

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES IN EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

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Literature shows that restorative justice practices, over time, are an effective practice for reducing negative student behaviors. This study will examine teacher and staff viewpoints on restorative practices and how they are being implemented on our campus. Additionally, this study will explore what impact restorative practices have on our campus, according to teachers and staff. My goal is to answer some of the questions that were unanswered through the literature. For instance, do the restorative justice consequences have a positive impact on student behavior? Do the staff feel that the current system, which uses restorative practices, is effective in dealing with negative student behaviors?

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Introduction

Restorative justice practices have been used in juvenile justice systems for years (Vaandering, 2014). When discussing discipline in an educational setting, many schools continue to use the retributive model that creates distance between the victim, the school community, and the offender (Ryan & Ruddy, 2014). The restorative model allows for all parties involved in an incident to bridge the distance that was caused during an incident.

When restorative dispute resolution practices are used within an educational setting, healing can begin and relationships can be built through mutual respect and fairness (Zaslaw, 2010). These practices include peer mediation, classroom circles, and family groups conferencing and have been used in settings ranging from elementary school to high school within the United States since 2005 (Chemelynski, 2005). The purpose of using restorative practices within the school setting rather than the traditional form of discipline is to hold students accountable and rebuild the relationship in the school setting (Zaslaw, 2010).

This study sought to discover teacher and staff perspectives on the implementation and impact on student behaviors of restorative practices on a TK-8th grade campus. The participants for this study work on a TK-8th grade public school campus in a small, rural geographical area. Restorative practices within the school setting have been in practice in this area for about 5 years.

By identifying the perspectives of teachers and staff members at this school site, the leadership team can further plan how to best support the staff and students with the implementation of these practices, resulting in improved student behavior. Additionally,

others may use this information to plan and implement their own restorative practices program. Through a mixed methods survey, teachers and staff members identified their perspectives on student behaviors and additional needs required to successfully implement restorative practices in their classrooms and on campus.

Chapter two provides a thorough review of the literature, including the history of restorative practices, types of restorative practices used in education, and statistics from schools implementing restorative practices. Chapter three explains the methodology of this study including information about how the survey was created and utilized, and how respondents were selected to participate. Chapter four provides the results of the data collected and chapter five gives an analysis on those results. Chapter six gives a final discussion of the results, information on limitations of the research, as well as implications for further research.

Literature Review

This literature review explored the theories of restorative justice and its alternative use to the retributive model of discipline in education. The review will begin with the theories of restorative justice, followed by the core principles of restorative justice, the types of restorative justice utilized in schools, and close with some statistics of success in using restorative justice as an alternative to the traditional model of discipline. For the purpose of this literature review, restorative justice practices were referred to as restorative dispute resolutions.

Theories of Restorative Justice

Normative Theory

Normative theory involves three core principles when applied to restorative justice: repair, stakeholder involvement, and the transformation of community and governmental roles (Bazemore, 2001). Restorative justice proponents promote informal decision-making that employs the victim, offender, and community in developing a reparative plan. The reparative obligations can include restitution, community service, apologies, and victim service, as well as various policies that are implemented to ensure a change in the relationship between the offender and community (Bazemore, 2001).

The first principle of normative theory is repairing the harm done by the actions of the offender (Bazemore, 2001). Since repairing the wrongs is difficult without the active involvement of the people most affected by the offense, it is imperative to restorative justice that all of the people affected are involved. Failure to repair the harm

done presents a barrier that can prevent meaningful and effective reintegration into the community (Bazemore, 2001).

The second principle of normative theory is the stakeholder involvement in the process (Bazemore, 2001). Repairing the harm done is directly connected to this second principle in that repair cannot be fully achieved without the active participation of the parties most affected by the offense (Bazemore, 2001). Restorative justice processes provide a more open structure for meaningful input from affected parties than conventional processes. Stakeholder involvement is most often recognized in the conferencing aspect of restorative justice where all parties are seeking to find a common position between the interests of the victim, offender, and community (Bazemore, 2001). In a traditional educational discipline system, teachers and administrators determine consequences for misconduct, so neither the victim nor the offender have the power to shape the process of punishment or redemption (Varnham, 2005).

The third principle of normative theory is transformation in community and government roles. According to Bazemore (2001) in order to repair the harm and involve the parties most affected, we must rethink the roles of government and community. Government preserves order while community, family, neighbors, and others who provide support and guidance, establish peace (Bazemore, 2001). In restorative justice programs, juvenile justice professionals need to move from primary service providers to facilitators of informal, problem-solving community responses. For example, in victim-offender mediation processes, trained mediators should facilitate a face-to-face dialogue between the victim and offender while allowing emotions and feelings to be

expressed, and allow a discussion about the harm caused and the way in which the offender can repair that harm (Bazemore, 2001).

Differential Association Theory

Differential association theory states that the symbolic meanings individuals attach to their behavior and goals become valued or devalued through a learning process that occurs over time (Dick et al., 2004). Criminal behavior is therefore a product of social life learned from conforming to the criminal behaviors of peers (Dick et al., 2004). Shoemaker (2005) asserts that criminal behavior is learned from informal primary groups and reference groups, which youth look to for approval and evaluation. Individuals internalize associations and place value on those associations. A high value and early start on an association has a major influence on behavior, which might be criminal or non-criminal (Dick et al., 2004).

Differential association theory can be applied to teen court because it assumes that by having peer's express disapproval of criminal behavior and impose penalties for that behavior, teens may be less likely to recidivate (Dick et al., 2004). The theory also suggests that offenders who have a positive experience in teen court will be less likely to recidivate than an offender who had a negative experience (Dick et al., 2004). By recognizing positive behaviors in their peers, offenders are more likely to redefine their associations and participate in law-abiding behavior (Dick et al., 2004).

