Perceptions of Secondary School Administrators Regarding the Implementation of

Restorative Practices

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my devoted family for their unconditional love and support throughout this journey.

To my husband Steve, you are my strength, happiness, and my favorite coach. Thank you for always being there when I needed to hear, "You're almost done. Keep going, I'm proud of you." You have pushed me throughout the entire journey, and I could not have accomplished this goal without you.

A special dedication goes to my parents, my late father, Bennie, and my mother, Marine because without their love, guidance, and sacrifice, I would not be the person I am today. Mama, thank you for being my role model and inspiration in this journey and my educational career. Thank you for keeping me grounded throughout the process and for giving me the space necessary to complete my assignments, readings, and extended writing sessions. Your words of encouragement and simple pride-filled smiles made this work possible and I am forever thankful.

Abstract

Background: Rates of suspension and expulsion have increased dramatically since schools began to implement zero-tolerance policies for managing student behavior. The increased implementation of zero-tolerance policies results in higher rates of behavioral problems and suspensions. Restorative discipline is a rapidly growing alternative approach to traditional punitive methods of discipline that have become ineffective. **Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to understand and explore how the participants experienced the implementation of restorative practices to build and sustain relationships and manage student behavior. The study addressed the following research question: What are secondary school administrators' perceptions of the implementation and success of restorative practices? **Methods:** This qualitative case study utilizing participants' narratives investigated the perceptions of secondary school administrators implementing restorative practices on their campuses as a means of managing student discipline. Three secondary school administrators were selected using a social networking sample of administrators from an urban school district in North Houston within the first year of implementing the restorative approach initiative. The district's initiative includes training on the theoretical foundation and techniques of a restorative approach, a campus readiness assessment, and an implementation plan. The researcher collected data through the use of a semi-structured interview with each study participant and a follow-up member-checking interview to discuss the themes that emerged from the interviews. The researcher's reflective notes, which were recorded bi-monthly, were also included in the research. The three participants' interview responses were transcribed electronically and analyzed using traditional thematic methods to discover contributing factors, patterns,

and ideas that captured the perceptions of the administrators. A peer review of the identified themes was conducted to protect potential bias. The researcher organized the patterns into themes, conducted word frequency tests, and created word clouds to illustrate the themes through the identification of keywords and phrases. **Results:** The findings revealed that secondary school administrators within the first year of implementing restorative practices faced the challenge of shifting mindsets from punitive discipline management practices to a restorative approach. However, the interviews with the study participants highlighted observations of positive change regarding the interactions between students and staff and the development of communication skills through the use of community circles. Additionally, the study participants perceived the commitment and buy-in of the staff to have an influence on the growth and development of the students throughout the implementation of the initiative. Moreover, the interviews revealed that the administrators viewed the use of restorative practices to be effective with the students who were receptive to the idea of the restorative approach and those who actively participated in community circles. **Conclusion:** The study participants agreed that the mindset of administrators and staff needed to shift from punitive beliefs when implementing restorative practices in order to provide an opportunity for student growth and development. The use of a restorative approach to managing discipline developed positive changes on each campus through the use of community building circles in small groups. Students were receptive to the new approach to managing student discipline and participated in the activities. The students who participated in the restorative circles were receptive and open to growth and improved relationships.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Introduction

School districts across the state are responsible for preparing students for life after high school by ensuring that the students have access to choices and opportunities in the workforce, higher education, or enlistment in the military. Along with the responsibility of making sure students have the opportunity for quality education, school leaders must make sure all students are able to learn in a safe and positive school environment. The school leaders must make sure there are systems and structures in place to maintain order and safety for all students. The priority focus is growth and improvement in academic outcomes for all students, but disciplinary concerns must be addressed as well.

In an effort to address school violence incidents and manage disruptive behaviors, educational leaders and policymakers have employed various strategies that promote school safety. One strategy is the implementation of zero-tolerance policies which are defined as "policies that mandate predetermined and severe consequences or punishment for specific offenses" (Fries & DeMitchell, 2007; Stader, 2004). Zero tolerance was initially implemented as a means to show the public that violent behaviors were being addressed in schools. Educators have since expressed that the application of zero tolerance in this manner throws common sense out the window, as it is known in education that one size never fits all (Jones, 2013). The "one size fits all" practices were criticized as students' circumstances and intent were not considered in consequence decisions. Rates of suspension and expulsion have increased dramatically since schools began to implement zero-tolerance policies (Smith, Fisher, & Frey, 2015). Schools are transitioning from the era of zero-tolerance due to the lack of effectiveness of punitive

discipline models. The concerns that are raised when considering zero-tolerance policies include the higher rates of behavioral problems and suspensions (Anderson and Ritter, 2017). Exclusionary practices have been associated with lower academic achievement (Beck & Muschkin, 2012), higher rates of school dropout (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013), and higher involvement in the juvenile justice system (Fabelo et al., 2011). History shows that suspension and expulsion of students do more harm than good, pushing students out of the school system and leading to a greater level of dropout and harmful learning environments (Riley, 2017). Situations requiring discipline in schools provide opportunities for learning, growth, and community-building (Amstutz and Mullet, 2015). There is an increased effort in making more informed decisions regarding the number of students who are being suspended and strengthening relationships between the individuals. There is also an increased effort in making social connections within communities.

"But what about the students who need more?" At-risk students who have experienced some type of trauma typically thrive from a different approach by educators in order to successfully complete high school. These students require more patience and understanding. These students also require support from instructional leaders who accept that they make mistakes and help teach them different alternatives with a more positive and acceptable result. Finally, these students need instructional leaders who are willing to give them a second chance when others have considered them failures and disregard their potential for academic success. The implementation of restorative discipline (RD) and restorative practices (RP) in schools is a rapidly growing alternative approach to traditional punitive methods of discipline that have become ineffective.

Challenging behavior most likely occurs when the demands being placed on the child exceed their capacity to respond adaptively (Greene, 2014). The principles and values of restorative justice consider how we live in community with one another (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015). According to Jones (2013), restorative justice programs in schools provide non-punitive reconciliation and community building by having students be accountable for their behavior by focusing on how it may have infringed on someone else's rights.

My Story

My journey in education began before I actually signed a contract as a teacher. My mother served as an educator for more than 50 years in the capacity of secretary, teacher, librarian, counselor, and school board member. As a child, I recall playing with my dolls by lining them up in rows in their classroom while forcing them to listen to my storytelling and reading as well as taking attendance. I would follow my mother to work and assist teachers in preparing their rooms for their students at the beginning of the year. I would secretly listen to her conversations with her teacher and counselor friends as they discussed their daily events and was more than excited to hear how each student was guided to success. I knew once I graduated that I would indeed follow in my mother's footsteps and become an educator.

My actual career in education began 25 years ago in a self-contained classroom in Longview. I moved back home to Houston and began to work within the district where I attended schools and graduated. I loved my position as a resource math teacher, and I coached volleyball and basketball. I was on cloud nine as I worked with students who needed a little more attention from their teachers, someone with a bit more patience and

willingness to forgive than others, and someone who was willing to see the students for who they were at that moment and working with them so they would reach their highest potential. Near the end of that first year back in Houston, I became one of the teachers who students from all over wanted to come to visit with. The students began sharing their stories with me and depended on me for guidance and advice. I started finding myself in spaces where I was helping students navigate their way more than the teaching curriculum. I decided that although I had been shying away from school counseling, it was truly in my blood and a field I needed to pursue. I enrolled in the graduate program for school counseling at Sam Houston State University and shadowed one of the counselors at the high school where I was teaching to make sure counseling was really something I wanted to do. The following year, the ninth-grade campus opened, and I applied for one of the counseling positions. I became a counselor and for the next seven years, I worked with first time and repeat ninth graders. After the district moved its night high school to a campus of its own, a new program that catered to overage, repeat ninth graders opened at the alternative school of choice. I interviewed and was offered the position of counselor and my journey began.

An alternative high school offers students a unique and personalized learning experience in a more individualized environment for students who aren't succeeding in the traditional high school setting. The barriers to success include academic gaps, attendance, behavior, disciplinary, and safety concerns. Students and teachers are able to establish meaningful relationships due to the lower student to adult ratio. Once the students began experiencing success, I was able to establish a higher level of trust and respect with them. While guiding them through their graduation plan, I was able to visit

more frequently with the students and get to know their needs. The students often had lagging skills which prevented them from behaving rationally in certain situations. The students had limited exposure beyond their neighborhoods, so I always took pleasure in taking them on field trips and community experiences. Although my high school experience was different from many of the students, I had a bond with the alternative education students and an understanding of their social and emotional needs. After seven years, I decided to pursue an administrative role which after five years provided the opportunity for me to return to the alternative school of choice as Principal. As the Principal of Hill Center for Learning, I understand the need for establishing a strong campus culture that encourages the development of a sense of community and building relationships. Upon learning the basic principles of restorative practices, I was immediately intrigued by how the approach to managing student discipline could possibly benefit my campus and student needs. The circle, which is a component of the practice, is a process for building relationships (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015). The practice of using circles strengthens trust and builds caring relationships between adults and students which in turn provides a connection to the campus. The students at Hill Center for Learning are at-risk of dropping out of school so it is crucial that a support system is provided early on and often to capture their attention and desire to finish school.

The majority of punishments for violations of a school district's Student Code of Conduct in Texas schools are discretionary. Due to the nature of the campus being considered an alternative school, high incidents of discipline infractions, and the high percentage of students who have been introduced to the criminal justice system, my

campus was one of 11 campuses chosen to implement restorative practices during the 2019-2020 school year. Frederick Douglass said it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.

The introduction to restorative practices is a collaboration between the school district and the Harris County Department of Education. Each of the eleven campuses designated a team of at least five leaders to participate in the training. The goals of the training included understanding the key values, concepts and practices to circle and restorative practices and developing skills to plan and facilitate talking circles. Schoolwide implementation of a restorative approach may take three to five years (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). During the introductory year of implementation of restorative practices, each campus was charged with establishing their goals for the year, identifying the process that would be used to secure buy-in from the faculty, the logistics for when community circles would take place, and the determination of how lessons would be used (common lessons or teachers running their own circles). The use of circles was the primary focus of implementation for the eleven campuses. The use of circles in schools includes the improvement of classroom management techniques, conversations on difficult topics, problem resolution, and the correction of wrongdoings including those affected by the occurrence, the wrongdoer, and relevant community members.

The implementation of restorative practices is a practice used to strengthen the sense of community in schools and to alleviate harm. Once trauma has been experienced the impact is not able to be reversed. Students and teachers are encouraged to talk through their problems or feelings and build stronger relationships in order to prevent conflict and violence before it happens. When students have strong, trusting relationships

both with adults and their peers, it is harder for them to misbehave (Smith, Fisher, & Frey, 2015). The selection of my campus for this initiative has been welcomed and embraced. Mahatma Gandhi said, "We must be the change we wish to see in the world." I am excited about the opportunity to possibly be a model for other campuses to follow as we attempt to reduce the number of discipline incidents and build stronger relationships between students and teachers, teachers and their co-workers, and students and their peers.

Statement of the Problem

Zero-tolerance policies, which deliver harsh, predetermined punishments, are the root cause of many suspensions and expulsions in schools today often affecting minority students (Maynard & Weinstein, 2019). As Principal of an alternative school of choice with a background in school counseling, I have observed students that are disrespectful to some campus staff members, but they fully adhere to classroom norms and expectations with other educators. There are students who work well with some students, but they may be defiant, disrespectful, and/or not cooperative with other students. The use of restorative practices has been suggested to improve classroom climates and positively affect student academic performance, decrease student absenteeism, improve student self-esteem, and improve the psychological and emotional well-being of students (Smith et al., 2015; Thapa et al., 2013).

Hill Center for Learning is in an urban school district located in North Houston and covers over 100 square miles. The district educates over 67,000 students making it one of the largest school districts in the state of Texas. Over 95% of students are a minority and many students come from families that are economically disadvantaged.

Hill Center for Learning opened its doors in the 1994-95 school year and served as an alternative school of choice that met at night so non-traditional students could return to school and complete their education. Some students worked full-time jobs during the day and chose to attend school in the evening. Currently, Hill Center for Learning serves 162 students from varied areas of the school district. The students are referred from their zoned campuses and undergo an application and interview process for enrollment consideration.

The majority of students that attend Hill Center for Learning are labeled as at-risk and have experienced limited success in traditional high school settings. The Texas Education Code identifies a student as at-risk of dropping out of school. Considering their identification as an at-risk student, it is important to provide a comprehensive program comprising a number of resources and supports to provide a safe and positive environment to ensure these students successfully matriculate through high school and earn their high school diploma. Students experience greater success at Hill Center for Learning due to smaller class sizes, accelerated block scheduling, and the provision of the opportunity to build healthy and impactful relationships with professional school staff. Social-emotional learning is a vital component of academic achievement and later success in life (Jones and Doolittle, 2017). Although our campus focuses on academic success and credit recovery, we understand that it is equally important that we equip our students with the tools they need to lead healthy and productive lives.

An abundance of research exists that supports various interventions for at-risk students. The focus at Hill Center for Learning is to produce productive citizens by focusing on skills for living that extend beyond the classroom. One of the key goals of

any school is the building of a sense of community between staff and students as well as

between the students themselves. The campus would greatly benefit from a disciplinary

management system that meets the social-emotional needs of the students. More than two

decades of research demonstrate that education promoting social and emotional learning

gets results (CASEL, 2019). For such cooperative relationships to best develop,

according to Tyler and Blader (2000), individuals need to feel a high level of pride in

membership of the group and a high level of respect within the group. During the 2019-

2020 school year, Hill Center for Learning is participating in an initiative that encourages

the implementation of restorative practices. The International Institute for Restorative

Practices defines restorative practices as an emerging social science that studies how to

strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within

communities. By incorporating the practice of Circles into the everyday life of the school

community, the expected outcome includes the building and maintenance of a healthy

community in which all members experience feelings of connectedness and respect.

Conceptual Framework for the Study

The theory of restorative justice and the principles for restorative practices

provided the basis of the research questions and focus on this qualitative case study.

Restorative justice is deeply rooted in the restoration of social relationships. Within the

relationship, each individual bears the right to equal dignity, respect, and concern.

Punitive discipline does not focus on the consequences of behavior. School discipline

methods that remove students from the school setting such as off-campus suspension

have a tendency to shame and alienate students (Macready, 2009). Schools that utilize

restorative practices as a means of managing student discipline on the other hand use intervention to enhance a sense of community and the strengthening of relationships.

Restorative justice is "an alternative framework for thinking about wrongdoing" (Zehr 2002). Restorative justice views crime as a violation of people and obligations. The empowerment process is for both the victims and offenders and focuses on harm and the needs of the victim. The obligations for the offender and all stakeholders including the community are addressed. This process places emphasis on a collaborative and caring approach. Zehr (2002) identified three pillars to restorative justice: (a) harms and needs; (b) obligations; (c) engagement. Restorative justice requires that we acknowledge and address the victims' harms and needs, hold offenders responsible for right those harms, and involve victims, offenders, and communities in this process.

My beliefs about restorative discipline practices in an alternative school of choice have been established from my commitment to make sure students are equipped with the necessary tools for being productive citizens after graduation. Based on my own experiences with students who are faced with their last attempt of obtaining their high school diploma, I aim to find an approach to managing student discipline that is more beneficial than punitive discipline practices and policies that enforce zero tolerance. Restorative practices embrace a relational approach to building a school climate and addressing student behavior. Restorative justice requires those who inflict harm to others to take responsibility for their actions and for the harm they have caused. The offender then focuses on repairing the harm and decreases the chance of them causing harm again. This approach to correcting undesired behaviors fosters community over exclusion, social acceptance and engagement over control, and accountability over punishment. The

restorative justice process uses collaboration which can lead to the transformation of people, relationships, and communities.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The campus administrator is crucial to the success of the implementation of different disciplinary systems such as restorative practices in order to address high suspension and expulsion rates. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to identify the strategies, practices, and processes utilized by secondary school administrators to introduce and implement restorative practices and the use of restorative circles as an alternative approach to addressing disciplinary concerns along with maintaining a safe, positive school environment. The goal is to provide current administrators who are considering implementing restorative practices on their campus a personalized account of the journey taken by other secondary school administrators. The study also captures the experiences of other secondary level principals who are within their first year of implementing restorative practices at their schools.

