

# Toward a Restorative Physical Education

**Pedagogical Stances for the Era of  
#BlackLivesMatter**

**Michael A. Hemphill, PhD  
Department of Kinesiology  
University of North Carolina at Greensboro**



***“As educators who are committed to engaging in best pedagogical practices for all students, we stand committed to engaging in inclusive, equitable, and socially just practices in all aspects of teaching and learning. It is now, more than ever, that we need to take responsibility in creating change to ensure that equitable practices are transpiring in our gymnasiums, classrooms, and movement spaces. We may engage in this individual and collective effort by giving voice to our students and reviewing our curricula and pedagogical practices, so that they reflect all students’ identities who are and are not in our learning spaces.”***

**- Jennifer Walton-Fisette & Traci Grissom**



- Reflect upon your social identity and consider any conscious or unconscious biases you may have...
- Review your curriculum and programs for any anti-Racist or socially unjust practices and policies...
- Review your curriculum and programs to explicitly teach about and for anti-Racism...
- Learn about your students...
- Consider co-constructing your programs with your students...
- Offer pedagogical and learning experiences that are devoid of perpetuating gender binaries, racial injustices...

# 3 Pillars of Restorative Justice

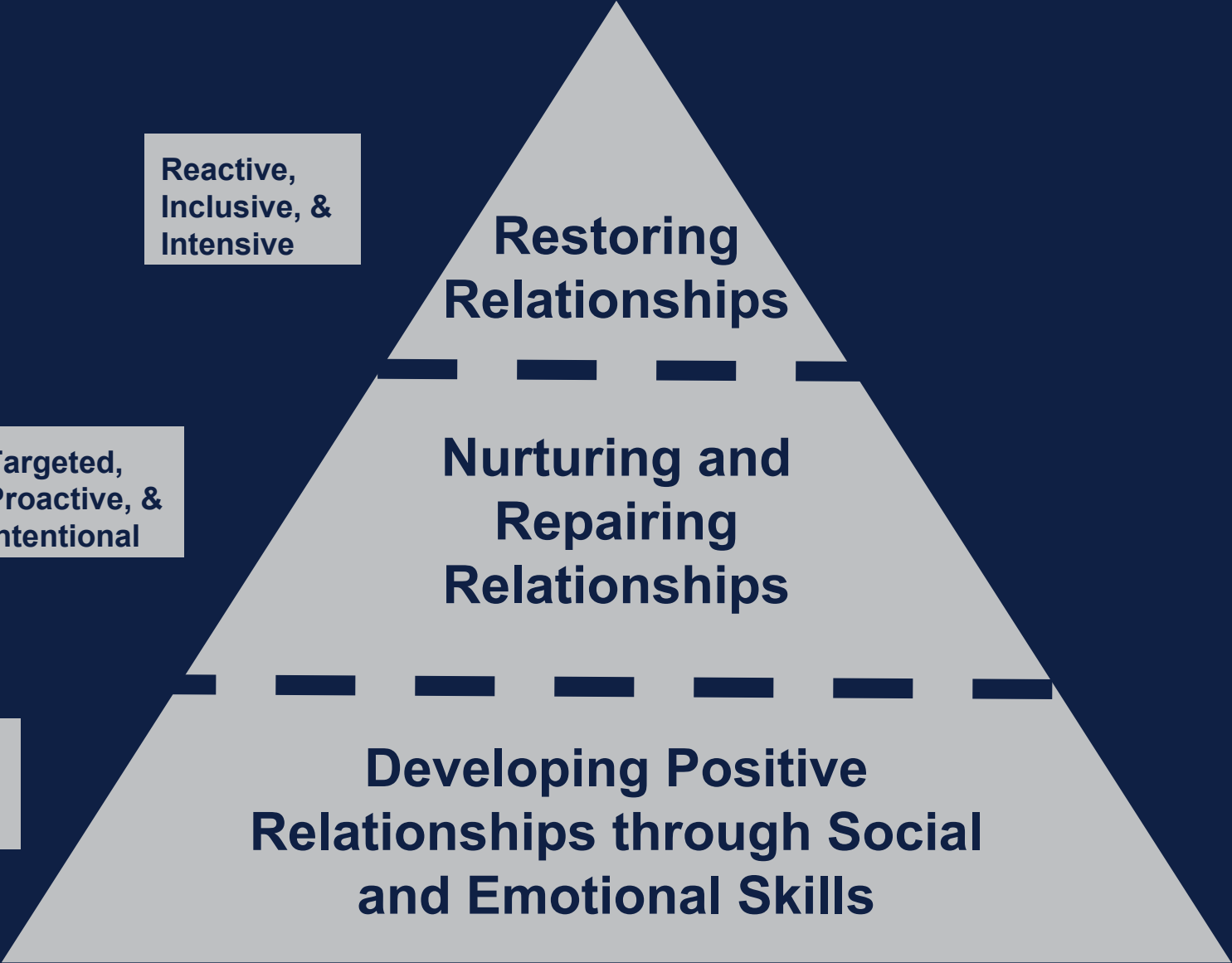
1. Harms and needs

2. Obligations

3. Engagement (Howard Zehr, 2005, *The little book of restorative justice*)

*“RJ is making the wrongs right, but making it right in a way that both sides can come to an agreement. ‘Cause there’s some justice where its like, ‘I feel like this is justice’ but that other person might not agree. Restorative justice ... is like you’re restoring an issue and its justice on both sides, and they’ve come to an agreement that this is what’s gonna happen.”*

