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Restorative Practices Interrupted

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Restorative Practices Interrupted

by

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DEDICATION

My greatest accomplishment and the greatest joy in life is my family. No matter what else I do, that has been my best work.

I dedicate this effort to my children (the ones I gave birth to and the ones who are now mine through marriage), my grandchildren (those born and those yet to be born), and my husband, Paul, without whom I could never have built this wonderful life.

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LIST OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Alexithymia	The inability to find the words to describe an emotion (Snow & Sanger, 2010).
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
"Baker Act"	Florida Mental Health Act. Requires involuntary commitment by local law enforcement for threatening behavior either by the individual to themselves or to others.
Circle	Method of holding a Restorative Practice conference.
D/HH	Deaf/Hard of Hearing
EBD	Emotional Behavioral Disorder
ESE	Exceptional Student Education
Exclusionary Practices	Any practice that excludes a student from the school setting, to include both in and out-of-school suspension as well as expulsion.
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IND	Intellectual Disabilities
LI	Language Impaired
OHI	Other Health Impaired
RP	The practice of using the philosophy and process of Restorative Justice/Restorative Practices in response to wrongdoing (Burnett & Thorsborne, (2015, p. 24).
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
SLD	Specific Learning Disabilities

SWD	Students with Disabilities
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injured
Theory of Mind	The ability to understand the perspectives of others (Burnett & Thorsborne, 2015).
Zero Tolerance	Policies instituted to protect students from those who might be a danger to others with mandated penalties for specific behaviors resulting in suspensions, expulsions, alternative placements, and the involvement of law enforcement authorities (Teasley, 2014).

ABSTRACT

The initial critical event precipitating the problem of practice at my school was the repercussions of the mass shooting at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School, Parkland, Florida on February 14, 2018. This shooting and the resulting legislative mandates of Florida Senate Bill 7026, led to my administrative decision to adopt Restorative Practices at my school, a school for students with disabilities. Restorative Practices purport to encourage the development of positive relationships, repair and restore existing relationships thereby decreasing the chance of a repeated offense and improving school climate (Zehr, 2015). Additional rationale for the adoption was to address the disproportionality students with disabilities experience through exclusionary disciplinary practices (in/out of school suspension, expulsion, restraint, seclusion.) Exclusionary practices result in the loss of valuable classroom instructional time for students who are already significantly behind academically.

The adoption of any new initiative at a school can pose a challenge for administrators. The adoption and the success of the practice at my school was specifically challenged by the whole school shutdown due to COVID-19 and the move into the virtual learning environment. The purpose of this narrative inquiry is to explore through personal reflection the challenges I faced as a school leader in implementing and utilizing Restorative Practices at a school for students with disabilities in times of crisis.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"Stories constitute the single most powerful weapon in a leader's arsenal."

Howard Gardner, Ph.D., American Developmental Psychologist

How does a school leader respond to a crisis initially caused by one of the nation's worst school shootings? How does that same school leader respond when that crisis is complicated mid-implementation by additional crises? Crises with more personal implications for the school population as well as crises more global in nature. Kathleen Minke, executive director of the National Association of School Psychologists, commenting about the COVID-19 global pandemic, stated, "Crises always reveal both the strengths and vulnerabilities in individuals and systems. How quickly we respond to bolster those strengths and mitigate those vulnerabilities is critical" (Minke, 2020, p.1). How a school leader responds to compounded crises reveals not only the strengths and vulnerabilities in a system but also the strengths and vulnerabilities of the leader.

The initial critical incident precipitating a problem of practice at my school was the repercussions of the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, February 14, 2018. They were many and far-reaching for K-12 education. A young man carrying a rifle bag and hundreds of rounds of ammunition exited an Uber ride and entered Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, through an unguarded gate. The man made his way through the school, firing on students and staff, killing 17 and injuring 17. His rampage began at 2:19 p.m. and ended seven minutes later. He exited the campus with students evacuating in

response to the activated fire alarm caused by the concussive blasts of the gunshots against ceiling tiles. At 2:51 p.m., video surveillance captured him walking into a Subway sandwich shop located in a nearby Walmart and ordering a soda. Broward County Sheriff's deputies in the Walmart parking lot apprehended him one hour and 16 minutes after the shooting began and identified the shooter as Nikolas Cruz, a former Stoneman Douglas student. He was charged and pled guilty to 17 counts of premeditated murder (Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission [MSDHS Public Safety Commission], 2019). In 2022, Cruz was sentenced to life in prison without possibility of parole. Bill 7026, enacted by the state of Florida shortly after the shooting, mandated active shooter drills, the expansion of student mental health care services, and additional social-emotional supports and initiatives within the school setting. Because the shooter at Stoneman Douglas was a student with special needs in emotional and behavioral disabilities, implementing the mandates was more critical at my school as it only served students with disabilities. It was during the school's first active shooter drill that these mandates became evident. The Sheriff monitoring the onsite drill, bluntly stated, "*You know, your biggest threat is not from the outside but from within your own school population.*" The Sheriff's statement implied that due to the identified disabilities of our students in the areas of social/emotional functioning, they may be more prone to acts of violence.

My administrative team met to consider innovative options that would meet the mandates of SB 7026 and address the Sheriff's statement. The school already used Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and employed personnel to support students, including a behavioral specialist, a behavioral assistant, and two full-time mental health counselors. Despite these supports, there remained a need to address disproportionality evident in exclusionary practices (in/out-of-school suspension, expulsion, restraint, seclusion) for students with disabilities.

Before the Parkland shooting, the administrative team had been informally discussing measures to address the amount of out-of-school time our students experienced due to disciplinary measures. My assistant principal had previously worked in a county that had recently mandated Restorative Practices at the district level and felt it had been positively received. Unfortunately, she had moved from the county before data on its effectiveness was collected. At the time of the adoption consideration, no research data was available addressing the use or success of Restorative Practices with students with disabilities. Despite that, we established an initiative in the 2018-2019 school year to adopt Restorative Practices at our school to meet the mandates of SB 7026, address the disproportionality our students with disabilities experience through exclusionary disciplinary practices, and improve our students' overall mental health needs. As principal, I hoped adopting the practice would additionally support building caring relationships. Restorative Practices purport to encourage the development of positive relationships, repair and restore existing relationships, thereby decreasing the chance of a repeated offense, and improving school climate (Zehr, 2015). My staff received professional development in Restorative Practices in preplanning with the expectation the practice would be used schoolwide in the upcoming school year. To further our continued commitment to Restorative Practices into the next school year, the 2019-2020 school year began with a "refresher" training in Restorative Practices during preplanning.

During the 2019-2020 school year, the schoolwide implementation of Restorative Practices was more effectively used with increased fidelity. Behavioral data revealed a drop in both out-of-school suspensions and involuntary institutionalizations (Baker Act) of the students. However, in February 2020, the small successes the practices had garnered to date were questioned when one of the high school students at my school took their own life. With only 140

students in our high school, the impact was deeply felt within our tight school community. Staff questioned the practice's success in improving our students' mental health. It was difficult for my staff to accept one of our own would take their own life despite our schoolwide commitment to mental health, social-emotional learning, and Restorative Practices. It was a stark reminder that Nikolas Cruz, the Parkland shooter, had been both suicidal and depressed. One of Cruz's classmates reported Cruz had shown him scars on his arm from cutting attempts. Others knew Cruz at the school to be a troubled young man. After the shooting at Stoneman Douglas, while fleeing the campus with the crowd of escaping students, one remarked to him, "I'm surprised you weren't the one who did this," (*Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission*, 2019). A study conducted in 2000 found 14 to 20 percent of children in the U.S. were diagnosed with at least one psychiatric disorder falling in the moderate to severe range. If left untreated, these disorders could lead to more severe impairments (Edmonds-Cady & Hock, 2008). Current statistics regarding the mental health of adolescents ages 13-18 revealed that 49.5% were diagnosed with a mental disorder; 22.2% of which would be considered a severe impairment (*National Institute of Mental Health*, 2020). Unfortunately, 75% of students with mental illness do not receive mental health services (Paolini, 2015, p. 5). Restorative Practices is considered an essential element of the Zero Suicide Framework, especially in its effectiveness at creating a culture of trust and accountability (Turner et al., 2020). This was pertinent given the recent student suicide at my school. Despite questioning by staff regarding the efficacy of the practice, they still used it as a method of helping groups of students and staff share their feelings regarding the student's death.

Shortly after the student suicide, another critical incident presented itself in the shutdown of schools in March 2020 and the transition to an online distance learning platform due to the

COVID-19 virus global pandemic. The shutdown upended our school's therapeutic teaching model. The instructional practices essential to this model had to be adapted to the virtual learning environment. Both students and staff experienced the symptoms of social isolation caused by the shutdown. Though data are currently scant regarding the effects on the mental health of children during home confinement due to the COVID-19 outbreak, one study in the Hubai Province of China revealed 22.6% of primary school students reported symptoms of depression compared to 17.2% that had previously been reported for the same population (Xie et al., 2020). Research conducted on disease containment measures (quarantine, isolation) for other pandemic disasters (H1N1, SARS) found the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) were evidenced in 30% of the children who were quarantined as well as in 25% of their quarantined or isolated parents (Spring & Silman, 2013). Although administration encouraged the continuation of the use of Restorative Practices as a component of daily Social Emotional Learning (SEL) activities, staff struggled to make the move to a virtual educational platform (conceptually and literally) with little professional development to aid in the transition became the priority need.

The purpose of this study is to explore the challenges faced by a school leader in implementing Restorative Practices at a school for students with disabilities. Any critical analysis of the adoption of the schoolwide initiative cannot be evaluated without the consideration of the mitigating incidents that impacted the practice since its adoption at the school. The practice was adopted after a critical incident, challenged by another, and recreated to accommodate a third. The efficacy of the practice was called into question through incidents related to a fourth critical incident. The questions initially driving this narrative inquiry have changed, acknowledging that as Thornton (1993) contends, there is a "considerable likelihood qualitative researchers will 'find' things they were not 'looking' for" and that one's theoretical

perspective can change across the course of one's research" (Thornton, 1993, p.68). This statement is true for this narrative.

Statement of Problem

Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act or Florida Senate Bill. 7026 went into effect on March 9, 2018, with mandates for expanding student mental health care and additional social-emotional supports and initiatives within the school setting. Current Zero Tolerance practices exclude (through in/out-of-school suspension, expulsion) students with disabilities from the educational setting at a rate of over twice that of their peers without disabilities Research data do not support zero-tolerance policies increase academic achievement or school safety (Schiff, 2018). While statistically representing 12% of the total student population, students with disabilities are referred to law enforcement or arrested at school at a rate of 25%. Students with disabilities are 75% more likely to be restrained in school and 58% more likely to be subjected to seclusion (Green et al., 2018).

Discipline data at my school from the 2017-2018 school year revealed 165 referrals issued for various offenses, most minor. However, approximately 14 students were taken into custody by local law enforcement under the Florida Mental Health Act (more commonly known as the Baker Act) for exhibiting threatening behavior to themselves or others. This statistic was most concerning and the driving impetus behind the school's decision to begin using Restorative Practices (RP). The school needed to improve social connections through relationship building and improve the overall mental health of its exceptional student population. The off-hand comment made by local law enforcement during the monitoring of our first mandated "active shooter" drill led to the determination that something more than 'drilling' was needed to restore and repair damage done to students, thus exemplifying a problem of practice for the school that

required addressing. In a publication by the United States Department of Justice regarding the behaviors and characteristics of school shooters, of the 28 possible personality traits listed as the first prong in the identification of school shooters, 20 would apply, conservatively speaking, to 80% of the student population of a special needs school (O'Toole, 2009). Characteristics such as low frustration tolerance, poor coping skills, lack of resiliency, feelings of alienation, lack of empathy, blame externalization, low self-esteem, anger management issues, intolerance, inappropriate humor, etc., could be considered comorbid traits with their identified area of disability, especially for those students identified with high-functioning autism (O'Toole, 2009). Individuals with identified autism sometimes lack the perspective-taking skills found in one's Theory of Mind. Theory of Mind is defined as the ability to understand the perspectives of others (Burnett & Thorsborne, 2015). While the Department of Justice points out these characteristics are only one prong of a four-prong assessment in the identification of potential school shooters, the factor must be given consideration, especially at a school whose total population is students with disabilities (O'Toole, 2009).

With the incident of the student death by suicide, the whole school shut down during the global pandemic, and the general unrest in the world due to a volatile political climate, the continued use of Restorative Practices with fidelity should have continued.

Purpose of Narrative Inquiry

The purpose of this narrative inquiry is to explore the challenges I faced as a school leader in the implementation and utilization of Restorative Practices to address multiple crises affecting the school and its students with disabilities.

Research Questions

This autobiographical narrative inquiry could assist school leaders in decision-making regarding the use of Restorative Practices at a school for students with disabilities. I have addressed the following questions through an in-depth examination of my experiences regarding the implementation of Restorative Practices during times of crisis:

Question 1 Based upon my personal narrative, what were the challenges experienced in implementing Restorative Practices at a school for students with disabilities?

Question 2 Based upon my personal narrative, what were the challenges experienced in attempting to continue the use of Restorative Practices at a school for students with disabilities during the school shutdown due to COVID-19 and the transition to virtual learning?

Question 3 Based upon my personal narrative, what were my perceptions about Restorative Practices as a strategy for addressing the health and well-being of students with disabilities in times of crisis, such as the school shutdown due to COVID-19?

Significance of the Narrative Inquiry

Proponents of Restorative Practice generally agree that more research needs to be conducted on the effectiveness of the practice in several areas. A recent WestEd report itemized six primary areas of research still needed to inform the practice: implementation readiness, implementation, and effectiveness, impacts on racial and ethnic minorities and students with disabilities, leadership/training, data and measurement, and sustainability (Hurley et al., 2015). While quantitative exploration is still needed on this topic, this narrative inquiry presents my unique insight and impressions regarding the implementation and perceived effectiveness of the practice at my school, especially in times of crisis. The narrative explores my impressions of

Restorative Practices and its purported potential to improve disciplinary practices for the vulnerable population of students with identified disabilities whose maladaptive behaviors are addressed through exclusionary practices.

Proponents of Restorative Practices strongly believe it can keep disciplined students in school (as opposed to "out" through exclusionary practices or dropping out), increasing their academic performance. I have shared my personal anecdotes regarding accommodations and specific strategies used with my population of students with disabilities for them to effectively access the practice in both the virtual and traditional learning environments. The narrative inquiry could also guide school administrators in adopting Restorative Practices.

Research Approach

This autobiographical narrative inquiry tells the personal story of a school leader addressing the challenges brought about in implementing a new initiative in a school.

Stakeholders and Audience

The original intended audience for this narrative inquiry is those serving a population of students with disabilities and considering the whole-school adoption of Restorative Practices. It is also for anyone who desires the next generation of young people to exhibit positive, caring behaviors, appropriate cooperative relationships, and be more understanding to their peers and their community. Due to the mandates of SB 7026 in Florida, the scope of the narrative inquiry expands to benefit all who desire to improve the mental health of the disenfranchised and protect the community's safety at large (Marjory Stoneman Douglas Public Safety Act, 2018). In addition, this narrative inquiry is relevant for administrators struggling to initiate change during uncertain times.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework for the adoption of Restorative Practices and the support for this narrative inquiry is based upon the principles of care ethics. Nel Noddings, the American philosopher and educator, introduced the principles of care in *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1986). Noddings names the two parties in a relationship as the "one-caring" and the "cared-for" (1986, p.7). Noddings (1986) addresses the difficulty in teaching morality:

The same sort of difficulty arises when we approach the teaching of morality or ethical behavior from a rational-cognitive approach. We fail to share with each other the feelings, the conflicts, the hopes, and ideas that influence our eventual choices. We share only the justification for our acts and not what motivates, and touches (p. 8).

Noddings asserts caring people act in caring ways. She additionally presents two critical terms to describe the meeting between the one-caring and the one-cared for: *engrossment,* which refers to the one-caring receiving the one-cared for, and *motivational displacement,* which refers to the one-caring's response or signal to the one-cared for they are willing to prioritize their needs, even if only for a short period of time (Noddings,1986, 2010). This can be applied to the teacher-student relationship through the teacher's receptive behaviors of attentiveness, responsiveness, and active listening to their students (Kim & Schallert, 2011). Noddings states (2010),

> When I care, my motive energy begins to flow toward the needs and wants of the cared-for. This does not mean that I will approve of what the other wants, nor does it mean that I will never try to lead him or her to a better set of values, but I must take into account the feelings and desires that are actually there and respond positively as my values and capacities allow" (p.7).

When the United States Secret Service investigated 37 incidents of school shootings involving 41 perpetrators, a common thread ran through all the interviews with these individuals Many had expressed the feeling of being left out; of not being cared for. All expressed feelings of depression. It was reported some of the school shooters investigated had tried or threatened suicide. Two-thirds had been victims of bullying (Reddy et al., 2001). When the Secret Service asked Luke Woodham, who killed his mother and two students in 1997, how he could have communicated to an adult what he was feeling, he replied, "Pay attention. Just sit down and talk with me." When the agent asked Woodham for his advice to adults in dealing with students like him, he said, "…they should try to bond more with their students. Talk to them. It doesn't have to be about anything. Just have some kind of relationship with them" (Morrison, 2003, p. 690). One young man who shot and killed two students in his school and wounded others, stated, "I was really hurting. I didn't have anybody to talk to. They just didn't care," (Fein et al., 2002, p.15).

In "*Threat Assessments in Schools: Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates,*" the United States Secret Service advises that the greatest deterrent to preventing school shootings is creating a school climate built upon mutual respect; respect between the students and their teachers and respect between the students themselves. In addition, adults and students should establish connections within the school. The Secret Service suggests every student should have at least one adult within the school with whom they feel a positive connection (Fein et al., 2002). The evaluative criteria set by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS/Cognia), one of the six regional accreditation organizations recognized by the United States Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation for accreditation of schools, additionally supports this finding in their accrediting

standards (*AdvancEd Performance Standards for Schools*, 2016). In the Learning Capacity Domain, Standard 2.4 states, "The institution has a formal structure to ensure learners develop positive relationships with and have adults/peers who support their educational experiences" (AdvancED Performance Standards for Schools, 2016, p. 4).

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Since Restorative Practices inform this narrative inquiry, this literature review aims to explore Restorative Practices as a practice for improving student behavior and personal interactions in both neurotypical student populations and students with disabilities, a subgroup of students disproportionately affected by exclusionary disciplinary practices. I have researched the roots of Restorative Practices as well as the supporting theoretical frameworks and relevant research is presented. Current research was reviewed regarding the challenges the whole school implementation of Restorative Practices poses to school leaders and others within a school. Accommodations and modifications necessary to successfully adapt and utilize the practice with students with disabilities and relevant literature regarding the impact on school leaders/faculty and staff in adopting such an initiative are also addressed.

Method

Narrative inquiry is examined as the primary method of research for this dissertation. The sources in this literature review supporting the narrative inquiry varied and included key-term searches through ERIC (EBSCOhost), Education Source, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and SAGE. Relevant information was drawn from books, dissertations, and peer-reviewed articles from academic journals. Key search terms included but were not limited to Restorative Justice, Restorative Discipline, Restorative Practice(s), zero tolerance, students with disabilities,

disciplinary practices, disproportionality, school shootings, school leadership, school change, narrative inquiry, autoethnography, and storytelling.

Roots of Restorative Practices in Schools

Restorative Practices in schools has roots in the Restorative Justice movement, which involves all harmed by an offense. The practice considers the needs of the offender, the offended, and the community and believes in the interconnectivity of all involved (Zehr, 2015). The founder and former president of the International Institute for Restorative Practices, Ted Wachtel, states, "The social science of Restorative Practices offers a common thread to tie together theory, research, and practice in diverse fields such as education, counseling, criminal justice, social work, and organizational management" (Silverman & Mee, 2018, p. 2). The practice is widely used in New Zealand, where it mirrors the practices of the Māori approach to problem-solving called *Tikanga* (Blood & Thorsborne, 2013). The basis of *Tikanga* is fairness and the relationships between people (Bowen & Consedine, 1999).

A pioneer in the Restorative Justice movement, Howard Zehr (2015) states, "Crime is a violation of people and relationships. It creates obligations to make things right. Justice involves the victim, the offender, and the community searching for solutions that promote repair, reconciliation, and reassurance" (p. 29). The three pillars of Restorative Justice are 1) harms and needs, 2) obligations, and 3) engagement (Zehr, 2015, p.31). The practice considers the law broken and who has been harmed by the crime. Additionally, the person who has harmed has an obligation to the offended to make it right. Finally, the practice involves engagement by all parties including the harmed, the offender, and the community for justice to be served (Zehr, 2015, p.31).

Determining the roots of Restorative Justice practices in schools depends, as Blood and Thorsborne (2013) assert, on who is telling the story and where in the world they are located. While it may take different forms in different countries, the principles of the practice are the same. The practice of Community (Restorative) Counseling was introduced to schools in the Australian state of Queensland in the early 1990s. The first Community Conference was held at Maroochydore High School in Queensland, in April 1994, to repair the harm that occurred after an assault at a school dance (Cameron & Thorsborne, 1999).

Restorative Practices were introduced at Palisades High School, Kintnersville, Pennsylvania, in the 1998-1999 school year as part of the SaferSanerSchools pilot program and were fully phased into the school over a three-year period (Mirsky, 2003). The first year of the initiative involved introducing teachers to Restorative Practices. The administration of the school divided the staff into three categories: believers, fence-sitters, and critics. As the practice began to grow within the school, the fence sitters noticed the positive effects of the practice and began to seek out the believers to learn more about using the practice within their classrooms. By year three, critics who had been resistant to the practice had left the school or had retired. Presented data showed the number of disciplinary referrals had decreased from 1752 in the 1998-1999 school year to 1154 in the 2001-2002 school year. The number of disruptive incidents had dropped from 273 to 153 in the same period (Mirsky, 2003).

In response to the tragic school shooting at Columbine High School in 1999, Denver Public Schools implemented zero-tolerance policies. However, after studying the negative effects of the policies in school settings, the district has since initiated Restorative Practices (Buckmaster, 2016). Minnesota Public Schools began the Restorative Justice Project in 1995 as part of a 5-year plan to reduce violence throughout the state system. Adopting the practice

provided additional options for disciplinary actions, allowing for reintegration of the offenders and restoration of the victims rather than separation and punishment (Karp & Breslin, 2001).

The Restorative Practice Circle originated in the tradition of Talking Circles used by the First Nation communities in North America and is characteristic of Indigenous People around the world (*The Indigenous Origins of Circles and How Non-Natives Learned about Them*, 2017). Circles allow participants to share their feelings regarding an incident or share ideas around predetermined topics. The Circle encourages a sense of interconnectedness and community and builds relationships within the school (Brewster & Louallen, 2016). Circles also create an opportunity for a safe place for everyone to speak, and a talking piece is usually exchanged to indicate when it is time for each participant in the Circle to take their turn to speak. The talking piece should have a special meaning for the group (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). In addition to the talking piece, other key elements of the Circle include an opening and closing ceremony, guidelines for the Circle, a facilitator who engages, encourages, and maintains the safe space of the Circle, and finally, consensual decision-making.

The Circle allows participants to resolve their disputes through a restorative dialogue and reach agreements without damaging relationships in the process (Stewart Kline, 2016, p.100). There are a variety of Circles used in the practice. The Community Circle is a method of starting the day or a class period. The Circle allows the teacher to assess the group's disposition before beginning academic activities. Issues of discipline are addressed within the Justice Circle. Questions asked in the Justice Circle are: 1) What happened? 2) What were you thinking and feeling? 3) Who was harmed? 4) What can be done to repair the harm? 5) Are you ready to move forward? (Goldys, 2016).

Morrison et al., (2005) conceptualize Restorative Practices as a three-tiered approach (Figure 1). The first tier represents Restorative Practices modeled by all staff and experienced by all students within a school. The second tier represents the targeted interventions of Restorative Practices used to repair relationships after an incident has occurred. The third tier is considered the most intensive level of Restorative Practices and is utilized in response to a serious infraction. At this level, the restorative conference is formal and scripted and may involve other school community members whom the action may have harmed (Mansfield et al., 2018).

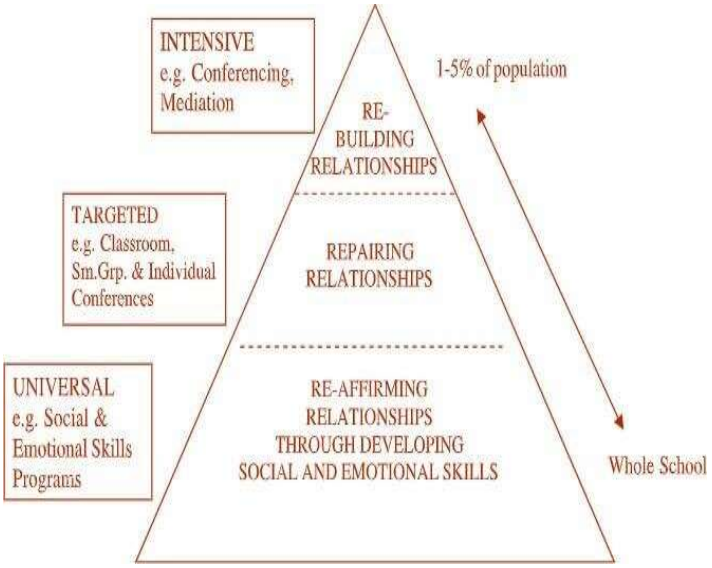


Figure 1:

Hierarchy of restorative responses (Morrison et al., 2005, p. 343).

The field of Restorative Justice is "so diverse these days that it becomes difficult to find a single overarching definition on which everyone can agree" (Hopkins, 2011, p. 8). Restorative Practices can best be described as an "umbrella of tools" enabling educators to establish positive relationships with their students. In practice, it builds relationships among all stakeholders while specifying restorative measures to address and repair the damage done to relationships due to conflict (Stewart Kline, 2016, p. 98). Restorative Practices create opportunities for the school to

respond to inappropriate behaviors respectfully and promote the restoration of damaged relationships; either between the students or between the student(s) and the teacher. Restorative Practices also attempts to move away from an extrinsic rewards system to an intrinsic one as it considers rewards the counterpoint of punishment. A rewards system suggests a student should be compensated for engaging in appropriate behaviors- behaviors in which they should be engaging anyway. Research has found appropriate behaviors do not tend to continue once the rewards are no longer provided (Smith et al., 2015). Some schools use Restorative Practices as a stand-alone disciplinary approach using the practice to address all disciplinary issues within the school (Hurley et al., 2015).

Restorative Practices has also been included in the recommendations of case law. The final decree in a 2017 case between the United States and Wicomico County Public Schools, Maryland, mandated the implementation of both Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) and Restorative Practices as methods of preventing the use of excessive force as a disciplinary action for inappropriate behavior (Katsiyannis et al., 2019). Restorative Practices, implemented effectively, support the U.S. Department of Education's (2014) recommendations for improving school climate and discipline, which recommends the following three guiding principles: 1) create positive climates and focus on prevention, 2) develop clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations and consequences to address disruptive student behaviors and 3) ensure fairness, equity, and continuous improvement (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Theoretical Frameworks Relevant to Restorative Practices

The theoretical frameworks relevant to Restorative Practice include the Ethics of Care, the Social Discipline Window, the Relationship Window, and Stakeholder Roles.

Ethics of Care

Nel Noddings (1986), the American educator and philosopher, introduced the concept of the ethic of care in *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. Central to the ethic of care is the relationship built between "the one caring" and "the cared-for" (Noddings, 1986, p.7). Noddings has applied the theories to relationship building and caring in the classroom setting and encourages school leaders to choose a curriculum with caring in mind. "Educators can manifest their care in the choice of curriculum, and appropriately chosen curriculum can contribute to the growth of children as carers" (Noddings, 1995, p.1). Noddings additionally asserts that the guiding policy for schools should be that school is considered a place where students "learn to care and are cared for" (Noddings, 1995, p.2).

> The time spent on learning to care is not wasted; it is not time taken away from academic instruction. Kids who are friendly, happy, and cooperative tackle their work with more confidence, and both teachers and students enjoy greater success. They are not adversaries but partners in caring and learning (Noddings as cited in Charney, 2015, p.2).

Noddings' assertion requires schools to move past the view of discipline as punishment and more toward a holistic perspective that considers that all behavioral aspects are related (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005, p.3).

