

Adapting restorative practices
to a center for teens
living and learning without school

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Overview

- * Personal approach: How can I, as an individual, apply what I've learned through restorative practices in my work?
- * What is North Star? - a unique community/learning center
- * Assessing the workplace/institution: What is restorative?
Where might restorative concepts be fruitfully applied?
- * How can I work restoratively as teachers, with individuals and groups, as an advisor and in my role as a staff member?



North Star Self-Directed Learning for Teens

Learning is Natural. School is Optional.

Social



Common room and building as a whole provides a place and a social environment, particularly for teens who otherwise might never choose a life without school

Weekly classes / one-on-ones

- Core staff
- Extended staff
- Volunteers
- Parents
- Students themselves



Any imaginable subject, if possible!

Advising

Core staff (currently 3 full-time and 5 part-time) meet with each member (currently about 60) every week or two to check in.



What is restorative about North Star?

- * Concept of working “with” students and families
- * When rules are broken - respect maintained. No punitive measures.
- * Family Meetings - 3x per year, open communication
- * Annoyance meetings
- * Occasional use of responsive circles
- * Staff meetings using circle go-around
- * General collegial atmosphere. Fair process.

Possible gaps/blind spots

- * Little student engagement in norm setting
- * “Community meeting” was top down, somewhat chaotic
- * Lack of process for students to take responsibility/enforce norms
- * Feeling that adults have to nag about things like cleaning up, maintaining reasonable volume in quiet room, etc.
- * Some frustrations about student follow-through, homework, attendance, somewhat permissive on this level.

How can I influence the organization?

- * Be humble and observe. There are many useful processes, and these processes can be used to learn and have influence.
- * Offer a short introduction to the social discipline window and the continuum of restorative practices at a staff meeting.
- * Raise issue of disconnects on “community level” on several occasions. Eventually this led to reconsideration of the “community meeting.”
- * Talk with others about specific practices.

Practice/model restorative responses

- * Model restorative practices in my personal dealings with students whenever possible
- * Responsive example: outrageous comment
- * Responsive example: student in band

Advising role

- * How to apply RP to the concept of self-directed learning.
- * Where does this fit on the social discipline window?
- * What does it mean to be “explicit”?
- * What types of questions to ask and when?
- * Narrative therapy, restorative questions & Socratic method.