

## **Communities of Practice: Tending to our Collective Well-Being**

For many of us, restorative justice feels like a set of values that guide not just the way we do educational practice, but the way we want to live our lives. And most of us realize that doing so, living justly and restoratively, is countercultural, requiring us to swim upstream. This can be exhausting and virtually impossible if we try to do it alone. We need each other. We need each other to rely on when things get hard or we become discouraged. We need each other to see things that we cannot see due to our own lack of experiential wisdom. We need each other to dream beyond what we can imagine. This restorative justice journey is not intended to be walked alone.

To that end, the 2026 RJE Conference will focus on nurturing communities of practice - not just talking about learning and working collaboratively, but actually practicing a collaborative approach to restorative justice in educational spaces. In the feedback forms submitted by previous conference participants, we heard you say that sometimes it's simply too much information and not enough time to process. We saw comments about too many breakout sessions and not enough time to think together about what to do with the learning.

So this summer, it is our intention to not only take in information about RJE, but to process that information in a variety of ways. The 2026 schedule provides an opportunity to hear from a few highlighted speakers and then to reflect, processing and applying the wisdom from each speaker in a variety of creative ways. Whether through writing, dancing, art, Circle process, facilitated dialogue, or some other modality, we invite you to come prepared to nurture and be nurtured, to restore and be restored through our time together. Whether you're new to RJE or an experienced trainer, we invite you to join us and bring your team along!

While we won't be inviting submissions for breakout sessions this year, we will be looking for facilitators. If you have practices that focus on arts-based processing, including dance, drama, painting, music, please let us know. If you have experience with world cafe, constructive dialogue, or other discussion-based formats, please let us know. And of course, we will need a few Circle keepers - if you're interested in facilitating/co-facilitating Circles, please let us know.

You probably haven't experienced a conference quite like this one; to be honest, we haven't either. But we think it's worth trying and that it will likely be aligned with those principles and values that we hold dear within the restorative justice world. We look forward to hosting you, to learning with you, and reflecting and scheming with you about the transformative and healing potential of RJE.