PRINCIPALS LIVING RESTORATIVE PRACTICES: A JOURNEY OF HOPE, PASSION, AND JUSTICE

by

Travis Mutscher, M. Ed.

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Committee Members:

Miguel A. Guajardo, Chair

Bergeron Harris

Clarena Larrotta

Hilary Lustick

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my own family, who are impacted by the systems of education each day. To my loving wife who serves as an elementary school counselor, and my two boys who started this journey with me as elementary students and are now high school and middle school students.

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, who are both former educators and instilled the value and power of education for all children to shape the world that we live in. Their influence empowered me to use my voice as an instrument of hope, passion, and justice in the world.

I dedicate this dissertation to all my former teachers and professors, who provided a caring and nurturing environment, who challenged my thinking with rigorous coursework, and ultimately provided the platform to shape my own learning and pathway.

I dedicate this dissertation to my co-workers in education who are in the trenches with me each day. They are faced with tremendous odds against them in a society that has devalued education and given educational workers less respect and resources to meet the needs of the children we serve. Despite the demands and requests, they meet those duties with a smile each day because they are true champions for students.

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to all the students that I have ever taught or for whom I have been an administrator for. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your

lives and educational journey. It is with you in mind that I embarked on this research to find a way to make tomorrow better than today!

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I. ENGAGING IN A RESTORATIVE INQUIRY

When a flower does not bloom
You fix the environment
In which it grows,
Not the flower.
- Alexander den Heijer

Statement of the Problem

As an assistant principal, I prided myself on being a strict disciplinarian. If a student disrupted the school environment, that student was going to receive a consequence, no questions asked. I often used a discipline matrix to determine consequences for students that had broken the student code of conduct, and I even worked to revise the discipline matrix to guarantee that specific and appropriate consequences were given to repeat offenders. The matrix specified a consequence for each rule's infraction, and if it was a second offense, the consequence increased in severity. At the very least, the student would be out of class to give the teacher and other students a break from the disruption.

As I progressed in my career as an administrator, I came to the conclusion that what I was doing was not truly working. Although behavior improved for most students, and morale improved for most teachers, there was still something plaguing me. For particular students, my methods were completely ineffective, and this resulted in a lack of respect. Students were not afraid to go to the office, and there was no fear of being out of class or even out of school. There was also no difference when the student re-entered the classroom. Often a student returned to the classroom bitter about having been given a referral, and the teacher was bitter about the consequences issued to the student. Without clearing the air and starting fresh with a new plan in place, it was only a matter of time

before conflict resumed and the cycle continued. Students often had a perception that consequences were unfair and that the system was stacked against them.

Embarrassingly, it took me four years and a change of scenery before I stopped rubber stamping referrals and started taking the time to listen to the students and understand the situation from their perspectives. Perhaps it was making the move from a school of privilege back to a Title 1 school that opened my eyes. When I was at a school of privilege I had more compliance from students, and the students were less likely to argue and more likely comply without questioning authority. This experience was different when I moved back to a Title 1 school. I had students openly question why certain rules were in place and if there was not respect, good luck in trying to convince them to be compliant. What I took away from it, however, was the reality that some students did not trust adults, and one of the missing components was the intentional establishment of student-adult relationships.

As a teacher and coach, I prided myself on building relationships with my students. They knew that I cared about them, would protect them, and would go to bat for them. I tried to carry that same spirit into the assistant principal role, but somewhere along the way, it seemed to slide down the list of priorities. Once enlightened about my renewed passion for relationships, I began to really listen to the words that I had been hearing. When students responded, “Why should I tell you what happened? Why should I explain what I did or did not do? Why should I tell you why I did or did not do something?” This was followed up with, “You already have the teacher’s version and you already have my consequence picked out, do you not?” Busted. It was true. Many times I did already have a consequence in mind before I ever heard the student’s side of the

story. After a little soul searching, I told myself, “Today, I am going to do things differently!” The more I saw the same students in the office, the more I was convinced of what the problem was: me.