It has also been suggested that school administrators could emphasize the concept of care by "modeling compassion and understanding as a more purposeful approach to giving value to student voice and community building" (Buckmaster, 2016, p. 2). Building the relationships between teachers and students and between the students themselves is an essential element of Restorative Practices. It can no longer be assumed children come to school "understanding the basic concept of care" (Cavanagh, 2009, p.72). Without that understanding, children cannot

demonstrate appropriate social interactions in school (Cavanagh, 2009). Children often need to learn about caring, a task often left to their teachers. Circles, an integral component of Restorative Practices, provides a natural way for teachers to build relationships and caring within the classroom by facilitating dialogue between both the teachers and the students. Table 1 compares consequences and Circles and their impact on the teacher-student and student-student relationship.

For low-performing students, a caring education creates a learning environment that meets both the emotional nurturing and rigorous academic needs of the students (Rivera-

Table 1:

Consequences and Circles: A Comparison (Cavanagh, 2009, p.77)

	Consequences	**Circles**
Participation	Exclusive, primarily reliant on experts (e.g., counselors, dean, assistant principal)	Inclusive, primarily reliant on the whole school community
Decision-making	Adversarial, hierarchical, and control and power-based	Consensus, co-constructed
Focus	Past student behavior problems Individual accountability School rules and regulations	Past, present, and future behavior Individual and collective responsibility Healing the harm to relationships of all affected members of the community
Tools	Detentions Stand downs Exclusions Early leaving exemptions	Restoration of harmony to school community Healing broken relationships Trust and understanding
Procedure	Rigid rules and regulations that apply to everyone in the same way	Flexible responses that fit the people and the situation involved
Results	Polarization of the school community between the good and bad students	Finding a common ground for solving problems non-violently

McCutchen, 2012). A caring education provides the additional academic support required by low-performing students for remediation; “When students are sufficiently cared for, there can be a significant interruption in failure, and students can be empowered to become academically

successful" (Rivera-McCutchen, 2012, p. 654). One study suggests those students' perceived teachers who pushed their students to achieve academically as caring (Alder, 2002). Teachers demonstrate an ethic of caring by communicating expected standards to students and helping them achieve them (Rivera-McCutchen, 2012). Rivera-McCutchen (2012) identifies six categories of behaviors indicative of caring school environments and teachers:

> 1) providing emotional and academic support, 2) expecting a high level of work from students, 3) valuing parents as resources, 4) understanding the sociocultural and sociopolitical factors that shape students' experiences with education, 5) communication of standards, and 6) the belief that all students are capable of academic rigor (p. 659).

Social Discipline Window

The Social Discipline Window (Figure 2) sometimes called Window of Social Control, is considered the operational philosophy behind Restorative Justice (Buckmaster, 2016). It illustrates punishment and other disciplinary choices as opposite ends of the support continuum (McCold & Wachtel, 2003). The vertical axis of the window reflects the continuum of social control from low to high while the horizontal axis illustrates the influence of support from low to high. The Social Discipline Window defines the four approaches to behavior regulation as punitive (high control/low support), permissive (low control/high support), neglectful (low control/low support), and restorative (high control/high support) (McCold & Wachtel, 2003, p.2). Restorative Practices aim to create a disciplinary model with high levels of control balanced with high levels of support (Hansberry, 2016). The restorative approach to behavioral regulation provides opportunities for those affected by an action to "come together to share their feelings, describe how they were affected, and develop a plan to repair the harm done or prevent a

reoccurrence" (Hansberry, 2016, p. 2). The restorative approach is reintegrative because it allows the offender to "make amends and shed the offender label" (McCold & Wachtel, 2003, p. 2).

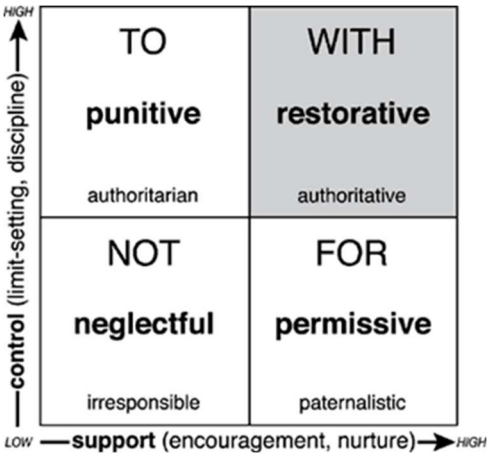


Figure 2:

Social Discipline Window (McCold & Wachtel, 2003, p. 2)

Relationship Window

Vaandering suggests an alternative model to McCold and Wachtel's Social Discipline Window grounded in critical theory with the goal to "create a just, rational, humane and reconciled society" (Vaandering, 2016, p. 64). The Relationship Window (Figure 3) frames Restorative Justice from the perspective of relationships rather than from a disciplinary perspective.

The vertical axis of the Relationship Window indicates, from low to high, the "expectations' one gives another for being human," while the horizontal axis of the matrix reflects the level of support, from low to high, "one gives another for being human" (Vaandering, 2016, p. 65). In a restorative meeting with a student, Vaandering suggests using the Relationship Window featuring relationship analogies (Figure 4) to guide the conversation. Vaandering uses the analogies of a machine, dirt, stuffed toy, and human to illustrate relationships. "When we

treat each other like toys, machines, or dirt, we need to remind each other that we are human, or we will never become the people we could be" (Vaandering, 2016, p. 70).

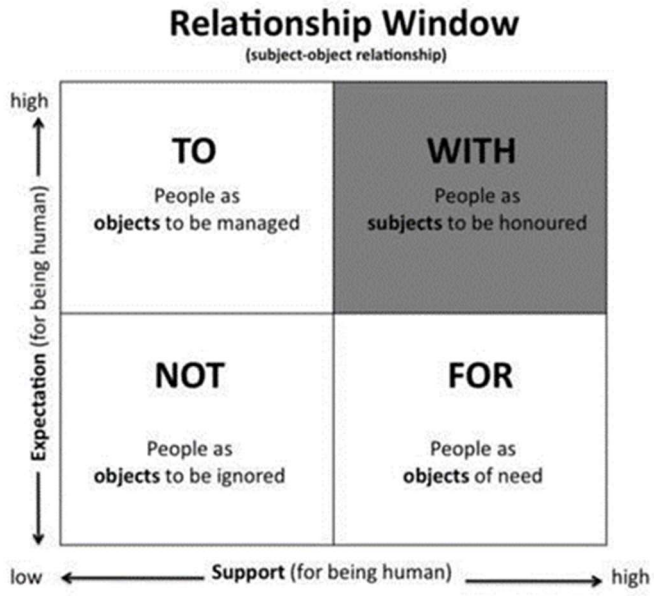


Figure 3:

The Relationship Window: subject-object relationship (Vaandering, 2016, p. 66)

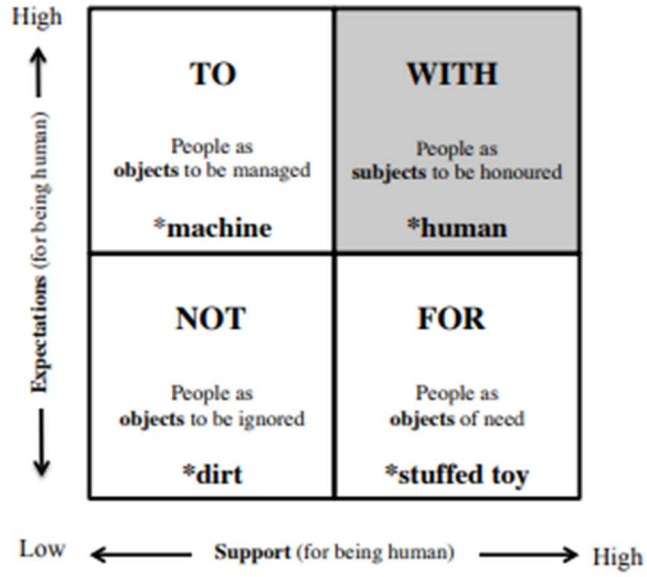


Figure 4:

The Relationship Window: relationship analogies (Vaandering, 2016, p. 71)

Stakeholder Roles

Another supporting theory of Restorative Justice is Stakeholder Roles (Table 2). Stakeholder Roles distinguish between those who have been directly harmed from those who have been indirectly harmed by an offense (McCold & Wachtel, 2003). Primary stakeholders are most frequently the victims and the offenders, but other stakeholders, such as the families of both the victim and the offender, may also be directly affected. Their significant emotional connection to the parties involved identifies them as primary stakeholders in the offense.

Table 2:

Stakeholder Roles (McCold & Wachtel, 2003, p. 3)

	Harm	Needs	Responses
PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS			
Victim(s)	direct	specific	active
Offender(s)	direct	specific	active
Families+	direct	specific	active
SECONDARY STAKEHOLDERS			
Neighbors+	vicarious	aggregate	supportive
Officials+	vicarious	aggregate	supportive

Secondary stakeholders are those without an emotional connection to the offense but who may be indirectly affected. Secondary stakeholders could be the school community, religious community, local businesses, or society in general. The primary role of secondary stakeholders is to support the restorative processes for those primarily affected by the offense (McCold & Wachtel, 2003).

Research on Restorative Practices in Schools

While international studies on Restorative Justice have supported its positive effectiveness, there have been few longitudinal studies on the impact of Restorative Justice in the United States. Song and Swearer (2016) state that the "practice appears to be far ahead of the research on effectiveness and successful implementation and sustainability, when in fact, research should be facilitating data decision making using RJ" (p. 318). Quantitative studies are emerging that support the practice's success; however, studies have yet to be published showing that Restorative Practices reduce the disproportionality in exclusionary disciplinary practices toward minority students or students with disabilities (Song & Swearer, 2016). While more rigorous research may become available in the future, much of current research "would not meet the standards of evidence-based registries in education or justice (e.g., the U.S. Department of Education's *What Works Clearinghouse*, the U.S. Department of Justice's *Crime Solutions*)" (Fronius et al., 2019, p. 33).

One of the first pilot Restorative Justice programs was implemented at Cole Middle School in West Oakland, California, in 2005 as an alternative to zero-tolerance disciplinary policies (Sumner et al., 2010). Data provided by Oakland Unified School District and the California Department of Education revealed a dramatic reduction of 87% in the suspension rates at the school after implementing the Restorative Justice program (Sumner et al., 2010). While the study's authors could not definitively say the drop could be directly attributed to the program's implementation, the results warrant further investigation (Sumner et al., 2010).

A longitudinal study was conducted in Denver Public Schools using data collected from school years 2006-2013 (González, 2015). Findings indicated an overall drop in the district's suspension rate from 10.58% to 5.63% between the years 2006 to 2013. While the suspension

rate for African American students was still higher than that of the other reported subgroups, the suspension rate had dropped significantly from 17.61% in the 2006-2007 school year to 10.42% in the 2012-2013 school year. The study also indicated an increase in student proficiency on statewide tests in reading, writing, and math. The students in the district presented with an overall gain of four percentage points in reading, seven percentage points in math, and six percentage points in writing. The graduation rate increased from 46.4% in 2009 to 51.8% in 2010 with the high school drop-out rate decreasing from 11.1% in 2006 to 6.4% in 2010. The study found although the academic gains were significant, they could not directly credit the implementation of the Restorative Practices in the district (Gonzalez, 2015).

A two-year randomized controlled trial in Pittsburgh Public Schools, the second-largest school district in Pennsylvania, supported the claim that Restorative Practices lowered school suspension rates (Augustine et al., 2018). The district received a grant from the National Institute of Justice in July 2014 to implement Restorative Practices. Pittsburgh Public Schools called their Restorative Practices initiative PERC, an acronym for "Pursuing Equitable and Restorative Communities" (Augustine et al., 2018). Schools using the practice demonstrated marked improvement in days lost to suspension, which declined by 36% relative to the comparison schools whose suspension rate only declined by 18%. The gap between the suspension days received by African American students compared to White students was narrowed through PERC (Augustine et al., 2018). Staff surveyed in the Pittsburgh schools felt their relationships with students had also improved (Gregory & Evans, 2020).

Not all results of the study were positive. The study also revealed that the students in the PERC schools had lower scores in math in grades 3-8 than their peers on the same state standardized assessments. Additionally, in restorative schools with a predominately African

American student population, math and reading state assessment scores were lower for African American and White students (Gregory & Evans, 2020). Augustine et al. (2018) identify three main challenges to the full implementation and sustainability of Restorative Practices in Pittsburgh schools: lack of time, insufficient training resources and support, and unclear expectations. The study provided four recommendations to Pittsburgh Public Schools to increase the sustainability and scale of the PERC project:

> 1) set clear expectations for the requirements for Restorative Practices in the schools and accountability for implementation; 2) focus on training the school leaders so they have a complete understanding of Restorative Practices before requiring staff to engage in the practice; 3) continued training, coaching, and professional learning groups focused on the practice; 4) central office support (Augustine et al., 2018. p. xvi).

A two-year cluster-randomized trial was conducted at 14 middle schools in Maine to assess the fidelity of implementation of Restorative Practices on "school environment, developmental outcomes, and problem behaviors" (Acosta et al., 2016, p. 418). The staff of the selected schools were trained in RPI (Restorative Practice Interventions) by certified instructors from the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP) in Fall of 2014 and began using the practice in 2014 school year. The study found Restorative Practices Interventions did not have a statistically significant effect on the students in the treatment schools (J. Acosta et al., 2019). The students did not report "more school connectedness, better school climate, more positive peer relationships, and developmental outcomes or less victimization" than the control group of students (J. Acosta et al., 2019, p. 886). Based on the study's findings, it could not be stated that Restorative Practices interventions had a whole-school impact on positive behavioral outcomes. Hypothesizing as to the lack of significant findings supporting the use of Restorative

Practices to build a fully supportive school environment, Acosta et al. (2019), assert not all teachers were actively participating in Restorative Practices or implementing the practices regularly or as intended. The authors suggest additional research should be conducted over a longer period to best assess the full implementation of the practice and determine student-level changes based on an improved school environment (J. Acosta et al., 2019).

In 2018, 14 Baltimore City Schools became Restorative Practices Intensive Learning sites (Webber et al., 2020). As intensive learning sites, the schools received rigorous Restorative Practices training and coaching for one year, followed by an additional year of less intensive training. Johns Hopkins University conducted a review of the implementation status of Restorative Practice in the Baltimore City schools and found a 44% decrease in suspensions after one year; 804 suspensions in the 2016-2017 school year to 450 in 2018-2019 (Webber et al., p. 24). The study found that implementing Restorative Practices had a negligible impact on student attendance rates (p. 25). The same study found, through student and staff surveys, 47.2% of the respondents thought their school had "fully implemented Restorative Practices," 21.3% felt their school had not fully implemented the practice, and 31.5% felt it was "too early to tell" whether the practice had been implemented (Webber, et al., p. 30). While the researchers stated the study did not prove Restorative Practices were solely responsible for the marked decline in suspensions, they suggested there was a "potential relationship between the implementation of RP at these schools and a reduction in the number of student suspensions" (Webber et al., p. 25).

A study conducted by WestEd Justice & Prevention Research Center (Guckenburg et al., 2016) focused on practitioners' impressions of Restorative Practices integration into schools and indicated the practice resulted in a decrease in student suspension and expulsions as well as an overall improvement of school climate. The 169 Restorative Justice practitioners surveyed felt

some of the challenges of implementing Restorative Practices in schools were resistance from stakeholders, insufficient funding to implement the practice fully, and extensive training requirements (Guckenburg et al., 2016).

A 15-month-long longitudinal study examined the prevalence of bullying and the effectiveness of a Restorative Whole-School Approach (RWsA) in reducing bullying in four Hong Kong schools. Participating students were administered surveys that questioned their attitudes regarding self-esteem, aggressive or inappropriate assertive behavior (bullying), quality of school life, perceptions/attitudes regarding their teachers, and school harmony. The study found the students' perception of bullying dropped significantly in the RWsA schools, whereas students perceived a worsening in bullying in the non-RWsA schools. The percentage of students who had bullied others at the RWsA schools dropped by 49.9%, while 51% of students at the non-RWsA school had increased their bullying behaviors (Wong et al., 2011).

Challenges to Restorative Practices in Schools

While research continues to emerge supporting the success of Restorative Practices in schools, there are challenges regarding adopting the practice in educational settings. Three of the biggest challenges, highlighted by Evans and Lester (2013) are, extensive time and resource requirements (generally three to five years), lack of conceptual clarity (what does Restorative Justice look like in school settings?), and "clashing philosophies" (clash between existing punitive disciplinary policies and Restorative Justice) (p. 61). Though in 2016, Song and Swearer noted there was not support for the practice in scholarly literature, especially in the fields of school psychology, school consultation, and special education, recent descriptive reports and pre-post evaluation studies are emerging to suggest Restorative Practices have been associated with

"improvements in students' connections to school, lower incidents of school discipline offenses and violent behavior, and improved attendance" (Wang & Lee, 2019, p. 182).

Three primary disagreements have emerged regarding the implementation of Restorative Practices since its introduction in American schools. They are the lack of an implementation manual, the degree of implementation within a school, and the ability of the practice to explicitly address racial inequity in discipline (Song & Swearer, 2016). Regarding a lack of a manual adequately outlining the practice, Song & Swearer (2016) characterizes Restorative Practice as "an art rather than a science," best learned through an apprenticeship-type model with an experienced mentor (p. 314). The degree to which a Restorative Justice approach is implemented within a school is also in dispute. Restorative Practices is similar in use to other whole-school intervention programs with the exception being the use of the restorative circle. From a research perspective, it is difficult to attribute school disciplinary improvements specifically to Restorative Practices. Additionally, there is disagreement regarding how Restorative Practices address the disproportionate exclusionary disciplinary practices by race. Some practitioners believe Restorative Practices should be used "explicitly and directly" when it comes to issues of race, while others believe the results of the practice should be naturally occurring without explicitly emphasizing issues of race (Song & Swearer, 2016, p. 315).

In the study conducted in Baltimore City Schools (Webber et al., 2020), researchers found the major challenges to the implementation of Restorative Practices were lack of support from students' families, insufficient training, student resistance, lack of staff buy-in, lack of administrative support, and insufficient funding. 18.1% of respondents cited "other" as a challenge for the implementation of Restorative Practices with "difficulty incorporating RP into an already compact teaching schedule" (Webber et al., 2020, p. 30).

Restorative Practices and Students with Disabilities

Restorative Practices have been considered an alternative to punitive disciplinary practices that exclude students with disabilities from the educational setting more disproportionately than their non-disabled peers (Green et al., 2018; Wilson, 2013). Current zero-tolerance practices exclude (through in/out-of-school suspension and expulsion) students with disabilities from the educational setting at a rate of over twice their non-disabled peers (Green et al., 2018). While statistically representing 12% of the total student population, students with disabilities are referred to law enforcement or arrested at school at a rate of 25%. Students with disabilities are 75% more likely to be restrained in school and 58% more likely to be subjected to seclusion (Green et al., 2018). This statistic is more disparate for African American students with disabilities as they are excluded from the educational setting 2.8 times more frequently than White students with disabilities and increases to 3.4 times more frequently for multiple suspensions (Wilson, 2013).

There is a greater chance a student identified with an emotional disability or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder will be excluded from the school setting through disciplinary action (Miller & Meyers, 2015). Students with emotional disabilities are disciplined at a higher percentage than other areas of disability, with the second highest area being students with an identified learning disability. Students with disabilities receive more than one out-of-school suspension at a rate 45 times higher than that of their non-disabled peers. High school students with disabilities also have a higher rate of both in- and out-of-school suspensions than same-grade students without disabilities (Miller & Meyers, 2015).

Research on the successful use of Restorative Practices with students with disabilities is less prevalent than research on its use with students without disabilities. It is generally agreed

upon that students with disabilities may require a differentiated method or rate of instruction for academic tasks; therefore, the same should be considered for meeting their individual behavioral or disciplinary needs (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). Buckmaster (2016) asserts that Restorative Practices might be more accepted in special education because the field already operates from an inclusionary mindset. Restorative Practices can be an effective approach for students with psychological disabilities who have difficulty understanding societal norms because one of the major objectives of the practice is developing social and personal responsibility (Shackelford, 2011). Burnett and Thorsborne (2015) outline the difficulties in using the practice with this population of students. Students with identified autism as an area of disability frequently lack the empathy or perspective-taking necessary to "see the world through someone else's eyes" (Burnett & Thorsborne, 2015, p. 46). The authors state one of the benefits of the practice for students with autism is repeated use, and practice will help them develop this ability because Restorative Practices "provides opportunities for the repetitive and consistent work required for creating the neurological circuitry that underpins health and resilience" (Burnett & Thorsborne, 2015, p. 44).

Restorative Practices heavily emphasize language and communication as part of the practice, which can be challenging for those students with deficits in oral language (Burnett & Thorsborne, 2015). Oral language competence is the ability to express and understand spoken language. Alexithymia, the inability to find the words to describe an emotion, is also a characteristic of individuals with autism and those who have suffered emotional trauma or social-emotional disabilities (Snow & Sanger, 2010). Snow and Sanger (2010) have expressed concern regarding the use of restorative processes in the criminal justice system due to issues with alexithymia:

> Language deficits are invisible so there is no way for those taking part in a Restorative Justice conference (the mediator and/or victim) to know that the young offender may be compromised in his/her ability to process what others are saying (and conveying nonverbally) and /or to express their own perspective and tell their story and do so with a level of perceived genuineness that is commensurate with how they actually feel. As noted previously, young offenders who have undetected language impairments run the risk of appearing lazy, rude, or unmotivated, and this may be damaging in a Restorative Justice conference, for both the victim and the offender. (p. 50)

According to Burnett and Thorsborne (2015), using Restorative Practices with individuals with disabilities can be challenging; however, through direct teaching, constant repetition, and accommodations such as scripts and visuals, the practice can be effective for a high-need population. Though the language and vocabulary of Restorative Practices can be difficult for students with language disabilities, it is not suggested that the language be watered down; instead, appropriate language should be introduced at students' current level of cognitive development (Procter-Legg, 2018). Because dialogue is such an essential component of Restorative Practices and could pose an obstacle for those with language challenges, it is suggested that a dialogue script or leading questions be provided to the Circle members ahead of the meeting, so participants have an opportunity to process the intricacies of the dialogue (Umbreit et al., 2007). Garnett et al., (2020) found that when interviewed, some teachers and school staff expressed concern regarding equitable participation in the Circle process, especially for English learners and students with disabilities. One teacher interviewed suggested, "I teach students who are new English learners, and it is tricky to do Circles as they are so language-

based, but I have found that with perseverance, it is getting easier for students to participate" (p. 7).

One study that combined the principles and practices of Restorative Practices into a visual literacy workshop found that when the rules for turn-taking were strictly adhered to, it stifled the conversational flow of the lessons. When the rules were loosened, it was found that the levels of verbal engagement in the lesson increased (S. Wilson, 2010). When Restorative Practices was adopted at Brennan-Rogers School of Communication and Media, a pre-K-8 magnet school in New Haven, Connecticut, the critical impact of communication on the adoption of the practice was understood and therefore, teachers specifically taught the vocabulary and concepts associated with the practice (Dubin, 2016). According to the school's principal, "We wanted to give our students the skills of being able to speak to one another about something they don't agree on without name calling and getting into fights" (Dubin, 2016, p.20). Willis (2020) noted that the disparity in communication skills could also result from social class differences and states, "when Restorative Justice processes fail to accommodate equal opportunity to communicate for participants from disadvantaged class backgrounds…participants may be harmed" and suggests unequal starting points of the participants must be balanced before the start of the practice (p. 202-203).

The Scottish Restorative Practice Project was a two-year pilot whose aim was to learn about the use and effectiveness of Restorative Practices in schools in Scotland (McCluskey et al., 2008). The project involved 18 schools, one of which was a special school for students with learning disabilities. The special school made noteworthy progress in the use of Restorative Practices during the pilot period. The school staff reported the keys to success were modeling of

the practice by administration and key staff, and a commitment to professional development, both initially and in follow-up (McCluskey et al., 2008).

Mayworm et al. (2016) suggests the following tiered approach to teacher professional development in Restorative Justice. Step 1 is the determination and justification for the adoption of the practice, followed by school-wide professional development, initial implementation phase, needs assessment, consultation support for groups of teachers as well as one-on-one with teachers, monitoring and evaluating the schoolwide impact of the practice and finally, Step 7 involves continually evaluating the program for improvement after implementation to achieve long-term goals (Figure 5).

A review of tentative results on the impact of the Restorative Justice Discipline Project at one high school in Virginia found that the suspension rate of students with disabilities steadily declined more than 10% over 3 years after adopting the practice. In the fourth year of the study, it found that no suspensions of ten or more days were reported for students with disabilities - (Mansfield et al, 2018).

The Role of School Leaders in the Implementation of Restorative Practices

The school administrator's role in implementing Restorative Practices in the school setting is essential (Marzano, 2003; Wong et al., 2011; Wilson, 2013; Denti & Guerin, 2014). A school's leadership is the most critical aspect of school reform (Marzano, 2003). An extensive study of over one million secondary students found that the administrator's actions surpassed all other causes (including race, culture, socioeconomic background, and district policy) relative to high rates of suspensions (Denti & Guerin, 2014). Research consistently supports the connection between reducing exclusionary practices at a school through "collaborative leadership focused

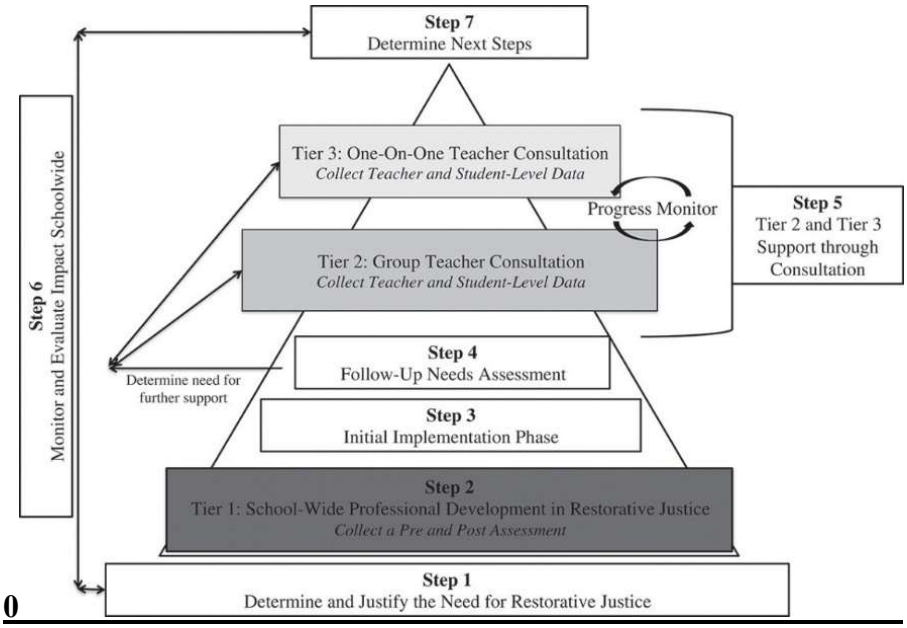


Figure 5:

Visual Depiction of the Teacher Professional Development Model in School-Based Restorative Justice Approaches (Mayworm et al., 2016, p. 400).

on prevention and intervention through programming and supporting the enactment of high expectations through curriculum" (Wilson, 2013, p. 67). A key factor in the whole school implementation of Restorative Practices is ensuring total school buy-in. Acknowledging the natural resistance to change, this task must fall squarely on the shoulders of the leaders of the school (Costello et al, 2017). Richard Beckhard's "Formula for Change" (1975) provides a distinct formula for achieving change within a school setting:

> The formula can be described mathematically as C=(abd) > x, where C=change, a=level of dissatisfaction with the status quo, b=clear or understood desired state, d=practical steps toward a desired state, and x = "cost" of changing." In other words, for change to be possible and for commitment to occur there has to be enough dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs to mobilize the energy for change (p. 45).

Changing the culture of a school from a traditional disciplinary mindset to a restorative mindset can present a challenge for an administrator because many of the cultural traditions regarding school discipline are centuries old (Morrison et al., 2005). Parsons (2005) notes, "In many countries, the will to punish is deeply embedded" (p. 194). Morrison et al. (2005) have developed a responsive framework for schoolwide behavioral change using the Regulatory Pyramid (Figure 6).

Two sides of the Regulatory Pyramid focus on behavior while the other two sides focus on individual and institutional relationships. As one moves around the pyramid "the behavioral and relational faces alternate, tapping both institutional and individual needs and concerns" (Morrison et al., 2005, p. 344).

