



# Community Advisory Groups

Ypsilanti Community Schools

*Character Education for All*

April 11, 2013

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# Recommendations

- 1) Adopt **restorative practices (RP)** as the district's approach to character education throughout the district.

*A philosophy for building, maintaining, and repairing relationships and for fostering a sense of social responsibility and shared accountability.*

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# Recommendations

- 2) Support the implementation of district-wide restorative practices through a **work team process** to include parents, staff, and community members to determine the following:
- ▣ Vendor(s) to be used for training and services
  - ▣ Timelines for professional development
  - ▣ Partnerships with community members and organizations to support RP in the schools
  - ▣ Long-term plan for sustainability
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# Recommendations

- 3) Adopt the **Michigan Model for Health** as the district's K-12 health curriculum, implemented at all grade levels. The curriculum includes social and emotional learning components, and students will learn skills that complement those they will learn through restorative practices.
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# Committee Membership

Sonja Allen – Communities in Schools

Daisy Mull – Parent (YPS)

Mary Beno – Regional Health Coordinator

Caroline Mull – Student (YMS)

Lesley Chace – Health Educator, Parent

Lisa Murray – Teacher (WR)

Maria Coteria - Teacher

Deborah Payne – Transportation (WISD)

Toney Cummer – Teacher

Kelly Powers – Principal (YPS)

Belinda Dulin – The Dispute Resolution Center

Margaret Rohr – The Dispute Resolution Center

Celeste Gentile - WISD

Michelle Rose-Armstrong – S3 Grant Liaison (YPS)

Annie Hampel – S3 Grant Liaison (WR)

Ruth Salles – Student Advocacy Center

Susanna Hanrath – Social Worker (WR)

Debby Shaw – Juvenile Court

Robert Harris – Support Staff (YPS)

Lara Slee – S3 Grant Regional Coach (MDE)

Monique Hoyle – The Corner Health Center

Peri Stone-Palmquist – Student Advocacy Center

Jacquelynn King – Social Worker (WR)

John Weiss – The Neutral Zone

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# Process

- **Developed common understanding and definition for character education:**

*Ypsilanti Community Schools believe that developing character and social-emotional skills are as important as academic achievement. Character education creates and supports a safe and healthy learning environment that promotes positive self-advocacy and citizenship while building a kind, caring, and just community. We are committed to identifying skills and practices that enable students to respect themselves and others. Adults in the district will model and teach these skills for students on a daily basis. This approach will enable students to develop habits required for lifelong success.*

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# Process

- ▣ **Identified non-negotiables used to vet different character education programs/approaches:**
    - ▣ Program includes on-going professional development for every adult (bus drivers, teachers, lunch supervisors,...) working in schools
    - ▣ Approach has clear expectations, creates a supportive community, a safe and trusting environment, respect and appreciation for all, focuses on empathy and listening and supports the wrongdoer
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# Process

- ▣ Teacher/staff can buy-in by having input/participation in development
  - ▣ Program has continuity PreK-12
  - ▣ Students have voice, meaningful roles and choices in the character education program
  - ▣ Program is embedded in school climate (not an off-the-shelf program or separate class that students take)
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# Process

- ▣ Program provides resources and approaches to teach and intervene in teachable moments without disrupting learning of all students
  - ▣ Program includes in-school remedies - In-school suspension or plan
  - ▣ Program includes peer mediation opportunities and/or learn conflict resolution skills
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# Process

- Health and emotional well being is the foundation (for all -- students, teachers, staff, community, families) -- especially students' social/emotional/ethical development as well as academics
  - There are clear and universal values and expectations that are embedded in the school climate and understood by all (even outside the district)
  - There is an emphasis on positive (not punitive)
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# Process

- **Examined different character education programs/approaches through readings, presentations, and interviews:**
    - Capturing Kids' Hearts
    - The Leader in Me
    - Michigan Model for Health
    - Restorative Practices
  - **Rated each program/approach using our non-negotiables and the district's 5 guiding principles. Survey results indicated a strong preference for restorative practices.**
  - **Recommendations are based on survey results and in-depth discussions at committee meetings.**
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# Description of Framework

