connected and stayed involved with the student and his or her successful re-entry. The students also learned a lot about themselves and their own behavior.

What is most exciting to you about restorative practices?

They're totally transformative for people. I can see real change taking place through the restorative process. Instead of suspending, detaining, or excluding students, restorative practices give them a way to re-enter the school system and teaches them pro-social skills. They're a perfect vehicle to get students back in. ◇

[Westfield, from p. 1] to move forward from the harmful events.

Schools across the globe that have implemented restorative practices have witnessed a drop in students who are referred to the office repeatedly. Other FCPS administrators have implemented restorative practices in their schools with positive results. Carole Kihm, principal at Longfellow Middle School, conducted a restorative dialogue between two students in serious conflict who had been referred to her.

"The meeting was so very powerful for both students," she said. "The victims were able to talk about the hospital experience and the pain [they] had endured. The other student really empathized and said she had no idea the pain she had caused..."

Carole went on to say, "The father called me again to let me know that...for the first time since the incident his daughter was feeling comfortable about being in school again." Many success stories such as this exist in which students have found, through conflict, a way to deepen their relationships.

"I think the real success story is bigger than any individual case," says Scott Adams, a Northern Virginia Mediation Service volunteer at Westfield HS. "Schools are starting to be more open to this process. It helps that students are asked questions or put in a position where they actually have to take some responsibility or accountability."

The restorative approach does take more time. Teachers and administrators often say they can't afford to give any more than they're already doing. Enforcement of rules can be a quick and easy option, while dialogue takes more time and involves new skills. However, Tim Thomas, principal of Westfield HS, remains positive and continues to recommend restorative practices to others.

"While there is some time commitment," Tim notes, "the outcome and the product of restorative practices at Westfield HS have been worth every minute and every second of time we've put into it. I'd recommend it to any principal – it just makes sense." ◇

Upcoming Events For more information contact Joan Packer, FCPS Conflict Resolution Specialist, at jgpacker@fcps.edu or (571) 423-4273.	April 8 & 9	8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Restorative Practices Training at FCPS Gatehouse Administration Center, 8115 Gatehouse Road, Falls Church, VA 22042
	April 15	7:00 – 8:30 p.m.	Westfield HS & Northern Virginia Mediation Services "Celebrating the Restorative Practices Partnership" in Westfield HS Lecture Hall
	April 30	3:30 – 5:30 p.m.	Australian practitioner Margaret Thorsborne will give a free presentation and answer questions about her life and work at, Northern Virginia Mediation Services, 4041 University Dr., Fairfax, VA 22030