Supporting Holistic Restorative Approaches to Learning During School Building Closure

*This document is an evolving resource for SU/SD/schools' restorative approaches and leadership teams. It was initiated by the Vermont Restorative Approaches Collaborative (VTRAC) with additional support from a Vermont Department of Health, Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Programs grant. We invite you to compare your SU/SD/school's approach and resources with what is offered here and make constructive suggestions to your leadership and colleagues. If you need support making such recommendations, please contact us at info@vtrac.org. This document is a working document; **please provide feedback on this form to let us know what is missing and what you found useful.***

As educators, students, and families around the state and world struggle to meet the challenges of Teaching and Learning in COVID-19, a holistic restorative approach to education becomes even more important. By applying restorative principles and trauma-informed, equity-based practices to our online interactions, we increase everyone's capacity to learn while tending to our wellbeing. This document was created to encourage educational institutions to apply the following principles:

- Relationship
- Engagement / Inclusion
- Choice / Agency
- Mindfulness

- Respect
- Responsibility / Accountability
- Equity
- Humor (don't forget it--we did!)

Consider establishing principles to guide teaching and learning in a time of Covid-19. Try and have restorative principles, such as above, inform your school's work. Here's an example from Lamoille Union High School.

Start with Connection & Belonging

Because human beings are wired for connection, the absence of it makes learning (and everything) more difficult. Students, families, colleagues, and leaders all need time to slow down the virtual world and connect before jumping into learning or working together. Create the conditions for meaningful engagement; avoid a compliance orientation. Here are a few examples:

- 10 Tips for Restorative Leading and Teaching in the Virtual World
- Emotional Weather Report
- "Our Shared Humanity" RAC weekly check-in

- Online Support Circle by Kay Pranis
- Check-ins & Check-outs
- Roses and Thorns by Alex Venet
- Virtual Circle Visual Resource
- Restorative Approaches Activities

Support Student Connection

In addition to the connection activities linked above, here are examples of how to support student connection:

- Advisory Resource
- Remote Community Engagement Resource
- Guidelines/Tips for leading student circles
- Mindfulness Bookmarks

- Set up student-led circles (if there is readiness)
- Weekly Mindfulness/Friday 5-4-3-2-1
- Develop RP groups, youth-adult teams, etc.
  - Resource for youth-adult RP team

Family/Household Connection

Schools are no longer the locus of learning; it's the home. Partnering with families and caregivers is now critical to student success, but also the success of teachers and the school. Families benefit from basic semi-structured activities that help them better understand each other and co-create supports for this new learning and working environment. The Vermont Agency of Education has published Information for Families and Guardians, which includes Guidelines by age group. Here are a few activities for families to succeed with learning at home:

- Have regular family meetings with check-ins (see resources above)
- A Family Guide to Supporting Student Wellbeing During School Closures
- Thriving at Home: A wellness workbook
- Identify family values; develop agreements for the home
- Positive Behavior Support at Home (pg. 6 specific to Restorative Approaches)
- Be clear about work expectations at home and when it is OK to call it a day (< 6hrs)

Support Staff Connection

With the many obstacles to learning inherent to a virtual classroom or meeting room, it is very hard for educators to feel success. And, it is far too easy to experience feelings of failure and frustration. That's why it's essential that RP or leadership teams create opportunities for authentic and meaningful connections.

- Staff Circle Script (bare bones)
- Appended Staff Circle Script (with tips and scripts to follow)
- Staff Circle with Break Out Room Protocol for larger staff circles
- "Our Shared Humanity" RAC weekly check-in

Promote School-Community Connection

- Convert school traditions and routines to virtual models (i.e. concerts, recognition ceremonies, field day, etc.)

Facilitate Equitable & Engaging Online Learning

We are all operating with reduced capacity due to the global crisis. Start with slowing down and connecting to build a learning environment where people can actually engage. The Vermont Agency of Education published Universal Principles and Recommended Practices. Here is a simple list of things to consider:

- Engage students in co-creating expectations/guidelines/agreements for virtual learning environments
- Survey students to drive learning using online polling (i.e. Google forms)
- Begin with connections before content
- When using a video platform, establish a talking order and post it in the chat box. This avoids multiple people starting to talk at once, limits interruption, helps create equity of voice in the virtual classroom. Anyone can always pass using modified circle process
- Use Google Docs to co-create work products together
- Use breakout discussion groups in addition to larger virtual classroom environments
- Remind people to slow down - work with administrators on this messaging.
- Don't forget to be human and bring your own unique brand of humor to your online learning. Here are some fun examples.

Build Safety with Trauma-Informed Principles & Balance in the Process

- Limit what's new: Maintain and remind everyone about norms, do not change things that don't need to be changed (student math or reading groups), avoid unnecessary new technology.
- Offer self-regulation, self-soothing, and self-care tools to students and educators and practice them together! Check out this simple and clear set of video instructions from a Milton Educator
- Establish online routines and rituals using the balance in the process model: mindfulness moment, check-ins and outs, connection, collaborative learning, closing. See "10 Tips"

- Provide opportunities for students to provide anonymous feedback through a polling app.
- Follow recommendations for keeping online spaces safe, like blocking private chatting.
- Develop guidelines with students around how they want their online learning to look like.
- Take 3-5 minutes to ground yourself before going online. Co-regulation happens online too.
- Acknowledge the challenges and be transparent about your own.
- Consult with the experts:
  - Joelle Van Lent: Supporting ourselves, our families, our students, and our communities during our current experience of COVID-19 & school closure.
  - Alex Venet: Four Core Priorities for Trauma-Informed Distance Learning
  - David Melnick NFI VT: COVID-19 Emotional Well-Being Ideas

Considerations for Professional Learning

As we settle into this new reality and grow more comfortable with the work of teaching and supervising online, we will want to think of ways to maintain professional learning. For detailed technical and restorative guidelines visit here. Here are some recommendations:

- Keep PL opportunities short and easily digestible by providing an article or video and an interactive quiz or forum discussion.
- Provide PL that does not require online engagement 100% of the time, like book groups.
- Create asynchronous learning opportunities to accommodate educators' new schedules as parents/caregivers and educators.
- Take this opportunity to build online resources.
- Make sure to provide certificates for PL hours.
- Enlist your RP team to develop resources and post on district or school website.

Take a look at Milton Elementary School's learning modules developed by Zach Jerome, Annie O'Shaughnessy. and Kelly Gildersleve.

Considerations for School and District Leadership

School leaders have been asked to build the plane as they fly it *without* a manual! Here are a few supports to help guide your path.

- 5 simple ways to support teachers now
- Updated: 154 free K-12 resources during coronavirus pandemic

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Additional Learning Resources

Journal Pages w/ or w/o prompts
Article from the IIRP: During the COVID-19 crisis, restorative practices can help
Article from National Association of Community and Restorative Justice: Restorative Responses to COVID-19: A Call for Dialogue and Action for Restorative Practitioners