

# Baltimore City Public Schools Restorative Practices Report Summary

Prepared by the Open Society Institute Baltimore  
For Baltimore City Public Schools



Many schools around the world and right here in Baltimore City are using restorative practices (RP) to build positive relationships within school communities, to enhance instructional practices and to resolve conflicts among stakeholders. One of the key hypotheses in RP involves the notion that staff and students are likely to be happier, more cooperative, more productive and to make positive changes when those in positions of authority do things *with* them rather than *to* them or *for* them. Fundamentally, restorative practices require participants to make a mindset shift from one that is punitive and blaming to one that is more reflective and inclusive. Research has shown that the consistent use of restorative practices leads to decreases in suspensions, more positive school and work climates and increased levels of trust, empathy and respect among stakeholders.

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners and the Chief Executive Officer of Baltimore City Schools, Dr. Sonja Santelises, have pledged to make Baltimore City Schools (City Schools) a restorative practices district. In August 2017, Baltimore City Schools released its Blueprint for Success, which outlines three priority areas for the district: student wholeness, literacy and leadership.

Principles of restorative practices will be adopted across the district under the student wholeness priority area. To date, more than fifty schools have had initial training and are implementing restorative practices to varying degrees. In January 2018, 14 schools were selected to receive intensive training and coaching in the approach. These intensive learning sites will become incubators of learning and best practice, serving as models for the integration of restorative practices into other schools throughout the district.

The Restorative Practices Report incorporates both restorative practices theory and practical application by aggregating research, stakeholder feedback and actionable implementation tools into a single body of materials. The report comprises a research overview prepared by Johns Hopkins Institute of Education Policy, feedback from nearly 400 stakeholders, a robust set of recommendations derived from the research and stakeholder feedback, and an Implementation and Resources Guide, newly developed by City Schools.



Photographs by Wide Angle Youth Media

## Recommendations for the initial years of implementation:

- Implement whole-school approaches where *all* adults in a school community are trained in restorative practices and on-going coaching and support are provided. School-based practitioners must also be trained so that the practice can be sustained.
- Shifting the attitudes and sensibilities of all school and district personnel may require three to five years. Baltimore City Schools should operate under this timeline in which training must be embedded in school based and city wide professional development calendars.
- Restorative practices should be woven into everything that is done in a school. It should not be used solely as a conflict resolution tool, as 80% of restorative practices should focus on proactive community building. Restorative practices may also be used for instruction and student reentry, following sustained absences, such as incarceration or suspensions to welcome students back to school. Additionally, these practices can and should be combined with complementary existing practices.



- Implementation of restorative practices will require school and district leadership to be trained in and communicate to all a strong and consistent restorative vision. Time must be devoted to align the practice with City Schools' Blueprint for Success and other district mandates and practices.
- Restorative practices should be introduced to students before being used in school. Students should be fully engaged as thought partners in the implementation process which could include being trained to lead circles.
- Schools implementing restorative practices should familiarize parents through meetings, materials, and when feasible, training.

To read the entire report, please visit: [www.osibaltimore.org/restorativepractices](http://www.osibaltimore.org/restorativepractices)

To learn more about restorative practices, please watch: <https://vimeo.com/205263529>