

## Restorative Justice

“Promotes safety, inclusion, respect and positive relationships”

January 2017

Dear Parents and Students of Sterling High School:

I am excited to be part of a new **Restorative Justice program** at Sterling Heights High School (SHHS). The program is being introduced to many districts throughout the State of Michigan; however, SHHS being one of the first to get the program implemented has partnered with a nonprofit agency in Macomb County called the Resolution Center.

### What is Restorative Justice?

The following is an overview of the State of Michigan’s Department of Education definition of Restorative Justice.

- Restorative Justice (RJ) is an approach to addressing conflict and misconduct that focuses on healing rather than punishment.
- RJ assumes that misconduct and conflict injure those directly involved (victims and offenders) as well as the broader community to which they belong.
- Rather than relying on punishment, RJ expects those who cause injuries to make things right with those they have harmed and with their community

Its foundational principles of **respect**, **accountability**, **healing**, and **empathy** speak to *fundamental human values, ethics, and practices*

For more information, please see Michigan Department of Education  
website: <http://www.michigan.gov/mde>

### How does it work?

The students or staff are able to refer concerns/issues/incidents to the RJ office in the East Center of the Building.

\*The RJ coordinator is an independent neutral facilitator of the conversation, put in place to host mediations, reflections, and RJ conferences

\*The RJ coordinator facilitates the communication between the parties, having very little input on the overall agreement

\*The party/parties are responsible for coming up with the best mechanism in their opinion for addressing the concern, to avoid further incidents and to create an alternative dispute resolution

\*A social contract (agreement) is put in to place and as long as the parties can adhere to the agreement the school will limit administrative disciplinary actions

\*If a social contract (agreement) cannot be reached a conference may be scheduled (at the discretion of the administrator) with parents, and other necessary parties in an effort to resolve the conflict

\*The process is confidential (non-reporting information shared in the conference/mediation) with only the agreement being placed in the student’s file

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### What are the benefits?

- \*Students are able to express themselves in a **Safe Zone**
- \*Promotes positive resolution and **reducing** administrative **disciplinary actions** (i.e. suspension, expulsion, and other actions)
- \*Students and Staff **communicate** concerns in a legitimate effort to avoid further conflicts/ disciplinary actions (communication entails both listening and voicing)
- \*Fosters  **coping skills** and **accountability**

### When does it start?

The program will actively begin **January 23, 2017**, at the start of the second semester

### Some of the concerns/issues addressed:

- Threats/ Put downs
- Attendance Concerns
- Suspension
- Missing classwork/ Grades concerns
- Personal, School & Family Issues
- Relationship issues
- Social Media conflicts
- Gossip or Bullying concerns
- Concerns with staff and peers
- Fights (verbal and physical)
- Classroom disruptions
- Insubordination

Remember Restorative Justice is about the student having an input on outcomes that affect their lives!

Please feel free to email Ms. LoRon at: [LPolk@wckids.net](mailto:LPolk@wckids.net) or call: (586) 698-4256

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### Who is the new Restorative Justice Coordinator?

Hello, I am LoRon Polk the new Restorative Justice Coordinator at Sterling Heights High School. My educational background includes a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science and Business from the University of Michigan, continuing forth with my education I attended graduate school at Eastern Michigan University pursuing a Masters of Public Administration and is currently, completing a Sports Administration Masters of Science (preliminary for Doctorate’s program) online at St. Thomas University in Florida. I am a formally trained mediator through the University of Detroit Law School. As a Michigan State Supreme Court (SCAO) approved Mediator I am certified to work in the areas of probate, family, special education, restorative justice, and technical areas.

I have an extensive background in education, politics, business and law; however, I have found the most enjoyment in mediating over the last 10 years. My experiences have afforded me the opportunity to work with many school districts, judges, prosecutors and court personnel within Oakland, Macomb and Wayne Counties by being employed by various courts and school districts. As the former District Wide Mediation Coordinator in Wayne County I worked within the Prosecutor’s Office as a truancy mediator/school coordinator. This position also afforded me the opportunity work with Wayne County District Courts and to oversee the mediation efforts over the largest school district in the State of Michigan, having a direct influence in deterring student conflicts.

I am a divorced mother of two daughters (one just graduated from NYU the other is in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade). Hence, I am aware that there are awkward moments between youth and youth, as well as, youth and adults that may need an outside ear, so that all parties are heard. For me personally, it is always a positive to assist our youth in having positive school/life experiences. It is with great honor and enthusiasm that I join the Sterling Family on behalf of the Resolution Center. I have an open-door policy, which means at any time students, staff and families can reach out to me. Thank you again for affording me the opportunity to work with your students and the staff at Sterling as we **work together** in achieving positive benefitting outcomes.

Kind Regards,

Ms. LoRon, Restorative Justice Coordinator

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