



Repairing Relational Breakdowns

Thursday, November 9, 2017

1:30 - 2:45 p.m.

ISACS Annual Conference

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The Summit Country Day School
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*Relationships are
inextricably linked to
learning and engagement
in the classroom.*



The Worst Advice I Ever Got as a New Teacher Was...

Amy's Story

Relational Teaching



Learning relationships provide the framework/foundation for effective learning.

It is in the context of a positive learning relationship a student will feel valued, supported, cared for and work above and beyond for their teacher.

Students observe teachers' relational gestures and construct a learning relationship from them.

The quality of this learning relationship is largely controlled by the teacher's ability to model relational gestures/practices.





Our Research

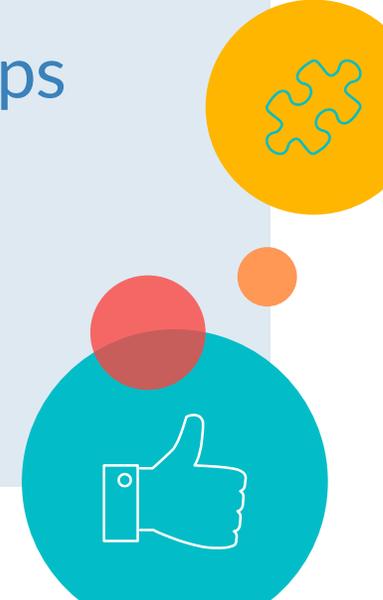
Clear Expectations

Student Centered Methods

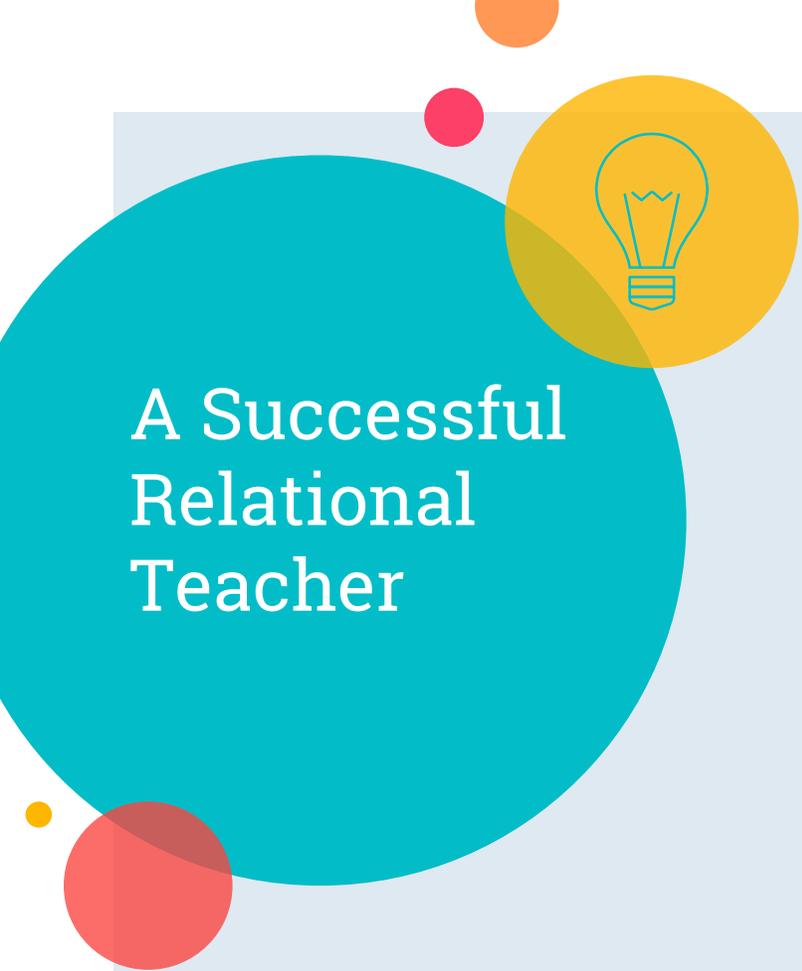
High Expectations

Engaging and Authentic

The bottom line: Relationships



“Um, so you feel like you want to work for a teacher like that, or do stuff, and, um, even if he pushes you he understands what it’s like to work hard so he’s not going to push you too hard.” - Student Research Participant



A Successful Relational Teacher

Creates a receptive relational classroom climate by...