Schools are seeking alternatives to replace exclusionary policies in hopes of reducing the reliance on school exclusion and reducing the overrepresentation of ethnic minorities in the discipline system (Anderson and Ritter, 2017). Administrators who are struggling with increased rates of in-school and out of school suspensions can benefit from a different approach to addressing behaviors. Developing and implementing restorative practices on a school campus is a complex process that requires ongoing support, training, and opportunities for reflection. The approach the Principal of the campus uses to introduce restorative practices to his or her staff and students is crucial to the success of the implementation of a different disciplinary system to address school

safety, incidents of violence, high suspension and expulsion rates. Implementation is where you move from aspiration to mastery (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012).

Previous literature has reported the success of a restorative approach in terms of reducing suspensions, expulsions, and office referrals for behavioral issues (Vaandering, 2010). Students who have participated in restorative programs have shown a significant reduction of bullying behaviors, higher self-esteem, and higher empathic attitudes in comparison to students who either did not participate or partially participated in the program. It is my desire that readers will use this study to identify strategies, practices, and processes utilized by secondary school administrators to introduce and implement restorative practices and the use of restorative circles in their schools.

Research Question

Through the reflection of the process as a campus leader and participant-observer during the process of implementing restorative practices on the campus of an alternative school of choice, this study addressed the following research question: What are administrators' perceptions of the implementation and success of restorative practices in an alternative school of choice? This study will help explore the experiences of secondary school administrators who are within the first year of implementing restorative practices as an alternative discipline system on their campuses.

Definition of Terms

Alternative School of Choice: a school that doesn't provide a completely traditional learning experience as in a traditional comprehensive school. Alternative schools and programs of choice offer a different structure, learning philosophy, or academic emphasis to accommodate different student needs, interests, and learning styles. The effective use

of such instructional strategies as an independent study, community-based education, focused or thematic education, and flexible scheduling increases attendance and improves performance while fostering student engagement.

At-Risk Student: a student identified as at-risk of dropping out of school. The indicator codes include: not maintaining an average equivalent to 70 on a scale of 100 in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum during a semester in the preceding or current school year or is not maintaining such an average in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum in the current semester; not advancing from one grade level to the next for one or more school years; not performing satisfactorily on an assessment instrument administered to the student under TEC Subchapter B, Chapter 39, and who has not in the previous or current school year subsequently performed on that instrument or another appropriate instrument at a level equal to at least 110 percent of the level of satisfactory performance on that instrument; is pregnant or is a parent; has been placed in an alternative education program in accordance with TEC §37.006 during the preceding or current school year; has been expelled in accordance with TEC §37.007 during the preceding or current school year; is currently on parole, probation, deferred prosecution, or other conditional release; was previously reported through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) to have dropped out of school; is a student of limited English proficiency, as defined by TEC §29.052; is in the custody or care of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or has, during the current school year, been referred to the department by a school official, officer of the juvenile court, or law enforcement official; is homeless, as defined NCLB, Title X, Part C, Section 725(2), the term "homeless children and youths", and its subsequent amendments; or resided in the

preceding school year or resides in the current school year in a residential placement

facility in the district, including a detention facility, substance abuse treatment facility,

emergency shelter, psychiatric hospital, halfway house, or foster group home.

Circles: A restorative practice that is used to proactively build relationships and

communities through open dialogue and discussions. Circles are an integral part of

Indigenous life in the community. Participants of the circle are able to speak and listen to

one another in a safe space that has values, guidelines, and agreements.

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS): A school-wide systems

approach to improve school climate and create safer and more effective schools by

identifying and supporting desired behaviors.

Principal: The school principal is the highest-ranking administrator in an elementary,

middle, or high school. In some school districts, a single person functions as

superintendent and principal. Principals, headmasters, and others who are responsible for

the overall operation of a school are often called school leaders.

Restorative Justice (RJ): A social science that studies how to build social capital and

achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision making. It is

considered reactive and consists of informal and formal approaches that respond to crime

and wrongdoing after it occurs (Wachtel, 2016).

Restorative Practices (RP): A social science that studies how to build social capital and

achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision making. Restorative

practices proactively build relationships and a sense of community to prevent conflict and

wrongdoing (Wachtel, 2016).

Summary

    Chapter one has offered background information on the researcher and the rationale for the relevance of this study in regard to meeting the needs of students and an approach for schools to use in order to reduce suspensions, expulsions, and office referrals for behavioral issues. The research question was introduced which includes the perceptions of educators on the implementation of restorative practices at an alternative school of choice. The next chapter details additional studies and text that are relevant to the successful implementation of transforming schools from rule-based to a relationship-based approach to managing student discipline.

Chapter II

The Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study utilizing participants' narratives is to identify strategies and practices used by secondary administrators related to the implementation of restorative practice as an approach to managing student discipline at an alternative school of choice. The implementation of restorative practices at the participating campuses is a response to a need to decrease office discipline referrals and suspension rates.

The review of the literature will explore the concept of restorative practices and its use as an approach to repairing harm and relationships. Next, the leadership characteristics that are necessary for getting the support and buy-in from students and staff for the successful implementation of restorative practices on campus will be outlined. The next area of the literature review will be a brief look at the components of school culture and how it relates to creating an environment of support. After delving into the positive aspects of school culture, we will discuss the relationship between social-emotional learning and restorative practices. Finally, culturally responsive restorative justice practices will be showcased in order to focus on educators' respect for the cultural, social, and experiential differences among themselves and their students.

Restorative Practices

Restorative practice is a philosophy that focuses on building positive relationships (Wachtel, 2013), which must be fostered school-wide with all staff and students. Howard Zehr (2015), who is known for his work with restorative justice, began in the criminal justice setting. He has adapted the practice for use in educational settings. Restorative

practice is a system of principles and processes that build and sustain a culture of respect, responsibility, and accountability (Berkowitz, 2017). Restorative practices involve both proactive and reactive approaches to student and staff interactions in schools. Restorative practices are interwoven into every interaction in the building (Smith, Fisher, & Frey, 2015). The use of restorative practices has become one of the most popular methods of resolving conflicts in schools. The founder of the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), Wachtel (2003) defines restorative practices as "the term restorative practice includes any response to wrongdoing which falls within the parameters defined by our social discipline window as both supportive and limit-setting" (p. 84). Schools are turning to the use of restorative practices as an alternative to zero-tolerance policies. The goal of restorative practices is to create an experience that leaves all who participate in feeling fully validated with their full humanity intact (Valandra & Hokšíla, 2020). Through consistent implementation, restorative practices will promote and strengthen positive school culture and enhance the development of relationships within the school community.

Interventions are used when harm has occurred and there are also practices included that help to prevent harm from occurring in the future. These interventions and practices build a sense of belonging, shared social responsibility, and safety in the school community. The underlying premise of restorative practices is that people are happier, more cooperative, more productive, and more likely to make positive changes when those in positions of authority do things with them rather than to them or for them. (Wachtel, 2012).

The use of "Circles" is a more formal restorative practice strategy whose development began in the mid-1990s by Dominic Barter in Rio de Janeiro. The use of circles to resolve conflict is a longstanding tradition in restorative justice, originating in the customs of Native Americans and Canadian First Nations communities (Umbreit & Armour, 2011). According to Boyes-Watson and Pranis, the Circle is a highly structured intentional space designed to promote connection, understanding, and dialogue in a group. The Circle process provides the foundation for every student to belong and be significant to the group. Each participant in the Circle has the opportunity to share freely (Whalen, 2019). Students are encouraged to speak from their own experiences (Gollnick and Chinn, 2013). The Circle eliminates the hierarchy between cliques, experienced parents, practicing educators, and the students. The shape of a perfect circle promotes equality (Whalen, 2019). Circles can be used proactively, to develop relationships and build community or reactively, to respond to wrongdoing, conflicts, and problems. Circles can be used in many contexts, from pedagogical protocols, such as a Socratic seminar, to strategies for discussing class-wide concerns (Smith et al., 2015).

The circle process allows people to tell their stories and offer their own perspectives (Pranis, 2005). Restorative justice peacemaking circles can raise trauma awareness and promote healing among communities (Valandra & Hokšíla, 2020). In terms of the use of circles with students, giving them a sense of control is important when wanting to change their behaviors (Mendler, & Mendler, 2012). Circle participants have an opportunity to speak and listen to one another in an atmosphere of safety and equality. The circle has a wide variety of purposes: conflict resolution, healing, support, decision making, information exchange, and relationship development. Circle time (Mosley, 1993)

and morning meetings (Charney, 1992) have been widely used in primary and elementary schools for many years and more recently in secondary schools and higher education (Wachtel, 2012).

All circle processes involve a group sitting in a circle, with an unobstructed view so all members are able to see each other. One person speaks at a time, and the opportunity to speak moves in one direction around the circle. Each person must wait to speak until his or her turn, and no one may interrupt. A small object or talking piece is passed around to indicate who is talking at a given time. Only the person who is holding the talking piece has the right to speak (Wachtel, 2012). Both the circle and the talking piece have roots in ancient and indigenous practices (Mirsky, 2004a, 2004b; Roca, Inc., n.d.).

There are various topics that can be used for circle discussions. Some circles, such as check-in circles, are very informal and are used at the beginning of a week or class period to give students the opportunity to express how they are doing and to build relationships within the group. Circles can also be used for goal setting, discussing class norms, addressing classroom behavior problems, or engaging in academic content (Morrison, 2012). Some practitioners use the wisdom and skills drawn from their life experiences to help young people and adults who have struggled with experiences similar to their own (Valandra & Hokšíla, 2020).

The circle script is prepared ahead of time. The sequential circle is usually structured around topics or questions raised by the circle facilitator. Decorum is used when conducting circles because back and forth arguments are strictly forbidden. The opportunity for quiet voices is maximized and they are provided the opportunity to speak

without interruption from those who are usually louder and more assertive. Individuals who want to respond to something that has been said must be patient and wait until it is their turn to speak. The sequential circle encourages people to listen more and talk less (Wachtel, 2010).

There are qualities that contribute to the establishment of building positive relationships with students. First, the emphasis is placed on the importance of trusting relationships which is the heart of building community and repairing relationships when harm has occurred. Students and staff establish the trust that their school environment will remain safe and consistent. In a trusting environment, individuals are held accountable for their words and actions. They don't live in the fear that they will be ostracized on days when they are not their best selves (Smith, Fisher, & Frey, 2015). Next, there has to be mutual and unconditional respect between the members of the community. Respect is a fundamental belief in the dignity of every person, regardless of their age and role (Smith, Fisher, & Frey, 2015). In this aspect, respect is earned as opposed to being demanded. The next quality that contributes to building positive relationships through restorative practices is the belief that students can learn. Optimism is grounded in a realistic view of circumstances and impacts the results of progress. Intentionality is what turns optimism into results. As leaders, there is a responsibility to teach, intervene, reteach, assess progress, and teach again (Smith, Fisher, & Frey, 2015). As it relates to restorative practices, by being intentional, sound practices are implemented which yield positive, effective results.

Leadership

Although scholars suggest that restorative practices benefit schools and communities, the implementation of these programs is the true testament in determining whether or not the approach is beneficial. The successful implementation of restorative practices is heavily dependent on the quality and passion of the leadership in general within the school (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). Vaandering (2009) in her case study of two JK-8 public schools in Ontario noted that strong leadership characteristics do not necessarily guarantee the development of a restorative school, but what will help the implementation is leadership that will go beyond the procedural aspect of engagement to the emotional aspect of the engagement. She further infers that the leaders responsible for initiating the change need to utilize and reinforce the use of the approach and create safe spaces where others can be engaged socially and emotionally. The leaders must engage the school community in useful dialogue about behavior management in general and then more specifically, the restorative philosophy. A transformational leader is energetic, enthusiastic, and passionate, they are able to inspire others to change expectations, perceptions, and motivations so they can work toward common goals (Aguilar, 2016). An effective school leader can make a world of difference for a school community (Greene, 2014). Schools are implementing restorative practices in an effort to develop safe and caring school cultures that will effectively support the overall purpose of schooling which is student academic achievement. Great staff cultures come from the careful development of habits that build a strong staff community (Bamrick-Santoyo, 2012). The leader should be strategic and able to clearly articulate the vision for the school culture while implementing new initiatives.

Cultural change does not happen overnight. A long term, strategic approach is needed to successfully implement the use of restorative practices campus-wide and it usually takes three to five years to ensure the change is sustained. Blood and Thorsborne (2005) suggest that school leaders enact the following five stages to effectively implement restorative practices. According to Blood and Thorsborne (2005), school leaders must:

1. Gain the commitment of administrators, faculty, and staff by capturing their hearts and minds.

2. Develop a shared vision with the school community and establish clear goals and preferred outcomes that are aligned with the vision.

3. Create responsive and effective practices within the school community and provide support for maintaining these practices with training.

4. Develop a whole-school approach through which there is a realignment of school policy involving the new practice.

5. Promote open, honest, transparent, and respectful professional relationships. Use the restorative processes for managing staff conflicts.

Similar to these stages, Kane et al. (2007) found that schools that seemed to be the most effective with their implementation of restorative practices when their school leaders established clear goals, focused on a positive, child-centered atmosphere, and were committed to building positive relationships. School improvement depends on

effective leadership, and the leaders' ability to build and influence positive, collaborative

school culture. The leader provides an accurate profile of the school's current

performance on the correlation between school performance and future life success

(Muhammad, 2009). The leader's goal is to create a compelling case for looking at

alternative methods by calling attention to the failure of past practices. This strategic

action prepares the staff for exploring other options to improve student performance.

Revamping school discipline is a challenge that is unlikely to be met without vision,

perseverance, a sense of purpose, resilience, patience, perspective, and collaboration

(Greene, 2014). The leadership team has to make a commitment to address the root

problem equally (Bamrick-Santoyo, 2012). If a member of the team fails to get on board

with the initiative, a message is sent to the students and other staff members that the team

isn't in support and that school culture is dependent on an individual.

According to Vuyisile (2013), the leadership style that best fits the social and

restorative theories is servant leadership. Servant leadership refers to a leadership style

that seeks to empower others for the greater good of the organization rather than

themselves (Vuyisile, 2013). The leaders face challenges and obstacles when

implementing new initiatives, however, they are empowered to make a larger impact on

the community. Leaders recognize that their primary role is to organize action, mobilize

and challenge people, and to facilitate exploration of new ways of conducting business

(Greene, 2014). It is impossible to address all of the issues at one time so the leader

should start with staff members who are most invested in the change (Bamrick-Santoyo,

2012). The leader conferences with those staff members and walks through the routines

and procedures that will be used to reset the culture of the campus. Staff members are

trained using the smaller group of invested members first and then the training is delivered to the remainder of the staff. The procedures and routines are practiced and modeled for the staff to make sure there is full understanding. The use of the new practice is observed, evaluated, and reported back to the staff.

The leader recognizes the efforts of the stakeholders implementing the change through the use of celebration or appreciation. Recognition of achievement and celebration of goal attainment are powerful methods for increasing productivity (Nelson, 2007). This recognition provides consistent reinforcement on maintaining focus on the components for implementation that are most important. The act of celebrating success also emphasizes the values that leadership holds in leading the campus through the changes.

Components of School Culture and Climate

Cultures evolve every day whether at a slow pace or in big leaps. Educators are the key in the development of climate (Gollnick and Chinn, 2012). The National School Climate Council (2007) describes school climate as, "the quality and character of school life. It is based on patterns of life experiences and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, and organizational structures" (p.5). The culture of a school is not formed by motivational speeches or statements of values, instead, it is formed by repeated practice and building good habits (Bamrick-Santoyo, 2012). Habits of excellence are formed when students have the opportunity to practice the right things. School and classroom climate can have profound academic and non-academic impacts on students (Koth et al., 2008; National School Climate Council, 2007; Thapa et al., 2013). Exchanges in schools serve to tear

people down (Smith, Fisher, & Frey, 2015). School climate matters in that it informs how we tend to work, teach, learn, and live while there. In schools with strong cultures, students receive a continual message that nothing is more important or as engaging as learning (Bamrick-Santoyo, 2012). The U.S. Department of Education (2014) has identified three principles for improving school climate. School leaders must create positive climates and focus on prevention. Clear, consistent, and appropriate expectations and consequences must be developed in order to address disruptive student behaviors. Finally, it is imperative to ensure fairness, equity, and continuous improvement. All three components are necessary or there will be an imbalance that causes weakness and failure of systems. There are four major elements that are responsible for shaping school climate and culture: safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and institutional environment (Cohen et al., 2009). Many of these elements of school climate are interrelated, but below they will be described in more detail.

