

Write a Short Story of a Success

If it helps, you can write in response to each of the following sections. In the end, have it prepared to read like a single story instead of answers to different questions:

Ideally, each story you write should have the following parts as illustrated:

1. Your goal: what you wanted to accomplish: *"I wanted to get the school to stop kicking out students. I wanted to find a way to keep them at the school and deal with them differently than expulsion"*

2. Some kind of hurdle, obstacle, or constraint that you faced (self-imposed or otherwise): *"Staff and students had gotten so used to kicking students out, that any change seemed like weakness. There was resistance from others. Also, I was not in charge of discipline so there was no guarantee that my ideas would be taken seriously. I didn't have time to run a discipline program. And, finally, I didn't really know what to do instead of kicking out students."*

3. A description of what you did, step by step (how you set about to ultimately achieve your goal, above, in spite of this hurdle or constraint): *"I read a lot online mostly - surfing the web to see what other schools might be doing. One thing that caught my eye was schools using Restorative Justice as a way to keep students in school. This meant holding meetings to determine contracts for students. The meetings would be attended by people impacted by the student's behavior. I also saw in our newspaper that our town had a Restorative Justice program for youth who committed minor crimes. It was a way to keep them out of court. I called the program and asked if we could be trained in the process. They agreed to hold the training at the school and give us all the materials. They trained other townspeople as well so it was a win-win for them. They got a place to conduct the training for free and they got more facilitators out of the process. We got our staff and students trained for free in the process."*

4. A description of the outcome or result: *"We have been using RJ since 2007. Students who break serious rules get to stay at the school as long as they go through the RJ process. "*

5. Any measurable/quantifiable statement of that outcome that you can think of: *"We doubled the number of students we retained."*

Now write your story using the sample as a guide.

Don't worry about picking a story where you have achieved something big. At least to begin with, write a story about a time when things just turned out better than you expected or you feel good about it.

Don't try to be too brief. This isn't Twitter.

If you absolutely can't think of any experiences you've had where you achieved some success then try this: describe an enjoyable job or activity you've had; or describe a role you play like brother, sister, son, daughter, mentor. Tell us something you did or accomplished in this role.

Example

When I started working at Big Bear High School in Arkansas, I was surprised at the strict discipline policy. This was a school that was supposed to show people how to reengage young people who were dropping out of high school. So for me, it did not make a lot of sense that when these students misbehaved they might easily get kicked out of the school. That bothered me. When I looked at the records, it seemed like we were only graduating about 60% of our students. That was worse than the national average. I thought the poor graduation rate had something to do with how easily students could get expelled for having a fight, smoking cigarettes, or using drugs. Some of these misbehaviors were serious and I did think we should address them seriously but I thought there should be another way.

My biggest concern about trying something new was that I was a new staff member and I was not in charge of discipline. So, there was no reason for people to listen to me about a different way of doing things. And, it wasn't my job - so I did not have a lot of other time to start something new. I was also worried about staff and students being resistant to the change. Everyone had gotten so used to kicking out students that any talk about doing something differently seemed like "going soft" to others. Finally, I didn't really know what to do anyway. How was I going to find out what we could do instead.

I started reading books, articles in magazines and newspapers and I read a lot online. While I was surfing the web to see what other schools might be doing, I found out about Restorative Justice. RJ was something schools were using as an alternative to suspension. This meant holding meetings to determine contracts for students. The meetings would be attended by people impacted by the student's behavior. I also saw in our newspaper that our town had a Restorative Justice program for youth who committed minor crimes. It was a way to keep them out of court. I called the program and asked if we could be trained in the process. They agreed to hold the training at the school and give us all the materials. They trained other townspeople as well so it was a win-win for them. They got a place to conduct the training for free and they got more facilitators out of the process. We got our staff and students trained for free in the process. Part of my job at Big Bear HS is to host visitors. So, I had the authority and time to host this training. I invited the people from our staff who were in charge of discipline. In this way, they could take the time to institute the program (because it wasn't my job and I didn't have the time).

We have been using RJ since 2007. Students who break serious rules get to stay at the school as long as they go through the RJ process. Staff and students are now upset if someone is kicked out rather than having a chance to go through RJ. So, the culture has changed. We also doubled the number of students we retained, increased our graduation rate and we now have a better reputation with other schools around how we develop positive culture at our school.