Deterrence Theory

Deterrence theory presumes that people will not participate in unlawful behavior if the perceived risk outweighs the rewards (Dick et al., 2004). People participate in

activities that will give them the greatest reward with the least amount of risk (Dick et al., 2004). According to Dick et al. (2004), there are two different types of deterrence, general and specific. General deterrence refers to deterring criminal behavior by providing public information about the costs of committing crimes, which allows people to make informed decisions about their behaviors. General deterrence assumes that individuals have the knowledge and capacity to weigh the costs and benefits of their actions before committing a crime. Specific deterrence refers to the actual sanctions imposed upon an individual that deter him/her from committing a crime (Dick et al., 2004).

There are three elements of penalty that are related to deterrence theory: severity, certainty, and celerity (Dick et al., 2004). Severity refers to the harshness of the punishment, certainty is the probability of being penalized, and celerity means how quickly the penalty will be applied following the offense. Deterrence theory assumes that criminal behavior will be low if “severity is strong, certainty is high and celerity is swift” (Dick et al., 2004, p. 1452). While deterrence theory focuses on formal sanctions, informal sanctions such as the stigmatic costs of embarrassment and humiliation also play an important role (Dick et al., 2004).

There are attachment costs to personal relationships and commitment costs dealing with lost opportunities. When an individual sees these costs as detrimental, they will be more likely to refrain from criminal behavior (Dick et al., 2004). Deterrence theory is an important aspect of teen court because youth referred to a juvenile diversion program, such as teen court, may evade being labeled but are still subject to punishment

for their behavior. Deterrence theory suggests that the quicker an offender comes to teen court, the more likely that offender will refrain from law-breaking behavior (Dick et al., 2004).

Reintegrative Shaming Theory

One of the most influential theories behind restorative justice is the reintegrative shaming theory. John Braithwaite presented reintegrative shaming theory in 1989 as an effective practice of both preventing and responding to crime (Harris, Walgrave & Braithwaite, 2004). Reintegrative shaming theory provides an explanation as to why restorative justice programs should be more effective as a response to crime than the traditional criminal justice system (Harris, 2006). Some scholars claim that it is the social communication of disapproval or shaming that is crucial to the reduction of offending (Harris, 2006).

Reintegrative shaming theory is described as respectful disapproval, which is terminated by forgiveness, and does not condemn or label the offender as evil or delinquent. It is distinguished from disintegrative shaming (or stigmatizing shaming), which shames the person disrespectfully, does not terminate the disapproval by forgiveness, and does label the offender as evil (Harris, 2006). It is expected that reintegrative shaming theory results in less re-offending than disintegrative shaming (Harris, 2006). According to reintegrative shaming theory, shaming becomes reintegrative when disapproval is aimed at the criminal act, not the individual, and the offender is given a chance to repent. Disintegrative shaming condemns not only the offense but also the offenders' character (Rossner, 2008).

There is also a distinction between shame and guilt that plays into reintegrative shaming theory. According to Harris et al. (2004), shame occurs when disapproval is seen in the eyes of others and guilt occurs when a person is disappointed in his or her own actions. Guilt is felt about actions, whereas shame is felt about the self as a whole. Understanding reintegrative shaming theory and how offenders manage these emotions is an important part of the restorative intervention process (Harris et al., 2004).

Reintegrative shaming theory applies to both victim-offender mediation and teen courts. The idea is that seeing the disappointment in peers as well as the community and the offender's own family will deter him/her from participating in any further criminal activity (Harris et al., 2004). It is also argued that restorative justice processing is more likely to promote reintegrative shaming theory and repair the broken bonds caused by crime, whereas traditional criminal justice processing is more likely to be highly stigmatizing and can shame the offender with no opportunity given to repent (Hayes, 2006; Rossner, 2008).

Reintegrative Shaming Experiments

The Reintegrative Shaming Experiments (RISE), stemming from John Braithwaite's reintegrative shaming theory, began in Canberra in 1995 as a longitudinal study of young offenders attending a family group conference (Hayes, 2006; Robinson & Shapland, 2008). RISE randomly selected eligible offenders either to conference or to court and compared the experiences of those groups. RISE consisted of four separate experiments based on offense type: drunk-driving with a blood alcohol content above 0.08 by offenders of all ages, shoplifting by offenders under 18 years of age, property

crime by offenders under 18, and violent crime by offenders under 30 years of age (Hayes, 2006; Strang, 2002).

RISE was conducted to determine if conferencing was successful in bringing forth the following concepts behind the reintegrative shaming theory: a sincere apology from the offender derived from shame, the expression of forgiveness by the victim, and the reintegration of the offender into the community (Strang, 2002). Hayes (2006), who chose to focus on property crime and violent crime, reports that the reconciliation and repair was achieved in less than half of all cases. Fifty-four percent of the victims of violent crime reported that they were either not forgiving the offender or indifferent to forgiving the offender. These theories help shape the core principles that are behind restorative justice practices.

Core Principles of Restorative Justice

Repair Harm

One of the main focuses of restorative justice is ensuring that the harm done to the victim and community has been repaired (Pavelka, 2013). Victims and communities are healed and offenders are held accountable for their actions through restorative justice. Repairing the harm also means repairing the relationships and the behavior that is harmful. Offenders are encouraged to make positive changes in their behavior to correct the harm done and prevent future harm from occurring (Pavelka, 2013). Restorative justice helps students make better choices and repair the misconduct that harmed the relationship (Ryan & Ruddy, 2015). Repairing the harm done means the offender must acknowledge the specific incident and develop a way to take responsibility for his or her

actions. Holding the student accountable and rebuilding the relationship in the school setting is the primary goal of restorative justice (Zaslaw, 2010).