Safety is the next component of school culture and climate and it refers to the emotional and psychological safety of a school environment, as well as the physical safety of students in a school. Students cannot learn if they do not feel physically and emotionally safe according to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Safety extends beyond the physical well-being of students. Students must feel supported, welcomed, and respected in order to have a safe learning environment. Discipline practices are usually exclusionary which does not support a positive climate that is conducive to growth and learning. Removal from classrooms, suspensions, and expulsions negatively impact students' academic performance and have a lasting impact on their high school graduation (Waldman, 2016). Traditionally schools' discipline underserved students at

much higher rates than their peers. According to the 2013-2014 Civil Rights Data Collection survey, in grades K-12, Black students are 3.8 times as likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions as white students (p.3). The school's code of conduct should promote positive relationships between students and adults in order to build a positive school climate. The consistent enforcement of school discipline, norms, rules, and expectations helps create a sense of physical and emotional well-being in a school (Cohen et al., 2009). Students who feel safe, benefit from reduced incidents of bullying, violence, and aggression (Thapa et al., 2013). Students are more likely to remain in the classroom and be ready to learn when supported in this type of environment.

The restorative approach, which emphasizes the building and repairing of relationships, has been embraced in the past two decades worldwide. Relationships among teachers and students determine the quality of education (Gollnick and Chinn, 2012). Teaching and learning in schools do not occur in isolation instead relationships play a role in the student's success and connectedness to their schools. Traditional discipline practices focus on the violations of rules whereas restorative practices focus on the violation of people and relationships (Smith, Fisher, & Frey, 2015). As students and teachers interact with one another, relationships are formed. These relationships can be positive or negative depending on the experience and are an intricate factor in the development of school climate. The relationships either facilitate learning or provide a block from learning. Staff and student relationships influence the social climate and the individual performance of students. Student success is supported when students feel connected to teachers, staff, and other students. When students care about or value the relationships with others, they work harder to keep those relationships healthy and intact.

In the event there is harm, they work quickly to repair the damage. Strong student-teacher relationships are vital to well-run classrooms and are important in effective behavior management (Mendler, 2012).

Schools bear the responsibility of facilitating effective teaching and learning. The components included in this responsibility are social-emotional learning and the quality of instruction. There are many factors that are considered when focusing on the quality of instruction. These factors include the teacher's use of praise, expectations, student participation, and varied teaching methods (Cohen et al., 2009). Student achievement can be impacted by positive school culture. Problem-solving can be used to help students make better decisions. When students are taught how to recognize and resolve problems appropriately, they are able to handle themselves both in school and in their community.

Another impact on the school climate is centered around the institutional environment, more specifically school connectedness and school facilities (Thapa et al., 2013). School connectedness refers to the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals (Centers for Disease Control, 2009, p.3). Most students have a strong need to feel connected (Mendler, 2012). Students who experience connectedness with their school tend to experience fewer incidents of violence and have an increased satisfaction of school and academic outcomes. Research shows that students are less likely to engage in risk behaviors, including early sexual initiation, alcohol, tobacco, drug use, and gang involvement and violence. Students who feel connected to their school are more likely to experience more academic success and have better school attendance. Students with a connection to their school, teachers, and peers stay in school longer. Some factors that help strengthen school

connectedness for students include adult support, belonging to a positive peer group, commitment to education, and a positive school environment. School staff members serve as important adults in students' lives. School facilities and resources also have an impact on the school climate. Safety expectations are raised when the school environment is clean and has a pleasant physical environment.

Each of the components of school climate: safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and institutional environment is significant when achieving and maintaining a positive school climate. Teachers have direct control over the elements of safety, relationships, and teaching and learning. Campus administrators usually have more influence over the institutional environment based on the emphasis that is placed on making sure students are connected and valued. When considering the implementation of a school-wide emphasis on using a restorative practice approach to changing behaviors, it is imperative to help teachers establish a positive classroom climate, so that their students can reap the benefits.

Social-Emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning (SEL), as defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is "the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions." According to the 2014 School Discipline Consensus Report, SEL programs have been shown to improve students' social competence, self-awareness, connection to the school, positive interactions with others, and academic performance. Connections are

nurtured through SEL as students learn to understand and manage their emotions and interactions with others. This understanding provides them the necessary skills to resolve conflict and communicate with others.

CASEL outlines the following social and emotional competencies that are necessary for students. Self-awareness consists of assessing one's feelings, interests, values, and strengths which in turn helps students to maintain a sense of self-confidence. Self-management refers to the student's ability to regulate his or her own emotions to handle stress and impulses. Within this component, students address challenges, appropriately express emotions, and academic and personal goal setting. Social awareness requires the student to take the perspective of and empathize with others. The students are also able to recognize and appreciate individual and group similarities and differences. Relationship skills consist of the establishment and ability to maintain healthy and rewarding relationships. Students are encouraged to resist inappropriate social pressure, resolving interpersonal conflict, and seeking help as needed. The final component of SEL is responsible decision making which refers to the students making decisions based on the consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, and respect for others. Students are able to apply decision-making skills to academic and social situations and also contribute to the well-being of their school and community.

Students who derive from challenging socio-economic situations are successful when supported with high-quality collaboration, teacher mentorship, and environments where there is an emphasis on community building (Parker, et al. 2011). Restorative practice is a process through which SEL skills are further learned and refined (Gulbrandson, 2018). Through the process, a safe physical and emotional environment is

established. The circle process increases the likelihood that students will use their skills because they have regular opportunities to talk about and practice them. The use of the process provides structures for listening, gaining insight on others' feelings, and the opportunity to share feelings and experiences along with managing emotions. The climate we create for students can enhance or inhibit the development of these traits as well as student academic learning (Smith, Fisher, & Frey, 2015).

Culturally Responsive Restorative Justice Practices

Culturally responsive restorative justice practices focus on the reality that educators have respect for the cultural, social, and experiential differences among themselves and their students and are curious about their value in order to build relationships with students in classrooms and schools (Archibold, 2016). Educators who develop classroom environments using culturally responsive restorative approaches create spaces for students to learn in the context of difference, collaborate and build responsive relationships with others, and utilize conflict as an opportunity for learning. Good intentions without knowledge will harm students therefore teachers and school leaders must make time and effort to understand the history, traumas, strengths, and challenges of the students being served (Valandra & Hokšíla, 2020). It is important that students have opportunities to learn from each other's experiences and perspectives. In order to do this effectively, teachers must provide safe spaces where students are able to be valued, seen, respected, and cared for. The use of culturally restorative justice practices provides an opportunity for constructive and transformative learning for both the teacher and all students in the classroom.

Schools across the nation have been trying to appropriately address issues of violence and disruption, especially with the increased school shootings and incidents of school violence. The fear of these occurrences and tragic incidents have resulted in the use of punitive methods of school discipline. School systems have a direct tendency toward the use of punishment and exclusion (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). One way schools can decrease their number of suspensions starts with teachers. Educators need to make it a priority to build positive relationships through the development of connections with students, by finding out their interests and listening to their experiences. Students need to feel that the teacher really cares about them; if students feel supported and valued, they are far more likely to be motivated to learn" (Harmer, 2007). As stated by Dupper, Theriot, and Craun (2009), "Positive teacher-child relationships are at the core of being a culturally responsive classroom manager" (p. 9). If the interaction between the adults and students is strengthened and the students have an understanding of the rewards and consequences, it is projected that they will know the behavior expectations for the classroom.

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) refers to pedagogy that embraces equality and inclusion and shares characteristics of the social-emotional learning concept. It is based on the understanding that students learn differently due to factors such as social-emotional needs, language, culture, and family background. The foundation for learning is the culture that expands growth in all students. Gay (2002) defined culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. Culturally responsive teaching emphasizes that all people, especially teachers, should learn about

and respect themselves, one another, and all other people in honor of their many diverse cultural characteristics (Brown, 2007).

Conclusion

This literature review explores the implementation of restorative practices and its use as an approach to repair harm and relationships in schools. The leadership characteristics necessary to move the idea from a simple idea to implementation involve getting the support from students and staff. The components of school culture and its relationship to creating the environment of support were identified as safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the institutional environment. A positive classroom climate is vital to the success of students, but some teachers struggle to create a positive classroom climate. Consistent school wide expectations create the most meaningful student freedom to thrive (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012). The use of a restorative practice framework has been suggested to improve the school climate (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). A pivotal role in how students respond and view their teachers can be impacted by the language that the teachers use. The language used should be conducive to building positive relationships. The relationship between social-emotional learning and restorative practices was identified. Finally, the emphasis on culturally responsiveness was explored in that educators have respect for the cultural, social, and experiential differences among themselves and their students in order to make effective and meaningful connections.

The successful implementation of restorative practices is not a simple task. A paradigm shift must occur that encourages schools to focus on relationships rather than rules. When the shift occurs, schools are able to see the benefits and the positive impacts

that using restorative practices can create. Leaders must believe in the philosophy and support the use of restorative practices as a means of approaching discipline management. The leaders must be willing to provide sufficient and thorough training for the entire staff (Morrison, 2012). The next chapter will describe the methodology used for this qualitative case study utilizing participants' narratives.

Chapter III

Methodology

Introduction

As noted in the previous chapters of this doctoral dissertation, qualitative case study utilizing participants' narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) is the methodology that is being utilized in this study of the experiences of administrators and the implementation of restorative practices on their campuses. My qualitative case study is centered on the question: What are secondary school administrators' perceptions of the implementation of restorative practices? This method of research begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals (Creswell, 2018). The goal of this qualitative case study research is to add value to the readers of the research and to produce a literary representation for implementing restorative practices successfully.

Narrative inquiry is rooted in Dewey's writing on education as an experience that is relational in regard to personal and social interactions, situational, and to the past, present, and future. This set creates a metaphorical three-dimensional narrative space that is not separate from one another. Using this foundation, an inquiry is defined by its' three-dimensional space: studies have temporal dimension and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequence of places (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 25). I will be examining the perspectives of the participants as they introduced the implementation of restorative practices to their staff and students, during the process of the implementation, and also collecting ideas for the evolving practices in their second year.

The narrative theory provides a framework for the desire to empower learners by developing their own voice and helping them form a method of integrating one's life experience into the learning process. My research relies heavily on the experiences gained by administrators while embracing the implementation of restorative practices. As a researcher utilizing narratives from my study participants, my intention is to look for ways to understand and then present real-life experiences through the stories of the research participants (Connelly and Clandinin, 2003). The inclusion of multiple perspectives and common narratives of the experiences emerge which makes the implementation process stronger and richer. The conversations and stories that administrators from other secondary schools shared made me question my own experiences and process of designing the use of restorative practices at an alternative school of choice. Through reflections on these conversations and also the practices implemented on my campus during the process of my doctoral work, there were opportunities to consider how the utilization of these experiences would impact my own campus' success in the implementation of restorative practices. Through the use of a qualitative case study utilizing participants' narratives, my research pays attention to the multiple narratives told on behalf of the participants in the study (Reed-Danahay, 2017). My research question stems from my experience as a campus principal and the desired opportunity to analyze and capture administrators' perceptions of what leadership qualities and culture conditions are needed in order to successfully implement the system of restorative practices as a means to reduce discipline infractions and build a positive school climate and culture. I will analyze my own experiences as well as those of other administrators while introducing the restorative practices to both staff and students to

identify relational practices and common values and beliefs while comparing field notes, interviews, and a personal self-reflection journal.

The intention of the study is to flesh out the experience of the narrative and to tie the narratives together into a comprehensible whole. By examining the past, present, and future experiences of the participants, I will have the opportunity to be the storyteller in sharing what decisions have been made through the introduction of restorative practices as an alternative approach to student discipline to staff and students at an alternative school of choice. Through the practice of telling the administrators' stories of implementation, a unique opportunity is presented by which the process we followed allows others who are preparing to venture into their own practice an outlook on what is required for a new initiative to be embraced by educators and students within the school community. There are several factors that should be considered when attempting to shift mindsets such as this approach to managing student behaviors. The principal has to educate teachers on practices that impact academic gains as well as develop a positive culture and climate of the school. Strong student-teacher relationships are vital to any well-run classroom and are critically important in effective behavior management (Mendler and Mendler, 2012). This study will put me in a position to collect the observations of myself and others in order to obtain multiple perspectives on how campuses can implement restorative practices. By selecting a qualitative case study approach utilizing participants' narratives for my study, I will be given a wider lens to view varied methods of implementation which provides an opportunity to identify the richness of knowledge and experience administrators bring to their practice. The experience of the administrators implementing restorative practices is collected through

storytelling, interviews, and the researcher's journal writing over the course of a year.

The focus of the research is the lived experience of secondary school administrators

during the implementation of a new approach to student discipline. The primary

researcher is embedded in the research field and addresses the special challenges of

implementing a new initiative.

Methodological Framework

This study used a qualitative approach utilizing participants' narratives. A case

study methodology was utilized due to the goal of ascertaining an in-depth understanding

of the perceptions of secondary school administrators regarding the implementation of

restorative practices on their own campuses (Creswell, 2014). A variety of data

collection procedures were utilized within a specific time and in a particular place

(Creswell, 2014). Case studies are bounded by time and activity (Creswell, 2014).

The second feature considered in the selection of the case study design was the

determination of the setting for the case (Creswell, 2014). The context of the case study

involves the setting in which the study occurs. Examples of the setting include the

physical, social, economic, or historical perspective. The context used for the purposes of

this study was an urban school district located in North Houston which serves over

67,000 students in which four campuses were participating in a district initiative to

implement restorative practices on their campuses through the support of Harris County

Department of Education.

The third feature of this study included the narrative that was provided by the

researcher's journal entries. The personal reflections recorded in the researcher's journal

captured her lived experiences while implementing restorative practices on her campus as

a means to managing student discipline. The journal entries were used to provide insight

into the implementation of the initiative. They provided a deeper understanding of the

context of the implementation of the initiative by the administrator, her students and staff.

Participants, Sampling Design, and Data Collection Methods

The following section provides an overview of the participants and context, as

well as the procedures of the study. The components of the study that are mentioned are

based on the common elements of a qualitative case study utilizing participants'

narratives. The secondary school administrators' stories are paired with the researcher's

reflections to provide insight into the processes of narrative research (Clandinin &

Connelly, 2000) as the administrators and researcher moved together through the inquiry

process.

Sampling

The participants in this study were selected through the use of social network

sampling and purposeful "qualitative" sampling (Creswell, 2014). While creating the

criteria for the participants selected for the study, the researcher kept in mind what she

was looking for to best help learn and understand the phenomenon focusing on the

implementation of restorative practices in secondary schools. This practice was directly

reflective of the practice of purposive sampling, in which the researcher specifies the

characteristics of the population of interest and locates individuals with those

characteristics (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). As previously mentioned, the study took

place in an urban school district located in North Houston which covers over 100 square

miles. The criteria used for selecting potential participants included being employed in

the same district that the Harris County Department of Education's initiative was taking

place, fulfilling the role of an administrator of a secondary school campus, and within the first year of implementing the alternative approach to managing student discipline.

Again, the researcher focused on secondary administrators within the first year of implementing restorative practices on their campuses in an urban school district located in North Houston. There were 11 campuses participating in the district initiative during the 2019-2020 school year. Of these campuses, five were secondary schools implementing restorative practices on their campuses as a means to manage student discipline and there were three male administrators and two female administrators. Of these administrators, three to five total administrators were selected to participate in the study. The administrators for the study were recruited through electronic mail (email). The email included information about the research study surrounding the implementation of restorative practices within their current district of employment, participant consent form, and additional components required by the university's institutional review board.

