

# **Relationships First Implementation Guide**

**A Holistic, Whole-School,  
Responsive Approach**

**Dorothy Vaandering Deenaree Voelker**





# Relationships First: Implementation Guide

## A Holistic, Whole-School, Responsive Approach

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**WRITTEN AND DEVELOPED BY:**

Dorothy Vaandering, Ph.D.

Deenaree Voelker, M.Ed.

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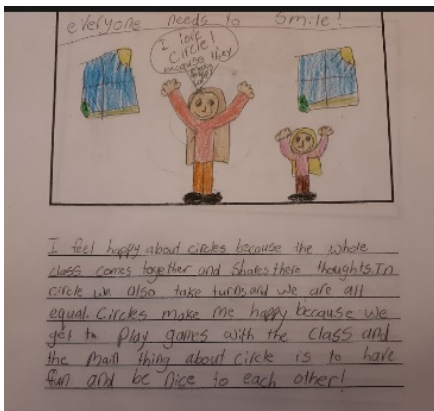
## Foreword

In July of 2017, NL Premier, Dwight Ball, released a final report of the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes (PTF). Of the 82 recommendations highlighted by the Premier's Task Force Report, many focused on areas such as inclusive education, student mental health and wellness, multicultural education, and Indigenous education. To move forward, according to the PTF Final Report, key education stakeholders and community members must find ways to address the concerns raised in each of these areas.

During this same period, two schools in the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD) were completing their first year of a 3-5 year implementation plan as Relationships First - Restorative Justice in Education NL (RF-RJE) Project Schools. Team members at both schools shared stories of transformation and change in their schools, classrooms, and in their personal and professional lives when implementing regular classroom talking circles. In a time of increased teacher/student burnout and mental health issues, experiences with talking circles through RF-RJE provide hope to those who were given the space to practice and to participate. What we have all experienced is how most of the recommendations in the PTF were being addressed by RF.

As the RF project schools have completed Year Two, the challenges, nuances, and benefits of becoming a "Relationships First School" are emerging clearly. We have learned much from our direct NL experience as well as from the many educator experiences around the country and the globe.

Many people have participated in these early experiences of implementing RF. We thank all those who have engaged fully with and have contributed to this project from the beginning as well as those who have joined us along the way. Not only have these people contributed their time, energy, and effort throughout this entire process, but they have also contributed their honesty, critical lenses, and vulnerability. We thank them for serving as models and co-learners. We hope that this implementation guide reflects our combined experiences and provides a significant resource for those who will follow.



*"I feel happy about circles because the whole class comes together & shares their thoughts. We also take turns & we are all equal..."*

*-3rd Grader on what they like about circles*



## Dedication

To:  
**Indigenous peoples of this land**  
The content of this handbook is not our own.  
In particular,  
we are indebted to  
the humility and grace offered by Indigenous peoples across North America  
who have kept the wonder of circle dialogue  
alive through generations  
while threatened with genocide.  
We trust that this handbook  
honors Indigenous teachers and traditions and  
further opens our settler hearts  
to be still and  
learn more fully  
from their wisdom  
so generously offered.



To:  
**Kim Cole**  
A passionate friend and educator  
whose life was committed to putting relationships first!  
She dreamt of being involved in sharing  
her insights, experiences, and passion  
for promoting RF in NL  
for many, many years.  
Though her life was cut short by illness,  
her dream and creative, resilient spirit  
is embodied in this handbook.  
And we are thankful.  
Thanks for your on-going encouragement,  
Kim,  
Thanks for the words you left with us:  
"I highly recommend that if you can  
pursue knowledge in relationships first  
and restorative justice,  
that you do it.  
It's a very rewarding way to handle  
yourself."





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- all our Relationships First: Restorative Justice Education in NL Consortium partners:



- the many educators since 2012 who have engaged in deepening our understanding of sustainable implementation. In particular, we acknowledge educators and students involved from our first two RF schools in St. John's: Bishop Feild Elementary School and Gonzaga High School. These schools accepted the challenge of becoming project schools where practical implementation and unique ideas specific to NL context could be explored.



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# Part ONE: Overview

The following section includes information about RF–RJE history, foundations, and central concepts. It also highlights the benefits of RF in schools and outlines how to use this implementation guide. Part One is a companion to “Chapter 1: The Way We Do Things” and “Chapter 2: A Brief History of RF” from *The Little Book of RJE*. Please read both chapters either just prior to, or just after considering the ideas in this section.





## Using this Implementation Guide

RF is not a new or separate program but rather a support for and approach to understanding and implementing the school's vision, the educator's hopes, and most of the programs already in place in schools. This guide provides resources and information meant to introduce you to the foundations of RF and provide a key responsive approach for implementing a relational culture in your school or organization that will be sustainable for many years (and hopefully generations). This implementation guide is a companion to *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education* (Evans & Vaandering, 2016), and outlines how to put into practice much of the content discussed in that book. In addition, we recommend three other resources to extend the content of this guide:

- RF-RJE website ([www.relationshipsfirstnl.com](http://www.relationshipsfirstnl.com)) that includes two short videos (Ripples of Relationship & Circle Formations)
- Circle Forward by C. Boyes-Watson and K. Pranis (available at Memorial University Bookstore or RF Office)
- The Restorative Classroom by B. Hopkins available from Optimus Press as an e-book with distribution rights for your educators & staff. (<http://my.optimus-education.com/shop/restorative-classroom-using-restorative-approaches-foster-effective-learning>)

This resource is *not* a comprehensive implementation guide to be used without support. All of these resources have been designed and written as introductory or support materials for:

- Those considering the idea of becoming an RF school;
- Those about to start their first year as an RF school;
- Those moving into year two and three of implementation
- Those who are growing and sustaining their relational school culture.

We recommend in-depth facilitated professional learning (PL) in Year 1 and on-going PL and support for the following years as needed. See next page for an outline of what can be done at each stage. See Appendix or RF website for a list of recommended readings and resources.

Though the guide has been written in consideration of the public-school system in Newfoundland and Labrador, it is readily adaptable for any school or organization interested in nurturing a relational, organizational culture.







Note: Memorial University offers a graduate course in RF (ED 6463: Relationships First: Rethinking Educational Engagement), an excellent foundation for several of the team members.

*"I was going to quit teaching, I was so frustrated, but with RF, I know I can continue."*

*(NLESD educator)*



## Suggested guide for Sustainable Implementation

					
<b>Surveying the landscape</b>	<b>Preparing the soil: Pre-implementation</b>	<b>Planting the seeds: Year One</b>	<b>Early growth: Year Two*</b>	<b>Establishing buds: Year Three*</b>	<b>Enjoying the fruit: Year Four+</b>
<i>Is RF for us?</i>	<i>How do we start?</i>	<i>What does the beginning involve?</i>	<i>How do we involve others?</i>	<i>What can we do to keep growing?</i>	<i>How can we monitor our progress?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the benefits (pg. 11);</li> <li>• 2-3 hour introductory PL;</li> <li>• What's involved? (pg. 18)</li> <li>• Survey the handbook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing a team (pg. 18)</li> <li>• Explore resources together;</li> <li>• Add RF to school development plan</li> <li>• 1/2 or 1-day whole-school Intro PD;</li> <li>• Planning for year 1</li> <li>• Carefully read handbook</li> <li>• Gathering pre-implementation data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular PL for Team</li> <li>• Resources/Materials</li> <li>• Monthly team meetings</li> <li>• Personal &amp; school inventories</li> <li>• In-class circles—class mtgs; curriculum; problem-solving; check-ins, -ups, &amp;-outs.</li> <li>• Staff mtgs in Circles</li> <li>• Corridor conversations</li> <li>• Nuances &amp; challenges of Circles</li> <li>• Identifying &amp; celebrating change</li> <li>• Planning for Year 2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team expansion</li> <li>• Peer-led PL for expanded team</li> <li>• Internal mentoring for new team members</li> <li>• In-depth PL for original team-external mentoring &amp; support</li> <li>• Parent intro meetings;</li> <li>• Student engagement opportunities;</li> <li>• On-going use and growth of relational circle pedagogies</li> <li>• Circles for serious harm training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team expansion (whole-school engagement)</li> <li>• Peer-led PL for staff, parents, students</li> <li>• External &amp; internal mentoring &amp; support</li> <li>• IEP circles</li> <li>• Establishing growth with:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Staff</li> <li>○ Parent intro meetings;</li> <li>○ Student engagement opportunities;</li> <li>○ On-going use and growth of relational, circle pedagogies</li> <li>○ Circles for serious harm</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Personal and School Inventories for a selection of characteristics of a school community committed to living our RF.</li> </ul>

\*Though there is a very clear Year One plan to initiate the possible growth, what happens in Year Two and Three is dependent on the school's engagement, growth, and team plan for moving forward. Some schools may be at a Year Two stage for many years. This RF Implementation plan is dependent on the team and the school's initiative for moving it forward.



## Relationships First: Restorative Justice Education

### What's in a name?

It is easy to assume that restorative justice is a process for addressing incidents of harm and unacceptable behaviours. Though this is not untrue, it is much, much more. As people come to a deeper understanding, it is not unusual to hear,

*"I thought I knew what restorative justice was, but I really didn't."*

In 2012, a group of 17 NL educators were the first to participate in an intensive 2-week Restorative Justice Education (RJE) experience in the hopes that they would begin to live it in their work contexts. To convey the essence of RJE, this group coined the term:

### ***Relationships First!***

This, they felt, would highlight that restorative justice embodies a comprehensive two-part understanding of justice:

- *Primary Justice*: honours the inherent worth of all and is enacted through relationship; exists in all relationships when no one is wronged or harmed (like social justice).
- *Secondary Justice*: responds to harm or crime; a way to make things right.

These innovative educators had experienced that RF impacts and informs every minute of every day!

*Relationships First* also describes the heart of the early iterations of restorative justice. Originating from ancient and contemporary spiritual and Indigenous traditions, RF identifies justice holistically as promoting the worth, well-being, and interconnectedness of all people (Vaandering, 2011). In traditional Indigenous cultures around the world – from Africa to New Zealand to North America – the customary approach for addressing community concerns honoured the relational elements of that society and focused on staying connected. The contemporary Western expression of restorative justice began in judicial contexts in the 1970s in Elmira, Ontario as well as in Akron, Pennsylvania, communities with large Mennonite populations whose intent, like Indigenous cultures, was to maintain social connection and relationship in addressing concerns. In the late 1990s, Restorative Justice was introduced to schools where its relational foundation became evident. In these educational contexts, restorative justice expanded from primarily being a means for addressing harm to explicitly nurturing, maintaining and repairing relationships. As such, schools would become places where people could say,

*"Here, relationships come first, and that makes all the difference in how we learn and live!" - (NLESD administrator)*



## RF-RJE: The Central Concepts

Relationships First is a **holistic, whole-school, responsive, relationship-based expression of the belief that all people are worthy and interconnected**. This creates an ethos guided by the values of **respect, dignity, and mutual concern** where the purposes of education will be nurtured. The following diagrams illustrate these components and are more fully described in *The Little Book of Restorative Justice Education*.

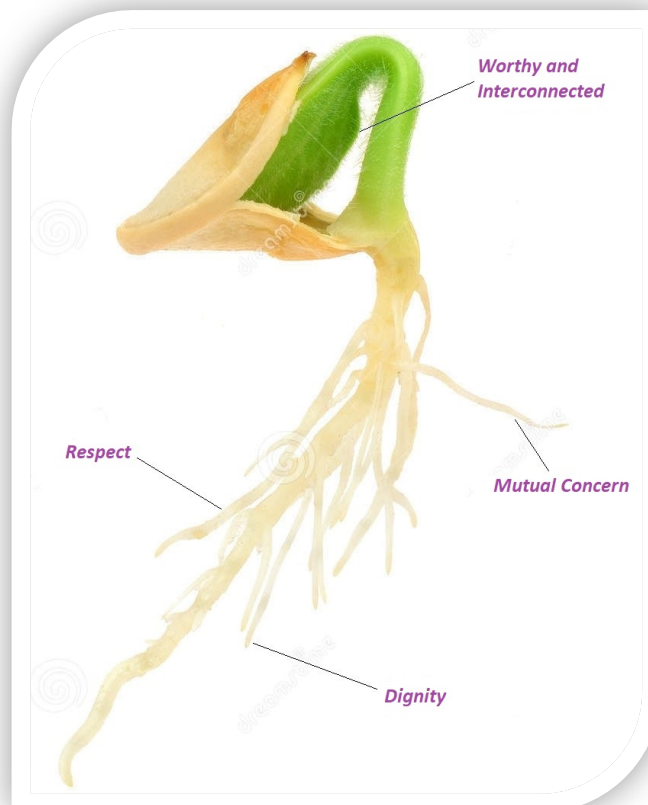
### **1. Beliefs and Values:**

RF is grounded in the view that *all* people are worthy and relational. When we take our responsibility as human beings to honour each other as such, well-being is enhanced, and we all thrive.

Three key values guiding this way of being are:

- Respect ('re'-again; 'spect'-to look = to look again from the other's perspective. - D. Barter)
- Dignity (worth that has no substitute- I. Kant)
- Mutual Concern—(reciprocal caring for one another-J. Llewellyn)

The analogy of the seed and roots helps to visualize the organic nature of RF and the critical role of accepting the beliefs and values for healthy growth.



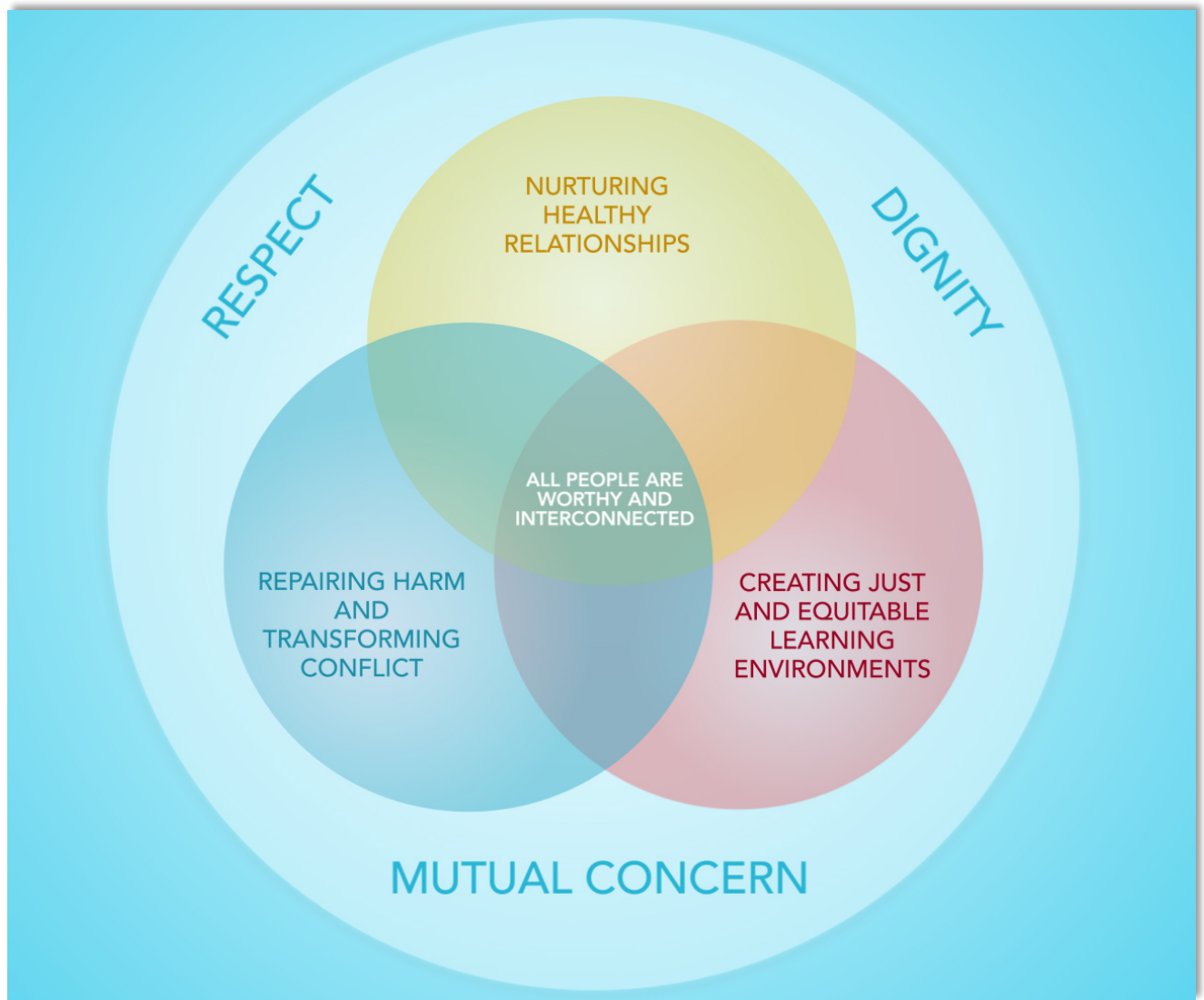




## 2. Holistic:

RF-RJE culture is comprised of 3 components that are embedded in all aspects of school and education: nurturing healthy relationships, creating just and equitable learning environments, and repairing harm and transforming conflict. These three components intersect with each other and revolve around the hub of core beliefs—that all people are worthy and relational. The key values of dignity, respect and mutual concern surround and support the whole. The diagram illustrates how each component overlaps and informs the others.

### *Relationships First Culture*



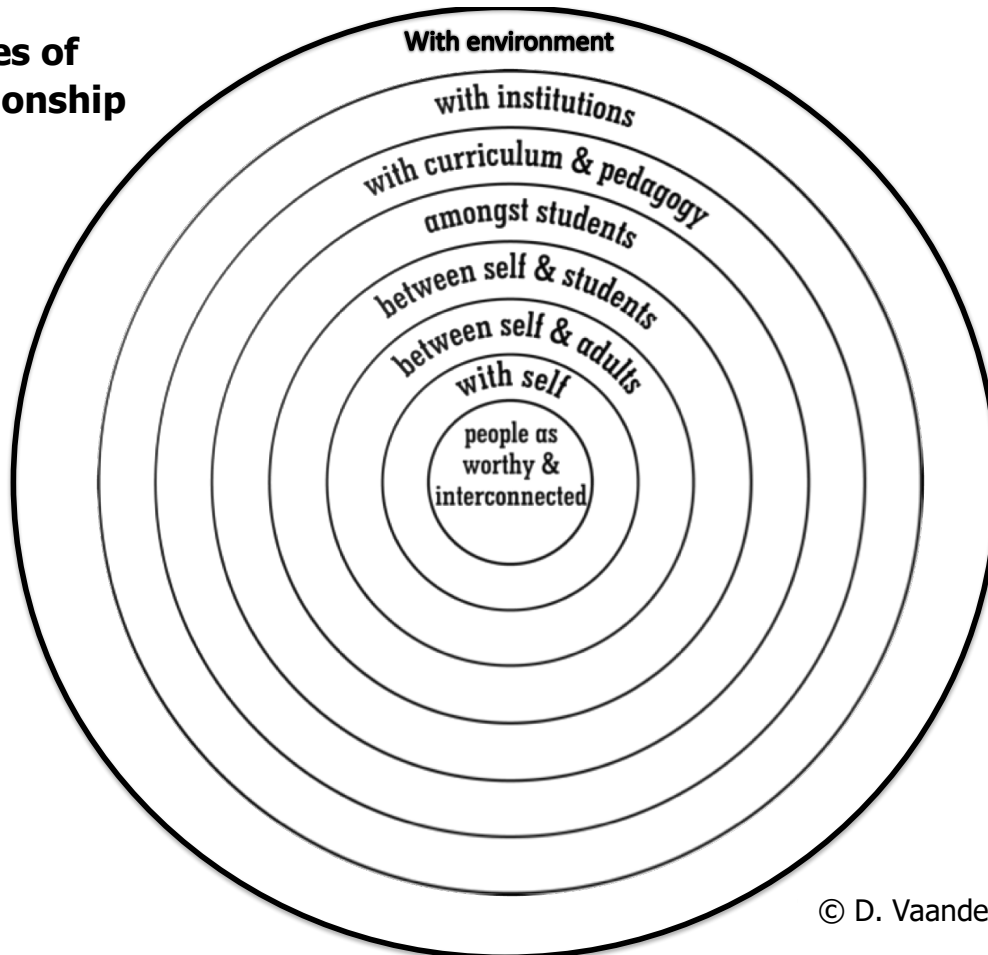
*(Evans & Vaandering, 2016)*



### **1. Whole-School:**

RF-RJE involves *all* relationships within a school. The Ripples diagram illustrates the educator's relationships within the whole and how the core beliefs begin by affecting the relationship with self. Our relationship with self then affects all our other relationships. As leaders, when educators honour and respect themselves as having dignity, they can then engage in healthy relationships with others, their tasks, and their contexts. A similar diagram could be created for the students, the parents, and the broader school community.