Reduce Risk

Restorative justice offers a flexible and controlled way to manage misconduct (Mergler, Vargas & Caldwell, 2014). When wrongful behavior is prevented and controlled, communities feel safer (Pavelka, 2013). Restorative justice gives students the opportunity to ask for and give support in dealing with responses to wrongdoing. Helping students address behavior in their peers fosters a strong sense of community and safety (Chmelynski, 2005). Mutual collaboration and trust provide an environment where students can feel comfortable asking for help. Asking for help reduces the risk that misconduct or negative behaviors will occur or escalate (Chmelynski, 2005). Students who feel comfortable asking for help are more likely to report other students for behavior problems and self-report (Chmelynski, 2005). Often times, negative behaviors occur because students are communicating that their needs are not being met. Many offenses occur due to alienation and a lack of community (Evans, Lester, Anfrar & Jr., 2013). These negative behaviors and interactions may be lessened with restorative justice. When schools develop a strong culture and community built on relationships and a sense of belonging, bullying, delinquency, and alienation are less likely to occur (Pavelka, 2013).

Community Empowerment

Restorative justice allows for offenders to take responsibility and to be held accountable within a supportive learning community (Ryan & Ruddy, 2014). An offender

does not only cause harm to a victim but also causes harm to the school community by consuming the time, effort, and expense of the academic institution (Zaslaw, 2010). The restorative model helps to repair this harm by ensuring that the school community is involved in the process of reparation. The central theme in restorative justice is always community (Ryan & Ruddy, 2014). The school community collectively addresses the impact of the wrongdoing and the reparation (Pavelka, 2013). Restorative justice seeks to strengthen the community in order to prevent further harm (Varnham, 2005). Within schools, restorative justice focuses on the relationships between students and school administrators, teaching students how their actions affect the school community and providing a platform for students and administrators to engage in righting the wrongs caused by the student's behavior (Mergler, Vargas & Caldwell, 2014). It is important that communities are involved in the process of restorative justice. In education, this means the administration, teachers, and staff as well as parents and students. Strengthening school community and enhancing community relationships is viewed as the most effective way to prevent misbehavior and school-based violence (Evans, Lester, Anfrar & Jr., 2013).

Repairing Harm Through Building Relationships

Restorative justice practices aim to restore the harm that was done to a victim or community by an offender. In education, the aim of restorative dispute resolution is to repair the harm done to the victim and the school, to protect the school community, and build peer and intergenerational relationships through mutual respect and fairness

(Zaslaw, 2010). Often times, the reasons for harmful behavior is due to relationships among the people involved and their social/institutional contexts (Vaandering, 2014).

Restorative justice focuses on people and relationships rather than on punishment and retribution (Varnham, 2005). Building relationships between the victim, offender and community allows for stronger interpersonal relationships between all parties. The retributive model of discipline forces distance between the offender and the victim, and between them and the school community (Ryan & Ruddy, 2014). The restorative model forces all parties to bridge the distance created during an incident and allow for healing to begin (Ryan & Ruddy, 2014). Restorative justice practices provide resolution for all participants including the victim, the offender, and the community.

Peer Relationships

An important focus of restorative justice is building relationships between peers. Students have the opportunity to work together and develop a solution for repairing the harm done. With traditional school discipline, students who have caused harm or shown misconduct would be removed from the school community and wouldn't be given the opportunity to repair the harm or their relationships with peers or the school (Mergler, Vargas & Caldwell, 2014). Restorative justice moves from a punitive philosophy to a supportive one. Restorative justice brings the person who created the harm together with the person or persons who were impacted by the harm (Ryan & Ruddy, 2015).

The victim's perspective is the most important aspect of repairing the harm done. The victim's perspective is central to determining how the harm can be repaired (Zaslaw, 2010). The offender must be prepared to accept responsibility and act to repair the harm

done. Victims are given a voice and are able to express what harm was done by the offender and how the offender can repair that harm. Restorative justice challenges students to hold each other accountable and right a wrong (Mergler, Vargas & Caldwell, 2014). Rebuilding the trust and relationships comes from the implementation of different types of restorative justice programs that are currently being utilized within the education system.

Programs Utilized in Education

There are several different restorative justice programs used when dealing with juveniles ranging from peer mediation, classroom circles, and family group conferencing. All of these programs aim to restore the dignity of both the victim and offender and facilitate offender reintegration by relying on community involvement and support (de Beus & Rodriguez, 2007).

Peer Mediation

Peer mediation allows students to determine what they think is a fair action in response to an offense without using the traditional school disciplinary systems. With peer mediation, students are trained to be mediators for their peers. Peer mediation is the most common form of the restorative justice model nationwide (Pavelka, 2013). Typically, each mediator meets with the involved parties independently to get their version of what happened and determine their willingness to participate in the mediation process (Varnham, 2005). Since it is important that all involved parties participate, this is a key part of the peer mediation process.

When listening to all parties involved, there are three main questions that the mediator focuses on: what happened, who was affected, and how do we heal the harm (Von Der Embse, N., Von Der Embse, D., Von Der Embse, M., & Levine, 2009). Peer mediation offers students an opportunity to right what was wrong. The outcome that is considered most successful is one that resolves the conflict between all of the individuals (Pavelka, 2013). Mediation offers an opportunity to repair the harm prior to the offender being suspended (Von Der Embse, N. et al., 2009). Relationships between peers are often improved and repaired through the peer mediation process.

