

# Restorative Applications in Special Education

*Leila Peterson, Executive Director*

*Melina Mora, Restorative Practices Program  
Specialist*

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# What Restorative Justice Brings

A mindset shift for the whole school community: **students** to **teachers and school staff** to **principals** to **families** to the **neighborhood**



Adapted from Evans, K.R. and Lester, J.N. (2013). Restorative Justice in Education: what we know so far. *Middle School Journal*. 44(5), 57-63.



# What Restorative Brings

These practices aim to:

- Keep youth in school and in their communities;
- Promote a safe and inviting learning environment;
- Repair harm and build stronger relationships;
- Provide opportunities for youth and adults to be worthy, active, and accountable members of their school community.

***How can we realize these goals for ALL students?***

# Why integrate restorative practices into the Special Education process?

- Team members (especially parents) have lots of feelings around the special education experience  Special Education is currently characterized by processes that are often impersonal, legalistic, and adversarial.
- Helps teams move from “letter-of-the-law” to “spirit-of-the-law”  Restorative practices offer an alternative set of processes that serve Special Education functions with greater trust, shared decision making, and mutual accountability, thereby improving educational investment and outcomes.



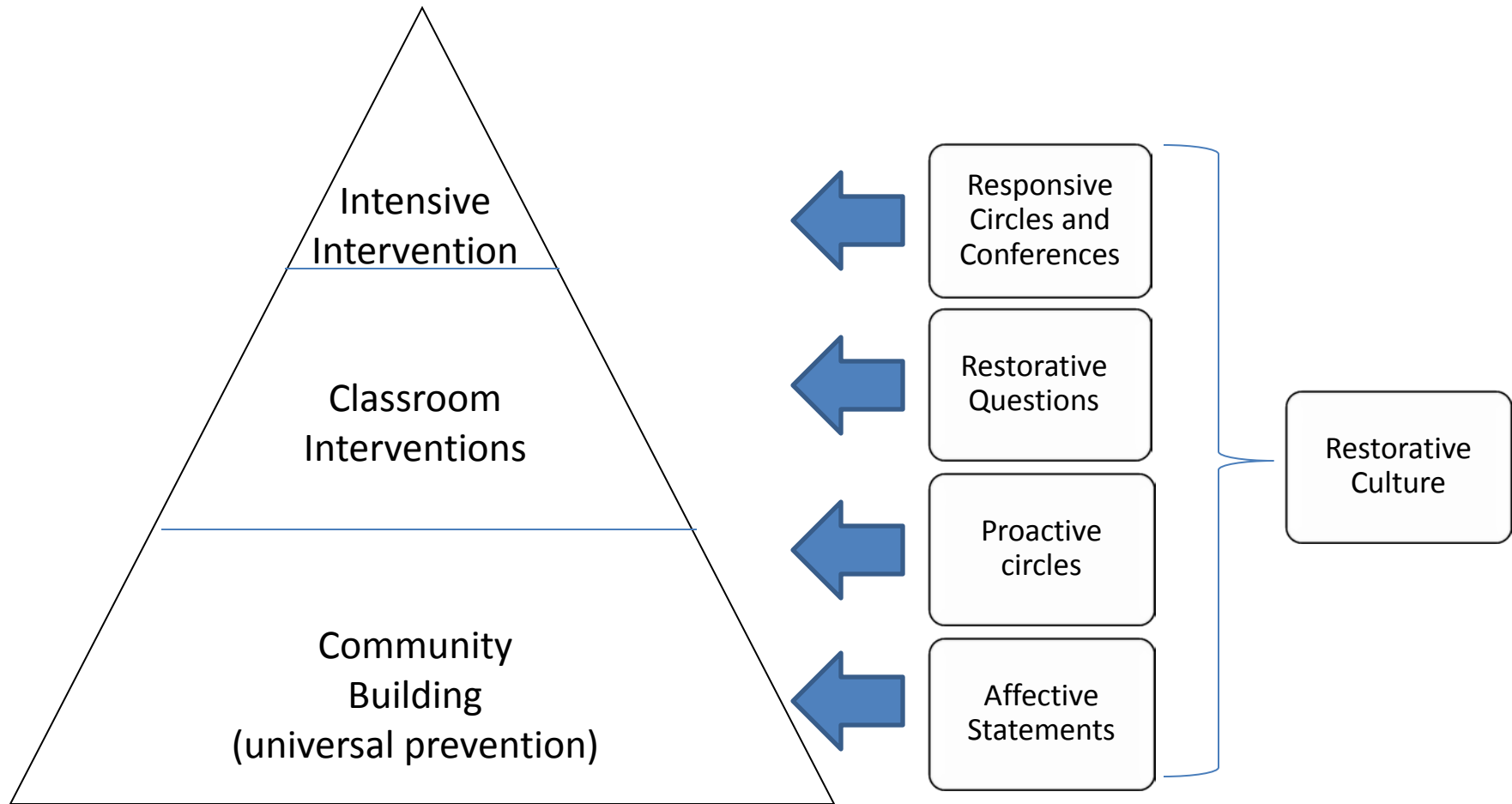
# Restorative DC works with **12** schools in Washington, DC to implement a **Whole School Restorative Model\***



Adapted from Evans, K.R. and Lester, J.N. (2013). Restorative Justice in Education: what we know so far. *Middle School Journal*. 44(5), 57-63.

