

ISA'S IDEALS

Restorative justice is an underutilized measure of reform for students.



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through inclusive processes that bring together students and educators, should be the first action step taken.

Restorative justice was introduced to CCHS in the 2019-20 school year as a method of behavior resolution. It provides a way to get to the root cause of an issue between two or more people through restorative talks and circles.

A 2015 study conducted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and George Mason University found that after a year, just 18.4% of 102 participants in a Restorative Community Conferencing program committed another delinquent act. By comparison, 32.1% of participants who did not go through the RCC program did.

Restorative justice in both schools and the juvenile justice program has served as a powerful way to avoid recidivism, or the relapse into criminal behavior, as defined by the National Institute of Justice.

However, completing restorative justice chats and circles becomes increasingly difficult at CCHS. During the 2023-24 school year, the CCHS restorative coordinator position was left unfilled, limiting capabilities to utilize the positive benefits of restorative justice.

"We give (our planning periods) up, and we're running around, doing all this other stuff because we lost our full-time (restorative coordinator)," CCHS

Thirteen fights occurred at Clarke Central High School in August, the most in one month since August 2021, according to the Clarke County School District Behavior and Attendance Analysis Dashboard.

According to the dashboard, the most common consequences for students include In-School-Suspension (ISS) or Out-of-School-Suspension (OSS) – not restorative justice.

Even before reactive measures like suspension, restorative justice, an approach to discipline that focuses on repairing harm

Multi-Classroom Leader Lawanna Knight, who is a part of the Restorative Cultural Leadership Team, said. "If some teachers would take time to learn about (restorative justice) and how it's used everywhere, it would be beneficial for everyone, not just here, but in life."

In an effort to encourage leadership and problem-solving skills among students, a peer leadership elective, Peer Leadership I, was brought to CCHS during the 2022-23 school year. The class taught students how to mediate restorative justice circles. However, at the end of the 2023-24 school year, the class was cut.

Restorative justice must be utilized by students and faculty at CCHS as much as possible. Locating the cause of an issue can decrease the number of in-school and out-of-school fights and arguments.

"I really think (restorative justice is effective) because I had a problem with this girl (in) 10th grade, and this year, I got a chance to resolve that problem because we ended up having a (restorative) circle," CCHS junior Iayah Edwards, who was in the peer leadership class, said. "We got to get the stuff that was said through other people out of the way and get to the root of the problem."

Restorative justice needs to be a greater part of behavioral resolution at CCHS not only after fights, but also proactively, like during Advisement. In Advisement, circles should be conducted as a way to build and maintain relationships.

With limited resources available to effectively apply restorative justice at CCHS, everyone in the building must take it seriously. It can become an effective way to solve issues maturely, yet is not treated as such. The restorative justice coordinator position, as well as restorative justice funding, must be brought back to CCHS.

Restorative justice enacts change within students. It grants them open communication, a way to express their feelings and room for growth. By regularly participating in restorative justice circles within classes, the number of behavioral incidents can be reduced.



Above: RESTORATIVE JUSTICE: An illustration pictures students participating in a restorative justice circle. Restorative justice, a method of behavioral resolution focusing on proactive discussions between students and teachers, was brought to Clarke Central High School in the 2019-20 school year and has proved to be beneficial. "Restorative justice must be utilized by students and faculty at CCHS as much as possible. Locating the cause of an issue can decrease the number of in-school and out-of-school fights and arguments," Viewpoints Editor Isabella Gresham wrote. Illustration by Sam Harwell