Restorative Practices Implementation Report
Summary of Findings

Background

School discipline is at a crossroads. Most researchers have concluded that years of punitive discipline measures have produced harmful consequences for students. Increased disengagement and subsequent drop-out imposes significant social and economic costs (Rumberger & Losen, 2016). Receiving just one out-of-school suspension can potentially alter a student's educational trajectory (Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2013).

Restorative Practices (RP) represent an attempt to reform school discipline and improve relationships among stakeholders while minimizing punitive disciplinary measures (Vaandering, 2010). Morrison and Vaandeering (2012) posit that RP address "power and status imbalances" by promoting the "soft" power of relationship building and understanding, rather than "hard" power of the institution to impart sanctions as a motivator.

Defining RP in schools, however, is no easy task; there is no consensus around what constitutes a restorative practice (Fronius, Persson, Guckenburg, Hurley, & Petrosino, 2016), and the research base on the impact of a wide variety of measures that might be included under the term is still emerging. However, most RP programs include ongoing communication across the school and reparative opportunities designed to produce the following outcomes:

– Accountability, community safety, and competency development (Ashley & Burke, 2009);

– A reduction in racial and ethnic disparities in school discipline (Rumberger & Losen, 2016);

– A reversal of the negative academic effects of zero tolerance school discipline policies (Rumberger & Losen, 2016); and

– A reduction in contact between police and students on school discipline issues (Petrosino, Guckenburg, & Fronius, 2012).

Researchers have examined a range of models and frameworks in schools, and some offer potentially promising evidence. Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPSS), in partnership with the Open Society Institute and Family League of Baltimore implemented an RP pilot in schools, dubbed Intensive Learning Sites (ILS) within Baltimore City starting in School Year 2017-2018.

This report focuses on the management of that implementation, with the goal of identifying which strategies are having the highest impact and where opportunities exist for additional improvement. The findings are based on data from surveys of administration, teachers, and staff working to implement RP in ILS pilot schools in addition to student behavior and attendance indicators at those schools. Thus, these findings are not generalizable across other schools that may be implementing RP.

Data Sources

Date sources for this report include data from the Maryland School Report Card, BCPSS School Profiles, and the Maryland Department of Education Student and Staff Publications. These data include school-level student demographic and service data (race, ethnicity, gender, Special Education receipt, Direct Certification eligibility, English Language Learner service receipt, homeless services), as well as yearly student attendance and chronic absence information. Additional information was collected using the Restorative Practice Implementation Survey. All calculations presented in this memo are made by the author.

Methods

The Restorative Practice Implementation Survey was used to gain broad knowledge about the teacher/administrator/instructional support staff experience with the restorative practice implementation process. The survey is modeled after a Restorative Justice survey used by researchers at WestEd (Guckenburg, Hurley, Persson, Fronius, & Petrosino, 2016) and focuses on respondents' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the RP implementation process.

The survey was administered to teachers, administrators, and instructional/non-instructional support staff at the ILS schools on two separate occasions: May-June 2018 and February-March 2019. A link to the survey was provided directly to the BCPSS Office of School Supports, which agreed to disseminate the survey to administrative leaders at each ILS schools. School leaders were then encouraged to distribute the link directly to teachers, instructional and non-instructional support staff. The first administration of the survey returned 12 responses and the second administration returned 82 responses, for a total of 94 completed surveys for analysis. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

The Institute of Education Policy relied on administrative student data from the school years 2016-17 and 2017-18. Using the various data elements, the author conducted a pre-implementation/post-implementation descriptive analysis of student suspensions, and student attendance, and to see what, if any, potential impact RP may have had on these three areas of interest. Chronic absenteeism data was originally part of the analysis, but was removed due to lack of reliable, available data. All analyses report findings in the aggregate; no student level data is reported.

Research Questions

Answers to the following research questions are provided in the Findings section below:

- What are the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of school staff regarding the RP implementation process?

- Has the implementation of RP changed the perception of school climate for teachers, administrators, and other school support staff?