### **Ripples of Relationship**



© D. Vaandering, 2016

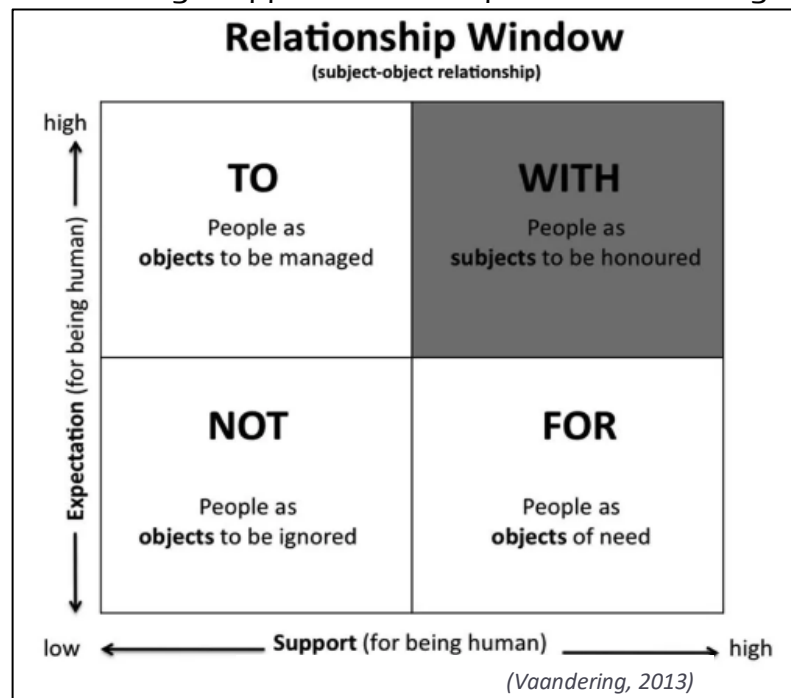


## 2. Relationship-based and Responsive:

Healthy relationships are responsive to the needs and joys expressed by all who interact with each other. Responding effectively is a learned skill that begins with awareness of what it means to live in responsive relationships. Educators and students alike can increase their understanding and capacity for responding effectively in all circumstances by engaging with the Relationship Window. The Relationship Window illustrates how responsiveness occurs through **high support** and **high expectations** for being human. The Relationship Window is a framework that firstly helps to discern the kinds of relationships we find ourselves in and then serves as a guide to increase their quality.

Central to relationship is the need to **belong**; we feel honoured when we are included and can be at our best. Briefly, consider the following summary of the RF Window. Be sure to follow this description with a careful reading of Chapter 5 in the LBRJE:

When people provide support and expectations in a balanced, reciprocal way, it results in people engaging *with* each other and people are thus invited to belong and honoured. However, relationships become problematic, unhealthy or even destructive when one or both have ulterior motives for personal effect. When this occurs, all those in that relationship lose their humanity and become objects that are used. This can happen subtly (i.e. to get something done) or aggressively (i.e. bullying) and has many reasons. Because everyone needs to belong, doing what is necessary to belong is often the underlying motivation for unhealthy relationships. When one is offered high support but low expectations for being human, the relationship is characterized by people doing things *for* each other. When high expectations are combined with low support, people do things *to* each other. When there are no expectations or support given, the relationship is characterized by neglect and is assumed to be non-existent.





### **3. Perspective: The glasses we wear!:**

Another way to examine our own contributions to a healthy relationship is to consider how we view people and the environment. When we filter our actions through 3 key questions (see below), we can identify if we are honouring or measuring (judging) the people that we are with. If we measure others, we diminish their worth because we do not accept who they are. Connection is broken. If we honour others, we accept and celebrate their worth simply because they are human and we all benefit from the connections that are made. By putting ourselves in the shoes of the other and asking ourselves, "What message am I sending this person?", we create opportunities to discern if we are dismissing or accepting those with whom we engage and we can challenge ourselves to nurture more inclusive spaces of belonging.

Please note that this does not mean that harmful behaviours are to be accepted. The person can be accepted and honoured despite their actions. This is demonstrated by taking time to dialogue together about the concerns you observe and experience. The following framework of questions can help with this.



**Am I measuring?**

**Am I honouring?**

**What message am I sending?**





#### **4. Expression: RF-RJE Framework Questions:**

When people work diligently within the RF-RJE beliefs and values, the following set of framework questions can effectively guide relationships when challenges arise. See pg. 72 for further details about how these questions can be used personally, amongst people when they are struggling, as well as for academic learning (i.e. I don't know how to do this math problem). These questions help to tell the story of the experience by looking at the past, present, and future. They are **NOT** *magic* questions that work simply because you asked them. They are key open-ended questions that invite dialogue and deep(er) thinking. They require awareness by the one asking of their own position of power, tone, body language, etc. They are best used after 2-3 days of professional learning so the nuances of listening, sharing, and asking can be better understood. [**Warning:** do not facilitate situations of serious harm with these questions unless you have had significant instruction for how to do so.]

## **RF-RJE**

### ***Key Questions***

- What happened? [not WHY?]
- What were you thinking/feeling at the time?
- What are you thinking/feeling now?
- Who has been affected? In what way?
- [What has been the hardest thing for you?]
- What do you need [to do] to go forward?





## Becoming a Relationships First (RF) School

### What are the benefits?

Relationships First-Restorative Justice in Education is a comprehensive approach that nurtures relational school cultures. This has an impact on *all* aspects of schooling from life in the classroom, the hallway, the offices, with parents, and when harm occurs. It creates just and equitable learning environments by informing and supporting:

- Increased achievement levels & student engagement
  - Social-emotional learning
  - Mental health and well-being
  - Inclusive education
  - Engaged curriculum and pedagogy (all subject areas)
  - Universal Design for Learning
  - Student-teacher-administrator relationships
  - Positive Behaviour Supports
  - Trauma-informed Practice
  - Bullying prevention
  - Student attendance
  - Educator wellness
  - Parent involvement
  - Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations
  - Indigenous/Non-Indigenous relationships
  - Multi-cultural education
  - Early years education
  - And more 😊
- (See pg. 12 for more details)

### ***Research indicates that:***

- students, educators, administrators, and families become more engaged in the purpose of education: focused learning;
- achievement levels increase;
- graduation rates improve;
- conflicts are reduced;
- satisfaction for resolving conflict using an RF approach is high.
- (See Appendix pg. 77 for a brief overview of empirical evidence)

### ***Do you want to know how you can get your school involved?***

- Explore this handbook and other resources (i.e. [www.relationshipsfirstnl.com](http://www.relationshipsfirstnl.com)) carefully;
- Invite a few others in your location to consider the possibility of moving forward;
- Contact your NLESD (Program Itinerant for Safe and Inclusive schools) or RF-RJE Centre Consultant for more information.

[rfrjnl@mun.ca](mailto:rfrjnl@mun.ca); [www.relationshipsfirstnl.com](http://www.relationshipsfirstnl.com); <https://www.facebook.com/RelationshipsFirstNL>



## Relationships First: A Comprehensive Integration

Relationships First (RF) honours each person as worthy and interconnected. It nurtures an understanding of relationship that is not limited to simply being interdependent, but rather that we “understand each other through each other” (Llewellyn, 2012). Because RF is a way of being, it addresses many/most aspects of education responsively—for **children, youth and adults alike**. The chart below outlines how RF intersects with some of the key issues facing education today. In particular, this chart demonstrates how RF addresses many aspects of the NL Premier’s Task Force Report, *the Education Action Plan: The Way Forward (2018)* which also intersects with the findings of the most current research regarding educator needs.

An RF culture addresses ...	By ...
<p><b>Mental Health &amp; Wellness</b></p>	<p>RF intersects with the <b>National Comprehensive School Health Framework (CSHF)</b>. Both emphasize the need for a culture that supports nurturing mental health and wellness for adults, children, and youth alike. Designed specifically for the NL context, RF reflects the 4 CSHF components (Teaching and Learning; Social and Physical Environment; Policy, and Partnerships and Services). Because of its strong core philosophy and multifaceted, relational ways of being and knowing, it provides practices that embody and bring to life each of the 4 CSHF components.</p>
<p>Social-Emotional Learning</p>	<p>RF encompasses the whole of SEL and extends it by deepening understanding of interconnectedness for children, youth and adults alike. RF builds on our human need to belong and as such encourages the 5 aspects of SEL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• self-awareness,</li> <li>• self-management,</li> <li>• responsible decision-making,</li> <li>• relationships skills,</li> <li>• social awareness.</li> </ul> <p>When these components are embedded into a culture where the relationship is understood holistically as “understanding each other through each other” a rich culture of individuals, who know they need others to thrive, is nurtured.</p>
<p>Trauma-Informed Practice &amp; Grief</p>	<p>RF creates a relational culture that can hold the deep sadness of trauma and grief. Class/school communities that are familiar with circle dialogue find circles to be very comfortable for sharing pain when illness and death occur. In these spaces, the students and adults alike have discovered through experience that the complexity of life is not ignored, frowned upon, or hidden. Instead the collective learns to carry the needs of those hurting.</p> <p>Rather than expecting students and adults to decide to seek out the services of grief-counsellors, RF schools invite grief-counsellors to participate in the routine practice of circle dialogue where a sense of belonging and support is already established.</p> <p>Trauma-informed practice addresses the historical and long-term harm done to individuals and groups. Similar circle processes are used in these situations but are facilitated by people with expertise in guiding the process.</p>



<p><b>Universal Design</b></p>	<p>The 3 components of Universal Design for Learning are central to RF in that both highlight meaningful, relevant engagement with peers as well as curriculum. Circle dialogue as well as relational curriculum engagement inherently a) stimulates interest and motivation; b) allows for multiple ways of presentation that are equally led by educators and students; c) provides differentiated ways for student response. This is all possible because space for student voices guide learning.</p>
<p>Teaching Math (and other subject areas)</p>	<p>RF informs and enriches all curriculum content and pedagogical approaches because it is a lens through which one sees the world. Critical reflection, inquiry, and problem solving that is grounded in the students' experiences is promoted.</p> <p>Through small and large group curriculum circles using RF framework questions to initiate curiosity and address challenges the students experience in completing their work, deeper, more meaningful connection to their learning occurs. Students also learn how to use this framework to address complexities on their own.</p> <p>This RF pedagogy is used across the curriculum and as such further prepares students for the more serious situations of harm that occur during daily life at home and school.</p>
<p>Inclusive Education</p>	<p>RF is not about finding ways for everyone to <i>'fit in'</i> but rather creating spaces where everyone <b>knows</b> they <i>'belong'</i> and have opportunities accessible to them to thrive. RF is an experience of full participation and respect for the contributions of <i>all</i> students through both small and large group instruction that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interaction through the use of talking circles,</li> <li>• community &amp; relationship building activities,</li> <li>• integration of learning into each student's unique life.</li> </ul> <p>Questioning and deep listening skills that reflect honest engagement with one another develop so that all students contribute regularly, feel safe to be themselves, and celebrate each other's abilities and diversity.</p> <p>RF provides frameworks for IEP meeting processes, transitioning between grade levels, monitoring and evaluation of students with special needs, and much more.</p>
<p>Autism Spectrum and Attention Deficit</p>	<p>RF is proving to be significant in engaging students with diagnoses on the autism spectrum, attention disorders, and other developmental concerns regarding learning and social engagement.</p> <p>The invitational, non-threatening, circle format regularly draws in students that ordinarily teachers would consider not having the capacity for engagement. Curiosity and desire to engage with peers, as well as clear guidelines and ceremony, allow for trust to root. Students without such diagnoses come to appreciate the contributions their peers bring to the circle discussion and welcome an opportunity to hear their voices.</p>
<p>Newcomer inclusion &amp; Multicultural education</p>	<p>RF talking circles create space and opportunity for newcomers to share their thoughts and experiences regularly. A circle ensures that each participant, regardless of language capacity, has time to formulate and express their thoughts in the group. For <i>all</i> students and their teachers this results in increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• language acquisition &amp; competence;</li> <li>• social engagement amongst all students;</li> <li>• confidence in speaking;</li> <li>• patience and empathy;</li> <li>• effort, &amp; interest by dominant culture students to engage with newcomers;</li> <li>• respect for cultural diversity.</li> </ul>



<p><b>Student-student Student-teacher Adult-adult Conflict, harm and violence</b></p>	<p>Harm, conflict, and violence will occur. However, in a school where relational culture is nurtured daily, educators, students, and caregivers rise to the challenge when the well-being of some is undermined. A skilled facilitator with careful preparation can use the RF framework questions/process to guide dialogue so that “a space is provided for dialogue whereby the dignity of all involved and affected can be restored. In this way, each can once again become a fully contributing member of the community of which they are a part.” (Vaandering, 2011). Opportunity to share perspectives along with an emphasis on responsibility and accountability results in collaborative problem-solving for repairing harm and moving forward for children, youth, and adults alike.</p>
<p>Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports</p>	<p>PBIS has been adopted by NLESD as a program of “proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviours to create positive school environments” (PBIS). RF enhances this objective by grounding its desire for appropriate student behaviour in the deeper context that this will occur by shifting the focus from “changing behaviour” to “nurturing relationships”. RF also recognizes that student behaviours most often reflect what they see in adults. As such, RF includes and emphasizes critical reflection and activity by adults on their relationship with self and other adults in their lives.</p>
<p>Bullying</p>	<p>Bullying is defined as a ‘relationship problem that requires relationship solutions’ (PrevNet). RF provides clear, explicit, relational ways forward that can resolve bullying situations. <b>After careful preparation</b>, those directly involved and their supporters hear everyone’s stories, deepen their understanding of everyone’s experiences, and collaboratively find ways to move forward. A balanced combination of accountability and support is provided to ensure safety, repair, and opportunity for healing.</p> <p>Addressing bullying using an RF approach without an RF culture being established is not recommended as there is a risk that further harm may occur. Serious incidents of bullying must be facilitated by an experienced facilitator.</p>
<p>Is RF a soft response to inappropriate, harmful behaviours?</p>	<p>Anyone involved in resolving harm using an RF approach will attest to the fact that facing those with whom you are in conflict is incredibly difficult. Much more than ‘dialogue’, RF requires action that will change all the contributing factors of a harmful situation. Since those directly and indirectly involved are also involved in finding a way forward, the cycle and repetition have greater potential for the harm to end. When the focus is on ‘rules broken’ and ‘who is to blame’, the real concerns of ‘who has been harmed’ and ‘how are their needs being met’ can be ignored. In RF, meeting the needs of all is immediate, challenging, and quickly evident.</p>



<p><b>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; Universal Declaration of Human Rights</b></p>	<p>RF encourages students' voice, choice and responsibility in such a way that better ensures that schools educate and meet the 54 rights that all children need to have met for them to thrive.</p> <p>RF encourages respect and dignity for all and is guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in terms of nurturing relationships amongst adults involved in education.</p>
<p>LGTBO</p>	<p>Explicitly practicing the key concepts of honouring the worth and interconnectedness of all supports the efforts made recently for creating safe and inclusive spaces for LGTBO children, youth, educators, parents, and community members. Dignity of all is embodied and practiced at all times and in all places within a school context. Circle dialogue principles and procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide for an opportunity for deeper understanding, empathy, and allyship;</li> <li>• creating welcoming, judgement-free spaces, as well as opportunities for respect and healing.</li> </ul>
<p>Indigenous ways of knowing and being</p>	<p>RF circle dialogue is grounded in ancient and contemporary indigenous ways of being and knowing. As such, talking circles and healing circle formats provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• common ground for inviting insightful dialogue with elders and leaders from indigenous communities involved in the school</li> <li>• pedagogical opportunities to help all students, parents, and educators honour diverse ways of knowing and being;</li> <li>• a deeper understanding of local Indigenous knowledge;</li> <li>• practical ways of addressing curriculum goals and objectives;</li> <li>• practical, meaningful, holistic approach to addressing harm when it occurs.</li> </ul>
<p>Truth and Reconciliation recommendations</p>	<p>Nationally, we are called to work for reconciliation in education. RF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creates cultures where addressing harm and nurturing healing is considered part of daily life;</li> <li>• provides a significant means for working on this continually and in so doing will engage meaningfully and practically in implementing the recommendations listed in Articles 62, 63, and 64.</li> </ul>





I feel happy when I have circles because if my feelings are hurt or my friends feelings are hurt we can fix the problem.

I feel happy when I have circles because if my feelings are hurt or my friends feelings are hurt we can fix the problem.



# Part TWO: RF School Implementation & Sustainability

The following section provides a concise overview to RF-RJE whole school implementation. These documents are meant to serve as a *guide* for educators as they navigate roles and responsibilities along with tips to engage school staff, parents, students, and community members. The samples included are based on research for sustainable implementation.



## So, You Think You Want to Be an RF School?

In the year(s) leading up to becoming a Relationships First School, please consider the following implementation ideas:

- Engage with RF in a number of ways:
  1. Read scholarly and educational articles related to RF (See Appendix pg. 92).
  2. Read *The Little Book of Restorative Justice Education*.
  3. Explore the RF-RJE NL website ([www.relationshipsfirstnl.com](http://www.relationshipsfirstnl.com)), Facebook, and Twitter sites.
  4. View videos that show how RF approaches have been successfully implemented.
  5. Talk to Relationships First school team members from other schools.
  6. Attend any RF related conferences and events in or around your area.
  7. Connect with local organizations or individuals whose values line up with those of RF-RJE.
  
- Being informed prior to committing to and beginning RF will result in greater likelihood of being able to sustain becoming a Relationships First School.
  
- Discuss the possibility of becoming a Relationships First School with your school administrator as this is a whole-school initiative and **must** include the full support of the administration.
  
- Complete the checklists: “Determining the Need for Relationships First: Restorative Justice Education” and “Administrators Reflections and Needs Assessment” to ensure there is a clear understanding of this initiative. (See next 2 pages)
  
- Identify a group of five-six people who are interested in RF and are willing to commit to establishing and becoming engaged members of an RF team. One school administrator **must** be an active member of the team. The others can include teachers, parent/caregiver(s), guidance counsellor(s), student(s), etc.
  
- After establishing the RF team, if you are an NLESD school, connect with your SEO and Safe and Inclusive Schools Itinerant to indicate your interest in becoming a Relationships First school. If you are not associated with NLESD, connect with those responsible for overseeing the operations of your organization. Be prepared to discuss:
  - what being a Relationships First school looks like
  - the amount of PD required for your team and staff
  - the amount of funding needed for the initiative to be sustainable.
  
- Communicate your expression of interest to the Relationships First Centre which will be keeping track of initiatives throughout the province. This will ensure that you will be connected to implementation throughout the region and be provided with support from the Centre and others in your vicinity.
  
- The Relationships First Centre will support the implementation and sustainability of RF in your school with resources, consultation, and Professional Learning as needed and requested by those directly involved.



## Determining Our Need for Relationships First: Restorative Justice Education

Evidence from practice suggests that by implementing RF across the school community, schools can expect the outcomes as listed in the chart below.

Review each outcome and check the corresponding number on the scale of 1-5 that captures your perception of need within your school community in each specific area (1-lowest need; 5 highest need). Complete this reflection individually and then meet as a team or staff to collate and discuss combined scores. Consider completing this chart at the end of each school year to determine your plan for moving forward.

		Need					Comments
		(1 - lowest; 5 - highest)					
RF Outcomes		1	2	3	4	5	
Improved relationships and a sense of belonging across the school community	Among students						
	Among administrators & teachers/staff						
	Among teachers/support staff						
	Among teachers, staff, administrators & families						
An increase in the engagement and learning of students in the classroom							
A calmer school environment with less classroom disruption and more time for teaching							
Growth in relational and problem-solving skills for the adults across the school community							
Growth in relational and problem-solving skills for the students across the school community							
Increase in student school attendance							
Increase in employee attendance							
Decrease in discipline referrals to the office							
Decrease in in-school detentions & suspensions							
Decrease in out-of-school suspensions							
Reduced disciplinary disproportionality (i.e. race/gender/ability...)							
<p>**Note: This needs assessments chart is meant to provide a means for reflection and discussion for the team. The areas in which there is higher need will be the areas to focus on and to watch for change over time. If there seems to be little need for change in any area, it may not be the time to begin implementation as there will be little motivation for growth.</p>							
Adapted from K. Berkowitz (2017). Restorative Justice Practices in Schools.							



To be a successful and sustainable Relationships First School in NL, a great deal of planning and preparation is required by the administrators and the RF Team Leader. The initial assessment of needs requires administrators to consider a range of questions about their personal core values & beliefs and relationships within the school in general (i.e. relationships in the school amongst staff, between staff and students, support staff and students, between staff and the parent/extended school community).

It is recommended that the administrator as well as the Team Leader(s) complete this reflection and then meet to collate and discuss the combined score. Consider completing this chart at the end of each school year to determine your plan for moving forward.

Questions to consider		Amount (1 - little; 5 - a lot)					Comments
		1	2	3	4	5	
What do I know about RF?							
What do I know about RF in NL?							
What is my interest in seeing RF take hold in our school community?							
What is my staff's interest in seeing RF take hold in our school community?							
Is there a strong desire in our school to develop positive relationships?							
Understanding that a paradigm shift is challenging and takes time, refer to Figure X, titled "Innovation Adoption Life Cycle". Considering the relationships in your school and community, estimate how many of each of the different categories of the "Adoption Life Cycle" will be in your school community:	Early Adopters						
	Early Majority						
	Late Majority						
	Resistors						
Am I ready to commit to implementing RF to strengthen relationships ...	Between administrators <b>and</b> teachers-staff?						
	Amongst teachers <b>and</b> support staff?						
	Amongst teachers-staff- admin <b>and</b> families						
	Amongst adults <b>and</b> students						
	Amongst students						
How much "dedicated time" can I embed in our school schedule to develop and sustain RF practices?							
What time commitment am I ready to make for PD with staff in the First Year as well as over a number of years?							
Are we ready to invest and source needed funds to become an RF school?							
**The final scores will be indicators for areas to focus on for implementation. The intention is to <i>grow</i> in making RF a consistent guiding framework for the school.							



## Relationships First: A Co-learning Experience

The school implementation team and NLESD program itinerant approach is grounded in a relational mentoring process. These relationships are perfect opportunities for intentionally practicing RF practices and recognize that co-mentors draw on each other's strengths and offer support throughout their RF journeys. Each RF mentorship role recognizes that we are equal partners in the process and each role functions and benefits from a "power with" dynamic.