I was not taking the time to listen. Once I took the time needed, it was crystal clear that the problem usually dealt with dialogue and relationships. Over time, the relationship aspect between the student and teacher had eroded to the point of non-existence. Perhaps an authentic relationship had never been built in the first place. Nonetheless, the dialogue between student and teacher, when present, was not productive. It was to the point where neither person in conflict knew what to say anymore, nor how to fix the relationship that had diminished.

The situation presented itself very similarly regarding students having conflict. Students were more concerned about “saving face” in front of their friends than trying to get to the root of the problem. Conversations were confrontations and the only way that I knew how to keep the peace between two students upset with each other was to keep them away from each other. In the long run, this was only hurting the students, as they were often placed in In-School Suspension (ISS), Out-of-School Suspension (OSS), or sent to another classroom during a period that they shared with the other student. My best option for keeping students in class was a schedule change. This was not desirable either, considering the student now had to get to know a new teacher and new classmates, all the while, still holding a grudge. I knew the problem was fixing the relationship, but did not know the answer. I just could not solve the issue of how to fix the relationship. In retrospect, part of the problem was that I felt that I was the one who had to solve the issue for two other individuals, even though it was not about me.

On my journey to understanding my responsibility as a leader, I attended the inaugural national conference on school discipline in Atlanta, GA in the summer of 2012. While there, I sat in on Larry Thompson's Responsibility-Centered Discipline session, which centered on student accountability. When I returned home and looked up more resources, I stumbled upon the concept of restorative practices. The more I read, it just made sense to me as an educator. Restorative practices repair the relationship, give voice to each side, and hold not only the student accountable, but all parties accountable in determining a solution (Zehr, 2002). From that point forward, I have tried my best to be a restorative leader. It has been six years, and I continue to practice my craft as a restorative coordinator for circles and conferences. I read many books and articles and attended more conferences on discipline and I am now convinced that restorative practices are the cure for relationship woes in schools.

Dare to dream. Imagine a school where students learn to be a part of the process that resolves conflict. Imagine a school where a student harmed in a situation is able to have a voice in the discussion with the student who caused the harm and has a say in the next steps towards reparation. Imagine a school where a support system exists for both of these students, letting each one know that mistakes are made, lessons can be learned, and harm to relationships can be repaired. Imagine a school where the voice and story of a student is more important than traditional metrics (markers) such as grades and attendance. Imagine a school where this philosophy and practice also extends to the adults in the building. Imagine a school that invites the community to be a part of these same practices.

Restorative justice is a new buzz word in the educational community, yet I am not talking about restorative justice. I do not use the words victim and offender because I am in the education field, not the justice department. I am not talking about restorative discipline. I no longer use the word discipline freely, because too often it has a negative connotation associated with power dynamics. Although the Latin roots of discipline mean pupil and can be characterized as educating a pupil, too often the word is associated with obedience, control, or punishment. I also do not use the word punishment because the focus for conflict resolution should be on accountability and support, rather than consequences. The terms victim, offender, discipline, and punishment are sprinkled throughout the study when associated with Restorative Justice, Restorative Practices, and Restorative Discipline. I leave these terms in on purpose, because when reading them with an awareness, even within the field of restorative practices, there is a need for a change in the language used.

Restorative practices are a growing movement for alternative approaches to traditional punitive discipline. By using a model referenced by Guajardo et. al. (2016) as the Ecologies of Knowing (Figure 1), I confirm the significance of restorative practices as a model, not only for educational institutions at the organizational level, but a model for individuals and communities to use in daily life as well. I demonstrate how storytelling can impact our thinking and learning as it moves between the micro, meso, and macro levels that I refer to as the ecologies of self, organization, and community. In doing so, I explain how social constructivism enhances our understanding of self and an obligation to community.

Figure 1. Ecologies of Knowing. Adapted from M. Guajardo, F. Guajardo, C. Janson, & M. Militano, 2016, p. 28.

In the end, I hope for action. For it is only with hope and passion that we take action in our schools, and with that action brings about justice and the ability to live a better tomorrow. Based on preliminary research of the literature, educational experiences, and the study of various theories, restorative systems is an emerging concept that allows for naming the space between the converging concentric circles of the systems and lifeworld as depicted by Figure 2. This is an adaptation of Habermas's (1984) and Sergiovanni's (2000) systems/lifeworld model.