Participants

This qualitative case study utilizing participants' narratives examined the perceptions of secondary school administrators regarding the implementation of restorative practices. For this study, the case being studied was a group of secondary administrators who were within the first year of implementing restorative practices through a district initiative to utilize an alternative approach to managing student discipline. The researcher ensured that the participants understood that they were participating in a research study and that their participation in the research study was voluntary. The participants were told that at any time, they could voice their desire to end their participation. The three participants came from secondary campuses located in an urban school district located in North Houston. One participant was a Black male in his

50's with 3 years of experience as an administrator. He has a military background and very firm upbringing where discipline was more about control, than management. One participant was a White male in his mid 40's and he has 8 years of administrative experience. The third study participant was a White male in his late 40's and he has 19 years of experience as an administrator. It is important to note that even as the researcher, I was also a participant in this study. The last two study participants and I also are similar in that we each were coaches in the beginning of our education careers. My reflections and observations throughout the process of implementing restorative practices on my campus are embedded in the research study as my journal entries and notes were used as data in the study.

The participants are the researcher's colleagues, so the selection of the participants was conducted through convenience and accessibility. The researcher has already built a rapport with the participants over the past two years. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the interviews were conducted using zoom conferencing to allow the ability of each participant to be a part of the study yet maintain social distancing and safety.

Data Collection

The researcher is viewed as the primary instrument of data collection in this qualitative study. The researcher collects data through observing behavior, examining documents, or interviewing participants (Creswell, 2014). Data included observation notes, interview notes and transcripts, archival data, and the researcher's reflective journals taken through the school year (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). For this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to answer the research question. An example

of the interview protocol for this study is included in Appendix A which includes the interview questions asked of each of the study participants. The collection of field notes was attempted to reconstruct the experience (Dewey, 1938 & 1997). A personal journal was kept which reflected the weekly events in both the personal and professional life of the researcher regarding the implementation of restorative practices. Through honest reflections, the researcher was able to make herself vulnerable in the text. A list of ideas in the journal was the researcher's thinking which focused on consistent data collection. Through the reflection captured in the researcher's journal notes, the researcher was able to examine not only her own personal and professional contexts as they relate to the strategies employed throughout the implementation of restorative practices, but apply them to understanding the contexts of the participating administrators and the campuses as well (Reed-Danahay, D., 2017). Another key instrument that was used for data collection was the series of emails and notes that are sent to the researcher's staff in regard to conducting restorative practices. This form of data collection helped identify themes and patterns used to keep the staff abreast of the process of implementing the alternative discipline framework.

An introductory survey tool was emailed to the secondary principals who were within the first year of implementing restorative practices. This tool was used to identify potential participants and participant interviews who were secondary principals within their first year of restorative practice implementation. The administrators were purposefully selected due to meeting the following criteria: (a) administrators serving students identified as low socioeconomic status; (b) experience with the implementation of both zero-tolerance policies, restorative practices, and the transition during remote

learning during the COVID-19 pandemic; and (c) address student discipline on a regular

basis. The initial contact asking the principals to participate in the study was completed

via email. The researcher identified herself and explained the purpose of the study. The

principals were asked to share their expertise, experience, and knowledge of restorative

practices.

1. How long have you served as principal at your school?

2. How often do you address discipline concerns?

3. Please briefly detail your knowledge and experience with restorative

    practices.

Once an administrator agreed to participate in the study, and written consent is

obtained, a follow-up email was sent to confirm a date and time to conduct the interview.

With the other secondary campus principals' permission, their emails and personal

communications were used to compare them to the researchers. Each campus principal

was contacted by email in order to determine their level of interest in participating in the

study. The interviews were conducted using zoom conferencing. The interview helped to

ascertain how school leaders have led their staff through the implementation process of

this new change initiative. This method also identified whether or not the administrator

thought the implementation process was successful. The administrators provided

information regarding the staff training, structures, and leadership characteristics and

strategies that have been employed to facilitate the implementation of restorative

practices on their respective campuses.

Open-ended questions gave participants an opportunity to respond freely and

openly (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003). The interview questions that were used for the study

were open-ended as a means to give the participants an opportunity to respond with their

own perspective on the procedures and approach for the implementation of restorative

practices on their campuses. The following list includes the nine interview questions that

were asked of the participants while conducting the interviews:

1. How would you describe your ideas of discipline on your campus before restorative practices?

2. Have you led your staff through a change initiative prior to the implementation of restorative practices? Please briefly describe the initiative and experience.

3. What preparation was necessary before introducing your staff to restorative practices?

4. Describe the initial reactions of your staff?

5. Describe the initial reactions of your students?

6. What are your general impressions of restorative practices in schools?

7. Can you tell me what the challenges or barriers of the implementation process have been?

8. What changes in the number of discipline referrals have you noticed on your campus since implementing restorative practices?

9. Can you provide a story or example that illustrates how you have used restorative practices as a means of managing student discipline on your campus this year?

10. What suggestions do you have for other administrators who are considering restorative practices for their campuses?

Once the interviews were transcribed, the participant had an opportunity to review

their interim and research texts and verify accuracy. A follow-up interview was

conducted for triangulation. The participants read the interpretation of their own work to account for potential bias. This provided a space in which to negotiate meaning (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Debriefing with each participant and a critical friend after the interview assisted in the transparency of the study. The process of member checking was used to validate, verify, or assess the trustworthiness of qualitative results (Doyle, 2007). The study participants were invited to a follow up interview to review the transcription and data following our initial interview. The purpose of the follow up interview was to make sure the researcher accurately captured the participants' thoughts and perceptions through conversation. The utilization of the real-life experiences and stories of the study participants promoted trustworthiness in this study.

Measures and Instruments

The sources of data collected by the researcher for this study included interviews, initial and a member checking follow up, and the reflective journal entries that the researcher maintained throughout the study. As an administrator on a campus within the first year of implementing restorative practices, the experiences and reflections of the researcher served as a means to explore the perceptions of administrators participating in the initiative to implement an alternative method of managing student discipline. When developing the interview questions, as the researcher, I relied on my experiences as highlighted in my journal entries to consider additional information that would provide insight into how other administrators were rolling out the initiative with their staff and students effectively. I believed in the importance of obtaining the views of other administrators to enhance my own practices. I developed questions that provided a way

that the participants could express their vast experiences with managing student

discipline and implementing restorative practices on their campuses.

I used an interview protocol for asking questions and recording answers for the

interview data that was collected as a part of this study. There were ten open-ended

questions with ample space between each of the questions for me to jot down notes

during the interview. By using an interview protocol with each participant, I was able to

organize thoughts on things such as headings, how to begin the interview, how to

conclude the interview, and other ideas (Creswell, 1998). The interview protocol

provided a framework for the sequencing of the questions and also helped me to group

the responses into categories that ultimately became my themes.

Data Screening and Analytic Procedures

Data analysis is a process of interpreting, transforming, and modeling data for the

purpose of discovering useful information, informing conclusions and supporting

decision-making throughout a study. Data was collected through semi-structured

interviews with each study participant, follow-up interviews for member checking, and

the researcher's reflective journaling notes. Data collected through the researcher's self-

reflection journal was organized in terms of similarity with the interview responses of the

study participants and interim texts were created and analyzed in order to support the

preset themes. Through the collection and analysis of data, a discovery of patterns and

similarities occurred among the secondary administrators who were implementing

restorative practices on their campuses. The audio recordings of the interview were

reviewed, and the transcriptions were carefully analyzed to identify important ideas and

information. The data collected from the interviews with each of the participants was then

compared to the reflective journal entries of the researcher to identify patterns and similarities and analyzed to identify commonalities amongst the participants' narratives. The transcription of the interview and interpretation of the data was reviewed with the study participant for the purpose of member checking to clarify and validate the accuracy of the information that was collected. The identification was conducted in an exploratory and investigative manner to ensure all potential themes were detected. Once all data was collected and transcribed, the information was analyzed. Once the themes of the data were determined, I reviewed the information with a critical friend to check accuracy and clarify the categorization of the ideas. The findings of the data analysis were presented at the end of the study in order of value and uniqueness.

To support the validity of this study, the researcher used data triangulation. The researcher conducted a follow up interview with each study participant for member checking purposes. Member checks allowed the researcher and the participants "to reflect on the accuracy of the account" (Creswell, 2018). The researcher used the data from the semi-structured interview with each of the study participants and compared their responses for validity. The researcher used the process of member checking when she sought feedback from the participants after interpreting the data from their interviews to check the accuracy and credibility of the findings. The researcher also utilized peer debriefing with a critical friend during the research process as a validation strategy for analyzing the findings and identifying the themes.

After reviewing the data and emerging patterns, the researcher analyzed the data to generate descriptions and identify categories and four general categories or themes. The interview transcripts were uploaded into a word frequency generator program online

to conduct word frequency tests which further identified the themes, words, and phrases from the interview data. The researcher used the word frequency analysis to generate a pictorial representation of the data and a textual synopsis in relation to the research question. The word clouds that were generated from the word frequency tests were then arranged in a graph format to illustrate the preset themes.

The researcher used the data from the interviews with each study participant to ascertain the perceptions of secondary school administrators regarding the implementation of restorative practices. The researcher conducted word frequency tests on the data to identify major concepts and themes. Word clouds were generated to illustrate those emergent concepts and themes which provided a rich description and depiction of the data through visual images. Additionally, the researcher's reflective journal notes were used to deepen the understanding of the context and give more insight into the experiences of secondary school administrators implementing restorative practices.

Practical Limitations

A limitation of significance to this study was that the school staff, students, and parents were not interviewed. Any input that they might have had to share regarding the implementation of restorative practices was not included or considered in the analysis of data. Researchers who are using this data should be aware of the study's limitations in consideration of future research.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout this study, the ethical standards of the University of Houston Institutional Review Board (IRB) were maintained and followed. Behavioral guidelines

were followed to ensure the protection of all participants and data collected throughout the study. Additionally, as a participatory inquirer, I remained mindful of the responsibility of developing and maintaining a trusting relationship with each participant. Transparency was maintained throughout the study regarding its purpose and nature. Each participant's interim and research texts were shared as the inquiry progressed (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This practice helped to maintain the ethical responsibility toward my participants and in the process of ensuring that their voices and stories are heard.

The participants were each given clear details and instructions for discontinuing their participation in the study without penalty. The participants were given opportunities to ask questions before granting their informed consent, prior to the beginning of the study and collection of data. Each step of the research process was handled professionally and delicately to make sure that nothing brought harm to the participants. All information that was divulged by the participants was kept confidential by the following procedures. All identifying information was removed. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect their anonymity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Finally, documents and data were properly disposed of at the conclusion of the study. Direct quotes were examined closely throughout the gathering of data to ensure that no identifying information was disseminated. All identifiable information that could potentially identify participants was removed.

Protection of Data

The interviews were conducted within a 45-minute timeframe, and the researcher used audio/video to record the zoom conferences to ensure the accuracy of responses.

The recording of interviews was a precaution that minimized bias and ensured that no interpretation of the responses occurred. The audio recording was transcribed and each of the participants was sent an email with the written version of their responses for review. The principals were given an opportunity to respond with any additional remarks or clarifications so as to maintain the highest level of accuracy in this study.

Summary

This chapter presents the methodology of study which provides the foundation for the study which has to be planned and implemented efficiently throughout the research. Qualitative methods will allow the exploration of themes, strategies, and processes that were utilized by secondary principals throughout their implementation of restorative practices as an alternative discipline management system for students. The targeted population consists of secondary principals, including the primary researcher's reflection through the first year of implementation of restorative practices. Open coding methods facilitate the categorization of the data. The next chapter will present the findings of the data analysis as well as the research conducted for this study.

Chapter IV

Findings

Introduction

This data analysis presents the voices of secondary school administrators who are within their first year of the implementation of restorative practices on their campuses. In this study, as the role of the researcher, I have used the actual words of the participants to tell their story in hopes of providing a rich representation of the ideas presented throughout the process. Each administrator's story is told through data that has been gathered from interviews. The information has been organized in the following manner: (a) an introduction and description of each participant, (b) an individual review of interview responses by each administrator for member checking, and (c) the presentation of themes arranged categorically that are supported by the data from the individual interviews and member checking through the follow up interview, and the overall responses to the research questions. Each administrator's identity was protected by the use of a pseudonym. This is a qualitative case study where the interviews with the three study participants serves as the primary source of data, however it should be noted that the researcher is embedded in the research field because she, too, is a secondary school administrator implementing restorative practices on her campus. Her experiences, reflections, and narrative will serve to also respond to the research question for this study: What are the perceptions of secondary school administrators regarding the implementation of restorative practices. By incorporating the lived experiences of the researcher and the voiced perceptions of the participants, this study seeks to devise a common interpretation that is richer and stronger, a more comprehensive understanding of implementing restorative practices. The stories of the study participants and the

researcher are combined to become the story of secondary school administrators who are implementing an alternative approach to managing student discipline.

The administrators' words were often repetitive in nature even though the dynamics of each campus vary in size and student population. For example, they each found the use of restorative practices as a means of managing student discipline as one that required a mindset shift. They introduced the initiative to their staff in phases with the assistance of their leadership teams and administrators. Each of the administrators also noticed a decline in the number of discipline referrals and repeat offenses from the students who fully participated in the circle process. Through the use of an in-depth analysis of the description of their overlapping experiences, it became my desire to make sure I captured the same emotion and passion in which they displayed in their interviews. These narratives told their journey of implementation over the year. The overall research question to guide this study was:

1. What are administrators' perceptions of the implementation and effect of restorative practices at secondary schools including an alternative school of choice?

This section begins with a brief description of each administrator. There were four major themes that emerged from the interviews with the administrators. The themes were: (1) preparation for the implementation of restorative practices, (2) initial reactions of teachers and students, (3) challenges and barriers, and (4) the changes in the number of discipline referrals as a result of the use of restorative practices on student discipline.

Researcher Personal Narrative

The researcher-participant's experience as a secondary school administrator implementing restorative practices at her alternative school of choice campus prompted her to study the topic in more detail. Before the worldwide pandemic, civil unrest, endless zoom sessions and the experience as a student specifically noting consent forms, zoom interviews, and transcription software, there was an administrator who was striving to make a difference. The administrator mentioned above entered her first year as the lead instructional learner at the above-mentioned campus in 2018 and is the researcher of the study. The campus mentioned above is one of the campuses being examined in this study, my campus. As an administrator implementing restorative practices as an approach to manage student discipline, my lived experience and insight will serve to narrate my story and the experiences of my campus as well.

The penned questions remain in the researcher's journal from her initial interview with the incoming superintendent of schools. The two questions that were top of mind were the start date which was answered quickly, "immediately" and an inquiry regarding the transition plan from the previous role of assistant principal on a campus where there was a newly named principal. Although a sense of calm hovered over me when I initially transitioned to the role two days prior to the start of the school year because I was familiar with the student demographics and several of the staff members, the question the superintendent of schools had for me has driven the study today. The question that drives the practices that are implemented at Hill Center for Learning is, "How can Hill Center for Learning evolve because you are the leader?"

Having served as a counselor on the same campus for seven years prior to jumping into administration, I was already familiar with the routines, procedures, and practices. As the campus principal, I had a strong conviction in the belief that the development of positive and meaningful relationships with students and staff drives results in student achievement. The challenge I frequently considered was centered around the most appropriate way to address issues of violence and disruption that potentially occurred with students attending an alternative school. These occurrences and incidents typically result in the use of punitive methods of school discipline. The students that are served at Hill Center for Learning already have experienced gaps in their learning for lack of attendance, disciplinary consequences, and other family priorities which caused them to miss school. It should also be noted that the students enroll from campuses all over the district so there has to be emphasis on belonging as we merge to one campus. There was a strong focus on social-emotional learning and the campus' values were centered around respect, responsibility, and connections with others. As a new administrator, I felt compelled to learn as much as possible about changing the campus culture and climate and meeting the social and emotional needs of students. At each conference, workshop, and meeting I attended, I received more validation that the effort I was making on my campus with both students and staff was going to lead to the overall growth and development of my campus.