Circles

Circles are another restorative justice practice that offers students an opportunity to right the wrong and based on traditional practices used by indigenous tribes (Pavelka, 2013). Circles are also referred to as peace making circles, talking circles, or healing circles (Morrison & Vaandering, 2011). Circles are different from peer mediation in that affected community members are also a part of the process. The circle process includes the wrongdoer, the victim or victims, and the relevant community members (Pavelka, 2013). Circle keepers or facilitators are in charge of shaping the discussion and facilitating the process, which may include passing a talking piece (Chmelynksi, 2005). Peers are not usually considered to be circle keepers in this process.

Circles allow the involved parties to establish a set of values at the beginning of the process. The most common values that emerge are: respect, honesty, trust, humility, sharing, inclusivity, empathy, courage, forgiveness, and love (Morrison & Vaandering, 2011). Circles allow each affected party to address the misbehavior and offer ways for

reparation (Mergler, Vargas, & Caldwell, 2014). Circles can be used in situations that happen quickly and get students to talk about what they were thinking when a behavior occurred and how they can make it right (Shah, 2012). Circles are a process that allows all involved parties to voice their points of views and be heard.

Conferencing

Conferencing offers a wider and larger group of participants than peer mediation and circles (Pavelka, 2013). Conferencing offers the opportunity for the victim, offender, school, and the families of involved parties to be a part of the retribution process (Ryan & Ruddy, 2015). As with circles and peer mediation, conferencing requires that there be roles assigned in order to keep the process positive. Trained conference facilitators take on a similar role as with circles in that they facilitate and guide the course of action (Ryan & Ruddy, 2015). School counselors and psychologists are often called on to be facilitators with conferencing (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012).

It is also important to establish values, such as trust, respect, integrity, and due care, for the conferencing process (Ryan & Ruddy, 2015). The goal of conferencing, as with other forms of restorative justice, is to seek reparation and resolution of the wrongdoing (Pavelka, 2013). Conferencing allows all participants to speak freely about how the offense affected them, decide as a group how the offending student will repair the harm he or she caused, and determine what role each of the participants will have in the healing process (Zaslaw, 2010). Because the group is larger, the process of conferencing may take longer than other forms of restorative justice (Pavelka, 2013).

Statistics and Results from Implementation in Schools

Several schools have implemented restorative justice practices as their discipline policy and many of these schools have seen a reduction in the number of suspensions, expulsions, and repeat offences (Mergler, Vargas, & Caldwell, 2014). A study conducted by the Minnesota Department of Education (Chmelynski, 2005) found that restorative justice practices in primary and secondary schools showed a 30-50% reduction in suspensions. The data and statistics collected from these schools reflect the positive impact that restorative justice practices can have within schools. Although schools individualize their use of restorative justice, the majority of elementary, middle, and high schools who use these practices have reported decreases in major disciplinary issues, reductions in the number of expulsions and out-of-school suspensions, and shifts from expelling students with drug and alcohol issues to providing supports that resulted in a reduction in substance abuse (Evans, Lester, Anfara, & Jr., 2013).

Elementary/Middle School

City Springs Elementary/Middle School of 624 students, cut its suspension numbers by about 75% in the few years that they began using restorative justice practices (Shah, 2012).

Cienega Elementary School in the Los Angeles Unified School District saw an 81% reduction in office referrals within two years after implementing their own alternatives to school suspensions based on restorative justice principles (Schachter, 2010). They have also seen a decrease in the amount of influence of neighborhood gangs within school walls (Schachter, 2010).

Skinner Middle School in Denver, Colorado implemented restorative justice practices into their school in 2008, and as a result have seen a 57% decrease in out of school suspensions (Schachter, 2010).

At Davidson Middle School in San Rafael, California, a school with 900 students, suspensions dropped from 300 in the 2009-2010 school year to just 27 in the 2010-2011 school year as a result of using restorative justice practices (Shah, 2012).

In 2005, Patengill Middle School in Michigan found a 15% drop in suspensions after piloting a restorative justice program. Other schools in the same district saw an increase in the number of suspensions (Zaslaw, 2010).

High School

When Palisades High School in Kintnersville, PA implemented restorative justice practices in their school, they saw a dramatic decrease in out of school suspensions (105 to 53), disciplinary referrals (1,752 to 815), detentions (844 to 332), and incidents of disruptive behavior (273 to 142) after a few years of implementation (Chmelynski, 2005).

James Madison High School in Brooklyn, New York, which uses peer mediation as well as conferencing, has seen a dramatic decrease in recidivism, repeat offences, as well as dropout rates (Schachter, 2010). In two years, the number of repeat offenders dropped from 37 to just seven and the number of students who dropped out of high school prior to completion decreased from 17% to just 12% (Schachter, 2010).

JFK High School in Denver saw a 53% decrease in out of school suspensions and a 75% decrease in referrals to the principal within one year of using restorative justice practices in their school (Schachter, 2010).

In one year of using restorative justice practices, Springfield Township High School in Philadelphia, Pa saw incidents of disrespect toward teachers fall from 71 to 21 and incidents of classroom disruption from 90 to 26 (Zaslaw, 2010).