In determining the need to implement Restorative Practices, school leaders must make a case for the need for change and have a clear vision of a plan to do so (Hansberry, 2016). The

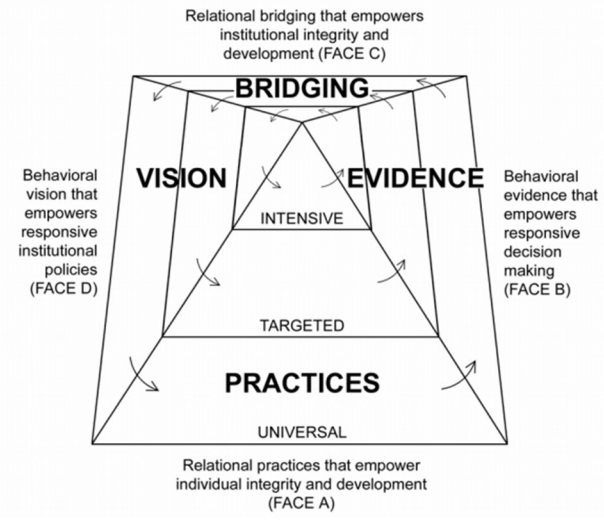


Figure 6:

Regulatory Pyramid of Restorative Responses to Managing Social Relationships and Behavior (Morrison et al., 2005, p. 343)

key to the whole school implementation of the practice would be for the leader to ensure those wishing a change within their organization are greater in number than those who do not. Leaders must be brave and "put themselves out there, first showing others their willingness to make mistakes" (Hansberry, 2016, p. 162). Restorative Practices cannot change the culture of the school unless the principal has a clear vision of the practice and a steadfast belief that it will work within their own school (Hansberry, 2016). Leaders must commit to behaving restoratively and use Restorative Practices with their staff (Hansberry, 2016).

School leaders with a control mindset cannot make the necessary shift to a less paternal mindset (Buckmaster, 2016). Claassen and Claassen (2008) outline the obstacles to implementing a school-wide initiative such as Restorative Practices in the minds of the teachers: resistance to change, lack of time to learn the practice effectively as well as time loss when they should be teaching the standards, their unwillingness to "share the power," fear of permissiveness, loss of punishment as a method of dealing with misbehavior, and impact when the practice is not being used with fidelity throughout the whole school (p. 161). A school principal who is "committed to RJ (Restorative Practices) and to creating a restorative environment in the school is essential for implementation to be successful" (Hurley et al., 2015, p. 5). Wilson (2013) suggested that school principals were the solution to solving the school-to-prison pipeline because they can "mitigate the exclusion and incarceration of youth" by focusing on prevention rather than strictly following district policies regarding zero tolerance (p.65). Fessehatsiou (2017) found that 80.7% of teachers surveyed believed exemplary leadership was the greatest predictor for change in a school, and 87% felt most successful when feedback was provided constructively regarding the change process. One study by Garnett et al. (2019), suggests that school stakeholders should conduct needs assessments to determine implementation

readiness before initiating Restorative Practices into the setting. The results of these assessments could guide school leaders in determining the challenges and opportunities the practice would pose for their school and provide information on what the surveyed stakeholders deemed necessary to make the practice effective and sustainable (Garnett et al., 2019). Restorative Practices have the potential to not only change the behavior of the students but also the behaviors of the adults in the school setting (Brown, 2018). While policymakers want to use Restorative Practices to change student behavior, adult change must come before student change. Brown (2018) states, "Whole-school reform means exactly that. Students change when they have a school community that listens to them. They change because we change" (p. 185).

Gregory et al. (2013) offers 12 indicators of effective Restorative Practices:

> 1) administrative support for Restorative Practices, social-emotional learning, and equity, 2) schoolwide buy-in and leadership, 3) professional development, 4) rethinking discipline policy reform, 5) data-based decision-making to guide change, 6) explicit and differentiated social-emotional skill building, 7) community building and skill-building circles in the classroom, 8) repairing "less serious" harm and restoring community in the classroom, 9) repairing "more serious" harm and restorative conferences, 10) Restorative Practices student leadership, 11) Restorative Practices family/community involvement, 12) addressing equity and social justice (p. 3).

The findings of the longitudinal study conducted in Denver Public Schools suggested the following six key areas for implementation of Restorative Justice/practices in schools:

> 1) establishing specific reasons for implementation and buy-in from key members of the school community; 2) developing a clear institutional vision with short-, medium-, and long-term goals; 3) creating a responsive, effective, and adaptive practice; 4) adopting

districtwide disciplinary policy and practices that integrate Restorative Justice; 5) developing practices that promote a whole-school rather than a program-based approach; and 6) investing in a continuous system of growth and professional development for all members of the school community (González, 2015, p. 19).

Blood and Thorsborne (2005) suggest the five-stage implementation model (Table 3) as a guide for implementing Restorative Practices in schools.

School administrators have not been without apprehension regarding the whole-school implementation of Restorative Practices. One study found administrators expressed concern about finding the time needed to train facilitators, the time necessary to see meaningful change in the climate of the school (usually 1 to 3 years), and the time needed to repair harm (Karp & Breslin, 2001). Morrison et al., (2005) suggest a 4 to 5-year timeline for the full and complete implementation of Restorative Practices in a school (Table 4).

1) In citing what does not work regarding the whole-school or whole-district implementation of Restorative Practices, Gregory and Evans (2020) present five mis-implementation models of the practice adoption: mandated top-down initiative not aligned with the values of Restorative Justice Education; 2) narrow approaches focused on a single Restorative Practice; 3) colorblind or power-blind approaches to marginalizing dynamics; 4) “train and hope” approaches that offer few implementation supports; and 5) under-resourced and short-term initiatives that will likely result in minimal buy-in, inconsistent practices, and teacher frustration and burn-out (p. 12).

Table 3:

Stages of Implementation (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005, p. 6)

Stage	Actions
Stage 1: Gaining Commitment-Capturing Hearts and Minds	1. Make a case for change 1.1-Identifying the need (the cost of current practice) 1.2-Identifying the learning gaps 1.3-Challenging the current practice 1.4-Debunking the myths around behavior and what makes a difference 1.5-Linking to other priorities 2. Establishing buy-in
Stage 2: Developing a Shared Vision-Knowing where we are going and why	1. Inspiring a shared vision 2. Developing preferred outcomes aligned with the vision 3. Building a framework for practice 4. Developing a common language
Stage 3: Developing a Responsive and Effective Practice-Changing how we do things around here	1. Developing a range of responses 2. Training, maintenance, and support 3. Monitoring for quality standards
Stage 4: Developing a Whole-School Approach-Putting it all together	1. Realignment of school policy with new practice 2. Managing the transition 3. Widening the lens
Stage 5: Professional Relationships-Walking the walk with each other	1. Promoting open, honest, transparent, and fair working relationships 2. Using restorative processes for managing staff grievance, performance management and conflict 3. Challenging practice and behavior-building integrity

Table 4:

Timeframe & indicators of change (Morrison et al., 2005, p. 352)

12–18 months	Gaining commitment. Changing dialogue. Pockets of practice. Improved statistics. Increased options for managing behavior.
12–24 months	Altered dialogue & processes. Alignment of policy & procedure. Increased skill development. School community commitment.
24–36 months	Embedding of practice at all levels. Altered operating framework. Reviewing policy and procedure. Creative solutions continue to emerge.
4–5 years	Best practice. Behavior change embedded. Cultural change across school community.

The top-down mandate of the practice may "evoke reluctant compliance or active resistance" (Gregory & Evans, 2020, p. 13). Approaching Restorative Practices from a narrow perspective means over-emphasis of only one aspect of the practice (like circles or conferencing), partial adoption of the total practice, or exclusion of some members of the whole school community (i.e., paraprofessionals, office staff, etc.) in the training of the practice. Color-blind or power-blind mis-implementation suggests not explicitly addressing the impact of race through the practice (Gregory & Evans, 2020).

Concern has been expressed in determining the outcomes of the whole-school implementation of Restorative Practices because of the difficulty in differentiating the practice from other safe school initiatives such as School-wide Positive Behavioral Supports (SWPBS) or Social Emotional Learning (SEL) initiatives (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). While the pedagogy may be similar, SWPBS focuses on rewards for behavioral compliance and SEL focuses on "self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making" (Morrison & Vaandering, p. 150).

A case study in the United Kingdom involving one student in a school setting found that using Restorative Practices had little impact on the subject. The student's behavior did not improve and was eventually excluded from the school. In hypothesizing why the practice may have failed with this one subject, it was found that while most staff adhered to the practice, the

entire school staff was not participating as directed. They found some staff were conducting the Circle as proscribed but found instances when the staff would publicly chastise the student for their misbehavior, thereby negating the positive effects of the practice (Standing et al., 2012).

Narrative Inquiry as a Research Methodology

The primary method of research used for this dissertation is narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Connelly (2000), leaders in adapting the use of narrative inquiry for educational purposes, state the use of narrative inquiry in educational research is largely due to the belief that "humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives" (2000, p. 2). Qualitative researchers tend to refer to narrative as a particular type of discourse, however, Polkinghorne (1995) refers to narrative as a story and believes "stories hold promise for qualitative researchers" (1995, p. 6). In this context, Polkinghorne states that "story refers to…narratives describing 'ideal' life events such as biographies, autobiographies, histories, case studies, and reports of remembered episodes that have occurred" (1995, p.7). Polkinghorne acknowledges the hesitancy in using the word *story* in describing events as the word implies what is to follow is untrue; however, he states the word accurately describes narratives that "combine a succession of incidents into a unified episode" (1995, p. 7). Conle (2000) also addressed the bias of the storyteller, "Because the narrator tells us what happened, where and when, he or she tends to convey an aura of truth along with the narrated elements. Indeed, they are the truth from the teller's vantage point at a particular time of inquiry" (2000, p. 57). Conle acknowledges the perspective of the narrator is often shaped by the people and setting involved in the story and what may have mattered a great deal at the time may be interpreted differently not only by the readers but also by the narrator over time (2000, p. 57). The story should be the retelling of events and should feature at least three of the following elements: (a) a situation

involving some predicament, conflict, or struggle, (b) an animate protagonist who engages in the situation for a purpose, and (c) a sequence with implied causality (i.e., a plot) during which the predicament is resolved (Carter 1993, p. 6).

Carr (1986) acknowledges that the "events of life are anything but a mere sequence" but are instead "a complex structure of temporal configurations that interlock and receive their definition and meaning from within the action itself (1986, p.122). He suggests the story is not just the progression of the sequence of events but three distinguishable points of view of not only the storyteller, but the audience and the characters involved (1986, p. 124). Carr also identifies three features of narrative: First, a good story is pared down to only include those events and actions necessary to "further the plot"; second, the teller is the voice of authority in the story and knows "the plot in a way both the audience and characters do not (or may not)" (1986, p. 124); last, the storyteller has the freedom to determine their temporal position within the story. A reader can be outside or above the events and free of time constraints as they relate to their telling of the story (1986, p. 123).

Noddings (1986) speaks of the teaching-learning relationship and how the researcher situates themselves in relation to those with whom they work. Her thoughts would be applicable to the researcher-practitioner relationship and her thoughts on narrative inquiry. "We approach our goal by living with those whom we teach in a caring community, through modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. Again, we see how unfamiliar this language has become" (1986, p. 502).

In his book, *Experience and Education*, John Dewey (1938) proposed two principles he believes are fundamental to creating an experience: *continuity of experience* and *interaction of experience*. The *continuity of experience* suggests all experiences are on an "experiential

continuum" (1938, p. 28) and build upon previous experiences and influence experiences to follow. The principle of *interaction of experience* is the interaction of both the demonstrable and internal conditions of an experience that create a situation (1938, p. 42). Dewey states, "We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future" (1938, p. 49). It is the responsibility of the educator to institute conditions in the present experience that will have a positive effect on future experiences (1938, p. 50).

At the very root of Restorative Practices is storytelling and the success of the practice is contingent upon what emerges from the story told (O'Reilly, 2019). Restorative Circles function as a method to ask questions and the stories that are told in response to those questions (Bhandari, 2018).

Analysis of Narratives-Paradigmatic Analysis vs Narrative Analysis

Polkinghorne (1995) describes types of narrative inquiry that correspond to cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner's determination of two kinds of cognition: paradigmatic and narrative. Polkinghorne identifies inquiry that employs paradigmatic reasoning in its analysis as an *analysis of narratives* and inquiry that uses narrative reasoning as *narrative analysis* (1995, p.12). In their analyses of narratives, researchers "collect stories as data and analyze them with paradigmatic process," while in narrative analysis, researchers "collect descriptions of events and happenings and synthesize or configure them by means of plot into a story or stories" (1995, p. 12). The result of research utilizing narrative analysis is a story and the task of the researcher is to configure the data into "a story that unites and gives meaning to the data as contributors to a goal or purpose" to determine the how and why of the particular outcome (1995, p. 15, 19). Polkinghorne states that "narrative configuration is not merely a transcription of the thoughts and

actions of the protagonist; it is a means of making sense and showing the significance of them in the context of the denouement." The researcher is the narrator of the story in narrative inquiry and the story is told through their voice (1995, p. 19).

The "I" in Narrative Inquiry/Autoethnography

Peshkin (1985) acknowledges the duality of the researcher as both researcher and person and suggested the multiple "I's" of narrative writing is a complex idea. "The human *I* is there, the I that is present under many of the same political, economic, and social circumstances as when one is routinely human and not a researcher" (1985, p. 270). He further states:

> As noted, my subjectivity narrows what I see and shapes what I make of what I see. By disposing me to choose, I select from the array of N possibilities those that I will make something of. I bring my biases or inclinations to my research. Unlike clothing, they are preexisting states that cannot shed and thereby prevented from interacting in some way with objects I study. That they will interact is unavoidable; just how they will do so is uncertain. My subjectivity, furthermore, is one basis for my distinctiveness, although not a unique distinctiveness, peculiar solely to me. Otherwise, my work would be marked by idiosyncrasy that locates what I have seen exclusively in my eyes and in those of no other's. If my work is to become acceptable to the corpus of social science, it should not be a product of hallucination, delusion, or illusion. That is, if what I see cannot be squared with the real or imaginable perceptions of others, I may have had an interesting personal experience, but I have missed the boat (1985, p.279).

Connelly and Clandinin (1999) have also addressed the issue of the subjectivity of the researcher in narrative inquiry.

> Narrative researchers are concerned with the representation of experience, causality,

> temporality, and difference between the experience of time and the telling of time, narrative form, integrity of the whole in a research document, the invitational quality of a research text, its authenticity, adequacy, and plausibility. Currently in narrative inquiry, it is important for each researcher to set forth the criteria that govern the study and by which it may be judged. It is also the case that others may quite legitimately adopt other criteria in support of, or in criticism of, the work (1999, p. 139).

Validity and Reliability in Narrative Inquiry

Mertova and Webster (2020) state that reliability in narrative research refers to "the dependability of data," while validity refers to "the strength of analysis" of the data (2020, p. 74). They acknowledge that a personal narrative is "not read as an exact record of what happened, nor is it a mirror of the world 'out there'" (2020, p. 75). The foundation of the validity and reliability of narrative inquiry lies in the "access to reliable and trustworthy records of the stories told by the individuals" (2020, p. 75). Methods typically applied in the validation of qualitative research are not necessarily suited for narrative inquiry, such as the use of triangulation for verification of data. Mertova and Webster state, "triangulation in the storytelling sense is almost impossible to achieve" and in their view, a "framework of *critical* events, *like* events, and *other* events is more applicable (2020, p. 76). In defining what constitutes a critical event(s), Mertova and Webster (2020) suggest the following qualities for definition: 1) the event exists in a particular context or communities of practice, 2) the events have an impact on the people involved, 3) the events have life-changing consequences, 4) the events are unplanned, 5) the events may reveal patterns of well-defined stages, 6) the events are only identified after the event, and 7) the events are intensely personal with strong emotional involvement (2020,p. 68-69). Most importantly, a critical event is unplanned and unanticipated.

Reliability in narrative inquiry is achieved through the 'trustworthiness' of the notes or transcripts of the researcher (Polkinghorne, 1988). Mertova and Webster (2020) address the difference between reliability from an empirical point of view versus reliability for narrative. "Reliability from an empirical point of view is concerned with a result that is applicable across samples, whereas reliability in narrative relates to the experience of individuals. Instead of reporting the results of statistical measures, narrative reports events of human experience" (2020, p. 77-78). To ensure the reporting of the researcher is truthful, Mertova and Webster (2020) suggest the following aspects of verisimilitude: 1) critical events should resonate with the experience of the researcher; 2) reporting should be plausible; 3) the reporting and accounting of events should be truthful and can be confirmed through like and other events (2020, p. 83).

Summary

The roots of Restorative Practice in schools were investigated in this literature review as it is a well-documented area of the practice. The theoretical frameworks supporting Restorative Practices were additionally explored. The role of school leaders in implementing Restorative Practices was looked at through the dual lens of the role of school leaders in general and the change process in schools. In the areas of research relative to the use and success of Restorative Practices in schools, this review is limited by the lack of research available on these topics. Very few studies featuring large sample sizes were available for review. In the area of the success of the use of Restorative Practices with the population of students with disabilities, there were (to date) no studies specifically addressing this topic despite the fact this group of students is disproportionately affected by zero-tolerance exclusionary disciplinary policies. This literature review emphasized the need for further research on the use of Restorative Practices in schools and the use of Restorative Practices with students with disabilities. Narrative Inquiry was

researched as it is the primary research method used in this dissertation. Narrative Inquiry is discussed more specifically in Chapter 3 in describing the methodology used for this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As a new administrator, I frequently sought the counsel of those senior to me in the field. In preparing for my role as a new principal, I gravitated toward books presenting the role of a school leader in practical terms through anecdotal stories rather than definitive theory and practice. Conversations with my administrative peers frequently began with, "What would you do in this case?" or "Have you ever had a student/parent/staff member who…?" And their insight often helped guide me through my days as a rookie administrator. In determining the course of my narrative inquiry, significant events framed the story that emerged from my own firsthand experiences in implementing an innovative initiative such as Restorative Practices at my school and the challenges experienced through this process. As Connelly and Clandinin (2000) acknowledge, the task of composing one's narrative of experience is central to narrative inquiry (2000, p. 70).

Research Purpose

This autobiographical narrative inquiry aims to explore through detailed reflection the challenges I experienced as a school leader in implementing Restorative Practices at a school for students with disabilities. The experience is documented through storytelling using the narrative inquiry method of qualitative research. Riessman (2008) states individuals use narrative form to "remember, argue, justify, persuade, engage, entertain and even mislead" an audience (2008, 8). I have told my story truthfully.

Research Questions

This autobiographical narrative inquiry could assist school leaders in decision-making regarding using Restorative Practices at a school for students with disabilities. The following questions are addressed through an in-depth examination of my own experiences with the implementation of Restorative Practices:

Question 1 Based on my personal narrative, were the challenges experienced in implementing Restorative Practices at a school for students with disabilities?

Question 2 Based on my personal narrative, what were the challenges experienced in attempting to continue the use of Restorative Practices at a school for students with disabilities during the school shutdown due to COVID-19 and the transition to virtual learning?

Question 3 Based on my personal narrative, what were my perceptions about Restorative Practices as a strategy for addressing the health and well-being of students with disabilities in times of crisis, such as school shutdown due to COVID-19?

Method

Qualitative methodology through autobiographical narrative inquiry was used as the methodology for this study. I critically reflected on my time as principal and examined the experience through narration. Focusing on critical incidents through self-reflection is a two-stage process involving reflection and reflexivity. The first stage involves addressing the researcher's preconceived assumptions regarding the critical incident through reflective questions. The second stage involves the researcher further focusing on their reflections from stage one and determining how they could change their thinking or practice based upon the revelations of their reflections (Fook, 2019, p. 67-68). Mertova and Webster's (2020) Critical Event Approach to

Narrative Inquiry, was used to address the proposed questions. Critical events can be exposed in ways that precipitate the participants in the research project to "retell their understanding of events that have occurred in their professional (and possibly private) lives and have changed their perspectives on their current and future practice" (p. 111). In determining what makes an event "critical," it is not only the "impact it has on the storyteller" but also the change experience that occurs after the event (p. 60). Critical events can be either positive or negative (p. 61) and they are "unplanned, unanticipated, and uncontrolled" (p. 63). "Human centeredness" and the complexity of the human experience are the two factors that regulate the framework at its highest level. The framework is then delineated into four parts: 1) research processes which comprise the tools, criteria, and structure for the methodology, 2), negotiations which involve relationships, both caring and empowering, 3) risks involved, and 4) auditing of results.

The "processes" component contains the tools, criteria, and structure that guide the framework. "Tools" refers to the varied instruments that will be used to collect the data. In this case, the tools used data derived from observations, surveys, letters, emails, newsletters, etc. (Mertova & Webster, 2020, p. 112). The "criteria" component of the processes component will create a well-referenced audit trail that will ensure the narrative is authentic and truthful. The framework's structure refers to the establishment of the time, place, and events that create the "formative background" for the readers of the research (p.115).

Role of the Researcher

As the storyteller of this narrative inquiry, I have been in the field of education for more than 30 years, primarily in Special Education. I hold a bachelor's degree in Specific Learning Disabilities, master's degree in educational leadership, and Florida educational certifications in the areas of Specific Learning Disabilities, Exceptional Student Education, English for Speakers

of Other Languages, and Educational Leadership. I have been a special education teacher at all grade levels from elementary to post-high school, as well as an Exceptional Education Specialist for Compliance and Staffing in the third largest school district in Florida. At the special education charter school where the story took place, I have held the administrative positions of Director of Discipline, Director of Transition, Assistant Principal, and Principal, and am currently the Director of Grant Administration with the same organization. Before the introduction and use of Restorative Practices at my school, I had no knowledge or exposure to the practice. As the researcher for this narrative inquiry, I acknowledged and mitigated potential abuses to the practice such as "intersubjectivity" and "smoothing" (Mertova & Webster, 2020, p. 116) by appropriately reflecting and analyzing my role in the narrative. I ensured all data was considered, not just data that reflected positive results.

Researcher Bias

In their standards for ethics, the American Educational Research Association (AERA) states "no research (no researchers) are neutral when it comes to values" (p. 486) and researchers should directly address any potential conflicts that could influence their analysis. This narrative reflected on my experiences as principal of a school implementing Restorative Practices. I have a bias about Restorative Practices with a population of special education students because of my sincere desire to decrease the disproportionality of exclusionary disciplinary practices in the school. For a population of students who present as significantly below grade level, exclusion from the classroom results in lost instructional time. I was hopeful the use of Restorative Practices, if implemented with fidelity, would improve student behavior and mental health within the school.

Setting and Participants Supporting My Narrative

The setting for the narrative is a charter school located in Florida where I was principal. The school serves students in grades 3-12 with identified disabilities. The school has Title I designation with 69% of the student population qualifying for the National School Lunch Program. All students have an Individualized Education Plan and a need for a self-contained, fully therapeutic learning environment which is indicated by academic functioning at least two grade levels below expectations. Additionally, students must also have deficits in at least two other domains of functioning which include social/behavioral, independent functioning, communication, and health to be considered appropriate for the highly restrictive educational setting. The school is considered an exclusive rather than an inclusive learning environment because there are no students on campus identified as non-disabled. The school is designated as an ESE center school under Florida Department of Education guidelines. The narrative of my experiences encompasses the school years 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2019-20.

In the 2017-18 school year, the breakdown of the student population by disability was 36% of the students were identified with the primary exceptionality of Specific Learning Disabilities, 23% of students as Other Health Impaired, 17% Autistic, 12% Language Impaired, 8% Intellectually Disabled, and 4% as Other which are identified as Emotional Behavioral Disabilities, Traumatic Brain Injured, Visually Impaired, Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing (Figure 7).

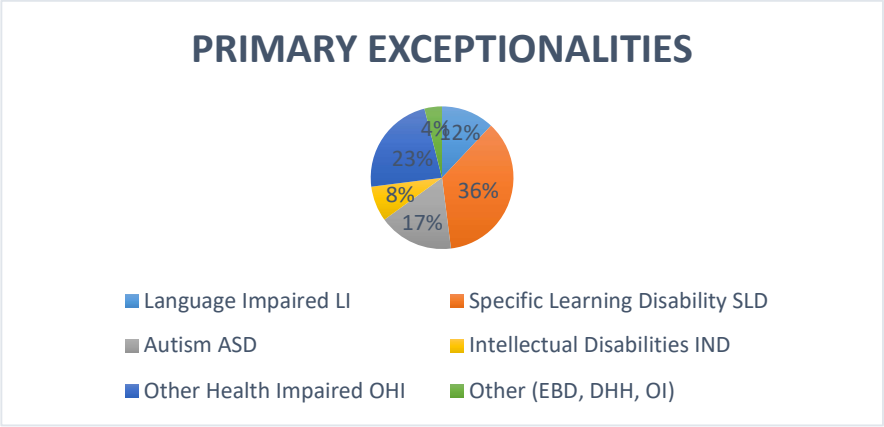


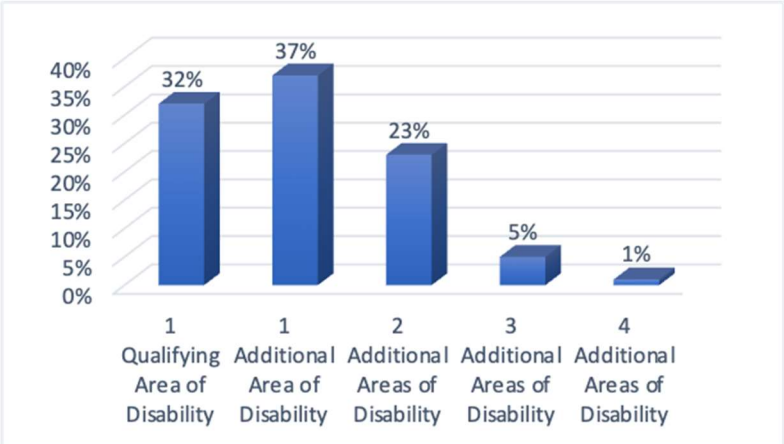
Figure 7:

Primary exceptionalities at the school

Of the students enrolled at the school for the 2017-18 school year, 32% of those students had one qualifying area of disability, 37% of the students were identified as having one additional area of disability, 23% were identified with two additional exceptionalities, 5% with three, and 1% with four additional identified areas of disability (Table 5). Data tables reflect school years 2018-19 and 2019-20. However, historically, the percentages vary little from year to year.

Table 5

Qualifying Plus Additional Areas of Disability



Before the adoption of Restorative Practices, the primary behavioral approach used at the school was Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS). The school employed a full-time behavioral specialist, a full-time behavioral assistant, and two on-site certified mental health counselors. Additionally, the school followed the authorizing county's Student Code of Conduct and their Discipline of Students with Disabilities disciplinary matrix which specifically outlined the level of offenses and intervention/consequences were also followed. While charter schools are not required to follow the disciplinary matrix of their authorizing county for Level 1 and Level 2 offenses, Level 3 offenses must be reported into the state School Environmental Safety Incident Reporting (SESIR) system. Level 3 offenses are offenses such as aggravated battery and physical attack, drug offenses, weapons, etc., and usually involve law enforcement.

Data Collection

Data sources used to support my narrative were collected through my personal calendar and notations, emails, letters, classroom observational notes, and other artifacts.

Personal Calendar and Notations

My calendar and anecdotal notes functioned as journals for my experiences in implementing Restorative Practices at my school from school years 2018-19 and 2019-20 and served to provide source material for the narrative told in Chapter 4.

Emails and Letters

Emails sent through my school email account during the above time provided support for my story. Emails and letters sent to staff members, Restorative Practice trainers and practitioners, as well as parents were used.

Classroom Observations and Anecdotal Notes

Observations of classroom teachers and other instructional personnel were conducted in the school at least twice yearly for teachers determined to be "Highly Effective" using the Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools State-Approved Evaluation System for School-Based Classroom Teachers and Other Instructional Personnel. New or struggling teachers are observed more frequently. Random principal "walk-throughs" are also documented within the observation system. Notes, comments, and scores in these observations were used to support the narrative.

Communication

Artifacts such as school-wide bi-monthly newsletters, weekly staff meeting agendas, parent presentations, conference presentations, post-presentation survey responses, and staff and parent climate surveys also supported the narrative.

Historical Student Disciplinary/Behavioral Information

Quantitative data in the form of disciplinary and behavioral information supported my personal story. However, no comparison between the years was made due to the inconsistent use of Restorative Practices in the first year of implementation as well as the disparate data collected during the school shutdown due to COVID-19. Disciplinary/behavioral data for the reporting years is maintained in the school district data management system and provided information for the following areas:

a) Number of discipline referrals administered in the 2017-18 school year.

b) Number of discipline referrals administered in the 2018-19 year (after the implementation of Restorative practices in the 2018-19 school year.)

c) Number of students who were involuntarily hospitalized under The Baker Act by the local county Sheriff in the 2017-18 school year.

d) Number of students involuntarily institutionalized under The Baker Act by the local county Sheriff in the 2018-19 school year (after the implementation of Restorative Practices in the 2018-19 school year.)

e) Number of incidents of seclusion and/or restraint (if any) at the school for the 2017-18 and 2018-19 school year.

f) Data from the 2019-20 school year was considered however, the data set reflects from August 2019 to March 13, 2020, due to school closure because of the COVID-19 virus.