The summer of 2019 was a pivotal year for the campus after being selected as one of eleven campuses to implement restorative practices as an approach to manage student discipline. I was vaguely familiar with restorative practices and its proposed benefits. When we rolled out the circles, I saw the increased communication between students and

staff. In reflecting on the use of community building circles, one of my staff members noted, "once you get to know what people are going through, you gain a new perception of the individual." Through the participation in the circles, participants were willing to take risks and there was a refreshing level of respect for differences in opinions. Positive things were happening on my campus and others were beginning to take notice.

The participation in the initiative provided me an avenue for additional learning and became a passion for me. Being eager to learn during that time exposed me to various people, programs, and practices that led me to want to understand more about social and emotional learning and restorative practices. The passion and quest to learn how other administrators rolled out their use of restorative practices opened the door to my research study. During this study, field notes were taken in order to document the implementation of restorative practices at Hill Center for Learning. As the researcher, I collected field notes of events and issues related to the introduction of restorative practices to both staff and students throughout the school year. These field notes documented a wide range of school-based interactions with administration and staff, including training sessions, professional development, and conference sessions in restorative practices, leadership team meetings, PLCs, and district training. Interactions between staff and students were recorded in a reflective journal as they occurred. The field notes were then transcribed, and themes were identified using specific words and phrases that were pulled from the notes.

Participants

Within chapter four of this dissertation, the participants' responses to interview questions, and the findings of the researcher are presented. The participants in this study

were selected using social network sampling. The criteria for their selection were that they were (1) secondary school administrators serving grades six through twelve, and (2) within the first year of implementing restorative practices as a means to manage student discipline on their campus. Once the sampling of participants was secured, all participants were contacted via electronic (email) mail. The information included in the email consisted of general information about the research study, a participant consent form, and an overview of the time commitment for the study. All of the participants gave consent for a recorded interview by checking off a section on the consent form and also by providing their signature.

There were three administrators interviewed in the study; all were administrators of secondary schools who were within the first year of implementing restorative practices on their campuses. The researcher is also within the first year of implementing restorative practices on the campus of Hill Center for Learning. Pseudonymous were used to identify the participants and their interviews. The participants were administrators from various campuses in an urban school district located in North Houston which covers over 100 square miles. The participants were asked how long they had served as an administrator at their current school, how often they addressed discipline concerns, and to briefly describe their knowledge of restorative practices. Table 1 indicates their responses as well as their gender and the dates they were interviewed.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Identification Code	Gender	Years as an Administrator	Date Interviewed
George	M	8	6/23/20

Charles	M	3	6/25/20
Jimmy	M	19	6/30/20

George

George, the son of two lifelong educators, was born and raised in North East Houston and lived on three acres of land with Greens Bayou behind his home. He had the experience of a country life but was still close enough to the city. Houston was slow to desegregate public schools. In fact, the school district of which George is a graduate of, was under a federal court order to redraw attendance zones so that every school maintained within 15% enrollment of Black students and within 5% percentage of Black teachers at primary schools and 10% at secondary schools until 2002. George had a love for history most of his life. He participated in the History Fair throughout both his middle school and high school years. Through his participation in the History Fair and passion for history, he was exposed to American History and learned how to research and gather information to put topics into historical context.

George has served as a paraprofessional, special education teacher and administrator in the same school district. He began his career in education as a Special Assignment Class (SAC) paraprofessional. As a SAC educator, his purpose was to supervise and monitor students assigned to the in-school suspension program for disciplinary placement. He facilitated student success in academic and interpersonal skills through courses of study and the implementation of the district approved curriculum which addressed specific needs of students. He provided the students a safe and optimal learning environment and provided feedback regarding student progress, expectations, goals, and activities. In 2002, he became a special education teacher in the

behavioral unit where he worked with emotionally disturbed students at his alma mater and he coached sports. In 2012 he became an assistant principal at a middle school and later transitioned to the alternative school of choice in 2017 as curriculum assistant principal before becoming principal of the district's disciplinary alternative education program. He began to change his approach to discipline after becoming the curriculum assistant principal at the alternative school of choice or credit recovery campus. During that year he attended his first restorative justice training from Harris County Department of Education. He did not conduct community-building circles at that time, but he became aware of how exclusionary discipline practices impacted students. He attributes his growth as an administrator to the training in restorative practices.

George is entering his fourth year as the principal of his campus and deals with discipline in some capacity on a daily basis. He has attended training for restorative practices since 2015. He made an effort to pilot restorative practices on his campus after attending local and state conferences and workshops. He officially introduced the use of restorative practices to manage student discipline to his staff and students in 2019.

Charles

Charles was born in a mid-size southern city during the middle of the desegregation of U.S. public schools. The city was racially divided and primarily supported by the oil and gas industry. As a young teen, much of his formative youth was spent helping other family members in domestic roles in homes of the more affluent White and Jewish community members and in the hospitality industry. Within this backdrop and personally feeling the effects of desegregation starting in middle school, the subject began to see a world of possibilities beyond his birthplace and the importance

of formal education as a potential path to middle-class America. However, this dichotomy also caused the subject to question his loyalty to his own racial and cultural identity group and the seeming need to acquire White Eurocentric values in order to succeed in the prevalent dominant culture of that period. Although unsuccessful in his first attempt in college, after joining the army and spending some time in the military, he returned to school and obtained a degree in criminal justice.

While waiting for a background check for a probation officer's job, Charles was convinced to take a one-day substitute teaching job in order to help a friend which led to his entrance into education as a career choice. Charles began teaching at a middle school where he was an adaptive behavior teacher. The position was not an ideal location for a novice teacher due to the lack of support that was needed to make sure he was successful. He flourished at the second campus with grade level, content, and administrative support. He gained a great deal of knowledge with respect to human behavior and his approach to discipline while on this campus for three years. Once Charles transferred to his current school district, he primarily worked in an intermediate school as a special education teacher, RtI interventionist, and a testing coordinator. He then moved into administration as an assistant principal and he is now entering his first year as a principal. Charles interacts with students in the capacity of managing discipline on a daily basis. Charles' approach to discipline is based on an evolving philosophy that began with his introduction to B. F. Skinner's approach to behavior analysis. Recognizing that behavior is a response to a stimulus, the subject through training, evolved into a less punitive approach to discipline and instead recognized that behavior is a complex construct that requires a multi-tiered approach. He first heard about restorative practices five or six

years ago. He was familiar with the practice and heard that more schools in the North were using a form of the practice with student mock courts. He attended a couple of conferences, but at that time, his school district wasn't utilizing the practice. After reading the book Hacking the Discipline, he thought the alternative support for students was a good idea. He felt restorative practices would help the students move away from punitive discipline practices and get them to understand what they did and heal them in the process before moving back into the classroom or school. He was introduced to the idea of bringing restorative practices to his previous campus in 2019.

Jimmy

Jimmy was born in a large city in Texas that was known for oil and gas and the exploration of space. His mother was from New Jersey and his father was adopted by an interracial couple. He received his bachelor's degree in kinesiology. He began his teaching career in 1996 as a history teacher and a coach. He was well received by his students and their parents and loved building positive and meaning relationships with each of them. His first teaching position was at a large, culturally diverse school in Harris County that was recognized for demonstrating a strong commitment to educational excellence for all students. Five years later, Jimmy began his career in administration as an assistant principal at a high school across the district where he served until 2010. He felt pursuing a career in administration and growing and developing others with the same passion he had for coaching would allow him to make a more impactful difference in education. His mentors and role models were strong education leaders in the district and they each saw something positive in him and that kept him encouraged and motivated to make a difference in the lives of others.

Jimmy is entering his ninth year as the principal of his campus. In an effort to make sure he keeps up with the needs of his campus, he is responsible for an alpha split and manages student discipline on a daily basis. Jimmy used a form of restorative practices at his previous campus. He implied that the school relied on the practice a lot because the students had experienced a lot of things being taken away from them and punitive discipline. He realized that a different approach needed to be taken. Although his current administrative staff thought they were engaged in restorative practice principles before his arrival as principal, their thought process broadened when they were formally introduced to the circle process in 2019.

Coaching Discipline Philosophy

Two of the participants, George and Jimmy, were coaches in the beginning of their teaching career along with the researcher. As former coaches, our belief regarding discipline is more about fixing wrongdoings and learning from those mistakes. Each function in coaching is centered around instruction and correcting behaviors. A coach's goal is to teach his or her athletes which behaviors and responses are appropriate and which ones are unacceptable. Punishments are aligned to the mistakes and aim to deter athletes from making the same mistakes repeatedly. The goal of discipline is to help each athlete develop their character and regulate themselves which is similar to the basis for restorative practices.

Data Collection Process

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify the strategies, practices, and processes utilized by secondary school administrators to introduce and implement restorative practices and the use of restorative circles as an alternative approach to

addressing disciplinary concerns along with maintaining a safe, positive school environment. The 30-45-minute interviews for this study were conducted virtually using Zoom with each participant. An interview protocol form was used to conduct the interviews. The interviews began with three questions to capture the professional background and demographics of each administrator, followed by a set of ten questions. After the completion of each interview, the Zoom audio recording was saved. The researcher used Otter's online transcription platform to transcribe each interview. The transcript for each participant was carefully reviewed by the researcher for clarity and accuracy. Each participant was provided an opportunity to review and confirm the data that was collected and for member checking purposes and to clarify that their thoughts and reflections were accurately recorded. The participants were asked whether or not the transcription and interview data captured their responses accurately and if they had any questions, concerns, or clarifications regarding the document. The data from the interviews was categorized into four themes. The themes were reviewed by a critical friend for transparency and accuracy. Pseudonymous were used to identify the participants and their interviews to protect their identity. Upon completion of the research study, all transcribed interviews and audio-recordings were destroyed in accordance with the University's Institutional Review Board.

Results

After transcribing the interviews and completing the process of member checking, the researcher organized and prepared the conversation for analysis. The data compiled from the semi-structured interviews with the three participants were downloaded into wordart.com to generate word frequency tables and word clouds. The word clouds and

frequency tables were analyzed further to identify patterns. The researcher identified common themes during the interviews and grouped the questions accordingly. The four themes supported the purpose of the study, which is to provide support for administrators who are considering adopting an alternative practice for managing student discipline. The following section summarizes the findings related to the implementation of restorative practices: preparation for the implementation of restorative practices, initial reactions of teachers and students, challenges and barriers, and the impact of restorative practices on student discipline. It should be noted that as an administrator on a campus that is implementing restorative practices as a means of student discipline management, the researcher for this study has been capturing reflections and journaling her experiences throughout the year. These reflective journal notes will serve to provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the perspectives of administrators in the first year of implementing the restorative practices initiative.

Four Themes

Theme #1 centered on the participants' steps for preparing their staff for the introduction of the discipline management initiative. The interview questions that corresponded to Theme #1 were questions #1 through #3. Theme #2 centered around the initial reactions of both staff and students with the use of restorative practices. The interview questions that corresponded to Theme #2 were questions #1 through #6. Theme #3 highlighted the challenges and barriers to the implementation of restorative practices based on the perceptions of the participants. The interview questions that corresponded to Theme #3 were questions #1 through #7. Theme #4 highlighted the changes in the number of discipline referrals as a result of the use of restorative practices. The interview

questions that corresponded to Theme #4 were questions #1, #4 through #6, and #8

through #9. A synopsis of the participants' responses to the interview questions in each

theme was generated from an analysis of their responses, the corresponding word

frequency tables, and the word clouds. The following table illustrates the findings.

Table 2:

Synopsis of Participant Responses to Interview Question Clusters

Theme #1: Preparation for the Introduction of the Initiative   **(Interview questions #1-3)**
Synopsis: The mindset of discipline before restorative practices includes student management by taking away things and being punitive where kids do not learn social skills or communication.
Synopsis: When introducing restorative practices to manage student discipline and develop positive change, introduce community-building circles at the beginning of the year in small groups.
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Theme #2: Initial Reactions from Staff and Students   **(Interview questions #1-6)**
Synopsis: Staff and students can work together and change mindsets moving away from punitive discipline management and improving communication skills through the use of community circles.
Synopsis: It's the heart and soul that goes into it on everybody's part.
■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■
Theme #3: Challenges and Barriers   **(Interview questions #1-7)**
Synopsis: Buy-in from the leadership team and staff and a belief in shifting the mindset from punitive discipline to a restorative approach provide an opportunity for student growth and development.
Synopsis: The shift from punitive discipline to management using a restorative approach causes some discomfort and pushback from the staff.

Theme #4: Changes Noticed Regarding Discipline Referrals **(Interview questions #1,4-6,8-9)**
Synopsis: Students who are receptive and participate in the community circles find restorative practices effective.
Synopsis: People change their behavior when they feel loved, heard, and understood.

Theme 1: Preparation for the Introduction of the Initiative

From 2019 to the present, the administrators who participated in this study have been implementing restorative practices as a means of managing student discipline on their campuses. The training was provided by the Harris County Department of Education for identified campuses in an urban school district located in North Houston which covers over 100 square miles. The campuses were identified to implement the initiative due to their recorded high incidents of discipline infractions and discretionary placements from the previous school year. The researcher sought to capture the administrators' perceptions of the implementation of restorative practices on their campuses and share the findings with other administrators who are considering implementing restorative practices on their campuses in the future.

Theme #1 corresponded to three different interview questions that were asked of the participants in order to gain insight into how they prepared their staff for the introduction of restorative practices. When the participants were asked to describe their ideas of discipline on their campuses before introducing the use of restorative practices, each of them shared a unique perspective and belief in discipline. As the participants reflected on their ideas of discipline on their campuses before restorative practices, they each referenced a shift in mindset from punitive approaches with students to restorative.

The study participants mentioned the use of the district's student code of conduct as a guide for discipline and consequences. All three of the participants also mentioned the process of implementation in phases beginning with a general introduction of restorative practices, discipline data to support a new discipline management system, and the review of circle structures. Mr. George felt his administrative team was following the expectation for addressing discipline.

> Before restorative practices I would say that we were basically following the student code of conduct, but also using that discernment for when we had disciplinary hearings, you know, taking into account students' disability or other extenuating circumstances that might have caused the behavior. So basically, using the student code of conduct as a guideline, but then also using our own discretionary ability as administrators. We also looked at discipline data, but each one was a case by case type situation.

> Mr. Charles came from a military background and a firm upbringing. His reflection of discipline was one where "discipline was more about control than management." Mr. Charles shared his discovery after attending graduate school.

> Discipline was more about behavioral management. I took the approach with the discipline that it was a response to the environment. Either students wanted something, they wanted to avoid something, or they responded to discipline. They were responding to stimuli, so it made me then refine my discipline practices into more of a therapeutic model, as opposed to a punitive model.

> Through their responses, both Mr. Charles and Mr. George noted discipline in the context of control rather than management and the mastery of

right and wrong. Their responses struck a chord with my own experience

regarding discipline and consequences based on the action which defied a rule or

code of conduct. I related to Mr. George's notion of following the district's code

of conduct and reflected on the guidance received from the district at the

beginning of each year when we receive guidelines in our administration training.

There is a menu of consequences based on the entry code which violates the

conduct guidelines. The issuance of consequences based solely on the guidelines

do not provide opportunities for repairing the harm that is done.

Mr. Jimmy had difficulty with the question because he already had a

restorative mindset through his previous work experience. He reflected on the use

of a point system where students earned points.

> We had to sell the staff on not going around taking away points because kids are
>
> very accustomed to things being taken away; the punishment, discipline, mindset,
>
> it was gratification that they were earning from, learning their social skills that
>
> they were supposed to be exhibiting, or what we tried to help them... It
>
> encouraged discussion, where sometimes they wouldn't, you know, we wouldn't
>
> talk, of course, kids are going to be who they are. They're gonna be wearing
>
> feelings. It's the adults we had to work with, on understanding what our goals
>
> were, in terms of, you know, you don't carry it over from day to day. Whatever
>
> happened is in the past. We're there to help develop their social skills and help
>
> them realize that they can. Sometimes they make mistakes. And then we also have
>
> to realize that it's a great opportunity when we mess up to share with them that we
>
> made a mistake and maybe shouldn't have said something or should have done

something a little different. So that kind of drove the discussion with those kids who were having consistent run-ins.

