

My name is Kendra Collins and I am 17 years old and attending U32 high school. When I started at U32 I was living with my parents but last year I was put into foster care and I now live with my foster mom, Beth. This really forced me to grow up fast and because of this I have been through many complications, for this I am very thankful U32 taught me about restorative practices (RP).

Every teacher at U32 has attended a 4-day training on using RP. This has given them the values of patience, persistence, and conflict resolution. Because every staff at U32 uses RP I can trust all the adults have a tool to use to maintain a comfortable, calm, and problem-solving environment to openly communicate not only what's going on, but how both parties are feeling. Because of this I have had a chance to have better emotional relationship with my peers and teachers. My efforts in school are depending on a lot of things. However, one of the biggest factors is what my relationships are like between my peers and the school staff. I feel as though RP offers up an advantage for both parties to hear not only what one has to say, but a chance to hear another point of view, that being an outside view.

One time, me and a peer we're having a disagreement and it was very hard for us to talk to each other. We live together, go to school together, and even drive places together. So, we are 24/7 surrounded by each other, making it close to impossible to hold our ground because we are butting heads so often. However, all this stopped when her and I went through a "RP circle with our school counselor. After a lot of convincing and a couple days thinking time, we agreed to do the "RP circle" not only because we were sick of fighting, but we were both aware we couldn't hear each other. The framework of RP and set-up of the questions gave me an opportunity to hear how my peer was impacted by my choices. I couldn't interrupt, defend, or argue with what my peer was saying because the structure of RP and once she was finished she had to do the same for me, listen. We trusted our school counselor with our conflict because we knew she would have an open mind and the problem-solving energy to be there for both of us. This helped me to feel empathy for my friend and have a different bond with my school counselor.