**Mentored:** As the individuals and the collective team members participate in and complete initial RF learning, they continue to *seek nurturing and a space* to grapple with experiences. You may find at times that you wish to be mentored by an itinerant, a colleague, the RF Centre staff, further PL, courses, readings, Special Interest Groups, PL Community, etc. A mentor's role is to encourage your growth and capitalize on your strengths as well as to hold you accountable to RF expectations.

The person I am mentored by is:

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**Co-mentor:** As you complete initial RF Learning and as you grow in experience, you will benefit from having a co-mentor—someone who shares expertise that is easily accessible and can help you as you plan implementation, facilitate talking circles, or facilitate circles for harm. A colleague is the most natural choice as you can work together, support each other, and hold each other accountable to expectations. However, at times you may find a co-mentor in a neighbouring school or organization.

My co-mentor(s) is (are):

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**Mentor:** As you complete your initial RF learning, you will reach out to and invite other individuals into a collaborative relationship who are eager to learn about RF. You will share your insights, ideas, practices, and resources with one or more, others taking on the responsibility to support them and hold them to expectations that remain true to core principles and practices of RF. Depending on your role, who you mentor and how many you mentor, will vary. In an RF school, the initial team mentors their colleagues in year 2 and beyond.

I am a mentor to:

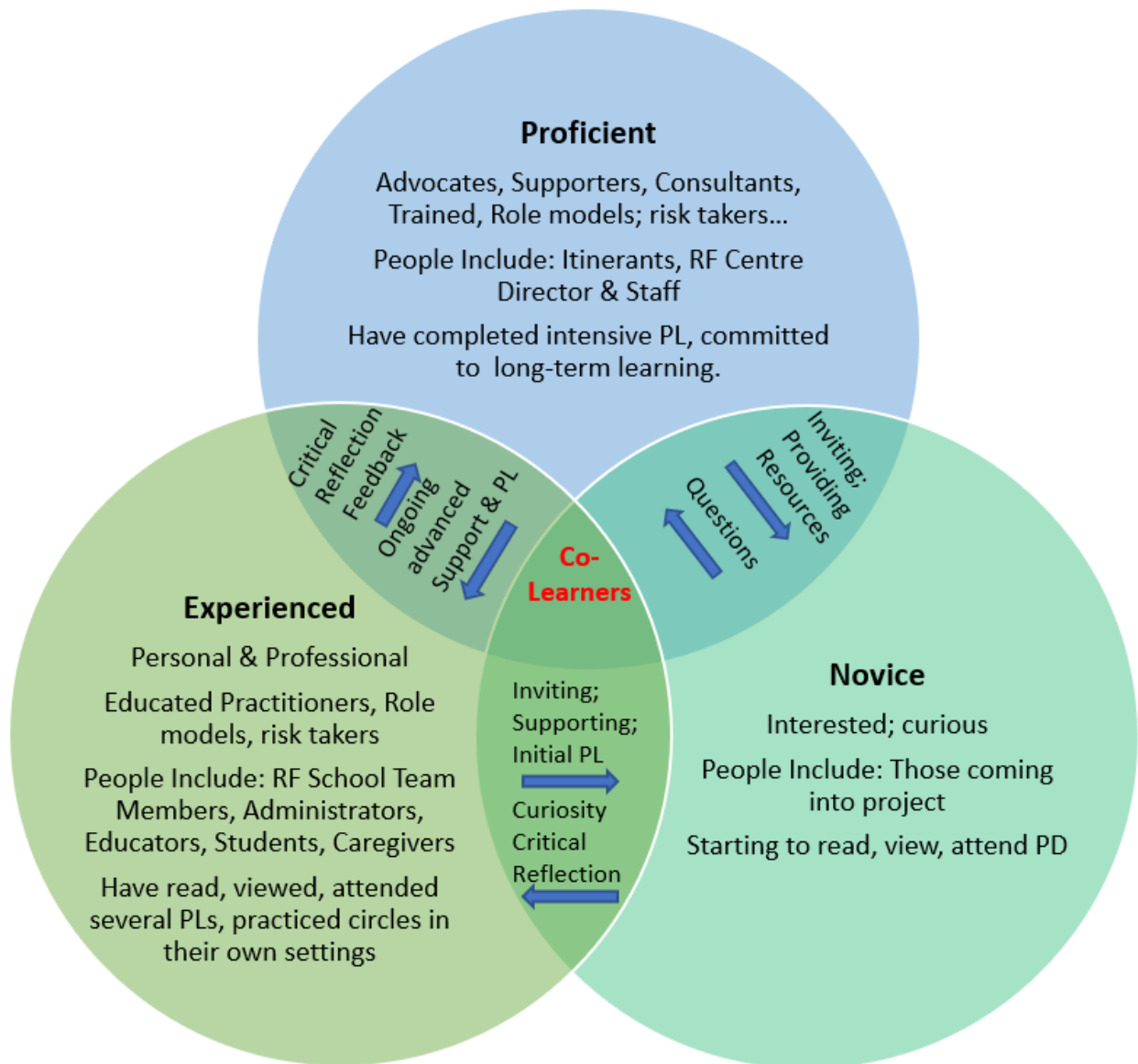
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## Mentored, Co-Mentor, Mentor – A Co-Learning Model

The diagram below illustrates the different capacities of those involved in the experience of understanding, implementing and practicing RF. Because RF is an organic process, the mentoring roles described previously can actually fit into any one of these circles. There is no time frame for growth. Some become proficient quite quickly, while some stay at the novice level for a long time depending on their motivation and interest. What is critically important is that all those involved in RF are co-learners.





## RF School Participant Roles & Responsibilities

The following chart informs you of the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the project.

<b>Team Leader(s)</b>	Staff member(s) at the school; preferably not the school administrator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Champions the implementation of RF at the site</li><li>• Meets with teams on a monthly basis</li><li>• Facilitates circles at team meetings</li><li>• Plans content/direction of team meetings</li><li>• Reports team concerns to Project Coordinator/Director &amp; School Administrator</li></ul>
<b>School Administrators</b>	Principal and Assistant Principal
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support team leaders &amp; team members</li><li>• Attend team meetings &amp; PL sessions</li><li>• Practice RF Approach in daily office matters</li><li>• Check-in with team leader &amp; team members</li></ul>
<b>Team Members</b>	Educators, caregivers and/or students who are interested in implementing RF
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attend team meetings, PL sessions, &amp; participate in mentorship program</li><li>• Implement circles in classroom settings and/or their particular contexts</li><li>• Engage with PL and team meeting materials</li><li>• Support &amp; encourage the Team Leader(s)</li><li>• Help to keep the plan focussed throughout the year</li></ul>
<b>Mentors/External Supports</b>	Anyone with proficiency i.e. RF Centre Staff; Safe & Inclusive Schools Itinerants ...
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide assistance to &amp; answer questions of Team Leaders &amp; Members</li><li>• Attend team meetings &amp; PL sessions as requested</li><li>• Supports novice and experienced practitioners on site as requested and suggested</li></ul>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	Caregivers, Community members, Department of Education, District, and Teachers Association leaders
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attend designated PL days</li><li>• Support team members and school implementation as necessary</li><li>• Engage with RF materials when possible</li></ul>



## RF Stakeholder Roles & Responsibilities

Before moving towards RF school implementation, take a moment to consider the types of structures and policies that are in place at an institutional level and/or within your governing bodies as these will be key to the support that your team will receive.

### Safe & Inclusive Schools Itinerants

Experienced Educators serving under NLESD & EECD

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- Provide Safe and Inclusive policy related inservice and support
- Support team members and school staff in RF implementation process
- Serve as a resource or reference for RF related inquiries
- Can provide up to 1-day PL sessions for schools or team

### Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Governing body of education province wide

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- Oversees education province-wide;
- Oversees Safe & Caring Schools Policy & Inclusive Education;
- Policy Statement 8 outlines RF-RJE connections
- Integrates RF principles and practices in various initiatives such as the Premier's Task Force
- Has provided PL for Safe and Inclusive Schools, and Itinerants in RF principles & practices
- Is an RF Research-Resource Centre partner

### NLESD

Newfoundland and Labrador English School District

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- Responsible for implementation of EECD and EA mandates
- Creates time, space, and resources for RF implementation.
- Oversees the work of Safe and Inclusive Itinerants
- Is a RF Research-Resource Centre partner

### NLTA

Professional association of educators in Newfoundland and Labrador

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- Creates spaces for special interest groups (i.e. RF related groups) which plan summer institutes and set PL opportunities
- Potential source of support for Professional Learning opportunities
- Is a RF Research-Resource Centre partner



## Implementation Options

Relationships First is a way of being. For most people, it requires a shift in thinking that accepts that we are inherently relational and dependent on each other for our well-being. As such, becoming an RF educator or school takes time, can never be enforced, and requires unique implementation approaches.

Research and experience clearly indicate that for implementation to be sustained, the following components are required:

- explicit, detailed professional learning over an extended period of time
- a team committed to guiding practice and growth
- participation that is invited and not mandated.

The RF Research-Resource Centre recommends an approach that encompasses these three components and is outlined in the following pages. It includes five days of focused professional learning for the team in the first year, and then 1-3 days of follow-up professional learning in the following years.

This requires a significant commitment in terms of time and replacement (guest) teacher costs. It is important to realize, however, that effective implementation will quickly result in saved time and financial resources (See Appendix pg. 77)

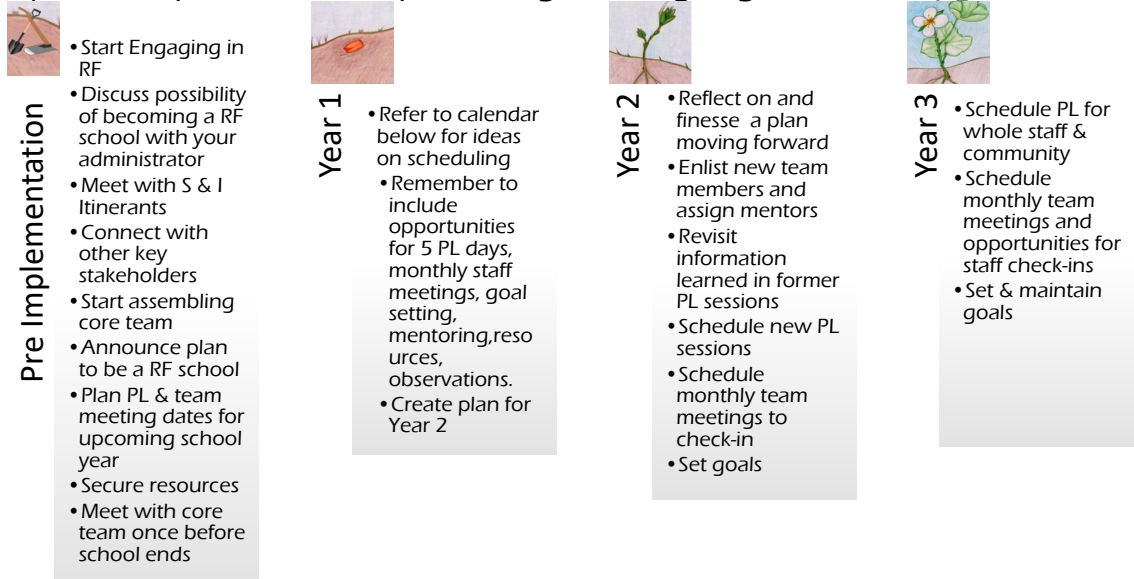
We also realize that in spite of a school's best efforts and desires, resources for recommended implementation might not always be available. This should not deter anyone from beginning their engagement with RF. Options include:

- Working with Program Itinerants for Safe and Inclusive Schools for introductory sessions on RF and one-on-one mentoring sessions with educators and administrators eager to learn
- Acquiring grants that are available locally, provincially, and nationally.
- Encouraging one or more teachers enrolled in a graduate program to complete graduate courses in RF;
- Reading and viewing resources at staff meetings, in small groups, or individually (see [www.relationshipsfirstnl.com](http://www.relationshipsfirstnl.com) for many resources).



## Implementation Timeline

The following diagram and accompanying calendar provide *suggested* timelines and topics for implementation – pre, during, and ongoing. See Part 1, pg. 3 for other details.



Activity Overview for Year 1			
<p><b>June or August</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Intro PL day for team members</li> <li>○ Set goals &amp; expectations</li> <li>○ Notify school community</li> <li>○ Prepare schedules</li> <li>○ Gather materials for future mtgs.</li> <li>○ Prepare for ½ day intro PL for the whole staff</li> </ul>	<p><b>September</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Half day intro. PL with the entire staff to explain/describe the initiative</li> <li>○ Start implementing check-in circles</li> <li>○ Brief intro to parents at Meet the Teacher School Curriculum night</li> </ul>	<p><b>October</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complete PL #2</li> <li>○ Complete 2nd monthly meeting &amp; discuss goals, materials, early experiences</li> <li>○ Continue w/ check-in circles</li> <li>○ Plan for implementing curriculum circles</li> </ul>	<p><b>November</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Monthly meeting</li> <li>○ Check-in circles</li> <li>○ Start implementing curriculum circles</li> <li>○ If appropriate meetings with bus drivers, parents, student assistants, support staff to introduce an initiative</li> </ul>
<p><b>December</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Monthly mtg.</li> <li>○ Continue check-in &amp; curriculum circles</li> <li>○ Plan for PL #3</li> </ul>	<p><b>January</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Monthly mtg.</li> <li>○ Revisit goals &amp; expectations</li> <li>○ Review/discuss concerns &amp; questions</li> <li>○ Complete PL #3</li> </ul>	<p><b>February</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Monthly mtg.</li> <li>○ Check-in &amp; curriculum circles</li> <li>○ Prepare for PL #4</li> </ul>	<p><b>March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Monthly mtg.</li> <li>○ Check-in &amp; curriculum circles</li> <li>○ Complete PL</li> </ul>
<p><b>April</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Monthly mtg.</li> <li>○ Check-in &amp; curriculum circles</li> <li>○ Prepare for PL #5</li> </ul>	<p><b>May</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Monthly mtg.</li> <li>○ Check-in &amp; curriculum circles</li> <li>○ Complete PL #5</li> <li>○ Revisit &amp; reassess Year 1 goals</li> <li>○ Plan for Year 2</li> </ul>	<p><b>June</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Monthly mtg.</li> <li>○ Check-in &amp; curriculum circles</li> <li>○ establish a necessary component of Year #2 plan (i.e. expanded team)</li> </ul>	<p><b>July</b></p>



## Professional Learning: Content & Objectives

The chart below contains a *sample* of PL content that can be used to help guide facilitators as they plan their PL sessions. Most of the detail and direction are provided for year one. In Year two and beyond, PL content will be determined by the overall needs of the group.

<i>Professional Learning</i>	<b>Activities &amp; Content</b>	<b>Resources &amp; Materials</b>
<p><b>#1 The way we do things—school culture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Making our plan;</i></li> <li>• <i>Learning to facilitate talking circles;</i></li> <li>• <i>Relationship with Self</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen &amp; respond to RF Schools history and vision</li> <li>• Create group guidelines</li> <li>• Explore underlying philosophy &amp; theory of RF -soil, seed, growth</li> <li>• Watch and discuss videos related to RF</li> <li>• Participate in Check-in, Check-up, and Check-out circles</li> <li>• Make a personal plan for implementing 2-3 key activities in personal and professional life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “What do we need today to be at our best?”</li> <li>• Iceberg—belonging or * alienation</li> <li>• Where We Are</li> <li>• Video: <b>Ripples of Relationships</b></li> <li>• Video: <b>Circle Formations</b></li> <li>• Sample circles from Circle Forward</li> <li>• Check-list: How relational am I?</li> </ul>
<p><b>#2 The Versatility of RF Framework Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Relationship with other adults</i></li> <li>• <i>Learning to Facilitate Curriculum Circles</i></li> <li>• <i>Connections to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Social Emotional Learning;</i></li> <li>○ <i>Mental Health</i></li> <li>○ <i>Trauma-informed practice</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check-in and debrief on experiences of the first few weeks</li> <li>• Participate in and refine facilitation of Check-in, Check-up, and Check-out circles</li> <li>• Review plan and overview</li> <li>• Experience &amp; develop ways to incorporate circles of dialogue into the curriculum;</li> <li>• Understanding the complete continuum of practice—from sharing to addressing harm.</li> <li>• Make a personal plan implementing 2-3 key activities in personal and professional life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where We Are</li> <li>• Video: <b>Review Ripples of Relationship - Curriculum component</b></li> <li>• Video: <b>Planting the Seeds</b></li> <li>• Checklist: How relational is my pedagogy?</li> <li>• Circle Forward: Curriculum Circles</li> </ul>
<p><b>#3 When Challenges Arise:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Student-Teacher relationships;</i></li> <li>• <i>Student-Student relationships;</i></li> <li>• <i>Using RF Framework questions to address academic challenges.</i></li> <li>• <i>Informal dialogue circles to resolve challenges &amp; differences</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and extend applications of RF through the curriculum</li> <li>• Introduce Relationship Matrix and apply to one’s context</li> <li>• Practice using RF questions to respond to complications that might arise in relationships with others</li> <li>• Create a personal plan implementing 2-3 key activities in personal and professional life</li> <li>• Participate in and finesse facilitation of Check-in, Check-up, and Check-out circles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where We Are</li> <li>• Review of RF School mandate</li> <li>• Extending curriculum and daily routines with RF</li> <li>• Video: <b>The Problem with Youth</b></li> <li>• Video: <b>Ripples of Relationship</b></li> <li>• Relationship Matrix</li> <li>• Scenarios using RF framework questions</li> <li>• Video: <b>Transforming Conflict</b> (Belinda Hopkins)</li> </ul>





<p><b>#4 What's happening?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Making sense of our RF experiences;</i></li> <li>• <i>Introduction to formal circles for more complex concerns</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of RF Project School mandate and RF framework</li> <li>• Participate in Check-in, Check-up, and Check-out circles</li> <li>• When things get hard! – No Shortcuts,</li> <li>• Identify one of each of the following:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Something you want <b>modelled</b>;</li> <li>○ Something you want to <b>discuss</b> as a group;</li> <li>○ Something you want to <b>practice</b>.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Discuss: YES, but.... Problem-posing; Problem-solving</li> <li>• Team Meetings: supporting and expecting –Planning for next 8 weeks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video: <b>Backwards Bike</b></li> <li>• Video: <b>Transforming Conflict</b></li> <li>• Video: <b>Our Story: Restorative Practices at The Alliance School &amp; In Our Lives</b></li> <li>• Relationship Matrix &amp; Scenarios</li> </ul>
<p><b>#5 RF Reflecting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Looking back;</i></li> <li>• <i>Looking at now;</i></li> <li>• <i>Looking ahead.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the seed, roots, and growth</li> <li>• Participate in Check-in, Check-up, Check-out circles</li> <li>• Sharing/Documenting stories of hope &amp; stories of struggle</li> <li>• Practicing and refining facilitation skills</li> <li>• Team Meetings - Planning for next year:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What do we need [to do] before and for next year?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Creating &amp; sharing our plans and our needs;             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When do we collaborate;</li> <li>○ When do we move forward on our own?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revisiting: What do we need to be at our best?</li> <li>• Video: <b>Creating a Movement</b></li> <li>• Video: <b>Facilitating an Informal Conflict Circle</b></li> </ul>

Possible PL for deepening RF knowledge and practice:

<p><b>What does Mentoring look like?</b></p>	<p>Review of RF Foundational Concepts Using RF principles to support colleagues</p>
<p><b>Repairing Harm</b></p>	<p>RF offers 3-day Facilitator Training for Serious Harm yearly.</p>
<p><b>Revisiting and Expanding Upon Curriculum Circles</b></p>	<p>Using Resources Generating ideas together - curriculum planning Sharing experiences/ideas</p>



## Staff Engagement

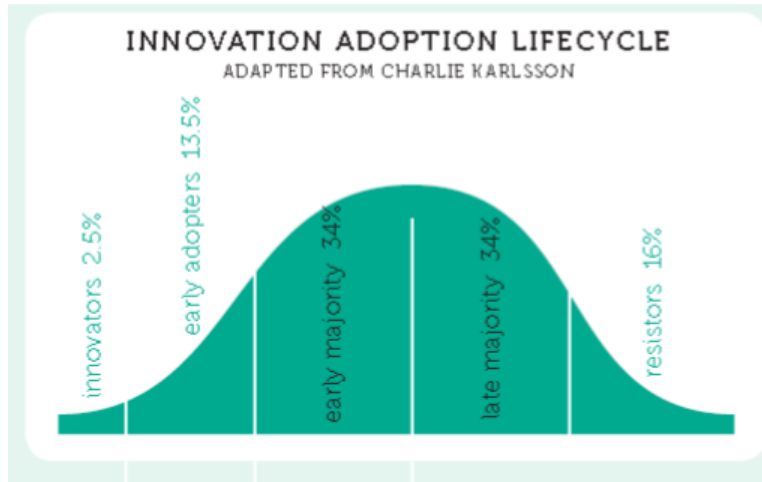
Relationships First schools have accepted an invitation to implement an RF way of being to nurture healthy, relational school culture. This initiative is not a mandated program or approach; schools get involved only because they believe it will positively impact their school community. The school becomes involved because some of their members will have expressed a desire to explore and engage in relational theory and restorative justice practices more fully. They find the beliefs and values of RF (worth and interconnectedness infused with respect, dignity, and mutual concern) align with their practice and feel that an explicit focus on relationships could significantly improve the well-being of all within the school community. This forms the basis of the RF foundation which includes growing the school community “from the ground up”.