The lifeworld is a theoretical concept stemming from the work of Husserl that defined "lifeworld" as situations in which groups or individuals must communicate with each other. This was expounded upon by Habermas (1984) in his theory of communicative action, where he theorized that the more complex an organization or society is, the more it is dependent on systems of communication. This system of interactions in the lifeworld is the foundation for developing cultural capital (Habermas, 1987). In the lifeworld, a school's culture, which consists of traditions, rituals, and

norms, serves as an accountability measure. The systemsworld is comprised of management designs and protocols, as well as policies and procedures, that lead to accountability. Sergiovanni (2000) stated that school leaders need to focus on the culture of the lifeworld when determining the policies and procedures of the systemsworld for the organization. Within systems theory, individual behavior often adapts to its environment through the complex internal structures in place. This can lead to a system of benefits and exploitation.

When these two systems are not created unilaterally, there will be intervals of conflict. In order to navigate tensions between the two systems, there must be an alternative approach. Gracious space is an alternative approach that bridges these two systems. Hughes (2004) reasoned that gracious space cultivates an open space and time where the emphasis is on the dialogue and exchange of ideas, rather than being right or wrong. An environment is created where there is trust and a willingness to share. Within this setting, the spirit is allowed to emerge, barriers are dismantled, and learning through self-reflection, disclosure, and active listening occurs.

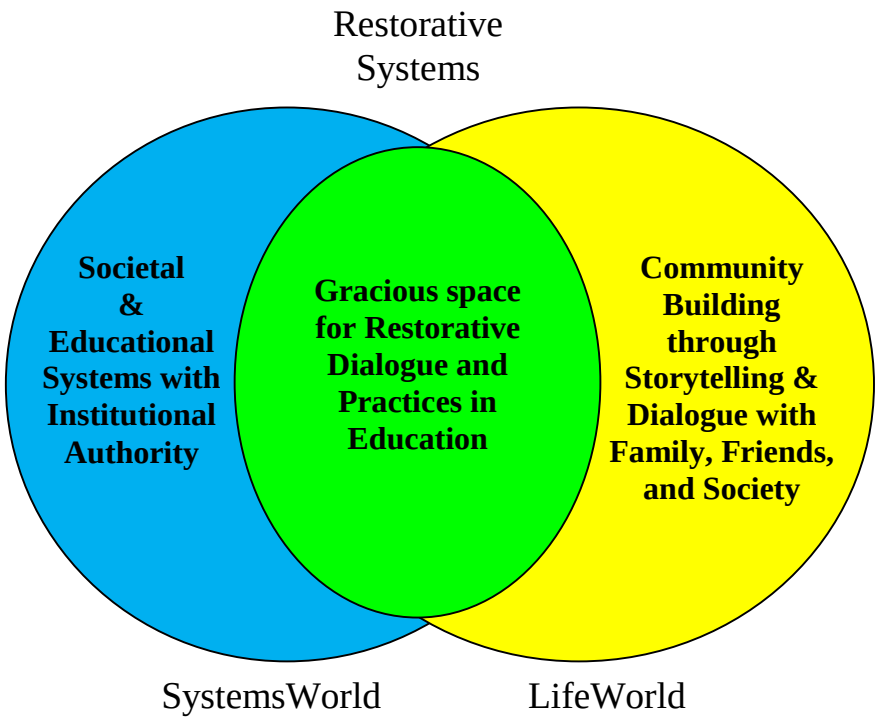


Figure 2: Converging Concentric Circles of Restorative Systems.

Theory and Conceptual Framework

Epistemology informing the research. Restorative practices are not unique to North America. In fact, Africa, Europe, Australia, and South America have been using the practice of circles for centuries (Roche, 2006). At the heart of restorative practices lies repair to relationships. Currently, there is no defined theory for restorative practices. I examined several theories (Braithwaite's re-integrative shaming theory, Bandura's social learning theory, Habermas' theory of communicative action, Durkheim's theory of social class, and Hughes' concept of gracious space) that have direct application to restorative practices, but settled on a conceptual framework of understanding that stems from Vygotsky's social constructivist theory and examines restorative dialogue within the ecologies of knowing.