Summary

Using restorative justice practices as a form of discipline in schools can be a beneficial way to change the negative behaviors and repair the harm caused by those behaviors. Including all of the involved parties in the reparation of the relationship benefits not only the individual who caused the harm, but also the individuals and communities who were affected by the harm (Von Der Embse, N. et al., 2009). Rebuilding trust between the victim, offender, and community helps to form a bond that makes reoffending less likely (Schachter, 2010). Many offenders use negative behaviors to express their lack of acceptance and involvement in the community. When those relationships are rebuilt and repaired, the entire community benefits (Varnham, 2005).

Although restorative justice practices in education have only been implemented in recent years, many schools show the positive impact those practice have on school discipline as well as school cultures (Mergler, Vargas, & Caldwell, 2014). Each school must make their own decisions about which policies and practices they will use based on their own school cultures. However, the core principals of restorative justice, repairing the harm, reducing the risk, and empowering the community should be present within the restorative justice policies.

Based on the literature and the results indicated in the studies included in this literature review, I wanted to gain perspective on the use of restorative practices at my own school site. I developed this case study in hopes of determining if the teachers and staff members felt that restorative practices were improving student behavior on campus. The ultimate goal of this case study is to determine how and what restorative practices are being utilized on school campus, what needs there may be to implement restorative practices with fidelity, and if student behavior has been positively impacted by the use of restorative practices.

Methodology

This research explores the impact on negative behaviors that restorative justice can have as well as the views of staff at a school that has implemented restorative practices on site. Through this research, the district, school site administrators, and leadership team can look at ways to improve on the current system in order to lessen negative student behaviors on site.

School Site and Restorative Practices

The school site where this case study took place is a TK-8th grade school within a single school district. For the purposes of this study, the school will be referred to by the pseudonym, Northern Elementary. It is located in a rural part of Northern California in a town with a population of just over 19,000 people. There are approximately 575 students currently enrolled at Northern Elementary.

There are 24 general education teachers, 4 special education teachers, one music teacher, and one physical education teacher on site. Northern Elementary also has one speech and language pathologist, two counselors, one full-time behaviorist, one English Learner teacher, one library technician, one part-time nurse, 20 classroom assistants, 6 special circumstances instructional aides, and two administrators.

Northern Elementary uses behavior tracking forms when responding to student behavior. These forms track both minor and major behaviors ranging from the minor behavior of tardiness to the major behavior of fighting. Behavior tracking forms are filled out by the person or person who witnessed the behavior and are added to the student information system to track statistics regarding student behavior, including when and

where the behavior took place. Students who receive behavior tracking forms could be eligible for a restorative practice based on the behavior and the willingness of the participants, community members, and families. Students do not need to have received a behavior tracking form in order to participate in a restorative practice.

Participants

Participants recruited for this study were school site administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers, support staff, including counselors and a behaviorist, and classified staff members, including classroom aides, special circumstances instructional aides (SCIA), and yard monitors. The experience of working at a school site of the staff completing the survey ranged from 1 year to 25+ years. The administrators at the school site were given a description of the research and were asked for permission to give the school staff a survey to be completed during a certificated staff meeting and a classified staff meeting.

Procedures

An overview of the survey was given to staff at staff meetings for both certificated and classified staff members. The participants were given time during the staff meeting to complete the survey. If they were unable to complete the survey within the allotted time, they could complete the survey after the meeting. The participants were also informed that they could opt-out of the survey if they chose to.

Informed consent was presented to the participants before the survey was completed that included information about the purpose of the survey and instructions for how long it was likely to take to complete. A brief description of the risks was provided,

being minimal and primarily involving being revealing in terms of personal information. Potential benefits were also presented, primarily involving providing the administration with valuable data that can be used for further considerations regarding the discipline systems within the school site. Reliable data will provide insight into effective policies and procedures for reducing undesirable student behaviors.

Participants were informed that all information was confidential and participants' information (such as grade level taught), will be kept in a Google Drive that is only accessible by the researcher. No personal information will be shared and the information will be collected in such a way that individuals cannot be identified. No direct quotes will be used and written information will be kept for 3 years. Participation in the research was completely voluntary and contact information was provided for any questions or if participants are interested in the final results.

The first round of surveys was given to certificated staff and was completed by 19 of the 28 staff members present. The second round of surveys was given to classified staff and was completed by 4 of the 8 staff members present.

Survey

Based on the benefits and drawbacks of using restorative practices within a school system identified through the literature review, a survey was created. Thirteen questions were developed which included eleven multiple choice and two short answer responses. Questions were asked about staff perspectives on the use of restorative practices, the impact on student behaviors, implementation of restorative practices, and training that the participants had completed.

Analysis

Following the completion of the survey, I reviewed the statistical data of the eleven multiple choice questions. I also reviewed the short answer responses and looked for themes within those responses. Through those themes, I was able to identify some of the major take-aways from the participants responses.

Results

This section will explore participants responses to what types of training they have completed, perspectives on implementation of restorative practices, and perspectives on the impact that restorative practices have on student behavior within the classroom and on campus.

Types of Training

Participants in the survey reported on varying levels of training and knowledge of the restorative practices that are used on campus. Thirteen percent of participants reported that they were unsure if they had received any training at all or if they had participated in any restorative practices with their students. Respondents reported varying types of restorative practice training. Eighty-seven percent of respondents reported that they had been trained in restorative circles, 44% reported that they had been trained in peer conferencing, 9% reported they had been trained in community conferencing and community service, and 13% reported that they had not been trained in any of the above-mentioned practices.