Establishing a clear sense of behavioral expectations

Respectfully addressing each student

Creating a classroom atmosphere students perceive to be “fair” and emotionally safe

“...These educators feel that this is an important trade-off and that this time spent away from the traditional academic requirements is not interfering with academic outcomes – rather it is enhancing them. They believe that the stronger the relationships are between the students and the teachers the better the performance: sciences, liberal arts, music, art, physical education, athletics, etc. for all their students. Furthermore, building relationships forges connectedness to and among stakeholders.” - Phil Vincent



Building Relational Capital



To “repair a relationship” implies that there is a relationship there to begin with...

Take time in the beginning to get to know something about each student.

Model and cultivate restorative practices (affective statements and questions, community circles, & small impromptu conversations).

Be authentic and appropriately vulnerable; share something about yourself/personal disclosure.

Reach out to meet a specific need.

Respond to personal interest or talent.

Cultivate a common interest.

Be willing to accommodate some degree of opposition.

Be willing to forgo the “lesson of the day” for the life lesson.



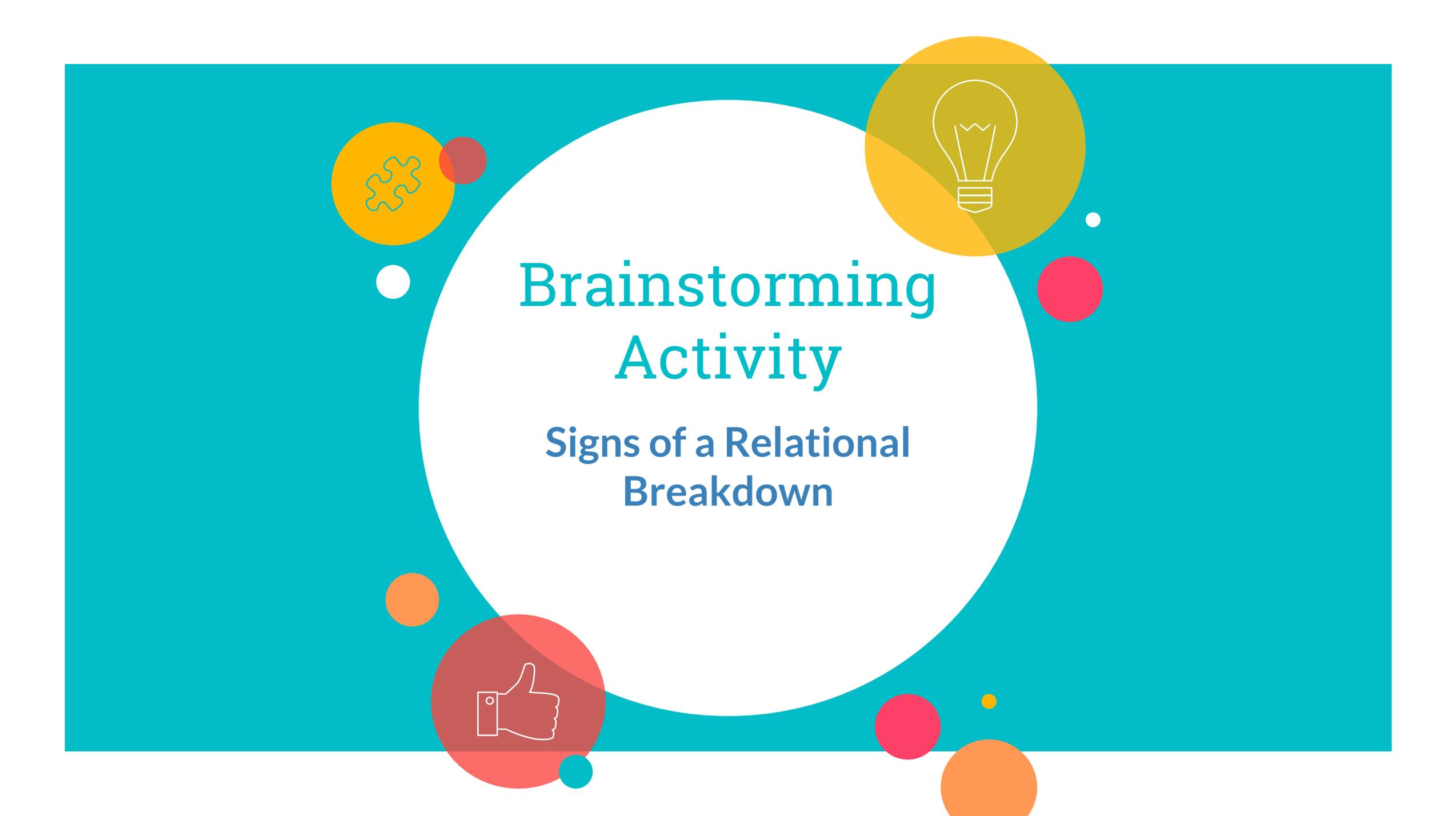
“...trust, the core of relationship, and truth, which is at the core of education, are inseparable.”



