**THE AWESOME IEA Podcast**

Episode [18]: What are Restorative Practices?

*K: Welcome to* the AWESOME *IEA* Podcast brought to you by the Illinois Education Association.

D: The podcast for curious well-informed association members.

K: I’m one of your hosts, Kelsey Harms, Computer Specialist from the IEA Program Development Department

D: And I’m Diana Zaleski, one of your Instructional Resource and Professional Development Directors from IEA Teaching and Learning.

K: The goal of this podcast is to educate our members about important new educational policy initiatives in a brief and *hopefully* entertaining format.

D: Today we are going to discuss restorative practices. You may have seen IEA advertise trainings on this topic and wondered what this topic was all about.

K: Well Diana, we are very lucky to have you as our guest on the podcast today because I know you are one of our restorative practices trainers. So, can you start by just sharing with us, what are restorative practices?

D: I certainly can. There are a few different approaches to restorative practices. At the IEA the approach we utilize was developed by the International Institute for Restorative Practices, or the IIRP. The IIRP defines restorative practices as a social science that studies how to build social capitol and achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision-making.

K: So Diana, what does that mean for restorative practices in our schools?

D: So, in schools, educators work with students to (1) prevent conflict by building relationships, and engaging in meaningful social and emotional learning; and (2) address conflict and prevent its recurrence through the use of a structured problem-solving method. Restorative practices demonstrates how students can resolve their own problems when provided with a constructive forum to do so.

K: I’ve also heard the term restorative justice. Can you help us understand the difference between restorative justice and restorative practices?

D: Yes, and that’s a common misunderstanding. Those terms are often used interchangeably. So, the IIRP views restorative justice as a subset of restorative practices. So, restorative justice is reactive, it involves reactive practices consisting of practices that are used after conflict occurs. And restorative practices include both proactive and reactive practices. So, these proactive practices are used to prevent conflict by building relationships and teaching the social and emotional skills such as self-awareness and self-management.

K: Can you share more information about the different practices?

D: I sure can. There are a continuum of practices that range from proactive informal practices to reactive formal practices. These include things like affective statements, affective questions, relationship and community building circles, small impromptu conferences, restorative circles, and restorative conferences. It is imperative that both proactive and reactive practices are utilized if restorative practices are going to be successful within a school.

I won’t define each of these today but as an example, the most proactive and informal practice, affective statements are used by educators to help students to learn how their specific behaviors impact those around them. The use of affective statements is also a way of humanizing yourself as an authority figure and can be used to teach young people empathy. These statements can be used to reinforce positive behaviors or re-direct negative behaviors.

K: That sounds like a really good way to introduce restorative practices in our schools. Can you share a few examples of affective statements?

D: Yes. In order to construct an affective statement and educator would first self-identify how they are feeling or how they are impacted. Second, the educator would self-identify the specific action or behavior they are responding to, and would then bring steps one and two together in an authentic expression of how they are feeling or how they are impacted by the specific behaviors or actions they are reinforcing or redirecting. So, for example, if I saw two students fighting on the playground I could say “I was really scared when I saw you fighting on the playground. Someone could have gotten hurt” or when I see a student doing a good job, I might say, “I’m so proud that you used different strategies on that math problem until you final got it!” But the emphasis there is authentic. So your statements are not going to be the same as my statements. You want them to be natural to you and how you would normally communicate with your students.

K: So that’s a really good example of an informal restorative practice. Can you share an example of a more formal restorative practice?

D: I sure can. So these practices build on one another. So, after we introduce affective statements, we then introduce affective questions. Affective questions are the foundation for all of the other restorative practices. These questions provide students with a structured problem-solving method and begin with the question, “what happened?” This question allows each students the opportunity to share their perspective on the conflict. Additional questions then allow students equal opportunity to speak and to listen about how their behaviors impacted others. Students are finally asked, “what do you think you need to do to make things right?” Students are then able to resolve their conflict and prevent its recurrence.

So, this problem-solving method holds students accountable for their behavior while also empowering them to resolve their own conflicts in a collaborative prosocial manner. So, we use these questions in small impromptu conferences, restorative circles, and restorative conferences. Each practice more formal and scripted than the next. The choice of the practice depends on the length and severity of the conflict. For example, an argument on the playground or in the hallway could be resolved quickly with an impromptu restorative conference. However, a more serious conflict between a small group of students may require a restorative circle.

K: Diana, this sounds like really important and helpful tools and resources that our members can use in their everyday lives, whether it’s in the classroom or on the bus. What resources are available for our members on this topic so they can really jump in and get started?

D: Yep, so staff, a, are resources here to help you any time. So, I’m here, you can always contact me, I’m happy to answer any of your questions, or my colleague Kristine Argue and we’ll put both of our email addresses on the podcast page. We will post an article on restorative practices that provides a nice overview of the continuum. In addition, we provide training on the restorative practices continuum throughout the year in our local IEA offices. So, we post those on our PD calendar, but you can also email me and I’ll let you know when those dates are coming up. Or if you would like to schedule a training for your local IEA office we’re happy to do that too!

K: Diana, thank you so much for sharing information about this important topic. If you have any questions, comments, or feedback, please check out the contact section on the Podcast page on the IEA Website.

D: Special thanks to Mark for the audio help, Amanda for the transcription, and Dan for the website. As always, thanks so much for being a member, and thanks for joining us!