\*Restorative DC is a program of SchoolTalk, and is funded by the District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education and the aoe Foundation

# A Whole-School Approach





# Restorative DC assists schools with exploring the intersection of special education and restorative practices

- Integration of restorative practices into the SPED process
- Developing and sharing techniques for more accessible restorative practices
- Building self-advocacy and promoting disability awareness



# Why exploring the intersection is important for inclusion...

- A restorative mindset encourages focus on the whole child rather than emphasizing limitations
- Promotes collaboration of all stakeholders (parents, students, teachers, principals, etc.) in realizing the shared goal: the success of the student
- Through relationship-focused lens, undesirable student behaviors are seen as a result of and an opportunity to address the lack of warm, caring, and respectful human interactions

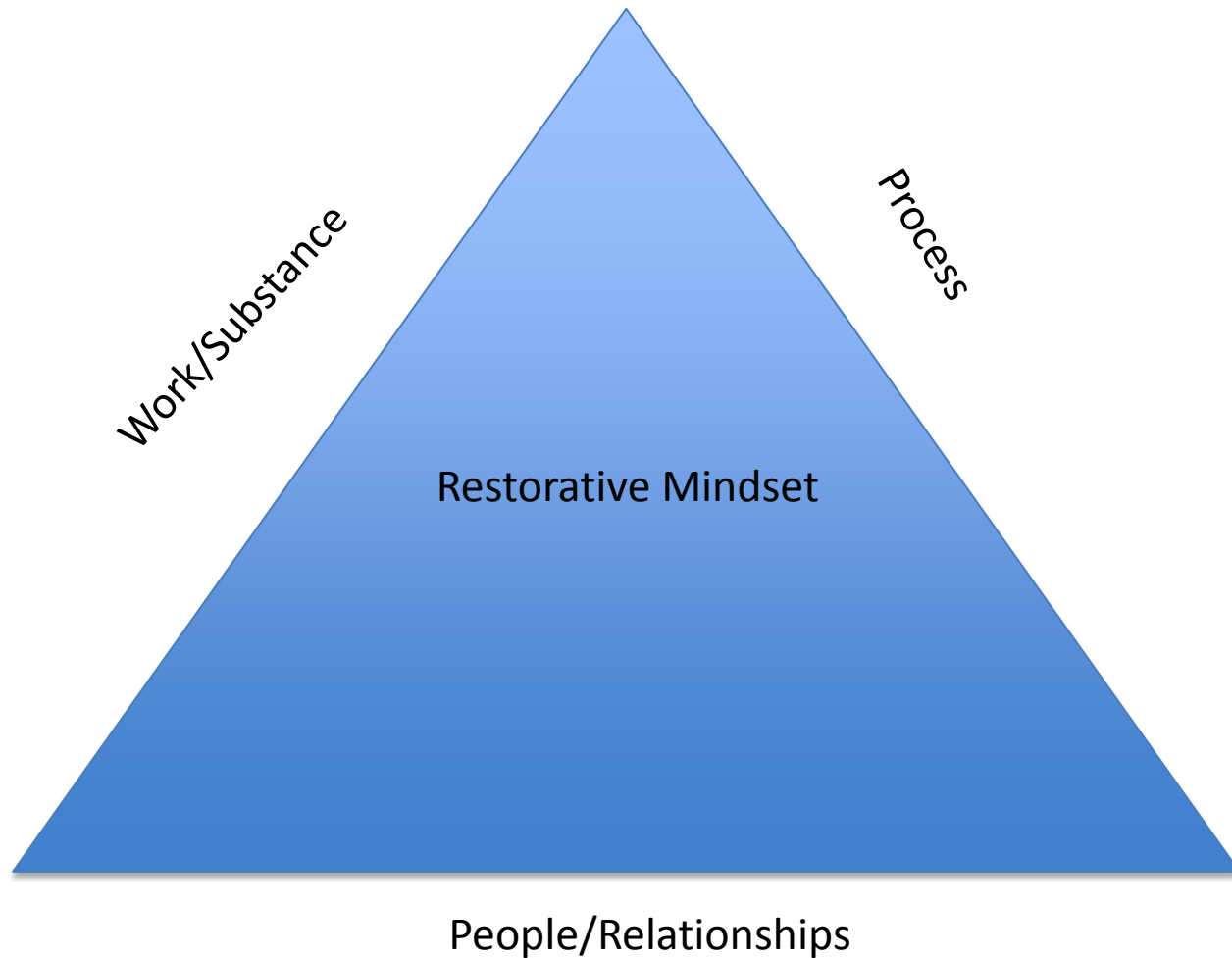


# What we have learned...

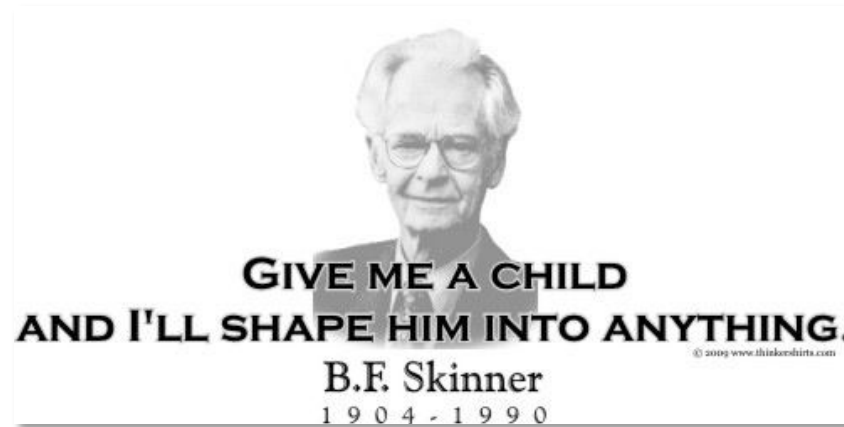


**RestorativeDC**

# Building a restorative mindset requires attention to all three aspects



# Behavior is Communication



Disruptive or problematic behavior by a student might be caused by:

- A manifestation of the disability
- Result of frustration, anger, anxiety, depression as a result of not having educational needs met
- Or a combination of both

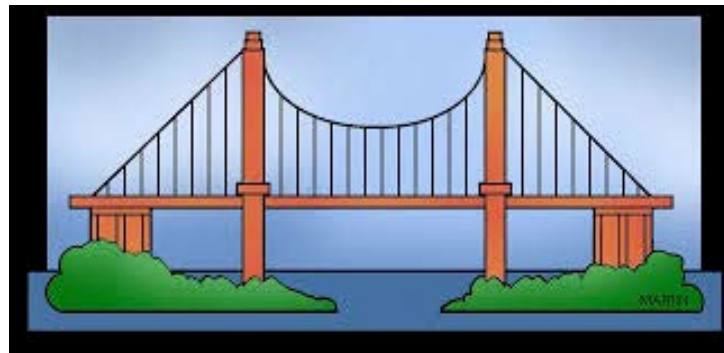
# Flipping the Switch

- Too often problematic behavior flips the switch to a focus on controlling or punishing behavior
- Addressing educational needs becomes secondary



# Bridging the behavioral and academic components of a school requires effort

- Including teachers in restorative practices has structural challenges
- Members of behavior teams and social workers often don't have a deep understanding of how disabilities impact students in the classroom and what can be done to support them
- Restorative practitioners need disability awareness



