

## Appendix E. Model Language for School District Policy

Model policy language is provided below. This language can be tailored as needed by district leaders for their specific context.

### ARTICLE I: PURPOSE AND DEFINITIONS

#### Section 1.1 – Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for the adoption and implementation of restorative practices in [DISTRICT NAME] schools. This policy is designed to support belonging, connection, and reparation within our school communities; improve school climate; reduce reliance on exclusionary discipline; and enhance student social-emotional and academic outcomes.

#### Section 1.2 – Definition of Restorative Practices

Restorative practices are relationship-centered processes that develop, maintain, and repair bonds among members of a community. Rooted in Indigenous traditions, these practices proactively build community, prevent conflicts, and repair relationships where conflict has occurred.

#### Section 1.3 – Core Principles

Restorative practices in [DISTRICT NAME] shall be grounded in the following principles:

- All people should be treated with respect and compassion
- Healthy relationships are the foundation of strong communities
- Relationships must be built, maintained, and repaired
- Accountability should be prioritized over punishment
- Communities play an active role in preventing harm and responding to it

### ARTICLE II: COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY

#### Section 2.1 – Clear Communication

The District shall clearly communicate with families, staff, and students about the goals, content, and implementation of restorative practices. Communications shall:

- a) Clearly define "restorative practices" and specific practices to be used (e.g., community building circles, mediation circles, restorative circles, welcome circles);
- b) Explain how restorative practices produce benefits for students and schools;
- c) Address common misconceptions, including clarifying that restorative practices do not mean students avoid consequences for their behavior;
- d) Provide ongoing communications and opportunities for feedback from families, staff, and students.

### ARTICLE III: SCHOOL ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

#### Section 3.1 – Voluntary Adoption

Schools may voluntarily choose whether to adopt restorative practices. District leadership shall provide encouragement and support for adoption but shall not mandate participation. When school leaders do not wish to adopt restorative practices, the practices are unlikely to be implemented effectively.

### Section 3.2 – School Readiness Assessment

Prior to adoption, schools must complete a self-assessment of readiness, including:

- Leadership buy-in and commitment
- Schedule of ongoing professional learning and coaching
- Plans for overseeing and monitoring implementation
- Identified funding for costs not covered by the District

School readiness shall be reviewed and approved by District leadership before adoption is authorized.

### Section 3.3 – Schoolwide Implementation

Schools that adopt restorative practices shall aim for schoolwide implementation to meaningfully impact school climate and student skills. Initial adoption may proceed without universal participation provided that:

- School leaders are fully engaged
- "Early adopter" staff members are identified
- Families are given opportunities to provide feedback

## **ARTICLE IV: DOMAINS OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES**

### Section 4.1 – Required Domains

Schools that adopt restorative practices shall offer practices across the following domains:

Domain 1: Community Building – Practices that strengthen communication and relationships at a universal level (e.g., community building circles in classrooms).

Domain 2: Responding to Conflicts – Practices to prevent rule violations or interpersonal harms before they occur (e.g., mediation circles or conferences).

Domain 3: Responding to Rule Violations or Serious Conflicts – Practices to address rule violations or more serious conflicts that have occurred (e.g., restorative circles or conferences).

Domain 4: Reintegration – Practices to welcome students back into the community following a significant absence, including after suspension, expulsion, stay in juvenile detention, illness, or injury (e.g., welcome circles).

## **ARTICLE V: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

### Section 5.1 – Education for All School Staff

Schools that adopt restorative practices shall provide education on restorative practices and related competencies for all school members, including:

- Administrators
- Teachers
- School mental health providers
- Other staff (janitorial staff, lunchroom staff, school resource officers, bus drivers)

Training shall include multi-year professional learning in restorative practices, with onboarding professional learning for new staff. Coaching and ongoing professional learning are required.

### Section 5.2 – Foundational Professional Learning Requirements

Prior to adoption of restorative practices, adults in the school community shall be educated on:

- a) Trauma-Informed Approaches – Education about the effects of extreme or continuing stress on child development, including how stress can interfere with learning, memory, and trust, and strategies for responding compassionately and effectively to students;
- b) Implicit Bias – Education to help adults recognize and combat implicit biases to ensure restorative practices benefit all students equitably and minimize potential for harm.

### Section 5.3 – Threshold for Student Education

Approximately one-third of adults in a school should be trained in restorative practices before students are educated, so that adults can effectively structure and support student-led practices.