Mr. George reflected on the need and importance of training with the staff before implementing restorative practices.

I think first of all the training on restorative practices is really, really important. You know, but there's certainly going to be that learning curve as you're going to go through it. I would certainly attend all of the training or get all of the information that I can first. I think it's one of those things, too, that you shouldn't necessarily force on your staff. I think you introduce it, you pilot it first with a group of people, you monitor it, you ask other people, you know, Hey, why don't you go in and see that something you want to try? If not, I think it becomes one of those additions that people are going to do, they are just going to go through the motions, there's not going to be a lot of heart and soul in it. And I think that's what makes the restorative practice different. It's the heart and soul that goes into it on everybody's part.

As an administrator on a campus within the first year of restorative discipline implementation, the researcher has studied the effectiveness of the student discipline management practice to address the social and emotional needs of at-risk students. The classroom environment intentionally focuses on relationship building techniques that promote positive interactions and norms to establish trust, empathy, and a sense of belonging and community in the classroom. Mr. George's reflection on the importance of the training resonates with my own practices and experiences as I have attended conferences and workshops. Because I view social-emotional learning as critical for the

success of my campus with both students, staff, and the stakeholders that provide additional support, I have personally invested time and attention into learning as much as I possibly can.

> SEL is important because you have to reach the child before you can teach the child. Although conflict is inevitable, SEL gives students the tools to manage these conflicts. In addition, the use of SEL also nurtures the development of healthy relationships.
>
> (Journal July 16, 2019)

In an analysis of participants' responses regarding their description of discipline before introducing restorative practices, several common terms and word choices emerged as noted in the following word frequency table and word cloud.

Table 3:

Word Frequency Table for Participants' Description of Discipline

Term(s)	Frequency
Student	7
Discipline	6
Kids	5
Learn, teacher	4
Mindset, going, little	3
Management, case, punitive, staff, things, taking away, social, skills, communication	2

Figure 1:

Word Cloud for Participants' Description of Discipline

The mindset of discipline before restorative practices includes student management by taking away things and being punitive where kids do not learn social skills or communication.

The introduction of restorative practices on my campus was well underway before the introduction to the initiative for implementing restorative practices. The researcher reflects on the work for changing the culture of her staff below. The effort set the foundation for a restorative approach to managing discipline.

> Upon reflecting on my first year as a high school principal, I have focused quite a bit on changing the culture for my campus with the students and staff. We are creating an atmosphere of belonging, family, safety, and the belief of success in various ways. The teachers and staff offer more than just academics. The staff creates an environment of support for our students both academically and socially. I hope to focus on introducing SEL competencies to my staff and students next year now that the culture of the campus has been established. In order to successfully implement the

program and strategies, the staff will need to recognize the need for the

use of SEL.

(Journal Entry April 24, 2019)

When participants were asked, "What preparation was necessary before introducing your staff to restorative practices?" all agreed that the implementation would take place in phases through the use of community-building circles. Mr. George stated that "he began to lay the groundwork on what restorative practices were and what community building circles were."

The researcher's introduction to restorative practices mimicked the initial training received through Harris County Department of Education. The practice of using community circles was embedded within the discussion and identification of the components to the circle process. There were segments of commercials highlighting the benefits of social-emotional learning and meeting the students' needs. The staff was introduced to the restorative approach and activities through participation so they would see the potential of the practices to change the culture of the school environment.

Each of the participants introduced their staff to restorative practices through the use of community building circles in small groups during staff development at the beginning of the year. One of the study participants centered his introduction to the use of circles with teachers based on their frustration with current discipline trends and incidents.

Mr. Charles shared his reflection on the preparation for the introduction of restorative practices with his staff.

When we got ready to introduce restorative practices, at my current campus, I showed them the discipline, first of all, how it was coming from some teachers and more teachers than others. I did a comparison of the discipline of the kids with their academic performance to show them that you know, these kids are missing a lot of time out of classes because they are in the office or being suspended or assigned SAC and it's affecting them academically. You're frustrated as a teacher, so we have to do something. Do you want to continue on this? Or do you want to find a better way?

Mr. Jimmy "prepared a couple of sessions to do it together as a staff." He worked with his administrative staff and skills specialists and they "started or ended sessions with circles." Each of the administrators reported positive results in implementing the idea of restorative practices using small groups of staff and students. Mr. Jimmy noted, "we were surprised that some teachers even opened up about some personal stuff."

In an analysis of participants' interview responses regarding the preparation needed before introducing restorative practices, common terms and word choices emerged as noted in the following word frequency table and word cloud.

Table 4:

Word Frequency Table for Participants' Preparation before Introducing Restorative Practices

Term(s)	Frequency
Kids, Teacher	7
Circle	6
Year	5
Community, building, positive, behavior	4

| Discipline, training, practices, students, restorative | 3 |
| Development, beginning, group, success, progress, introduce, change | 2 |

Figure 2:

Word Cloud for Participants' Preparation before Introducing Restorative Practices

When introducing restorative practices to manage student discipline and develop positive change, introduce community-building circles at the beginning of the year in small groups.

The researcher found that the community building circles had opened the door for communication between members on the staff and they were more aware and accepting of each other's feelings. Conversations were being held between staff members that wouldn't normally take place outside of their assigned professional learning communities. Such was the case when the researcher overheard a teacher comment on his experience in the welcome circle at the beginning of the school year.

This is really cool. I don't think I've ever heard Mr. Adams talk before.

(Journal August 7, 2019)

Theme 2: Initial Reactions from Teachers and Students

For the past two years, the researcher's campus has been promoting the development of positive and meaningful relationships, social-emotional learning, and the shifting of mindsets in consideration to the abilities of the students. The campus is an alternative school of choice, but the researcher leads in a manner that supports the belief that the students and their experience with school shouldn't be any different from that of a student at a traditional campus. Expectations for excellence have been relayed to the students in terms of behavior and academic performance. The implementation of restorative practices in 2019 was an additional layer in the effort to relay a message of respectful and responsible productive citizenship for high school and beyond.

Theme #2 corresponded to six different interview questions that were asked of the participants in order to gain insight into their perspectives on the initial reactions of the staff and students with the implementation of restorative practices. In an analysis of participants' responses regarding their general impressions of restorative practices in schools, several common terms and word choices emerged as noted in the following word frequency table and word cloud.
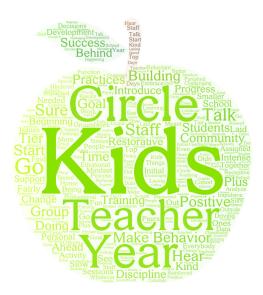
During the initial introduction of the approach, the study participants received mixed reactions from their staff. There were some staff members who were receptive and open to the new discipline management system and tried to implement the circles with fidelity and there were others who followed along for compliance only. Each of the participants made mention of the willingness of staff to open up during the circles causing occasional emotional breakthroughs. One of the study participants mentioned the

need for district support during the process of changing the mindsets of his staff from

punitive to restorative. Through his experience, there were complaints that were

submitted to the district office which referenced his use of disciplinary practices as being

non-supportive of his staff's needs and concerns.

Table 5:

Word Frequency Table for Participants' General Impressions of Restorative Practices in Schools

Term(s)	Frequency
Student	10
Discipline	6
Work	5
Learn, teacher	4
Mindset, community, circles	3
Management, punitive, punishment, social, skills, positive, receptive	2

Figure 3:

Word Cloud for Participants' General Impressions of Restorative Practices in Schools

Staff and students can work together and change mindsets moving away from punitive

discipline management and improving communication skills through the use of

community circles.

Mr. George reflected on the initial reactions of his staff by stating "that their mindset of discipline was more punitive." He additionally said, "there were levels of issues with the implementation of restorative practices because he wasn't getting support from the top."

>   Be prepared for the pushback, be prepared that you are going to be told that you
>
>   are soft on discipline, that you are not doing anything and the kids are out of
>
>   control, or they are allowed to do whatever they want to do because they don't
>
>   match what the standard punitive approaches are.

In regard to the use of restorative practices with the students, Mr. George stated, "Students were fairly receptive. They liked and enjoyed community-building circles."

Mr. Jimmy scanned the room during the introduction of the initiative. He reflected on seeing nods of yes thinking this would be good and others that felt the community circles might have been silly and not work.

>   Once we set it as a staff, they started seeing that this wasn't that bad and that it is
>
>   actually pretty good, and they shared a couple of things. I finally got to the point
>
>   where they shared more than just the, you know, small little comment, they would
>
>   actually share a little more. Restorative circles have really helped our teachers
>
>   learn a little more about what our kids are going through and what's going on in
>
>   each of our kids' personal lives. So, from that perspective, they actually are

starting to be more open to working with kids instead of just going for punitive consequences.

Mr. Charles also reflected on his staff members' response to the initial introduction of restorative practices.

So, we first introduced it, we did it first, it was more of a let's get everybody involved. So, the group that went through the training, I think we broke the staff up when we first came back to school into four big groups. And we actually facilitated circles ourselves. And probably the first two weeks of training we did about three or four circles, all the time switching the leaders of the circles up, so we are rotating to each circle to sort of get the staff involved. One of the things we weren't really counting on is there was a lot of crying going on in the circles. They just brought up feelings that they wouldn't have been able to discuss and open before, and for me, that was a little uncomfortable.

The researcher found that the community building circles have opened the door for communication between members on the staff who believed in the system and their students have been more receptive of the practice as well. In these settings, there has been improved communication between the staff and students. Mr. George's students were fairly receptive to the community circles.

I think that it was hard for them to get their head wrapped around the restorative justice circles. So, taking that ownership, taking that responsibility piece, and even with the pre-conference interviews, once we got into it, sometimes it would go south. They couldn't let the issue go. I think now that we've done it for a year, I

don't think it's going to be a stretch next year. And it's one of those things that each year it'll build upon itself.

Mr. Charles' reactions from students depended on the interaction with the teachers and their feelings about the initiative.

You have to have a staff member who is really leading it and believing in it. I think that rubs off on your kids. You also have to go in there and realize that the kids are going to be really reluctant at first, there is going to be a lot of passing, there is going to be a lot of very yes/no answers, but I think if you stick to it over time, and if you make the kids feel really receptive like I've done with a couple of them, the conversation got a little more profound and the language got a little rawer, but the facilitator didn't show that she was really concerned with the verbiage that they were using so much as the emotions. I think the kids bought in more because they realized that they could really be their authentic self and if the emotions just got here, and I just used maybe an inappropriate word, it was okay. They really didn't focus on that, they focused on what the kids were expressing and getting out of the circle.

Mr. Jimmy noted that his staff discovered laughter when they implemented restorative practices.

You know, some thought this is silly. But in discussions with my team, I found that a lot of it depended on how the teacher was presenting it, and how the teacher shared that they felt, you know, the qualities of the program would be. If the teacher was sharing a very positive approach with their students, a very open and very serious mindset, that this is going to be a procedural thing in our class, then it

went well, and there were fewer, let's just say chaotic issues in the classroom. You would see a tighter program with those teachers. Then with others very lackadaisical attitudes. That's how the kids did. You know, they're very lackadaisical in their approach to the circles. So, a lot of it depended on the actual leader in the classroom, and how they structured it. I just think the progress that's being made was mostly in the classroom for teachers who didn't have any bias towards it. They were very comfortable with it. They felt it was a good idea. They had very progressive mindsets and made it work. So the students were really dependent on their reactions and were really dependent on the teacher.

The researcher noted apprehension initially with her staff members as their led circles with their students, but in time staff members shared with ease. The researcher reflected on a journal entry identifying concern for a troubled staff member, "need a safe word for teachers who aren't stable and need a mental health day." The experience with the staff member who ultimately utilized the district's employee assistance program prompted the circle topic for the month. Self-care Awareness month is recognized in September, in keeping with the theme and responding to a need for both students and staff, a self-care community circle was held in each professional learning community and with the students during their intervention period.

> The self-care circle prompts with staff were, "Can you tell when you are not 100%? What are the signs? How do you regain focus?" The circles were held over two days. On the first day, the flow of the circles was great and upbeat. On the second day, as the facilitator, I am drained both

physically and emotionally. Two staff members experienced emotional

releases during the circle.

(Journal September 11, 2019)

Theme 3: Challenges and Barriers

Theme #3 corresponded to seven different interview questions that were asked of

the participants in order to gain insight into their perspectives on the challenges and

barriers to implementing restorative practices on their campuses. Each of the participants

noted concern in the area of staff and leadership buy-in and the shift from punitive to

restorative. They each believed that in order for their campuses to reach the full potential

and benefit of restorative practices, their staff members needed to shift their mindset.

They mentioned the need for the staff to understand why restorative practices were

important and relevant in their work. One of the study participants noted the struggle

between finding balance between academics and effectively implementing restorative

practices and the pushback received from all stakeholders as the campus. In an analysis

of participants' responses regarding the challenges and barriers of implementing

restorative practices in schools, several common terms and word choices emerged as

noted in the following word frequency table and word cloud.

Table 6:

Word Frequency Table for Participants' Views on the Challenges and Barriers of Implementing Restorative Practices

Term(s)	Frequency
Buy-In	6
Restorative, discipline, mindset	3
Pushing, academic, data, leadership, checkbox, believe, motions, opportunity	2

Figure 4:

Word Cloud for Participants' Views on the Challenges and Barriers of Implementing Restorative Practices

Buy-in from the leadership team and staff and a belief in shifting the mindset from punitive discipline to a restorative approach provide an opportunity for student growth and development.

As Mr. George shared his view on the challenges and barriers he faced with the implementation of restorative practices on his campus, he noted that members of his administrative and intervention team "had a mindset on what discipline should be and those were our most reluctant people to embrace." He mentioned that adult buy-in was his largest challenge and that it was two-fold,

> As the instructional leader, I was pushing restorative practices, but I was also pushing academics as well because my boss was wanting us to do both because that is what you need to do. But at the same time, she was more focused on the academic piece. She was not very supportive of the restorative piece. I really

think everybody has to understand and know why we are doing it… My campus

behavior coordinator said he understood and was really excited about it, but I was

the only one that led restorative circles. I thought by me modeling that, it would

happen with him, but it didn't translate to that.

Mr. Jimmy reflected on the need for each member of the administrative team to

commit to reevaluating their own discipline mindset.

The biggest barrier was first of all getting leadership buy-in from the campus.

You know, I've been around a long time and a lot of times we get initiatives that

are given to us and we sort of check that box like okay, yeah, we did it, but there's

really no buy-in and you really don't believe in it, but you went through the steps.

I implemented the initiative like the central office said… So, if you have

leadership on the campus who really believes discipline has to be punitive and

they won't budge, it's not gonna work.

Mr. Charles reflected on his biggest issue in regard to teacher participation. He

stated, "that goes back to some of the mindsets of some of the teachers. I don't have

100% buy-in and they will go through the motions." In order for restorative practices to

be successful Mr. Charles shared the following sentiments with his teachers,

I need you to really believe what everybody else is buying into here and not just

go through the motions. Here's a couple of questions I asked rather than just going

through the motions. I have goals that they need to actually meet. This is a

learning opportunity for our kids. It's a social development opportunity. I asked

the teachers again if they had buy-in and if their heart was in it and they felt like

there was value in it. The kids generally felt that way too. If they felt the teacher

wasn't wholeheartedly there and they just thought it was silly and the administration made him do this. That was a problem and it made the kids in the classroom not want to do it either.

The researcher noted reactions from a staff member during the first community building circles during her intervention classes. Ms. A reflected on her experience with the students who were reluctant to share due to discomfort in opening up.

> Ms. A. said there were two students who did not say anything and continued to pass the talking piece when it was their turn to share. She realized that she had to set the tone for the students to be comfortable with the circle process and speaking out and opening up.
>
> (Journal August 30, 2019)

Mr. George shared that the initial reactions of the staff with restorative practices created a barrier that he had to work on with his staff considering they were an alternative education placement campus.

> I would say that most of them because their mindset of discipline is punitive, you know, why aren't you putting the student in SAC? Why aren't you suspending the student? Why aren't you…? I actually had a grievance filed on me because of discipline. The teacher didn't feel that the punishment was severe enough. They wanted the kid removed from the campus and actually my boss backed them up. I wasn't getting support from the top.