Visual representations of the data were created using charts and graphs derived from entering the data into an Excel file.

Surveys

Survey data was collected through end-of-course, online surveys administered after the initial Restorative Practices training conducted in teacher preplanning of the 2018-19 school year was referenced in the narrative. End-of-course summary information collected after the Restorative Practices "refresher" training conducted in teacher preplanning of the 2019-20 school year was also used to support the narrative. These surveys were administered to not only obtain information regarding staff opinion of the training but also for use in awarding professional development credits toward educator recertification. Additionally, staff completed surveys regarding aspects of the use of Restorative Practices in the school. These surveys were completed voluntarily and answered anonymously. Staff, parent, and student responses to annual School Climate surveys in the areas of school safety and discipline are also part of the narrative.

These surveys are administered yearly as part of planning for the school's improvement initiatives as well as in compliance with the requirements of the annual charter school review conducted by the authorizing school district.

Data Analysis

Polkinghorne (1988) suggests the goal of data analysis in narratives is to "uncover common themes or plots" in the data and "noting underlying patterns across examples of the stories" (1998, p. 177). I followed the two-cycle process outlined by Saldana (2016) in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. The first cycle of the coding process involved giving a word or short phrase that "symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute to the language-based or visual data." The second cycle involved synthesizing the data to create meaning (p. 5). Because narrative is language-based and can be poetic in nature, the data can often be "more complex, ambiguous and uncertain" (Plowright, 2019, p. 203). Thematic codes were assigned relative to my proposed research questions, and they were counted and measured. Codes were collected and synthesized in an Excel spreadsheet so they could be easily manipulated to determine common themes.

Confidentiality

All names of individuals used to tell the story are removed and pseudonyms used when applicable. Pronouns were also kept neutral to protect the anonymity of those discussed within the narrative. Students at the school are protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) as they are all identified as students with disabilities and therefore only the broadest of descriptions will be used when referencing students. The school where the story takes place was referred to as "the school" when referenced.

Validity

In addressing validity in narratives, Polkinghorne (1998) suggests the word "valid" should be assigned its ordinary meaning of being well-grounded and supportable (1998, p. 175). He posits a valid finding in narrative research might include some measurement data and logic, however, the validity of the narrative should be based on the understanding that validity represents a "well-grounded conclusion" (1998, p. 175).

Regarding the validity of narrative inquiry-based research, McNiff (2012) suggests the research must be meaningful and create "meaningful relationships for mutual benefit, in terms of what they understand as of value or good" (2012, p. 12). The researcher must be able to articulate the relationship between learning and action especially when the researcher is suggesting these stories are influencing their learning as well as the learning of others (2020, p. 12). Riessman believes there are no rules or standardized procedures for validating narrative. "Narrative truths are always partial-committed and incomplete" (Riessman 2008, p. 189).

Addressing the issues of validity commonly associated with qualitative research, Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman (2014, p. 104-105) suggest answering the following questions directly:

1) How will I ensure the descriptions of participants and context are accurate and complete?
   As I was the principal of the school where my story takes place, I endeavored to ensure all descriptive elements are accurate and complete based on information available from the data collected.
2) How will I ensure my personal biases are not a threat to the validity of the research?
   The objective of this project is to provide valuable information through personal storytelling that may be useful to other school leaders/faculty/staff regarding implementing a school-wide initiative such as Restorative Practices with a population of

students with disabilities. One validation strategy suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018) to clarify researcher bias in a study is for the researcher to "illuminate the 'dark matter' that is often omitted in qualitative research by commenting on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations" that have shaped my interpretation and approach to the study (p.261). As the building administrator at the time of the implementation of the practice, I freely admit I am not without bias toward the practice or any ramifications thereof. I have been in the field of special education since 1984. I have seen school-wide initiatives come and go and come back around again. My 'dark matter' was illuminated. In compiling the artifacts that were used to form my conclusions and recommendations regarding the use of the practice with students with disabilities, I tried to maintain neutrality and acknowledge any potential conflicts or perspectives that may have colored my analysis of my findings.

3) What are my plans for dealing with any unanticipated reactions of readers to the narrative?

Every attempt was made to protect the anonymity of those individuals whose comments, behaviors, etc., form my narrative.

Limitations

Though I kept all school personnel and students discussed in the narratives anonymous and gender neutral, incidents related through the narrative could be identifiable to others with knowledge of the situation.

Summary

This qualitative study using narrative inquiry tells the story of my experiences as a school principal at school for students with disabilities in the adoption of the school-wide initiative of

Restorative Practices. The challenges I subsequently faced in implementing the practices informed the narrative. The purpose of the research, data collection, data analysis, and confidentiality were addressed. The validity of narrative inquiry as well as limitations of the narrative are described. I acknowledged and addressed my personal biases.

CHAPTER FOUR: NARRATIVES

Narrative 1

Narrative 1 begins with a retelling of the precipitating event of the problem of practice, the Parkland shooting, the ramifications caused at the state level because of the shooting, and how these mandates were addressed within our school.

Causation

School administrators know that certain events occurring in the world can immediately impact the day-to-day running of their school. Sometimes, that realization can happen in real-time. Wednesday, February 14, 2018, was such a day. The day had rolled out like most Valentine's Days in school. Our younger students had decorated shoeboxes with hearts to collect their traded Valentines. Older students carried the balloons, stuffed animals, candy hearts, etc., they had been gifted by their "sweethearts." Others lamented their lack of Valentine's gifts, saddened by their perceived unpopularity. Too many cupcakes and candy had been consumed, and our teachers counted the minutes until the dismissal bell. While my school was getting ready to close out the day, about 280 miles to our south, a former student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, entered that campus through an unguarded gate. He `was carrying a rifle bag and hundreds of rounds of ammunition and proceeded to make his way through the school. By the time he left the building with the crowd of students exiting due to the activated fire alarm, he had killed 17 students and staff members and injured another 17. He was apprehended about an hour and 15 minutes later in a Walmart parking lot. The news of the

shooting was reported before our dismissal was complete. News alerts popped up on our phones. The minor grumblings and annoyances staff had been voicing regarding the difficulties of trying to teach on Valentine's Day gave way to shock at the horrific nature of the crime as it was revealed. The shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School would soon become known as the worst shooting to take place at a high school, surpassing the Columbine shooting in April of 1999. The school shooter was identified as a student with disabilities in social-emotional functioning. I knew the shooting would have a specific and significant impact on my school since our population of students is only students with disabilities.

Ramifications

The next day, our mental health counselor was on alert to address the needs of any students experiencing stress and trauma from the news of the Parkland shooting. As the days progressed after the shooting, rumors circulated that students planned a "walkout" to protest school gun violence. I received emails from the school district, like "School Safety Guidance for Administrators," reminding me to "focus on education" and not "advocate for continued disruptions during the school day or walkouts at this time." I additionally received advice to acknowledge our students' rights to free expression but to remain focused on learning as much as possible. The emails warned of the possibility of the situation becoming disruptive and the case of a "campus-wide movement." Our school district provided constructive suggestions for how students could express themselves:

- Wear the same color to show solidarity.
- Moment of Silence
- Organize a walk before or after school.

- Handwritten letters of support to the students who attend Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School
- Laminated banners with messages of support to be displayed at the school.
- Additional candlelight vigils
- Work with student leadership groups
- Letters to elected officials (District Personnel JY, personal communication, February 22, 2018).

The Florida Legislature, in session at the time of the Parkland shooting, grappled with the issues that quickly arose. Just a week after the massacre, a group of 100 students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School boarded a bus and headed to Tallahassee to speak to their lawmakers about new restrictions on guns, specifically the banning of the sale of the AR-15 rifle used by the Parkland shooter (Turkewitz, 2018). Initially, the interaction between the lawmakers and the students was calm and respectful; however, the atmosphere outside the capitol grew tense throughout the day. Others supporting the cause of the students converged on the capitol later in the day. The tone changed as protesters packed the building. This tension was reflected in many protests held around the country supporting the gun restriction laws.

The following Friday, our charter school advocates in Tallahassee sent an email acknowledging the emotional week in the legislature. It was reported that the Senate would be hearing firearm safety and school safety bills in the Rules Committee. Although the House of Representatives had yet to release their bills, they were also expected to release something later in the day. Governor Rick Scott held a press conference to announce his action plan, which outlined an initiative to “keep guns away from dangerous and violent people” (Turkewitz, 2018). Other proposals to keep students safe would require mandatory school resource officers in every

public school, mandatory active shooter training, increased school safety and security funding, increased mental health counseling for students, school-based threat assessment teams, and crisis intervention training for all school personnel.

On February 23, 2018, the leaders of the Florida Senate and the Florida House of Representatives released a statement announcing a comprehensive package of legislation to improve school safety and security in Florida. The proposed Senate Bills were 7022-Firearm Safety, 7024-Public Records, and 7026-School Safety. On March 9, 2018, Governor Scott signed Senate Bill 7026, also known as the Marjory Stoneman Douglas School Safety Act, quickly putting the law into effect. At the time, more information was needed regarding the bill's specifics.

At a district principals' meeting on March 29, 2018, we were briefed on legislative updates regarding the new bill. We were informed that we would need to hire a school safety officer and provide additional mental health support for our students. Although it was reported that our capital outlay funding would be increased, it was undetermined at the time how much funding schools would receive to help offset the additional cost expenditures resulting from the new legislative mandates. We were informed that $140,000.00 was the cost factor that should be used in budgetary planning for the school safety officer. This would cover salary, training, uniform, and equipment (to include a firearm.) We were also informed of the option of having a staff member participate in the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program, which was also established through the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act. (Coach Aaron Feis was a Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School teacher killed in the shooting while protecting students.) This program would allow an employee of the school to be armed and "aid in the

prevention or abatement of active assailant incidents on the school premises" (*Florida Department of Education*, n.d.).

The minutes from my school's April 4, 2018, board meeting reflect the first instance of discussion regarding the requirements of SB 7026. As principal, I reported the little I knew at the time regarding the ramifications of the bill and my assumptions about any impact on our annual budget. The minutes reflect a discussion regarding polling school staff to determine if anyone would be interested in carrying a weapon. No decision was made or voted upon by the board at the time, and it was stated in the minutes that they would wait until more information was available to create a more informed decision. On May 3, 2018, an email memo was released from the Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools which stated:

> The Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools fully realizes that our members are concerned with the safety of their students and staff, and with meeting all the requirements of SB7026. However, much of the onus for developing school safety-related Target Assistance Papers (TAPs), security tools, and various training programs are the responsibility of the Florida Department of Education. The Department is working on meeting all its SB7026 mandates, but until it publishes their work, nothing concrete will be known about what the requirements for charter schools might be. Anything else, at this point, would only be conjecture. (Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools, personal communication, May 3, 2018).

The email continued, stating, "As soon as **reliable** information concerning the various mandates of SB7026 and how and what will require school districts and/or charter schools to do, FCPCS will pass that information along to its members." The emphasis and underlining were in the

original email. (Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools, personal communication, May 3, 2018).

Emails from the State Department of Education began to roll out with information regarding the implementation and impact of the initiatives of SB 7026. Information regarding FSSAT (Florida Safe Schools Assessment Tool) was received before the end of the school year. FSSAT was a school security risk assessment survey. Once all schools in the state had completed their survey, each district's school safety specialist would provide recommendations to the school, identifying strategies and activities the school should implement to improve school safety and security. Extensive training was provided through the district on the use and completion of the assessment.

An emergency meeting of our school board was held on May 16, 2018, to discuss and vote on the mandated School Safety plan and the hiring of 1) a school resource officer, 2) a school safety guard, or 3) a school guardian (armed school employee participating in the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program.) Our authorizing county (LEA) had chosen to meet the requirements of the law by hiring school safety guards. As a county, they would not have any employees participating in the Guardian Program. In this instance, as stated in the law, a charter school could meet the bill's requirements with one of the three options and did not have to follow the lead of their authorizing county. The monetary impact of each option was presented to the board. Our chief financial officer (CFO) acknowledged that hiring a school safety guard would impact the school's annual budget, leaving us with little surplus. This also would take into consideration the hiring of an additional mental health counselor. The board voted unanimously to follow the school district's lead and hire a school safety guard. The search for a qualified candidate would begin immediately.

Our school safety guard was to be hired, trained, and in place on the first day of the 2018-2019 school year. We were lucky we could quickly hire a former parent who was also a retired law enforcement officer, and he completed the required training in June 2018. Further discussion regarding the school safety officer was noted in the charter school board meeting minutes on July 24, 2018. Our CFO shared that the school had received an increase in our capital outlay allocation of $17,000 from the state to cover the mandated safety mandates, however, the actual costs would be much higher.

Local school districts increased safety initiatives after the 1999 school shooting at Columbine High School and the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary. Before Parkland, the school was already conducting active shooter drills. What was previously called a lockdown drill, or an active shooter drill was changed to an active-threat drill in the 2017-2018 school year. SB 7026 would now require schools to have their students either barricade themselves in the classroom or evacuate from the classroom (depending on the location of the perceived threat) in the event of an active shooter on campus.

My administrative team, in addition to planning for the 2018 school year, also considered ways to improve the mental health initiatives in our school as mandated by SB 7026. At the forefront of our thoughts were the comments made by the local Sheriff, who had monitored the school's first active shooter drill on site one year before. He bluntly stated, "*Your biggest threat is not from the outside but from within your own school population.*" The Sheriff's statement implied that due to the identified disabilities of our students in the areas of social/emotional functioning, they may be more prone to acts of violence. His words rang true considering the shooter's background in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting. My

administrative team met to consider innovative options that would meet the mandates of SB 7026 and address the Sheriff's statement.

As a school, we have already employed one full-time mental health counselor to address the many emotional needs of our population of exceptional education students. We additionally utilized Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to promote appropriate behaviors. Our students received daily lessons in Social Emotional Learning (SEL). After evaluating our school budget for the year, we hired an additional school mental health counselor to provide more comprehensive support for our students. Additionally, my assistant principal mentioned that the prior county in which she had been employed had adopted Restorative Practices district-wide as it offered "a continuum of services to promote a safe and inclusive environment" for their students (*Loudoun County Public Schools-Department of Student Services*, 2022). One vital mitigating factor for adopting Restorative Practices for the whole school was that we had one staff member who was using the practice daily and was one of our most highly effective teachers in academics and behavior. This teacher came to us from the juvenile justice system and had used the practice successfully in that setting. We acknowledged that this teacher's classroom and behavior management were stellar. We had all observed him implementing the approach during classroom walk-throughs and observations. If this teacher ever called for the behavior specialist or an administrator, we knew to come running because they rarely called for support. After briefly researching Restorative Practices, we adopted it for the upcoming school year.

Narrative 2

Narrative 2 outlines the steps takin in adopting, implementing, and supporting the practice at my school. A description of the professional development offered, and post-training surveys are referenced. The open-ended comments from surveys were thematically coded.

Examples of staff and parent communications are referenced to support my attempts to bring awareness and support for Restorative Practices throughout its adoption. Narrative 2 also addresses the challenge of adopting a heavily language-based practice with a population of students with language disabilities and autism.

Adoption of Restorative Practices

To bring Restorative Practices to our school for the 2018-2019 school year, I began to educate myself in a practice I knew nothing about. I purchased *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* (Zehr, 2015), which provided an aerial view of the practice; however, I needed more information regarding implementation and practice in the school setting. As I researched the practice, I soon discovered it was very verbal/language-based. I was concerned about how it could be used with my school of students with disabilities who had both language and cognitive impairments. I wanted to know if and how the practice could be adapted for our students. I found Burnett and Thorsborne's (2015) book, *Restorative Practices and Special Needs,* which focused on the adaptations and accommodations necessary to the practice to be used with students with disabilities. I was also looking for a trainer to train myself and my staff in the practice during teacher preplanning at the beginning of the school year. I discovered that my home county did not offer professional development in the practice. I learned that a sister county had fully trained all staff in Restorative Practices, and it was being implemented in all schools; however, I could not locate a trainer from that county to train my team.

In my research, I discovered the River Phoenix Center for Peacebuilding in Gainesville, Florida. The mission of the center is to promote the skills of peacebuilding and Restorative Justice around the world. I found the name of the center's director and contacted her through her LinkedIn page, asking if she could recommend an affordable trainer for our staff (emphasis on

affordable as our school's funds for professional development were low.) I soon heard back from the Director of Training and Program Development at the Center, and we set up a call to discuss scheduling the professional development workshop. I emphasized the need for activities specific to using the practice with students with disabilities. The trainer was excited about working with my staff and shared her presentation materials with me beforehand so I could make suggestions that might be more relevant to our student population. Using information from Burnett and Thorsborne's (2015) book, I created an infographic as a reference for teachers in accommodating the practice for our students. The infographic provided suggestions for adapting the practice for our students and could be used as a quick reference during classes. A brief description of Restorative Practices and our intent to begin using the practice in the 2018-2019 school year was presented to our charter school board on July 24, 2018. Adopting the practice did not have to be voted on by the board because it was a school-based decision; however, I felt it was best that our board knew of any new initiatives at the school.

Time and money were critical factors in scheduling the presentation, as we had little of either. Time is always at a premium during preplanning at the beginning of the school year. Teachers are anxious to spend time preparing their rooms and lack the patience for activities that take them away from the classroom. Ideally, a day-long training would have been best, but a half-day training was agreed upon. To ensure my staff would be as receptive as possible to the training, I approached our parent-teacher organization about sponsoring the event at a local hotel and providing breakfast and lunch as a beginning of the year "Welcome Back," and they happily agreed. My first mistake in preparation for this day was believing eggs, sausage, bagels, and a taco bar would stave off any faculty negativity or acceptance of Restorative Practices. It would most certainly not be my last mistake.

The objectives of the training were:

1) Embed restorative practices in schools.
    a. Understand the difference between restorative and punitive.
    b. Understand why restorative practices are effective.
    c. Learn the five main restorative practices.
    d. Practice the five main restorative practices.
    e. Apply restorative practices in our school.

The half-day training presented information regarding the basics of Restorative Practices, and the trainer was energetic and enthusiastic in her presentation. The day after the training, the trainer sent an email containing the survey results she had distributed to my staff at the end of the workshop (Restorative Practices Trainer KF, personal communication, August 9, 2018). The results (see Table 6) were positive, with 92% of participants stating they agreed or strongly agreed they understood the difference between Restorative Practices and punitive disciplinary approaches after the training. Eighty-two percent agreed or strongly agreed and said they understood why Restorative Practices was effective. Eighty-three percent agreed or strongly agreed that they understood the five main Restorative Practices after the training. The results also suggested that more time could have been allocated to the initial training and that more training would be needed for staff to feel more comfortable using the practice.

Table 6:

Restorative Practices Post-Training Survey

1. After completing the training, I:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A. Understand the difference between Restorative Practices and punative approaches to discipline	0	0	7%	22%	70%
B. Understand why Restorative Practices are effective	0	0	15%	24%	61%
C. Understand the 5 main Restorative Practices	0	0	17%	26%	57%
2. The training provided me with the knowledge/skills relevant to my profession	0	4%	15%	20%	61%
3. The environment was conducive to learning	2%	2%	13%	24%	59%
4. The trainers were clear and articulate	0	2%	7%	13%	78%
5. There was ample time for practice	4%	7%	33%	22%	33%
6. The trainers used effective teaching methods	2%	4%	15%	33%	46%
7. The material was presented in an understandable manner	0	0	15%	22%	63%
8. The trainers used time wisely	0	6%	6%	26%	63%

The open-ended staff comments revealed the themes in Table 7 (see page 75). Taking these comments into consideration, our administrative team made the decision to hold mini workshops to reinforce the key components of the practice throughout the school year.

Acknowledging the importance of building trust in the Restorative Practices initiative with community stakeholders, I included the adoption of Restorative Practices in my principal's message for our website. I welcomed back families for the new school year and featured the news of not only the hiring of the school safety guard (a new mandate under the Marjory Stoneman Douglas School Safety Act) but also the adoption of Restorative Practices:

As always, the safety of our students and staff is our number one concern. We have added a School Safety Guard who will be patrolling the campus daily to better protect our students. In addition to our Positive Behavioral Support System, we are adding Restorative Practices as a way to support the positive behavior and overall mental health of our students. We will have more information to follow throughout the year on this initiative. Look for a Parent Information

Table 7:

Coded Open Response Comments Regarding Initial Restorative Practice Training

Magnitude Coding	Example Comments
Positive	• Excellent all around, especially within our population. Looking forward to implementing it in the future. • Awesome! • Daily circles can make a big difference. • This will help me hone my skills and perfect these skills. • I am excited about the entire school using the same practice.
Inquiry Focused	• Want research backing. • …looking for research regarding effect. • Questions remained for application. • This is a way for me to hopefully start building a community with my students to negate behaviors.
Neutral	• There is an alternative way of dealing with behaviors and negative situations that arise in the classroom. • We must seek to understand other feelings before we can try to help them.
Unrelated to RP Content	• Long lecture/lacked movement/more interaction needed/more media. • Want more activities/movement. • More interactive. • Reduce or eliminate "put the nay sayers away." It made me far more skeptical like in-depth questions and criticism are not welcome (which implies lack of defense/apologetics for the RP.) • Please do not wear a watch with a dangle chain. Could be found distracting. • More practice time. • Spending more time focused on how this can be specifically used with our population. It made sense for most schools but maybe not so much with special needs students. • Tailoring to school with special needs and more breaks and movement activities • Explain different approaches to use this for people with different abilities. • Incorporate videos with samples of strategies in action. • More chances to bridge RP with academics. • I think it would be nice to do a whole training in our setting. • Less time spent on language. • Would like more pragmatic examples. • Would like more time to do role playing. • Simplify things. • Model the circles.

Night on the topic of behavior at the beginning of the school year. We will also now have two on-site Mental Health Counselors to better meet the needs of our students.

Understanding that parent "buy-in" (stakeholder buy-in, in general) would be a component in the success of the practice, my beginning of the school year/welcome back newsletter also featured a section on Restorative Practices:

> *This year, it is our aim to build stronger relationships with our students. To help us achieve our goal, we are introducing Restorative Practices. Restorative Practices develop community and manage conflict and tensions by repairing harm and building relationships. For effective teaching and learning to take place, we believe good relationships need to be at the heart of everything that happens at (our school.) Restorative Practices allow the unacceptable behavior to be rejected while still acknowledging the worth of the offender. It separates the 'Deed from the Doer.' It is a process that puts repairing harm done to relationships and people over and above assigning blame and dispensing punishment. It shifts the emphasis from managing behavior to focusing on building, nurturing, and repairing relationships. We know that a whole school restorative approach can contribute to:*
>
> - *Happier and safer schools*
> - *Mutually respectful relationships*
> - *More effective teaching and learning*
> - *Reduced exclusions.*
> - *Raised attendance.*
> - *Addresses bullying behavior.*
> - *Raises morale and self-esteem.*

- *Helps promote a culture of inclusion and belonging.*
- *Increases emotional literacy.*

Please plan to attend our Behavior Workshop for Parents where we will explain more in-depth Restorative Practices as well as other aspects of improving behavior. Please mark your calendars for Wednesday, September 26th @ 6:00pm.

The benefits of Restorative Practices were intentionally bulleted in hopes that if parents read nothing else in the newsletter, the highlighted bullets might catch their attention. Despite offering refreshments and childcare for the Parent Behavior Workshop, we had one parent in attendance: the president of our Parent/Teacher Organization.

To further solidify our school-wide commitment to Restorative Practices, I added the following information to our staff manual in the Classroom Management section:

> Beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, staff will receive training on using Restorative Practices in the classroom setting. Restorative Practices are a continuum of resources to support social-emotional development and conflict resolution. Embedding Restorative Practices in schools has been shown to reduce serious infractions and improve school climate and academic achievement. Restorative Practices include enhancing self-awareness and self-regulation, developing empathy and healthy relationships, and learning how to recognize, constructively engage in, and effectively resolve conflict. Once the staff is trained, the expectation is that RP will be used as a strategy within the classroom setting.

In addition to the beginning of the year Restorative Practices workshop, a year-long, study on the book, *Better Than Carrots or Sticks: Restorative Practices for Positive Classroom Management* by Smith, Fisher, and Frey (2015) was initiated. This book was chosen because of

its focus on common sense classroom management rather than hardcore pedagogy as well as its brevity and ease of readability. In a personal email to Dr. Nancy Frey, I informed her I purchased 50 copies of the book because I "found it extremely readable, timely, pertinent, and though not specifically directed toward a special needs population, could easily be applied to our students" (C. Kellar, personal communication, July 18, 2018) and asked if book study questions were available for use. Dr. Frey responded with the link to the book study. I created an online professional development course for the book study, which went live on September 17, 2018, with an open-end date for completion. Although all instructional staff received a free copy of the book, participation in the book study was voluntary. Staff who fully completed the course received professional development in-service points that could be used toward recertifying their teaching certification. At the end of the school year, following the opportunity to access free, fully online, asynchronous, and accessible professional development, two of my 34 staff members opted to complete the 170-page book study activity and were awarded professional development points. Eight staff members accessed the course for a significant amount of time (up to 5 hours) but did not finish answering all the questions, while 15 staff members accessed the course for fewer than 30 minutes (some as little as 1 minute) and 9 staff members did not access the course at all.

I found this lack of staff interest extremely disheartening. First, the lack of interest from staff in availing themselves of a completely free, easy professional development activity offering in-service points that could be used toward their educator recertification was disappointing. Staff frequently complained of (and reflected on annual climate surveys) the lack of free professional development offerings, making their lack of interest puzzling. Second, and more personally discouraging considering the school's adoption of Restorative Practices, was the appearance that

a substantial portion of my staff was unwilling to take the time to learn more about the practice. I had now funded a pre-planning in-service training on the topic, provided a free book resource with associated professional development points, offered mini-workshops, as well as topical "how-to" videos on the topic, The staff's lackluster participation in the "Carrots and Sticks" book study should have led me to consider tabling the RP initiative, but I was seeing "circling" in the classroom, hearing the language of RP being used around the school, and generally sensing an improved school climate resulting from the practice. At this point, I had not analyzed any disciplinary data to support my feelings, but as principal, I could sense the change.

Making Connections

Becoming the resident "expert" at my school in Restorative Practices during our first year of implementation was a challenge and necessitated making connections within the RP community. I read on the topic and contacted the authors of the books I was reading. The kindness espoused in the practice was evidenced in the generosity of its proponents. I first contacted Margaret Thorsborne, co-author of *Restorative Practices and Special Needs* (Burnett & Thorsborne 2015) in July of 2018 and shared that I was using her book in our preplanning training as a source for accommodating the practice for special needs students. I asked if she knew of other sources that addressed accommodations for students with special needs other than those students identified as Emotional Behaviorally Disabled (EBD). She responded she knew of no other but provided me with the names of other members of the RP community who might have some ideas. She invited me to a 10-week online course centered around the book she and her co-author, Nick Burnett, were offering. Unfortunately, I declined because I felt navigating the 17-hour time difference between Florida and New Zealand would be a challenge. At her suggestion, I contacted Nancy Riestenberg, a Restorative Practices Specialist with the Minnesota

Education Department of Education, and author of *Circle in the Square: Building Community and Repairing Harm in School* (Riestenberg, 2012*),* and again asked for suggestions for implementing the practice with our population of students. Nancy responded quickly with an email and shared the following story about an autistic child participating in the circle:

> I recently heard a story of the use of a circle in the life of an autistic child. The elementary student was high functioning, but needed a laptop to do his work, as his eye-hand coordination was weak, and he had a hard time writing. He was teased by other students who also wanted to have a laptop. He talked with his mom, and they asked the teacher if he could explain who he was to the class. So he worked with his mom on a power point that explained autism and shared who he was as a person (he likes chocolate cake, video games, to not be touched, his sister and reptiles). He worked with the RP lead in the school to outline a discussion circle that he would keep with his class. There were 27 students in the class. After the presentations, he asked his classmates what they learned about autism. Then he asked them what they learned about him. The students were completely engaged the entire time and expressed a lot of empathy and understanding. Everyone spoke with each question. At the end of the circle, another boy asked if he could do a circle about ADHD!" (N. Riestenberg, personal communication, August 24, 2018)

I affiliated with the Florida Restorative Justice Association and communicated with their president regarding information on the use of the practice with students with disabilities. Additionally, I attended their annual conference, which put me in contact with other Florida-based practitioners and supporters of the practice.