As RF school team members, individuals will have many opportunities to participate in professional learning sessions that will help facilitate growth, deepen understandings, and encourage practices that create spaces that honour all people in the school community. As time passes and these individuals become more confident in their ability to live out the relationships first principles, other members of the school community will respond in different ways. Some colleagues might start to take an interest in RF and look for more opportunities to learn from their fellow staff members. Others might be a bit more resistant to RF approaches and practices. Change is a process, and RF involves a complete paradigm shift that invites individuals who participate, *to choose* to be involved. Every person comes with their own set of experiences, beliefs, and limitations. It is important to reiterate that being an RF school is an invitation that individuals can decline. However, just as someone has the right to decline, others have the right to accept and, thus, move forward without interference from those who do not wish to participate.

The Innovation Adoption Lifecycle (Figure 1) outlines the different ways that staff members might respond to and/or adopt a change when invited to consider taking an RF approach. Rogers (2003) has divided the rate of change amongst people into five defined categories. The characteristics of each group are presented in the following chart along with suggestions on how to work with people from these groups. In a chapter on understanding the change process, Thorsborne & Blood (2013) encourage readers to consider the importance of providing opportunities for experimentation before undertaking policy change. “Policy change too early will evoke resistance as there is a sense of being told what to do. You cannot force people on board with a policy change that is not yet backed up with practice that makes sense.” (pg. 82)



Figure 1



From: Oakland Unified School District. Restorative Justice Implementation Guide.

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## Innovators

Risk-takers, visionaries, whose importance lies in their huge capacity to network, but whose constant willingness to embrace new ideas may contribute to a loss of credibility. Meet them by acknowledging their role & talking to them about importance of letting things settle before introducing other initiatives. To prevent them getting in the way of development of good practice, help them identify change agents beneath them and encourage them to hand over aspects of implementation to others.

---

## Early Adoptors

Prepared to take risks, but are results-orientated, will not take a risk unless it makes sense. Change agents who, with support and networking opportunities, will promote innovation & be the role models for their colleagues.

Meet them by creating opportunities for experimentation & permit them to practice in relative safety. Start small & provide networking & support opportunities.

---

## Early Majority

Pragmatists with goodwill who need solid evidence that an idea works before putting it in place themselves. Influenced by observing actions of colleagues they respect and through ongoing internal professional dialogue & articles on practice that has worked in other schools.

Meet them by providing ongoing internal professional dialogue, opportunities to be involved, & articles & stories about practice.

---

## Late Majority

Conservative, cautious, skeptical people who change in response to pressure from the school or department leadership. Influenced by policy and need the removal of uncertainty or failure before taking on the risk.

Meet them by providing trustworthy information (i.e. networking forums, visits to other schools). They also need opportunities to discuss what is not working for them & policy in place to put a degree of pressure on them.

---

## Resistors

Either situational or persistent in their resistance to an idea because a) They did not have concerns addressed in the past or b) They have seen ideas come and go. Resistors can be your greatest leaders and advocates if you tap into the frustration they feel about what has happened in the past and hold them to account.

Meet situational resistors by engaging in dialogue, taking concerns seriously, & involving them in change process. Provide opportunities for two-way communication. Meet persistent resistors by increasing circle of influence of those who are on-board until their destructive power is reduced. May need to be confronted about behavior.

---



## Ideas for encouraging relational culture amongst staff:

Nurturing a relational culture amongst staff requires sensitivity towards the “adoption lifecycle”. While staff are engaged at various levels, there are many possible ways to encourage relational ways of being. Consider the following:

- Begin each staff meeting with a Check-In topic (See section 5).
- End meetings with a Check-Out allowing each participant to share one thing they will take from the meeting time, or one thing they will do as a result of the meeting.
- Change the physical set up of a meeting to be in a circle. When possible remove tables to encourage more dialogic interaction.
- Use energizers and mixers (see Appendix) in meetings to encourage interaction and play amongst staff.
- As an administrator, present new information and then allow for staff feedback using a circle format and a response to *one* of the Framework Questions.
- Use some or all of the RF Circle Framework Questions to guide topics on an agenda.
- Provide a half-day workshop to ensure that the whole staff is aware of the principles and practices of RF and that the school is (considering) becoming an RF school.
- With staff who are engaged in RF, agree to meet daily/weekly to respond in small groups to a check-in topic.
- Have teachers report to staff meetings about their experiences with RF (both progress and challenges).
- Revise the term “substitute teacher.” Use “guest teacher” and watch the impact.
- Daily welcome (i.e. morning announcements) to 'guest' teachers, speakers/visitors, etc.
- Celebrate/Announce staff, support staff and student birthdays (remember to get staff permission first.), OR celebrate all staff and support staff birthdays for that month with a cake, etc.
- Organize monthly socials that include a circle and/or a mixer or energizer.
- Celebrate 'Teacher Appreciation Week/Day' with school-wide activities/mixers/energizers (students should be part of the planning committee for all appreciation week/day activities, - some could be done in a circle).
- Stop asking each other “why” and instead ask “what happened?”
- As an administrator, use the framework questions to guide conversations with your staff especially around reviews of personal goals.

Within a responsive, relational framework, consider all you do and discover many, many ways of shifting your practice.



## Parent Engagement

Nurturing a relational culture in RF schools requires not only the inclusion of staff, administration, and students, but also parents/ caregivers. As early as possible, provide various opportunities for parents to engage with RF. Below is a list of ideas on ways your school could work to include parents before and during year one of RF implementation. Space has been provided for you to write some additional ideas.

- Parent Meetings - Hold meetings at the beginning of the year to introduce parents to RF and what it means to be an RF school. Hold meetings for report cards, behaviour/academic issues, ISP/ISSP, etc. in a circle.
- Meet the Teacher nights/School Open House Events/Curriculum nights, Monthly/Term Information sessions (alternate after school and night sessions) – Use these opportunities to distribute information, model circle processes, and answer questions on RF school implementation.
- Kinderstart sessions – Before children begin their education at your school, use this time to start modelling circle processes and providing information on being an RF school [See pg. 69 for more information].
- School Council – Facilitate council meetings in a circle and provide opportunities for Q & A sessions.
- School Newsletter – Provide school community with an RF section for clips (re: RF-RF practices, videos, quotes, etc.).
- Monthly or Term Whole School ‘Relational’ Activities (i.e. Family Literacy Day, Earth Day) - Implement circles as much as possible.
- Facilitate Individualize Education Plan (IEP) meetings using a talking circle process.
- Additional idea #1: \_\_\_\_\_
- Additional idea #2: \_\_\_\_\_
- Additional idea #3: \_\_\_\_\_



## Student, Support Staff, and Community Engagement

As part of a whole-school approach, consider the following list of ways that students, staff, and stakeholders can take responsibility for RF practices happening at the school. Space for additional ideas has been provided.

### ***Student to Student:***

- Integrate restorative justice concepts in the curriculum through reading materials (i.e. English courses, ethics), provide framework questions as a reflective piece in journaling assignments, integrate restorative justice in voluntary requirements that are already in place for High School graduation, provide opportunities for additional research on RF practices in social science related courses (see pg. 63 on: Why Circles in Curriculum).
- Prepare students (who are interested) to work restoratively as peer facilitators on the playground, in the hallways and cafeteria.
- Give students opportunities to facilitate check-in circles in class.
- Designate a “peace-making” space for students to assemble in.
- Engage student council in circle processes and RF training.
- Pair students who are interested in RF with adults who are trained in RF to participate in a mentoring program.
- Invite guest speakers to present RF processes to groups of interested students.
- Pair students with members of the community or organizations that work in a restorative justice manner (see list of RF Partners).
- Consult with student groups within and outside of the community who specialize in an RF approach and bring them to the table in planning ways to involve students at your school.
- Additional idea #1: \_\_\_\_\_
- Additional idea #2: \_\_\_\_\_
- Additional idea #3: \_\_\_\_\_





## **Support Staff:**

School staff are a critical element of nurturing a relational culture in a school. Many of them have a special relationship already with students that can be more informal and supportive. As soon as possible implement PL through short meetings that will provide the foundation and practices for healthy dialogue. Include these people in PL with teaching staff or provide a shorter version of the learning experience for them with refreshers throughout the year. Remember to:

- Invite your bus drivers in for a facilitated circle at the start of the year and once/twice a term to let them respond to the RF framework questions and work together with you to address key concerns on the buses;
- Invite your student assistants and lunchroom or playground assistants to a regularly facilitated circle to let them share their joys and challenges as well as suggestions for change.
- Invite your custodial staff into a circle and discover just how incredibly hard they work for the school and really have the heart for the students. They have much insight into the needs of all involved in school.
- Invite your 'substitute teachers' into circles if possible. Begin by welcoming them to your school as 'guests' who are highly valued. One school noted an incredible shift in attitude by adults and students towards guest teachers alike when 'guest teachers' were welcomed over the intercom system during morning announcements.
- Additional idea #1 \_\_\_\_\_
- Additional idea #2 \_\_\_\_\_
- Additional idea #3 \_\_\_\_\_

## **COMMUNITY GUESTS AND NEIGHBOURS**

The school is always part of a community and neighbourhood. Remember to:

- Create a welcome environment for all guests who come to your school. If guests need to be buzzed in, can you find a way to be sure they are also greeted with a smile and a cheery hello?
- Invite your neighbours (business owners, community residents, postal carriers, delivery services, etc.) into your school once or twice a year to a dialogue circle asking them for input into how the school can contribute to the neighbourhood more fully.



# Part THREE: A Personal Inventory

The following section provides practical activities to highlight the critical component of RF, assessing and understanding the educator's personal relationship with SELF and the impact they have on others with whom they are in a relationship. It *is* a companion to Chapter 3- "Beliefs and Values in RJE" in *The Little Book of RJE*. It is important to read that chapter either just prior to, or just after completing the activities in this section.



## Relationship with Self – Is RF for me?

Getting to know yourself is foundational to sustainable implementation of RF. Take a few minutes to reflect on and answer the following questions to assess where you might be in the RF process. This is a personal activity. Only share your reflection with others (if you are willing) with a trusted colleague or friend- an honest discussion can support your way forward.

What does it mean to be human?	
What are my core values about humanity? What do I believe in?	
What do I do or think that leads to the development of positive relationships?	
What do I do or think that can be a challenge to the development of positive relationships?	
Are there times when there is a disconnect between the things I value and my thoughts and actions?	
What are some barriers to me being my authentic self?	
How can I work towards overcoming some of these challenges?	

**NOW:** Read Chapter 3- “Beliefs and Values” in RJE from *The Little Book of RJE*. What do you notice? What surprises you?



## Learning to LISTEN; Learning to ASK

The RF Framework questions provide a structure for **your own** Thinking, Sharing, Listening, and Asking. Use some or all of them to guide your involvement in dialogue.

- What happened? [not WHY?]
- What were you thinking/feeling at the time?
- What are you thinking/feeling now?
- Who has been affected? In what way?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What do you need [to do] to go forward?

### **Thinking:**

Responses to positive or challenging situations are often reactions that might make things complicated. When RF is our way of being, our first responsibility is to look at the impact of our role in the situation. If we can reflect briefly before responding, our participation can be more empathetic and constructive. I.e.



- What happened?
- What was I thinking and feeling when the situation occurred?
- What am I thinking and feeling right now?
- Who is being affected? In what way?
- What is the hardest thing for me?
- What do I need [to do] to respond?

### **Sharing:**

As educators, we often respond to situations with questions that can put others on the defensive. However, to help others build empathy and understanding, it can be transformative when you as the educator begin by sharing your perspectives. Notice how the following sentence stubs are responses *you* give in response to the RF Framework questions:

- I noticed that ...
- At the time I was thinking ... feeling...
- Now I wonder ... and feel ...
- This has affected me by ...
- The hardest thing for me is ...
- I really need ...; I'd like to offer ...





## **Listening:**

It is human nature to presume we know what another person thinks. As educators, our listening skills need to be very sharp and ready to respond to the problems that arise from such assumptions. The RF framework questions create opportunities for others to share their stories. However, asking these questions is only helpful if we are prepared to listen fully. Consider 3 types of listening that can occur:



*Compassionate listening:* Full attention to what the other is saying for the benefit of giving that person time to express their ideas & thoughts. During this type of listening, our response is to reflect to them what we heard them say to affirm our understanding.

*Interruptive listening:* We listen for a space to interrupt the other so we can share our ideas as we assume we know what the other is saying. While the other is speaking, we are thinking about what we want to say.

*Dialogic listening:* Full attention to what the other is saying with the purpose of seeking clarity. We wait to formulate our ideas until we hear the full thought of the other. We listen fully prepared to change our mind about what we were thinking and planning to do (this includes affirming our initial thoughts & plans.) Though compassionate listening is appropriate at times, in an RF culture, we strive for dialogic listening- knowing that true dialogue requires openness from all involved.<sup>1</sup>

## **Asking:**

After thinking, sharing, and listening in a dialogic manner, we are then ready to ask others the RF framework questions to deepen understanding and clarity. The situation will determine the process for asking the questions and might include only one or a few of the questions. These questions are open-ended; the first two reveal the past; the next three focus on the present, and the final question moves people into the future. Variations are also appropriate as long as they are open-ended and create a space where you honestly can say you, as the inquirer, don't know the answer.



We can use these questions to guide all dialogue. For example:

**(1)** a brief hallway chat, **(2)** conversations with colleagues or parents, **(3)** a teacher-student conversation about the challenges that student has with learning a particular concept/skill, **(4)** a more formal sit-down circle chat with several people where we ask each participant the first four questions followed by a round of the final needs, or **(5)** a full class meeting where all involved in the classroom culture have opportunities to share a response to the questions based on a particular incident or a more general "How has the day/week gone?"

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: Dobson, A. (2014). *Listening for democracy: recognition, representation, reconciliation*. Oxford University Press.



## How Relational Am I?

Reflect on how, in your role, you dialogue with students, colleagues, or parents to nurture healthy relationships. This checklist is meant to serve as a guide for personal reflection only. It provides a beginning self-assessment that you may find helpful.

<b>HOW RELATIONAL AM I WITH STUDENTS, COLLEAGUES, PARENTS?</b>				
Answer the questions below by marking a check in the corresponding column: (It may help to think of a recent specific incident).	ALWAYS	USUALLY	NOT OFTEN	NEVER
1. Do I <b>ask</b> myself the RF questions before approaching the other person?				
2. Do I invite the other person to have a conversation? Are they willing?				
3. Do I <b>share</b> my thoughts from my own perspective?				
4. Do I really listen, without interrupting?				
5. Do I listen, anticipating that I might need to change?				
6. Do I remain calm during the conversation?				
7. Would the person feel I am a good listener?				
8. Do we explore how our values apply to the issue?				
9. Do I talk about how the incident affects me?				
10. Do I take responsibility for any part I might have played when things went wrong, acknowledge it, and apologize?				
11. Do I consider the extent to which I have a relationship with this person and how that affects my expectations for our interaction?				
12. If the person apologizes to me, do I accept the apology respectfully?				
13. Do I collaborate with the person to formulate a plan?				
14. Is the relationship with the person repaired?				
15. Have I, at any stage, asked someone I trust to observe my practice and give me honest feedback?				
16. Do I try to handle most issues or incidents myself?				
17. Do I seek support when issues get tricky for me?				

Look through your results and use them to identify where you could further strengthen your communication skills and Relationships First approach. You can also use this chart to reflect on your relationships with friends, close family members, partner, service agents, etc.

*\*Adopted with minor changes from Minnesota Dept of Education: Restorative Practices Trainer's Guide Training Activities  
(<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/safe/clim/prac/>)*





## How Relational Is My Pedagogy? Curriculum?

Beyond relationships with people, your relational perspectives inform your pedagogy and the curriculum you choose or create. Use the following questions to begin to reflect critically on the messages you send in your approach to teaching and learning. This checklist is meant to serve as a guide for personal reflection only. It provides a beginning self-assessment that you may find helpful.

HOW RELATIONAL IS MY PEDAGOGY? CURRICULUM?				
How would you respond to these questions: (It may help to think of a recent specific lesson you taught recently)	ALWAYS	USUALLY	NOT OFTEN	NEVER
Does the lesson encourage: Relationship with self?				
Does the lesson encourage: Relationship with others?				
Does the lesson encourage: Relationship with the content?				
Does the lesson/unit uphold and encourage: Worth and interconnectedness of all involved?				
Does the lesson/unit uphold and encourage: Dignity, respect, and mutual concern?				
Is the worth and the interconnectedness of the people you are learning <i>about</i> , upheld?				
Are you doing things FOR the students?				
Are you doing things TO students?				
Are you doing things WITH the students?				
Are you ignoring/avoiding some students?				
Is there a space/time/opportunity for everyone to engage with the topic presented in some way regardless of their ability, their context, their resources, etc.?				
Is everyone appreciated for who they are and encouraged to use their strengths?				
Do you feel genuinely thankful for your students and their efforts or do you look at their limitations in learning and behaviour first? Can you be curious together with your students?				
Do you encourage your students to be vulnerable and open with you about their learning? (How?)				
Do you use the RF framework questions to help you assess your lesson/unit experience?				

\*Adopted with minor changes from Minnesota Dept of Education: Restorative Practices Trainer's Guide Training Activities (<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/safe/clim/prac/>)



## Implicit Bias

Healthy relationships with others and the environment starts with the relationship one has with self. In **Part ONE** pg. 5, we discuss changing our lenses from those that measure to those that honour. One way we do this is by asking ourselves, am I measuring, am I honouring, what message am I sending? Another way we do this is by taking time to address our own built-in biases and, as Gonzales (2018)<sup>1</sup> points out “getting comfortable with the idea that we all have them”. Like a fish in water that doesn’t think about the water, so too are we unable to identify our biases without consciously challenging ourselves. Implicit bias occurs when someone “rejects stereotypes on conscious levels yet holds onto them on unconscious levels.”<sup>2</sup>

Raybon (2014)<sup>3</sup> states that “we all have biases and stereotypes that come from our brains’ constant effort to make sense of the world by finding patterns. These subconscious patterns can be in complete opposition to our understood and articulated values and beliefs.” Though we may believe that all people are worthy and relational, our interactions with and behaviour towards others may not always reflect these beliefs as “...unconscious bias – or looking for patterns and finding an in-group – is a survival mechanism so basic that it is below our conscious radar. As such, it usually shapes our decision-making without our being aware of it.”<sup>4</sup>

It may not be possible to avoid the automatic stereotype or prejudice, but if we take time to reflect on and become aware of our hidden biases change is possible. Below is a list of questions to consider as you move forward. Simply asking ourselves these questions honestly, is a start to recognizing our own built-in, unconscious biases.

- When I see \_\_\_\_, do I take note of their gender/sexuality/race/faith/socioeconomic status?
- When I talk to someone who doesn’t share my demographic, do I feel thankful that I am not them?
- When I am working with someone from a different demographic, do I insist on my way and dismiss their ideas without good reason?
- When I am working with others, do I feel I am being marginalized/not valued because of my demographic?

A more in-depth test can be found by clicking the link in the article “Test Yourself for Hidden Bias” found below in the footnotes. Both the test and the article are important for a deeper understanding.<sup>5</sup>

1: Gonzalez, J. (2018). *Restorative Justice in Schools: An Overview*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/restorative-justice-overview>

2: Oakland United School District Restorative Guide (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://rjoakland.org/wp-content/uploads/OUSDRJOY-Implementation-Guide.pdf>

3: Raybon, D. (2014, November 06). *Implicit Bias and Why it Matters*. Retrieved from <https://altarum.org/health-policy-blog/implicit-bias-and-why-it-matters>

4: Gartner, J. (2018, February 12). *Why is Unconscious Bias Important? Think of it as a Survival Mechanism*. Retrieved from <https://blackislegroup.com/unconscious-bias-survival-mechanism>

5: *Test Yourself for Hidden Bias*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/test-yourself-for-hidden-bias>





# Part FOUR:

# A School

# Inventory

The following section provides a comprehensive inventory to highlight the practical elements of implementing critical components of RF. It is a companion to chapters 4-6 in *The Little Book of RJE*. Please read these chapters in conjunction with completing the school inventory provided in this section. The list can:

- serve as a guide for understanding the nature of RF;
- serve as an inventory for assessing and understanding the school's culture in terms of the 3 key components of RF.
- be completed in parts rather than in one sitting;
- be completed by team members individually and then discussed in terms of similarities and difference.
- support an implementation focus as necessary.
- guide implementation planning at the beginning or end of each year.
- be used as a follow-up activity to Determining the Need for RF Practices (*pg. 19*)



## Restorative Justice in Education School-Assessment Inventory

<p>To what extent do you see evidence of these components of RF in your current school practices?</p> <p><i>Celebrate</i> what you do and then make a plan for further nurturing a holistic, whole-school relational culture!</p>	<p>We do this and have a process in place to monitor and assess progress</p>	<p>We do this, but do not monitor its progress in a formal way.</p>	<p>We do this occasionally, but not consistently</p>	<p>We have discussed this, but not implemented.</p>	<p>This idea is not in place, but we are willing to consider it.</p>	<p>We have not considered this at all.</p>
<b><i>General Restorative Justice Education Implementation</i></b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
1. Our school is consistently and intentionally looking at restorative justice education principles and practices and moving closer to them through strategic goals and monitoring.						
2. A team of school community members who have diverse skills and backgrounds guides RF implementation; this team is comprised of teachers, administrators, school staff, caregivers, and students.						
3. There is shared responsibility for building a restorative culture in the school; members of the community, including caregivers, are prepared or being prepared through PL sessions in the principles and practices of RF.						
4. The RF team meets regularly to support and grow in terms of cohesiveness and depth of knowledge (sharing experiences; reading/viewing new resources)						
5. The school and team participate in and support public events relating to RF.						
6. Continuing professional learning in RF is offered for school personnel; when new school personnel arrive, they are immediately taught the principles and practices of RF.						
7. School code of conduct has been revised, so it uses consistent relational language that is grounded in well-being. It is not a list of rules and consequences.						
8. School code of conduct is intended for students as well as all members of the learning community—teachers, admin, caregivers, staff...						
9. A clear school implementation & sustainability plan has been designed and is regularly referenced.						
10. At least 2 people in your school have completed facilitator PL for serious harm.						
11. Support staff are included in PL to ensure a consistent experience throughout the school.						