- *12th grade student circle keeper’s definition of RJ (as reported in Winn, 2018)*



# Conflicts in Schools

**Students  
navigate  
issues**

**Teachers  
manage  
conflict**

**Referrals to  
Principal**



# Restorative Circles

**Students  
navigate  
issues**

**Teachers  
manage harm**

**Referrals to  
Principal**



**Proactive  
Circles**

**Reactive  
Circles**

**Restorative  
Conference**

**What's  
your  
favorite...**

**What are  
you  
looking  
forward  
to?**

**What's  
your  
strength?**

**What  
gives you  
hope?**

**What  
does  
respect  
mean to  
you?**

**How can  
we value  
diversity?**

**What are  
your  
fears?**

**Kneel or  
stand for  
national  
anthem?**

**How did  
you  
contribute  
to the  
team?**



But, Does it Work?

Yes..., Maybe..., No...?

# But, Does it Work?

## Yes,

- In an RCT, students were less likely to be suspended in the RJ intervention and were also less likely to be suspended multiple times; including low income and black students. (Acosta et al., 2019)

## Maybe,

- Studies show that colorblind approaches show some improvements in social-emotional learning but fail to consider structural issues that lead to harsh disciplinary outcomes, thereby failing to address the root causes of harm. (Gregory & Fergus, 2017)

## No,

- Some studies caution that RJ models were not sustainable even after several years of implementation. (Augustine et al., 2016; Mansfield et al., 2018)

# Paradigm Shifts

(not practice shifts)

- RJ practitioners have often lacked adequate professional development
- RJ practitioners have not engaged in the mind-set work needed to shift their paradigm
- A paradigm shift critically considers: who and what matters?

*“A mind-set shift requires complementary pedagogical stances that are consistent with the goals of restorative justice”*

- Maisha T. Winn (2018), *Justice on Both Sides*

# *Pedagogical Stances for a Restorative Physical Education*



*My Experience at James B. Dudley High School*

# Pedagogical Stance 1: *History Matters*

Educators must seek out histories that make us uncomfortable

- What personal and professional histories shape your understanding of students and their communities?
- What are the histories that shape the power dynamics of your school and community?
- What events are necessary to consider in order to understand your students, school, and community?

## A history that explains current conditions...

- Community leads nation in eviction rates (TheEvictionLab.org)
- Situated in food desert (US Department of Agriculture)
- Racially segregated historically and currently
- Social unrest consistent with conditions of concentrated poverty

## A history that uplifts...

- Namesake led NC A&T University
- Black firsts... doctors, lawyers, judges
- Athletic pride: Many alums excel in professional sports
- Peaceful protest: 1960 sit-ins; mass incarceration

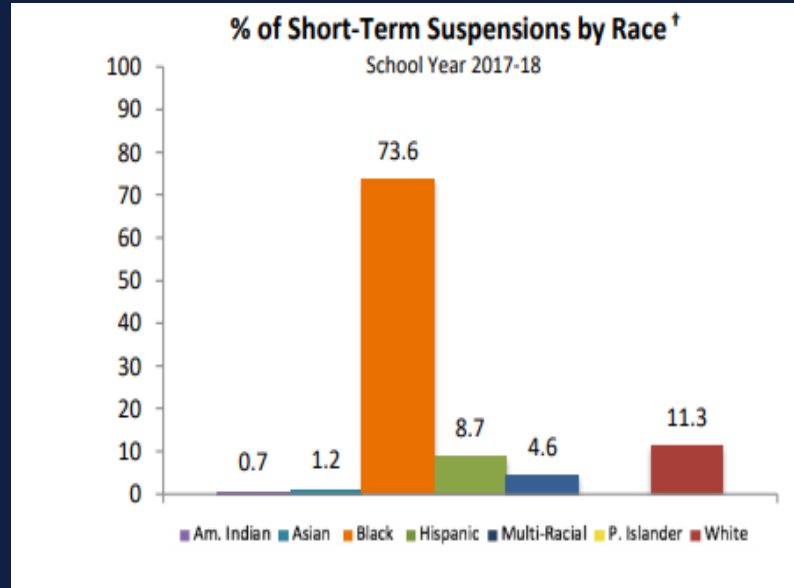
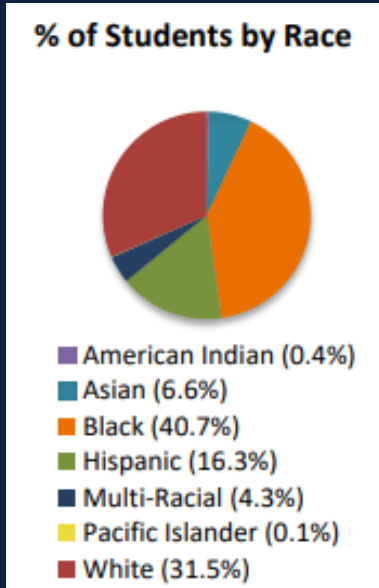


