

# What you need to know:

## Restorative Justice

### What's restorative justice?

“Restorative justice” is an approach to justice that “restores” the aggressor within the community or specific victims. The concept replaces “punishment” with “healing.”

### What's the issue?

Restorative justice promotes the idea that people misbehave or engage in criminal behavior because “the system” failed them. As such, misbehaving students are not punished or suspended. Instead of using traditional approaches to punish bad behavior (suspension, detention), schools create “talk circles” during which feelings and motivations are discussed until the classroom or community has been “restored.” Misbehaving students can at times disrupt the classroom and even cause physical harm to teachers and students. The pernicious rationale of restorative justice lets students get away with bad behavior, and tells victims that tolerating the behavior is necessary given that the aggressor is merely a victim of societal injustice.

When they say...	You can say...
<b>We know that black students are punished at a higher rate than white students. Doesn't that mean there is systemic racism?</b>	Discrimination is always wrong. All students deserve to be treated equally regardless of race, including in matters of discipline. Failing to enforce consequences for bad behavior, however, makes schools less safe for all students. All students deserve a safe and distraction-free learning environment at school.
<b>But restorative justice focuses on healing all involved parties, and that's a good thing.</b>	Restorative justice teaches students that bad behavior does not have consequences and suggests to victims that someone else's bad behavior is partially their responsibility. It also doesn't hold students with behavioral issues accountable for their actions. This fails to properly prepare students for life outside of the classroom.
<b>Punitive justice is wrong, especially for young children.</b>	When students misbehave, they should face consequences equivalent to their behavior. Consequences for actions such as suspension, detention, formal write-up, expulsion, and in some cases notifying law enforcement, protect other students and disincentivize bad behavior.

For more information, check out Parents Defending Education's [map](#).

