Community Building	All Grades	School Climate and Culture

Session Focus	Understand the key components necessary to build and sustain restorative practices and transform school climate and culture.
Facilitators	Familiarity with restorative processes and whole school implementation

AGENDA

I. Getting Started	II. View Video	III. Video Discussion	IV. Planning Resource
5 Minutes *Reflect on the factors needed to create and sustain culture within a school community.*	10 Minutes *Understand how a middle school in D.C. made the transition to a restorative school culture.*	10 Minutes *Discuss role of leadership and staff in sustaining the process of restorative practices.*	10 Minutes *Discuss and complete the SchoolTalk & Restorative DC School Climate and Culture Assessment Tool.*

MATERIALS

Video	Planning Resources
Facilitators and participants can access the *Restorative DC Circles Video* here: Creating a Restorative School at Hart Middle School	*SchoolTalk & Restorative DC School Climate and Culture Assessment Tool*

CONTEXT

Video Context	Follow the staff and students of Hart Middle School as they work with Restorative DC consultants to create and sustain a restorative school culture and climate at Hart Middle School.
Key Points	• Leadership, staff and students have worked through a multi-year process to implement and sustain restorative practices to create a restorative culture at Hart Middle School. • The participation and commitment from leadership, staff and students is imperative to the success of establishing a restorative school culture.

SESSION: Getting Started (5 Minutes)

Opening Questions:
- What is your definition of school culture?
  - What are the important elements that are part of a school's culture, and why are these elements important?
- What is your definition of school climate?
  - What are the important elements of school climate and why are these elements important?

- What is the difference between school culture and school climate?
  - Why are both important to consider as part of the implementation and sustainability of restorative practices in your school?

Facilitator Note: *Encourage participants to consider key factors that need to be in place to create and sustain a transformation to a restorative school culture within their school community.*

Sample Response:
- **What is your definition of school culture?**
  - **What are the important elements that are part of a school's culture, and why are these elements important?**
    - *The term school culture generally refers to the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions, but the term also encompasses more concrete issues such as physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness of classrooms and public spaces, or the degree to which a school embraces and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural diversity. (**The Glossary of Education Reform for Journalists, Parents and Community Members**)*

- **What is your definition of school climate?**
  - **What are the important elements of school climate and why are these elements important?**
    - *School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life; it also reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures. A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributory, and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes:*
      - *Norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe.*
      - *People are engaged and respected.*
      - *Students, families, and educators work together to develop and contribute to a shared school vision.*
      - *Educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning.*
      - *Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.*
      - *(**National School Climate Center at Ramapo for Children**)*

- **What is the difference between school culture and school climate?**
  - **Why are both important to consider as part of the implementation and sustainability of restorative practices in your school?**
  - *Climate describes the shared perceptions of the people in a group or organization, while culture includes how people feel about the organization and the beliefs, values, and assumptions that provide the identity and set the*

standards of behavior (Stolp & Smith, 1995). Culture goes deeper to include the immediate environment and what people believe and value. Culture is a product of the relationship history in a school while climate is a function of how people perceive those relationships in the present (Stolp & Smith, 1995). According to Dr. Wayne Hoy(1990), organizational climate of a school is a set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another and influences the behavior of its members. It is the relatively enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by participants, affects their behavior, and is based on their collective perceptions of the behavior in schools.

- ○ *[What is School Culture and Climate (Academy for SEL in Schools)](#)*
- ○ *People are attracted to restorative approaches in schools because they see it benefiting students, families, teachers, and staff by creating a safe and engaging learning community. While the specific reasons people are attracted to restorative approaches are numerous and varied, many hope these approaches will achieve the following objectives:*
    - ▪ *improve relationships among students, teachers, and staff*
    - ▪ *strengthen the sense of belonging for all*
    - ▪ *provide opportunities for greater ownership*
    - ▪ *promote people feeling like valuable members of the community*
    - ▪ *operate in alignment with personal values*
    - ▪ *reduce exclusionary discipline*
    - ▪ *create more equity in discipline practices*
    - ▪ *create a more culturally sensitive school*
- ○ *Restorative approaches promote social engagement and connection (1) proactively to build community and connection (Tier I), (2) when things go wrong and relationship need repair (Tier II), and (3) when an individual needs more intensive support to feel a sense of belonging (Tier III). Research shows a clear connection between outcomes and students' sense of connection, belonging, and being part of the school community(CDC, 2009). School connectedness was found to be the strongest protective factor for both boys and girls to decrease substance use, school absenteeism, early sexual initiation, violence, and risk of unintentional injury, emotional distress, disordered eating, and suicidal ideation and attempts (Sacks et al., 2014). (**Vermont Agency of Education**)*

VIEW VIDEO (10 Minutes)

Restorative Practices Connection and Framing: *In this video, you will follow the staff and students of Hart Middle School as they work with Restorative DC consultants to create and sustain a restorative school culture and climate at Hart Middle School.*

Guiding Questions: As you watch the Hart video consider the following questions:
- How did the school leadership participate during the process?
- What contributions were necessary from the staff for the implementation of restorative practices within the school community?

VIDEO DISCUSSION (10 Minutes)

Reflection Questions:
- How could restorative practices support relationship building, routines and resilience in your school community?
- What steps would you need to take in order to implement and sustain restorative practices in your school community?
- How would the implementation of restorative practices impact your school culture and climate?

Sample Responses:
- **How could restorative practices support relationship building, routines and resilience in your school community?**
  - *Restorative community building circles provide a daily or weekly opportunity for students and staff to check in, create connections and strengthen relationships. Circles conducted consistently create a routine that students and staff may come to rely upon as an opportunity to engage and depend on when difficult issues arise in the class or school community.*
- **What steps would you need to take in order to implement restorative practices in your school community?**
  - *Demonstration, training and coaching may be necessary implement restorative practices from the school community.*

Planning Resource (10 Minutes)

School Climate and Culture Assessment: *Ask participants (in groups or individually) to review the **School Climate and Culture Strategy Brief** and use the attached **School Climate and Culture Assessment Tool** to assess your school's culture and climate and readiness for implementation of restorative practices.*
- *Using the Assessment Tool, ask participants to assess their school's current culture and climate.*
- *Ask participants to continue working through the Assessment Tool to determine professional development needs, resources, and staffing necessary to implement restorative practices in their school communities.*

Going Deeper

The following are additional resources to deepen your understanding of the Whole School Restorative Implementation process:
- *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* by Howard Zehr
- *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education: Fostering Responsibility, Healing and Hope in Schools* by Katherine Evans and Dorothy Vaandering
- *School Culture Rewired: How to Define, Assess and Transform It* by Steve Gruenert and Todd Whitaker
- *School Climate Change: How Do I Build a Positive Environment for Learning* by Peter DeWitt and Sean Slade
- *Circle Forward: Building a Restorative School Community* by Carolyn Boyes-Watson & Kay Pranis