<i><b>The Way We Do Things</b></i>	5	4	3	2	1	0
12. Adults in our school (administrators, teachers, and staff) model the principles of RF in their daily interactions with one another, with students, & with caregivers.						
13. Adults intentionally apply RF principles and practices to their own lives before expecting students to engage.						
14. Students are greeted cheerfully when they arrive at school and when they leave each day to affirm for them that they belong.						
15. All school personnel are honoured for who they are (custodians, guest teachers, lunch supervisors, etc.) Their input is sought and valued.						
16. Students are invited to learn to become circle facilitators for regular classroom activities and conflict resolution.						
17. Language is consistent throughout the school and reflects relational ways of being (i.e. What happened instead of why; Caring Harm Awareness Talk instead of a trip to the office, etc.)						
18. RF framework questions are used by everyone to guide conversations when challenges arise.						
19. Expectations for adults and students are similar.						
20. Dialogic listening is practiced and replaces interruptive listening.						
21. The relationship matrix guides relationships at all levels; adults and youth alike work to support each other and hold each other to expectations to be their best selves.						
22. An in-school suspension room is replaced with a <b>Student Support Centre</b> where students can access conflict resolution processes, academic, social and emotional support.						
23. Tutoring, as well as other academic, social, and emotional support, is offered at a variety of times throughout the day to accommodate the various schedules of students.						
24. Caregivers show up for meetings, and there is ongoing communication between school personnel and caregivers.						
25. Frequent contact is made with caregivers, not just to report on student concerns, but to share positive feedback with caregivers as well.						
26. Individualized Education Plans (IEP) are facilitated in talking circle format, and caregivers are invited to take support people with them to the meeting.						
27. In any given class, all students are engaged in active learning; when they are not, intentional steps are taken to address disengagement.						
28. Students feel safe enough to take academic risks, including reading out loud, accepting challenging learning tasks, asking for assistance.						
29. Teachers and other school personnel hold high expectations for each student and support them to achieve these.						



<b><i>Just and Equitable Schools &amp; Classrooms</i></b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
30. Adults in the school consistently ask what they can do to make the school environment more just and equitable for all students.						
31. Conversations about equity, justice, and social issues are taking place throughout the school; students and faculty are explicitly taught to respect others' differences regarding race, ethnicity, nationality, ability, language, body type, gender, sexual orientation, faith, etc.						
32. The effects of asymmetrical relationships are discussed and identified; shared decision-making and promoting consensus building are practiced consistently in classrooms and school governance.						
33. The curriculum takes into consideration the human rights of those being studied; for example, Indigenous societies are acknowledged and respected as founding nations of Canada; colonization is discussed as a past and contemporary reality.						
34. Instruction, classroom designs, and instructional materials are offered in a variety of formats to support diverse learners, including hands-on activities, pictures to support language development, audiobooks, etc.						
35. Academic support services are available for students who need them.						
36. Support services, such as health, counselling, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, social work, and career counselling, are available as needed to the extent possible.						
37. Students and school personnel demonstrate respect and dignity for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender, achievement level, economic status, faith, or other areas of diversity.						
38. Children's books, young adult literature, and other instructional materials include a variety of cultures, ethnic groups, languages, family designs, religions, and races.						
39. Student-led clubs are in place that support students' social engagement (i.e. gay-straight alliances, Muslim Student Association, etc.) and leadership for these clubs represent the diverse makeup of the school						
40. If religious holidays and cultural traditions of one group are observed, they are observed for all groups.						
41. Teachers use inclusive language to talk about students' families, including non-gendered language: i.e., the grownups you live with, rather than your parents, in that some children may live with grandparents, foster parents, aunts, two dads, etc.						
42. Posters in the hallways and classrooms reflect the diversity of the school environment and present that diversity in a positive light.						
43. Discipline and academic data suggest that there is proportional representation of all students regardless of race, ethnicity, language, gender, ability, sexual orientation, or economic status.						
44. The physical building/space is accessible and inclusive of all ages and ability.						
45. Educators facilitate talking circles attentive to nuances, so all participants are heard and respected;						
46. Class meetings are held regularly allowing students to give input to their school experience;						
47. Check-ups, ins, and outs are part of regular routines.						
48. Students facilitate circles regularly, planning for topics and activities;						
49. Curriculum circles are a regular part of teacher pedagogy inviting student response through open-ended questions;						
50. Specific goals are articulated related to closing the achievement gap between different groups of students.						





<b><i>Nurturing and Maintaining Healthy Relationships</i></b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
51. Adults in the school frequently ask themselves what they can do to nurture better relationships with students, caregivers, and one another. (Am I honouring or measuring those I am with?)						
52. Students feel that teachers and administrators like them, respect them and are interested in them as human beings, not just as students.						
53. Caregivers feel respected and included by school personnel and are often invited to be a part of decision-making; communication between school and home is supported as needed.						
54. Teachers & support staff feel respected by administrators, caregivers, & students						
55. Administrators feel respected by teachers, staff, caregivers and students.						
56. Students feel like they have a group of people that support them, including peers, teachers, staff, and administrators.						
57. Impromptu conversations between students and teachers are frequent and are characterized by smiles, active listening, and respect.						
58. When teachers observe conflict between students, they are proactive, promoting ways to help students build conflict resolution skills.						
59. Students feel there is at least one adult in the building who cares about them, wants them to succeed, and believes in their potential for success.						
60. There are physical spaces where students can go and have conversations about issues they face.						
61. Students are taught social, emotional skills that promote learning within a community, including active listening, empathy, perspective-taking, resilience, self-regulation, self-awareness, self-efficacy, and self-care; those skills are consistently assessed and explicitly taught.						
<b><i>Repairing Harm/Transforming Conflict</i></b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
62. Members of the school community (administrators, teachers, staff, students, and caregivers) see conflict as an opportunity to nurture stronger community; all members of the community have the skills and dispositions to address conflict in productive ways.						
63. Students' behaviours are seen as communication and attempts are made to understand that communication through active listening; trauma-sensitive responses are provided for students.						
64. Students feel safe at school, physically, emotionally, socially, psychologically; when they don't, there is a place to go to find help.						



65. Circle processes, circles of support and accountability, student conferencing, re-entry practices, etc. are used to support students who demonstrate more challenging behaviours.						
66. Suspensions and expulsions are used only in extreme/severe situations (weighed on a case-by-case basis, rather than zero tolerance) and are administered in non-punitive ways as a means for taking time to process next steps.						
67. Incidences of bullying are always addressed, and those responsible are held accountable for repairing the harm they caused.						
68. There is a decrease in physical violence and an increase in processes designed for conflict resolution, such as circles, mediation, and conferencing.						
69. Discipline hearings focus on who has harmed and what needs to be emerged from the harm, rather than what rule was broken and what punishment they deserve; accountability measures are designed to support students' growth and not simply punish them; these responses rely on increased self-regulation rather than external regulation.						
<b><i>Personal growth and accountability</i></b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
70. Students resolve differences on their own, seeking support as necessary.						
71. Self-confidence in adults and youth increases for addressing personal concerns.						
72. Students articulate their needs more clearly.						
73. Adults and students report fewer interpersonal concerns.						
74. Academic achievement improves; high school completion rates increase.						
75. Attendance improves – students are on time, present (no cutting class; they are not looking for reasons to miss school; when they aren't there, adults notice and find out what might be going on.						
76. Educator absenteeism decreases.						
77. Office referrals decrease.						
78. Classroom teachers address challenges in context and do not rely solely on external authorities (i.e. admin for discipline; reports home; etc.).						

\*Adapted from EMU MAED Restorative Justice in Education 3-20-15



# Part FIVE: Making RF a Reality

The following section includes practical strategies, activities, information and forms to guide circle implementation in classrooms and schools. Materials range from:

- the basics for facilitating circle dialogue
- creating physical relational spaces
- understanding the nuances and challenges involved in practicing RF.

This section also provides:

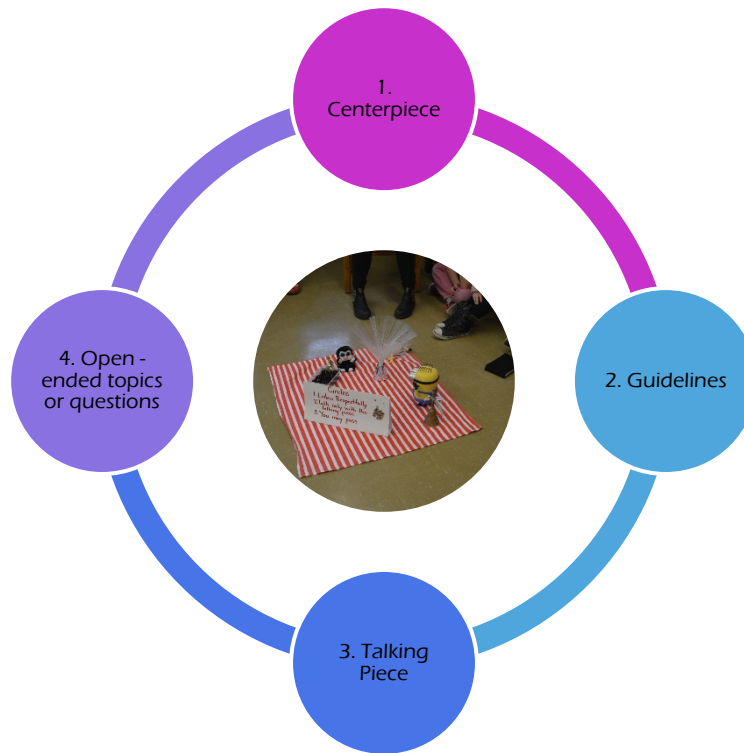
- templates for small-group circles and student-led circles
- guidance for integrating circles into the curriculum;
- introductory information & processes for repairing harm and transforming conflict.

These materials are meant to be used alongside *Circle Forward* (Boyes-Watson & Pranis), *The Restorative Classroom* (Hopkins) and *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education* (Evans & Vaandering).



## Circle Basics

The following diagram highlights the essential elements of a circle. Please refer to the corresponding notes for more details.



1. Centrepiece
  - Symbolic of group or topic
  - Provides focus for participants
  - Can be a cloth, plant, toy, or quote
2. Guidelines
  - Preferably created by the group (see Appendix pg. 90, "To Be At My Best" Activity)
  - Reminder of agreements made to honour each other while in the circle
3. Talking Piece
  - Moderates the discussion as it is passed from person to person
  - When received, each participant can hold it as they speak, take time of silence, or pass it on if they do not wish to share
  - Can be an object of importance for the group or circle facilitator or it can be a symbol of topic
  - Share story of its significance to build appreciation and respect
4. Open-Ended Questions/Topics
  - Questions that don't have right or wrong answer associated with them. (see pg. 56 for "Sample Prompting Questions/Topics for Circles")



## Creating Physical Relational Spaces

Moving about in relational ways not only applies to the space created for dialogue in a circle, but also to space created from and through our physical surroundings. Below is a list of ways that the school environment could be adapted to create more relational spaces.

### **In Faculty Spaces, consider...**

- Staff room – Does the placement of the furniture invite your staff (and guest teachers) to have conversations WITH each other?
- Meeting and Conference rooms – Are attendees sitting in rows? Are meetings conducted in a “lecture-style” where faculty are being talked to? Does the setup of furniture allow for teachers and parents to express their concerns/feedback?

### **In Classrooms, consider...**

- Teacher desk placement – Does the placement of your desk invite students to interact “WITH” you?
- Student desk placement – Is there enough space allotted for students to move quickly in and out of the circle?
- A “Quiet space” – Is there a designated place in the classroom for students, who struggle with self-regulation, to go when they need to calm down, or for conferencing to work through an issue?
- Posters, Decorations, and Wall Hangings – What kinds of messages do the items hanging around your classroom send?

### **In the Front Office, consider...**

- Counter height – How does the height of your counters invite opportunities for even your shortest students to interact WITH you?
- Wall hangings and decorations – What kinds of messages do the items hanging around your office send?



### **In the Administrator's/Counselor's Office, consider...**

- Desk placement – Does the placement of your desk promote open dialogue?
- Chair placement – Do your office visitors feel that they can access you? Are chairs placed in a circle formation?
- Displaying guidelines or values that reflect RF– Intentionally displaying values that speak to RF gives others opportunities to reflect and understand its role in community building.

### **For Additional Spaces, consider...**

- RF Room/Space – Where can your support staff (i.e. guidance counsellors, IRTs) facilitate circles with their small groups in ways that are not disruptive to the regular classroom teachers? Where can students, who are interested in implementing RF practice, meet?



## Circle Formations

Reimagine your spaces for circling. The diagram below shows just some of the several ways that people can be arranged in a circle. Examples can be seen on our *Circle Formations* video (<https://www.relationshipsfirstnl.com/videos>).







## Types of Circles & The Role of Framework Questions

Circle practice can be applied in a variety of different contexts for a variety of different purposes. Included are a few suggestions on ways that circles can be incorporated into your school environment. Some purposes include, but are not limited to, building a positive school climate and addressing and transforming conflict. For more detailed and specific circle lesson plans spanning the spectrum of circle applications, please refer to *Circle Forward* by Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis.

Additionally, the following framework questions (as discussed on pg. 10) can be used throughout all types of circles in shaping dialogue, deepening participant understanding, and reflecting critically. They are “go to” questions that can always be used.

In review, the framework questions are...

- What happened?
- What was I thinking/feeling at the time?
- What am I thinking/feeling now?
- Who has been affected? In what way?
- What has been the hardest thing for me?
- What do I need [to do] to go forward?

### ***Purpose 1: Building a Positive School Climate***

- Check in circles – Quick circles that build classroom community and establish trust, please refer to pg. 58 for sample check-in topics
- Curriculum circles – Engage students by allowing them opportunities to ask questions, reflect on struggles, provide feedback, and identify strengths and weaknesses. Please refer to pg. 61 for curriculum implementation information
- Student-led circles – Empowers children and youth and develops their leadership skills. Please refer to pg. 66 for an example of a student-led circle plan
- Staff circles – Strengthen connections between adults employed at the school, builds trust and confidence, intentionally puts values into action
- IEP circles – Gathers feedback, explores concerns, and engages full ownership by all key parties. Please refer to pg. 252-253 in *Circle Forward* for an in-depth plan for these meetings;
- Engaging Parents and Wider Community Circles – Allows for healthy partnership building, please refer to Parent/Teacher Interview pg. 68 and Parent Engagement pg. 32 for additional information



- Celebration Circles – Provides opportunities for participants to celebrate success and progress made possibly at the end of unit or lesson. Can also be used to acknowledge the good that comes from an incident of harm.
- Important, but difficult conversations – Opens space for shared discussion on difficult topics that are often avoided because they are hard. Topics include grief, violence, oppression, poverty, discrimination, trauma, etc.

### ***Purpose 2: Using Circles When Things Go Wrong \*Requires more time in pre-work and preparation***

- Addressing and Repairing Harm – Allows for needs to be articulated and impacts to be considered, supports participants as they reach agreement on how to move forward
- Welcome after Suspension Circle – Reintegrates students who have been out of school serving disciplinary action by providing an opportunity to reconnect with the school community in a positive way
- Follow-up Circles – Ongoing circles that check in on whether agreements made in the circle are being fulfilled and support for ongoing behavioural change is being provided

#### **Remember:**

*“There is no single way to integrate Circles within the school community: each community should incorporate the Circle in its own way to meet its own unique needs.”*

(Boyes-Watson & Pranis, pg. 3)



## Sample Prompting Questions/Topics for Circles

*Please note:* It is always important to carefully select which questions or topics to pose to the group depending on the needs of the group. The health of each member of the circle is always to be strongly considered.

\*Be prepared and know that some of the circle prompts may bring up a lot of emotions for the circle members.

### ***Getting Acquainted***

- Share a happy childhood memory.
- If you could be a superhero, what superpowers would you choose and why?
- How would your best friend describe you?
- What would you not want to change about your life?
- If you could talk to someone from your family who is no longer alive, who would it be and why?
- If you had an unexpected free day, what would you like to do?
- If you were an animal, what animal would you be and why?
- Name two things or people who always make you laugh.
- I like to collect....
- If you could have a face to face conversation with anyone, who would it be and why?
- Describe your ideal job.
- Describe your favourite vacation.
- If you could change anything about yourself what would it be?

### ***Exploring Values***

- Imagine you are in a conflict with a person who is important in your life. What values do you want to guide your conduct as you try to work out that conflict?
- What is your passion?
- What do you keep returning to in your life?
- What touches your heart?
- What gives you hope?
- What demonstrates respect?
- What change would you like to see in your community? What can you do to promote that change?
- A time when you acted on your core values even though others did not.



## ***Storytelling from our lives to share who we are and what has shaped us (to build community)***

Invite participants to share:

- A time when you had to let go of control
- A time when you were outside of your comfort zone
- An experience in your life when you “made lemonade out of lemons”.
- An experience of transformation when, out of a crisis or difficulty, you discovered a gift in your life.
- An experience of causing harm to someone and then dealing with it in a way you felt good about.
- An experience of letting go of anger or resentment.
- A time when you were in conflict with your parents or caregiver.
- An experience where you discovered that someone was very different from the negative assumptions you first made about that person.
- An experience of feeling that you did not fit in.

### ***Relating to Curriculum:***

- The best/worst thing about this science project is...
- The main character in the book we are reading is like/not like me when...
- These math problems make me feel...



## Additional Potential Circle Starters

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. I feel happy when...</li><li>2. I feel sad when...</li><li>3. I feel angry when...</li><li>4. I feel scared when...</li><li>5. I feel excited when...</li><li>6. I feel stressed when...</li><li>7. I feel alone when...</li><li>8. The scariest thing...</li><li>9. My favourite hobby...</li><li>10. My favourite pet...</li><li>11. My favourite food is...</li><li>12. My favourite T.V. show is...</li><li>13. My favourite weekend activity is...</li><li>14. My favourite song is...</li><li>15. My favourite sport is...</li><li>16. My favourite colour is...</li><li>17. My favourite weather is...</li><li>18. Rain makes me feel...</li><li>19. Wind makes me feel...</li><li>20. Sunshine makes me feel...</li><li>21. I feel happy when...</li><li>22. I feel sad when...</li><li>23. I feel angry when...</li><li>24. I feel scared when...</li><li>25. I feel excited when...</li><li>26. I feel stressed when...</li><li>27. I feel alone when...</li><li>28. The scariest thing...</li><li>29. My favourite hobby...</li><li>30. My favourite pet...</li><li>31. My favourite food is...</li><li>32. My favourite T.V. show is...</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>33. My favourite weekend activity is...</li><li>34. My favourite song is...</li><li>35. My favourite sport is...</li><li>36. My favourite colour is...</li><li>37. My favourite weather is...</li><li>38. Rain makes me feel...</li><li>39. Wind makes me feel...</li><li>40. Sunshine makes me feel...</li><li>41. Snow makes me feel...</li><li>42. Fog makes me feel...</li><li>43. Today I feel...</li><li>44. When I think of blue, I think of...</li><li>45. When I think of red, I think of...</li><li>46. When I think of green, I think of...</li><li>47. When I think of yellow, I think of...</li><li>48. When I think of black, I think of...</li><li>49. When I think of brown, I think of...</li><li>50. When I think of white, I think of...</li><li>51. If I were an animal, I would be...</li><li>52. If I were a famous actor/actress, I would be...</li><li>53. If I were a famous athlete, I would be...</li><li>54. When I graduate from high school, I want to...</li><li>55. When I become an adult, I want to...</li><li>56. When I start my career, I want to...</li><li>57. I can't wait until...</li><li>58. Friends are...</li><li>59. Families are...</li><li>60. Putdowns make me feel...</li><li>61. Appreciations make me feel...</li></ol>
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*\*\*This material is adopted from Kristi Cole and Paul Dedinsky's packet of Restorative Justice Practices, Milwaukee Public Schools. Safe Schools/Healthy Students.*

### TOWARDS THE END OF THE SESSION:

- Is there anything you came up with that you would like to leave behind?
- What are you taking from this circle that supports your healing?
- Where do you see yourself moving forward?
- What have you learned?
- What can you take away that is useful to you?
- How will these insights help you in the next two weeks?
- If you were to give a name to this circle (group), what would you name it?

### OR POSE THE RF QUESTIONS:

- What happened for you today?
- What are you thinking/feeling?
- How will these experiences impact how you will work/operate as an organization as you engage with those you serve?
- What's the hardest thing for you?  
What do you need [to do] to move forward?



## Nuances

When thinking about facilitating circles, please be mindful of the following nuances...