# Pedagogical Stance 2: *Race Matters*

Educators must consider the role of racism and racist ideas in how we think about students as learners

- What are our perceptions of students based on their race?
- What do our students and their families value?
- How has race shaped the experiences of our students and our school?

# Local school district data race reveals inequity...



But why?

- Dress code violations
- Disrespect
- Truancy
- Fighting
- Habitual rule breaking

(Guilford County Schools (NC), Southern Coalition for Social Justice, *Racial Equity Report Card*, 2018)

## Historical trends help explain race inequity...

- Erasure of NC's black educators in 1960s
  - e.g., 620 black elementary principals in 1963; 70 in 1970
  - Over 3,000 black teachers lost jobs in 1960s (2nd only to Texas)
- “All student groups of color have inequitable access to the kinds of rigorous coursework and effective teachers necessary to ensure college and career readiness.” - Triplett & Ford, 2020, *The State of Race Equity in NC Public Schools*



# Pedagogical Stance 3: *Justice Matters*

Educators must be guided by a moral compass  
insisting we do right be people

- What does justice mean to you and what does it look like in schools?
- What normative stances do we adopt that undermines justice?
- What is necessary to provide a just and equitable physical education?

## First, we try to see injustices...

- *Leandro* Supreme Court ruling found that NC “failed to provide a sound, basic education”
- Black students are routinely funnelled toward remedial programs and away from gifted programs
- Local, state, and national policies funnel resources away from low-income communities

## Second, we invite students to imagine a more just school...

- Restorative circles identify and discuss the needs of students and their communities.
  - What does academic success mean to you?
  - What do you need from this school to achieve your dreams?
  - What is owed to you as a citizen of this country, community, and school?

# Pedagogical Stance 4: *Language Matters*

Educators must be mindful of how language spoken to and about children is foundational to healthy relationships

- How does our language place the burden of failure on students rather than systems?
- How does our language create a deficit framing of students?
- How does our language embrace the rich assets possessed by students?

## Language that misleads...

- When racial groups stand on relatively equal footing, an “achievement gap” does not exist
- “Urban” describes population density
- “Silence” is a voice

## Language that uplifts...

- Opportunities determine success/failure in schools; therefore an “opportunity gap” exists (Rich Milner, 2020, *Start where you are, but don't stay there*)
- There are examples of success and failure in urban schools

## Language that affirms our students' lives matters...



# Toward a Restorative Physical Education

## Future Directions

“We cannot create justice without getting close to the places where injustices prevail. We have to get proximate.”

- Brian Stevenson (2014), *Just Mercy*

# Building Relationships

- Interrogate “diversity headlines”
  - *“There are over 40 languages spoken at this school!”*
- Create space for students to share their needs and aspirations
- Provide students with narratives that counter the deficit language applied to them

# Get Local

## Miseducation

### Is There Racial Inequality at Your School?

By *Lena V. Groeger, Annie Waldman and David Eads*, October 16, 2018

Based on civil rights data released by the U.S. Department of Education, ProPublica has built an interactive database to examine racial disparities in educational opportunities and school discipline. Look up more than 96,000 individual public and charter schools and 17,000 districts to see how they compare with their counterparts. [About Our Data](#) | [Related Story](#) | [Local Stories](#)



For example: [Cambridge Rindge & Latin High School](#) [Charlottesville City Public Schools District](#) [City of Chicago School District](#)

[projects.propublica.com/miseducation](https://projects.propublica.com/miseducation)

# Pedagogical Stances for the Era of **#BlackLivesMatter**

“From slavery times to the present, black people have treasured education as liberatory. It was unlawful for enslaved blacks to learn to read and write. When the slavemaster learned his wife was teaching the young Frederick Douglass to read, he at once forbade it ... Douglass went on to become a leader in the anti-slavery and women’s rights movement, a best-selling author, and a US diplomat.”

Fania E. Davis (2019), *The little book of race and restorative justice*



# Toward a Restorative Physical Education

**Pedagogical Stances for the Era of  
#BlackLivesMatter**

**Michael A. Hemphill, PhD  
Department of Kinesiology  
University of North Carolina at Greensboro**