Think Pair Share

- A time when there was a
failure to repair a
relationship

John's Story - Part 1



Brainstorming Activity

Signs of a Relational
Breakdown

Signs of a Relational Breakdown



Student

Isn't learning material

Silent or doesn't participate

No longer on the same page

Growing problem in class

Apathetic, makes excuses

Teacher

Is at the end of his/her rope

More angry, more frustrated

Dealing with lies

Reflecting/venting outside of class

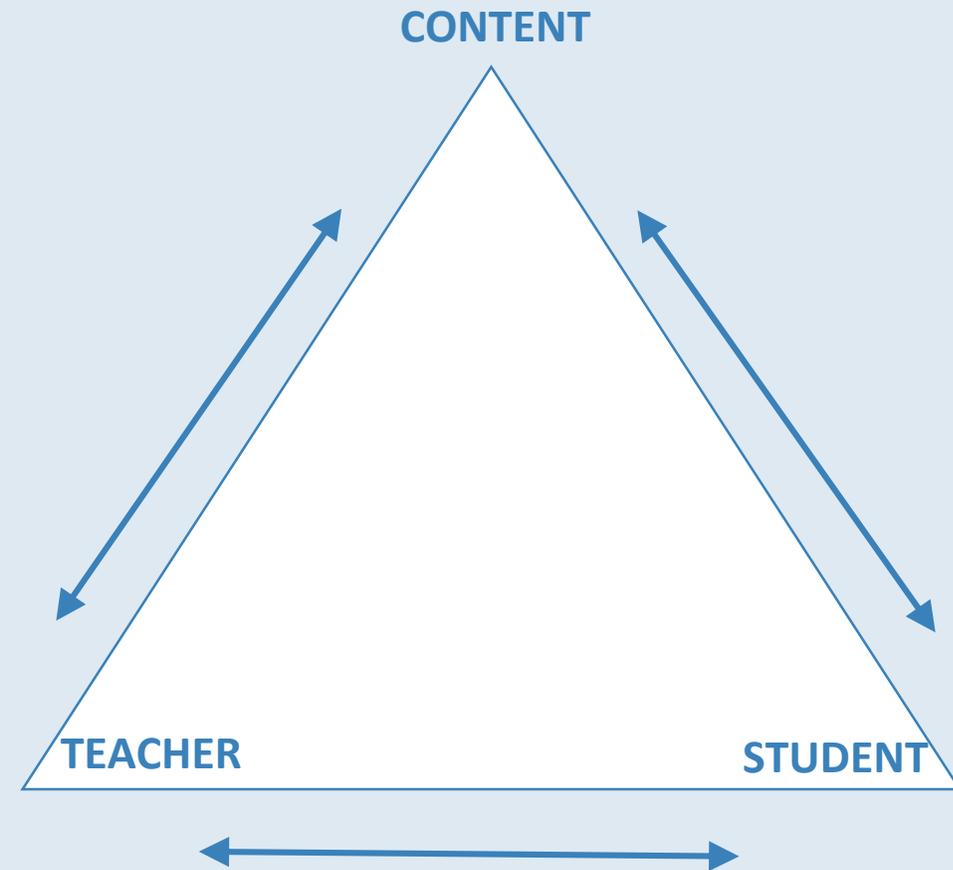
Feeling regret, disappointment

Increases office referrals/punitive measures

The children who need love the most will often ask for it in the most unloving ways.
(words of a teacher quoted by Russell Barkley)



Teaching is a triadic relationship



Having rejected many of the pseudo-academic benchmarks that can, and do, fit on a scorecard, preschool teachers in Finland are free to focus on what's really essential: their relationship with the growing child.

- Phil Vincent



Keys to Repairing Relational Breakdown



Recognize the Relational Breakdown

Determine to do something about it!

Remember you are the relational manager!

Challenge yourself to think about “I” rather than “they” - see it as a mirror first.

Separate the deed from the doer. - Braithwaite

Decide when to confront.

Allow for time for contemplation, reflection and planning.

Use “I” statements/ affective statements and affective questions.

Reflect and rise above student reactions – Don’t take personally.

“You cannot move to problem solving if the emotional temperature is too high.”



Reflective Relational Model



- Enlist the support of colleagues
- Be intentional and proactive
- Focus on an action plan
- Continue to revisit the plan

(Gibbs Model)





Keys to Repairing Relational Breakdown

Be Deliberate

Prepare - consider using the reflective relational (Gibbs) model.