- RP has a focus on teaching and learning and building intrinsic motivation.
  - It sets high expectations for students about behavior and high supports for success.
  - Teaches problem solving, solution finding, critical thinking, empathy, conscience, making amends and forgiveness.
  - RP is proactive and is not just about responding to discipline.
  - It is NOT an entirely prescriptive program but is intended to be customized by the district. All staff must be trained and ongoing coaching or professional learning groups are part of the model.
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# Description of Framework

- RP gives teachers concrete skills to help create a better climate in every classroom including proactive circles, affirmative statements and questions, reactive circles and more formal processes when more intense conflicts arise
  - RP has a common language that can be boiled down to one word: Respect.
  - This is a model recognized internationally, nationally, and right here in Michigan by the Michigan Department of Education.
  - Families are often called in to be part of RP conferences.
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# Guiding Principles



1. High expectations for ALL learners
2. Evidence-based “best” practices while allowing for innovation and creativity
3. Family and community partnerships
4. Student voice and empowerment
5. Responsibility, efficiency and financial viability

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# Alignment to Guiding Principles

- ***High expectations for all learners***

In a culture that embraces RP, there are high expectations for student behavior. Students are taught to work through their problems respectfully, and are expected to accept responsibility for their actions and for the consequences of their actions.

- ***Evidence-based “best practices” while allowing for creativity and innovation***

The RP philosophy provides a common language, approach, and vision for the district without mandating how to put into practice. Each school’s unique culture shapes how restorative practices will be implemented. Staff will be involved in creating the processes through which restorative practices utilized on daily basis.

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# Alignment to Guiding Principles

## ▣ *Family and community partnerships*

During conflict resolution, family and community members are invited into mediations to help the offender learn how to repair harm and learn skills to avoid conflict in the future. It is a team effort to teach students how to build and retain relationships within their community; they are not pushed out to fend for themselves without support.

## ▣ *Student voice and empowerment*

Each student's voice is heard when restorative practices are used. During all types of conflicts, students are empowered to share their stories and accept responsibility for their actions. One component of restorative practices is peer mediation, which can start on a basic level in elementary school. By high school, students are able to help their peers work through serious interpersonal conflicts.

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# Alignment to Guiding Principles

- ▣ ***Efficiency and financial viability and stability***

Vendors exist that train schools over two years. IIRP's Safer Saner Schools program has a "train the trainer" model to help make the approach sustainable over time. The Dispute Resolution Center has been working in Washtenaw County for more than a decade and already has many valuable community partners who may invest in a district-wide effort.

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# Challenges & Opportunities

## CHALLENGES

Capacity of vendors to provide all the services needed by the district, both short- and long-term

Blending different approaches of restorative practices into a program that will work for the district

Institutionalizing restorative on a budget

Amount of professional development time for restorative practices this summer and during school year

## OPPORTUNITIES

*An approach like restorative practices represents a major shift in traditional thinking about classroom management and disciplinary procedures. Instead of putting disruptive students out of the classroom or school, we are committing to keeping them within our community and teaching them to become better problem solvers and citizens.*

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# Considerations

- School staff must be provided non-instructional time to reflect, debrief, discourse on the approach adopted
  - Time should be created, before the start of the school year to actively reach out to families and students to inform them about the new practices being used in schools
  - Community members should also get training in the “character education” approach (so they can support outside of school)
  - The school leadership must “buy into” the program/approach; the leadership must support staff as they teach/model skills and value
  - There must be enough support staff to help teacher, model, re-teach, and practice RP skills (social workers, counselors, etc.) – it will take a whole team to help coordinate the new approach.
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# Next Steps

## **Create work team to determine:**

- Vendor(s) to be used for training and services
  - Timelines for professional development (year one, year two, etc.)
  - Partnerships with community members and organizations to support RP in the schools
  - Long-term plan for sustainability
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Questions?

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