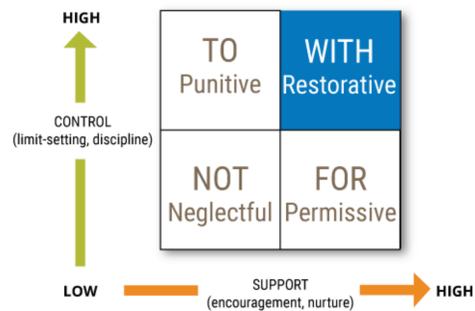


RESTORATIVE PRACTICES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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WHAT ARE RESTORATIVE PRACTICES?

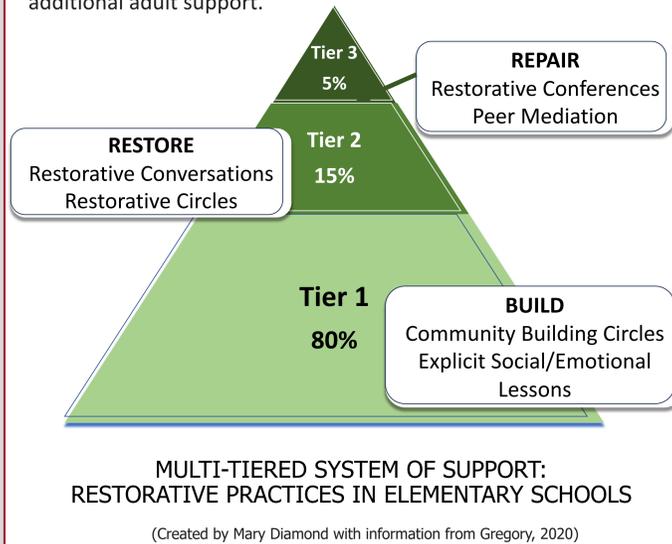
Restorative Practices (RPs) are an alternative approach to the historically punitive school discipline system. Restorative practice is the implementation of Restorative Justice in education, which is defined as “facilitating learning communities that nurture the capacity of people to engage with one another and their environment in a manner that supports and respects the inherent dignity and worth of all” (Evans, 2016). RPs are rooted in strengthening individual and community relationships to create a sense of belonging and provide a system of communal accountability that sets the stage for repairing harm that may arise from student or educator behavior.



Restorative Justice in Education exists in the high support/high control window of social control, where discipline is done *with* the students rather than *to* them.

HOW ARE THEY USED IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS?

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) have been shown to be the most effective way to implement Restorative Practices in schools. Tier 1 supports students in all classrooms and builds community and social-emotional skills. Tier 2 involves targeted interventions for situations with less serious harm, like nonphysical conflict between students. Tier 3 interventions are for situations with more serious harm, like physical violence, and happen with additional adult support.



TIER 1

Community Building Circles

These are meetings or discussions about community values/expectations which build the learning community necessary for restorative practices.



Explicit Social-Emotional Lessons

Explicit Social-Emotional Lessons develop students' skills with emotional regulation, empathy, conflict management, etc.



TIER 2

Restorative Conversations & Circles

Students often need scaffolding for how to navigate conflict and repair any harm that has happened. Restorative conversations provide a means to repair harm, while maintaining a positive self-view and circumvent shame through finding possibilities for redemption. Students are taught to use affective language when navigating conflict.

Questions for those who have been harmed:

- What did you think when you realized what had happened?
- What impact has this incident had on you and others?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

Questions for those who have created harm:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking of at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who has been affected by what you have done, and how were they affected?
- What do you think you need to do to make things right?

Restorative Conversation Scaffolding
(Sourced from IIRP Resources)

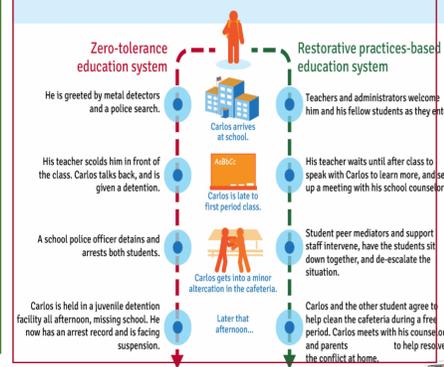
TIER 3

Restorative Conferences

These are utilized after more serious behaviors have occurred, including physical violence. Conferences are more formal versions of restorative conversations and include adding more adult voices to the conversation (Katic, 2020).

A Tale of Two Schools

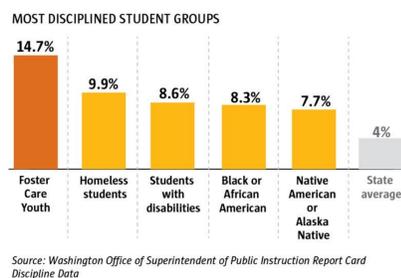
Carlos had a heated argument with his parents before leaving for school, so he's running late. Let's see the difference that restorative policies and practices can make.