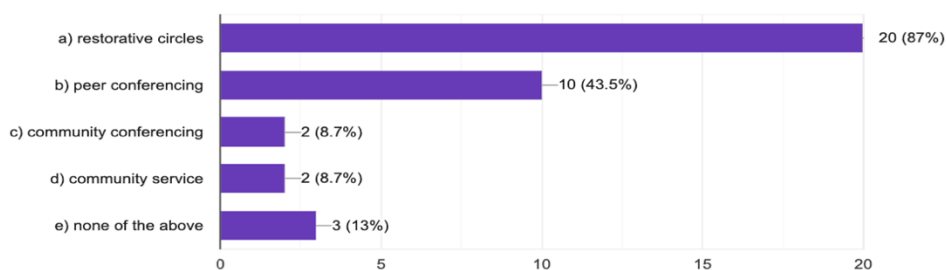


Figure 1: Teacher and Staff Training; a) restorative circles 87%, b) peer conferencing 43.5%, c) community conferencing 8.7%, d) community services 8.8%, e) none of the above 13%

Teacher and Staff Perspectives on Implementation

When asked about teacher and staff perspectives when presented with the proposal to transition to using restorative practices within the school, 13% of the respondents reported that they were skeptical of the proposal. Forty-four percent reported that they were enthusiastic about the proposal, 13% reported feeling excited, and 30% reported feeling indifferent about the proposal.

Seventeen percent of respondents reported that they feel restorative practices are being implemented with fidelity on campus. Thirty percent feel that they are not being implemented with fidelity and 52% responded that they are unsure if restorative practices are being implemented with fidelity.

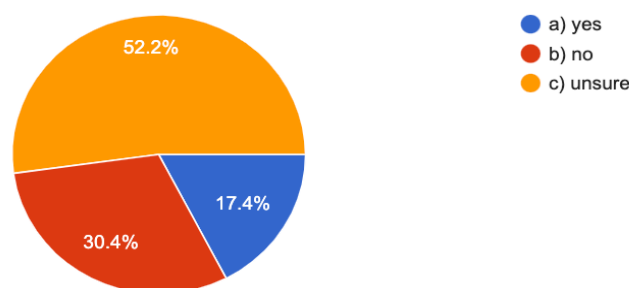


Figure 2: Implementation with Fidelity; a) yes 17.4%, b) no 30.4%, c) unsure 17.4%

Thirteen percent of respondents reported that they are always using behavior tracking forms with fidelity. Fifty-six percent of respondents reported that they are occasionally using behavior tracking forms with fidelity and 30% reported that they are never using behavior tracking forms with fidelity.

When asked if they know who to contact if they are interested in having a student participate in a restorative practice, 69% of respondents reported that they do know who to contact and 30% said they do not know who to contact.

Impact on Student Behavior in Class and on Campus

Thirty percent of respondents reported that there was a noticeable change in student behavior in class due to the use of restorative practices with their students. 47.8% of respondents reported that there was some improvement in student behavior in class and thirty percent responded with “N/A.”

The use of restorative practices and the impact on individual student behavior on campus was viewed more significantly. Twenty-one percent of participants responded that there was a noticeable improvement in student behavior on campus, while 56% of respondents reported that there was some improvement on campus. Twenty-one percent responded with “N/A.”

When asked how student behavior on campus as a whole has been impacted, 9% of respondents reported a noticeable improvement. Fifty-six percent of respondents reported some improvement, and 35% reported no change in student behavior on campus as a whole.

When asked if they felt that the use of restorative practices on campus are having an impact on our student and school community, 69% of respondents reported yes and 30% reported they are unsure.

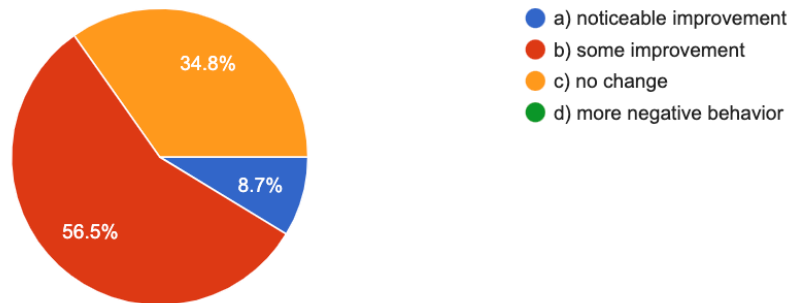


Figure 3: Impact on Student Behavior; a) noticeable change 8.7%, b) some improvement 56.6%, c) no change 34.8%, d) more negative behavior 0%

Discussion

The purpose of this case study was to examine teacher and staff perspectives on the use of restorative practices on a TK-8th grade campus and their impact on student behavior. In order to identify staff perspectives on the use of restorative practices on campus, this study explored staff perspectives on student behavior since the implementation of restorative practices began and what staff felt could be done differently with regards to the implementation of restorative practices on campus.

Restorative Practice Training

The results from this survey indicated that 83% of respondents reported that they had been trained in some form of restorative practices with restorative circles being the most common. Circles offer the opportunity to repair the harm that has been done and offer reparation. One survey participant noted that many of our students are very “consequence-oriented.” Circles offer an opportunity for the person who was harmed to feel some form of retribution because they allow for all participants to feel heard and valued. Circles allow each affected party to address the misbehavior and offer ways for reparation (Mergler, Varga, & Caldwell, 2014).

Forty-four percent of respondents reported being trained in peer conferencing. Peer conferencing allows for students to participate in finding a solution to the harm that was done. It has been noted that relationships between peers often improve through the practice of peer conferencing. The outcome that is considered the most successful is one that resolves the conflict between all of the individuals (Pavelka, 2013). One participant discussed training our older students to be peer mediators and noted that taking advantage

of the TK-8th grade setting to support our younger students could be beneficial for both younger and older students and could help build community. A second participant noted that giving students a voice is helping to improve behavior on campus. This is important when discussing how to implement restorative practices successfully so all participants feel heard and respected.