*Ss = Students*

Nuance	The message that this could be sending is...	Be Consistent
Tossing the talking piece around	The talking piece is a toy & not something to be taken seriously or respected.	The talking piece holds meaning for the person who brought it in to share &, therefore, should be treated with respect.
Ss raising their hand to answer questions	The teacher holds power in deciding who starts first.	Place talking piece in the middle so that students can engage with it.
Singling out Ss who are not willing to share when the talking piece is being passed	It is wrong to pass & that the guidelines are not meant to be followed	After talking piece has gone around once, present the opportunity to “those who have passed” to share if they would like, but respect the guidelines by allowing this to be optional.
Teacher reacts to certain answers	Teachers favour or dislike certain reactions over others	Work at creating a judgement free space that honours all students, “kind eyes turned to wonder”.
Excluding the chairs of those who are not present	Ss who are gone are not a part of the class & their voices do not need to be represented	Include the chairs of Ss who are not present in case they arrive while the circle is going. This creates a welcoming space for them.
Adults who sit outside the circle and “observe”.	Expectations are different between Ss & teachers. Teachers hold more power. Time spent in the circle is better spent elsewhere	Remind adults unfamiliar with the circle that if they are to be present in the classroom, they are also expected to participate by sitting in the circle.
Adults sitting on chairs while Ss sit on the floor	Expectations are different between Ss & teachers. Teachers hold more power	Everyone needs to be on a level playing field.
Teacher pressures or volunteers certain Ss to go first	The teacher thinks those Ss have something important to contribute over others. Ss feel pressured to speak even if they might not want to.	Trust that Ss will engage with the topic when they are ready. If they aren’t engaging, determine what is happening. Consider doing anonymous circle rounds (see pg. 62 for details) until trust is established & Ss are comfortable with each other.
Ss excitedly volunteer to go first before wait time is observed	Ss who are more social & extroverted, or who “know the answers” are more valued than those who sit quietly.	Wait time is important & provides everyone with the opportunity to reflect on the question. Wait time also allows people to regroup & center on the circle - it gives peace to the circle.
Talking across the circle or having side conversations	Not a talking circle anymore.	Respect the established talking piece guidelines of one speaker at a time Stop the circle and regroup.



## Challenges

The following chart highlights the various challenges that the current RF School team members faced and how they could be addressed. Ss = Students

Challenges	Reasons for the Challenge	Solution
Lots of passing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trust has not been established</li> <li>There could be some power dynamics at play with people in the circle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do a mixer*</li> <li>Start with light topics until trust is built</li> <li>Consider doing anonymous circle questions in which all Ss write answers on a notecard that is placed in the middle and read by the teacher</li> </ul>
Not enough space for circle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small classrooms, many Ss, desks, &amp; chairs to manage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Circles can be done anywhere, refer to Circle Formations chart on pg. 53 or Circle Formations video on RF website</li> </ul>
Not enough time for a circle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many materials/topics to cover, not enough time to cover them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is not adding something to your curriculum, but doing things differently, refer to Circles and Curriculum pg. 63.</li> </ul>
How to address disruptive behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ss are getting used to new process &amp; need to know procedures</li> <li>Ss feel coerced &amp; not invited</li> <li>Establishing group guidelines has not been a collaborative or collective process, but an imposed one</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do a mixer* to separate the groups of students who might be causing the most disruption</li> <li>Consider doing anonymous circle questions in which all Ss write answers on a notecard that is placed in the middle and read by the teacher</li> <li>Stop the circle and wait quietly</li> <li>Stop the circle and refer to guidelines, wait until all participants agree or until they can all go forward</li> <li>Talk to the student on the side using RF questions and make a plan</li> </ul>
Ss resistant to & not joining the circle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ss are getting used to new process &amp; need to know procedures</li> <li>Ss feel coerced &amp; not invited</li> <li>Establishing group guidelines has not been a collaborative or collective process, but an imposed one</li> <li>Trust has not been built</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the situation to determine student need. What's happening, that is preventing the individual from joining the circle? Ss might need a bit of time to see what the circle involves &amp; could be invited to observe from the outside of the circle. However, when Ss attend class, they are choosing to be present in some way. Remind Ss that sitting in circle is a way to be present, but they have every right to pass. Start with light topics to build trust.</li> </ul>

\*see Appendix pg. 84





## Curriculum Circles

One of the biggest issues educators raise in their hesitancy to implement RF circles involves the belief that circles “take away” from valuable learning time and prevent teachers from getting their students to reach specific learning outcomes by a certain time. The Teaching and Learning in Circle module in your *Circle Forward* manual provides many examples on how to incorporate circle processes in student learning. According to Boyes-Watson and Pranis, “The value of Circle as a pedagogical tool is nearly limitless.” (pg. 69). However, Boyes-Watson and Pranis strongly advise that it is “extremely important that teachers not use the circle when this format is not suited to their pedagogical needs.” (pg. 70). We have provided some examples below of the different ways that students can engage in curriculum circles according to subject area.

- **Reading** – Ask students to share their perspective on what a certain character in a text might have been feeling/thinking when they behaved in the ways that they did.
- **Writing** – Give students opportunities to share their writing and provide constructive feedback in circle (refer to module 3.4, pg. 75 in *Circle Forward*)
- **Math** – Provide a word problem to the whole class and then divide students into small groups to work to solve the problem together on chart paper. Bring students back to the circle to share how they solved the problem. Explore how each group came to the answer in ways that might have been different or the same.
- **Social Studies** – Present students with a scenario in which they must leave their homes and travel to a distant place. As a class, brainstorm a list of 10 objects that they will take with them. Then, divide students into small groups to determine which three will be most important and why. Come back to the circle and share group work with the class.
- **Science** – Give students opportunities to process science lessons in a circle by asking them to provide feedback on any parts that were difficult or confusing. Record student feedback and use these answers to guide future lessons.
- **Government** – Invite students to discuss policies that affect them whether they are school-related or community-related ones. What might students do to change these policies? How would an alternate policy change their lives and/or affect others?



- **World Religion** – Allow students opportunities to reflect on religions learned in class and the values that these religions share. Ask students to discuss how these values relate to their own personal experiences.
- **Health/Nutrition** – Find out what students already know and what they want to know about healthy eating before starting a healthy eating unit. Take information gained from sharing to lead lesson planning.
- **French** – Build vocabulary in a circle by asking students to share something they did over the weekend (in French).
- **English Language Learning (ELL)** – Build English skills in a circle by introducing new units through the passing of objects related to that unit and asking students to share what they know about the object, its uses, and any experiences they might already have with the object. They can also take this opportunity to share the name of the object in their native language.
- **Art** – Bring art pieces to the center of the circle and ask students to share ideas on what might have inspired the artists to create certain pieces. Bring their own art pieces to circle and ask the same. Explore art pieces using the RF Framework Questions to ‘read’ them.
- **Music** – Come to circle, pass a rhythm instrument as a talking piece and ask students to create a four-beat rhythm pattern. Increase confidence in using singing voices by having each person sing a line or tone pattern. Such uses of circles also allow educators to assess student learning and engagement.
- **Integrating Concepts** – Facilitate a circle that reviews what students have been learning and ask them to reflect on, “Where are the connections?”



## Why Circles in Curriculum?\*

Curriculum circles...

- Help teachers figure out where students are with curriculum, so they can adapt delivery, figure out what to repeat, how to repeat, etc.
- Creates a forum for extension of the curriculum in interesting, non-threatening, time-efficient ways within the traditional curriculum
- Creates new opportunities for assessment for students who benefit from other ways of representing knowledge
  - This has real consequences for how students see themselves as 'smart' or not, for the very real construction of what a 'good student' is – one who can learn independently, quietly, reproduce their knowledge in writing or test situations – we know not all learners are like this, so what other valid ways can we offer to see what kids know?
- Opens new spaces for voices not typically heard – fosters recognition among peers, challenges growth in individuals
- Fosters peer-to-peer teaching and learning
- Creates legitimate space for Affective Dimension of learning, as well as Metacognition – how we feel and think in and about our learning, learning to understand why we feel and think those ways
- Removes the cultural privileging of the individual as the knower – vs – the collaborative nature of meaning-making, of knowledge production and transmission
- Counter-cultural in recasting relationships as essential to what and how we know – we constantly complain about the hyper-individualism of youth culture; here is one way to challenge it in education vs. implicitly reproducing it through our educating models

*“Circles are a great way to cover your content - the objectives that you set out for a particular class, and it's a really amazing way for students to share their experiences - their thoughts and feelings. What I've noticed in circles is that students actually look at each other when they are speaking, and they actually listen to each other, so it's a great way of forming relationships.” – High School English Teacher*

*\*As presented by David Martino during an RF School PL session.*



## How Relational Is My Pedagogy? Curriculum?

Beyond relationships with people, your relational perspectives inform your pedagogy and the curriculum you choose or create. Use the following questions to begin to reflect critically on the messages you send in your approach to teaching and learning. This checklist is meant to serve as a guide for personal reflection only. It provides a beginning self-assessment that you may find helpful.

HOW RELATIONAL IS MY PEDAGOGY? CURRICULUM?				
How would you respond to these questions:(it may help to think of a recent specific lesson you taught recently)	ALWAYS	USUALLY	NOT OFTEN	NEVER
Does the lesson encourage: Relationship with self?				
Does the lesson encourage: Relationship with others?				
Does the lesson encourage: Relationship with the content?				
Does the lesson/unit uphold and encourage: Worth and interconnectedness of all involved?				
Does the lesson/unit uphold and encourage: Dignity, respect, and mutual concern?				
Is the worth and the interconnectedness of the people you are learning <i>about</i> , upheld?				
Are you doing things FOR the students?				
Are you doing things TO students?				
Are you doing things WITH the students?				
Are you ignoring/avoiding some students?				
Is there space/time/opportunity for everyone to engage with the topic presented in some way regardless of their ability, their context, their resources, etc.?				
Is everyone appreciated for who they are and encouraged to use their strengths?				
Do you feel genuinely thankful for your students and their efforts or do you look at their limitations in learning and behaviour first? Can you be curious together with your students?				
Do you encourage your students to be vulnerable and open with you about their learning? (How?)				
Do you use the RF framework questions to help you assess your lesson/unit experience?				

\*Adapted with minor changes from: Minnesota Department of Education: Restorative Practices Trainer's Guide Training Activities  
<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/safe/clim/prac>



## Large Group Circle Plan: Circle Plan

Class/Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Theme:
Talking Piece:
Check-in:
*Mixer (if needed):
Main Activity:
Check-up [De-Brief]:
Energizer:
Check-out:
Decisions Reached:

Notes:

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Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up Needed:  Yes  No

*\*Adapted from: Restorative Classroom (Hopkins, 2011 pg. 56); Also see: Circle Forward (Bayes-Watson & Pranis), Module #3*



## Student Led: Circle Plan

### ***What do you need to prepare for completing a circle?***

Facilitator Names:
Talking Piece: (Explain why you chose the talking piece)
Quote: (Read the quote to the circle)
Review the circle guidelines
Check-in Question: (To see how everyone is doing now and/or to see how people have been over a period of time)
A round: (can do more than one) question you like to ask <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To express an opinion on a topic</li><li>• To express knowledge of a topic</li><li>• To ask about recent events</li><li>• General interest topic</li><li>• To share personal experiences</li></ul> Round 1:  Round 2:



Activity: (optional)

- Can be subject related
- Can be an energizer
- Fun activity

A round: (can do more than one)

- A question you would like to ask about how the class is going
- About the topic
- New ideas
- What people have learned
- What the future needs
- How people feel

Round 1:

Round 2:

Check-out question: (To see how everyone is doing now or to see what people will take with them from the lesson)

What do you need from your teacher(s) to help support you during the circle?

What do you need from your classmates to help support you during the circle?

*\*This template was provided by Kellee Melendy, school counselling intern at Gonzaga High School in 2017*





# Parent/Teacher Interviews: A Script for Dealing with Both Regular & Difficult (& Short) Conversations

**Introduction** - The script below is intended to be a simple and practical guideline. The focus is on building relationships through a conversation with parents and teachers in order to work WITH each other (parent, teacher, & student). It is important to hear the parent perspective first through a guided conversation.

**Rationale** - A guided conversation can help to shape and to focus the discussions teachers have with parents. Parent/teacher interviews are really conversations about communication and relationship building between parent and teacher and between student and teacher. Many common errors in these interviews include one party talking for the entire 10 minutes, line-ups for individual teachers or defensive reactions from either parent or teacher. The script below is an attempt to structure the interview in the time given, usually 10 to 15 minutes.

## **Step 1: Introduction**

*Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am (student's name)'s teacher. I'm glad you came to the parent-teacher interview. You received \_\_\_\_\_'s report card, and I also have a copy here. I'm looking forward to hearing your perspective and sharing my perspective too. If it is ok, I'd like to invite you to begin. Is that OK?*

## **Step 2: Questions for Parents**

*From your perspective, what's been happening with \_\_\_\_\_ (student's name) this term?  
[Alternate – How's it going with \_\_\_\_?]*

- *What do you think some of the successes have been this term?*
- *What do you think some of the challenges have been this term?*
- *How do you feel about this?*
- *How has \_\_\_\_\_ (student's name) been affected by this?*
- *(How has this affected you?)*
- *What do you think the main issues are for \_\_\_\_\_ (student's name)?*

## **Step 3: Answer the above questions from your (the teacher's) perspective in statements.**

*(What's been happening is... The successes have been...The challenges have been...The main issues are...)*

## **Step 4: Where to from here**

*What do you think we need to do together WITH \_\_\_\_\_ (student's name) for the next reporting period?*

## **Step 5: Record the conversation results.**

Make notes of what you agreed to, date them and check with a parent to be sure that it is clear to all. \*\*

## **Step 6: End the interview**

*(Stand up and shake hands) Thank you very much for coming in. I am looking forward to working with you and your child*

*\*\*If the conversation goes beyond 10 minutes, ask the parent to schedule a separate meeting and say something like,  
"It's really important that we discuss your child's progress in more detail and I'd like to schedule another meeting with you to discuss this further. What time and date would be good for you?"*

*Adapted from original by S. Baker, Kawartha-Pineridge School District, Ontario*



## Kinderstart Parent Session

### Brief Introduction to *Relationships First: Restorative Justice Practices*\*

#### **Purpose:**

This activity is designed to briefly introduce school beginning/Kinder-start parents to Relationships First and classroom circling practices. This first interaction with parents is an opportunity to build the foundation for a sustainable relationship with the school. This plan is meant to be flexible and adaptable for the size of the group and time allotted. It can also be adapted for any introductory Parent Meeting for any grade level.

**Time Allocation:** 45 minutes

**Materials:** Talking piece, handouts (list of resources), video [if time]

#### **Set-Up/Preparation:**

Because this activity will involve individual reflection, participants will bring a variety of experiences to this exercise. These may include sensitive and difficult experiences, so it is important to create a relaxed and safe environment. Allow participants to share or pass during the round(s).

#### **Instructions:**

Ask participants to stand around the perimeter of the room/outside chairs, if chairs are not already set up in a circle. (If there are many participants, do a 'Fishbowl' circle with volunteers making an 'inside' circle and others making an 'outside' circle to observe and to respond to what they think during a debriefing after).

- Introduction: Brief overview of yourself and start up/involvement with RF-RJ practices/philosophies
- Meditation/Breathing exercise (see pg. 237 of *Circle Forward*)
- Introduce Talking piece, Rounds, and Guidelines [if time permits, do 'values' exercise as per plan on pg. 237-238 of *Circle Forward*]
- Check-in Topic/Rounds: What is your child's favourite toy, movie or T.V. show? Or What will you miss when your child goes to Kindergarten?
- Check-out Topic/Debriefing: What did you notice about the circle process? What's something you learned about someone else? [also elicit responses from 'outside' circle.]

#### **End of Activity Processing/Key Points:**

- Discuss a few main points from your own experiences with using RF practices, especially using 'What happened?' instead of 'Why?' Explain or give an example using a volunteer. Tell a few 'stories' from your personal life, classroom, or office experiences.
- Handout pamphlet, articles, etc.
- Watch a 5-10-minute video (i.e. Pinellas County, Florida ...)
- Thank everyone for participating and sharing.

*\*Provided by Roxanne Skanes, Vice Principal*



## When Challenges Arise

# Caring Harm Awareness Talk

### Stages to a C.H.A.T.:

#### 1. Restorative Think

- I wonder what happened from the perspective of everyone involved.
- I wonder what's going on inside everyone involved— their thoughts and feelings.
- I wonder who is being affected and how.
- I wonder what the hardest thing about this for each person might be.
- I wonder what people need to move forward and for things to be put right.
- I wonder how I can support everybody affected to find ways of addressing each other's needs?

#### 2. Affective statements

- You state what you experience, think/feel, impact, hardest thing and what you need.
- Ask for affirmation. "Would this be ok with you?" "Can you do this?"

#### 3. Affective Questions

- You ask individuals the questions to affirm what you are thinking about what you notice

#### 4. Small group conference

- IMP'T: If you suspect a power imbalance, confirm that there is not a power differential that might further harm either of the participants. Ask:
  - How would \_\_\_\_\_ feel about having a discussion with \_\_\_\_?
  - How might this help you/the situation?
  - **(NO coercion! — This is about the needs of the one harmed FIRST!)**
- Begin by asking the person who caused harm to the RF Framework questions first: (What happened? What were you thinking/feeling? What are you thinking/feeling now? Who has been affected? What was the hardest thing?
- Then ask the one who experienced the harm the RF Framework questions
- Then ask them each to respond to the question, "What do we need to move forward?"

Whether we are struggling personally with ourselves or with others, or when our students are unable to grasp the curriculum, the **C.H.A.T.** assists us in navigating these challenges in a restorative way. Please keep in mind that all these stages are important to consider when something goes wrong.

*\*With thanks to Roxanne Skanes for this acronym and idea.*



## RF Circle Notes (Small group)

Those involved (Grade): \_\_\_\_\_

(\*those who are hurt/highlight those responsible for causing hurt)

Other(s) impacted: \_\_\_\_\_

Site: Playground Classroom Hallway Bus Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

What happened from your perspective? (*Involved)	What happened from your perspective? (*Involved)
What was going through your mind and how were you feeling at the time? And since?	
Who has been affected/harmed? And how?	
What do you need so that things can be put right and everyone can move on?	
How can you (all) address these needs together? [Decision Reached]	

Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Circle: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up Needed: Yes No Referred by: Teacher/Staff/Other: \_\_\_\_\_

[Adapted from *The Restorative Classroom*, Hopkins, 2011]



## Repairing Harm, Transforming Conflict

A significant component of RF is in regards to repairing harm and transforming conflict. Many of the difficult situations we encounter in schools are diminished and addressed through consciously creating relational school/classroom cultures as well as using RF framework questions and CHATS to help people sort through the early stages of harm or conflict that arises.

However, when they do occur it is very important to be consistent and continue nurturing the relational culture the school has been working to establish. This can be done through formal RF circles that have a particular process and are facilitated by **people who have had a 3-day professional learning experience** focused on the practice and nuances involved. Trained facilitators are an important component. We encourage every school to have 2-3 people who are/will become facilitators for serious harm.

The following outlines the process in brief. Other details can be found in Circle Forward, Module 13, pg. 315-322.

### ***The Formal RF Circle for Harm: Steps***

- Harm is caused, experienced, and reported
- Competent, trained facilitators are appointed to engage with the case (from within the school, a neighbouring school, the RF Centre, etc.)
- Those experiencing harm indicate their desire to participate in an RF Circle meeting
- Those causing the harm are asked to acknowledge their involvement in the incident (levels of involvement or admission of guilt can vary)
- If they acknowledge responsibility and/or involvement they are invited to meet with those harmed
- The facilitators meet separately, in person, with each one involved to:
  - Describe and clarify the process until the participant is satisfied



- Pose the questions they will be asked to respond to during the meeting. Participants are asked to share their answers with the facilitator in this pre-conference meeting, so the facilitator is aware of the details. This allows the participant to rehearse what they want to say and to be reminded, if necessary, to stay focused on telling their personal story rather than slipping into statements that blame.



- Share how the questions posed to each person in the circle meeting are intended to draw out each person's story—past, present, and future—and will include variations of the following: What happened? What were you thinking/feeling at the time? What are you thinking/feeling now? What impact has this had on you/others? What is the hardest thing for you? What do you need [to do] for the harm to be repaired? When stories are heard at the conference, the multi-faceted aspects of the event become clearer so an effective response can be created.
- Be alert to and discern any interpersonal dynamics that indicate there might be a power imbalance that could result in further harm either during or after the meeting. If there is a risk of further harm, the meeting will not happen or will be postponed until counselling ensures all participants will be safe in during and after the meeting.
- Ask who else they feel has been affected that would benefit from or contribute to the meeting. These people will be invited to attend and if agreeable will also have a pre-conference meeting.
- Ask to identify a person (a friend, parent, mentor, relative, colleague) present to support them during the meeting time. This is strongly encouraged, so they have someone to help them process their thoughts before, during and after the experience. Whoever is suggested, is invited and will also meet with facilitators before the meeting (At times, this person is identified before the pre-conference meeting, and the two meet with the facilitators together).



- After all the individual meetings are held, facilitators deliberate on the details, consider if others impacted or involved peripherally should be invited based on what they have heard, and make plans for a meeting time and place that will be amenable to all involved. Final details are given to all participants so everyone is fully aware of who will be present.
- The meeting space is consciously arranged by the facilitators with a chair for each person set up in a circle. Those directly involved, with their supporters, sit on either side of the facilitators; those less affected complete the circle sitting between the two groups.
- The facilitators begin the meeting with a welcome, introductions, a summary of the purpose of the meeting, and a reminder of the process. Questions are posed first to those who have caused the harm, then to those who experienced the harm, and finally to those impacted in various other ways so that the details and impact of the event are heard by all. Opportunity is given for people to respond to each other with questions and comments after everyone has had an initial chance to share their stories. Final rounds of discussion allow participants to indicate what they require for the harm to be repaired; facilitators note what is said; those primarily responsible are asked what they can do or need in order to make restitution. Others can also offer solutions. A written contract is created reflecting what was agreed upon by the group and signed by everyone.
- The meeting ends with an informal time of interaction and refreshments.

The process at every stage is intentionally inclusive and respectful of each individual and the collective; the resolution, along with indications of support and accountability, arise from the interconnectedness within the group.

From: Vaandering, D. (Spring, 2015). *Living justly: How restorative justice nurtures our communities*. *Newfoundland Quarterly*, 107 (4), pg. 38-39.

**CAUTION:** Do not facilitate a Circle to address serious harm without training or consultation with those who can help support you through the process.





