

**THIS MEETING DID NOT CONTAIN A PRESENTATION**

Suspension and Expulsion Subgroup

**9/20/2024**

**11:00-12:00**

**Web Based Meeting- Zoom**

**Attendance**

TJ Nuccio  
Amanda Pickett  
Fran Rabinowitz  
Emily Leen  
Yecenia Casiano  
Jo Ann Freiberg  
Werner Oyanadel  
Maureen Brummett  
Samantha Miller  
Amy Vatner

Marco Tirillo  
Pat Ciccone  
James Mandracchia  
Kathryn Meyer  
Rep. Porter

**TYJI Staff**

Brittany Lamar  
Paul Klee

**Meeting Objectives:**

This meeting featured two presentations about the implementation and importance of restorative practices in addressing student behavior, one from an educational consultancy and another from a middle school.

**Meeting Summary:**

- John Wallace Middle School Restorative Practices Presentation
  - There have been numerous conversations about the traditional lack of acknowledgement of equity within pedagogical disciplinary tactics. Brown and Black students are overrepresented in these systems.
  - JWMS used a traditional disciplinary model in the 2017/2018 school year, which resulted in over 1000 level 1 actions, over 400 level 2 actions, and 69 suspensions.
  - After implementing restorative justice model over the last few years, level 1 and level 2 actions were halved, and there were only 31 suspensions in the 2023-2024 school year.
  - The traditional disciplinary model did not address the core issue of a student's behavior, and primarily focused on enforcing a rule or regulation
    - In response to this JWMS created a committee incorporating students from all grade levels, educators, and administrators in implementing restorative justice practices.

- This committee read academic literature on restorative justice discussed its implementation and documented the positive effects of other schools that adopted similar models.
    - In addition, JWMS also brought in a trainer that specialized in positive school climate training and in restorative practices
    - While there was unanimous support in implementing these principles, it is important to note that they need to be specifically applied to each school's context
  - The restorative practices framework uses mediations within the classroom, and tasks students with a reflection assignment after an infraction. The student must understand the process of correction and how their actions impact others.
  - Acknowledging race is a critical component of the restorative practice model, as it helps confront unconscious bias and assists educators in changing their relationship with punitive discipline.
  - The future of their work is going to be developing behavioral expectation examples.
    - This is completed through MTSS Tier 1 model, and Tier 2 and a Tier 3 level for students that need more assistance.
      - A practical example includes creating a Friday detention period that is focused on 2 hours of learning. This alters prior policy that forced student into suspension before.
      - There is a greater focus on communication and thinking about altering behavior, such as making students more respectful. It's more important to the core lesson that the teacher is attempting to teach, such as valuing interpersonal respect and responsibility.
- Presentation from School Climate Consultants
  - A major concept in their work is restorative accountability, which accounts for context and the model doesn't replace consequences, and helps the individual change their behavior.
  - Another critical idea is connective relationships, in which all stakeholders such as students, parents, administrators base their interactions on expressing care, interpersonal growth, expanding possibilities, sharing power, and respecting human dignity.
  - The presenter gave an example of an elementary school student slurring a friend. Instead of applying a punishment without sufficiently correcting the behavior, the school opted for both parties to discuss the situation in a restorative justice circle, with the offending party having a chance to express their remorse and acknowledge the harm they did.
  - The methodology of administering a punishment could radically alter the trajectory of a student's life. The presenter gave an example of two 8th graders that received a year-long suspension for vandalism, and one of them failing to graduate high school due to falling behind academically that school year.

- A restorative practice such as helping to repair the damage they caused would have been a better learning experience in helping them understand the consequences of their actions.
- Restorative Justice recently impacted bullying statutes, as the Connecticut State Legislature recently tasked schools with implementing restorative practices.
- Another important distinction is the way disciplinary actions are messaged. Even with suspensions, frame it regarding accountability instead of punishment.
  - Students benefit more when there is student and staff buy-in, as this is a prerequisite prior to introducing restorative justice.
  - Instead of just problem solving, there needs to be an emphasis on the interpersonal connections between staff members and students.
- In some schools that have begun employing restorative practices, the rates of chronic absenteeism dropped from 23.7% to 3.2%

**Next Meeting: TBD**

