

■ WHAT ARE THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CPS & RESTORATIVE PRACTICES?

WHAT IS COLLABORATIVE & PROACTIVE SOLUTIONS (CPS)?

The CPS model focuses on helping kids and caregivers solve the problems that are causing concerning behaviors (rather than focusing on concerning behaviors and modifying them or having kids make amends for them). The problem solving is collaborative (meaning, the student is fully involved in the process) and proactive. The model views concerning behavior as a child's "frustration response," and helps caregivers move away from motivational explanations for such behavior and toward understanding that a variety of skills are implicated when students are having difficulty handling problems and frustrations.

WHAT ARE RESTORATIVE PRACTICES?

Restorative practices (RP)—also known as Restorative Justice—refers to a set of general practices and beliefs that have been implemented in highly diverse ways. RP is derived from indigenous conceptions of community justice that are focused on healing rather than punishment. After gaining popularity as a social justice movement in the criminal justice system, schools began to adopt elements of the RP philosophy in education to reduce exclusionary discipline and harsh punitive practices. RP practices can include making amends, healing circles/mediation, and community building exercises. In schools, restorative circles frequently take one of two main forms: community building circles are aimed at fostering strong classroom bonds, while reparative or mediation circles focus on addressing harm that has been caused, making amends, and creating an agreement for the future.

■ AREN'T BOTH MODELS AN ALTERNATIVE TO PUNITIVE, EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES?

Yes, though their focal points are quite different. Both models are aimed at helping caregivers shift their lenses about kids' concerning behavior, with CPS primarily on helping adults come to appreciate that certain skills – flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, problem solving, and emotion regulation – are the primary contributor to maladaptive frustration responses. And, as noted above, in the CPS model, the primary intervention is helping kids and caregivers proactively and collaboratively solving the problems that cause harmful behaviors. The interventions of RP that are primarily focused on addressing concerning behavior are oriented toward having kids make amends for behaviors that have caused harm to others.

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH BASE FOR THE TWO MODELS?

RP is not recognized as an evidence-based model. While schools implementing restorative practices often indicate an important shift in attitudes towards exclusionary discipline -- which is a critical first step for reducing disparities based on race and/or neurodivergence -- several literature reviews have shown that the evidence base on RP is still quite limited, due both to the types of studies employed and the general lack of impact. In an analysis of 71 articles publishing original data on RJ between 2000 and 2020 (Zakszeski & Rutherford, 2021), only four studies used a quasi-experimental or experimental design, which are considered the strongest design for showing the impact of a particular model; more than half of the studies were qualitative. The current available data does not focus on RP's impact on students with significant behavioral needs or cognitive challenges.

The CPS model is recognized as evidence-based. Several peer reviewed studies employing controlled randomized designs have shown that the model is highly effective at improving kids' behavior (on a par with behavioral interventions) and improving adult-child relationships. Other studies have shown that the model is effective at dramatically reducing discipline referrals, suspensions, restraints, and seclusions in schools and therapeutic facilities.

■ CAN RP BE IMPLEMENTED IN COMBINATION WITH CPS?

Yes. As noted above, both models help caregivers recognize that punitive, exclusionary discipline can cause harm and can be both ineffective and counterproductive, and the interventions of RP that are focused on school culture would not detract from the CPS model. However, as it relates to improving kids' concerning behavior and decreasing the use of punitive, exclusionary disciplinary practices, the evidence base for CPS is much stronger, and – with time being a major constraint in schools – there is no evidence to suggest that adding making amends and restorative circles to the practices of CPS lead to better outcomes than CPS alone.