

Integrating Restorative Strategies with Positive Behavior Support

School Board Work Session Read-ahead for October 20, 2015

Positive Behavior Support – “Positive Behavior Support is based on the belief that school staff members within all settings actively teach and consistently recognize and reinforce appropriate behaviors, therefore the number of students with serious behavior problems will be reduced” (Lewis & Sugi, 1999; Sugi & Horner, 2002).

Restorative Justice – “Restorative Justice is a set of principles and practices that sees crime and harm as violations of people and relationships. Restorative [strategies] in schools build community, civic engagement, and relationships. These practices provide structure to problem solving. In a restorative school, people who harm others [or things] are held accountable to the person they hurt as well as to the school community.... Students are actively involved in fixing the problems they make. Applied in schools, [restorative strategies] provide adults and children with processes...for holding students accountable for rules violations, such as fights and bullying...” (Riestenberg, N., 2012. *Circle in the square: Building community and repairing harm in schools*. St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press).

However, it is essential to note that restorative strategies offer so much more. In addition to building relationships and community, restorative strategies provide a safe and productive context for students and learn and the current work of teaching that includes student engagement and learning and practicing empathy, effective communication, accountable talk, and problem-solving. For the district’s initiative-- Integrating Restorative Strategies with Positive Behavior Support, we have selected specific strategies that will enhance and/or extend current instructional and PBS strategies.

Sarasota United for Equity and Responsibility (SURE) – “SURE’s mission is to unite people of faith in Sarasota County so that they can powerfully hold systems accountable in the community to a Godly standard of justice. For over a decade, SURE has been a definitive ministry in Sarasota, crossing lines of faith, denomination, age, race, geography, and income. Members of SURE congregations work hard to build relationships in their congregations and their communities, discuss their concerns for the city and county, research solutions to serious problems they select, present them to the proper officials and work with them to make “sure” our community is a just one.” (<http://www.suresarasota.org/about-us/>)

AmeriCorps VISTA – The Sarasota County School District has been awarded a three-year AmeriCorps VISTA grant through which up to five (5) VISTA volunteers are provided to support the development and implementation of the district’s Restorative Strategies initiative.

“VISTA was founded in 1965 as a national service program to fight poverty in America. In 1993, VISTA was incorporated into the AmeriCorps network of programs. Today, more than 46 million Americans live in poverty. AmeriCorps VISTA taps the skills, talents and passion of more than 7,000 Americans annually to support community efforts to overcome poverty. Members [VISTA Volunteers] make a year-long, full-time commitment to serve on a specific project at a nonprofit organization or public agency. They focus their efforts to build the organizational, administrative, and financial capacity of organizations that fight illiteracy, improve health services, foster economic development, and otherwise assist low-income communities.” (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/ameri-corps-vista>)

Also see attached diagram of how we are integrating Restorative Strategies with Positive Behavior Support