One participant indicated that they would like more training for using restorative practices with students who receive special education or related services. When looking at students who receive support on campus, often times they are the ones who need the most support in feeling as though they are part of the community. Another participant noted that using restorative practices can help reduce some of the stigma that surrounds students who receive support services because students are able to feel included within the community.

Additional Training

In reply to open-ended questions and in response to other survey items, seventeen of the twenty-three participants (74%) wrote that they would like to see more training on restorative practices. Of those seventeen participants, three responded that they would like to see more students trained and implementing restorative practices on campus and one participant responded that they would like to see more parent involvement in the process.

Four participants responded that they would like to see more situational examples or the use of role-playing to support their knowledge and implementation. One participant noted that they would like to see more situational examples of restorative

practices as well as participating in some role playing to help build their confidence in using restorative practices. Another participant noted that they would like to see training to ensure that everyone on campus is communicating with the same language when using restorative practices. This speaks to the successful implementation of restorative practices long-term because all students throughout the TK-8th grade setting would recognize the common language used.

The literature states that training is essential for the successful implementation of restorative practices. Trained circle and conference facilitators help to facilitate and guide the course of action and keep the process positive (Ryan & Ruddy, 2015). When utilizing restorative practices, it is vital that each person participating has a role in the process. Facilitators help to guide the course of action and help to determine the willingness of the participants. As members of the school community it is important that the person in this role is properly trained in order for the process to be successful.

The participation of all parties involved is also vital for the successful implementation of restorative practices. The response to the open-ended questions that participants would like to see more involvement from students and parents indicates that the participants also recognize that their participation is an important part of the process.

Implementation and Support

Seventeen percent of participants believe that restorative practices are being implemented with fidelity. It was reported by one survey participant that they would like to see more follow-up after a restorative practice has been utilized to determine if further

support is needed. It is important for teachers, staff, and students to feel that they are receiving the support they need when dealing with behavior and repairing harm.

Thirteen percent of participants reported always using behavior tracking forms with fidelity. Behavior tracking forms are an important part of data collection on student behavior and help to determine if a student or students could benefit from the use of a restorative practice. More training and follow-up should be done to ensure that teachers and staff are properly using behavior tracking forms and that they are using them as often as they should be.

Seventy percent of participants indicated that they know who to contact if they are interested in utilizing a restorative practice with students. One survey participant responded that a flow-chart would be useful in determining who to reach out to for support. This suggests that participants appear to be confident in reaching out for support if they are interested in participating in restorative practices.

Impact on Student Behavior

Of the respondents who had led a restorative practice with their students, seventy-eight percent saw an improvement in their students in class and on campus after they participated in the restorative practice. This indicates that the respondents do feel that restorative practices have a positive impact on their students' behavior. This is likely due to repairing the relationship that was harmed based on the behavior and reintegrating the student into the classroom and campus community without causing shame and guilt. Restorative practices bring the person who created the harm together with the

person or persons who were impacted by the harm (Ryan & Ruddy, 2015) and challenge students to hold each other accountable (Mergler, Vargas & Caldwell).

The results from the survey also indicate that sixty-five percent of respondents feel that student behavior on campus as a whole has improved since the implementation of restorative practices. This is also likely due to the repair of the relationships between students and the community members on campus. Within school, restorative practices focus on repairing the relationships between students and the school community, including administrators and teachers (Mergler, Vargas & Caldwell, 2014).

Although the response to the questions regarding using behavior tracking forms and restorative practices with fidelity is low, it appears that the perspective of participants is that there has been an improvement in student behavior within classrooms and across the campus.

It's clear from the data and the literature that proper training is an essential part of implementing restorative practices successfully. It is vital that facilitators are properly trained in order for the process to be positive for both the person or persons who were harmed and the person or persons who did the harming. Restorative practices focus on people and relationships rather than on punishment and retribution (Varnham, 2005).

The data also indicates that there continues to be a need for support with the implementation of restorative practices. This includes support from the administration and continued training. Continued training can include teachers and staff who have been previously trained in restorative practices but also includes new staff members so all staff members can feel comfortable implementing restorative practices.

COVID-19 Pandemic

One important note that should be made is that this data was collected as schools are learning the new norms following the COVID-19 pandemic. Perspectives on the implementation of restorative practices and the impact on student behavior may be affected by this. The results of the survey may have been different if given prior to the school shutdown during the 2020 school year.

Conclusion

This study has provided an overview of teacher and staff perspectives on the implementation of restorative practices and the impact the implementation has had on student behavior on one TK-8th grade campus. It identified what training staff and teachers have participated in and if restorative practices are being implemented with fidelity. It also identified the teacher and staff perspectives on student behavior within the classroom and on campus since implementing restorative practices.

Limitations to the Research

One limitation to this study was the small sample size. In order to establish a more representative sample of the whole school perspective, a larger sample of classified staff members would need to be included in this study.

Related to the small sample size was the geographical location where this study took place. All participants in this study were from a small, rural geographical area. Restorative practices within the education system is a fairly new concept in this area. It is possible that teacher and staff perspectives on the implementation of restorative practices and their impact on student behavior would differ greatly in a larger, more urban geographical area.

Additionally, this survey was given to participants within a TK-8th grade school setting. Many of the teachers and staff who participated in this study have worked with in this setting for many years, which could impact their answers to the survey questions related to the school community. Limiting the research to a single TK-8th grade school

also limited the perspective of staff and teachers who work within the high school setting.