Elicit advice.

Who else might have a positive relationship with the student?

Do your research.
What else is going on?

Frame consequences in terms of “why.” This helps students feel like things are being done “with them” instead of “to” them.

Consider including other stakeholders or a neutral third party.

Set norms and expectations for the conversation.

Remain positive.
“Start and end with positives.”

Model language and behaviors you expect.

Use relational capital.

Be genuine, authentic and vulnerable.

Work with the student to define the problem and elicit possible solution.

Decide on a plan together.

Schedule time to follow-up, revisit the plan and check in.

Extend beyond the classroom.

Don't hold grudges -
Tomorrow is a new day.





Keys to Repairing Relational Breakdown

Understand some students have adopted a self-defeating attitude – it isn't you!

Realizing that, with such students, a focus on schoolwork and compliance with school norms and expectations only elicits stronger resistance and self-defeat.

Look at patterns - Are you repeating the same steps and expecting different results?

Appreciate that some students have adopted unfortunate, often unconscious and self-defeating postures in relation to schools and teacher. Realize they are demonstrating the life skills they have learned that works for them at home and other places.

Partner with peers, parents and others for positive outcomes

Be willing to make multiple, repeated efforts.

Be creative!

Take care of yourself!

"We just keep talking until there's nothing left but the obvious truth." Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper of the Turtle Clan, Onondaga Iroquois





How important is it to
let our students know
who we are and where
we are coming from?

How well do we
explain our “why?”