Social constructivist theory. Vygotsky (1978) felt that learning is situated in a social context, thus learning is supported by the interaction with others in the culture. Knowledge resides not in the head of the individual, but in communities of practice. Macready (2009) posited that Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" is applicable to restorative practices because new understanding is developed through the interaction and involvement of other perspectives to create a shared consciousness. Questions and dialogue are central to "integrating new information, and developing concepts that create new understanding and new possibilities for acting differently" (Macready, 2009, p. 214). Social constructivism focuses on the idea that language is productive. We bring identities and relationships into being by the ways we speak (Drewery & Kecskemeti, 2010). Thus, every conversation that takes place in the school setting ultimately impacts teaching and learning. Every conversation that takes place has the ability to build or destroy a relationship. I chose to use social constructivist theory because it strikes a chord with me. I feel that I learn so much by being in conversation with others. As a principal, I see the benefit to students working collaboratively and the power of dialogue to solve problems. It is in this same spirit that I invite the reader to join me in my journey and begin having conversations so that we can learn from each other.

Restorative dialogue and storytelling. Dialogue is a central component of restorative practices. Dialogue is important because it allows us to have meaningful conversations that, among other things, give us the ability to understand the other participants in the conversation. Mead (1934) claimed that to have the capacity for morality, one must be able to empathize. Through dialogue one can abandon personal perspective to see another's. This ability to see another's perspective allows us to put

ourselves in their shoes and feel some of the same emotions that they do. Dialogue also serves as a means for meaning making. Isaacs (1999) characterized dialogue as a conversation where thoughts are built together in a relationship. Dialogue is also productive as a way to build relationships and resolve conflict. Schirch and Campt (2007) described dialogue as "a process for talking about tension-filled topics" (p. 5). Dialogue "aims to build relationships between people as they share experiences, ideas, and information about a common concern" (p. 6).

Perhaps the most important role of dialogue is to encourage open learning and change between participants. Mutual storytelling is one such form of dialogue. Pranis (2005) asserted that storytelling is an effective way to engage the listener in empathy and the teller through self-reflection. Thus, both the teller and the listener benefit from the story. Connection and respect emerge from the experience. Restorative practices such as the "circle" focus on the use of voice or storytelling to build or repair relationships, depending on the purpose of the circle. At first glance this might seem like an easy endeavor. However, the elements of restorative dialogue must be taught (Umbreit & Armour, 2010). These elements include: suspending opinion, listening to self and others, seeing the whole person, and speaking with an authentic voice. These conventions for circles are often taught through norms, but require participation and practice in order to fully comprehend their impact. Professional development and training that puts participants in a role to actively engage and share their story is encouraged to maximize the restorative process.

Another important aspect of dialogue is the connection to learning. Dialogue is a key component to social constructivist theory. It is dialogue that allows us to construct

meaning of our past and present. This social construction of knowledge then gives us the awareness, readiness, and competence for change to take place. While it might be possible to learn through observation, there is a greater feeling of connection as an active participant. For this reason, I am an active participant in the research as specified in chapter three.

Ecologies of knowing. Often it is difficult for individuals to understand all the different factors that influence the organization and individuals. The ecologies of knowing (Figure 1) is a framework that can be used for individuals to understand that they are surrounded by the organization and community and there are influences that flow in and out of the complicated layers that impact not only the individuals, but the community and organization as well. Although it stems from the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and his ecological systems theory (Figure 3) which states that individuals must be aware that they are being influenced by forces within other contexts, there are some differences.

