

Transforming School Culture Through Restorative Practices

Course Syllabus

Course Information

Instructor: Amie Conger

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Court Site Location: Virtual, in-person, or a combination of these

Course Meeting Dates: TBD

Course Prerequisites: None

Course Overview:

All humans are hardwired to belong. Just as we need food, shelter and clothing, human beings also need strong and meaningful relationships to thrive. **Restorative Practices (RP)** is an emerging social science that studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities.

Every member of a school community has a sphere of influence. This sphere contains an interwoven network of relationships which can influence decisions, policy and practices. The outcomes ultimately depend on the strength of the **relationships** between students, teachers, administrators, families and community members.

Authentic youth engagement with Restorative Practices requires a shift in the mental models that both adults and youth have about each other. It requires respecting and valuing the unique gifts that come from each group, and valuing the positive results that come from working together.

Research has proven that Restorative Practices:

- Improve school culture and climate for youth and adults
- Ensure **all** students are productive contributing members of the community
- Improve academic outcomes and close the achievement gap to keep youth in the learning environment
- Reduce educational services lost due to in and out of school suspensions and expulsion by keeping students in the classroom and learning
- Significantly reduce absenteeism
- Enrich current pedagogical practices with more strategies for student centered decision-making
- Work in collaboration with any existing Responsive Classroom/Developmental Design, mindfulness and personalized learning practices. Restorative Practices are a paradigm shift, not a program or initiative.

Course Description:

The central goal is to shift the culture of the school through the use of restorative practices. This year long learning community is unique in that youth will sit side-by-side with adults as they work together to craft and implement a culture shift in their schools that supports equitable opportunities, engagement and empowerment.

As a member of the RP learning community you will::

- Explore the fundamentals of restorative practices
- Assess your individual and/or school's current status relative to mental models and practices aligned with implementation best practices
- Provide a learning community for problem solving, support and collaboration
- Identify the needs of the school community in response to the paradigm shift towards a restorative community
- Explore individual inquiry questions through the action research process

In a virtual learning community participants will:

- Reflect on readings.
- Reflect on the impact of their learning on their own teaching practices and the learning of the students they work with.
- Write a monthly reflection paper, minimum 2 pages.
- Design a final project that shows your learning from the year.

Individual Work:

- Participants will be a part of an online classroom where readings and reflections will take place regularly, as well as apply their learning to their professional practices, reflecting on this through the online classroom.
- The instructor will provide six individual coaching sessions to each course participant, and is available throughout the year for on-site or off-site consultation.

Required Texts:

Readings will help deepen your understanding of restorative practices, shifting school culture, authentic youth voice, agency and youth-adult partnerships. A full reading and assignment list will be provided upon registration. Additional readings will be selected based on the interests and needs of participants.

[Evan, Katherine, Dorothy Vaandering. \(2016\) *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education: Fostering Responsibility, Healing, and Hope in Schools \(Justice and Peacebuilding\)*](#)

[Shalaby, Carla \(2017\). *Troublemakers: Lessons in Freedom from Young Children at School*](#)

Beattie, Helen., Rich, Martha. (2018). [Youth-Adult Partnership: The Keystone to Transformation](#)

Suggested readings:

Toshalis, E., Nakkula, M. (2012) [Motivation, Engagement and Student Voice: Executive Summary](#). Students at the Center

Watson and Pranis (2015) *Circle Forward: Building a Restorative School Community*

Proposed Syllabus*

**May be subject to change depending on course participants*

October

Reading: The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education: Fostering Responsibility, Healing, and Hope in Schools: Chapters 1 and 2

Brief reflection in response to reading (2-3 paragraphs)

1. What are your values and beliefs? What are the core values and beliefs of your school? How do these align with the core values of RJE?

