

November 8, 2018

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Thursday, November 8, 2018, in the Board Room of the high school.

Call to Order

President Dr. Moore called the meeting to order at 6:12 p.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: Fred Arkin, Matt Baron, Tom Cofsky; Jennifer Cassell, Dr. Jackie Moore, and Sara Dixon Spivy. Also at the table were Dr. Joylynn Pruitt-Adams, Superintendent, and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors

OPRFHS administrators Greg Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Cyndi Sidor, Interim Chief School Business Officer; Christopher Thieme, Senior Director of Technology; Karin Sullivan, Senior Communications Director, Dr. Gwen Walker Qualls, Senior Director of Pupil Support Services; Matt Kirkpatrick, Interim Assistant Principal for Instruction; Helen Gallagher, English Division Head; Kathryn Rayford and Stephanie Baeza, of UMOJA; and Marty Bernstein and Rick Gibbs, community members.

The presenters, Stephanie Baezer and Kathryn Rayford of UMOJA, explained that UMOJA was a nonprofit organization that has supported schools in the Chicago area for 20 years in social-emotional learning, Restorative Justice Practices, and college and career readiness areas. They were excited to be partnering with OPRFHS. A cohort of 25 to 27 staff has been engaging in a series of workshops, community practice, troubleshooting skills, customize support, etc. to move implementation throughout the school. The meaning of UMOJA is unity. Restorative Justice is a relationship-based approach to solving issues.

Sitting in a circle, each person introduced themselves. Each person was asked to describe their feelings using terms of weather. The responses were as follows: thunderclouds, sun showers, cool breezy, hail storm, crisp and cool, sideways, a little sunny, blizzard, drizzly, foggy, rain, cloudy days--no chance of rain or sun, partly sunny, ice storm, sun peeking through, cloudy, calm after a storm, and tornado.

The group then had an experiential activity that helped them to understand and define Restorative Justice, how to reflect on the key values of that mindset, practice mindset, and use language to accomplish that mindset.

The group norms (shared agreements) were as follows:

- Stick to governance and policy issues.
- Keep students as the focus
- Recognize multiple truths
- Honor two statements before making another statement
- Offer your presence
- Believe that you will take what you need from this experience.

A series of exercises then ensued. First, everyone chose a picture from the center of the circle and described what it meant to them. Next, everyone was asked to

draw on paper what was important, beautiful or meaningful for them. In pairs, they shared the meaning of their drawings. The participants then shared what new things they had learned about their partners. This meeting was a relationship building exercise. Emotions expressed while doing this exercise included anxiety, interest, apprehension, unknowing, curiosity, empathy, vulnerability, connectivity, energizing, and even challenging or vulnerable.

For the next activity, the participants were asked to destroy their partner's picture, but not tear it (harm doer). Each reported out how they did that. The participants were asked to name the feelings they had while destroying their partner's picture. The responses were sad, guilty, hurt, good because was creative, hesitate, defiant, deliberate, easy, it takes so little to destroy something, shame, embarrassment, regret, easier to act than react. The other partner (harmed) reported that as their picture was being destroyed they felt relief, unbothered, detached, safe, pain, distrust, fear, loneliness, disbelief, stressed, disappointment. When one is on the side of harm doer, it is important to take a look at one's self.

The participants were then asked to repair their partners' pictures and express how they felt while doing that repair. The responses included: adding something to the picture so it was originally not defaced, hopelessness, remorse because it could not be rebuilt, not the quite the same, relief because one had the chance to put it back as it was, ineffective, inadequate, frustrated, seeking validation for repair, playful/humorous, respectful, unsure it was made better, patience, ownership of situation, vulnerability, broken trust, and rejection. Participants were asked to relate this to real life and the community.

The presenters noted that one needs to be proactive in building relationships as it is foundational, a key part in restoring relationships. People have needs underneath the surface, and if they are not addressed, their emotions stay stagnant.

The meeting recessed at 7:46 p.m. and resumed at 7:55 p.m.

Restorative justice is about developing a restorative mind. Below is a chart of punitive responses vs. restorative responses.

PUNITIVE	RESTORATIVE
What rule was broken?	What happened? What were you feeling or thinking at the time? What was the root cause?
Who's to blame?	Who or what was impacted?
What punishment is deserved?	What needs to happen to fix this relationship/the harm?

The idea is for all students to succeed. If a student commits an infraction and needs to receive a consequence, the student needs to continue to feel valued, and they need to learn something in the process. While rules can be helpful, such as rules for traffic, one also wants norms to know how to treat one another. The restorative

consequence is an attempt to repair. The example was given that a group of boys in another school were passing around nude female photos and one of the photos was that of a current student. The boys were sent home for a half day and returned through a restorative-based process. The boys talked in a peace circle. While the girl had opted out of participating, she wrote a letter that was read in the circle by the circle keeper. The boys came up with their next steps: 1) learn more from the female student about what she needed to feel safe, 2) participate in regular circles for about six weeks on the topics of female obsession, boys, and 3) present to their grade level a report on what they had learned. It was a 6-month, rigorous process, much more intense than a three-day suspension. The boys appreciated not being pushed out or ostracized. A UMOJA member and staff member co-led the follow-up meetings and students periodically. Restorative Justice is a voluntary situation. In some situations, the harm doer does not want to participate in a peace circle.

One participant suggested that teens are interested in being with their peers and a circle allows for that fact. In response to the question as to whether all students could understand what was being asked of them or what they were risking or facing, the response was that students are brought in and allowed to ask questions, and the UMOJA representative determines if they are ready to participate. The session is more about the mindset so that they can make choices during the mindset. Restorative Justice is a mindset, not a program, and people need to understand why they are making choices. Mindsets are not set and do change over time. One needs to realize how they are holding their mindset in different situations. One needs to continually check in on their mindset. This takes practice. A way to do that is through language.

The participants reviewed an example of how language had been used. Because of the shortness of time, they were unable to reframe all but one of the questions on a page from the perspective of Restorative Justice. However, it was acknowledged that the questions themselves contained a lot of assumptions that may have not been justified. One needs to investigate what is under the “water line.” People should be asking questions instead of judging. Before one makes a choice or says something, they should ask themselves to what extent does this build a relationship?

Participants responded to how they felt about the session and their responses were: hopeful, questions, ongoing work, relaxed, urgency, more informed, enlightened, grateful, miles to go, intrigued, respect, pensive, data, self-examination, reflective, impact, community. Participants were asked to fill out an evaluation.

Adjournment

At 8:58 p.m., Dr. Moore moved to adjourn; seconded by Ms. Dixon Spivy.
A voice vote resulted in motion carried.

Dr. Jackie Moore
President

Jennifer Cassell
Secretary