One initiative that never came to fruition was my attempt to bring a presentation of the film, *Circles*, to our school and community. The film, directed by Cassidy Friedman, is about Eric Butler, a Hurricane Katina survivor and pioneer in the Restorative Justice movement in Oakland, California. Butler begins to question the practice after his son is arrested and beaten while in jail. The event would feature remarks by the director prior to the film, a screening of the film, and a panel discussion with local parents, educators, and restorative justice practitioners. The full cost for the event could have been up to $5,750 plus all travel, hotel, meals, and local transportation expenses. Our charter school contacts in Tallahassee met with the executive director of the Florida Film Commission about bringing the event to the area and obtaining the necessary funding. There was much back and forth with the director and available open times for screenings were at least a year away. Unfortunately, the initiative was quashed by the COVID-19 pandemic and never took place.

Implementation

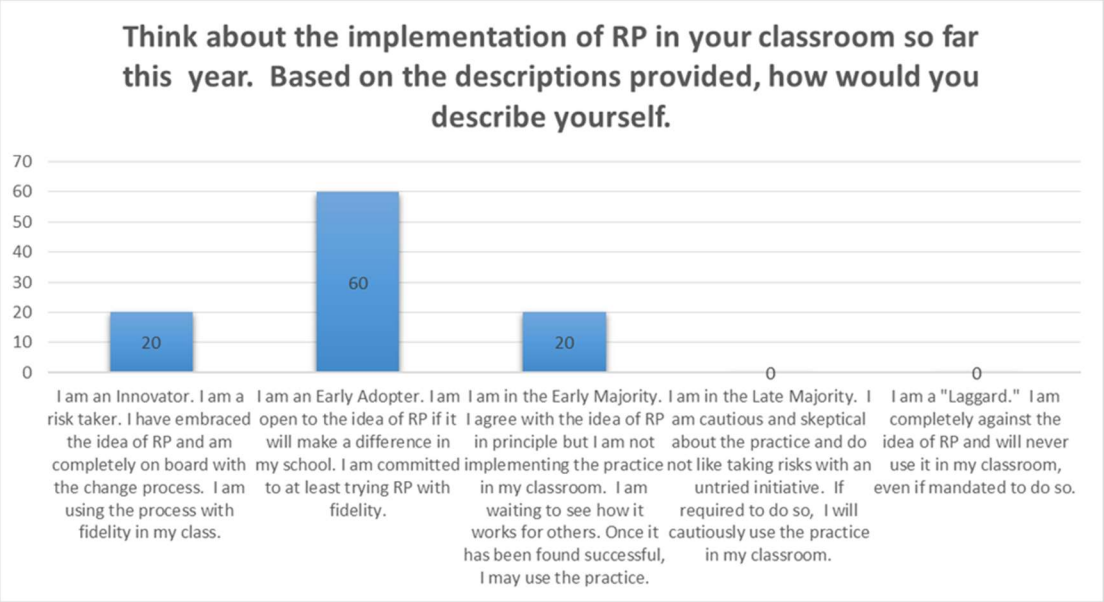
I began the school year with the impression that a foundation for the adoption of Restorative Practices had been established, and my staff and I put activities in place to reinforce the practice throughout the school year with all teachers and within all classrooms.

In September 2018, the six-member Building Leadership Team (BLT), comprised of key instructional and non-instructional personnel who functioned as the School Improvement Team for the school, advised that the members who were in attendance at the meeting felt "respect overall was a major issue here within the school environment" and expressed they wished to define what "respect means and how it looks here on campus" (Teacher MA, personal communication, September 24, 2018). The team put the topic on the agenda for discussion at the October 24, 2018, BLT meeting.

While the major focus of the adoption of Restorative Practices remained improving student behavior and social-emotional learning for special needs students, it became apparent that how a whole school embraces a new and/or innovative initiative also presented itself as an aspect to be considered. Peta Blood and Margaret Thorsborne's (2005) presentation at the International Institute of Restorative Practices on overcoming resistance as a whole school adopts the use of Restorative Practices provided critical information regarding the whole school uptake of RP. Using Everett Rogers' Diffusion Model of Innovation, which divides the system members of adoption of innovation into five subgroups: 1) innovators, 2) early adopters, 3) early majority, 4) late majority, and 5) laggards, (Rogers, 1995, p. 208), Blood and Thorsborne had used his descriptions of how groups embrace change in their presentation. This model provided me the opportunity to survey staff as to how they viewed themselves in their embrace of RP within their classrooms and the responses were interesting. Twenty percent of respondents to the survey categorized themselves as an "Innovator," embracing the idea of RP, completely on board with the change process, and using the process with fidelity in their class. Based upon formal classroom observations/informal classroom walkthroughs as well as the increased number of student disciplinary referrals in the first quarter of the 2018-2019 school year (23 in the 2017/2018 school year compared to 36 in the 2018-2019 school year) it would seem staff responses to the survey (see Table 9) were either inaccurate or overly optimistic. Based on those data, the 60% of respondents who felt they were an "Early Adopter," embracing the idea of RP and committed to at least trying RP with fidelity, seemed a more accurate representation of what was happening in the school.

Table 8:

Staff Self-Perception of their Use of Restorative Practices in the Classroom



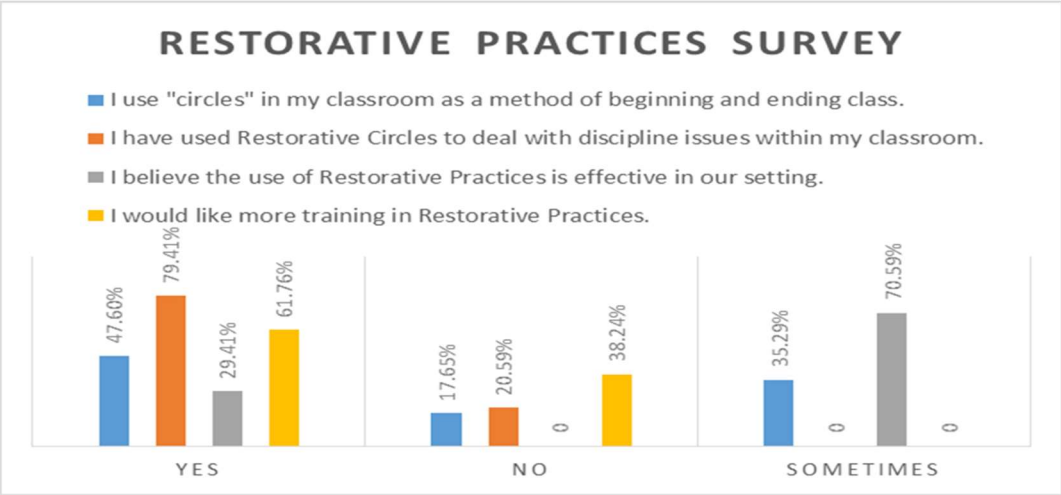
Twenty percent of respondents considered themselves in the "Early Majority," liking the idea of RP in principle, but were not implementing it in their classrooms until they saw that the practice was successful in the classrooms of others. Staff was also asked to respond to a survey specific:ally about key components of the program, such as the use of restorative circles within their classroom and whether they would like more training in RP (see Table 10).

After a November 2018 faculty meeting, a staff member inquired as to how our behavioral management framework, Positive Behavioral Intervention, and Supports (PBIS) worked with Restorative Practices. In an email, my assistant principal responded, "They run together...Carrots and Sticks is a way to build community and get to know how each student is feeling that day. It helps to prevent behavioral problems by looking at the student's baseline of how they are feeling today (is it a day to push the student, or a day to back off a little or do they need additional support) so teaching/learning can occur. (PBIS Incentive) is to reinforce daily classroom expectations (AKA following the classroom/school rules) so

teaching/learning can occur" (Assistant Principal KB, personal communication, November 13, 2018).

Table 9:

Restorative Practice Needs Survey



Supporting the Practice

I had read and thought I understood the research that acknowledged strong administrative support was required for Restorative Practices to be successful at a school. One monthly staff meeting was devoted to discipline and behavior so staff could work together on improving in this area. Teachers could also use this time as an opportunity to work on the *Better than Carrots and Sticks* book study. In addition to the book study, I sent out frequent emails featuring short videos on using Restorative Practices in the classroom (i.e.-classroom circles, dealing with disruptive behaviors with the circle) and articles regarding its use in other school settings. Improved student behavior was acknowledged whenever possible.

Narrative 3

This narrative recounts the general reception to the practice at the school in the first year of adoption. It additionally documents the accommodations some teachers used to effectively

adapt the practice for our students. The positive disciplinary data from the first year of implementation is presented as these data were used to support the continuation of Restorative Practices into the 2019-2020 school year.

Reception

Some teachers embraced the practice more heartily than others. The middle school team held large group circles with all students to address issues occurring across all classes. The school Behavioral Specialist used the practice extensively and documented the outcomes. The Restorative Circle was included in the referral to the Behavioral Specialist as an option for addressing classroom behaviors. This did not replace the school discipline referral but provided a disciplinary option that hoped to minimize the use of the exclusionary practices of out-of-school suspensions, which removed the students from valuable class instruction. Sometimes, parents did not receive this behavioral option well. In one communication, a parent complained to administration that her child had informed her that they had been subjected to a "restorative circle with another child or something of that nature" but had no other communication regarding the incident. The child was involved in a behavioral incident in the classroom, and the behavioral specialist addressed it with a restorative circle instead of a referral. The parent was understandably upset they were not made aware of the initial incident despite it being addressed. She requested she be informed of all incidents to address the behavior at home. Notifying parents of incidents became best practice even if the restorative circle was used to address the behavior. Students re-entering the school after a suspension would participate in a Restorative Circle as part of the re-entry process. An example of the language used in parent communication regarding student discipline was as follows:

> We have now completed a thorough investigation of the bullying incident alleged against (student name) and it has been determined that an incident of harassment met the criteria of the School District Policy Prohibiting Bullying and Harassment. This is a Student Code of Conduct Level III infraction with appropriate consequences. For (student name), the following actions are being taken so this type of incident does not happen again. (Student name) schedule will be changed, they will have an assigned seat during lunch, they will participate in social skills lessons, and participate in a restorative circle upon their return.

The administrators held "Restorative Lunches." In truth, the Restorative Lunch was a lunch detention in which a restorative circle was held. Teachers could ask for the administrators to hold a Restorative Lunch with their students. One teacher asked the administrator to address "defiance, verbal attacks, incomplete work, and excessive cologne use" with a student during a Restorative Lunch. During Restorative Lunches I held as administrator, I tried to address the issues restoratively and not punitively even though having lunch with the principal could be considered punitive in and of itself.

Administrators involved themselves in Restorative Circles whenever possible. One Restorative Circle in which I was involved glaringly highlighted the power differential and imbalance in the circle by a student with superior verbal abilities. The incident demonstrated how the practice could be challenging for a student whose major area of disability is expressive language. This had been one of my initial concerns regarding adopting the practice. The incident involved a high school student with dyslexia and high-functioning language and a high school student with language impairments and learning disabilities. The student with language impairments ex-girlfriend was now dating the student with dyslexia. (For clarification, the couple

had broken up before the student with dyslexia had started dating the girlfriend.) The student with language impairments perceived his ex-girlfriend and her new boyfriend were "talking smack" about him. Unfortunately, in a small school, there are few opportunities to separate students; therefore, this situation impacted both students' behavior (as well as the girlfriend's) in their shared classes. This led to the student with language impairments laying hands on the other student (not to the point of fighting but on the cusp of a brawl) out of frustration.

As the saying goes, "People who cannot communicate think everything is an argument," which was the case in this situation. The Behavior Specialist, the two students, and I engaged in a Restorative Circle to try and resolve the conflict. The student with dyslexia had no difficulty expressing himself verbally and spoke quickly and verbosely. The student with the language impairment could barely form a response to any comment before the student with dyslexia had moved on to something else, leaving the other student to grow angrier and angrier with each interaction. In the circle, the student with language impairments became frustrated to the point of tears. The talking piece became essential in this circle because the student with dyslexia could not/would not stop talking. The rules of the circle and the talking piece had to be reiterated after almost every interaction. Eventually, the student with dyslexia allowed the student with language impairment to speak and express his frustration. Once the student with dyslexia got past the point that the two had almost fought and stated he and his girlfriend were not talking about the other student, the two were able to shake hands and move on.

My initial concern regarding the adaptability of the heavily language-based practice for students with disabilities was validated; however, some of my staff proved to be very adept at adapting the practice. Applying many of the same accommodations to the curriculum used daily in the classroom, such as scripting, repetition, and visuals, staff were effectively able to adapt the

practice for our students. The vocabulary of Restorative Practices was specifically taught and frequently repeated. Teachers relied heavily on visuals (see Figures 7 and 8) to help students express themselves during Restorative Circles. They also frequently referred to the accommodation infographic formulated using Burnett and Thorsborne's (2015) suggestions for accommodating the practice for students with disabilities.

Figure 8:

Visual Accommodations for Daily Circles-Elementary

Figure 9:

Visual Accommodations for Daily Circles-Secondary

Staff frequently reached out to me with positive comments; “Had a spur-of-the-moment circle with O and J today after a conflict. It seemed to be beneficial” (Teacher SW, personal communication, December 5, 2018.) Several emails from the time reflected positive comments and positive results regarding using the practice.

Not all staff fully embraced Restorative Practices, and some expressed their reservations. I received several emails at the time indicating that some staff felt the circles were unsuccessful with their students. One staff member asked for the administration and the Behavioral Specialist to come down during their class because the circle they had conducted had not been successful. “We essentially had one big circle today, but we can’t call it that because (the students) are very against the ‘circle.’ Tensions were high…feelings were expressed. I think it might be good for them to air things out” with administration present” (Teacher TA, personal communication, December 5, 2018).

Several teachers expressed confusion with the process. One email from a high school teacher expressed frustration with a student who walked through her classroom without permission and began speaking to her students. When the teacher corrected her, the student responded, “You’re not a part of this conversation.” The teacher emailed all administration and the high school team about the incident and asked how it could be addressed in a restorative way. Teachers who were on the email thread commented, though only one mentioned Restorative Practices. “Situations like this are confusing to me as well. It seems like a situation where we should be doing a restorative circle first. Yet, she is not your student, so it is hard to find a time to have that happen, and which staff should be included at that point” (Teacher KE, personal communication, September 19, 2019). My assistant principal responded, “Two things need to happen. Please call home and talk to the father (although he has told me she is 18 and

can do what she wants), so we may not get any support there. Please write a referral. It is not OK for her to talk to anyone that way, EVER. (The Behavior Specialist) and I will decide if she needs a restorative circle or something different. She is a senior.... if she is going to act this way she may be excluded from senior activities as she is not a good role model or representation of the school" (Assistant Principal KB, personal communication, September 19, 2019).

Some behavioral situations caused concern for the classroom teacher such as the one referenced in the following email:

> "Thanks for the clarification on the circle. Again, things are cooled down—but things often feel cooled down after talking to the students in my 4th period, then fire up again soon afterward. I was hoping to have it (a circle) together because there were multiple issues over time, and I know there were some other teachers who were interested in joining this circle if needed…I still think it's a complicated situation that has been building over time—we might even benefit from including other students, such as (student names) since they are a part of this ongoing conflict (though I only see it in my 4th period and hear a LOT about it in other periods). I think it is critically important for the teachers to understand what's going on a little better so we can address students and prevent outbursts/issues as much as possible. Just to clarify, I've already talked to (student names) separately but the only story I got was that they were both innocent victims of the other. I've also spoken to the parents of both students about their behavior in class on at least two occasions each. I will happily have a circle with the two of them, but due to potential escalation issues, I was hoping to have you present as well as another teacher or two. I thought this might also help us get the full story out better. Regarding (student names) I have witnessed them giving trouble to other students in my class on

numerous occasions and starting trouble with specific students who are reactive. They are NOT the only ones, but they tend to be the most "proactive." I have repeatedly handled this in my classroom throughout the school year. Thank you again for all that you do. It's a lot to only deal with students when things go "wrong." I'll have to start messaging you with good news more often!" (Teacher JM, personal communication, March 8, 2019).

The classroom use of Restorative Practices (or lack thereof) was noted for some of the teachers on their beginning-of-the-year and end-of-the-year instructional personnel evaluations using the Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools (FCPCS) Classroom Teacher Evaluation tool. The FCPCS Classroom Teacher Evaluation system is a copyrighted evaluation system for teachers and school-based administrators aligned with the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPs) and complies with the statutory requirements of Florida Statute 1012.34, which stipulates at least a once-yearly performance evaluation for all instructional personnel. The evaluation tool is provided to schools that are members of the Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools.

Comments regarding the use of Restorative Practices or the Restorative Circle were sometimes noted in the domain area of Learning Environment which addresses classroom and behavior management. The element for this domain is: Manages individual and class behaviors effectively through a well-planned management system. Examples of comments in teacher evaluations who scored in the Highly Effective or Effective range in this domain were:

- *Class began with a restorative circle to build community and take the temperature of the room.*
- *Teacher uses restorative circles daily at the start of each classroom to rate their day.*

- *Science classes do weekly restorative circles because the students requested this. If there are issues, they talk about them immediately.*
- *Lesson started with a restorative circle by students rating their feelings for the day and discussing what was going on to make them feel that way.*
- *(Teacher) began the lesson in a circle where students talked about what it means to be a friend since she noticed some ongoing bickering between the students. The students told (the teacher) what they felt it meant to be a friend and then looked online for additional information. Students then used the talking tool to take turns saying which qualities they have that makes them a good friend.*
- *(Teacher) began the lesson in a restorative circle. Students rated their day by best day ever, great day, good day, so-so day, rough day, horrible day, or worst day ever and then stated something they want to do this summer.*
- *Teacher reports Restorative Practices are used as situations arise in the classroom. They are incorporated through social skills lessons as well.*
- *Class was well-behaved with a well-planned management system (Are you still "circling" your class for Restorative Practices?)*

The following comments were noted on teachers' evaluations who scored Needs Improvement or Developing in this domain.

- *Teacher has written 15 referrals this school year (6 to 1 student, 5 to another) and frequently calls for administration or behavior specialist to address behaviors. Teacher has been seen using the Restorative Circle however she would benefit from professional development in strategies to address students who may have behavioral issues in a restorative way.*

- *Please remember to start each lesson with a restorative circle.*
- *Do you use restorative circles?*
- *Classroom interactions are between teacher and student are respectful. Area of improvement is to increase the respect between the students. Consider Restorative Circle daily to begin class.*
- *How do you reward students for showing expectations? How can you build in restorative practices in your classroom?*
- *Don't forget to post/refer to classroom expectations and use restorative practice circles daily at the start of each class to rate their day.*

Post-observation conferences with teachers focused on all aspects of their observation, touching on each domain. While the use of Restorative Practices was noted both on the observation document as well as in conferences, the focus of post-observation critiques tended to center more on the Instructional Design and Lesson Planning, Instructional Delivery and Facilitation, and Assessment domains. If the teacher was known to have difficulty with classroom behavior management (evidenced by frequent calls to the behavior specialist and administration, numerous classroom referrals, and poor student behavior observed during classroom walk-throughs) then there was more discussion regarding the use of Restorative Practices as well as the other behavioral tools available for use at the school.

First-Year Implementation Results

After the first year of implementation of Restorative Practices, behavioral referrals decreased by 23% overall, from 165 discipline referrals in the 2017-2018 school year to 127 discipline referrals in the 2018-2019 school year. Behaviors characterized as "Disruptive" in the School Environmental Safety Incident Reporting (SESIR) database reduced dramatically by 68%

as did behaviors described as “Failure to comply with previously assigned intervention strategies,” which decreased by 63%. Incidents reported as “Fighting” decreased by 43%. “Failure to comply with classroom, and school rules” decreased by 24%. “Running, tripping, pushing, hitting or similar aggressive acts” decreased by 25%. Several areas that did not show improvement were “Disrespect toward student or staff” increased by 8% and 2 incidents of bullying were reported in the 2018-2019 school year whereas there had been no incidents of bullying reported in the 2017-2018 school year. One reason for this could have been the increased focus on the reporting of bullying and harassment that occurred in the 2018-2019 school year. In the 2018-2019 school year, the state of Florida initiated the Hope Scholarship which mandated the investigation of all incidents of “battery, harassment, hazing, bullying, kidnapping, simple battery, robbery, sexual offenses, sexual harassment, sexual assault, or sexual battery; threat or intimidation; or fighting at school” and if substantiated, students who are the victim of the offense must be offered the opportunity to transfer to an approved private school under the Hope Scholarship. All personnel were required to take a Bullying and Harassment Prevention course at the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year. Increased knowledge regarding what constitutes bullying and harassment as well as the mandatory reporting of bullying and harassment could explain this increase. Similar behaviors may have been reported in another category in the prior year.

One statistic showing improvement with the use of RP was the decrease in students who were involuntarily institutionalized by the local Sheriff’s Office under Florida’s Baker Act. No students had been involuntarily institutionalized in the 2018-2019 school year. In the prior school year (2017-2018), during the same time, the Sheriff of the county involuntarily institutionalized two students.

Narrative 4

Narrative 4 documents the continuation of Restorative Practices into the 2019-2020 school year. This narrative also recalls the negative comments made by a small group of staff at the beginning for the year preplanning in-service on Restorative Practices. The final narrative in this section is the most difficult to recall as it recounts the suicide of a student at the school, comments made regarding the effectiveness of Restorative Practices to improve student mental health, and the impact of the student death on the school community.

Continuation

Despite less-than-optimal staff participation in the *Better Than Carrots or Sticks* book study, administrative staff felt the positive disciplinary data from the first year of implementation of Restorative Practices warranted continuing it into the next school year. To ensure the practice would be used with fidelity, a professional development workshop was scheduled for preplanning of the 2018-2019 school year. Again, the River Phoenix Center for Peacebuilding was contacted to provide the workshop. The trainer who had worked with our school in the prior year was no longer with the center, however, the Director of Programs conducted the training for our group. In a meeting with the Director before the training, I shared that although we had positive results as evidenced by the reduction in the number of referrals using the practice the prior year, I felt it was being used inconsistently and not with complete fidelity. Hearing this, the trainer chose to divide the staff into small focus group circles and she and her co-trainer would obtain the group's impression on various aspects of the practice. The trainers asked that the administration not be in the circles as they felt the staff would speak more freely. The results shared with the administration were very enlightening. Positive quotes shared:

- *Initially I thought circle was going to be a waste of time, but after seeing it put into practice, I really appreciate the benefit now.*
- *You learn a lot more about your students [that you would not have known] and they learn a lot about each other.*
- *It helps kids learn how to have a [meaningful] conversation.*
- *It allows us to show empathy and the students really responded to that empathy. It changed the whole dynamic.*
- *I was able to resolve a misunderstanding a student had through circle and after that, their whole attitude changed in my class. I no longer had any problems with that student the rest of the year.*

The trainer also shared quotes that revealed difficulties the staff was having with the practice or with buy-in.

- *Some kids will use the circle to escalate issues.*
- *Kids realize they can use the circle to waste time and not learn.*
- *There are certain repetitive behaviors that can't be solved in circles. When we ask for more discipline, we are "dinged" because we did not do a circle.*
- *Some classes are not appropriate for circle.*
- *This is stupid. Circle don't work here. We shouldn't have to do it.*
- *Kids start to push back, saying they already shared several times today.*
- *It is losing value because it is every period, every day.*

Most importantly, the trainer shared that there were several variations of the following feeling from my staff, "*I only share with a few people in my life. This is excruciating for me. I am not sharing here, and I am not putting my students through that."*

The trainer stated their overall impression was "that most staff see the value of Circles and are implementing the practice to varying degrees in their classrooms. There are several "Champions" who are using them with success. There are several individuals who started as skeptics and became proponents after experiencing it for themselves. Some are on the fence and utilizing the practice because it is expected. Many of those could use "fine-tuning" on how to use Circles more effectively." The trainer also said a group of my staff were "adamantly opposed" to the idea of Circles. The trainer stated,

> I wrongly assumed those who were not engaged were negative because they saw Circles as an additional burden. The most vocal individuals in their opposition shared that they are uncomfortable sitting in a Circle and sharing with others. They do not feel "safe" to share about themselves and are uncomfortable at the prospect of learning "too much" about their students. They may feel ill-equipped to handle what may be revealed in Circle. Additionally, one of them expressed concerns about exposing vulnerable students to ridicule or harm from others who would misuse what they have learned about others in Circle. It seems to me that compelling these individuals to conduct Circles would cause even more resentment and resistance, ultimately hurting the individuals, the program, and possibly the students. It is my opinion that these individuals would benefit from learning some SEL skills themselves, particularly trust building. However, they must be open to growth and learning. I'm not sure that is the case for some of the staff (Restorative Practices Trainer CG, personal communication, August 8, 2019).

This was not a surprise to me as some staff had shared their feelings and discomfort with the practice and Circles specifically, perhaps not quite as vehemently. I heard from some staff

members who were in the group with the more "impassioned" of my staff how negatively those staff members spoke about the practice. The trainer offered the following suggestions:

1. First, ask staff to self-identify as being one of the several categories:
    a. Restorative Practices are an invaluable tool for classroom management. I use them regularly and would encourage others to consider using them as well.
    b. I see value in using Restorative Practices and would like to learn more.
    c. There may be validity to Restorative Practices, and I am willing to learn more.
    d. I already know what I need to know about Restorative Practices and commit to using the resources and information I have.
    e. I am not interested in implementing Restorative Practices.
2. Identify Circle Champion Leaders (Group A) who are exemplary Restorative Practices users to be mentors and trainers for those who ask for more support.
3. Provide training opportunities for those requesting more information aka Circle Champions (A & B)
4. Pair Circle Champions Leaders with those willing to learn more in a mentoring relationship.
5. At the secondary level, rather than having Circles every day, every class, have Circles at the start of the day in homeroom and at the end of the day or just have a one-time a week check-in for every class-perhaps Mondays or Fridays. Those who are comfortable with Circles and choose to do them more often are welcome and highly encouraged to do so.
6. Have at least one Circle Champion on each team of teachers.

7. Train designated staff to facilitate formal disciplinary Restorative Circles. Create policy requiring teachers who write X # of referrals to participate in Restorative Circles along with the student and designated staff facilitator.
8. Consider creating a list of 'offense appropriate' consequences with staff that could be used to answer questions 3 & 4 of the Restorative Circle process.
9. Consider doing a project that would teach empathy and engage the entire school community…something like "Look for Good Project."
10. Offer incentives for teachers/classes that exemplify Restorative Practices…movies, pizza parties, field trips.
11. Celebrate successes! Ask staff to share success stories during faculty meetings (Restorative Practices Trainer CG, personal communication, August 8, 2019).

However, I can say upon first reading, I took the input quite negatively, and it immediately squelched any positivity I had felt regarding the improved disciplinary statistics. I was saddened there were staff that viewed the practice so negatively, and some saw no value in it. The trainer ended an email with a positive spin.

> Thank you again for inviting us to meet with your staff. It was enlightening and inspiring for [the trainers]. I was inspired by their passion, vision, and commitment. I commend you and all those who have dedicated themselves to educating our most vulnerable youth. I would love to support you and your efforts to create an environment where ALL can learn and thrive. (Restorative Practices Trainer CG, personal communication, August 8, 2019)

After receiving the email, I found I could only focus on the negativity of some of my staff and crafted my response to the trainer carefully:

> I am so sorry it has taken me so long to get back to you! The first week of school kicked my butt! Thank you so much for the insightful notes on the day. I am going to digest them and then get back to you as to how I think we would best be able to use our coaching time. Unfortunately, there was a huge article on the front page of *The Tampa Times* yesterday regarding Pinellas County's use of Restorative Practices and basically stating RP doesn't work, and admin is fudging disciplinary statistics to prove it does! That isn't happening here, but it doesn't help my case any! It's always something! (C. Kellar, personal communication, August 19, 2019).

The article mentioned, "Pinellas schools are disciplining far fewer students. Is that a good thing?" (Reeves, 2019) questioned the decrease in student referrals (48% fewer compared to 5 years before) since the school district had adopted Restorative Practices to address student behavior. The reporter claimed the decrease was not due to improved student behavior but due to no longer processing referrals that were being written. To address the article as well as the feedback provided by the RP trainer regarding the preplanning workshop, the article as well as the summary was sent out to all staff to consider for their monthly PLC/RP (Professional Learning Community/Restorative Practices) meeting. My assistant principal sent out the following email: "Please use the attached article and summary of feedback from our RP guest speaker to answer the questions that are also attached. Please let us know if you have any questions. We will be wandering around and joining different groups" (Assistant Principal KB, personal communication, August 27, 2019). The questions on the PLC/RP notes sheet asked:

1. Read and discuss the comments and feedback from our preplanning RP guest speaker. How can we use her suggestions to improve our RP practices?
2. Read the article criticizing RP. Answer the following questions:

a. Is RP working at (our school)? If so, what IS working?
b. What's NOT working?
c. Are our relationships with students increasing/strengthening?
d. What accommodations are we using to support the use of RP with our ESE population?