- Is there a relationship between the implementation of RP and student attendance and student behavior outcomes?

Findings

Characteristics of the Intensive Learning Site Schools

The demographic and educational service characteristics of students for school years 2016-17 and 2017-18 in the ILS schools and Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPSS) schools are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Overall, the ILS schools serve populations similar to the district as a whole. That said there were some statistical differences between those students in ILS schools and the district overall. In both years, the ILS school populations tend to skew more male and serve slightly lower Special Education Services (SES) populations. Moderate shifts in the number of Hispanic students occurs from 2016-17 to 2017-18, with more modest changes occurring in the proportion of English Language Learners (ELL) and Student with Disabilities. Tables 1 and 2 below further describe the ILS and BCPSS.

Table 1: Characteristics of RP Intensive Learning Sites 2016-2017

	ILS Schools	BCPSS
Demographic characteristics		
% Female	45.3	49.0
% Male	54.7	51.0
% African-American	78.0	80.6
% Hispanic	12.5	9.4
% White	7.6	7.9
Students receiving special services characteristics		
% Direct Certification	61.5	58.4
% ELL	4.8	5.6
% Students with Disabilities	14.0	14.8

Table 2: Characteristics of RP Intensive Learning Sites 2017-2018

	ILS Schools	BCPSS
Demographic characteristics		
% Female	45.5	49.2
% Male	54.9	50.7
% African-American	78.5	79.4
% Hispanic	7.3	10.4
% White	12.2	8.0
Students receiving special services characteristics		
% Direct Certification	63.1	55.1
% ELL	4.1	6.6
% Students with Disabilities	15.2	14.7

Restorative Practice Implementation Survey Results

What positions do respondents hold at ILS schools?

Survey respondents hold a number of positions, including teacher, counselor, and administrator, with a few respondents identifying their position as "other." Most respondents identified themselves as teachers (64.9 percent) or administrators (16 percent). The respondents also exhibit a broad range in regard to time served in their current role, with the largest percentage (45.7 percent) indicating five years or less. However, nearly one-quarter of respondents (23.4 percent) have been in their role for 10 or more years (Table 4).

Table 3: Respondents current position at ILS

Position	Number	%
Teacher	61	64.9
Administrator (e.g. Principal, Assistant Principal)	15	16.0
Other (e.g. Para-Educator, IEP Team Associate)	12	12.8
Guidance counselor (includes school social workers and school psychologists)	4	4.3
Non-instructional support staff	2	2.1

Table 4: Number of years respondent has served in current position

Length of time in current position	Number	%
1-5 years	43	45.7
10 or more years	22	23.4
Less than 1 year	18	19.1
6-10 years	11	11.7

Exposure to RP in ILS schools

Survey respondents were asked whether RP, either informally or formally, had been in place at their ILS school and for, roughly, how long. A majority of respondents (56.8 percent) indicated that, in some form or another, RP had been in place at their school for at least 1-2 years (Table 5).

Table 5: How long has RP been in place, either formally or informally?

Length of time	Number	%
1-2 years	50	56.8
It is a new program this year	22	25.0
3-4 years	13	14.8
More than 4 years	3	3.4

When asked to respond about any prior experience with RP or RP components, a similar percentage (53.2 percent) indicated that they have worked with RP in the past. As a follow-up, respondents who indicated prior exposure to RP were asked about the tenets of those programs. Here, a clear majority, 73.5 percent, indicated that the RP program in their school was modeled after the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP) framework (Table 6).

Table 6: Previous experience with the use of RP in schools

Previous experience	Number	%
Yes	50	53.2
No	44	46.8
If yes, is RP based on principles outlined by the IIRP?		
Based on the IIRP framework	36	73.5
Unsure	8	16.3
Developed our own approach	3	6.1
Developed own approach based on another model	1	2.0

RP Models: What are they and when are they being used?