RATIONALE

Punitive and exclusionary discipline has been associated with several negative outcomes for students:

- Increased likelihood of being expelled again (Mowen, 2020)
- Higher likelihood to be arrested in the future (Cueller, 2015)
- Lower academic achievement (Blake, 2022)
- Increased likelihood of dropping out of school (Morgan, 2021)



Disparities between different groups of students begin as early as preschool and persist throughout K-12 schooling. The harm of exclusionary measures are disproportionately affecting minority groups of students (Lustick, 2021).

SUPPORTING THEORIES

- **Restorative Theory of Justice:** This theory emphasizes the benefits of reparations over punishment. It is rooted in global indigenous traditions that value respect and relationships, as exemplified by Navajo peacemaker courts and Maori justice processes that highlight the interconnectedness of communities (Evans, 2016).
- **Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Learning:** Learning is inherently social and occurs through interactions. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) aligns with the collaborative nature of Restorative Practices, where educators and peers scaffold self-reflection and skill-building, guiding students' development within a supportive community.
- **Freire's Theory of Critical Pedagogy:** This theory challenges traditional educational models that view students as passive recipients of knowledge, often referred to as the "banking model of education." It promotes an educational practice that is dialogic, participatory, and rooted in the lived experiences of students. Restorative Practices embody Freire's ideals by creating dialogic spaces where students actively participate in their education and community. This model empowers students to shape their reality, fostering a sense of agency and responsibility.

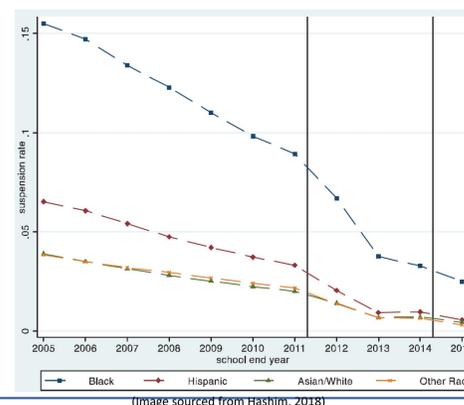
WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS ON STUDENTS?

There are many positive outcomes associated with implementation of Restorative Practices in elementary schools. These include a decrease in punitive discipline measures, lessening of the racial discipline gap, positive impacts on social climate and relationships, increased academic outcomes, and a reported overall increase in student well-being.

Use of Restorative Practices

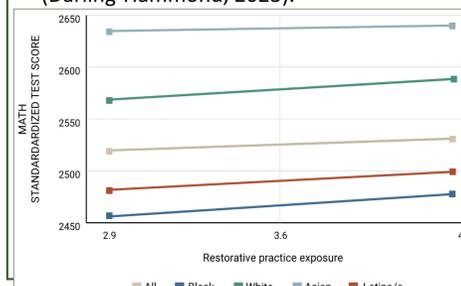
Impacts on Discipline

- Getting a Restorative Intervention **decreased odds of Out-of-School suspension for the remainder of the year by 60%** (Gregory, 2018), and schools that implemented RP had **85% fewer behavior referrals** (Ingraham, 2015)
- After the LA Unified School District adopted RP **the gap between students of color and white students narrowed considerably** (Hashim, 2018).



Impacts on Student Well-being and Academic Achievement

- Students and staff reported **greater harmony within their school, increased empathy and awareness of one's behavior, increased accountability, and higher respect** (Kehoe, 2017).
- Half of students reported a **significant decrease in bullying behavior** (Wong, 2011) and **greater exposure to restorative practices was associated with reduced cyberbullying** (Acosta, 2019).
- Increasing exposure to restorative practices during the transition from 5th to 6th grade **improved standardized test performance in both English language arts and mathematics** (Darling-Hammond, 2023).



WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

One challenge of integrating Restorative Practices is that a whole-school approach is required to reap the full benefits of student outcomes. Qualitative analysis from interview data with 18 school-based RP practitioners demonstrated that there are indicators of a successful RP program: administrative support, school wide buy-in, discipline policy reform, addressing equity and social justice, focus on student leadership and voice, family and community involvement, and integrating tiers of support into the school-wide approach for RP (Gregory, 2020).

Studies have shown that partial implementation of Restorative Practices leads to less impactful outcomes. Wong demonstrated that restorative whole-school approaches were correlated to decreased bullying significantly more than the partial implementation and control groups. For example, half of students in schools with a whole-school approach reported a decrease in bullying behavior, compared to no change in the partial implementation and an increase in the control group (Wong, 2011). This is further supported by Norris, who noted that “the reactive-only RA model [Tier 3 formal conferencing only]...did not develop sufficiently to significantly influence happiness or school engagement scores” (2018). This suggests that whole-school restorative practices such as community circles and restorative conversations are beneficial to reaping the benefits of RP.

WHAT TOOLS ARE AVAILABLE?

- International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP): implementation guide for restorative practices in elementary school with sample lesson plans
- Restorative Teaching Tools: wide variety of games that build relationships, understanding about restorative practices, and skills relevant to RP in students.
- Educators for Social Justice: has a list of stories with captions of which RPs are described in the book. For example, one storybook listed, *The Honest to Goodness Truth*, is about a small girl that tells lies and then repairs the harm she has created with her mother by being accountable and apologizing.



Inquiry Paper

References