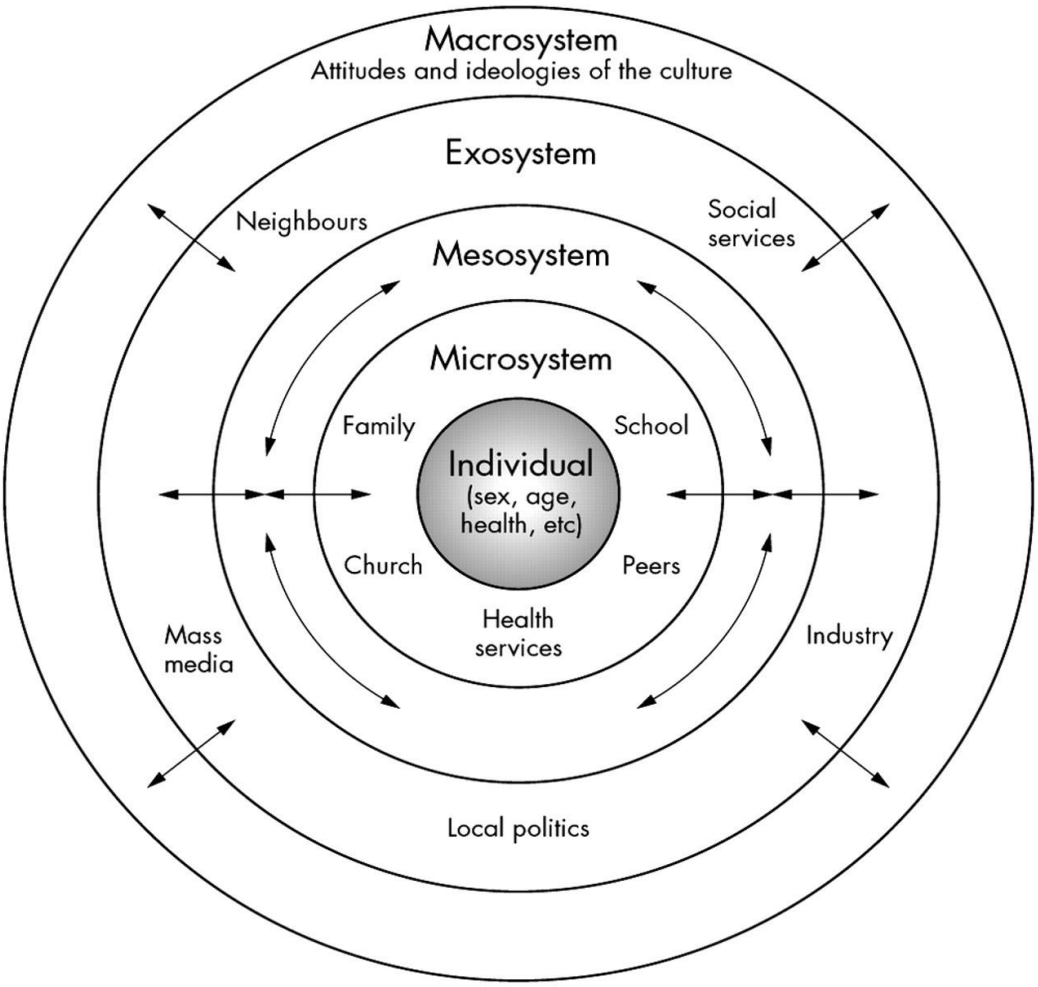


Figure 3. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Reprinted from L. Shelton, 2019, '*The Bronfenbrenner primer: A guide to develecology*.'

The ecologies of knowing and the ecological systems framework are both graphically represented by circles. The ecological system starts at the micro-level with the individual and moves outward to the mesosystem and exosystem, which are made up of organizations, that generally have a governing function with societal rules. The macrosystem depicts influences from the cultural context, such as values and attitudes, customs, and laws.

The ecologies of knowing moves from self, to organization, to community. While Bronfenbrenner's framework allows for plotting an experience, it is generally considered static. The major difference is that the ecologies of knowing framework is a dynamic space that is experiential. The plotting within the ecologies of knowing is used to explain and make meaning of a journey. It is a critical pedagogy with permeable boundaries, allowing for examination of influences on the movement. While it is often thought that outside circles influence inside circles, the ecologies of knowing allows for impact in both directions. Through this model, it can be reasoned that factors influencing a personal journey can lead to change at the school or organizational level, and could just as easily impact community and political structures. Restorative practices are an example of an influence at the personal level that has the potential to transcend boundaries and influence both the organization and community levels.