Survey respondents were asked to describe the type of RP model currently in place at their ILS school (Table 7). A vast majority, 86.5 percent, indicated their program was based on a whole-school model, with 3.4 percent indicated that they have a stand-alone model. While there are schools that implement, or seek to implement, individual components of the RP protocols, the existing research generally considers a whole-school approach most promising (Guckenburg, Hurley, Persson, Fronius, & Petrosino, 2015). A whole-school approach establishes common values and norms, promotes a sense of belonging to the school community, and builds trusting relationships, leaving fewer students in crisis. Behavioral and inter-personal issues are dealt with quickly and deeply, reducing the need for punitive discipline measure (Kidde & Alfred, 2011; Tyler, 2006).

Table 7: How would you identify the RP approach at your ILS?

Length of time	Number	%
Whole-School Integrated Approach	76	86.5
Unsure	9	10.1
Stand-alone disciplinary approach	3	3.4

To better understand what RP implementation looks like in ILS schools, the survey asked respondents to identify the specific components that are included in the RP model in place at their ILS school. Survey respondents could choose from a series of components, as shown in Table 8.

"[RP] is integrated into daily schedule and monitored monthly doing restorative practice coaching visits."

-ILS School Principal

More than three-fourths (84 and 81.9 percent, respectively) of respondents who took the survey indicated that "Restorative Circles" and "Restorative Questions" – informal conversations using restorative dialogue to repair or prevent harm (Kidde & Alfred, 2011, p. 12) – were the most commonly used RP components. Far fewer respondents indicated that they use "Separate the 'deed' from the 'doer'" (30.9 percent), "Stay in the 'With Box'" (23.4 percent), or "Fair Process" (20.2 percent) components. These results may indicate the need for additional trainings, as respondents may either be unaware of these components or do not feel comfortable employing them.

Table 8: Which components of RP are in place at your school?

Component type	Number	%
Restorative Circles	79	84.0
Restorative Questions	77	81.9
Affective Statements	61	64.9
Proactive Circles	60	63.8
Restorative Conferences (as needed)	56	59.6
Restorative approach with families	37	39.4
Separate the "deed" from the "doer"	29	30.9
Stay in the "With Box"	22	23.4
Fair Process	19	20.2
None of these components are in place	1	1.1

Note: Percentages do not total 100 because respondents could select multiple responses.

With regard to where RP sessions take place, research suggests that RP sessions (e.g., circles, conferences) are mostly commonly conducted within the classroom (Gonzalez, 2015), although they can take place in a variety of spaces within the school. To better understand where sessions take place, respondents were asked to identify locations, as indicated in Table 9 below. As the results show, classrooms (91.5 percent) are indeed the most common location for RP sessions among those surveyed. Other frequently indicated locations include the principal's (62.8 percent) or counselor's (48.9 percent) offices. The use of a designated space, such as a peace room, was noted to be used less often by respondents (36.2 percent) – a possible indication that such a space may not exist in all ILS schools.

Table 9: Where do RP sessions take place?

Space	Number	%
Classrooms	86	91.5
Principal's Office	59	62.8
Counselor's Office	46	48.9
Designated space within the school, such as a "Peace Room"	34	36.2
Other	8	8.5
Unsure	1	1.1

Note: Percentages do not total 100 because respondents could select multiple responses.

Lastly, respondents were asked to discuss the amount of time they were able to reflect with other staff and administration on their RP training and the implementation at their ILS schools. A clear majority, 61.4 percent, indicated that time was set aside for group reflection, although nearly one-third (28.4 percent) indicated they were unsure if this took place (Table 10). Of those who responded that they were offered a dedicated group reflection time, 59.6 percent of respondents stated that group reflection was a monthly occurrence, while slightly more than one-fifth (21.2) stated that group reflection occurred weekly. For those respondents who answered "other" the most common response was "as needed."

Table 10: Staff time for group reflection about RP

Response	Number	%
Yes	54	61.4
Unsure	25	28.4
No	9	10.2
If yes, how often does reflection take place?		
Monthly	31	59.6
Weekly	11	21.2
Other	7	13.5
Twice per month	3	5.8

Who is receiving training on RP? How and when are they being used?