## Conclusion

Becoming an RF school is exciting. Along every step of the way, there will be challenges, but the benefits will be felt almost immediately.

Having a clear, long-term plan in place is important. A strong leadership team that applies RF principles and practices to its own functioning will ensure that implementation and sustainability occurs. A committed team will allow for your school's plan to remain flexible yet firm through the challenges that arise including staff, educator, and administrator changes.

*It changed  
how **I** was;  
it changed  
how **they** were;  
and it changed  
how **we** were  
as a result,  
which was good...*

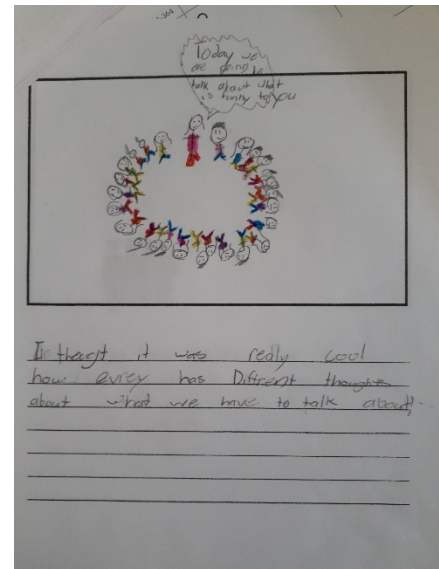
- Matt: High School Educator

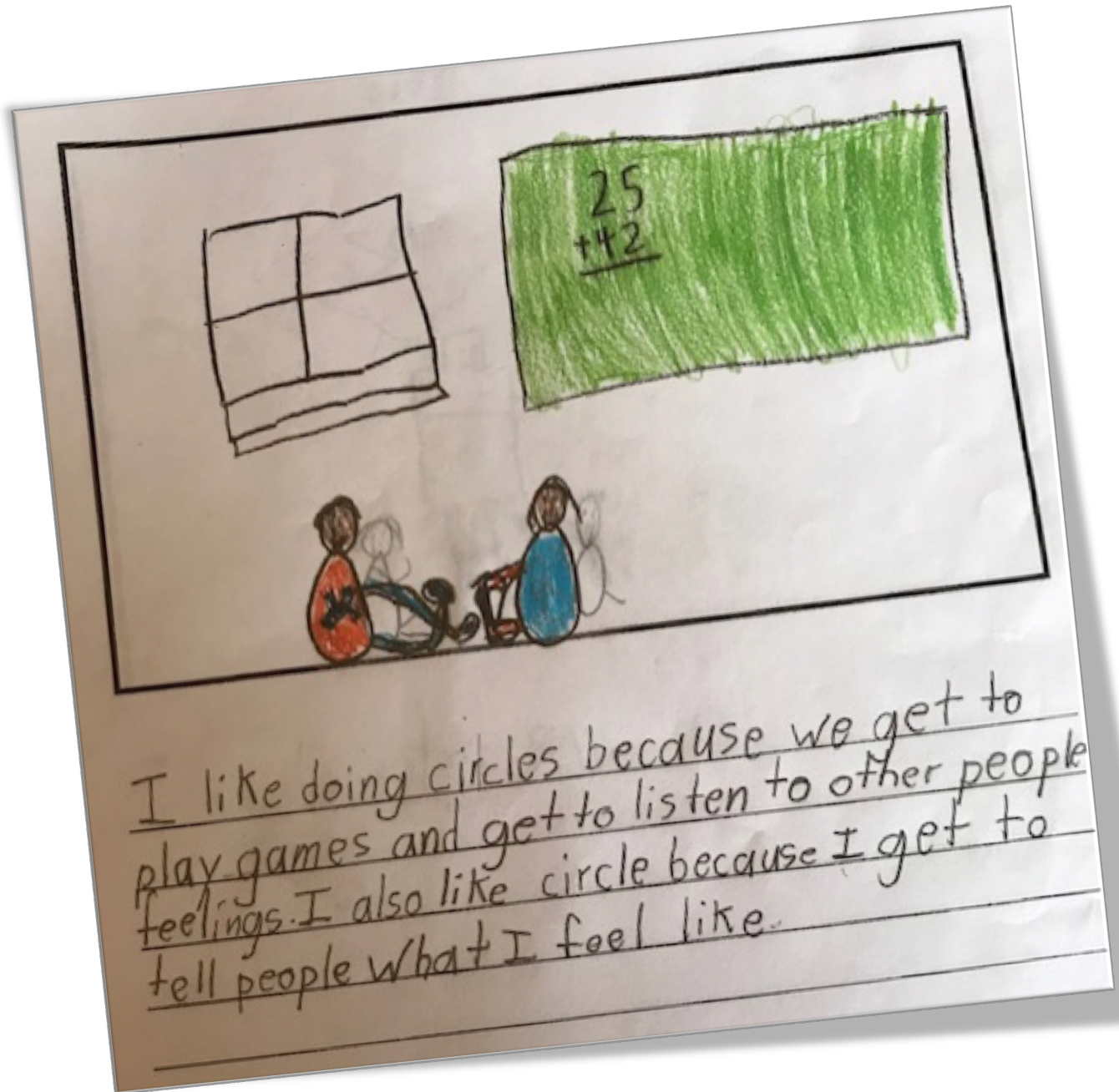
*It was the community-building  
That was most important  
You got to know people so quickly,  
You could empathize—  
The whole ability to  
Feel for one another,  
Put yourself in their place and not  
judge.*

- Betty: High School Educator

*"I thought it was really cool how every(one) has different thoughts about what we have to talk about."*

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Grader on what they like about circles







# Appendix:

## Research Evidence

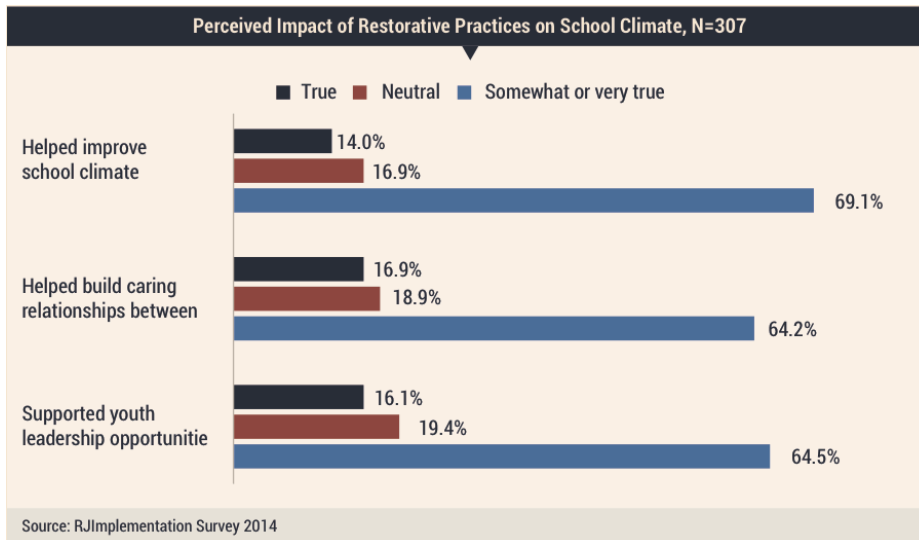
The following pages include a very brief overview of research evidence that illustrates the comprehensive, supportive impact of RF on a school.

For more a more detailed list of studies please contact the RF Research-Resource Centre

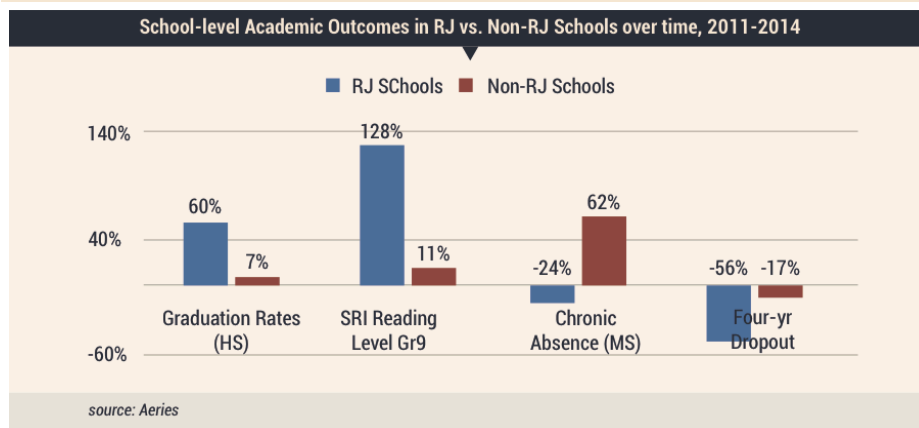


## The Impact—in numbers (UK & USA)

Schools have engaged with RF for several decades in various parts of the world. As RF is a way of being, evidence assessing the relational culture of institutions is challenging to collect. However, there are studies that indicate significant impacts on different aspects of schooling.



*OUSD Research Report:  
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN  
OAKLAND SCHOOLS  
IMPLEMENTATION AND  
IMPACTS 2014-  
Executive Summary*



The greatest cumulative change in chronic absenteeism is for middle schools with an RF program, a drop by 24%, compared to an estimated increase in non-RF middle schools of 62%.

Reading levels as measured by SRI in grade 9 doubled in RF high schools from an average of 14% to 33%, an increase of 128%, compared to 11% in non-RF high schools in the past 3 years.

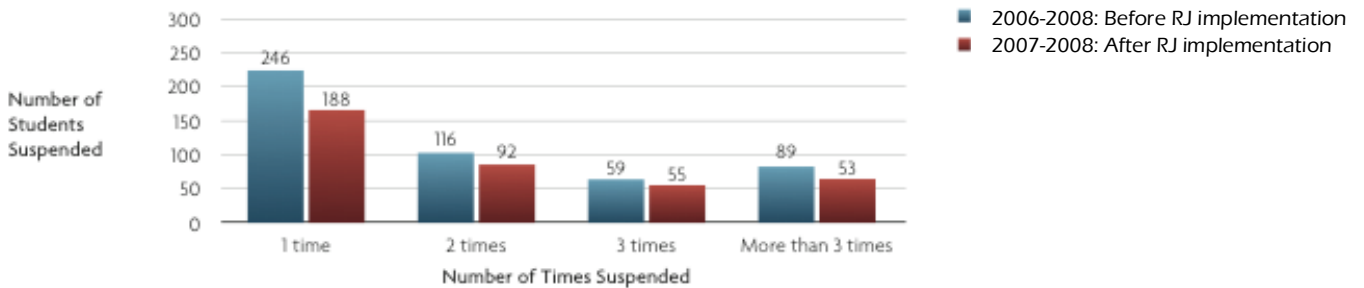
From 2010-2013, RF high schools experienced a 56% decline in dropout rates in comparison to 17% for non-RF high schools.



Four-year graduation rates in RF schools increased significantly more than non-RF schools (public schools only) in the 3 years post-RF intervention– a cumulative increase of 60% for RF schools, compared to 7% for non-RF schools.

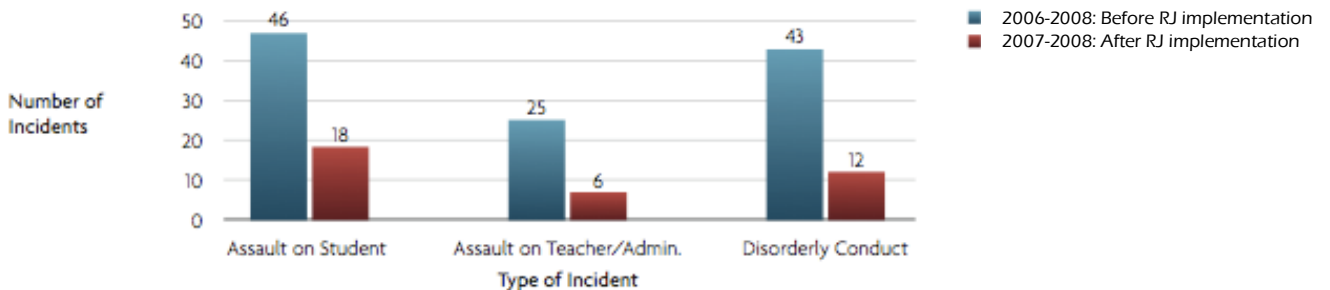
### Number of Students Suspended in 2 School Years

N=941



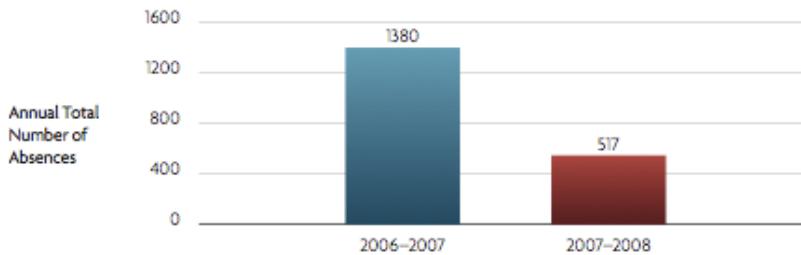
### Serious Behavioral Incidents by Type in 2 School Years

N=941



Source: Russell A. Gallagher, assistant principal, West Philadelphia High School, February 2009

### Staff Absences in 2 School Years



Source: Hull Centre for Restorative Practices & International Institute for Restorative Practices–UK Office, The City of Hull: Riverside Project, September 2008

The decrease in staff absences is important to note—a clear indication that teachers are happier and more able to do their work.



## ***The Impact—in Numbers (Nova Scotia)***

### Academic Impact:

	Gr. 3 Math	Gr. 6 Math	Gr. 6 Reading	Gr. 6 Writing
Pre-RF	67% ('06-'07)	54% (08-'09)	75% ('03-'04)	68% ('03-'04)
Post-RF	80% ('11-'12)	70 % ('11-'12)	93% ('11-'12)	95% ('11-'12)

### Office Referrals, Suspensions,

	Elementary #1		Jr. High #1	Jr. High #2	Secondary #1
	Office referrals	Suspensions	Suspensions (days lost)	Suspensions (days lost)	Suspensions (days lost)
Pre-RF	70/wk ('04-'05)	100 ('03-'04)	111 days('12-'13)	348 days('12-'13)	1638 ('12-'13)
Post-RF	4/wk ('10-'11)	3 ('10-'11)	64 days ('13-'14)	47 days ('13-'14)	685 ('13-'14)
% change	95%	97%	42%	86 %	58 %
	After 4 yrs, 94 % of students report feeling teachers really care about them; 95% of parents report child likes going to school; 98% of parents feel welcomed at school.				

XXX Elementary School in Halifax was among the first in Nova Scotia to implement a restorative approach. “The kids are doing really well, but a real testament to the restorative mindset is that there is no staff conflict. **People love coming to work.**”

2010-2011: 100% of teachers reported that classroom instruction is rarely disrupted by serious discipline concerns.

**Source:** Derible, R. (2017). *A restorative approach in schools*, Paper presented at Mental Health Symposium sponsored by Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training.





## ***The Impact—in Story: Newfoundland & Labrador, 2017***

- “A young autistic boy who in September was too anxious to even sit in the circle. He would pace around the classroom while the rest of the class sat in the circle. As time went by, he gradually warmed to the idea and would come sit with his class but not contribute. He now joins circle every day and never needs prompting to share.” *(Gr. 3 Classroom Teacher)*
- After facilitating a circle conference with 2 sets of parents whose children were in physical conflict regularly, the guidance counsellor shares: “As the parents figured out how best to move forward, so did the children on the playground. As the parents repaired the harm in their relationships, so did the children. Perhaps it had been an issue between the parents all along being acted out on the little playground by the next generation. I’m happy to say that the children refrained from conflict for the remainder of the school year.” *(Elementary School Guidance Counsellor)*
- “I chose the circle topic [regarding] school and what stresses you out for the first round. The obvious answers: tests, deadlines, teachers, etc. The next round [I asked], What do you do to handle it? Most said: study, extra help from teachers, Study group... What surprised me most was a child who is very quiet felt comfortable enough to say “his psychologist who he sees on a regular basis” help him handle stress. I thought that comment was brave on his part and showed his confidence level he felt from the group!!” *(A High School Healthy Living Teacher)*
- “I posed the question about conflict in our play Julius Caesar [in a talking circle format rather than our regular rows with me at the front]. This time almost every student in the circle had something to share with us. [They shared] an original example or something to add to a classmate’s response. I have to say that I was shocked at how much the circle formation increase student participation. After the class ended and I had some time to reflect, I realized that other positive things happened during that circle. Students looked at whoever was speaking, and students listened to what their classmates were saying. I never once had to ask anyone to “stop talking”, “pay attention”, or “put away your cell phone.” *(High School English Teacher)*
- “My colleague and I went to the class to do the circle but as we were about to start a teacher took us aside and warned us that a few of the students had extreme behaviour problems and wouldn’t last 10 minutes. She said that when they got out of control she would remove them from the circle and take them to the office. We started the circle and when we finished an hour later, everyone was still there and the students and staff were asking when we could do our next circle. We have now completed six Circle sessions with this class and the level of respect and sharing has been excellent. Not one person was asked to leave the circle.” *(Safe and Caring Schools Itinerant)*

(see full stories and more stories at: [www.relationshipsfirstnl.com](http://www.relationshipsfirstnl.com))

**Source:** *Relationships First: Restorative Justice Project School Impact Year 1*, Vaandering, D.(2017)







# Appendix:

## Exploring RF Foundations Through Activities

The following activities have been provided to help groups of people (i.e. teams, students, etc.) explore RF Foundations. These activities can be implemented in staff/team meetings, professional development sessions, and the classroom setting.



## RF Circle Energizers and Mixers

The following pages contain examples of Energizers and Mixers that can be used in circle planning. These activities are meant to build community and increase participant interaction. They can be used with a variety of age groups and most can be extended into full activities or lessons as demonstrated in “Whoosh, Whoosh, Whoa”.

Before proceeding, it is important to remember...

- Energizers (E) are short relational activities that build or moderate energy levels. They can be used in any group context to set the tone at the beginning or relieve intense focus mid-way through a meeting.
- Mixers (M) are short activities that allow for participants to get to know each other better and to adjust or form different groupings of people randomly.

### **Energizers**

<p><b>Be Unique</b></p> <p>This classroom game is about being unique and about getting to know each other better. Everyone stands in a circle. Every student has to say something unique about themselves. <i>For example: “I have four brothers.”</i> If one or more students have four brothers, the students who shared the ‘not-so-unique’ aspect must sit down. The goal is to stand as long as possible and therefore to share very special things about yourself that no one else typifies.</p>	<p><b>Juggling Ball Game</b></p> <p>Everyone stands in a circle. (If the group is very large, it may be necessary to split the group into two circles.) The facilitator starts by throwing the ball to someone in the circle, saying their name as they throw it. Continue catching and throwing the ball establishing a pattern for the group. (Each person must remember who they receive the ball from and who they have thrown it to.) Once everyone has received the ball and a pattern is established, introduce one or two more balls, so that there are always several balls being thrown at the same time, following the set pattern. [may substitute a small stuffed animal or object for the ball(s)]</p>
<p><b>Pass the Energy</b></p> <p>Participants stand or sit in a circle, hold hands, and silently concentrate. The facilitator sends a series of ‘pulses’ both ways around the group by discreetly squeezing the hands of those next to her/him. Participants pass these pulses around the circle, as in an electric current, by squeezing the hand of the person next to them and literally ‘energizing’ the group.</p>	<p><b>Knots</b></p> <p>Participants stand in a circle and join hands. Keeping their hands joined, they move in any way that they want, twisting and turning and creating a ‘knot’. They must then unravel this knot, without letting go of one another’s hands.</p>



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hula Hoop Balance</b></p> <p>In this game, small groups work together to lower a Hula Hoop (a meter-wide round tube)—or an alternative material—to the ground. Before splitting into groups, demonstrate how the game will work. Ask for enough volunteers to form a small circle (four or five people). Have them stand in a close circle and tell them to put both hands in front of their face like they are pointing at something straight ahead of them (so that their index fingers will be horizontal). Make sure everyone’s hands are level. Rest Hula Hoop on their fingers so that the hoop is sitting steadily on their fingers at approximately eye-level. Explain that the group must lower the Hula Hoop to the ground, but they must make sure that everyone’s fingers are touching the Hula Hoop at all times. Ask if there are any questions, then split the rest of the group into teams and have everyone begin. Have “monitors” walk around the groups checking to make sure that each player’s fingers are touching the hoop. If a finger is not touching the hoop, tell the group to begin again. After a group has completed the task successfully, have them try it a second time without talking. NOTE: Can use a length of wood, like a measuring yard-stick, if hula hoop is unavailable.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Snowball</b></p> <p>Have partners ball up a piece of paper like a snowball and place it on the floor between each other. Ask the partners to pick up the snowball using the body parts called out by the facilitator: elbow and elbow; foot and foot; knee and knee; forearm and elbow; foot and elbow; knee and elbow; forehead and back of hand; toe and finger. Partners try to lift the paper off the floor only using body parts specified. Variations: <b>(1)</b> Each student can have his or her own paper ball and play individually. <b>(2)</b> This could be done as a team relay activity, where students hop around their desks with the paper ball between the body parts and pass the paper ball to the next teammate. The last person hops to the trashcan and puts the paper ball in the trashcan.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Group Cooperation Activity/Spider Web</b></p> <p>Introduce the activity by asking participants if they think people can spin webs like spiders. Suggest that we should try to spin a web as a group. Join the group in a big circle (sitting down) and show them white yarn. Explain that you will begin spinning the web by holding the end of the yarn ball tightly in your lap and then picking a friend across the circle to toss the remaining ball to (e.g. “I pick John to help spin our web”). When John catches it, share something you like about him (i.e., “I like how John shares with his friends”). Remind John to hold the yarn string tight in his lap, as he picks the next friend to toss the ball of yarn to. The activity proceeds until all participants have had a turn.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pass it On – UNO style</b></p> <p>Facilitator hands out one Uno card to each student. Students identify colour on the card and perform an activity that corresponds to that colour for 10 – 15 seconds: Blue: jump to the sky; Red: squats; Yellow: twist; Green: swim. When the facilitator says, “Pass it On”, students pass the card to the person on their right and complete the activity that corresponds to their new cards. Variations: 1) Teach colours in French 2) For younger children, squat, and slide card on the floor to the right rather than handing the card to the next person.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Air Writing</b></p> <p>Students begin by moving in place or around the circle: Jumping, Marching, Hopping, Twisting, etc. Facilitator calls out a letter, number, word or shape and students stop the activity. Students will draw the letter, number, word, or shape in the air using their hand, arm, leg, head, elbow, knee, bottom, or any combination of body parts until facilitator calls out another activity. Students continue new activity until the facilitator calls out another letter, number, word, or shape.</p>