# *Restorative practitioners needs tools and techniques for making processes accessible for all*



Burnett, N., & Thorsborne, M. (2015). *Restorative practice and special needs: a practical guide to working restoratively with young people*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

# REPAIR Framework to Implement an RP Approach for Students with Various Needs

**R** - Is this the right approach? Establish the outcome needed to determine the approach

**E** - Establish needs for all involved – what's the one social skill I want to teach as a consequence of this?

**P** – Preparation for participation – what and who is needed to give this its best chance of working?

**A** – Paying attention to the affect for those involved – before, during and after. Also, what are the actions needing to happen as a consequence of the RP?

**I** – Integrity – in terms of process, preparation, follow-up and philosophy of RP, is the fidelity around process intact?

**R** – In the end it's all about the relationships – reflecting, repairing and reconnecting, and ensuring the relationship between participants and the facilitator is one of trust.

(Burnett & Thorsborne, 2015)

# **School/Class Approaches: Additional Helpful Hints for Accessible Restorative Practices**

- Use of circle time to teach restorative thinking and behaviors
- Take care not to deliberately humiliate
- “Centre of Calm” concept (Jacobson, 2015)
- Explicit teaching of facial expressions
- Learning socially acceptable responses
- Re-enactment
- Developing a small number of visual tools or communication

(Burnett & Thorsborne, 2015)



# Example:

## A public charter school is combining self determination skills with a student-led restorative support circle

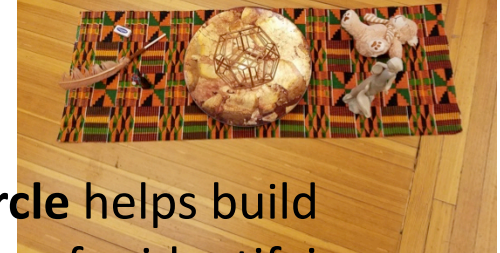
Self-determination skills help a student effectively communicate needs

### Awareness

- Strengths & Weaknesses
- Preferences

### Advocacy

- Communication Skills
- Understanding Rights & Process



A **restorative support circle** helps build relationships and is a process for identifying specific ways the school community can help a student be successful

# *Questions?*

Leila Peterson

[Leila.peterson@schooltalkdc.org](mailto:Leila.peterson@schooltalkdc.org)

Melina Mora

[Melina.mora@schooltalkdc.org](mailto:Melina.mora@schooltalkdc.org)