Restorative Justice & Driving Social Comprehension at OWWMS
The link between suspension and dropping out:

- 49% of students who entered high school with three suspensions on their record eventually dropped out of school*

- Students' chances of being suspended increase from 2.4% to 11% when moving from elementary to secondary programs (middle/high school). **

- Students who were suspended one time in 9th grade dropped out of high school twice as often as their peers who were not suspended. **

* Source: "Sent Home and Put Off Track" - Robert Balfanz, Johns Hopkins University
** Source: The UCLA Civil Rights Project
Restorative Practices: What is it?

- Originated in the world of Criminal Justice
  - Giving victims a voice
- Community Building
  - Creating shared values
  - Building a school community focused on learning both inside and outside of the classroom
- Response
  - Addressing incidents on multiple fronts - Combining traditional & non-traditional consequences
  - Support for the victim and accountability for the offender, Addressing harm - Physical, Emotional, Community
  - Successful school community re-entry
Types of Restorative Conversations

- Community Building Circles
- Problem Solving Circles
- Re-Entry Circles
- Restorative Conversations
- Restorative Conferences and Mediation
Restorative Practices: Our journey so far...

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

- September 2015 - Introduced to staff at faculty meeting, main office procedures
- January 2016 - Training for interested staff, Skidmore College K-12 RJ Consortium
- 16-17 School year - Ongoing restorative discipline, Skidmore Collaboration
- 17-18 - Community Circles Year-long staff PD with monthly meetings for interested faculty led by MS and HS principal - blended learning via Google Classroom
- 18-19 - Ongoing proactive community circles work, Social Comprehension
What is Social Comprehension?

“Social Comprehension, like academic comprehension, is how we make meaning from and mediate our relationship with the world”

**Getting to the root of the behavior or conflict**

**Rude** - inadvertently saying or doing something that hurts someone else.

**Mean** - purposefully saying or doing something to hurt someone once (maybe twice).

**Bullying** - intentionally aggressive behavior, repeated over time, that involves an imbalance of power.

-Signe Whitson, Child & Adolescent Therapist
Social Comprehension at OWWMS

Bystander

- Building-wide read
- Author visit that included small-group discussions about writing, character development and character interactions

Goals:
- Teach Lessons on Social Comprehension
- Promote Literacy
- Develop Building & Classroom Community
- Address New York State Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks
Social Comprehension at OWWMS

Identity and Identity Webs

- Name
- Gender
- Physical Features
- Occupation
- Food Preferences
- Age/Generation
- Sports
- Customs
- Religion
- School
- Opinions/Beliefs
- Interests
- Family/Role
- Passions
- What you read and write
- Hobbies
- Pets
- How you treat others
Social Comprehension at OWWMS

Identity Webs of Bystander Characters
Social Comprehension at OWWMS

Our Own Identity Webs

Middle school teachers exploring their identities today with colleagues. They are ‘Being the Change’ at Oliver Winch Middle School. @SaraKAhmed @OWWMS_Principal
Connection to The Essential Elements

- **2.1** - A standards-focused middle-level educational program that emphasizes not only intellectual development but also **personal, social, physical, and ethical development**.

- **2.13** - Encourages students to pursue personal interests, engage in school and community activities (e.g., sports, clubs, etc.), explore potential futures and careers, develop **useful social, interpersonal, and life skills needed to live a full and productive life**, and nurture a “love of learning.”

- **2.14** - Provides targeted and timely academic intervention services that are based upon a careful assessment of the academic, social, and emotional needs of students at risk of not meeting the State’s learning standards.

- **2.15** - Engages and involves the family, local community, and the world outside school in the education and **personal development of young adolescents**.
Social Comprehension at OWWMS

Connections to The Core Social & Emotional Competencies

Too many to list!
Social Comprehension at OWWMS

Restorative Practices - Implementation at OWWMS

- Empowering students to repair harm and rebuild trust
- Learning empathy
- Developing the skills needed to appropriately communicate during difficult times
Social Comprehension at OWWMS

Restorative Practices - Community Building Circles

Student Feedback

I like restorative circles because I can let my feelings out without being critically judged. I also like it because I can relate to other students too. And it just creates a good environment for the class because we can get more comfortable with our peers.
Restorative Practices: Resources

THE LITTLE BOOK OF Restorative Discipline for Schools

The Little Books of Justice & Peacebuilding

Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz and Judy H. Mullet

IMPLEMENTING RESTORATIVE PRACTICES IN SCHOOLS
A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO TRANSFORMING SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Margaret Thorsborne and Peta Blood

Circle Forward

BUILDING A RESTORATIVE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Carolyn Boyes-Watson & Kay Pranis

Foreword by Nancy Riestenberg
Restorative Practices:

Questions