

Dear Staff,

We hope that most of you know your school is spending this year learning more about restorative practices. We applaud you for recognizing that together we all must do better at:

- building honest, positive relationships and a sense of community in our schools; and
- learning/teaching how to solve conflicts in ways that encourage reflection and ownership, and repair the harm done, rather than simply dole out punishments.

A tall order, right?! Luckily, you are not alone—your school is one of 15 in the District with the courage and forethought to forge this path. Your school has been sending a team to the monthly PLC (Professional Learning Community) and has trained at least a few personnel in circles. Our hope is that as the year progresses, and especially as plans for next year get created, Restorative Practices will become more and more visible in your daily life at school.

We have a few of us who are working to support this work from Central Office on the RocRestorative team, and we're going to be spending time in each school, bringing fresh eyes to your school and looking ONLY for the BRIGHT SPOTS relating to restorative practices. Looking for what works and building upon it is known as Appreciative Inquiry, and it is proven to help organizations make changes that last. Plus, it motivates us by noticing and celebrating the good we are doing.

On _____, a small team will be spending 2-3 hours in your school, hanging out talking to students and staff, popping in and out of rooms, observing in the hallways and common spaces, etc. **We are NOT using a rubric, evaluating, or making judgements—we are TOTALLY focused on identifying the bright spots—the things you are already doing well in terms of building community, fostering relationships and solving conflicts restoratively.** We are thrilled that this team will include students and community partners from Rochester.

Examples of what we note might include:

- *“Staff member was at front door greeting students cheerfully with a personal good morning.”*
- *“10th grade girl shared that drama was squashed after a few circles that Ms. XX led, that the girls felt like they had a chance to talk it out.”*
- *“Individual picture of every student and staff posted on wall with what they contribute to the school family.”*
- *“Student used reflection sheet to pause and regroup in the administrators’ office”*
- *“Mr. X welcomed a student into class after an altercation, calling it a “do over” and not belaboring the point.*

Bottom line, we are looking to uncover the small things that are working well, the spaces where interactions are very positive, where conflicts are handled productively. We can't wait to help your schools identify and celebrate those positives, so that they can be nurtured to become the norm.

See you soon!

RocRestorative