

The No Excuses Mediation (No XQZz) Explained

Rationale

Steps in the Process

Foundational Work Needing to Be Done

I Rationale – A) Restorative Justice has 2 main tenets:

- Having people take responsibility for their actions and
- Having the people involved in a situation collectively work on repairing the harm done/righting the wrongs and then, brainstorming how to avoid it happening again.

B) The No XQZz Mediation was developed to achieve these goals in the shortest time period possible within a school situation. It tries to get to the heart of the matter and stay there as soon as possible.

C) It was developed mainly to help students and teachers/staff work out issues, but can be used for intra student conflicts.

D) It is a combination of a Restorative Chat and a Restorative Conference.

II Steps in the Process: Part 1 “The Talk” (Restorative Chat)

- A) **Setting the Context:** You remind both staff and students of the goals of your school’s new discipline policy: to keep young people in school and off the streets/ out of trouble/out of jail. You explain to each person that, “in our school the Deans/Counselors are here to help you grow”either as a student ‘to learn how to handle situations that make you tight’ or as a professional ‘to learn how to better relate to your students and to manage your classes’.
- B) You remind them that as part of this growing process, you’ll need them to look at where they might have made a mistake which made the situation worse rather than better. And, that you’ll need them to take responsibility for that – ‘to act more like an adult’ or ‘to role model self-reflection’.
- C) **You let them know that you have their backs at all times and will not let the other person blame them.**
- D) You let them know that you (or a partner) will be doing this same process with the other party....and, that that person will have to take responsibility for what they messed up as well.
- E) Then, you listen to their story – unexpurgated, noting as you go (to yourself), where they might have made a wrong turn.
- F) Then, you reflect it back to them
- G) **Once they know that you’ve heard them, you ask them to tell the story again, slowly, stopping where they think they made errors and inflamed things.**

- H) Once those points are clear, you ask them if they'd like to fix the problem that they had a part in creating. You remind either party that the other potential mediatee will be taking responsibility for his/her part as well.
- I) If they agree, (and most people will, if they believe you will protect them from attack/being blamed), we can move to what words or actions they can take responsibility and apologize for. Many people balk at this point and you must remind them that apologizing for what they did wrong will not on be acting maturely (for the young person) or role modeling (for the adult), but will get them 'out of trouble' or bring them a calmer class environment.
- J) Review what they'll say in their apologies and let them know how the mediation will flow.**
- K) Let them know, again, that you will be there for them, always having their back and not letting anyone blame them.**

II Steps in the Process: Part 2 "The No Excuses Mediation" (Restorative Conference)

- L) Mediators confer to see if both parties are ready and decide who will set the ground rules and explain the steps in the mediation and who will ask for the apologies to start the mediation off.
- M) If one or both of the people are not going to be willing to apologize or are not ready to discuss the issues, then let it be. You can wait a day for a cooling off period, have a conversation with a parent, have a short term suspension or removal and come back to work it out on another day.
- N) Adults are encouraged to be role models and apologize 1st. Invariably, this softens the students reticence and eases the way for them to also issue a real apology. Remember, apologies must be sincere in order for this process to be successful. Surface apologies are not acceptable. If that's all a person can offer, you may as well not give them and try to work out a solution based on the 2 parties desire to, solely, not wind up in your office again.
- O) Once apologies are given, defenses usually go down and you can move on to 'how to avoid this situation in the future'.
- P) You write up your agreements, have them signed and make check in plans. Agreements are later sent to relevant parties.
- Q) The teen gets a good call home; staff can get a letter in their file.
- R) If both parties are agreeable, a public apology can be given the next day to the students in the venue in which the problem flared. This too, must be practiced as the student will be 'mad nervous'.

III Foundational Work Needing to Be Done to Set the Way for Such a Cultural Change

- A) Your Principal needs to lay out an RJ Practices vision for your school to all members of the school's community
- B) It must include the bottom line that everyone is expected to be self-reflective, take responsibility for their words and actions and work on fixing problems.

- C) They must let people know that apologizing to youngsters does not rob them of the 'power of their position', but can actually strengthen bonds with their students and garner them more respect and caring
- D) All school leaders must role model the above and set the school on a journey to create a 'culture of self-reflection' in every area of the school's life.

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