Keys to Repairing Relational Breakdown



Fair Process - “[Students] are most likely to trust and cooperate freely with systems—whether they themselves win or lose by those systems—when fair process is observed”

Engagement— involving [students] in decisions that affect them by listening to their views and genuinely taking their opinions into account

Expectation clarity— making sure that everyone clearly understands a decision and what is expected of them in the future (Kim & Mauborgne, 2003)

Explanation— explaining the reasoning behind a decision to everyone who has been involved or who is affected by it

The fundamental unifying hypothesis of restorative practices is that “human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them.” - Costello, Wachtel & Wachtel



Restorative Practices



“The aim of restorative practices is to **develop community** and **manage conflict** and tension by **repairing harm** and **restoring relationships**.”

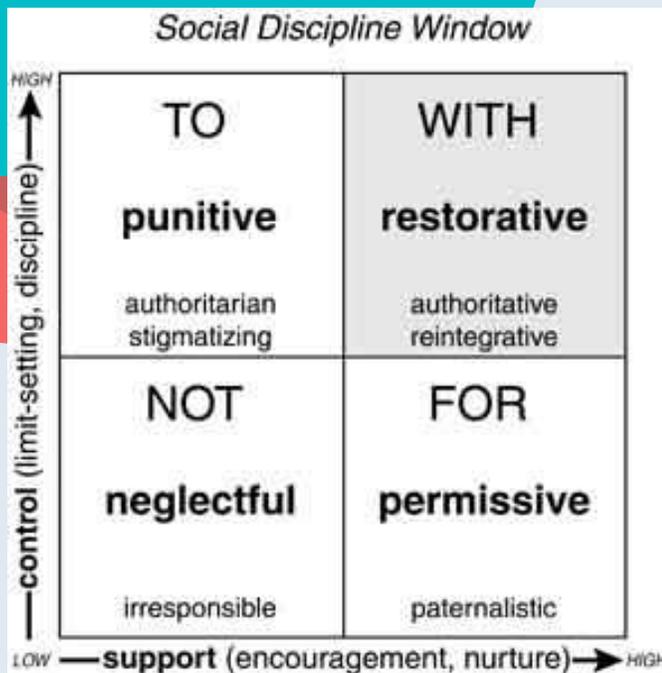
It is restorative (with) rather than punitive (to), permissive (for) or neglectful (not).