## **ARTICLE VI: STUDENT LEADERSHIP**

### Section 6.1 – Student Leadership Roles

Schools shall establish student leadership roles in restorative practices. Leading restorative practices teaches students critical social-emotional skills including, emotion awareness and regulation, meta-cognitive awareness, active listening, empathy, and accountability and responsibility.

### Section 6.2 – Inclusive Participation

All students, including those with behavioral, attendance, or academic issues, shall have opportunities to:

- Learn about restorative practices and how to facilitate them
- Facilitate mediation circles and conferences when trained and interested, with a teacher present
- Facilitate restorative circles and conferences when trained and interested, with a teacher present

## **ARTICLE VII: RESTRICTIONS ON EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE**

### Section 7.1 – Limitation on Exclusionary Discipline

Schools shall limit the use of suspension, expulsion, and other forms of exclusionary discipline to situations that:

- Pose a threat to safety; or
- Involve illegal activities

Exclusionary discipline removes students from school, disrupting their learning and undermining the goals of restorative practices, including accountability to community members and opportunities to repair harm.

### Section 7.2 – Alternative Responses Required

The District shall offer a spectrum of alternative options, such as mediation circles and restorative circles, for responding to lower-intensity but high-frequency behaviors. Schools shall be required to exhaust alternative disciplinary strategies before resorting to exclusionary discipline for non-violent offenses.

## **ARTICLE VIII: DISTRICT RESOURCES AND SUPPORT**

### Section 8.1 – Funding

The District shall fund the ongoing costs of restorative practices professional learning and coaching for teachers, staff, and students.

Individual schools shall cover additional costs, including stipends for school champions and dedicated spaces for mediation and restorative circles.

#### Section 8.2 – Partnership with Restorative Practices Organizations

The District shall partner with local, state, national, or international organizations or experts to provide:

- Learning sessions on trauma-informed care, implicit bias, and restorative practices
- Ongoing professional learning
- Coaching support in district schools

#### Section 8.3 – Infrastructure Support

The District shall identify or hire a staff member to oversee restorative practices across district schools. This staff member shall:

- Assist schools in accessing professional learning
- Help address implementation challenges
- Work collaboratively with schools on quality improvement

### **ARTICLE IX: GOALS, ASSESSMENT, AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

#### Section 9.1 – Clear Goals

The District shall establish and monitor clear goals for restorative practices targeting:

- Enhancement of school climate
- Community building
- Student social-emotional outcomes
- Student academic outcomes

Goals shall be SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, results-focused, and time-bound.

#### Section 9.2 – Assessment Measures and Guidelines

The District shall provide:

- Fidelity rating measures
- Measures to assess targeted school and student outcomes
- Clear guidelines for data collection and analysis

#### Section 9.3 – Data Collection Requirements

Schools shall collect data on restorative practices at consistent intervals (e.g., twice per year), including:

- a) Fidelity of Implementation – Data tracking how well restorative practices are being implemented, including whether practices are delivered as intended (adherence) and with skill (quality);
- b) Outcome Assessments – Data on student and school outcomes beyond disciplinary measures, including student belonging, teacher satisfaction, peer relationships, and student mental health;
- c) Equity Assessments – Data comparing outcomes across students with different characteristics (disability status, race/ethnicity, gender) to ensure all students benefit equitably.

### Section 9.4 – Quality Improvement Process

Schools shall share findings with District leadership for ongoing quality improvement. Regular review of findings by school and District leaders shall be required to:

- Identify implementation problems
- Guide quality improvement
- Address shortcomings in fidelity, outcomes, or equity

Findings shall be regularly shared with the school community, including teachers, students, and parents, and input shall be solicited to support improvements.

## **ARTICLE X: IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE**

### Section 10.1 – Phased Implementation

Schools adopting restorative practices shall follow a phased implementation approach, ideally over a three-year period:

Year 1: Foundational professional learning (trauma-informed care, implicit bias), initial restorative practices training for administrators and early adopter staff

Year 2: Expanded staff professional learning, introduction of student education, initial implementation of community building circles

Year 3: Full schoolwide implementation, student leadership roles established, data collection systems operational

Ongoing: Continuous professional learning, coaching, data-driven quality improvement

## **ARTICLE XI: POLICY REVIEW**

This policy shall be reviewed annually by the School Board in consultation with District leadership, school administrators, teachers, students, families, and community partners to ensure it continues to support effective implementation of restorative practices.

Adopted by the [DISTRICT NAME] Board of Education on [DATE].