The shift from punitive discipline to management using a restorative approach causes some discomfort and pushback from the staff. Mr. Jimmy stated, "Staff can be kind of discouraged when students aren't getting punishments, but it's a change of

mindset across the board with the staff, students, and even parents." He suggested the inclusion of checks and balances for accountability in the implementation process.

> Just like in every other programming, you tried to implement that there needs to be some kind of follow up to make sure that it is actually happening.

The researcher reflected on her journal entry noting the difference between a restorative approach and a punitive discipline approach. I would like to see the Talk Read Talk Write lesson involved in closing out one of those sessions. I think that's something we might do. So individually, students will share out in the circle and continue to share in their own writing scenario on how it felt to them and how they would resolve it. The biggest thing is we really need to bring the staff in and do it. Overall, they need to continue to have follow-up and not just let it go. I think there has to be something in your schedule. You're building a schedule to make sure you're revisiting it and pushing it throughout the year.

The researcher reflected on her journal entry noting the difference between a restorative approach and a punitive discipline approach.

> > The restorative approach is different. The focus is on holding students accountable for repairing relationships, not "fixing them" for breaking the rules. The mindset that challenges the current practice of using zero-tolerance policies and discipline is that we need to be more reflective of the use of proper strategies targeted to change the negative behavior.
> >
> > (Journal Entry from NERP Conference, November 4, 2019)

In order to reach the benefit and full potential of restorative practices, staff members might need to shift their mindset. The circle process is powerful and, in some

instances, therapeutic in that there is an allowance for voice. Because the use of restorative practices opens the door for vulnerability, it is important to be mindful of the staff members' state of being. Restorative practices require ongoing, internal inventory checks first to see where you are emotionally and spiritually than to ask, how will this self-check show up in our practice (Valandra and Hokšíla, 2020). While internalizing the definition and difference between burnout and demoralization, the researcher placed the meaning in the context of a campus leader and her influence on her staff.

> I need to be aware of my teachers' state of mind as often as possible. I need to pay attention to the signs of burnout and loss of passion. I also have to be mindful of my demands on the staff. This doesn't mean lower expectations or decreased emphasis on meeting the standards. Instead, it reminds me to empower the staff and allow them the freedom to still do what's best for students while meeting campus/district demands.

> (Journal October 30, 2019)

Theme 4: Changes Regarding Discipline

Theme #4 corresponded to four different interview questions that were asked of the participants in order to gain insight on their perspectives of the changes in the number of discipline referrals as a result of the use of restorative practices. The study participants did not use discipline reports to track the difference in behavior incidents. Their responses were generalizations of the effectiveness of their practices. Each of the participants felt the student's participation and acceptance of restorative practices depended on their teacher's attitude and acceptance of the system. The study participants felt the discipline of those students who actively participated in the community building circles was improved and there were fewer repeat incidents. The study participants

noticed some changes in the interactions between staff and students. In an analysis of

participants' responses regarding their view on whether or not discipline incident

referrals decreased through the use of restorative practices, several common terms and

word choices emerged as noted in the following word frequency table and word cloud.

Table 7:

Word Frequency Table for Participants' Views on the Changes of Discipline

Term(s)	Frequency
Participated	3
Receptive, community, circles, effective, kids	2

Figure 5:

Word Cloud for Participants' Views on the Changes of Discipline

Students who are receptive and participate in the community circles find restorative

practices effective.

In the summer of 2019, I was scrolling through twitter and found a post by a

college classmate who was rethinking his campus' approach to discipline. He opened a

restorative lounge on his campus. The room was a safe space designed to hold restorative

conversations in a private and tranquil setting. I knew the space would be beneficial on my campus due to our high discipline referrals and patterns of student behavior observed due to the demographics of our student body. I got my counselor and intervention specialist onboard and together we developed the "chill space". The "chill space" is designed to meet the needs of restorative circle facilitation while also supporting the need for a safe emotional space. Another benefit of the dedicated space for students and staff is the provision of a place of refuge and reflection. The "chill space" is a place where people feel calm which supports the work of our restorative approach to managing student discipline.

> DeShaun became angry without a reason or trigger that we were aware of. He hid under the table in the lab in a balled-up position. He was escorted to the "chill space" where he remained until we were able to get him calm and refocused.
>
> (Journal October 17, 2019)

When asked about the changes in the number of discipline referrals since implementing restorative practices, Mr. George stated, "I would say the kids that participated in it were more receptive and I think they felt more positive about it." He also shared there was a reduction in those students having a recurrence of discipline incidents. Mr. George reflected on future practices in the initiative since there was little data to support the impact.

> We are going to be able to really talk about discipline data and be deliberate about it and then talk about those restorative circles and start keeping data on it. That's

what really needs to take place because if you're not keeping data on it, there is no way to determine if it is actually effective.

Mr. Charles noticed a difference in the way staff members interacted with students after implementing restorative circles. "They were less punitive in their mindset, they were more of let's step out in the hallway or let's talk for a second and then okay, let's go back in and get back to work. I think the kids responded with it in time."

Mr. Jimmy acknowledged that they had high numbers in the discipline during the previous year. He stated that "they started looking into why that was happening and gave a stronger push for restorative practices." Mr. Jimmy noted some discrepancies with how the discipline incidents were recorded, but also noted that there were differences attributed to the focus on restorative practices as well.

The researcher noted reactions from the staff as they began to implement monthly community building circles with their intervention classes. The reflections of the teachers were captured in the journal as they began to connect with the students on a deeper level and use the interaction to motivate the students to develop both socially and academically.

> I really like listening to student responses. This is my way of collecting background student data while building a rapport. The circle process is having a positive impact and has allowed me to make better connections with the students.
>
> (Journal August 30, 2019)

The researcher reflected on her journal entry noting the difference between a restorative approach and a punitive discipline approach based on the reactions of others.

The structure of the community circle allows for each participant to have an equal voice and opportunity to share their feelings, concerns, and experiences. In a punitive setting, the student typically doesn't have an opportunity to share his or her side of the story.

> People don't change their behavior when others yell at them or attempt to shame them. People change their behavior when they feel loved, heard, and understood. In order to make changes and growth in behavior, a connection is required.

> > (Journal Entry NERP Conference, Nov. 4, 2019)

Over the past year, as we have been implementing restorative practices on my campus, I have a heightened sense of respecting one another whether it be student to staff, student to student, or between two staff members. The restorative approach is deeply rooted in taking ownership of behavior and healing the harm placed on another person. I reflected on an incident that took place involving a student with identified behavior issues and several staff members.

> Major cloud… What happened to patience, empathy, and understanding? Tracy had a meltdown today resulting in a one-day suspension. I'm still trying to find out what led to the outburst, but ultimately, she left the campus twice and was cursing loudly. The approach??? A few staff members are barking at students which isn't leading to positive results. We want our students to check their feelings at the door, but as adults, we bring ours into the classroom and common spaces. Respect requires a two-way street.

> > (Journal November 15, 2019)

Suggestions from Study Participants

The study participants were asked to give their suggestions to other administrators who are considering restorative practices for their campuses. Mr. George shared the importance for administrators to expect the push from staff, students, and stakeholders.

Be prepared for the pushback, be prepared that you are going to be told that you are soft on discipline, that you are not doing anything and the kids are out of control, or they are allowed to do whatever they want to do because they don't match what the standard punitive approaches are. That's the biggest takeaway.

Mr. Charles centered his responses on training, first for the administrative team and then also with the staff.

First of all, the training on it is really, really important. You know, there's certainly going to be that learning curve as you're going through it. But I would certainly attend all of the training or get all of the information that I could first. I think it's one of those things, too, that you shouldn't necessarily force on your staff. I think you introduce it, you pilot it first with those people, you monitor it, you ask other people… Otherwise, I think it becomes one of those additions that people are going to do, but yet, there's not going to be a lot of heart and soul in it. I think that's really what makes restorative practices different.

Mr. Jimmy reflected on his process of implementation with his staff. He shared a belief in practicing the process with staff first.

I think if we would not have brought the staff in a number of times for practice, I don't think it would have kicked off. I also stress just like in every other programming, you tried to implement, that there needs to be some kind of follow

up to make sure that it is actually happening. I would like to see Talk Read Talk Write lessons involved in closing out one of those sessions. Individually, students will share and continue to share their own writing scenario on how it felt to them and how they would resolve it. Overall, they need to continue to have follow-up and not just let it go on. I think there has to be something in your schedule. You're building a schedule to make sure you're revisiting it and pushing it throughout the year.

Summary

This qualitative case study utilizing participants' narratives involved interviews with secondary administrators who are within the first year of implementing restorative practices on their campuses. Each participant responded to the interview questions based on their experiences during the initiative supported through the Harris County Department of Education. This study was designed to answer the research question: What are administrators' perceptions of the implementation and effect of restorative practices at secondary schools including an alternative school of choice? There were four themes represented in the narratives and throughout the initial interviews with the three study participants. The first theme captured the participants' perceptions of the preparation that was necessary for introducing the student discipline management initiative with their staff and students. Participants' responses revealed that the mindset of discipline before restorative practices included student management practices that keyed in on taking away things and being punitive where kids do not learn social skills or communication. The participants' responses also revealed the belief that when introducing restorative practices to manage student discipline and develop positive change, community building circles

should be introduced at the beginning of the year in small groups. The second theme captured the initial reactions of both the staff and students to restorative practices. The participants' responses revealed that staff and students can work together and change mindsets moving away from punitive discipline management and improving communication skills through the use of community circles. The third theme of the study detailed the challenges and barriers to implementing restorative practices. The participants' responses revealed that buy-in from the leadership team and staff and a belief in shifting the mindset from punitive discipline to a restorative approach provides an opportunity for student growth and development. The fourth theme captured the participants' perceptions of the changes in the initiative on student discipline. The participants' responses revealed that students who are receptive and participate in the community circles find restorative practices effective.

The data in this study revealed diverse findings and similarities. The participants shared the belief that the impact of restorative practices relied on the staff's buy-in and delivery of the student discipline management system. Their delivery impacted the student's participation and belief in the circle process which was deemed as a positive student management practice. The participants' responses revealed that a mindset shift was required from punitive to restorative to reach the benefit of restorative practices. Chapter five will present a summary of the findings, conclusions, present recommendations, and identify implications for future research.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings from the perceptions of three secondary school administrators who are also in their first year of implementation. In chapter one, the context and researcher were presented. A literature review was completed in chapter two of the thesis which provided a historical overview of restorative practices. The methodology used for this research was presented in chapter three. In chapter four, the findings of the research were presented which captured the perspectives of the study participants. There were four themes represented in the narratives of the study participants. The themes included the preparation necessary for the discipline management practice, the initial reactions of the staff and students, the challenges and barriers, and finally the changes in discipline. The researcher will share further recommendations for administrators considering the implementation of restorative practices on their campuses as well as suggestions for future research later in this chapter.

This doctoral dissertation has been a chronicled journey through the first year of implementation of restorative practices at an alternative school of choice. On this journey, many different narratives, experiences, and issues related to the implementation of the restorative approach to managing student discipline have been explored. The primary source of data for the study came from interviews with the three participants, however, it should be noted that the researcher was also embedded in the research due to her involvement with implementing restorative practices on her secondary campus. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the participants were encouraged to be open and honest in the sharing of their experiences throughout the process of implementing

restorative practices. The study aimed to capture the perceptions of the participants therefore there was no right or wrong way to introduce the initiative to their staff and students.

This study posed the question What are administrators' perceptions of the implementation and effect of restorative practices at secondary schools including an alternative school of choice?

Discussion

The perceptions of the three study participants were derived from the four preset themes that were from data collected from a series of interview questions.

Theme #1 centered on the study participants' steps for preparing their staff for the introduction of the discipline management initiative. The study participants' perceptions regarding the mindset of discipline before restorative practices included the belief that student management is identified as taking away things and being punitive where kids do not learn social skills or communication. The district's code of conduct and campus policies were the guide for making discipline decisions. Discretionary abilities were utilized, but the zero-tolerance policies led to high rates of expulsions and removals causing the administrators to seek an alternative practice to replace exclusionary policies which caused an overrepresentation of ethnic minorities in the discipline system. The study participants also noted that during the process of introducing restorative practices to manage discipline and develop positive change, community building circles should be introduced at the beginning of the year in small groups. This implementation strategy provided the administrators an opportunity to introduce the student discipline

management practice and monitor the progress by identifying staff members who believed in the approach.

Theme #2 identified the initial reactions of both staff and students on the use of restorative practices. Participants felt that staff and students could work together and change mindsets moving away from punitive discipline management and improving communication skills through the use of community circles. The participants also noted that the heart and soul that goes into the implementation of restorative practices was the responsibility of everyone on the campus. Changing the culture of the campus to one of a restorative nature does not occur instantly and involves ongoing dialogue in order to be effective. The leaders and staff promoting the change process are charged with maintaining consistency and following the protocols and guidelines of restorative practices as well as encouraging others to use the practice to see the full benefit.

Theme #3 highlighted the challenges and barriers to the implementation of restorative practices based on the perceptions of the participants. The participants all mentioned the importance of buy-in. Their responses noted that buy-in from the leadership team and staff and a belief in shifting the mindset from punitive discipline to a restorative approach provides an opportunity for student growth and development. Key people are needed in order to keep the process of implementation moving in a positive direction. Their belief in the practice and benefits helps to motivate others who are interested in using restorative practices to improve relationships with the students. The participants did not shy away from their reflection of the process. They stated that the shift from punitive discipline to management using a restorative approach causes some discomfort and pushback from the staff.

Theme #4 highlighted the changes in the number of discipline referrals as a result of the use of restorative practices. In response to changes, participants felt students who are receptive and participate in the community circles find restorative practices effective and show a decline in discipline occurrences. The participants felt that people change their behavior when they feel loved, heard, and understood. The philosophy under restorative approaches implies that all stakeholders affected by an injustice have an opportunity to discuss how they have been affected by injustice and they should be included in the decisions that are made in reference to repairing the harm. The aforementioned injustice is understood in terms of a relationship more so than judging right from wrong (Vaandering, 2010). The study participants believed that the students who participated in the circles showed a reduction in the frequency of previous behaviors.

Trustworthiness and Triangulation

Data reliability is of significant importance when it comes to qualitative research. To support the validity of this study, the researcher used data triangulation. The researcher used the data from multiple interviews with secondary school administrators responsible for implementing restorative practices on their campuses and compared their responses to verify the information. The researcher used the process of member checking when she sought feedback from the participants after interpreting the data from their interviews to check the accuracy and credibility of the findings. The researcher used the same interview question protocol with each participant. The researcher was also embedded in the study through the use of her journal notes and reflections. The researcher also utilized peer debriefing during the research process as a validation strategy for analyzing the findings and identifying the themes.

The perceptions of other administrators in the district were the basis of the study with the inclusion of the researcher whose experience is embedded. The study participants' discussions could potentially lead to improving the experience of other administrators seeking to implement a restorative approach to managing student discipline with the use of restorative practices. The limitations of this study were that the participants were only a small representation of their campus and consisted of only the secondary level; therefore, they may not have represented the perceptions and values of all the administrators who were implementing restorative practices.

Implications

Upon completing a thorough analysis of the themes provided by the study participants in this case study, there were implications for secondary school administrators who are considering implementing restorative practices as an approach to manage student discipline on their campuses. Zero tolerance policies that impose punitive consequences typically do not result in assisting students in changing their misbehaviors. Students instead are removed from the school or excluded from instructional settings leading to repetitive disruptive behaviors. According to data collected by the US Department of Education, Black girls are disproportionately overrepresented in all discipline categories. For school administrators who are struggling with increased suspensions and off-campus discretionary placements, an analysis of the experiences of the study participants can be viewed as a guidebook of potential strategies and practices for introducing the implementation of restorative practices to both staff and students. Although there is the anticipation of questions regarding the nature of this study based on the conclusions, the following are suggested recommendations as a result of this study.