Next, respondents were asked to provide information as to who at their ILS school had received RP training (Table 11). Among those who responded, "All teachers" (80.9 percent) and "Administrative staff" (e.g. principals, assistant principals – 71.3 percent), were the largest groups, followed by guidance counselors (41.5 percent), and "some instructional staff" (31.9 percent). Survey respondents were less likely to indicate that only "some teachers" (13.8 percent) have been trained in their school.

Table 11: Who at your school has received RP training?

Position	Number	%
All teachers	76	80.9
Administrative staff (principals, APs)	67	71.3
Guidance counselors	39	41.5
Some non-instructional support staff	30	31.9
All non-instructional support staff	28	29.8
Some teachers	13	13.8
Other (please specify)	4	4.3
No one has received training	3	3.2

Note: Percentages do not total 100 because respondents could select multiple responses.

Next, respondents were asked to indicate the type of RP training they received at their ILS school. The vast majority of respondents, 83 and 74.5 percent respectively, indicated that they received training on "Introduction to Restorative Practices" and "Using Circles Effectively" (Table 12). Thirty-six percent stated they had received the

> *"The restorative circles have been a great asset to the school as a whole."*
>
> *-Special Education Associate at ILS school*

"School-wide Restorative Practices 101," and 28.7 percent specified receiving training on "Facilitating Restorative Conferences." Only four percent of respondents who completed the survey indicated they had not received any RP trainings.

Table 12: Which of the following RP trainings have you participated in?

Type of training	Number	%
Introduction to Restorative Practices	78	83.0
Using Circles Effectively	70	74.5
School-wide Restorative Practices 101	34	36.2
Facilitating Restorative Conferences	27	28.7
Restorative Leadership Development	12	12.8
I have not participated in any RP trainings	4	4.3
Other	3	3.2

Note: Percentages do not total 100 because respondents could select multiple responses.

Finally, respondents were asked how RP is deployed in their ILS schools by selecting from a number of possible scenarios (Table 13). The most frequently selected reasons were student verbal conflict (87.2 percent), general preventative discussions (86.2 percent), and minor behavior infractions (75.5%). Additionally, student/staff verbal conflicts (63.8), bullying (62.8 percent), and major (physical) behavior infractions (61.7 percent) represented a large proportion of responses.

> *"We still have work to do to make it [RP] our normal response instead of a suggested one.*
>
> *- Teacher at a K- 8 ILS school*

Conversely, property infractions (20.2 percent), truancy (16 percent), and alcohol/substance abuse (5.3 percent) recorded lower rates. Whereas respondents

indicate that they are using RP for a variety of reasons, the top three responses — student verbal conflicts, preventative discussions, and minor behavior infractions — suggest that RP is being utilized as a both a preventive measure and also to resolve conflict (Guckenburg et al., 2016).

Table 13: How are RP used at your ILS?

Component type	Number	%
Student verbal conflicts	82	87.2
General preventive discussions	81	86.2
Minor behavior infractions (non-physical)	71	75.5
Student/staff verbal conflicts	60	63.8
Bullying	59	62.8
Major behavior infractions (physical)	58	61.7
Student/ staff physical conflict	39	41.5
Property infractions (vandalism)	19	20.2
Truancy	15	16.0
Alcohol/Substance Abuse infractions	5	5.3
Other	5	5.3

Note: Percentages do not total 100 because respondents could select multiple responses.

Are students aware of the use of RP? Are they involved? Are parents and caregivers aware and involved?

Respondents were also asked to provide their opinions (using a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree) on the level of student awareness on the use of RP in their ILS school. Nearly three-fourths of respondents either agreed (38.8 percent) or strongly agreed (4.26 percent) that students were aware of the use of RP at their schools (Table 14).