Currently, state and federal governments are looking at restorative practices as mandates to turn around low performing schools. This is not a mistake in intentions, but is a mistake in delivery. Hantzopoulos (2013) reflected that restorative justice should not be rigidly imposed on a school, but rather should be integrated to embody the values of the school community. Brown (2017) advocates for more studies focusing on the ability of restorative practices to build social capital and how students can use developed empowerment skills within their social networks and communities. Restorative practices are organic in nature and must be part of the values the school and community embrace, therefore being embraced at the individual level. If not, then restorative practices is just be another program directive with little to no buy-in from stakeholders.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study was to better understand school leaders employing restorative practices, the climate necessary to implement them and how to best sustain the impact it has in our school community. Specifically, this study examined and recounted the journey of three principals, including myself, in a suburban school district, who have embraced the philosophy of restorative practices and are working on implementation in their respective schools. The focus of the study is on restorative leadership and the use of restorative dialogue that takes place in the school and the community. In doing this research, I wanted to gain an understanding of participant voice, as well as attitudes and perceptions for responsibility to both the school and community. The documentation of this journey through storytelling also included the constructivist learning process that takes place for each leader as they engage in dialogue through conversations.

Research Questions

Throughout this dissertation journey, I reflect on my own story as a principal and participant observer, who is implementing restorative practices on my own campus. I also co-construct the story of two other principals who were in the process of implementing restorative practices on their campus. By having the participants reflect on their own story of transformation and implementation, I unlock the untold stories of others that have been impacted by restorative practices for deeper analysis. I feel that the chronicling and examination of these journeys fills a gap in the research of how to operate in the space of restorative systems and serves as a springboard for shifting the mindset of educators, particularly school administrators, about the need for restorative practices in schools as a whole school approach for building community and repairing and restoring

relationships. Restorative practices should be considered a viable alternative to traditional discipline. The research questions that guided this inquiry and stimulated my curiosity were the following:

1. What levels of awareness, readiness, and competence are needed to prepare a school leader for implementation of a restorative system?
2. How does the climate and culture of an educational organization impact a school leader's ability to implement and sustain a restorative system?
3. How can storytelling be employed as action, method and pedagogy for restorative leadership?

Significance

Today much discussion centers on accountability in schools. This discussion of accountability is centered on high-stakes testing, which was ushered in by the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001. However, there is another type of accountability, rooted in a law seemingly meant to protect and hold schools accountable for the safety of students. This law was the Gun-Free Schools Act, passed in 1994. Enacted to establish a zero-tolerance policy for students who possessed a handgun on school property, this law went beyond giving schools the authority to expel a student. The law mandated a one-year suspension for students that were in violation, including students with disabilities, if a committee determines that the action was not a manifestation of the student's disability. Over the years, states expanded zero tolerance policies to include mandatory suspensions and expulsions for drugs, fights, defiance, disorderly behavior, truancy, and even dress code violations (Glanzer, 2005; Jones, 2013; Martinez, 2009; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). These actions were taken to keep students safe and protect the learning

environment. However, questions arise over the abuse of discrepancy power yielded to school leaders as to who is and who is not allowed to attend class when a school rule is broken.

Stucki (2014) reported that the suspension rate went up 87% between 1973 and 2006. At the same time, racial and ethnic minorities were disproportionately suspended for the same behavior as their White counterparts. Noguera stated:

> Suspension may put troubled kids out of sight, but it does not alter their conduct. Suspension often marks the beginning of a familiar pattern: Left on their own, kids get arrested, convicted of crime, and end up incarcerated, feeding what researchers and advocates now call the "school-to-prison pipeline." (as cited in Stucki, 2014, p. 7).

Seeing an increase in juvenile entry to the penal system, Henault (2001) cited the American Bar Association releasing a statement saying that zero-tolerance policies should be discontinued in schools. Sullivan (2007) called for an overarching framework that not only encompasses "academic knowledge and skills, but also creates a positive school environment, supporting the emotional and behavioral development of young people and encourages students to participate in developing school policies that impact their education" (p.45). This call for a positive school environment and participation in structure with student voice is in a sense the definition for restorative practices.