The two groups submitted their input sheets. As everything can be a teachable moment, even if you are the principal, I found out quickly I should not have sent out the RP trainer's feedback in its entirety. What I thought was an opportunity to be transparent in my thinking turned out to be a negative for some of my staff. One PLC/RP group found "the comments (by the trainer) to be offensive and not very 'restorative'." The staff in that group shared that the trainer's feedback gave some of them "a very unsettled feeling…even those who weren't in the RP resistant group." The other group did not comment on the trainer's feedback. Suggestions the groups had for improving our practice:

- We could ensure that we are using RP during our HR consistently.
- Create ownership of RP with students
- Staff needs to use more rigor in practice of RP.
- Scaffold and model how RP should look.
- Have staff work with (our Circle Champion) and observe his circles in his classroom, which is common practice.
- Put a slide or page explaining the circles for students to refer to.
- Use a consistent standardized scale (1-5, colors, 1-10).
- Ask students if they are interested in sharing when they state significant numbers.
- Add time restraints (longer than a minute; they can talk to us at another time).

In response to the question regarding whether RP was working at the school, the groups responded that it opens class easily, allows them to get to know the students and allows the students to get to know them, and stated that the practice works well as a check-in in smaller classes or if there is a set time limitation. When asked what is not working about RP at the school, the groups responded that the actual physical idea of the circle (the shape) does not work well with some of the students with social issues. The groups also commented that conducting the circles caused a time-management issue in larger classes. Both groups expressed that there were students who were resistant to the practice, and some used the practice to exacerbate conflicts. Some had reservations as to whether the practice was really working at solving disputes among students.

In response to the question regarding whether RP was increasing or strengthening relationships, the responses were varied. One group stated they felt most of their classes have shown an increase in social-emotional communication and many students were sharing more consistently and that some students with anxiety have become more comfortable in sharing. The other group stated they felt they have the same relationships they have always had with their students although they felt some students' relationships with each other were increasing and their knowledge of each other was increasing as well.

Regarding what accommodations were being used by the teachers to support the use of RP with our population of students, some shared they were not grouping their students in a physical circle because the students felt uncomfortable facing one another (which they said could be due to the limited space within the classrooms.) They shared they are using RP as a method for teaching their social-emotional lessons, verbal repetition, and reflective statements of rules and expectations, as well as using verbal repetition, and reiteration of concepts such as

communication, class expectations, needs, etc. Another shared that instead of having a verbal circle, they would do “What’s Good Wednesday” and have students share their thoughts on sticky notes that they stick to the cabinet in the classroom.

Taking the RP trainer's suggestions, the administrative team met to determine who, on our campus, used Restorative Practices consistently and with fidelity. Those personnel were chosen as “Circle Champions,” and I sent out the following email: “If you are receiving this email, you have evidenced yourself as a “Circle Champion” at our school. (You may not consider yourself as one, but you are!) You have presented yourself as generally comfortable with the Circle process, use the Circle with some regularity, and have used Circles to handle behavioral issues within your class. You may not use Circle every day, and you feel you are still learning the process but are not opposed to it, and that is OK!

- Would you consider being a “Circle Champion” leader for others in our school who may not be as proficient in the process or in fact, may be adamantly opposed to it?
- Would you consider additional training in the practice so you can take a deeper dive into the facilitation of Restorative Practices and the Circle, especially for disciplinary applications?
- Would you be willing to work on incentive ideas for those teachers/classes who exemplify Restorative Practices at our school?
- Would you be willing to work with other Champions to create a list of ‘offenses’ that are appropriate for Circle as a disciplinary consequence/action?
- Would you be willing to come up with ways to identify and celebrate Circle success stories that we can share with our less receptive members of the staff?

If you have answered “yes” to these questions, you are a Circle Champion! Let us know if you would be willing to take on the challenge (C. Kellar, personal communication, November 28, 2019).

Every staff member who received a blind copy of this email responded positively and said they would act as “Circle Champions” for the school. The “Circle Champions” made themselves available to those staff members uncomfortable with the practice.

Another change to RP that occurred in the 2019-2020 school year was to no longer make the use of Restorative Practices mandatory due to the negativity expressed by a small faction of the staff. I asked that all try to use it to their comfort level therefore those that felt so adamantly against the practice would not feel they were being penalized for not using it. In truth, no staff member ever received lowered observational scores due to not using RP. Any decrease in the teacher’s score in that area of the observation tool was due to a lack of any evidence of classroom management and control. There were staff members who had excellent classroom management and were not using RP and received highly effective scores in this area, but it was felt that due to the comments made to the trainer, there were staff who believed their lowered scores were due to not using the practice.

The book chosen for the year’s book study was *Hacking School Discipline: 9 Ways to Create a Culture of Empathy and Responsibility Using Restorative Justice* by Maynard and Weinstein (2019). This was another very readable, entertaining book that provided easy-to-use strategies and ideas for implementing the practice. Because the staff’s participation in the professional development component of the previous year’s book study had been so poor, the free book was merely presented as a supplemental resource with no expectation for it to be read if they did not wish to do so.

As administration, we also acknowledged staff who were championing the practice with the monthly "Golden Apple Award." One such award notification read, "(Staff member) has gone above and beyond in supporting our students' behavioral needs. He has stepped into the position and really runs with it to ensure our students have positive rewards and interactions. He is a champion of the restorative circle" (Assistant Principal KB, personal communication, December 3, 2019). Every opportunity was taken to provide positive reinforcement to staff when the practice was being used.

Expert in the Field?

Despite the improved disciplinary statistics at the school, which my administrative team felt provided sufficient rationale for the continuation of the practice for a second school year, the resistance of some staff to the practice kept me from characterizing the adoption of Restorative Practices at my school as a success. I, for some unexplainable reason, wanted 100% acceptance of the practice. Despite rationally knowing that in my 30 years in education, I could think of no instance when the adoption of anything at any school had been fully accepted by all staff unequivocally. This applied to absolutely everything…the hiring of a new administrator, the adoption of a new curriculum, the changing out of the sodas in the vending machine from Pepsi to Coca-Cola, the removal of croutons from the salad bar. There were always strong proponents and vehement dissenters no matter what the decision or initiative. I wished I had viewed the resistance of some staff regarding the use of the practice with more clarity and less frustration at the time.

I had enough confidence in the success of the practice at my school and the disciplinary data support from year one to think of myself as an "expert in the field." I submitted several conference presentation proposals on "Implementing Restorative Practices with a Special Needs

Population of Students." I felt what I lacked in longitudinal experience with the practice, I would make up for in enthusiasm that I felt would engage attendees. I was accepted to speak at the Florida Council of Exceptional Children in Dayton Beach in October 2019 and the National Educators for Restorative Practices, held in Irving, Texas in November 2019. To my surprise, both sessions at both conferences were well-attended. FCEC did not offer an evaluation after the presentation, so the only measure of success with which I could judge my presentation was the number of attendees who requested the PowerPoint I had provided. The NEDRP conference did offer an evaluation of the speakers. Although there were approximately 25 attendees at my presentation, only 13 completed the evaluation, and I scored an average of 4.0 out of 5.0. for the overall presentation and the same overall as the presenter, which I thought was good, considering I was nauseatingly nervous! Most of the comments were positive except for one stating the presentation was "a bit insensitive about disabilities." As I am prone to do, I obsessed over that one comment. How could this one person feel it was insensitive about disabilities when the entire presentation was focused on how to appropriately accommodate the practice for students with disabilities?

One of the principals from our other campus attended the FCEC conference, and my Executive Director and another principal from another campus attended the NEDRP conference. It was heartening to me to have my school as an organization express such commitment to my efforts. The NEDRP conference not only provided me the opportunity to share what we were doing at our school, but it also allowed me to network with others who were also utilizing the practice. The breakout sessions were informative; the speakers were engaging, and I came away from the conference with renewed enthusiasm.

How Quickly Things Can Change

The improved outlook toward Restorative Practices was called into question on a morning in February 2020. The morning was a good one. The evening before, the entire school staff had celebrated the closing of the property for our new school location. After 6 years in our "temporary" location in a small strip mall, this was a real cause to party. Our school board brought in a food truck specializing in Mexican cuisine and sponsored "Unlimited Taco Tuesday" at our new site during the time of what would usually have been our weekly staff meeting. The mood was upbeat. The staff ate, drank, wandered the 14-acre property, toured the existing buildings, scoped out their spaces, and dreamed about the potential of the new facility. A photograph in front of the existing gym on the property commemorates the happiness of the staff and their excitement (as well as my own) over the potential of our new facility. Our board chair brought donuts for the entire staff on Wednesday morning which, in a school setting, is always welcome and further buoyed the morale of the staff. It was one of those days when many things were going on in the school. Several classes were scheduled to attend off-site field trips. As I worked on the class coverage schedule to accommodate the increased number of staff who would be off campus due to chaperoning field trips, my administrative assistant buzzed into my office and said the Sheriff was on the line. A call from the local Sheriff is not necessarily out of the norm or cause of alarm for a school principal. It could be regarding anything from an issue with morning or afternoon traffic, the incarceration of a student, a homeless family…anything. Therefore, I did not approach the phone call with trepidation nor anticipated the message to follow.

Sheriff: Mrs. Kellar?

Me: Yes?

Sheriff: How you doing?

Me: Great!

Sheriff: Good to hear but this call isn't going to make your day any better.

Me: Why?

Sheriff: Is _____ a student of yours?

Me: Yes. Why?

Sheriff: Last night, they killed themselves. Hung from a tree in their front yard. That information is confidential. Just between me and you. Letting you know so you can be prepared.

Be prepared? At the time, I had no idea what that meant. After almost 30 years in education, I had never dealt with the suicide of a student. I immediately gathered my administrative team, and we contacted our school district's Crisis Response Team, who, once engaged, provided step-by-step directives regarding how to proceed. While waiting for the team to arrive on-site, we proceeded to call every staff member into my office (in groups of 2 or 3) and informed them of the death. The reactions were as varied as the staff themselves. Some were stoic while others were inconsolable.

In the era of social media, it became immediately clear that many of our students were already aware of the student's death and those not aware, were quickly being made aware. There was much discussion and replay of a TikTok video the student had posted the night before that was being characterized as a "goodbye" video. After viewing, this was not immediately obvious to me. The video also called out certain students in my school by name. The information that had been deemed "confidential" by the Sheriff was being freely shared although not the only story floating around about the student's manner of death.

The sheriff who had spoken to me in the morning, stopped by later in the day to discuss allegations that had been made in the comments of the TikTok video. The student's high school-aged sibling had accessed their TikTok account and was commenting that the student had been bullied and was calling out specific students by name and accusing them.

"*Don't no one comment on (it) now that (they) gone u cowards*"

"*Yea for all the little shit heads that bullied (them) you assholes are going to hell…*"

"*Those people who bullied you know who you r and you will answer carma is a bitch an it always get back so watch out"*

"I think it was two girls, I'd love to have 5 mins with them."

"*Two words. They know*."

The Sheriff's office completed a full investigation of the charges of bullying, and they were proved to be unfounded. However, a few students were scarred by the accusations, and we were dealing with daily results in the classroom.

With only 140 students in our high school, the impact was felt deeply within our tight school community. Staff, especially those who were anti-RP, questioned the success of the practice in improving the mental health of our students. It was difficult for my staff to accept one of our own would take their own life despite our schoolwide commitment to mental health, social-emotional learning, and Restorative Practices. Restorative Practices is considered an essential element of the Zero Suicide Framework especially in its effectiveness at creating a culture of trust and accountability (Turner et al., 2020).

Despite the questioning by staff regarding the efficacy of the practice, they still used it as a method of helping groups of students and staff share their feelings regarding the student's death. I saw many instances of small group circles taking place. When the district Crisis

Intervention Team met with students at the school, they also met in a circle. That day, I received photos via text message, of the two groups of students who were off campus on field trips circling to discuss the tragedy. Two separate groups of students in opposite parts of the county were being guided through their grief by their teachers using the Restorative Circle.

The days that followed the student's death were the most challenging I had experienced as an administrator. Dealing with the emotionality of both students and staff was something for which I was not fully prepared. I relied heavily on my mental health counselors as well as the district's Crisis Intervention Team for support. The school's insurance carrier provided mental health counseling as well and staff members sought outside counseling if needed.

As February ended, the school began to heal.

Narrative 5

Narrative 5 recounts the beginning of Restorative Practices Interrupted at my school. I begin with the school shutdown on March 12, 2020, and continue until the end of the following school year in May 2021. I recount the post-school shutdown COVID-19 learning environment. This narrative includes the death of my father due to COVID-19 and its impact on my ability to support my staff and Restorative Practices during this time.

Restorative Practices Interrupted-March 12, 2020

Just as the ship of the school was beginning to right itself after the student's death, the incident that would fully shut down (both literally and figuratively) the use of Restorative Practices occurred at not only my school but the entire world. This was due to the complete shutdown of schools in March 2020 and the transition to an online distance learning platform due to the COVID-19 virus global pandemic. The shutdown upended our school's therapeutic teaching model. The instructional practices essential to this model had to be adapted to the

virtual learning environment. Both students and staff experienced the symptoms of social isolation caused by the shutdown. While the continuation of the use of Restorative Practices was still considered a component of the daily Social Emotional Learning (SEL) activities, the struggle of staff to make the move to a virtual educational platform (conceptually and literally) with little to no professional development to aid in the transition became the priority need. Relationships were not the same in the virtual environment and lack of physical contact eliminated many of the behavioral issues the school typically experienced on a day-to-day basis.

In August 2020, while our school returned to in-person learning, approximately 25% of students, due to parental choice, attended school virtually. The plan, pre-COVID-19, had been to take occupancy of our new facility at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. Unfortunately, COVID-19 work stoppages and supply chain issues caused significant delays to the construction. My already hesitant and cautious staff was disappointed to have to start school at our old campus in the strip mall in addition to everything else. Teaching schedules had a mix of both virtual and in-person classes. The preplanning agenda for the 2020-2021 school year featured the topics, "COVID-19 Training," presented by local hospital personnel, "COVID-19 in the School Setting," presented by the school nurse; mandatory Google Classroom training presented by our IT (Information Technology) department and "Professional Development-(Instructional Personnel only) Establishing Relationships, Routines, Roles, and Rigor at the Beginning of the School Year: Face to Face and Virtually" presented virtually through Learning Science group. These trainings were in addition to the nine online seminar training courses that staff were required to complete at the beginning of the year.

The original agenda also featured a one-and-a-half-hour "Restorative Practices-Update." I canceled that presentation through email with the following message, "I have canceled the

Restorative Practices presentation (I know you are disappointed.) It will be presented after the start of school. There is too much to discuss regarding the beginning of the school year." In addition to this comment, I included a meme featuring two dogs, a large dog, and a small dog, covered in mud. The larger dog had mud up to his "knees" (if dogs have knees) while the little dog was almost fully covered in mud. The text on the meme read, "How deep is the mud? Depends on who you ask. We all go through the same stuff differently." My language in this email was dismissive toward Restorative Practices.

My staff was overwhelmed and on looking at what could be cut from the agenda, I chose the Restorative Practices training, which could have been my first mistake in continuing the practice. More importantly, the Restorative Practice Update presentation never took place! I sent out emails reminding staff to use the practice.

> Attached are just a few short video reminders about using Restorative Practices daily. Starting each class with a (socially distanced) circle will help with some of the small disruptive behaviors we've been seeing from some of the students. I know that between all the cleaning and social distancing, we may have been neglecting to make the connections with our students like we should but making those connections (even in the virtual environment) is really what it is all about. So, CIRCLE up! (C. Kellar, personal communication, November 5, 2020).

The emotionality experienced during this time colored all aspects of the return to in-person learning. The fear and loss experienced by some of my staff was overwhelming. I was experiencing this as well.

My father had a stroke in July of 2018 that caused complete right-side paralysis. After rehabilitation, with little recovery and unable to care for himself, he had to be placed in a long-

term care facility. After an extensive search, I found a small home setting with only four other residents. The gentleman who owned the facility was extremely caring and my father was well cared for. The home gave the impression of a regular family home, not one of a sterile hospital environment, and I thought my father would be more comfortable in the setting. However, though tolerant of the setting, he was not happy. He kept telling me that he wanted to return to his apartment and live alone. There was no way to explain to him that he could not care for himself because he could not comprehend it. He still received his physical and occupational therapies within the home but made little progress.

We visited him regularly and tried to keep him engaged even though the stroke and the rapid onset of dementia made communication more difficult. As with everywhere else during that time, the home was shut down to visitors in March 2020. His therapists came less often, more due to his lack of desire to participate and his lack of progress than due to COVID-19. I frequently spoke to his caregiver, David, and would still visit at least once a week. David or another caregiver would wheel him to the kitchen door entering the garage and I would stand at the entrance to the garage and yell at him. I would wave and flail my arms, but he would rarely respond. Sometimes, if he were in his room, David would open his window, and I would talk to him through the window, again with little or no response. One day, after many such visits, I was standing at the entry to the garage when they wheeled him to the kitchen door. To my surprise, he yelled, “Hey, that’s my daughter!” I have no idea what was different about this visit, but I was happy he recognized me. During this time, the news was full of stories about the deaths of nursing home residents. The residents and staff of my father’s home were tested for COVID-19 weekly. David was so vigilant about visitors that it seemed as if the dire consequences of COVID-19 might have bypassed his little home.

In late September 2020, David called and said he thought my father had a urinary tract infection since, as happens with older adults, he lacked an appetite and seemed more confused than normal. He told me he was calling the doctor to examine him. After examination, the doctor found nothing specific except the effects of the stroke, dementia, and his diagnosed heart and liver conditions. He tested negative for COVID-19. Within the same week, Florida lifted the visitation ban for nursing homes and long-term care facilities. I would be able to see my father in person for the first time in six months. When we arrived for the visit, he was in bed and he recognized us, something I was concerned about, having gone six months without him having seen us face-to-face. I shared with him that we had celebrated my birthday the evening before. I asked him if he remembered my birthday and much to my surprise he said, "October 2nd" but he spoke little else. We sat with him for a while. The caregiver on duty at the time said he still was not eating. This was highly unusual for my father because, through everything, he never lost his appetite. On October 6, David called and said my father was taken by ambulance to the hospital with symptoms of COVID-19 as well as symptoms related to his other medical issues. I received word he had tested positive for COVID-19 and had been admitted to the COVID-19 unit. When I arrived at the hospital, I was told I could not enter. At this time, families were not even allowed in the lobby of the hospital. The receptionist's desk was positioned just outside the entrance. Within days, he was moved from the ICU to hospice care within the hospital. I met with the hospice representative outside the hospital on a bench to sign the necessary forms for my father to make the move to hospice care. She told me if he lived longer than a few days, he would be moved from the hospital to a hospice house, where he would be in their care until he died. I felt extremely vulnerable and exposed hearing this outside in view of the other families also waiting to receive news regarding their family members. Because he had a "Do Not Resuscitate" order,

there would be no invasive measures. The doctor I was communicating with told me he did not expect him to last the day. I asked if they could let me see him one last time. The doctor said they could let me in for a moment, but I would have to self-quarantine for 14 days. Since I was told he would be completely unaware of my presence, I chose not to isolate myself from the rest of my family when I most needed their support. I called his room and asked his nurse if I could speak to him. She said she would hold the phone to his ear. Though I was told he was not on a ventilator, I could hear machines in his room but had no idea what they were for. I said my goodbyes as best as I could and waited. He died the next day.

My mother, who had passed away 18 years before, had been an extremely organized person. She had taken care of planning and prepaying for all their burial expenses before she died. My father had always said he wanted no service or ceremony, and in COVID-19, there was no other way. My brother, my only sibling, was compromised by a smoke inhalation lung injury he incurred while on his job as a firefighter and he had been in isolation and extremely cautious during all of COVID-19 and avoided most public gatherings of more than one or two family members. To this day, three years later. I have yet to "celebrate" my father's life. I barely took off from work and did not take all my bereavement days; just one to go to the funeral home to sign all the papers.

It is difficult not to attribute some of my lack of support for the practice after the school shut-down due to COVID-19 to my emotional state, however, it does not explain it all.

Who Abandoned Whom?

Looking back, I ask myself, "Did the practice desert me, or did I desert the practice?" In addition to the COVID-19 shutdowns, the summer of 2020 was also impacted by civil and political unrest initially brought about by the death of George Floyd, a Black man, at the hands

of white police officers in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This incident as well as conflict from all sides of the political spectrum preceding the 2020 presidential election, precipitated further violence in communities across America. The efficacy of Restorative Practices had already been called into question in the media before these events (e.g., Reeves, 2019; Pollack, 2019; Sutton, 2020). The results of longitudinal trials in Maine and Pennsylvania had been published, and they did not show that Restorative Practices improved student connectedness or student behavior (Acosta, 2019; Gregory & Evans, 2020). The practice was openly disparaged in front of a national audience in a speech at the Republican National Convention by Andrew Pollack. Pollack, the father of Meadow Pollack, a student killed during the Marjory Stoneman Douglas shooting, called out Restorative Practices as a "policy which really just blames teachers for student's failures and it puts kids and teachers at risk and makes shootings more likely" (Pollack, 2020).

I reached out to my friends in the Restorative Practices community, asking if they were aware of any current articles or studies addressing the use of Restorative Practices in the current environment, either the environment of COVID-19 or the racially charged political environment. Nancy Riestenberg, Restorative Practices Specialist for the Minnesota Department of Education, responded: "At MDE, we have been encouraging people to talk about the events of the last few months. It is the first, best thing to do, I think, so we can help the students talk" (N. Riestenberg, personal communication, September 3, 2020). Margaret Thorsborne, the author of *Restorative Practice and Special Needs* (2015), who had been so helpful to me in the past when we had first adopted the practice at our school, responded with, "Trying times everywhere, sadly…like you, I haven't seen too much in terms of anything but comments" (M. Thorsborne, personal communication, September 3, 2020).

Construction on our new facility was completed in November 2020, and we moved our entire facility during the winter break. Teachers returned after the new year to a brand-new school! The students, teachers, staff, desks, chairs, curriculum, technology, etc., all made the move to the new campus. However, the move of Restorative Practices was not as definitive. While there was excitement for the new campus, staff had to adjust to a new physical environment and a new educational environment. We were still following the COVID-19 safety precautions of continuous cleaning and sanitizing, still dealing with COVID-19 quarantines, and still conducting a hybrid model of teaching (half on-site, half virtual).

Our commitment to Restorative Practices waned under the weight of COVID-19. Staff meeting agendas and emails from the time remind me that the practice was not completely abandoned. From January 2021 to May 2021, I sent out emails referencing absenteeism (both students and staff), masking, social distancing, COVID-19 cleaning, etc., but I sent only two emails referencing the use of Restorative Practices.

Narrative 6

Something changed in me with the move to our new campus. When I took the position of principal to open our school in an adjoining county, it was with the goal of obtaining a permanent "forever home" for our school. It had taken seven years, but I had accomplished that goal. As I sat in my new principal's office with a window and a bathroom, both of which I had negotiated hard for, I wondered what to do next. Although nearing retirement age and approaching my 33rd year in education, I was not ready to retire, but I was tired of the rigors of the principalship, made more onerous due to COVID-19. Ten-hour days, in addition to a two-hour daily commute, did not help that fatigue. Fortuitously, our school was considering hiring a grant writer/manager to handle the COVID-19-related grant funding becoming available for

schools, and the Executive Director approached me with the idea. This position would be eight hours a day and close to home. My administrative team was ready to handle the change at the top. I decided to leave my position as principal in June 2021.

In my new position, I visit my old school frequently. As the saying goes, "Old principals never die; they just lose their faculties." The principal in me cannot help but evaluate the tenor of the school. I use data to support my grant proposals; therefore, I am frequently calculating the disciplinary data of all our schools. Student behavior, post-COVID-19, has proven to be a challenge nationwide. The National Center for Education Statistics (2022) reported that 87% of public schools surveyed in the United States found the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted student behavior, manifesting in increased incidents of classroom disruptions, rowdiness outside the classroom, disrespect towards teachers and staff, and increase use of electronic devices. This could account for the 103% increase in reported disciplinary incidents from school year 2020-2021 to school year 2021-2022 at my school. While it is true that approximately 25% of our student population was still in virtual school in the 2020-2021 school year, the abandonment of Restorative Practices could also have something to do with the change. PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) is still being used at the school, augmented by new disciplinary practices, but none have the specific peacebuilding aspect of Restorative Practices. Sometimes, during my school visits, I will catch one of the teachers circling up a group of students and know some vestige of the practice remains. I received a message from the Behavioral Specialist commenting on an email he had received from a teacher relaying some "chats" she had with her students that had resulted in "peace" in her classroom. He commented to me, "Restorative Practices, and she doesn't even realize it!" (Behavioral Specialist DM,

personal communication, December 9, 2021). I hope that the teachers and students who learned the practice will have learned, as I did, how to live restoratively.

CHAPTER FIVE: REFLECTION

"We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience."

John Dewey

Time, distance, and a pandemic have allowed me the opportunity to reflect upon critical events that occurred and impacted the adoption and success of Restorative Practices at my school. When I decided on the research questions, I had neither the foresight nor omniscience to anticipate the resulting events or outcomes. I assumed and anticipated a linear path of adoption of the practice, where I would diligently collect and interpret data and report an outcome. I expected my staff would fully embrace Restorative Practices and use these with fidelity. My assumption was our students would love the adoption of the Circle and fully participate in the process, and their behavior and mental health would be vastly improved. What should have been a "reflection-in-action" has become a "reflection-on-action" with my reflections on the incidents shaping my narrative well after the events took place.

My research questions are:

Question 1 Based upon my personal narrative, what were the challenges experienced in implementing Restorative Practices at a school for students with disabilities?

Question 2 Based upon my personal narrative, what were the challenges experienced in attempting to continue the use of Restorative Practices at a school for students with disabilities during the school shutdown due to COVID-19 and the transition to virtual learning?

Question 3 Based upon my personal narrative, what were my perceptions about Restorative Practices as a strategy for addressing the health and well-being of students with disabilities in times of crisis, such as the school shutdown due to COVID-19?

Events are considered "critical" in narrative based upon their impact on the narrator. A critical event can change their understanding of a situation or a change in their worldview. An event is considered 'critical' depending on its impact and effect upon whoever experiences it. (Mertova & Webster, 2020, p.63). Utilizing the critical event framework for narrative inquiry research methodology (p.113), I reflected upon each research question and identified the critical events relative to the questions, but also which events were most personally critical to me. Recalling the description of the framework from Chapter 3, critical events are defined as 1) those that exist in a particular context or communities of practice, 2) those with an impact on the people involved, 3) those with life-changing consequences, 4) those that are unplanned, 5) those that may reveal patterns of well-defined stages, 6) those that can only be identified after the event, and 7) those that may be intensely personal with strong emotional involvement (p. 68-69).

In reporting critical events, the researcher applies a structure to events that can be chaotic and uncoordinated in the retelling. I endeavor to address the research questions with truthfulness and clarity. For a critical incident to create strong emotionality, it must be personal. Many of the challenges experienced in adopting Restorative Practices were not personal to anyone but myself. Upon reflection, I believe I was the only one at the school who felt a strong emotional involvement in and commitment to the practice.

Research Question 1

Based upon my personal narrative, what were the challenges experienced in implementing Restorative Practices at a school for students with disabilities?

In addressing the research questions, my response to Question 1 will address the challenges experienced in the implementation of Restorative Practices and will be framed as critical events. These critical events will be reported in the order in which they had the most personal impact. The death of a student by suicide was by far the greatest challenge I experienced at the school during this time or at any time in my extensive educational career, irrelative to the adoption of Restorative Practices. What made it challenging to the implementation of the practice was the questioning after the fact regarding its effectiveness in improving student mental health. The second critical event will address the challenges related specifically to the adoption of the practice at a school for students with disabilities and the third critical event, though not of negative impact, is a discussion regarding the positive results attained after year one of the adoption of Restorative Practices.

Critical Event 1: Life-Changing Impact of Suicide

Restorative Practices were adopted at my school with two main goals. The first was to improve student behavior and decrease the disproportionality experienced by students with disabilities through exclusionary disciplinary practices. Second was to improve student mental health. In reviewing my narratives in Chapter 4, the event that was most challenging during the adoption of the practice (before the shutdown of the school due to COVID-19) was the death of a student by suicide. The impact of the student suicide was emotionally devastating. The student was at school one day, and dead the next. Regretfully, my last interaction with the student was not a positive one. Several days before their death, they had left the lunchroom without permission and when they returned, they were without an excuse and unapologetic. Although I did not write a referral, I provided corrective feedback for their behavior. This is not a positive last memory.

