



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN  
SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

November 24, 2008

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** State Board of Education

**FROM:** Michael P. Flanagan, Chairman 

**SUBJECT:** Presentation on Lansing and Kalamazoo School Districts' Restorative Justice Programs

Schools have been criticized for an overreliance on suspensions (both in-house and out-of-school) and expulsions which remove a student from the educational setting. Given the more rigorous high school graduation requirements, any missed class period has a greater potential impact on student achievement.

Restorative justice initiatives have proven to be effective ways of dealing with disciplinary referrals. Buildings that have adopted such initiatives have seen dramatic reductions in both disciplinary referrals and recidivism rates, as well as significant reductions in days lost to suspension and expulsion—a key component of the State Board's "Keeping Kids in School" efforts.

Restorative justice practices have proven results, such as:

- Enhanced personal responsibility on the part of students
- Significant improvements in school climate measures
- Improved relationships among students, staff, and families
- Dramatic reductions in recidivism rates and suspensions and expulsions in some districts as much as 50 percent
- Reductions in referrals to law enforcement and juvenile justice
- Greater satisfaction with the process on the part of victims than with traditional disciplinary sanctions

Thanks to partnerships with local Dispute Resolution Centers in the Greater Lansing and Kalamazoo areas, several districts have incorporated restorative justice practices, primarily conferencing and circles, in their buildings. Representatives from local districts, law enforcement, and the Dispute Resolution Centers have been invited to the December 9, 2008, State Board of Education meeting to share information about their programs.

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