Writing: Reflection Paper, maximum 2 pages, addressing these Enduring Understandings

1. Restorative Practices are intended to build community and maintain healthy relationships.
2. Since all learning is social by nature, strong relationships fostered by restorative practices play a powerful gatekeeping role.
3. Restorative Practices help an entire learning community understand each individual's needs in order to create a more equitable experience and set of outcomes.

and the following Essential Question

1. Why are we often more comfortable doing things "to" and "for" students, rather than with them? What is the consequence of this?

November

Reading: Troublemakers, Chapters 2 (Zora) and 4 (Marcus)

Brief reflection in response to reading (2-3 paragraphs)

1. What is school culture? How do you create the culture in your classroom to meet the needs of all learners?

Writing: Reflection Paper, maximum 2 pages, addressing these Enduring Understandings

1. Characteristics of schools which have increased student engagement in learning and voice in decision making.

and the following Essential Question

1. What is the role of freedom and democracy in the school setting?

December

Reading: The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education: Fostering Responsibility, Healing,

and Hope in Schools: Chapters 3 and 4

Brief reflection in response to reading (2-3 paragraphs)

1. How do you see the four quadrants in the Relationship Matrix play out in your school?

Writing: Reflection Paper, maximum 2 pages, addressing these Enduring Understandings

1. Youth can and should work in collaboration with adults to make their school more engaging for all students.

and the following Essential Question

1. How can I better align my classroom/school practices to reach disengaged students or students just "playing the game of school"?

January

Reading: Troublemakers, Chapters 1 () and 3 (Lucas)

Brief reflection in response to reading (2-3 paragraphs)

1. How do you encourage youth to be active participants in your community as humans?

Writing: Reflection Paper, maximum 2 pages, addressing these Enduring Understandings

1. How circles can be used for learning, conflict/resolution and support for all members of a school community.

and the following Essential Question:

1. What is restoration?

February

Reading: The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education: Fostering Responsibility, Healing, and Hope in Schools: Chapters 5 and 6

Brief reflection in response to reading (2-3 paragraphs)

1. How does your school/classroom align in terms of being restorative across settings?

Writing: Reflection Paper, maximum 2 pages, addressing these Enduring Understandings

1. The theory, stories, and practice of restorative practices occur in multiple settings and communities

and the following Essential Question:

1. What is justice?

March

Listening: [Restorative Justice is Racial Justice, Center for Court Innovation](#)

Brief reflection in response to reading (2-3 paragraphs)

1. What resonated with you in this podcast? What questions do you have?

Writing: Reflection Paper, maximum 2 pages, addressing these Enduring Understandings

1. How restorative practices can be infused into structures/initiatives that currently exist.

and the following Essential Question:

1. What needs to shift in order to empower students to be central players in their learning community?

April

Reading or **Listening:** Find a resource regarding RP to share with others in this learning community. Write a statement (min. 1 paragraph) of why you chose it and what about it resonates with you. Respond to at least one other post.

Writing: Reflection Paper, maximum 2 pages, addressing these Enduring Understandings

1. Being involved in school transformation requires deep personal reflection and a commitment to pedagogical changes based on new understandings.

and the following Essential Question

1. What are the most just or fair ways to handle disciplinary issues in school?

May

1. Team project share/celebration - details to come

Learning Opportunities & Assessment Evidence

1) **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY:** This is the part of the course that will allow youth and adults time to talk about readings, brainstorm ideas and solutions to challenges, and discuss and learn from each other's work. There is tremendous field-based expertise when we pool the experiences and talents of all involved in this work.

How will we assess this?

Attendance at the four full day sessions for our Professional Learning Community is mandatory. In addition, readings and reflective writing assignments must be done prior to meetings so all participants will be able to reference similar texts.

2) **REFLECTIVE WRITING:** Participants will write a monthly reflection that will incorporate reflections on the required reading as well as a response to the essential question posed for the month. In addition to the monthly written reflections, there will be a final end-of-year

reflection where you can address questions such as: what you did, what you learned, and how you are applying that learning to future work, as well as suggestions for refining the work.