The staff's reactions to the student's death were also a challenge. Their reactions foreshadowed the emotionality I would see during COVID-19. Some staff were stoic in their responses while others appeared heartbroken. I was extremely thankful for the immediate deployment of the district Crisis Intervention Team to the school following the student's death. The Crisis Intervention Team knew just what to do and guided me accordingly. The team had an answer for every question and a script for every response. The relationship between charter schools and their district LEA can sometimes be adversarial but I have nothing but the highest regard for this team of professionals.

The repercussions of the death reverberated through the school. Before the student's suicide, they had posted a TikTok video in which they accused classmates of bullying and called out students by name. The video was shared widely following the student's death. The parents of the students who were accused of bullying came to me in despair. I told them it was in the hands of the law enforcement as they were investigating the accusations. Even though I knew no bullying of the student had been reported at the school, I had no idea what might have occurred over text messages or social media. I anxiously awaited the report from the Sheriff. I was relieved several weeks later when it was determined that the reports were unfounded, but the damage had been done to the accused students. Unknowingly for them, the impending shutdown of the school due to COVID-19 would be fortuitous. It gave them time away from the other students and the lingering repercussions of the accusations.

Trying to hypothesize a connection to or application of fault toward Restorative Practices in the death of the student seemed inappropriate after the fact although connections were made at the time. I had a staff member openly question the use of Restorative Practices and felt it should be discontinued. They saw the student's suicide as proof of the practice's ineffectiveness in

improving student mental health, which had been one of the primary reasons for the adoption of the practice. They also cited the unfounded accusations of bullying toward the student as further proof. I listened and acknowledged the strong emotions of the staff member, and even briefly considered their request. However, what I observed after the student suicide was more students and staff clinging to the safety of the Circle and using it to express their feelings. Circling seemed to occur more organically, especially among our high school students, who were most impacted by the death of their classmate.

Critical Event 2: Building Momentum and Falling Flat

The decision to adopt Restorative Practices at a school for students with learning disabilities was precipitated by several critical events, primarily the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School by a student with identified disabilities in February 2018. Second, was the passing of Senate Bill 7026 also known as the Marjory Stoneman Douglas School Safety Act which mandated the hiring of a school safety guard, increased safety and security in schools, school-based threat assessment teams, crisis intervention training, and increased mental health counseling for students. While some mandates associated with the bill were clearly outlined as how they should be implemented, supporting students' mental health was more broadly defined. The Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework was already being used at the school. We determined additional support was needed to build a more positive school environment and foster more healthy relationships among our students and staff. After briefly researching the practice, the decision to adopt Restorative Practices was based upon my assistant principal's experience with the practice in her previous position in another state as well as the recent adoption of the practice in a neighboring county. The strongest argument for the adoption of the practice was the consideration of the one staff member who was already using the

practice daily and demonstrated highly effective skills both academically and behaviorally. Though we did not research the use of the practice specifically with students with disabilities, the fact this teacher on our campus had been successfully using it with our population of students for years, carried a significant amount of weight in the argument for the total adoption of the practice.

As an experienced principal (by this point, I had been a school administrator for 13 years), I understood my staff was most successful when working toward goal-focused initiatives. At the time, we had been singularly focused on the goal of attaining a new facility. For context, when my school was first chartered in a new county, the contract for the original location we were to occupy fell through. In desperation, we took over half of a Publix grocery store-anchored strip mall. Classrooms were situated in the empty storefronts; physical education classes were held in the parking lot; my principal's office and all the administrative offices were the size of a large walk-in closet. This less-than-ideal site was only to have been our location for three years, but as land and locations became increasingly scarce in the county and disproportionately expensive, three years stretched to four years, and four years stretched to five. Yet, I sold the goal of a new facility with such passion and enthusiasm, that my staff bought into the dream. With staff retention and attrition such a critical issue in education, I considered it a personal victory to maintain so many of my staff in this less-than-desirable setting. The challenge of getting my staff to buy into a new initiative with the same fervor they felt for the possibility of a new facility was going to be a test of my persuasive skills.

A challenge that quickly became apparent was that the extent of professional development we provided was not enough. A half-day workshop and a book study were not enough to warrant mandating the practice be used daily. Despite that, I did it anyway. The end-of-course survey data provided by the trainer after the Restorative Practice workshop revealed the

staff responded positively regarding their understanding of the practice; however, there was a significant number of staff who felt there had not been enough time provided for practice during the training. Adapting the practices for students with disabilities was minimally addressed in training, and graphic organizers posters with suggested accommodations for our students were provided for teachers, but once the practice began to be used, it became apparent the heavily language-based practice was challenging to our students with autism, language impairments, and low cognitive ability. These students struggled with expressing themselves in times of frustration. Their "go-to" phrase, due to the lack of ability to form an appropriate replacement, was often "I am going to kill you!" Our mental health counselors had to determine whether the student really did want to kill someone, or they just lacked the language to express their anger and frustration with a situation or interaction. It was then the task of our speech-language pathologists to help them find the appropriate replacement words to use during frustrating situations.

As stated, one of the strongest points supporting the adoption of the practice was that one of my most highly effective and well-respected teachers was already using the practice in their class daily. I often used this teacher as a bell weather of my successes or failures because they were always one to take the temperature of the school and respectfully let me know their thoughts. Though they had no aspirations for administration, staff saw this teacher as a quiet leader. This teacher was not one to boast about their classroom successes; however, they did speak up during the Restorative Practices professional development and their comments warranted other attendees to note in their end-of-course open-ended comments, that, they, too, wanted to do "(Teacher's name) circle." I felt their support in the initiative as a "Circle Champion" would go a long way in promoting and sustaining the practice at the school.

Those staff who fully bought into the practice became adept at modifying it to accommodate the needs of the students. Not surprisingly, teachers who were adept at modifying the practice for their students were the same ones who demonstrated proficiency at providing the necessary modifications and accommodations to the curriculum for their students with disabilities to be most successful.

Time proved to be a challenge to implementation. Presenting professional development on a new initiative in pre-planning and then mandating it be used beginning at the start of the school year had been a poor decision. Determining what amount of time between adoption and implementation would have been enough time was dependent on the individual teachers. There were staff members who were able to successfully pivot toward RP and seamlessly include it in their instructional practice without missing a beat while others never attempted to try it.

The lack of consensus among the staff for the adoption and full use of the practice proved challenging. Research supported that lack of staff buy-in was a major factor in the success or failure of the implementation of Restorative Practices (Webber et al, 2020, Costello et al, 2017, Gregory et al, 2013, Gonzalez, 2015, Blood & Thorsborne, 2005, Gregory & Evans, 2020). Classroom walkthroughs and observations, as well as disciplinary data and anecdotal extrapolation of events (number of behavioral referrals, number of calls for Behavioral Specialist support, frequent calls to administration for behavioral issues, parent complaints, student complaints, etc.), proved to be the best indicator of which teachers were using the practice and which were not. One could easily tell the classroom of a teacher who was fully using and accommodating the practice for the students. I could see the Circle was a routine part of the lesson as well as a part of their classroom management plan. The teacher maintained control of the circle and did not allow the students to veer off-topic and "highjack" the process. Visual

accommodations for the practice were posted (see Figures 7 and 8). Their students spoke the language of Restorative Practice in and out of the classroom.

Even those staff who utilized the practice with more fidelity in their classroom did not avail themselves of additional professional development provided to them mid-way through implementation in the form of a book study. Only two of 34 staff members completed the activity and were awarded professional development points that could be used toward their recertification. I interpreted the lack of participation in the activity as a lack of interest in the practice. However, in retrospect, I now view it more graciously and attribute it to the personal choice of the teachers in how best to use their time. The book was available to them as a resource and hopefully, it was referred to often.

A small group of teachers opposed the mandate of Restorative Practices and chose not to use it. I did not realize how vehemently they opposed the practice until the second year of its adoption when they heatedly expressed their displeasure at the pre-planning refresher workshop for Restorative Practices. These teachers expressed their objection to Restorative Practices with comments such as, *"This is stupid"* and *"I only share with a few people in my life. This is excruciating for me. I am not sharing here, and I am not putting my students through that.*" My preconceived notion regarding adopting the practice never considered the emotional impact it might have on my teachers. I had not considered the depth of the personal exposure my staff may have felt in revealing themselves to their students. In my research of the practice, I had not seen the issue of teacher opposition to the practice based on their anxiety with sharing their emotions. I erred in assuming all my teachers would be as open to the practice as I was. I did not recognize the internal emotional struggle they were experiencing.

In determining how critical events can have life-changing consequences, the tendency is to think in terms of life-or-death consequences, but in the critical events approach to narrative inquiry, "life-changing consequences" are interpreted as events having a profound effect on the people involved. It is difficult to gauge the criticality of events or the resulting challenges in comparison to the gravity of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas shooting; however, the critical events that followed, and the challenges experienced had life-changing consequences.

School safety will never be the same. With every subsequent school shooting, the structures and protections required at the school level have become more stringent, and the school year is now built around mandatory lockdowns, drills, and threat assessments. The passing of SB 7026, the Marjory Stoneman Douglas School Safety Act, impacted the day-to-day management of schools in Florida. For an independent, colloquially termed, "mom and pop" charter school (not run by a large management company), like my own, funding un-funded initiatives is always a challenge. Our budget was especially tight at the time because we were in the process of purchasing land and beginning construction at our new school site. While proportionate funding was allocated for the initiative at the state level, it was not enough to support all the requirements of the bill, such as the hiring and outfitting of the school safety guard and the hiring of an additional mental health counselor. I cannot discount the fact that the low cost associated with the adoption of Restorative Practices as another tool in improving student mental health was a consideration. Restorative Practices is not a boxed curriculum requiring expensive textbooks or materials, although the lack of an implementation manual has been cited as one of the limitations of the practice. The associated professional development provided was inexpensive, however, in retrospect, I believe my staff would have benefited from more professional development in the practice, specifically targeted at our population of students.

Critical Event 3: Positive Results and Rationale for Continuation

Critical events do not have to be negative for them to be considered critical. The positive trend in the disciplinary data evidenced after the first year of adoption was the best indicator for me in supporting the continuation of the practice. I believe the students at my school built stronger relationships with their teachers and peers through Restorative Practices in the years 2018-2019 and 2019 until the whole school shut down due to COVID-19. The teachers who fully embraced the practice during those years shifted their emphasis from managing behaviors to building, nurturing, and repairing relationships. The disciplinary data from the 2018-2019 school year revealed behavioral referrals decreased by 23% overall with referrals for disruptive incidents decreasing dramatically by 68%. Referrals for fighting decreased by 43% and referrals for failure to comply with classroom rules, and school rules decreased by 24%. These data suggest students spent more time in their classrooms and less time in the office of either an administrator or the Behavioral Specialist**.** The decision to continue the practice into the next school year was precipitated by these results.

Research Question 2

Based upon my personal narrative, what were the challenges experienced in attempting to continue the use of Restorative Practices at a school for students with disabilities during the school shutdown due to COVID-19 and the transition to virtual learning? In response to Question 2, the first critical event will address how the death of my father impacted my own ability to lead during this time of crisis. Critical events two and three will address the logistical and physical challenges involved in attempting to move Restorative Practices into the post-COVID-19 school shutdown.

Critical Event 1: Shared Grief in Times of Crisis

It is difficult for me to analyze the criticality of events during this time without viewing it from the perspective of someone who also lost a loved one. As the leader of the school, I became the sounding board for the emotionality experienced by my staff, my students, and the school community due to the consequences of the school shutdowns; however, I was experiencing my own emotional challenges due to the death of my father during COVID-19. The biggest challenge to continuing Restorative Practices was that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was truly life-changing. The educational and emotional impact of the school closures for students with disabilities has yet to be fully realized but I could see suffering happening in real time. A considerable number of students at my school were being raised by grandparents for a variety of reasons. (Father is dead. Mother in jail. Mother is dead. Father in jail.) Knowing the impact the virus had on the elderly, the fear of losing their sole caregivers caused debilitating anxiety in some of these students. Statistically, more than 200,000 children lost a parent or primary caregiver during COVID-19 (Abrams, 2023).

I fully acknowledge that my waning support for the continuation of Restorative Practices in the virtual setting may have resulted from the personal challenges I was experiencing due to my father's illness and subsequent death. As an administrator, I had long used one-on-one meetings, an idea I borrowed from corporate America, to build strong relationships with my staff. My one-on-one meetings with staff rarely addressed educational issues during this time as they were all experiencing personal crises in their own way. My experience was not unique. What once had been a time to discuss student progress, diffuse potential problems, provide motivational feedback, and plan personal goals, often became a therapy session. So much so that I sent a meme to a co-worker of my age range who remembered the original Star Trek series and the over-the-

top histrionics of Dr. McCoy, the starship's doctor. It said, "Dammit, Jane! I am a principal, not a miracle worker!" Trying to bring humor to tragedy was one way I dealt with my own grief as well as the stress of counseling my staff.

Parents and spouses lost their jobs. Statistics revealed that 114 million people lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic (World Economic Forum, 2021). Marriages and relationships failed. Our organization kept all employees on staff and paid during virtual learning, whether they were working or not. As a Title 1 school, with 69% of our families at or below the poverty level, they struggled through the pandemic in various ways. Some of our students' parents became unemployed. In coordination with our community partners, we participated in the Pack A Sack program, which provided families with bags of non-perishable food items every Friday afternoon to hold them over through the weekend. Students received free breakfast and lunch Monday through Friday.

These concerns surfaced in interactions with my staff. I had no answers to many of their questions or concerns, but I listened and tried to act restoratively while dealing with my own challenges.

Critical Event 2: Daunting Logistics

In the chronology of critical events, the onset and wide-ranging ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide must stand near the top of the list of challenges. The challenge presented in continuing the use of Restorative Practices before the flip to virtual learning during the time of COVID-19 and beyond seems inconsequential in terms of the greater impact of all other factors relative to that period, even viewed at the micro level of my school. This, however, makes it no less overwhelming.

Toward the end of February 2020, just as the school was recovering from the student's death, we began to receive news about the rapidly evolving coronavirus outbreak. The term COVID-19 had not yet become part of the universal lexicon. The superintendent of our sponsoring county sent a memo on March 12, 2020, just before our spring break, stating the plan was to return to in-person school on March 24, 2020. All staff would be participating in distance learning training on March 23, 2020, in preparation for the possibility of moving to distance learning after the break. My school had the same plan.

During spring break, the Florida Department of Education and the Governor of the State of Florida decided that all schools would move their classes online until April 15, 2020. My letter to parents stated the following:

> *What this fully means for a school such as (school name) is still in the process of development. One thing it does mean is that it will be a drastic departure from our current academic model that is so specifically tailored to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of our students. We completely understand the anxiety and stress this departure from the norm will cause our students. Therefore, as we roll out our online experiences, we must do so with a restraint that balances the need to maintain the academic gains they have made in our therapeutic environment with the challenges that may come from this new approach to learning. On Monday, the administrative teams of all (school name) campuses will meet to develop an encompassing plan for online/distance education. This will include information on how to meet all coursework expectations while fulfilling the expectations of the students' IEPs. This will allow a gradual transition into this new learning experience.*

The rest of the letter acknowledged the impact the pandemic might have on the families at a Title 1 school, and resources were listed for prepackaged meals and free Wi-Fi services in preparation for the move to online learning. A survey was also sent out to all parents assessing their technological needs in preparation for the distribution of laptop computers that would be necessary for the students to move into the virtual learning environment. The end of the letter still brings a tear to my eye, recounting it here:

> *This will be an ongoing process, an experience that has no precedence, but will forever define a piece of our history. Please be patient and continue your cooperation with our staff, other families, and, of course, our students, as we learn how to best meet their needs. Monitor your email and follow our Facebook page to see the updates and resources we distribute and share them out for others. For 20 years, (school name) has defined academic excellence for Exceptional Student Education. If anyone can meet the challenges of creating a new and unique online learning environment for these students, it is the (school name). We have much to look forward to once we get through this. The old buildings are coming down at our new facility, preparing the ground for the new ones to follow. Our students and families will soon have the state-of-the-art educational facility they so richly deserve. If anyone has demonstrated resilience and grit in tough situations, it's our students and families. As we teach our students, this is a glitch, not a catastrophe, although, at times, it may seem so. If we all exhibit composure and levelheadedness, we will make it through.*

We were committed to providing computers and wireless hotspot units to all students who did not have sufficient technology to move into the virtual environment. While our school currently has a one-to-one student-to-computer ratio, at the time, we did not have that capability,

and I worried about where we were going to get the funds to support the purchase of technology when our budget was already stretched so thin. This concern would later be allayed due to the extensive funding pushed into education through the Elementary and Secondary Student Relief (ESSER) and American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding. However, this was a genuine concern at the time.

We did not return to in-person learning on April 15, 2020. We worked through spring break on the school's eLearning Plan, which included the directive to teachers, "The daily schedule must allot time for SEL/Restorative Practices." While I had the forethought to include Restorative Practices in the plan for eLearning, I did little after the fact to support it. The laptop computers and wireless hotspot units were distributed to those students in need, and the rest of the school year was spent teaching from home. A "drive-thru" graduation ceremony was held for the Class of 2020.

Critical Event 3: Distantly Restorative

When the school returned to in-person learning in August 2020, the post-school shut-down environment of COVID-19 could not have been less restorative. We returned masked, socially distanced, partitioned, and sanitized. The temperature of all students was checked before they got out of their cars. The front hallways of the school were split with taped arrows to designate one-way traffic. Stickers on the floor designated the six-foot distance that should be kept between students. School dismissal was staggered to minimize the interaction between students. We purchased partitions for the desks of the teachers and specialists which, though unstated, encouraged them to remain at their desks, rather than move about their rooms, contrary to best practice for educators. I came in one morning to find one of my teachers had turned their classroom into a maze of partitions, made with plastic, see-through, shower curtains. They had

created a clear barricade completely around their desk, leaving only a small opening for them to enter. In addition to completely isolating themselves from the students, it violated the fire code. While I understood the fear precipitating this behavior, it created a less-than-restorative classroom teaching environment. Breakfast was eaten in the classrooms, students removing their masks only long enough to take a bite. During lunch, the capacity in the lunchroom was reduced by 50% and the tables were partitioned off in six-foot sections with blue painter's tape, socially distancing the students and discouraging communication and relationships as well. While we attempted to maintain as typical a teaching environment as possible for the students, it was impossible to do so. The required masks challenged our students in so many ways. In a school where a substantial number of students are diagnosed with language disorders, not being able to see the mouths of one's teachers and peers exacerbated their disability. The masks posed a significant challenge for our students who were deaf or hard of hearing or diagnosed with Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD). I purchased clear face shields for my teachers and therapists who wished to wear them, however, they frequently fogged and made it difficult to see. No one solution completely solved this issue.

Our sensorily sensitive students abhorred the mask and it was a challenge to get them to wear it. The mother of one of our more severely autistic students desperately wanted to bring their child back to school as they were having little success in the virtual environment. The mother had neither the expertise nor patience to help her son during online learning plus she was trying to continue her own job. She could not work and teach her autistic son at the same time. Unfortunately, the directive at the time was all students must be masked, and the student refused to wear the mask. The CDC guidelines specifically stated that individuals with mitigating disabilities did not have to wear the mask and I was willing to accept the student back to school

under this guideline, however, his classroom teacher said they would not have him in their class if he was not wearing a mask. Through much cajoling, I was able to talk another teacher into including him in her class until he could become more accustomed to the mask. Amazingly, as soon as he walked back on campus and saw all the other students wearing masks, he wore his mask with no problem and was able to return to his appropriate class and teacher.

Twenty-five percent of the school population still participated by parental choice in the virtual learning model. A positive diagnosis of COVID-19 resulted in a mandatory fourteen-day quarantine. It was hard for me to look at our average daily attendance statistics. Some days, whole classes of students were quarantined.

In addition to all the COVID-19 restrictions, the beginning of the 2020 school year was especially disappointing for our school. We were scheduled to move into our new facility during the summer of 2020, however, construction was delayed due to the work stoppages and supply chain issues resulting from COVID-19, as was our occupancy in our new facility.

When we finally moved into our new building in January 2021, the beginning of the second semester of the school year, it was done without fanfare or celebration. No ribbon cutting or grand opening ceremonies could be held due to the crowd gathering restrictions of COVID-19. The seven-year slog of enduring school in a strip mall should have been celebrated upon the completion of the new facility. An event had originally been planned, before the onset of COVID-19, which would not only publicize our new location and facility to the community but also celebrate our staff for valiantly enduring the shortcomings of our prior location and promote positive feelings and a greater connection toward their workplace. We garnered none of the positive effects of celebrating this accomplishment.

In addition to the stresses of COVID-19, the summer of 2020 was a particularly tumultuous one, with unrest resulting from the death of George Floyd and the political rhetoric associated with the presidential election of 2020. The impact was felt within our school. I remember having to address an incident between two students, which was associated with one wearing a mask with the letters "BLM" (Black Lives Matter) and the other student wearing a mask with the Confederate flag. Though they had not yet fought with one another, there were rumblings a fight was in the offing. This incident would have been an ideal time to use Restorative Practices; however, I did not. I recall thinking I did not have enough expertise in the practice to handle racially sensitive situations. It was not addressed in the little professional development we received. I did not even bring the students together into my office. I addressed them separately and told them to leave one another alone and allowed them both to keep their masks on, as it was their free speech right to do so. Neither student wore their mask to school again. The incident highlighted my personal need for more professional development in the practice for dealing with such politically sensitive issues, which were more evident at the school post-COVID-19.

COVID-19 was such a political divider. It elicited strong opinions that were sometimes expressed too freely. One of my staff members was a person of Chinese descent. When we were just becoming aware of the "coronavirus," I heard murmurs of students making racist comments regarding the teacher and the possible link to the transmission of COVID-19. I received the following email from a teacher, "(Student) said this morning if he sees a Chinese person, he is going to kill them—that we should stop talking about corona and do something about it. Any suggestions?" (Teacher, MG, March 6, 2020). Again, this was another incident where a student would have benefitted from using the Circle, bringing both the teacher and the student into my

office to build relationships within a safe setting. The student was counseled and received consequences for his comments, but no attempt at repairing the relationship between the student and teacher was made. The more volatile the incident, post-COVID-19, the less likely it was addressed restoratively.

Research Question 3

Based upon my personal narrative, what were my perceptions about Restorative Practices as a strategy for addressing the health and well-being of students with disabilities in times of crisis, such as school shutdown due to COVID-19?

Lessons Learned

The outcome of using Restorative Practices for students with disabilities in my setting should not reflect on the overall viability of the practice with this population of students. Recalling the roots of Restorative Practices, the First Nation communities in North America and Indigenous Peoples around the world, have used the Circle for participants to share their feelings regarding incidents or ideas around a predetermined topic. The Circle creates a safe place for all to speak and allows for consensual decision-making and the resolution of disputes using restorative dialogue (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). Restorative Practices in schools has its roots in the Restorative Justice movement, which involves considering all who are harmed by an offense and considering the needs of the offender, the offended, and the community at large (Zehr, 2015). Although the success of the Restorative Justice movement is a disputed political topic, the basics of the practice, a restorative approach to behavioral regulation, which provides an opportunity for those affected to "come together to share their feelings, describe how they were affected and develop a plan to repair the harm done or prevent a reoccurrence" (Hansberry, 2016, p. 2) could be the basic premise for any restorative behavioral approach to discipline.

The principles of care ethics (Noddings, 1986), which provide the theoretical framework for Restorative Practices, can be applied to the teacher-student relationship through the teacher's receptive behaviors of attentiveness, responsiveness, and active listening (Kim & Schallert, 2011). Restorative Practices can provide the essential link in building the relationships between teachers and their students, which is an essential component of Restorative Practice. School administrators can emphasize this care concept through community building and giving value to the student voice (Buckmaster, 2016, p. 2). Restorative Practices have the potential to change not only the students' behavior but also the adults' behavior, thereby changing the school community's culture. Recalling Cavanagh's (2009) statement that it can no longer be assumed children come to us learning to care, the true value in Restorative Practices is that it teaches children to care and that lesson, if no other, is invaluable.

Current post-COVID-19 youth mental health statistics estimate that 11.5% (over 2.7 million youth) experience severe major depression with more reporting each day (Mental Health America, 2023). Suicide rates for people aged 10–24 increased 62% from 2007 through 2021 (Curtin & Garnett, 2023) and is considered an epidemic with no signs of decreasing. The underlying cause of suicide is mental illness and while Restorative Practices does not purport to prevent mental illness, it has the potential to build strong, nurturing relationships and foster an environment of caring that can improve the overall mental health of those participating in the practice.

The National Center for Education Statistics reported school shootings rose to the highest number in 20 years with 93 incidents reported in school year 2020-2021 (Irwin et al., 2022). The United States Secret Service, in investigations of school shootings, found that two-thirds of 37 school shooters they investigated, reported they were victims of bullying and felt uncared for in

the school setting (Reddy et al., 2001). Their report found the greatest deterrent to preventing school shootings is to create a caring school environment built upon mutual respect between the students and their teachers and between the students themselves (Fein et al., 2002). This is a key component of Restorative Practices.

With targeted professional development, commitment, and ongoing support from administrators and staff, Restorative Practices can positively impact the school's culture. It can improve school climate by fostering a sense of belonging and relationship building. Restorative Practices provide a structured approach to conflict resolution, which looks at the root cause of the conflict and considers the needs of the offended, the offender, and the community, extending beyond the school building. However, as with any poorly implemented initiative, it can result in the opposite effects and cause frustration among staff members. Without extensive professional development and ongoing support, the impact of the practice may be negligible.

When Pinellas County Schools adopted the use of Restorative Practices county-wide, the school system reported that it processed 48% fewer referrals than in the five years prior. While district administrators hailed this as a victory and claimed the initiative had been “nationally recognized,” teachers claimed the lower number of referrals was not due to improved behavior but due to school administrators not processing the referrals as they had in the past. The teachers claimed they had received minimal training in the practice and had few options for dealing with inappropriate student behaviors (Reeves, 2019). This caused feelings of helplessness and dissatisfaction among the staff. When control in the work environment is threatened or reduced, teachers have less job satisfaction and find less meaning in teaching, which can lead to profound consequences for school effectiveness (Sergiovanni, 2009, p. 253-254). In the post-COVID-19 world of increased teaching vacancies and staffing shortages, retaining staff is a challenge, and

maintaining staff satisfaction is even tougher. The adoption of new initiatives should be thoughtfully considered by its proponents, strategically planned, rigorously promoted, and fully supported with targeted and continuous professional development to minimize staff dissatisfaction.

While the data does not yet fully support whether Restorative Practices decreased exclusionary disciplinary practices for students with disabilities or improved their overall mental health, the practice should still be considered as a method for improving school culture and relationship building.

The lack of support and prioritization are primary in examining the factors that led to its discontinuation at my school. Had I supported and prioritized Restorative Practices as I had before COVID-19, the practice could have continued. While the ideal application of Restorative Practices is the creation of the face-to-face, in-person, human connection, there was no substantive reason the practice could not have been conducted virtually, for the brief period we were in the virtual learning environment. Our mental health therapists, speech-language pathologists, and occupational therapists all conducted their therapies virtually. The six-month break in using the practice and the lack of support and prioritization upon our return to school led to its ultimate demise. Though I can offer reasons (excuses) for why it was not made a priority, the fault squarely lies with myself as principal.

In my current position, I am included in emails that go out to “all staff” at all the schools within our organization. The new principal at my school (my successor) recently sent out the following email, “There has been a concerning uptick in students making racial comments (the "n" word, “cotton-picking,” Jewish slurs, Arabic, etc.) and gestures--Heil Hitler while making the salute. If you see or hear anything of this nature, please write a referral immediately. Hate speech

and gestures are not acceptable and will not be tolerated" (Principal, KB, September 22, 2023). It sickened me to read this as much as I am sure it sickened the principal to write it. This language is not coming from within the school but is seeping into it like toxic waste from the outside. The principal stated the consequence for this behavior would be a referral which will, more than likely, result in the students involved receiving the consequence of exclusion from their classroom and more instructional time lost. While I agree these actions cannot be tolerated, with appropriate professional development in using Restorative Practice to tackle the difficult issues of race, gender, and ethnicity, these incidents could also be addressed restoratively to promote and maintain a positive school climate for all students.

