



THE FLUSHING INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

144-80 Barclay Avenue Flushing, NY 11355 Phone (718) 463-2348 Fax (718) 463-3514

Restorative Approaches at FIHS

Background & History:

At Flushing International High School (FIHS) we are moving in the direction of building a culture of community accountability, peace, and respect through Restorative Justice (RJ). RJ practices are alternatives to the more punitive zero-tolerance approaches to student discipline. RJ practices are rooted in the traditions of many Native American, African, and other Indigenous cultures throughout the world. In the United States, RJ practices have been introduced to address the high rates of student drop out (also known as student “push out”) that has been found to have a direct link to punitive student discipline methods.

Educators and activists have also introduced RJ practices in U.S. schools to address what is being called the “school-to-prison-pipeline”. Statistics show that particularly Black and Latino students are being pushed out of schools at higher rates while ending up in prison also at higher rates. Research shows that students of color are disciplined in harsher ways and are also suspended at higher rates, therefore leaving them at higher risk of being pushed out of schools and ending up in prisons.

Key Principles of RJ:

- Punishment does not address root cause of lead to long-term change.
- Interpersonal harm impacts the entire community.
- People impacted by harm have the right and responsibility to shape and influence the process to repair harm and restore peace.
- Cooperative processes can lead to the transformation of relationships, people, and entire communities. *(taken from Natalie Havlin's powerpoint presentation on the History and Politics of RJ in the U.S.)*

RJ at FIHS

RJ at FIHS is a preventive approach that aims to build a safer and more inclusive school community while also aiming to have higher student school retention (particularly of those groups at higher risk of dropping out). Instead of “pushing students out”, RJ at FIHS creates opportunities for those who engage in wrongful/harmful behavior to self-reflect and take responsibility by restoring the damage caused by their actions. Further, it creates opportunities for those who are harmed to have a voice around the impact the wrongful/harmful behavior had on them. Finally, RJ approaches create the opportunity for different members of the community (from students, to teachers, to administrators, and even families) to participate in providing support and holding community members accountable. RJ practices can also be implemented to support members of the community who are struggling academically and/or socio-emotionally, and to celebrate their victories/successes.



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FIHS Community Principles

RJ approaches at FIHS are guided by our school Community Principles. Through a collective and democratic student-staff-parent effort, we identified the following Community Principles: Collaboration, Peace and Justice, Self-Expression, Academic Excellence and Learning, Love and Belonging, Holism, Respect, Caring for our Environment, Honoring Diversity, Community Building, Leadership, and Creativity. When a FIHS Community Principle is violated, we restore balance through RJ practices.

RJ Practices at FIHS

The following are some restorative practices/approaches that are implemented at FIHS:

- **Circles:**
The Circle Process is a story-telling process. Every person has a story, and every story has a lesson to offer. In the Circle, people touch each other's lives by sharing stories that have meaning to them. Circles create a positive school and classroom climate, help resolve behavior problems while restoring the damage caused by wrongful behavior. Circles can also support students who are struggling academically, socially and/or emotionally.
- **Fairness Committees:** A Fairness Committee is a formal meeting of students and adults to hear the concerns of any community member who feels that a Community Principle has been violated. The Committee inspires self-reflection by confronting a member of the community with his or her actions and how they affected others. The group decides how to repair the community after actions have violated its principles, and how to reintegrate the member of the community who has committed the violation back into the culture of the school.
- **Mediations:** A Mediation is used to help resolve conflicts, fights and/or misunderstandings between members of our school community. A Mediation includes a trained facilitator and the people who are in need of resolving their differences. The intention is to support those who are involved in the conflict to engage in a peaceful and respectful dialogue about what happened and come up with solutions and/or agreements to ensure mutual respect.