Finally, this study focused on more qualitative data as opposed to quantitative data. Without looking at behavior tracking data, it is difficult to accurately assess if negative behaviors and suspension rates have decreased since that implementation of restorative practices.

Verbal feedback was given and a few participants indicated that two of the survey questions were very similar, which caused some confusion when answering those questions. However, many participants indicated that they appreciated the survey and being able to provide some feedback on the implementation of restorative practices on campus.

This survey was a mixed methods survey including open and closed ended questions. The open-ended comments provided a more thorough understanding of what teachers and staff felt they needed in order for the implementation of restorative practices to be successful on campus. More open-ended questions would have provided more opportunity for teachers and staff to share their input.

Implications for Further Research

A more comprehensive study could include a larger population sample, respondents from all grade levels, respondents from all staff perspectives, a larger geographical area, including rural and urban areas, and more opportunities for respondents to give open-ended responses either in survey or interview format. A more

comprehensive study could provide valuable insight into what teachers and staff need to fully implement restorative practices on campus in order to improve student behavior.

Reviewing the statistical behavioral data would be beneficial to determine if student behaviors have been impacted in a positive way since the implementation of restorative practices. This would provide more concrete quantitative data to support the perspectives of teachers that student behavior has been positively impacted by the use of restorative practices.

It would also be beneficial to determine if suspension and expulsion rates have decreased across the school population but also within our marginalized student populations. It would be important to look at our marginalized populations specifically, including students with disabilities, black and brown students, and students who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, to determine if those students are being positively impacted by the use of restorative practices on campus.

Summary

The intent of this research was to identify the success of restorative practices within a rural TK-8th grade school setting and the teacher and staff perspectives of the implementation of those practices. Participants in this study overwhelmingly believed that student behavior within their classroom and on campus has improved since the implementation of restorative practices. It revealed a strong need for additional training and cohesiveness across grade levels. With a better understanding of teacher and staff perspectives, the school may move forward in providing the training and practice that is

needed to support teachers and staff in the implementation of restorative practices with fidelity, resulting in improved student behavior.

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Appendix A

Restorative Practices in Education Informed Consent

My name is Emily Morris, and I am a graduate student at Cal Poly Humboldt in the School of Education, Master of Arts program. You are being asked to take part in a research study of the effectiveness of restorative justice practices in education. I am asking you to take part because you are a vital part of the Pacific Union School community and have experience with these practices. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right not to participate at all or to leave the study at any time without penalty. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time. There are no possible risks involved for participants.

What the study is about: The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of using restorative justice practices in the school setting rather than the traditional form of discipline.

What we will ask you to do: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to fill out a survey during a staff meeting. The survey will include questions about your thoughts on restorative justice practices within our school system. The survey will take about 15-20 minutes to complete.

Risks and benefits: There is a risk that you may find some of the questions to be revealing in terms of personal information. There are no direct benefits to you. My goal is to provide the administration with valuable data that can be used to direct any future considerations for the discipline systems within our school.

Compensation: There is no compensation.

Your answers will be confidential. It is anticipated that study results will be shared with the public through presentations and/or publications. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I make public I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a google drive that only the researcher will have access to. Raw data will be destroyed after a period of 3 years after study completion.

If you have questions: The researcher conducting this study is Emily Morris. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Emily Morris at emilyff13@gmail.com or 530-410-1660. You may also contact Libbi R. Miller, Ed.D. at

Elizabeth.Miller@humboldt.edu. If you have any concerns with this study or questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at irb@humboldt.edu or (707) 826-5165. Your participation in this study indicates that you are at least 18 years old, have read and understand the information provided above, you willingly agree to participate, and you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study. Please print this informed consent form now and retain it for your future reference.

I have read and understood this consent information, and agree to participate in this study.

The researcher will keep this consent form for at least three years beyond the end of the study.

Appendix B

Restorative Practices Survey

Questions

1. Have you been trained in restorative practices?
 - a) yes
 - b) no
 - c) unsure

2. Which restorative practice training(s) have you participated in?
 - a) restorative circles
 - b) peer conferencing
 - c) community conferencing
 - d) community service
 - e) none of the above

3. Have you led any restorative practices with your students?
 - a) yes
 - b) no
 - c) unsure

4. If you answered “yes” to the question above, how do you feel the practice impacted your students’ behavior in class?
 - a) noticeable improvement
 - b) some improvement
 - c) no change
 - d) more negative behavior
 - e) N/A

5. If you answered “yes” to question 3, how do you feel the practice impacted your students’ behavior on campus?
 - a) noticeable improvement
 - b) some improvement
 - c) no change
 - d) more negative behavior
 - e) N/A

6. How did you react when presented with the proposal to transition to using restorative practices within the school? Were you...
 - a) skeptical
 - b) enthusiastic

- c) excited
- d) upset
- e) indifferent

7. Since the implementation of restorative practices, how do you feel about student behavior on campus as a whole?

- a) noticeable improvement
- b) some improvement
- c) no change
- d) more negative behavior

8. Do you feel that restorative practices are being implemented with fidelity on campus?

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) unsure

9. Do you use behavior tracking forms with fidelity?

- a) always
- b) occasionally
- c) never

10. Do you know who to contact on campus if you are interested in having a student or students participate in a restorative practice?

- a) yes
- b) no

11. Do you see the use of restorative practice as having an impact on our student and school community?

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) unsure

12. Is there anything that you would like to see done differently with regard to restorative practices on campus?

13. Please provide any additional information related to restorative practices that you believe will be important for this study.