How will we assess this?

Whenever possible, written work will be shared with all class participants to capitalize on developing a vital virtual learning community.

Written work will be assessed according to timeliness and demonstration of critical thinking and strong reflective practices in a proficiency based framework.

3) **YOUR RP ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT**: This course is centered on what you and your team will learn from the implementation of Restorative Practices. This project will stem from an inquiry question and will follow a project-based learning model (inquiry, research, connection with community partners, documentation, reflection and celebration). An outcome of this project will be an action plan for the following year, as there is a continuum of implementation.

How will we assess this?

A team generated project capturing the impact of your learning and work in a way that is meaningful to your team. This can include photos, documents, drawings, writings, video documentaries, etc. It is up to you and your team to decide what format works best to capture your work throughout the year and be a useful presentation tool to reflect on and assess your journey at the end of the year.

Grading Policy

The Field-based Graduate Program in Education feels strongly that the learning that occurs in each class is very individualized and that assessment should occur based on each individual's ongoing improvement and progress. Evidence for that progress is therefore determined based on regular self, peer, and instructor assessment throughout the varying activities and discussions during every class session as well as any assignments given for outside of class time. Attendance at each class meeting is very important in order to provide that evidence of continual learning.

Unlike a fully evolved proficiency system, participants in this class need their final assessment in a letter grade form for reimbursement purposes. Each class member taking this course for credit will therefore include in their final paper a rationale for a grade translation based on their ultimate assessment in the three domains noted above. Instructors will review this rationale and issue or amend this proposed grade as deemed appropriate. If the grade is to be amended, the instructor(s) will discuss this with the class participant in depth.

Attendance Policy

A great deal of the instruction in this course will occur during in-class time as a result of the implementation of constructivist teaching and subsequent learning for all. It is therefore

crucial to attend all class meetings. Planning ahead by looking at your site's complete Master Schedule and prioritizing your graduate program is mandatory. However, emergencies do happen, and, in the very rare cases they occur, immediate communications with your instructor to determine how to proceed are required.

Copyright Policy

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Academic Honesty Policy

Southern New Hampshire University requires all students to adhere to high standards of integrity in their academic work. Activities such as plagiarism and cheating are not condoned by the university. Students involved in such activities are subject to serious disciplinary action. Plagiarism is defined as the intentional or unintentional use, whether by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another without full and clear acknowledgment. Cheating includes the giving or receiving of unauthorized assistance on quizzes, examinations, or written assignments from any source not approved by the instructor.

For a full definition of academic dishonesty, please refer to the undergraduate or graduate catalogs.

Southern New Hampshire University is committed to and concerned with meeting the needs of students challenged by physical, sensory, psychiatric and/or learning disabilities with regard to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended, and Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. At the beginning of each term, or as soon as you become aware of a disability, we encourage you to contact the Office of Disability Services to discuss accommodations for which you may be qualified. For questions concerning support services, documentation guidelines, or general disability issues: Office of Disability Services, Exeter Hall, Suite 59 Hyla Jaffe, Director 603.626.9100 ext.2386 h.jaffe@snhu.edu

Disability Services - ADA/504 Compliance Statement

For questions concerning disability related compliance matters, grievance or legal issues: Ms. Jet Goldberg, ADA/504 Compliance Officer Director of Wellness Center 603-645-9679 j.goldberg@snhu.edu

Library Resources

In addition to the intellectual resources available on site and online (<http://www.snhu.edu/library>), Shapiro Library makes available group and one-on-one instruction in information literacy, enabling students to define and articulate what knowledge-based resources are relevant to their research interests. Library staff are available to assist students in effectively and efficiently accessing information from credible sources, to compare new knowledge with prior beliefs, and to consider the related ethical,

legal, and socio-economic issues that are inherent in scholarly investigation.

Web-based Instruction Required

YES NO The use of Web-based supplemental instruction is required in this course.