

Board Member Questions and Answers

Prior to Dec. 6, 2023, Board Meeting

Item 5.1 APS and City of Albuquerque Collaborative Partnership Initiatives

Over the summer of 2023, Manzano High staff convened a meeting with APS board members, city staff, County Commissioner Eric Olivas, and Scott Groginski Policy Analyst for the Governor. The mission was to find a more restorative solution to the spike in aggressive/dangerous/violent behaviors APS students are exhibiting. The conversation and collaboration produced the idea of a Restorative Center for students and families. This center would represent a city, county, school district effort to address the needs of students who were in crisis and whose behavior was severe enough to warrant expulsion or long term suspension. The concern about expulsions and suspensions is that they did nothing to correct behaviors or even address their root cause. Another concern was that no one institution could address the mental & behavioral health issues alone. The circumstances, the problems, required a village approach.

Question 1:

Where are we with that effort and can we take this opportunity to commit to the idea of creating at least one Restorative Center for high school, middle school, and elementary school children and families with the most intensive needs for school year 2023-2024? Ideally, we should not need a Restorative Center if APS and the City can implement Restorative Practices in schools effectively.

As of July 2023, the district has articulated restorative practices in the administrative procedural directive for [Student Discipline and Standards of Behavior](#). This procedural directive is included in the 2023-24 Student Handbook and applies to all APS schools. Restorative practices are part of “progressive discipline” as defined by law (Section 22-35-2 NMSA 1978) and focus on “building, maintaining, and when necessary, repairing relationships among all members of a school community. Restorative practices are based on relationships, respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration.”

There is currently a targeted effort to implement restorative practices in schools effectively. Along with adding restorative practices to the APS Student Handbook, elementary, middle, and K-8 principals have recently become certified trainers in Classroom Culture, an offering from the Crisis Prevention Institute that aligns with the district’s nonviolent crisis intervention (NVC) training. The principals will train their school personnel in the principles of Classroom Culture. The five principles of Classroom Culture are:

- Consistent, calm behavior
- Sustainable routines
- First attention to best conduct

- Scripted interventions
- Restorative approaches

Within the principle of restorative approaches, those trained will be able to:

- Develop skills to build a classroom in which students feel listened to, begin learning to self-regulate their behavior, recognize the impact of their actions, and think reflectively
- Recognize the importance and impact of restorative approaches
- Identify caring habits and their benefits to individual students, the learning environment, and whole-school consistency
- Apply the skills, techniques, and questions for implementing an effective restorative conversation.

The Classroom Culture training is the foundation on which ongoing restorative practices principles and training will be established.

Additionally, the Office of Equity and Engagement currently has the position of School Climate Director posted on the APS Jobs site. The purpose of this position is to oversee the School Climate Department, which includes programs, trainings, initiatives, consultation, and support to district leadership, departments, schools, and community around restorative practices and bullying prevention. The position posting closes on December 10, 2023, and the goal is to have this position filled and active in January 2024.

Question 2:

On the topic of Restorative Practices, how can the city and APS better use resources committed to restorative practices? APS has access to the NM Public Schools Insurance Authority funding that has contracted with POMS Associates to work on RP's in the schools. APS has access to 160 hours of expert advice from Darron Walter, who works with POMS Associates. POMS Associates has several high school models showing promising results from around the state: Santa Fe's Capitol High, schools in Raton, Pojoaque, and Penasco to name a few. We could bring this state resource to bear on a city, county, APS effort to advance RP's in our high need schools. Begin with maybe ½ the schools one year and expand the program the next. APS and City of ABQ should be leading the state on this matter.

Currently, our schools are guided in using restorative practices by the procedural directive for Student Discipline and Standards of Behavior referenced above. District administration can explore additional ways to support the implementation of restorative practices in our schools.

(From Dr. Gonzales): I am grateful for the information regarding POMS Associates as a resource to support restorative practices in our schools, and I will prioritize connectin with Mr. Walter.

Question 3:

How can we get a commitment to Restorative Practices being the guiding philosophy in the VIP initiative tonight?

Some key elements of The VIP Program are social services support and mediation/trauma recovery interventions. These elements are centered on restorative practices such as relationship-based social services and working with offenders and their families to reduce the cycle of harm in each criminal act. Using ethics of care, VIP team members interrupt cycles of violence by providing victims and their associates with credible messages of non-violence, pathways to various social services, peer support, and an “honorable exit” from committing future acts of violence.

