



Teacher Tips for Restorative Practices in Prekindergarten

What Are Restorative Practices?

Restorative practices (RP) offer a social science method for resolving conflicts, assisting teachers in fostering a compassionate school environment and fostering a sense of unity in their classes. RP aids children in developing social-emotional and self-regulation abilities, fostering trust, and nurturing supportive connections. It also assists in mitigating challenging behaviors, setting up routines, and appreciating diversity. At its core, Restorative Practice emphasizes the importance of nurturing strong, meaningful, and trustworthy relationships in our interactions with children and families.

Including restorative practices in the prekindergarten classroom will allow children to:

- strengthen relationships between peers and adults
- promote positive behaviors
- establish trust and cooperate with others
- feel safe and secure to take learning and language risks

There are three key strategies the New York State Education Department Office of Early Learning suggests for using restorative practices in the prekindergarten classroom as pictured below. Throughout the document you will see a reference to each of the icons and tips to help with implementation of each strategy.



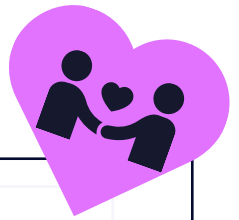
Discover strategies to resolve conflicts that support healthy relationships.



Promote communication to strengthen positive interaction within the classroom community.



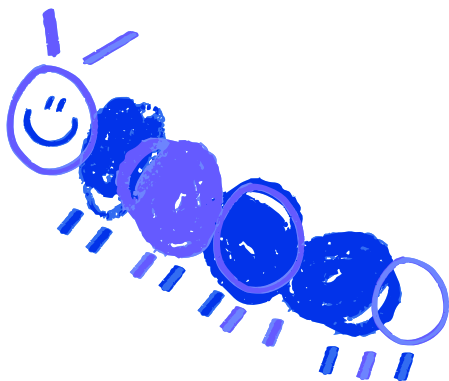
Learn to work together to build a classroom community focused on fostering positive interactions.



Tips for Nurturing Healthy Relationships

- Model and facilitate positive interactions between adult and peers
- Create small group opportunities throughout the day for children to interact and communicate with each other and adults
- Arrange the classroom area to promote interactions among children and adults
- Use images and words of emotions to assist children in expressing themselves
- Create a welcoming and affirming environment in which all children and families feel safe and represented
- Model developmentally appropriate emotional vocabulary and encourage students (when appropriate) to use expressive language skills
- Engage in read-aloud activities with social and emotional themes and model expected behaviors through role-play scenarios

Teacher's Notes:





Restorative Conversations in Prekindergarten Classrooms

Restorative Conversations are an individualized approach and educators must thoughtfully consider the developmental level of the students in the classroom. These conversations help children work through a difficult situation such as when a friend takes their toy, a child pushes another child, or waiting for their turn. Restorative conversations are facilitated by the educator between one child or a small groups of children.

Tips When Using Restorative Conversations:

- Maintain a calm, non-judgmental tone.
- Name emotions for all children involved in the situation
- Provide problem solving strategies
- Acknowledge everyone's feelings
- Offer choices when appropriate
- Reflect on the situation and process together
- Use active listening strategies and provide I statements
- Focus on planning for future success.
- View the conversation as a starting point, not the final discussion.
- Support students as they return to the classroom, track behavior improvements, communicate progress, and adjust scaffolds.



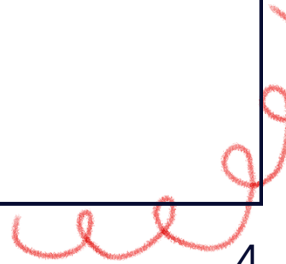


Restorative Conversations Guidelines

Directions: Use these guidelines to assist in planning and conducting a restorative conversation. Select one question from each phase that best fits the situation to enhance the discussion. Ensure the developmental needs of the child are considered prior to entering into a restorative conversation. Conversations should be limited to an age appropriate time limit.

Phases	Conversation Starters
1. Facilitate Student Reflection of the Incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened that made you feel happy/sad/excited? • Tell me about why you think this happened... • What happened first in the story you're telling? Then what happened? And what happened last?
2. Discuss Student Need and Plan to Address Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was there something you really wanted or needed? • When did you start feeling sad or upset? • What do you think we could do to make it better?
3. Plan to Restore Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who else was sad or hurt by what happened? • What can we do to help them feel better?

Teacher's Notes:





Community Building Guidelines

A classroom community is a learning space where children feel a sense of belonging and connection to their peers and teachers. Teachers recognize and support children’s strengths and interests through positive reinforcement and praise. As they get to know the unique characteristics and abilities of each child, teachers find ways to safeguard the individual child within the group by:

- allowing children to experience learning at their own pace
- encouraging children to explore and make meaning of the different facets of the learning environment
- providing opportunities for children to express their ideas and share their experiences with their peers
- maintaining a learning environment in which children can thrive because they feel safe, can express their feelings, and are respected as important members of the group
- encouraging children to participate in cooperative learning experiences when they are ready to become part of the classroom community
- taking advantage of “teachable moments” to extend learning and build bridges to new understandings and to ideas already introduced.
- Create an environment that validates, honors, and nurtures each child’s diverse abilities, cultures, and home languages
- Use visual cues to provide children with information about classroom behavioral expectations
- Build time in the schedule for purposeful play experiences and opportunities to develop social and emotional skills

The classroom can become a community where all students are an active member. Early educators can intentionally provide experiences that foster positive peer relationships. It builds relationships among children, between children and teachers, and between teachers and families.

Examples of Classroom Community Building Activities:

- “All About Me” projects;
- Morning meetings;
- Recognize and encourage kind acts;
- create a family picture board;
- celebrate and honor diversity;
- post pictures of students working; and
- create a diverse library.

References:

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