Table 14: Students are aware of the use of restorative practices in my school:

Level of agreement	Number	%
Strongly agree	40	42.6
Somewhat agree	36	38.8
Strongly disagree	8	8.5
Missing or did not respond	5	5.3
Neither agree nor disagree	4	4.3
Somewhat disagree	1	1.1

With regard to student involvement in RP, more than half of respondents (55.3 percent) strongly agreed that students were involved in the use of RP in their school (Table 15). Additionally, over two-thirds (67 percent) of respondents strongly agreed that RP is available to all students in their schools (Table 16). Given that the ILS schools are still in the early stages of RP implementation, it is encouraging see that respondents are creating awareness among the student population on the use of RP.

Table 15: Students are involved in the use of restorative practices in my school:

Level of agreement	Number	%
Strongly agree	40	55.3
Somewhat agree	36	28.7
Strongly disagree	8	5.3
Missing or did not respond	5	5.3
Neither agree nor disagree	4	4.3
Somewhat disagree	1	1.1

Table 16: Restorative practices is available to all students in my school:

Level of agreement	Number	%
Strongly agree	63	67.0
Somewhat agree	20	21.3
Strongly disagree	5	5.3
Missing or did not respond	5	5.3
Neither agree nor disagree	1	1.1
Somewhat disagree	0	0.0

Additionally, respondents were asked about the level parental or care giver awareness of RP in their child's school, as well as the level of involvement, if any, parents and caregivers have with the use and implementation of RP. A substantial number of respondents (44.7 percent) somewhat agreed with the statement "Parents and caregivers are aware of the use of restorative practices in my school"; with 12.8 percent strongly agreed (Table 17). Yet, nearly one-quarter (24.5 percent) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, and nearly 10 percent somewhat disagreed.

Table 17: Parents and caregivers are aware of the use of restorative practices in my school:

Level of agreement	Number	%
Somewhat agree	42	44.7
Neither agree nor disagree	23	24.5
Strongly agree	12	12.8
Somewhat disagree	9	9.6
Missing or did not respond	5	5.3
Strongly disagree	3	3.2

When respondents were asked about parental and caregiver involvement; however, the responses were somewhat more mixed. Thirty-four percent of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement "Parents or caregivers are involved of the use of restorative practices in my school", while 31.9 percent indicated they somewhat agreed (Table 18). Nearly identically percentages, 11.7 and 13.8 percent respectively, strongly agreed or somewhat disagreed with the statement. Given that RP is still in early stages of implementation, this finding should not be viewed negatively. That said, it may also suggest that further outreach is needed to increase awareness among family and community members of the potential benefits of RP beyond the walls of the school.

Table 18: Parents or caregivers are involved of the use of restorative practices in my school:

Level of agreement	Number	%
Neither agree nor disagree	32	34.0
Somewhat agree	30	31.9
Somewhat disagree	13	13.8
Strongly agree	11	11.7
Missing or did not respond	5	5.3
Strongly disagree	3	3.2

How do students experience RP? How is repeated misbehavior addressed?

Respondents were asked a series of questions seeking to better understand how students experience RP at ILS schools. The first question asked respondents if they were aware of other names students may refer to RP by The majority of respondents (57.6%) reported that students do not refer to RP by another name; for those who reported students refer to RP by some other name, (42.4 percent) the most common responses were "Circles" or "Circle Time."

Next, the survey asked respondents how many students go through the RP process at the school each month. More than two-thirds of respondents (68.2%) stated that 10 or more to students go through a Restorative Practice session in a month at their school, while slightly more than 20 percent (21.2 percent) said their program was too new to provide such an estimate (Table 19).

Table 19: Approximate number of students who complete a restorative practice session each month:

Student groups	Number	%
More than 10 students	55	68.2
The program is too new to answer	16	21.2
6-10 students (e.g. out of school suspension)	4	9.4
1-5 students	1	1.2

Lastly, respondents were asked next steps for a student who received a Restorative Practice session continues to misbehave. A solid majority of respondents (62.4) noted that the student is given another chance using a RP approach; while one-quarter (25.9 percent) stated that a student will receive a more traditional school sanction, such as an out of school suspension (Table 20). This finding suggests that there is commitment to the RP process as the ILS schools manage the transition toward developing a whole-school approach to RP (B. Morrison, Blood, & Thorsborne, 2005).

