

The Kaiser Permanente Community Fund (KPCF) at Northwest Health Foundation was founded in 2004 with an initial \$28 million investment by Kaiser Permanente to improve conditions for health. As we learned how to best partner with community organizations, we made pivotal decisions that changed how we operated. In this story, we tell how Resolutions Northwest taught us to focus on the roots of health, even when it pushes us out of our comfort zone.

The Roots of Health: Resolutions Northwest

Rigler Elementary School felt a lot different before Resolutions Northwest brought restorative justice to the school. Ten years ago, if a student ignored instructions or disrespected a teacher, they would have received a referral. In some cases they may have been sent to the office and spent a portion of their day there, missing critical instruction time. As referrals built up over the course of the year, the student may have faced suspension or even expulsion.

Now, as one teacher recounts, restorative justice helps educators address factors underlying behavior and keep students in school. One teacher told Resolutions NW, "I participated in a restorative dialogue with a student who had ignored instructions and used disrespectful language with me. During the session, he said he thought of himself as a bad kid and assumed that I saw him as a bad kid. The session allowed us to start to address this self-image and was the turning point in our relationship, which has been extremely positive ever since."

Restorative justice holds students accountable without the strict punishment that is often disproportionately applied to students of color and students with disabilities. It is a philosophy and practice to address harm between individuals and communities and undo systemic patterns of institutional racism and oppression. "Our goal is to build, maintain, and repair relationships in order to foster



Restorative Justice Co-Director Natalia Mathews leading circle with students at Rigler

healthy and inclusive school communities," said Christina Albo, director of restorative justice for Resolutions Northwest.

Restorative justice uses dialogue and social-emotional learning to teach young people to navigate their emotions and take responsibility for their actions. The skills it teaches create healthy habits that last a lifetime. In schools where restorative justice programs have been implemented, there has been a decrease in the difference of academic and disciplinary outcomes between students of color and their peers. During three academic years (2011-2014) of the Restorative Justice Program at Rigler Elementary School, African American and Latino students' rate of major disciplinary referrals declined compared to their White peers. Relative rates began to rise in 2014-2015 when the program didn't operate that year. (*You can review more data about the impact of restorative justice programs at Rigler Elementary School [in this infographic.](#)*)

“Looking back, we now see that creating partnerships between schools and community organizations is key to creating health. Schools are asking for help, and the solutions they need can be created only in partnership with the students and families in their communities.”

*– Michael Reyes Andrillon,
Community Engagement Officer at
Northwest Health Foundation*

As KPCF matured, we decided to focus on education as a key area for investment that can create health in our communities. With stated values around social and racial equity, we were introduced to the work of Resolutions NW. “Education is a key factor to determining life-long health. We can’t measure impacts to health immediately, but we can find other

indicators to measure our progress toward healthier communities. Resolutions Northwest helped us see how we can realize our vision by improving graduation and school discipline, and decreasing bias against students of color and students with disabilities,” said Michael Reyes Andrillon, Community Engagement Officer with Northwest Health Foundation.

With our support, Resolutions NW was able to expand their pilot into five additional schools and develop a partnership with Portland Public Schools. They now work closely with the district to reduce disproportionate discipline for youth of color and have even negotiated a multi-year contract with the district to build restorative justice into the district at all levels.

“Looking back, we now see that creating partnerships between schools and community organizations is key to creating health. Schools are asking for help, and the solutions they need can be created only in partnership with the students and families in their communities,” said Michael Reyes Andrillon. As a result of how we matured as a fund, and the decisions we made to address the roots of health in education, Resolutions Northwest has been able to nurture school efforts that give students a greater chance to live vibrant, healthy, and fulfilling lives.
