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# FOREWORD

Restorative justice work is social justice work. In *The Restorative Practices Playbook*, Dominique Smith, Douglas Fisher, and Nancy Frey highlight the power of genuine positive relationships among students and adults in schools. The authors provide readers with practical tools to encourage a sense of belonging and to foster connectedness among school community members. They provide readers with a toolkit to help educators feel safe being vulnerable to students and with each other and to allow students to be vulnerable and accept responsibility. These practices reduce conflict and enable schools to handle conflict in productive ways that emphasize growth, development, and learning rather than isolation and punishment.

In *The Restorative Practices Playbook*, the authors show readers how restorative practices positively impact schools and school-related outcomes. Students benefit from classrooms that function in predictable ways with predictable routines facilitated by a teacher they can trust to treat them with a predictable level of kindness and care. Even when events upend students' worlds outside of school, students must trust schools and the adults responsible for making schooling happen in ways that provide them with predictable routines and learning.

Dominique Smith, Douglas Fisher, and Nancy Frey show readers how restorative justice practices provide structures, processes, and functions schools can use to make things right when someone disrupts the school environment. These practices allow community members to repair harms and restore fractured relationships among each other. When done well, restorative practices help school community members protect core values and instructional time by diverting students from suspensions and expulsions and keeping them in classrooms. It is imperative that we keep all kids in school and ensure all students have equitable access to a free and appropriate public education.

I first met Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey the same way as many of you reading this foreword. I met them through their work. Before becoming an author, school principal, and professor, I was an English teacher. I knew Dr. Fisher and Dr. Frey through their research and writing on improving students' reading comprehension and writing. Later in my career, a high school I was leading got accepted into a competency-based education pilot program, which complemented a dual enrollment program I was determined to build with support from community partners. I dug deeper into Dr. Fisher and Dr. Frey's work at Health Sciences High and Middle College (HSHMC) to get curricular ideas and insight to revamp my school's curricular program. Connecting with Dr. Fisher and Dr. Frey through this foreword and other academic work is the universe working in mysterious ways.

Some time ago, I met Dr. Dominique through Twitter. (I'm not even kidding.) Dr. Dominique Smith is a school leader at HSHMC, and he sent a few members of his staff to hear me talk about my work in restorative justice. I connected with them, but I wasn't able to connect with Dominique at that time. Now, Dr. Dominique is "my dawg." For those who may not understand that colloquialism, Dr. Dominique and I have a wonderful appreciation for each other. Dr. Dominique and I connected about restorative justice online, via telephone, and it was clear that we were like-minded.

The work that this team has done on *The Restorative Practices Playbook* will help many children, educators, and schools. The ideas in the manuscript are wonderfully presented. The messaging about mindfulness, collaboration, and agency is needed. The playbook is written in an informative, easy-to-read style. Educators will find it a fantastic resource for reflection and action planning, particularly educators and school leaders new to restorative practices.

I do want to note that this book does not seek to take a deep dive into the intersections of race, implicit bias, and restorative practices. This book isn't written for that purpose. This is not the book that intends to explore restorative justice where it is equally (sometimes mortally) essential to be culturally competent as it is to be competent in one's subject matter pedagogy to be effective. This isn't that book. There are other books about restorative justice that immerse readers in discussions about the intersections of disproportionality, systemic discrimination, and restorative practices.

My colleagues have written a book that is exemplary at doing what it is designed to do. *The Restorative Practices Playbook* helps educators start or continue their restorative justice journeys, remain reflective about their practice, and make refinements to stay on track in their efforts. I am confident that *The Restorative Practices Playbook* will give schools tools to take important steps along their path to restorative practice.

My ministry in this restorative justice work is anchored in the belief that Jim Crow disciplinary practices in schools must end. Restorative justice provides waypoints to derail Jim Crow disciplinary outcomes. In this spirit, Dominique Smith, Douglas Fisher, and Nancy Frey provide readers with *The Restorative Practices Playbook*. This playbook is timely and much needed.

**—Zachary Scott Robbins**

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