In APS, “restorative practices” is defined as an approach that sees relationships as central to learning, growth, and creating an inclusive, respectful school culture. Restorative practices are based on relationships, respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration. These practices directly align with the key elements of the VIP program in that they are relationship-based, seek to repair harm, and emphasize reintegration into the school community with the belief that, with the appropriate interventions, supports, and relationships, students can and will make future choices that reflect a commitment to peace and security.

Question 4:

Can any of the following initiatives be woven together to work toward a Restorative Practice program? Especially Youth and Family Services Dept and Violence Intervention Program?

Peer Support is the cornerstone of the Custom Notification and the VIP “All In Social Services” Component. The VIP team uses a public health approach to intervene in the cycles of violence in Albuquerque by addressing the social determinants of health and disparities that underlie and drive the increases in violent gun crime. This approach is rooted in restorative practices.

Peer Helpers Program in 25 APS schools

The Peer Helper program is an extracurricular program that supports suicide prevention and mental health in middle and high schools. Peer Helpers are nominated by their peers and are invited to participate in a schoolwide effort to break mental health stigma, increase helping skills, and improve school climate. Peer Helpers are trained in suicide prevention, mental health supports, and help-seeking behaviors. Peer Helpers meet at least two times per month, participate in monthly outreach projects focused on suicide prevention and mental health, and larger service learning events (approximately two per academic year) to support the community in suicide prevention and mental health. Outreach projects are student-led.

Question 5:

There is talk of expansion of the VIP program but where is it in place? What data tells us it is working? Who is working with families of color? Do these families feel like they are making progress? Do these students feel like they are making progress? What is the continuous improvement model the program is using to measure these outcomes?

The City and APS are collaborating to expand the VIP program districtwide. The VIP programs are less than a year old at the school sites where they currently exist. While it is too early to

have meaningful data regarding the success of the programs on APS campuses, the City of Albuquerque's data for VIP in 2022 can be found [here](#).

Question 6:

What is the plan to work with NMPSIA and PED to weave their efforts into the City and APS initiatives? VIP MUST take a Restorative Practices approach to work. Moreover, it behooves the city and APS to be team players with state agencies wherever possible. This is one area where we could stand out in a positive light. Our absence from statewide efforts does not serve us well.

One of the elements of VIP includes providing pathways to various social services through collaborative relationships with over 20 community partners, peer support, and an "honorable exit" from committing future acts of violence. VIP is one of several collaborative projects between APS and outside agencies to address student behavior and support behavioral health. We have discussed with these partner agencies and the legislature about the expansion/support for these programs.

Short list of collaborative programs:

- Handle with Care
- Gun safety/gun lock community events
- Peer Helpers suicide prevention program
- Drug prevention/intervention programs

Consider Approval of the Continuance of the Albuquerque Public Schools Labor Board *(has been pulled from the consent agenda at a board member's request)*

Are the dates referred to in the resolution going to change? There are several times where the year 2020 is written, should those change to 2024?

No, the dates in the resolution are not going to change. There is no need to change the dates in the resolution because the resolution was passed in 2020 and is still in effect today.

The resolution for APS to continue to have a local labor board was entered into on December 16, 2020, and is still in effect due to the requirements of Section 10-7E-10(B) being met by December 31, 2020, which included the resolution. Then, pursuant to Section 10-7E-10(D), a local board existing as of July 1, 2021, shall continue to exist after December 31, 2021, only if an affirmation is submitted to the state Public Employee Labor Relations Board. This affirmation must indicate that the public employer subject to the local board has affirmatively elected to continue to operate under the local board and that each labor organization has submitted written notice to the Public Employee Labor Relations Board that it affirmatively elects to continue to operate under the local board. This affirmation is required to be submitted to the state Public Employee Labor Relations Board by the local board between November 1 and December 31 in odd-numbered years. See 10-7E-10(E).

Before 1985 APS didn't have a labor board? If they didn't how did it operate without one? What was the process pre-1985?

The current labor relations policy was adopted in May 1985 as Policy 3.1, subsequently renumbered as Policy H.1. The first collective bargaining law enacted in New Mexico was PEBA I in 1992 (NMSA 1978, § 10-7D-1 *et seq.*). Prior to this first enactment of PEBA, there was public sector collective bargaining, and New Mexico courts consistently upheld the implied right of public entities to enter into collective bargaining agreements. Prior to the implementation of the labor relations policy, there would not have been a labor-relations board as outlined in the Resolution. We do not have documentation regarding the process before the implementation of the Labor Relations Policy.