## Mixers

<p><b>Alphabet</b></p> <p>The facilitator chooses a random letter and any participants who have that letter in their name changes spots. This can be varied by using colors.</p>	<p><b>I Love ... Game</b></p> <p>A student stands in the middle of the circle and says: " I love (cats) ....", those who love the same thing change spots.</p>
<p><b>Mix it Up! or Where the Wind Blows...</b></p> <p>This is a fun way to mix it up the group. Say something like, "If you are wearing a watch, stand up and switch." or "The wind blows those who..." Everyone wearing a watch will stand up and switch seats. Continue with other comments like "If you have a sister, stand up" etc.</p>	<p><b>Mingle or Drum Beat</b></p> <p>This activity is a fun and easy way to mix large groups or to break into smaller groups quickly for an activity. Have everyone stand up and spread out within the circle space. While leader uses a drum or other instrument to keep a beat, everyone walks around the space mingling at a brisk pace, shaking hands with or saying a greeting to (i.e., 'Hi!', 'Good day to you!') different people. When beat stops, the leader yells out a number. Participants must get into a group of that many people and sit down/stand in a small circle to await instruction. The leader may have them answer an easy; low risk 'get to know you' question with each other (i.e., What is your favourite colour? Movie? T.V. show?). Once done, have them mingle again until you call another number. Repeat. If you find that people aren't mixing and mingling much, introduce a rule (i.e., they can't have any of the same people in their group from the previous round or must have at least one girl and one boy, etc.). Discuss key points like the goals of this activity: what does it mean to be inclusive or exclusive? How did it feel to be included/excluded?</p>
<p><b>Mingle Solo</b></p> <p>All participants stand in a circle. While using a drum/triangle instrument or recorded music to make music, participants slowly mingle around inside circle. When drum/triangle/music stops, all stop and turn to the nearest person and follow instruction from facilitator/drummer (e.g., exchange handshake and a warm greeting; share one thing you love about school; etc.). Music/instrument starts again to signal to continue mingling; next 'stop', turn to a different person.</p>	

## Energizers & Mixers

<p><b>Connecting Eyes</b></p> <p>Participants stand in a circle. Each person makes eye contact with another person across the circle. The two walk across the circle and exchange position while maintaining eye contact. Many pairs can exchange at the same time, and the group should try to <b>make sure that everyone in the circle is included</b> in the exchange [ensure an even number of participants, so that all are included]. Begin by trying this in silence and then exchange greetings in the middle of the circle.</p>	<p><b>Fruit Salad</b></p> <p>Participants sit on chairs in a circle and count themselves off into an equal number of three to four fruits groups such as: <i>oranges, apples, and bananas</i>. Facilitator/Teacher stands in the centre of the circle. The facilitator shouts out the name of one of the fruits, such as 'oranges', and all of the oranges must change places with one another. The person who is standing in the middle tries to take one of their places as they move, leaving another person in the middle without a chair. The new person in the middle shouts another fruit, and the game continues. A call of 'fruit salad' means that everyone has to change seats.</p>
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<p><b>Pass the Action</b></p> <p>Participants sit in a circle. One person (<b>A</b>) stands in the centre. <b>A</b> moves towards another person (<b>B</b>) using a specific action, such as jumping. When s/he reaches <b>B</b>, s/he takes <b>B</b>'s place, and <b>B</b> then moves to the centre of the circle using <b>A</b>'s action or movement. When <b>B</b> reaches the centre, s/he walks towards <b>C</b>, using a new action or movement. The game continues in this way until everyone has taken part.</p>	<p><b>Eye Nod Game</b></p> <p>All students are sitting in a circle; one student is standing in the centre of the circle. Sitting students must make eye contact with someone else in circle and nod. Once they nod, both must leave their chairs and either switch chairs or sit in an empty chair (student may not go back to the chair they just left). Person standing who has no chair can take an empty chair. Multiple students can be switching chairs at any point. (As a safety precaution, students claim the empty chair by first placing both hands on the empty seat, and then sitting. If two students claim the same chair, the student with their hands on the bottom wins). The game can be stopped periodically, and the student left standing is pointed out. The game is then started again.</p>
<p><b>Colour Mix</b></p> <p>Give one coloured block or crayon (red, yellow, blue) to each participant. Invite all who are one colour to stand and change places. Variation: Call out two colours at a time.</p>	
<p><b>Silent Line-Up</b></p> <p>Tell participants that they are going to line up but that they will need to do so in a particular order. The first time the group tries it, challenge participants to line up in order of their birth dates (month and day). One end of the line should be marked Jan. 1 and the other end Dec. 31. You can make the game more challenging by having people line up in silence. If successful, future line-ups could be based on topics like shoe size, height, number of brothers and sisters, and years in school.</p>	<p><b>Rock-Paper-Scissors Train</b></p> <p>All players find a partner and play rock-paper-scissors. Whoever loses must go behind the winner and put their hands on their shoulders, forming a train. The front person of that train leads their train to another train and the front people of each train play against each other. The losing train then attaches to the back of the winning train. This continues until only one (long) train remains. [While this is a great energizer, it can also be used as a 'mixer': have winning engine/leader of train sit and all other train cars fall in place in a circle until the last train car/caboose is sitting next to or near the engine/leader.]</p>

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For more information on these and other activities, please refer to the following sites (from which they have been adapted) ...

- *Restorative Approaches – A Teacher’s Guide* (Richard Derrible et al) @ <https://teacherguide2ra.weebly.com/circles-games.html>
- *The Olive Branch Teachers Guide* (Fall 2008, pg. 13) @ <https://www.seedsofpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/PeaceGames.pdf>
- *Energizers: Classroom-based Physical Activities K-2*; East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory, College of Health & Human Performance @ [www.pelinks4u.org/files/energizersK\\_2.pdf](http://www.pelinks4u.org/files/energizersK_2.pdf)
- Leadership Inspirations: <http://leadershipinspirations.com>



## “Our Own Experiences with School Climate” Activity

**Purpose:** This exercise is designed to help participants remember their own experiences from school and consider others’ experiences with school and to reflect upon it, evaluate it and use it as a guide for giving today’s children what they need.

**Time Allocation:** 15 minutes

**Materials:** None

### **Set-Up/Preparation:**

Because this activity involves individual reflection, participants will bring a variety of experiences to this exercise. These can include difficult experiences, so it is important to create a relaxed and safe environment. Allow participants to share or pass during the processing questions.

### **Instructions:**

Ask participants to make a continuum by placing themselves along an imaginary line in the room in response to the statements below. Remind participants to consider the range of messages they received, going beyond spoken words and including what was observed in relationships.

- If you feel you experienced warm, caring and inclusive relationships and environments, and got helpful information about social, emotional skills from reliable sources through elementary, middle and high school, stand on one end.
- If you felt you were left on your own to figure out social relationships, mostly had unhelpful information given to you and felt the school environment was mostly hostile, stand on the other end.
- If you feel your experience with school lies between these extremes, arrange yourself accordingly.

Once the line is formed, start at the end where people felt a less supportive and healthy school climate and ask participants why they chose to stand there. Note: If a full spectrum of experiences is not represented, ask what that says about the people who choose to work in school. Ask participants to consider the range of experiences of parents and other community members with whom they work. Proceed up the line, asking for volunteers as time allows.

### **End of Activity Processing/Key Points:**

- When you’ve heard from each section of the line, lead a discussion about where in the line they’d like their children to stand 10 or 20 years from now and what they can do to ensure that their children get what they need.
- If possible, take time to consider the perspectives of the children most likely to feel alienated or unsupported at school. Assess the range of opinions on whether it is the school’s responsibility to be welcoming and supportive of all children or whether it is the child’s and families’ responsibility to adapt to the school environment.

*\*Adapted with minor changes from: Minnesota Department of Education: Restorative Practices Trainer’s Guide Training Activities (<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/safe/clim/prac>)*





## “Iceberg” Activity

**Purpose:** Use this activity to strengthen team and relationship building. Participants will reflect on and evaluate their own experiences. As well, they will develop a better comprehension of the deeper purpose of behaviours and the human need ‘to belong’.

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Materials:** White string (to outline the iceberg); a different colour string or some other material to mark the sea line; markers for each participant; 8 strips of paper per person.

### **Set-Up/Preparations:**

A large floor space is needed for the outline of an ice-berg and space for all participants to circle around.

### **Instructions:**

1. At the start of the activity, form an outline of an iceberg on the floor with string. Place the water line across the iceberg at the appropriate place.
2. Ask participants to think of an event in their life where they did not feel welcome, did not feel like they belonged. Ask them to think about what they were feeling at the time...don't rush, give some thinking time. (Don't ask students to share these aloud. It is the feelings and actions that come from these that are important.)
3. Ask participants to write down 5-10 things they were feeling at that time (on one slip of paper). Primary students could draw a picture of what each feeling looks like instead of writing out the word.
4. Ask them to pick 2 of these feelings, write (or draw) them on separate sheets of paper and place them under the water line. Following an inclusive pedagogy, it is important that students lay down their ideas all at once, without names. Then have one or two students read these feelings aloud. Voicing all of the ideas presented provides an opportunity for further reflection.
5. Then ask them to think about what they did, whether during that time or afterward, because of how they were feeling. Give think time.
6. Ask them to write (or draw) 2-3 things they did on slips of paper and place these above the water line. Again, have students lay these down all at once, without any names attached. Have one or two students read all of the contributions aloud.
7. Ask the questions: What do you notice? Did anything surprise you? What did it feel like?
8. Repeat the process, only this time think of an event where you felt welcomed and had a sense of belonging.

### **End of Activity Processing/Key Points:**

- There are many things going on in people's lives that we are unaware of.
- Our actions often reflect the underlying emotions that we are feeling.
- Lack of belonging can have a very negative effect on us.
- We all want to feel welcomed and that we belong; this is not the experience for everyone.



## “What Do I Need To Be At My Best?” Activity

**Purpose:** This activity can be used to strengthen individual and group relationships. Participants reflect deeply on their own needs and share with others without feeling the pressure of speaking out loud.

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Materials:** Markers for each participant, slips of coloured paper

### Set-Up/Preparation:

A safe place, while preferably sitting in a circle.

### Instructions:

1. Ask each participant to take 4-5 pieces of paper and a marker. Ask them to think about what it is they need to be at their best in this group. What do they need from others to be at the best they can be. Give some time to think.
2. Ask participants to get up and place their slips of paper on the floor in the centre of the circle.
3. Ask for 2-3 volunteers to get in the middle of the circle and ask the group to find ways to collapse all of the slips of paper into 5-6 underlying themes. See which slips of paper are the same or fit closely together.
4. Review the groupings that have been made and discuss generally.
5. Identify these as our underlying guidelines: these are the things we need from each other to be at our best.
6. These can be summarized and written up as the group guidelines in addition to the three we had already established.

### End of Activity Processing/Key Points:

- We all need certain things to be at our best; there are many commonalities to what we need to be at our best.
- What we need to be at our best may not be exactly what someone else needs to be at their best.
- While it is important that our needs be met, it is also important that others' needs be met as well
- Sometimes we do not know what other people need unless we ask them.
- Sometimes we assume our needs are other peoples' needs as well.



## “Whoosh, Whoosh, Whoa” Activity

**Purpose:** To mentally warm up; to fail joyfully; to accept offers and to find the games within the game; to connect with your fellow players through a shared game experience.

**Time:** Flexible

**Materials:** None

### Set-Up/Preparations:

A safe, spacious place – Participants will be standing in a circle.

### Instructions:

1. Students will stand in a circle and be instructed to pass a “whoosh” around the circle. A “whoosh” travels through their fingertips and voices to the player to their left.
2. Once the whoosh has travelled around a few times, introduce the idea of “Whoa,” which is produced by holding up your hands to block a “Whoosh.” When someone says, “Whoa,” the “Whoosh” must switch directions and go the opposite way.
3. After the students adapt to this, further actions can be as follows: Ramp, which is sent over the head of the next player, skipping that player and landing on the next one; Tunnel, which causes the next three players to turn sideways (creating a tunnel through their legs) and landing the next Whoosh four players over; Volcano, which causes all players to run to the middle and erupt outwards and back into the circle, continuing the Whoosh from the last position; Banished!, in which a player points to another and “banishes” him or her from the circle. The banished student then finds a new place in the circle. (Banished can also be used when a student misses a pass or fumbles.)
4. Once students have adapted to all the different types of rules, they can invent their own, which should be accepted by the rest of the circle and incorporated into regular gameplay. The possibilities are endless!

### End of Activity Processing/Key Points:

- Ask the student to reflect on...
  - What did you notice during the activity?
  - What was challenging?
  - What skills do you have to have to be successful?
- The students get the most out of it when they accept that they can’t “win” the game, but can revel in the playing of it.

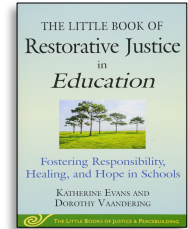
*\*Played with a high school RF group. Adapted from Whoosh/Whoa activity at Canadian Improv Games site (<http://improv.ca/whooshwhoa>)*



## Reading List

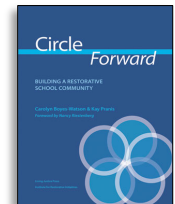
### ***Four key resources on which this implementation guide relies:***

- 1) Evans, K., & Vaandering, D. (2016). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education: Fostering responsibility, Healing, and Hope in Schools*. Skyhorse Publishing, Inc.



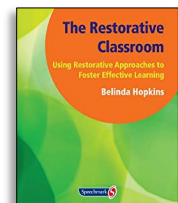
- This little book guides the growth of restorative justice in education (RJE) in the future. Incorporating activities, stories, and examples throughout the book, three major interconnected and equally important aspects of restorative justice in education are explained and applied: creating just and equitable learning environments; building and maintaining healthy relationships; healing harm and transforming conflict.

- 2) Boyes-Watson, C., & Pranis, K. (2015). *Circle Forward: Building a Restorative School Community*. Minnesota: Living Justice Press.



- *Circle Forward* is a resource guide designed to help teachers, administrators, students and parents incorporate the practice of Circles into the everyday life of the school community. This resource guide offers comprehensive step-by-step instructions for how to plan, facilitate and implement the Circle and provides over one hundred specific lesson plans and ideas for the application of Circles for a variety of purposes within the school environment. A 'must-have' resource for implementing restorative justice in schools in a holistic manner.

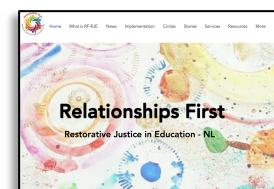
- 3) Hopkins, B. (2011). *The Restorative Classroom: Using Restorative Approaches to Foster Effective Learning*. Optimus Education.



- This manual explores relational pedagogy that truly does change school culture. It is packed with ideas for classrooms that include suggestions for curriculum, pedagogy, and responses to student behaviour. A key resource.

- 4) Relationships First Website: [www.relationshipsfirstnl.com](http://www.relationshipsfirstnl.com)

- A website full of background information, resources, stories, current research, and much more.





**If you are exploring or getting started, 'must reads' include:**

- 1) Amstutz, L. S. & Mullet. (2015). *The Little Book of Restorative Discipline for Schools: Teaching Responsibility; Creating Caring Climates*. Skyhorse Publishing, Inc.
  - A little book that provides stories and practical beginning ideas for responses to student behaviour.
- 2) Pranis, K. (2015). *Little Book of Circle Processes: A New/Old Approach to Peacemaking*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing, Inc.
  - A little book that provides practical ideas for using circle processes not just for conflict resolution but for discussion of all kinds.
- 3) Riestenberg, N. (2012). *Circle in the Square*. Minnesota: Living Justice Press
  - This book focuses on the challenges facing school communities and how restorative measures- especially Circles- create a safer place for learning and development for all. Using stories direct from the hallways, the author brings heart to subjects that are often diverse and controversial: bullying and other violence, suspension, drug use, staff conflicts and more. The book offers strategies that actually work for the whole school community: students, parents, administrators, teachers, and the community in which they live.
- 4) Schumacher, A. (2014). *Talking circles for adolescent girls in an urban high school: A restorative practices program for building friendships and developing emotional literacy skills*. Sage Open, 4(4), 2158244014554204.
- 5) Zehr, H. (2015). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice: Revised and Updated*. Skyhorse Publishing, Inc.
  - A little book that provides background to theory and principles of restorative justice.

**For a more in-depth look at the foundational principles of Restorative Justice, the following resources are important:**

- 1) Brown, M. A. (2018). *Creating restorative schools: Setting schools up to succeed*. St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press.
  - Creating Restorative Schools is based on Brown's study of two middle schools in the Oakland Unified School District that are making the shift to a restorative model. Addressing the potential pitfalls of implementing such a deep change in school culture, Brown shows us how the nurturing of relationships builds the capacity to make the shift and negotiate the challenges. Restorative schools emerge as places where people want to be—where teachers want to teach, and students want to learn.



- 2) Gardner, T. (2016). *Discipline Over Punishment: Successes and Struggles with Restorative Justice in Schools*.
  - Discipline Over Punishment is an exploration of the transformative potential of restorative discipline practices in schools, ranging from the micro-level of one-on-one interactions with students to the macro-level of re-routing the school-to-prison pipeline and improving life outcomes for young people. Gardner, who continues to teach high school in Oakland, CA, has spent nearly 20 years innovating, struggling, and succeeding to implement various restorative justice practices in classrooms and schools around the Bay Area.
- 3) Lockhart, A., & Zammit, L. (2005). *Restorative Justice: Transforming Society*. Toronto: Inclusion Press.
  - A book outlining details for conducting full restorative justice circles with lots of Canadian-based school and community stories to illustrate the potential restorative justice holds for developing stronger relationship-based communities.
- 4) Morrison, B. (2007). *Restoring Safe School Communities: A Whole School Response to Bullying, Violence and Alienation*. Sydney: Federation Press.
  - A comprehensive overview of the field of restorative justice in education. Full of research related literature as well as practical information to help schools move forward from rule-based to relationship-based cultures.
- 5) Pranis, K., Stuart, B., & Wedge, M. (2003). *Peacemaking Circles: From Crime to Community*. Minnesota: Living Justice Press.
  - A key book in understanding Indigenous perspectives of restorative justice and peacemaking circles.
- 6) Sullivan, D., & Tift, L. (2001). *Restorative Justice: Healing The Foundations of Our Everyday Lives* (pg. 51). Monsey, NY: Willow Tree Press.
  - A key publication in understanding restorative justice as coming from a needs-based not an incident-based place. A good thorough overview of restorative justice as a philosophy that impacts all of life.
- 7) Wolterstorff, N. (2006). Teaching justly for justice. *Journal of Education and Christian Belief*, 10(2), 23-37.
  - Though not addressing restorative justice specifically, this article provides significant foundation for understanding justice as honouring the worth of all.
- 8) Zehr, H. (2003). *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice*. Waterloo: Herald Press.
  - The foundational book on restorative justice by a pioneer in the field.





## ***Digging deeper, answering questions that arise, and developing more explicit practice:***

- 1) Blood, P., & Thorsborne, M. (2006, October). Overcoming resistance to whole-school uptake of restorative practices. In *International Institute of Restorative Practice's The Next Step: Developing Restorative Communities, Part 2 Conference* (pg. 18-20).
- 2) Boyes-Watson, C. (2013). *Peacemaking circles and urban youth*. Minnesota: Living Justice Press.
  - This book explores how the Circle process is being used by a remarkably innovative youth center outside Boston. Using Circles extensively, not only with immigrant, gang, and street youth but also with the families, community and throughout the organization, is integral to the center's effectiveness.
- 3) Burnett, N., & Thorsborne, M. (2015). *Restorative practice and special needs: A practical guide to working restoratively with young people*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
  - This practical guide explains how to implement restorative approaches with young people with special needs in educational or residential settings.
- 4) Costello, B., Wachtel, J., & Wachtel, T. (2010). *Restorative circles in schools: Building community and enhancing learning*. International Institute for Restorative Practices.
  - A book that presents an array of practical ideas for how circles can be used in classrooms, hallways, playgrounds, and staff rooms. Written clearly and with lots of examples, it is the type of book you can pick up and skim as you look for ways to nurture a relational culture.
- 5) Sellman, E., Cremin, H., & McCluskey, G. (2013). *Restorative approaches to conflict in schools: Interdisciplinary perspectives on whole school approaches to managing relationships*. Abingdon, OX; Routledge.
  - This edited volume draws together offers both critique and guidance in order that the implementation of restorative approaches in schools may be undertaken thoughtfully and sustainably.
- 6) Thorsborne, M., & Blood, P. (2013). *Implementing Restorative Practice in Schools: A Practical Guide to Transforming School Communities*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
  - A current, very helpful manual that gets into the hope of implementing restorative practices in schools.