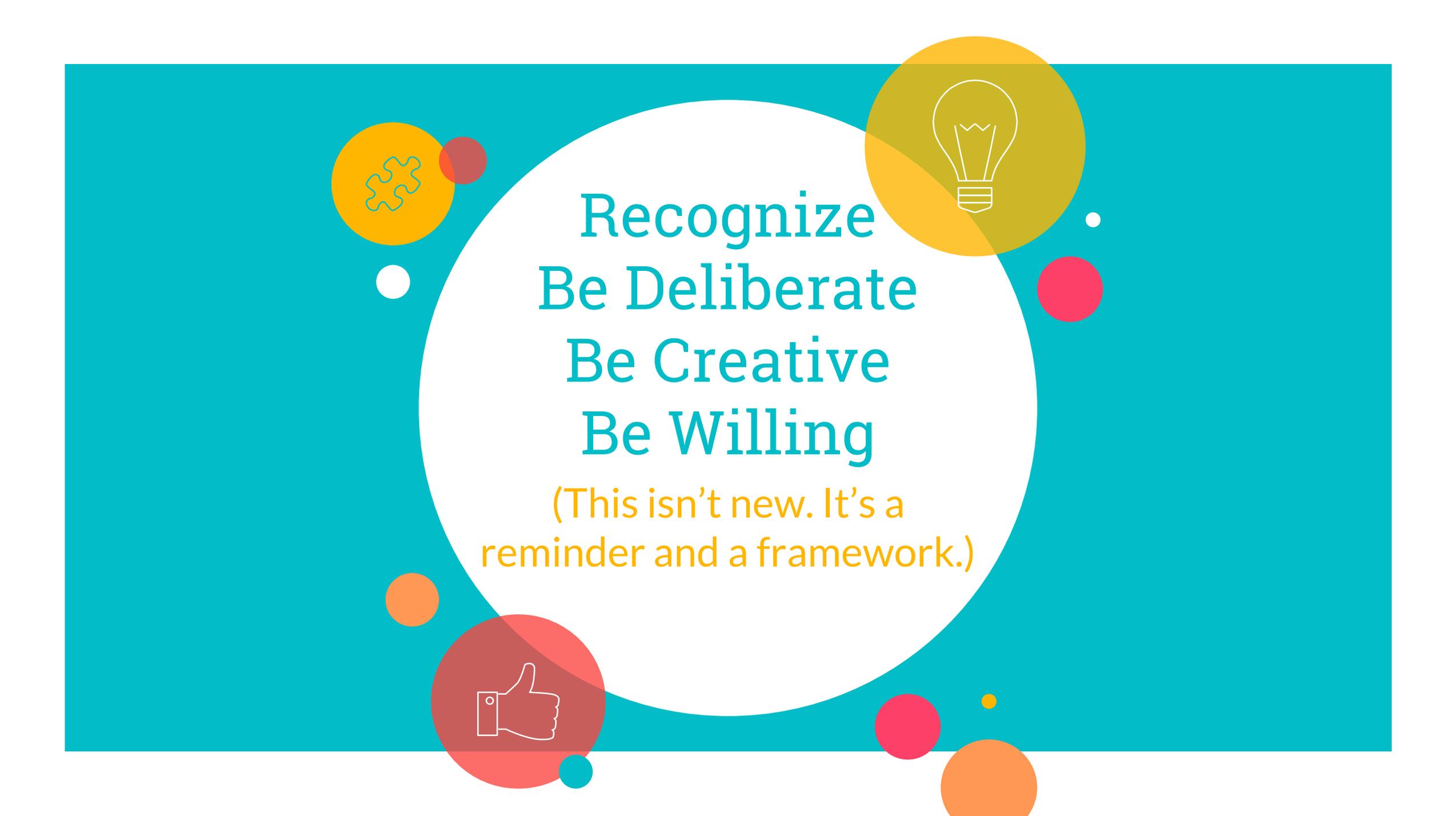
“RP allows the act (unacceptable behavior) to be rejected because it fails to meet an expectation or standard while acknowledging the intrinsic worth of the person and their potential contributions to [the class/school].”

It is reintegrative rather than stigmatizing.

The needs of all stakeholders must be acknowledged and provided for.

You can deal with things restoratively and still hold students accountable.

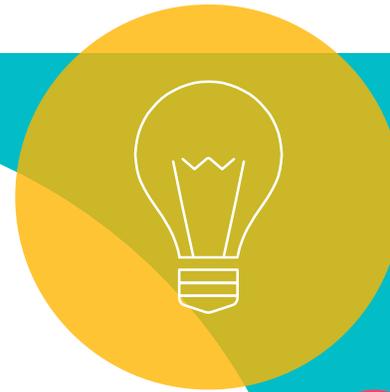
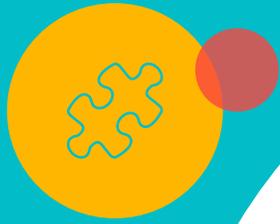




Recognize
Be Deliberate
Be Creative
Be Willing

(This isn't new. It's a
reminder and a framework.)

John's Story - Part 2



Resources for further exploration



IIRP - <https://www.iirp.edu/>

- The Restorative Practices Handbook
- Restorative Circles in Schools
- Restorative Justice Conferencing

Reichert and Hawley

- Reaching Boys, Teaching Boys - Strategies that Work and Why
- I Can Learn from You - Boys as Relational Learners

Phil Vincent - Relationships + Rules = Results, A Common Sense Approach

Leadership Advancing Climate and Culture in Schools (LACCS), Alverno College, Milwaukee www.alverno.edu/laccs - Provides on-site continuing education training on relational teaching, social emotional learning, climate, culture, Restorative Practices, mindfulness, trauma-informed teaching, and other character education topics

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