Those who selected "other" (11.8 percent) indicated either that they were unsure how the process of addressing repeat behavior post-Restorative Practice session or the issues were dealt with on an individual basis.

Table 20: What happens to a student who goes through the disciplinary aspects of restorative practices program and continues to misbehave at your school?

Response type	Number	%
Students receives another chance using an RP approach	53	62.4

Students receive a traditional school sanction (e.g. out of school suspension)	22	25.9
Other	10	11.8

How has the RP implementation process affected school climate at relationships among staff and students?

Respondents were asked to share their perceptions of how the implementation of RP has affected the climate of the school, for the students, staff, and collectively. Explicitly, respondents were asked if there have been shifts in staff and student relationships and attitudes, engaging the community, and the overall climate in the school.

> *"I believe that this program, if implemented with fidelity, can ultimately enhance student performance and teacher/student relationships."*
>
> *-School Psychologist*

Overall, the majority of respondents indicate that respect amongst staff and students and overall school climate has "somewhat improved" or is "much improved" (Table 21). Among the areas that survey respondents indicated where most improved were "overall school climate (72.4 percent), "student respect for one another" (69.1 percent), and "staff respect for students" (65.9 percent).

Table 21: How has the implementation of Restorative Practices impacted your school? (*n=94*)

Statement	Much Worse	Somewhat worse	About the same	Somewhat improved	Much improved	Did not respond
Student respect for one another	1.1%	2.1%	20.2%	55.3%	13.8%	7.4%
Student respect for staff	0.0%	3.2%	25.5%	50.0%	13.8%	7.4%
Staff respect for students	0.0%	1.1%	23.4%	45.7%	20.2%	9.6%
Staff respect for one another	0.0%	3.2%	26.6%	39.4%	23.4%	7.4%
Overall school climate	0.0%	3.2%	17.0%	44.7%	27.7%	7.4%

Success and Challenges to RP implementation

Survey respondents were asked to provide their thoughts on how RP implementation has progressed thus far, and what, if any, challenges they believe may be impeding the implementation process at their ILS school.

With regard to implementation progress, a plurality of respondents, 47.2 percent, indicated they felt RP had been fully implemented in their school (Table 22). When asked to provide more details as to why they felt this way, respondents indicated that RP was integrated into daily schedules; that meaningful circles were a happening daily throughout their school; and that they felt most teachers in school had "bought in" to the process.

Among respondents who felt that their school was falling short of full implementation (21.3 percent), the most common themes included lack of full buy-in from teachers, staff, and students and that only certain components (e.g. restorative circles) had been fully implemented. Given that buy-in was mentioned as both a success and challenge, this finding suggests more training may be necessary to generate investment in the whole-school model of RP (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005).

Table 22: Do you feel that they have been fully implemented at your school?

Length of time	Number	%
Yes	42	47.2
Too early to tell	28	31.5
No	19	21.3

Lastly, survey respondents were asked about the challenges, if any, they experienced in implementing RP at their ILS school (Table 23). The challenges that were cited most often by survey respondents were: lack of student family support (38.3 percent); inadequate training (31.9 percent); resistance from students (26.6 percent); staff buy-in (24.5 percent). For those respondents who chose "other" as their response, the difficulty in incorporating RP into already compact teaching schedules was the most cited response.

Table 23: What challenges has your school experienced implementing Restorative Practices?

Level of agreement	Number	%
Lack of student family support	36	38.3
Training needs not met	30	31.9
Resistance from students	25	26.6
Lack of staff buy-in	23	24.5
Other	17	18.1
Lack of administrative support	7	7.4
Insufficient funding	5	5.3

Note: Percentages do not total 100 because respondents could select multiple responses.