Future Implications/Opportunities

A 2015 WestEd report itemized six primary areas of research needed to further support the use of Restorative Practices in the school setting: implementation readiness, implementation, effectiveness, impacts on racial and ethnic minorities and students with disabilities, leadership/training, data and measurement, and sustainability (Hurley et al., 2015). Eight years later, these six areas are still priority needs. While Garnett et al. (2019) and Gregory et al. (2013) have conducted research regarding the need for determining the readiness of a school for the implementation of Restorative Practices at a school, more is needed. Further research is needed in determining the optimal professional development requirement for both leadership and staff in the adoption of Restorative Practices at a school. Though some studies have provided suggestions (McClusky et al., 2008, Mayworm et al. 2016, Gregory et al. 2013), the full-time commitment as well as the suggested length of time between adoption and implementation to achieve the most impact have yet to be explored. Opportunity exists for longitudinal exploration of Restorative Practices with students with disabilities. There is a great need to determine if the practice is

effective in decreasing disproportionality, which is a result of exclusionary disciplinary measures. Longitudinal research is also needed to examine the practice's effectiveness in improving student mental health. The disciplinary data retrieved from the first year of implementation at my school resulted in a 23% overall decrease in discipline referrals from the prior year. Most importantly, we saw a decrease in the number of students who were involuntarily institutionalized due to Florida's Baker Act from two to zero. These data were significant enough for the administrative team to continue using Restorative Practices into the next school year. Had the school not shut down due to COVID-19, the subsequent data may have been just as positive. The initial data was compelling enough to warrant another attempt at the practice for additional study.

Although Restorative Practices is considered an essential element of the Zero Suicide Framework (Turner et al, 2020), more research is needed to determine if the practice can indeed improve the mental health of students.

Although the findings from longitudinal trials in Maine and Pennsylvania indicated that Restorative Practices did not significantly improve student connectedness or student behavior (Acosta, 2019; Gregory & Evans, 2020), these studies are few and warrant more exploration. There are emerging research studies citing the success of reducing exclusionary disciplinary practices for marginalized groups of students (Black and Hispanic) using Restorative Practices (Huguley, J., et al., 2022); however, the use of Restorative Practices with students with disabilities remains a potential area for investigation. *Restorative Practice and Special Needs* (Burnett & Thorsborne, 2015) remains the definitive guide for modifying and accommodating the practice for students with disabilities. Restorative Practices rely heavily on the receptive and expressive language skills of the participants and students with language disabilities in expressive and receptive language, non-verbal students, and students with autism struggle to participate in

the practice. More research on this topic would be beneficial in ensuring the practice can be accessed by all, no matter their disability.

Conclusion

This narrative inquiry has allowed me to reflect on the adoption of Restorative Practices at my school. With the passing of time and distance away from the situation, I see how the practice could have successfully moved into the virtual learning environment during the shutdown of the school due to the COVID-19 pandemic with little effort and continued once most students returned to in-person learning. In retrospect, the solutions seem simple. What I cannot account for is the delta between the planned and the unplanned. If the move to virtual learning had been precipitated by something other than a worldwide pandemic, say the unoccupied school building burned down one evening, the move to virtual learning could have been made with relative ease. Staff would consider it a temporary situation until a new location was secured. Other than personal items that may have remained in the building, the staff would not have been personally impacted. As the principal, the impact of a temporary move to online would have been greater (repurchasing curriculum, furniture, technology, etc.), but I would know that insurance would take care of covering the cost of the damage. The emotions and the uncertainty associated with the pandemic made this situation more impactful.

Though critical to the successful adoption of any new initiative at a school, the personal enthusiasm of the principal is not enough to ensure the initiative will be continued in a school with fidelity. This responsibility does not solely rest on the shoulders of the principal but must be supported by the entire school community and ensuring that support is their ultimate task. The research questions for this project encourage reflection and recollection of the critical events that occurred at my school in the attempt to adopt Restorative Practices. Had I been asked before the

adoption of Restorative Practices to hypothesize what critical events I thought would occur related to the adoption, I, in no way, could have predicted what would occur during this implementation or what might be the outcomes. Though I cannot state with 100% positivity that the events that occurred were once-in-a-lifetime events, I can assert that, at the age of 64, they are once-in-my-lifetime events (or at least I hope so.)

While I have tried to bring structure and connectedness to the chaotic, critical events presented in this narrative, they represent a unique place in time and history. The chance of there being another school administrator trying to adopt Restorative Practices at a school for students with disabilities and having a pandemic cause the entire world to shut down, thereby impacting the adoption of said practice is highly unlikely. This narrative inquiry can provide information for other school administrators on the possible roadblocks experienced in the adoption of any new practice in a school.

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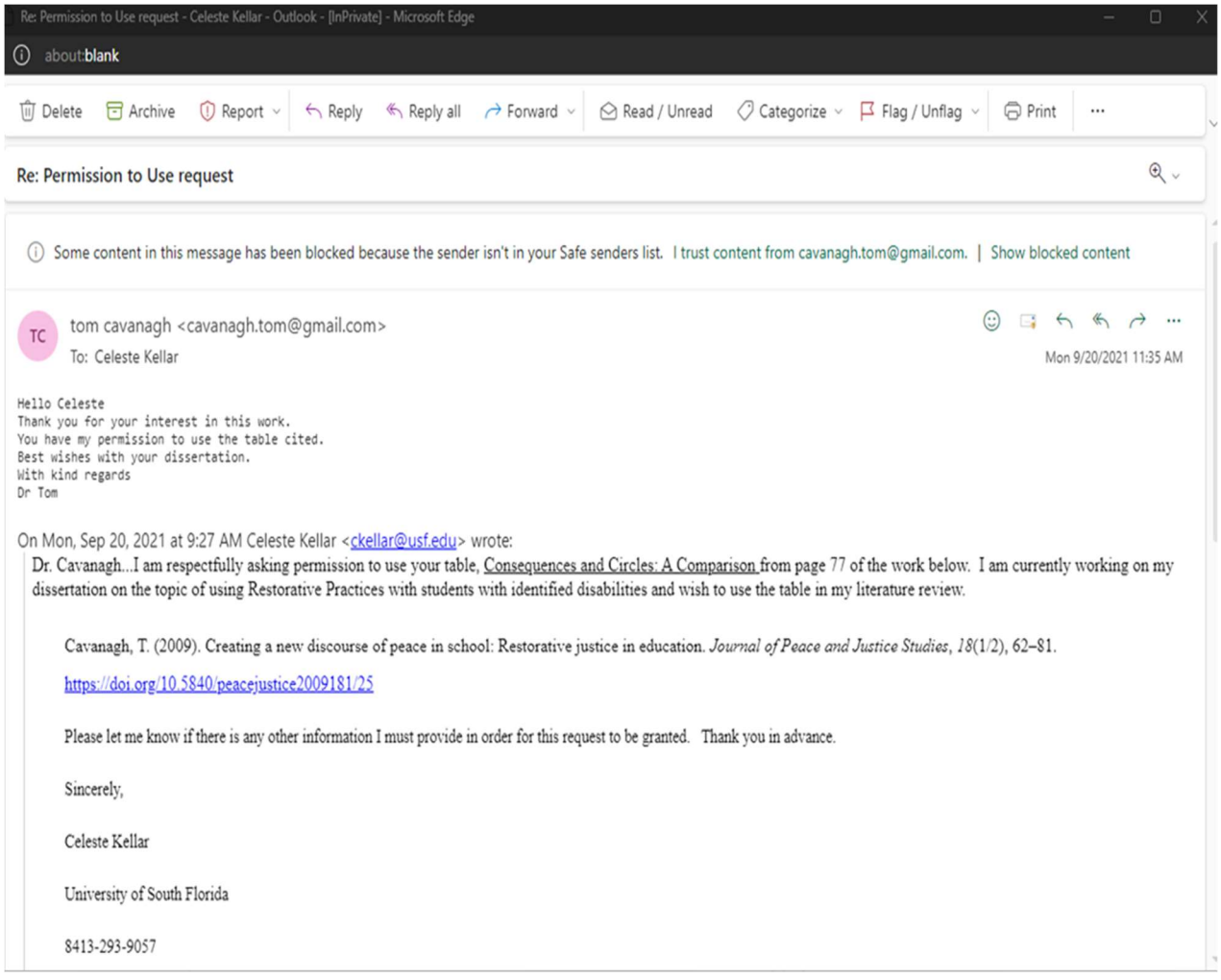
APPENDIX A:

COPYRIGHT APPROVALS

Permission for Table 1

Cavanagh, T. (2009). Creating a new discourse of peace in school: Restorative justice in education. Journal of Peace and Justice Studies, 18(1/2), 62–81. https://doi.org/10.5840/peacejustice2009181/25



Re: Permission to Use request - Celeste Kellar - Outlook - [InPrivate] - Microsoft Edge

about:blank

Delete | Archive | Report | Reply | Reply all | Forward | Read / Unread | Categorize | Flag / Unflag | Print | ...

Re: Permission to Use request

Some content in this message has been blocked because the sender isn't in your Safe senders list. I trust content from cavanagh.tom@gmail.com. | Show blocked content

TC tom cavanagh <cavanagh.tom@gmail.com>
To: Celeste Kellar
Mon 9/20/2021 11:35 AM

Hello Celeste
Thank you for your interest in this work.
You have my permission to use the table cited.
Best wishes with your dissertation.
With kind regards
Dr Tom

On Mon, Sep 20, 2021 at 9:27 AM Celeste Kellar <ckellar@usf.edu> wrote:

Dr. Cavanagh...I am respectfully asking permission to use your table, Consequences and Circles: A Comparison from page 77 of the work below. I am currently working on my dissertation on the topic of using Restorative Practices with students with identified disabilities and wish to use the table in my literature review.

Cavanagh, T. (2009). Creating a new discourse of peace in school: Restorative justice in education. *Journal of Peace and Justice Studies*, *18*(1/2), 62–81.

https://doi.org/10.5840/peacejustice2009181/25

Please let me know if there is any other information I must provide in order for this request to be granted. Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Celeste Kellar

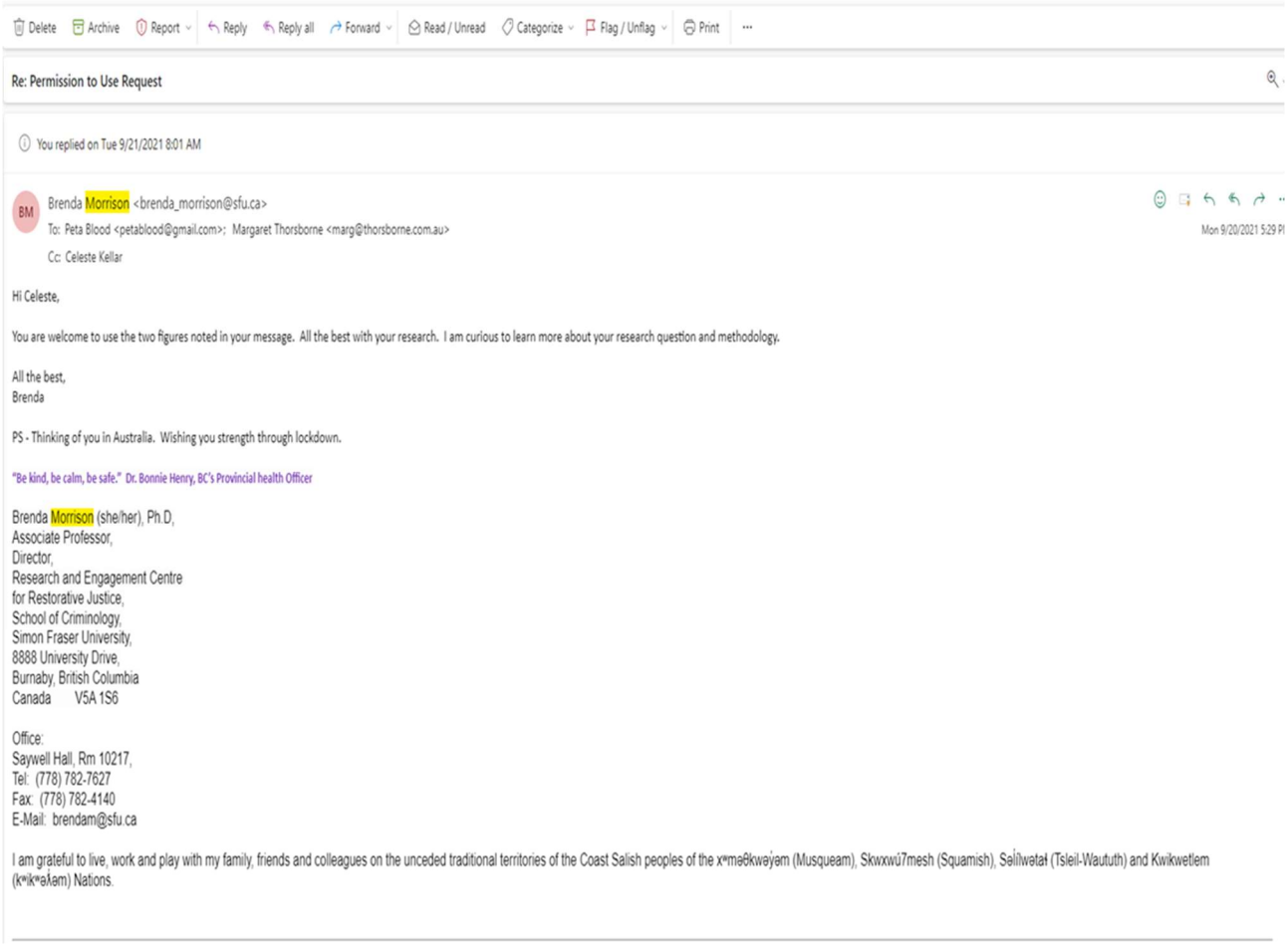
University of South Florida

8413-293-9057

Permission for Figure 1: *Hierarchy of restorative responses (Morrison et al., 2005, p. 343).*

Permission for Figure 6: *Regulatory Pyramid of Restorative Responses to Managing Social Relationships and Behavior (Morrison et al., 2005, p. 343)*

Permission for Table 4: *Timeframe & indicators of change (Morrison et al., 2005, p. 352)*



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Re: Permission to Use Request

You replied on Tue 9/21/2021 8:01 AM

BM Brenda Morrison <brenda_morrison@sfu.ca>
To: Peta Blood <petablood@gmail.com>; Margaret Thorsborne <marg@thorsborne.com.au>
Cc: Celeste Kellar
Mon 9/20/2021 5:29 PM

Hi Celeste,

You are welcome to use the two figures noted in your message. All the best with your research. I am curious to learn more about your research question and methodology.

All the best,
Brenda

PS - Thinking of you in Australia. Wishing you strength through lockdown.

"Be kind, be calm, be safe." Dr. Bonnie Henry, BC's Provincial health Officer

Brenda Morrison (she/her), Ph.D,
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Director,
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8888 University Drive,
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Canada V5A 1S6

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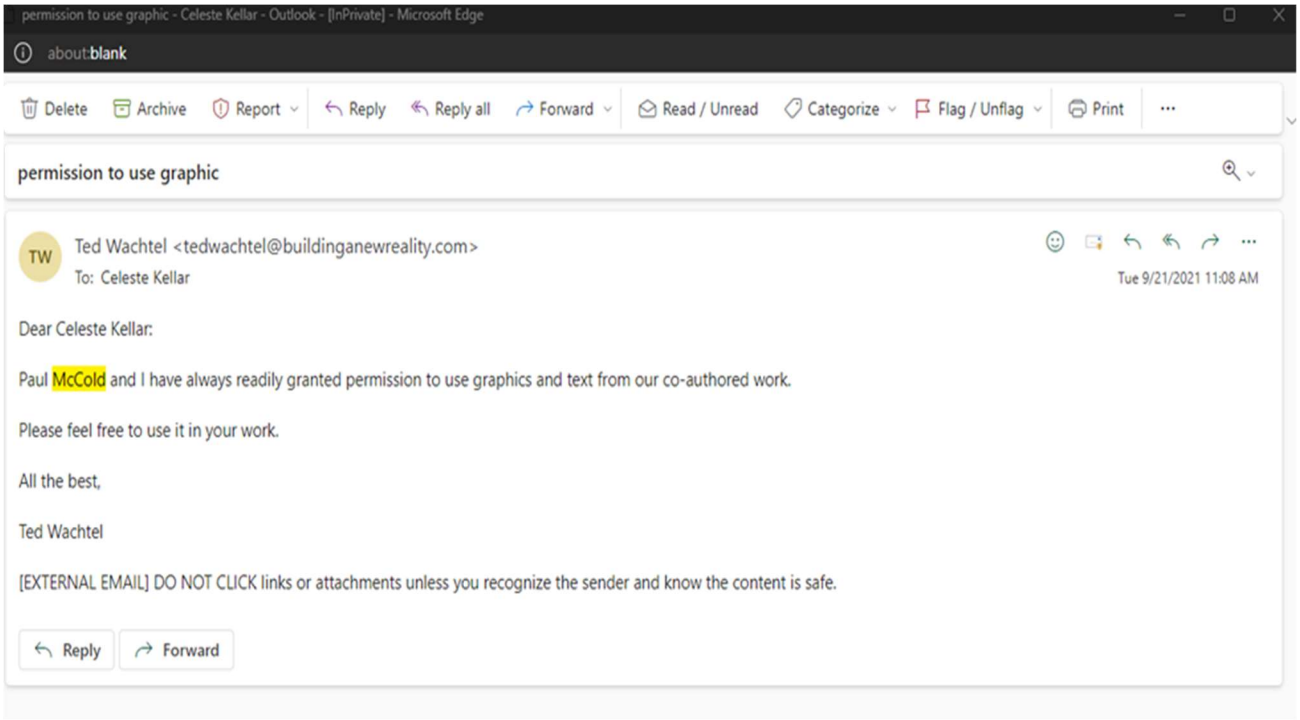
Saywell Hall, Rm 10217,
Tel: (778) 782-7627
Fax: (778) 782-4140
E-Mail: brendam@sfu.ca

I am grateful to live, work and play with my family, friends and colleagues on the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Səl̓ilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) and Kwikwetlem (kʷikʷəƛəm) Nations.

Permission for Table 2: Stakeholder Roles

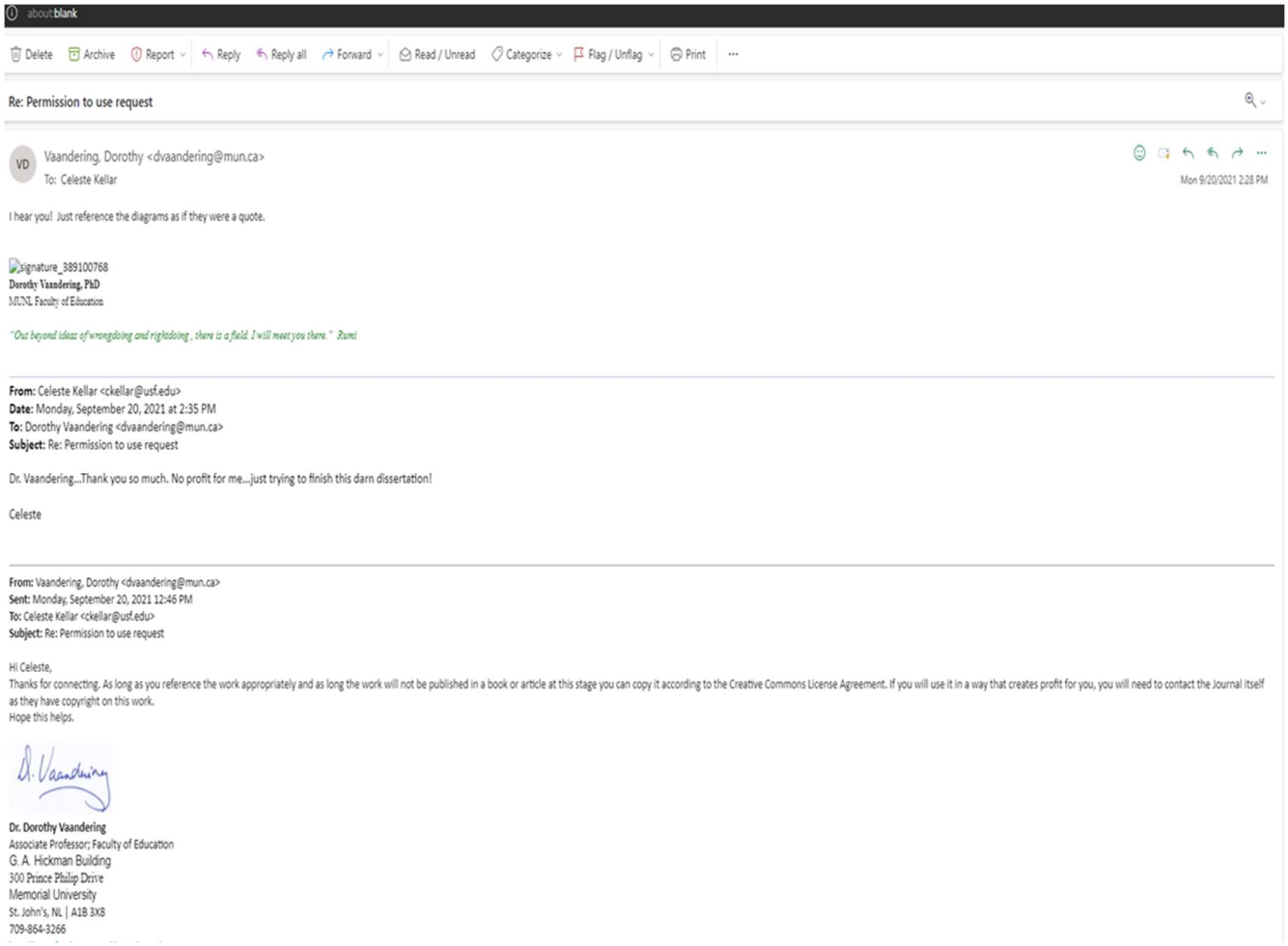
Permission for Figure 2: Social Discipline Window

McCold, P., & Wachtel, T. (2003). *In pursuit of paradigm: A theory of restorative justice*. Paper Presented at the XIII World Congress of Criminology, 15.



Permission for Figure 3 and Figure 4:

Vaandering, D. (2013). A window on relationships: Reflecting critically on a current restorative justice theory. *Restorative Justice*, *1*(3), 311–333. https://doi.org/10.5235/20504721.1.3.311



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Re: Permission to use request

VD Vaandering, Dorothy <dvaandering@mun.ca>
To: Celeste Kellar
Mon 9/20/2021 2:28 PM

I hear you! Just reference the diagrams as if they were a quote.

Signature_389100768
Dorothy Vaandering, PhD
MUNL Faculty of Education

"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing , there is a field. I will meet you there." Rumi

---

From: Celeste Kellar <ckellar@usf.edu>
Date: Monday, September 20, 2021 at 2:35 PM
To: Dorothy Vaandering <dvaandering@mun.ca>
Subject: Re: Permission to use request

Dr. Vaandering...Thank you so much. No profit for me...just trying to finish this darn dissertation!

Celeste

From: Vaandering, Dorothy <dvaandering@mun.ca>
Sent: Monday, September 20, 2021 12:46 PM
To: Celeste Kellar <ckellar@usf.edu>
Subject: Re: Permission to use request

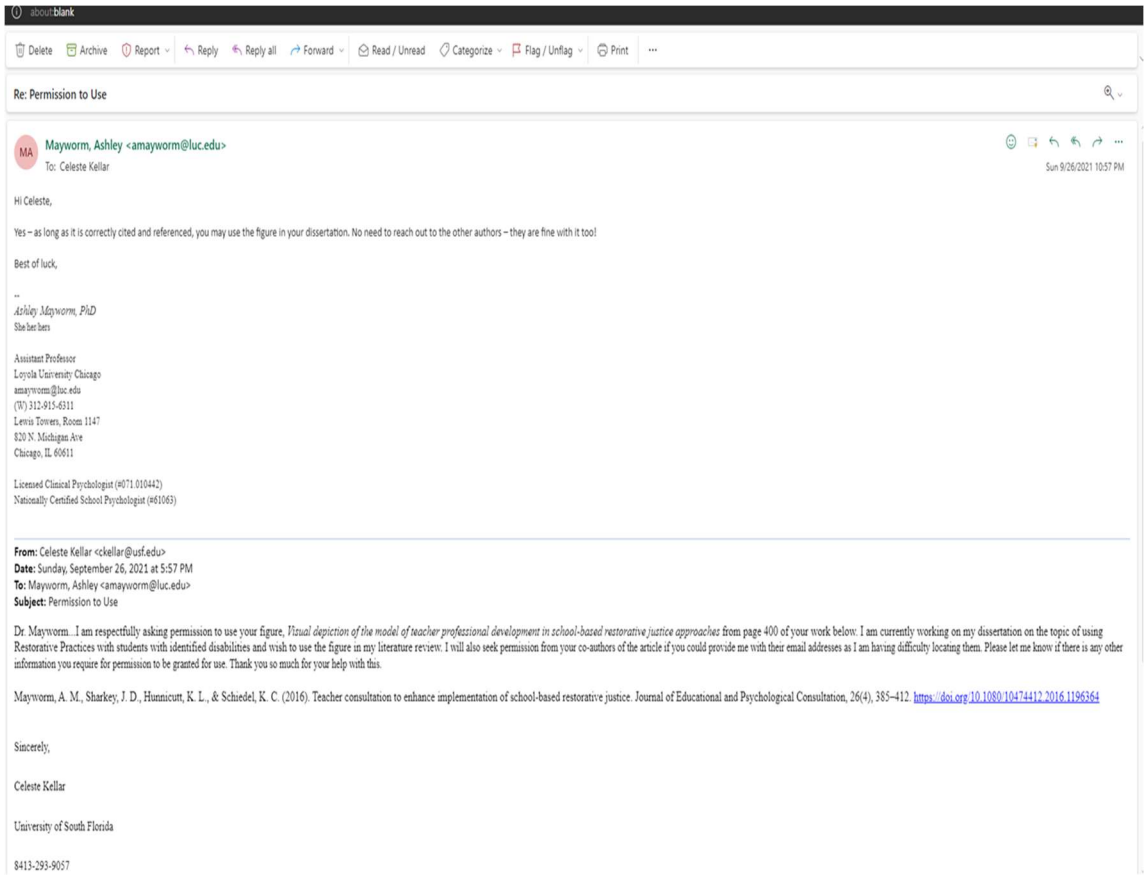
Hi Celeste,
Thanks for connecting. As long as you reference the work appropriately and as long the work will not be published in a book or article at this stage you can copy it according to the Creative Commons License Agreement. If you will use it in a way that creates profit for you, you will need to contact the Journal itself as they have copyright on this work.
Hope this helps.

D. Vaandering

Dr. Dorothy Vaandering
Associate Professor; Faculty of Education
G. A. Hickman Building
300 Prince Philip Drive
Memorial University
St. John's, NL | A1B 3X8
709-864-3266

Permission for Figure 5

Mayworm, A. M., Sharkey, J. D., Hunnicutt, K. L., & Schiedel, K. C. (2016). Teacher consultation to enhance implementation of school-based restorative justice. Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 26(4), 385–412. https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2016.1196364



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Re: Permission to Use

MA **Mayworm, Ashley <amayworm@luc.edu>**
To: Celeste Kellar
Sun 9/26/2021 10:57 PM

Hi Celeste,

Yes – as long as it is correctly cited and referenced, you may use the figure in your dissertation. No need to reach out to the other authors – they are fine with it too!

Best of luck,

--
Ashley Mayworm, PhD
She/her/hers

Assistant Professor
Loyola University Chicago
amayworm@luc.edu
(W) 312-915-6311
Lewis Towers, Room 1147
820 N. Michigan Ave
Chicago, IL 60611

Licensed Clinical Psychologist (#071.010442)
Nationally Certified School Psychologist (#61063)

From: Celeste Kellar <ckellar@usf.edu>
Date: Sunday, September 26, 2021 at 5:57 PM
To: Mayworm, Ashley <amayworm@luc.edu>
Subject: Permission to Use

Dr. Mayworm...I am respectfully asking permission to use your figure, *Vizual depiction of the model of teacher professional development in school-based restorative justice approaches* from page 400 of your work below. I am currently working on my dissertation on the topic of using Restorative Practices with students with identified disabilities and wish to use the figure in my literature review. I will also seek permission from your co-authors of the article if you could provide me with their email addresses as I am having difficulty locating them. Please let me know if there is any other information you require for permission to be granted for use. Thank you so much for your help with this.

Mayworm, A. M., Sharkey, J. D., Hunnicutt, K. L., & Schiedel, K. C. (2016). Teacher consultation to enhance implementation of school-based restorative justice. Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 26(4), 385–412. https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2016.1196364

Sincerely,

Celeste Kellar

University of South Florida

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