First, because all three of the study participants indicated that staff buy-in and support was an integral part of effective implementation, schools considering the approach to managing student discipline should ensure that they have information to present to the staff that supports a need to implement restorative practices. This documentation could include discipline data and trends that show repetitive incidents within the same category which supports the need for an approach that provides an opportunity to teach students how their behavior results in undesired consequences. One of the three administrators also mentioned the need for support from district leadership which would assist with resistance from the staff throughout the process of changing mindsets from punitive discipline practices. Second, an extensive review of restorative practices being implemented on school campuses would be beneficial in identifying the correct usage of the discipline management approach. Staff and students need to be explicitly taught what the common language, guidelines, and procedures are, and in time if they are practiced consistently over time, the implementation of restorative practices can take place effortlessly across the campus.

Future Research

The following section presents suggestions for future research for administrators implementing restorative practices based on the analysis of the research. They suggest implications based on the research findings and perceptions of secondary administrators within the first year of the implementation of restorative practices on their campuses. These suggestions are intended to initiate questions for further research and study.

The perceptions of administrators are presented in this study but moving forward there should be conversations with teachers to capture their perceptions. What are the

perceptions of teachers who are implementing restorative practices? This study would gather their perceptions of the effectiveness of the restorative approach to managing and addressing student discipline within the aspect of the behavior of students in the classroom.

One of the study participants inquired about the students' perspective of restorative practices. What strategies do students view as important in the implementation of restorative practices? Do students view restorative practices as helpful in their growth and development? Do students view restorative practices as meaningful in the development of meaningful relationships and communication skills? Future researchers could analyze student discipline data and the students' ability to utilize restorative practices to monitor their own behavior.

There is typically a focus on administrators and teachers, but an additional component in the implementation of restorative practices includes the perceptions of the parents whose students are utilizing the practices. Do parents view restorative practices as helpful in the growth and development of their children? Do parents view restorative practices as meaningful in the development of positive relationships and communication skills? What changes have parents noticed in their children due to their participation in restorative practices in their schools?

A study researching the impact on discipline would be interesting and a great follow up to the implementation of restorative practices. Discipline trends as a result of utilizing a restorative approach could be identified by tracking the number of discipline infractions acquired during the implementation of the practices in comparison to the data prior to the use of circles and other restorative practices. What is the impact of

restorative practices on the decrease of discipline incidents? Tracking discipline data to create measurable data points to analyze the effectiveness of restorative practices is necessary to support the alternative approach to managing student discipline and teaching appropriate behaviors and responses to stimuli.

Suggestions for Implementation

This qualitative case study utilizing participants' narratives derived from my desire to ascertain and understand the perceptions of secondary administrators within the first year of implementing restorative practices on their campuses. As a participant in the same district initiative, I wanted to see how other administrators were leading their campuses through the implementation process in order to enhance my own work with my students. Throughout the year, our district has been providing support and encouraging campuses to focus on the social-emotional health of both staff and students. The district's desired impact of improving school culture includes improving student attendance and safety, maximizing student engagement, and promoting positive, effective, and culturally responsive interactions between students, staff, and community members. The following section presents my recommendations for considerations when implementing restorative practices on school campuses. These recommendations are intended to provide suggestions for training, practice, and the use of the approach to managing student discipline based on the experiences of the researcher and the findings of the study participants.

I would first like to recommend that administrators who are seeking to implement restorative practices on their campus ensure time is designated at the beginning of the school year for training and practice during teacher staff development. The training

should provide an opportunity for the administrator to establish the norms and procedures for the circle structure. The introduction to the practices should include discipline data from the previous year to encourage staff buy-in, understanding, and support of the initiative. In order to ensure that restorative practices are used throughout the campus, I recommend that administrators build circle time into the master schedule or designate time on the campus calendar. The administrator should evaluate and observe the circles to make sure the use of restorative practices is being executed according to the appropriate protocols and guidelines of the campus. Based on the findings in this study, I would also like to submit a proposal to the Executive Director of Social Emotional Learning and Culture and the Chief of Schools to implement a system for evaluating the effectiveness of restorative practices on the campuses participating in the initiative. The circle schedule and discussion topics would be logged and monitored to ensure that the practices are being used. The evaluation would also document the perceptions of each circle facilitator and reactions of the students after each circle to gather information on which topics were more effective and impactful for the students. The evaluation system would also document student discipline referrals each quarter to determine whether or not the use of restorative practices is effective as a means of improving and managing student discipline.

In order for the school-wide implementation to be effective, restorative practices must be used with fidelity. The study participants have focused on one aspect of restorative practices, circles, during their first year of implementation. The circle is a structured dialog process that nurtures connections and empathy while also honoring the uniqueness of each participant (Pranis, 2005). The elements of the circle must be used by

all circle facilitators. It is important that both staff and students know, use and understand the common language, guidelines, and procedures for uniformity across the campus. Teachers serving as circle facilitators or circle keepers, must use the circle elements consistently with enthusiasm. In order for restorative practices to be effective, they must be followed with an intentional focus on improving relationships with students, not simply meeting compliance standards. As recommended by the study participants, staff buy-in is crucial to the success of a restorative approach to managing student discipline. Students were receptive to the use of restorative practices based on their teacher's delivery. I would further recommend that teachers align their ideas of discipline practices to educational goals as we pursue equity. Teachers should use restorative practices for the purpose of finding out student interests and listening to their experiences. Goals for student learning are created each year, but if the students are constantly referred to the office and ultimately suspended, teachers are working against their goals for academic success. Instead of relying on removal, teachers can utilize restorative practices to explore the causes of behavior problems and work on keeping them in the classroom, so they have an opportunity to learn. The use of restorative practices in schools and even in classrooms would be a great strategy for addressing relationships between teachers and students.

Students also have a responsibility in the effectiveness of the implementation of restorative practices. I suggest that students know, use and understand the common language, guidelines, and procedures of the circle process. The teaching of the circle elements can be done by practicing community building circles. Students should participate in circles to learn new ways of responding to students who have unique

qualities and differences. They should use the circle space to learn how to communicate their feelings and experiences and also how to appropriately respond to others.

Conclusion

This research has been a labor of love and possibly the most productive assignment in my career as an educator. Never have I been so deeply committed to thinking about practice for connecting students and staff. I have always valued relationships with others, but the opportunity I was afforded to implement a district initiative on my campus has allowed me to examine the power of those relationships. The goal of this study was to capture the perceptions of administrators who were within the first year of implementing restorative practices. I resisted the urge to shout amen to my fellow administrators who were sharing the same experiences as I was throughout the first year of implementation. I allowed each participant to share their own journey and listened with an objective ear free from bias. Based on the responses of the study participants, administrators believe the alternative approach to managing student discipline is beneficial and meaningful. The administrators who participated in the study perceive the buy-in of the leadership and staff is important in relation to student participation and acceptance.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol Form

Project: What are the perceptions of administrators regarding the implementation of restorative practices?

Date: _____   Time: _____

Interviewee: _____   Consent Form Signed: _____

Notes to Interviewee: Thank you for your willingness to participate in my study. I believe your input will be valuable to this study and I appreciate your time and support of these efforts. As a reminder, your participation in this study is strictly voluntary which means you can choose whether or not to participate at any time. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to let me know.

Purpose of Research: Examine the perceptions of administrators regarding the implementation of restorative practices to manage student discipline at secondary schools.

Demographic Information

1. How long have you served as an administrator at your school?

2. How often do you address discipline concerns?

3. Please briefly describe your knowledge of restorative practices.

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your ideas of discipline on your campus before restorative practices?

2. Have you led your staff through a change initiative prior to the implementation of restorative practices? Please briefly describe the initiative and experience.

3. What preparation was necessary before introducing your staff to restorative practices?

4. Describe the initial reactions of your staff?

5. Describe the initial reactions of your students?

6. What are your general impressions of restorative practices in schools?

7. Can you tell me what the challenges or barriers of the implementation process have been?

8. What changes in the number of discipline referrals have you noticed on your campus since implementing restorative practices?

9. Can you provide a story or example that illustrates how you have used restorative practices as a means of managing student discipline on your campus this year?

Follow Up Question

1. What suggestions do you have for other administrators who are considering restorative practices for their campuses?

Closure: Thank you again for participating in this research study. I appreciate your insight on the implementation of restorative practices on your campus. The information collected today will be kept confidential and your identity will remain protected. Once I have transcribed our conversation today, do I have your permission to send you a copy and then we can touch base with one another again to make sure I have captured your thoughts accurately? Thank you!

Appendix B

IRB Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON
DIVISION OF RESEARCH
Institutional Review Boards

APPROVAL OF SUBMISSION

June 18, 2020

Marcie Strahan
mstrahan@uh.edu

Dear Marcie Strahan:

On June 18, 2020, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	Administrators' Perceptions Regarding the Implementation of Restorative Practices at an Alternative School of Choice
Investigator:	Marcie Strahan
IRB ID:	STUDY00002127
Funding/ Proposed Funding:	Name: Unfunded
Award ID:	
Award Title:	
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Study Participant Solicitation Letter, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Interview Protocol, Category: Study tools (ex: surveys, interview/focus group questions, data collection forms, etc.); • Interview Protocol, Category: Study tools (ex: surveys, interview/focus group questions, data collection forms, etc.); • HRP-502a, Category: Consent Form; • HRP-503, Category: IRB Protocol; • Interview Protocol, Category: Study tools (ex: surveys, interview/focus group questions, data collection forms, etc.);
Review Category:	Exempt
Committee Name:	Noncommittee review
IRB Coordinator:	Maria Martinez

The IRB approved the study on June 18, 2020; recruitment and procedures detailed within the approved protocol may now be initiated.

Page 1 of 2

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON
DIVISION OF RESEARCH
Institutional Review Boards

As this study was approved under an exempt or expedited process, recently revised regulatory requirements do not require the submission of annual continuing review documentation. However, it is critical that the following submissions are made to the IRB to ensure continued compliance:

- Modifications to the protocol prior to initiating any changes (for example, the addition of study personnel, updated recruitment materials, change in study design, requests for additional subjects)
- Reportable New Information/Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others
- Study Closure

Unless a waiver has been granted by the IRB, use the stamped consent form approved by the IRB to document consent. The approved version may be downloaded from the documents tab.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the IRB system.

Sincerely,

Research Integrity and Oversight (RIO) Office
University of Houston, Division of Research
713 743 9204
cphs@central.uh.edu
http://www.uh.edu/research/compliance/irb-cphs/

Appendix C

Participant Solicitation Communication

Greeting Fellow Administrators,

My name is Marcie Strahan, and I am currently pursuing an Executive Doctorate of Education degree from the University of Houston. I am currently working on my dissertation, which will highlight the perceptions of administrators regarding the implementation of restorative practices.

You have been identified as an ideal candidate to interview for this research study due to your role as an administrator of a secondary school campus in the early implementation stages of restorative practices as a means to manage student discipline. I am writing to invite you to be a part of this study.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in one interview with me and a follow up conversation to make sure I accurately captured your thoughts. The interview will take about 45 minutes to an hour, using the online platform Zoom. Upon receiving your permission, I would like to record our interview and then use the information to understand more about the strategies and processes you have used to introduce your staff and students to restorative practices. Your decision to participate in the study is strictly voluntary and involves little to no risk to you as the participant. Your personal information will be kept confidential and a pseudonym will be used for your name and the name of your campus. Research records will be stored securely and only I will have access to the records.

If you would like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at mstrahan@uh.edu or 281-468-3311.

Thank you in advance for considering to participate in this study, your support is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Marcie Strahan, M.A., M.Ed.
mstrahan@uh.edu

Appendix D

Participant Consent Form

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON
A CARNEGIE-DESIGNATED TIER ONE
PUBLIC RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study

Title of Research Study: Administrators Perceptions Regarding the Implementation of Restorative Practices at an Alternative School of Choice

Investigator: Marcella Jones Strahan   mstrahan@uh.edu   (281) 468-331

Data from this research project may be included in doctoral dissertation research being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Cameron White.

Key Information:
The following focused information is being presented to assist you in understanding the key elements of this study, as well as the basic reasons why you may or may not wish to consider taking part. This section is only a summary; more detailed information, including how to contact the research team for additional information or questions, follows within the remainder of this document.

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?
You are being invited to take part in a research study about the perceptions of administrators regarding the implementation of restorative practices because you meet the following criteria: You are a secondary principal in the first year of implementation of restorative practices on your campus.

What should I know about a research study?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Taking part in the research is voluntary; whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide, and can ask questions at any time during the study.

In general, your participation in this research study involves you answering a series of questions about your perceptions regarding the implementation of restorative practices as a means to managing student discipline. You will be asked to share these perceptions in an one-on-one interview with the primary researcher. There is minimal risk foreseen in this study as the investigator has no administrative or supervisory role over the research participants, nor will any confidential or identifiable information be shared with the site administrator or school/district employee. Any party may withdraw from participation at any time with no repercussions. There are no direct benefits to the researcher. Benefits

Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study

of participation in the study include a contribution to scholarly research. There is no compensation to participate in this study.

Why is this research being done?
The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of secondary administrators regarding the implementation of restorative practices. The goal is to ascertain, through interviews, the viewpoints of administrators regarding the student discipline management practice and their perspectives regarding the implementation and effectiveness of restorative practices. This study is an important first step in identifying the next steps necessary to support administrators who are seeking alternative methods for managing student discipline on their secondary campuses.

How long will the research last?
We expect that you will be in this research study for 45-120 minutes, the expected duration of the interview and a follow up interview after the initial interview has been transcribed for accuracy.

How many people will be studied?
We expect to enroll up to 5 people in this research study.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?
If you decide to participate in this study you will be asked to complete the consent form prior to any other arrangement. Any questions you may have can be answered at any time, but especially can be discussed before signing the consent form. Once the form is complete, you will be asked to participate in two 45-60 minute interviews via Zoom. You will be contacted by Marcella Strahan (principal researcher) to arrange a time and a date that is mutually agreeable. Participants will be asked a series of questions on the implementation of restorative practices and the interviews will be audio/video recorded for transcription purposes. Once the questions are answered the interview will be concluded. The questions are semi-structured as to elicit a conversational response. All information will be kept confidential and pseudonyms will be used for all names of participating personnel.

I agree to be audio recorded during the research study.
I do not agree to be audio recorded during the research study.

Participants may still participate in the interview if they do not agree to be audio recorded. The audio recording is for the purposes of better analyzing the findings.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?
You can choose not to take part in the research and it will not be held against you. Choosing not to take part will involve no penalty.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?
You can leave the research at any time it will not be held against you. If you stop being in the research, already collected data will be removed from the study record and you will not be required to do any further. You will not be asked to explain the extent of your withdrawal. You will not be asked for anything else.

Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?
There are no foreseeable risks related to the procedures conducted as part of this study. If you choose to take part and undergo a negative event you feel is related to the study, please inform the principal researcher.

Will I receive anything for being in this study?
There is no compensation or payment that the subject can expect to receive for their participation.

Will being in this study help me in any way?
We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits include discussions that may lead to better practices and strategies for implementing restorative practices on a secondary campus. Other administrators may also benefit from your insights about the implementation of restorative practices on their campuses.

What happens to the information collected for the research?
Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study records, to people who have a need to review this information. Each subject's name will be paired with a pseudonym, which will appear on all written study materials. The list pairing the subject's name to the assigned pseudonym will be kept separate from these materials. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of this organization, as well as collaborating institutions and federal agencies that oversee human subjects research. We may publish the results of this research. However, unless otherwise detailed in this document, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential. A copy of the data from this research will be stored in Dr. Cameron White's office (FH 230) in the Curriculum and Instruction department for 3 years following completion of the research. All recordings will be destroyed once transcriptions are completed.

Who can I talk to?
 If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, you should talk to the research team Marcella Strahan at mstrahan@uh.edu or Dr. Cameron White at cswhite@uh.edu. You may also call Dr. White's office at 713-743-8678. The principal researcher (Marcella Strahan) may be contacted at 281-468-3311.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Houston Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may also talk to them at (713) 743-9204 or cphs@central.uh.edu if:
• Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
• You cannot reach the research team.
• You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
• You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
• You want to get information or provide input about this research.

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Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study

Your signature documents your consent to take part in this research.

_____   _____
Signature of subject   Date

_____
Printed name of subject

_____   _____
Signature of person obtaining consent   Date

_____
Printed name of person obtaining consent