Potential impact on student attendance and suspension

In addition to the qualitative aspect of this project, the following section examines the role RP implementation may have on student suspensions and attendance rates,[1] both of which are considered to be important indicators of both school climate and student success (Durham, Bettencourt, & Connolly, 2014). Chronic absenteeism and student success were not evaluated here due to lack of reliable available data.

Looking at the suspension and attendance data from School Year 2016-2017 through 2018-19, a consistent pattern emerges. In Table 24, the findings show a significant reduction in the number of student suspensions from year to year at the ILS schools.

Table 24: Pre and post implementation suspension and attendance rates

School Year	Total suspensions	Mean number of suspensions per school	Suspension rate (per 100)	Mean Attendance Rate
2016-17	804	57.4	13.0	90.3%
2017-18	479	34.2	7.7	89.4%
2018-19	450	32.1	7.2	88.4%

Pre- and post-implementation changes from SY 16-17 to SY 18-19 show the total number of suspensions dropped by 354, a reduction of 44 percent. Additionally, the average number of total

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[1] One additional Fall 2020 brief will examine these two indicators more closely as they relate to the implementation of Restorative Practices.

suspensions per school dropped 44 percent (from 57.2 to 32.1) while the suspension rate per 100 students saw a reduction of 5.7 percentage points (from 13 per 100 to 7.2 per 100). With regard to student attendance, there was a two-percentage point reduction in the mean attendance rate for the ILS school over the same time period, going from 90.3% in SY 16-17 to 88.4% in SY 18-19.

These observations, along with the qualitative data in this case study, begin to point toward at least some potential evidence of promising results for RP as an effective intervention (Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2016). That said, these findings are based solely on program exposure with no control comparison. Thus, it is unclear that these outcomes were a direct result of the implementation of RP in the ILS schools.

Discussion

The findings in this evaluation sought to capture the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of school staff regarding the restorative practice's implementation process, if the process has changed school climate, and if any potential relationships exist between the process and the proximal indicators of student attendance and student suspensions. With regard to those objectives, this evaluation found the following:

- The majority of respondents indicated that their ILS is implementing a Whole-School RP model that they received multiple RP trainings, and that "Restorative Circles" are the most prominently featured primary component in their ILS schools. Furthermore, those respondents who completed the survey believe that most students are aware and have access to RP when needed. Notwithstanding, challenges do exist with raising awareness and support for RP among parents and caregivers and increasing investment in the success of RP implementation from both staff and students.

- Respondents indicated that the overall climate and staff to students/student to student/staff to staff relationships have improved. Conversely, the findings also indicate that there is room for growth, specifically within all three types of relationship.

- The pre-/post-implementation analysis of student suspensions at the ILS schools indicates that there is a potential relationship between the implementation of RP at these schools and a reduction in the number of student suspensions. What is unclear from this data, however, is whether Restorative Practices is the cause driving this decline.

Despite a lack of causal evidence, the findings here are extremely useful in guiding the discussion on how best to reduce the systematic challenges and improve upon the successes to the Restorative Practices implementation process. For example, research suggests that teachers and staff who are perceived to be strong implementers of RP components have better relationships with students than those who use RP components indiscriminately (Gregory et al., 2016). Likewise, a recent randomized control trial of restorative practices, one of the first studies of its kind, found that mean suspension rates and disparities in suspension rates were reduced in the restorative practice schools (Augustine et al., 2018) .

Limitations

<u>Methodology biases</u> – The sample of survey respondents is small and was limited to those identified as working in ILS schools. It is not a random sample, and the respondents are not a representative sample.

<u>Unobservable factors</u> – Characteristics such as parent's education level, family and neighborhood stressors, and child and family health problems may contribute to higher or lower rates of attendance and the number of student behavioral incidents. The data did not allow for observation of these factors.

<u>Correlational observations</u> – The findings in this memo are not causal. As a result, the author urges caution with regard to making generalizable inferences.

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