Another concern to highlight is the erosion of community in schools. Restorative practices are a way of bringing a sense of community back to the school. It is a way to "help young people develop in the context of their communities of care" (Braithwaite, 2001, 244-245). It lets both participants in a situation know that they have a voice and a

role in the next step of the process. A sense of belongingness is needed for individuals. This is one area of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Figure 4) that has remained unchallenged. In order to belong, one must feel part of an organization or community. Every organization or community has rules for acceptance within it. What is often missing, however, is how an individual is able to find belonging after being in contradiction with these rules for acceptance.

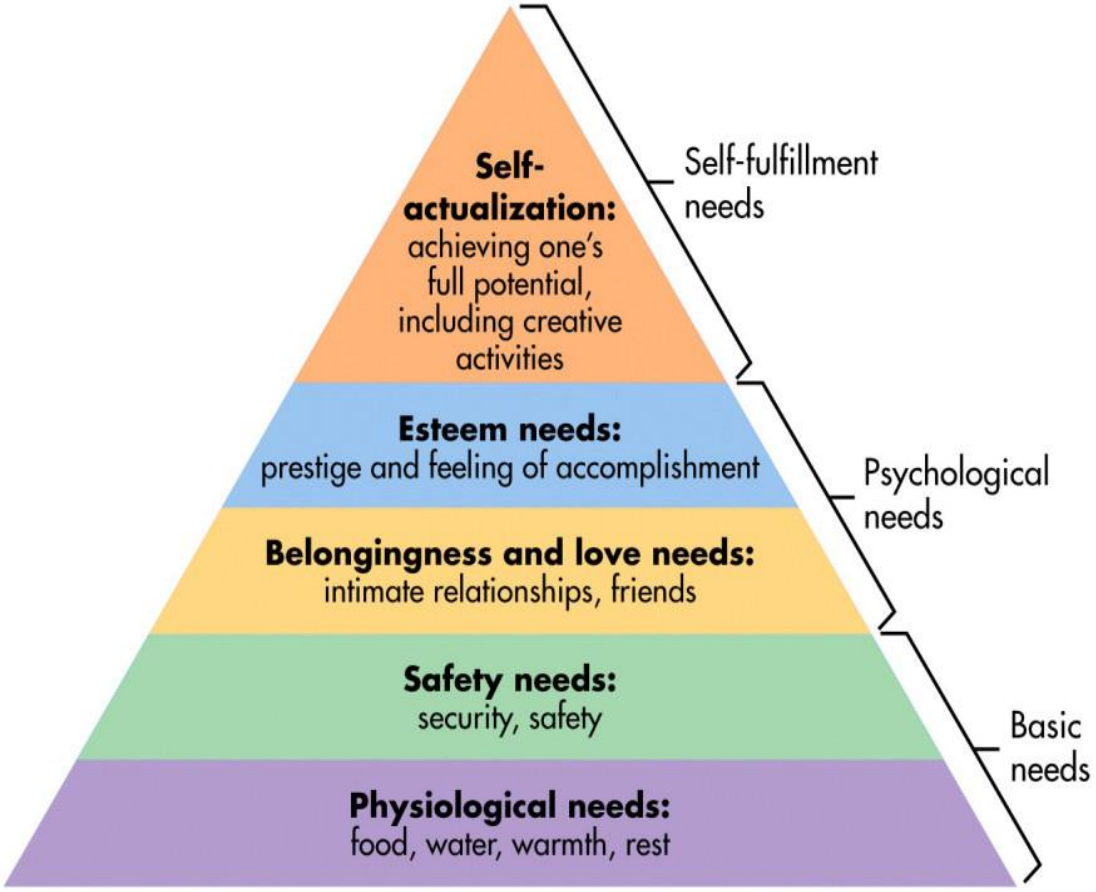


Figure 4. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Reprinted from S. McLeod, 2018, Retrieved from https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html.

In the school system, school rules are in place to ensure individual safety and a sense of responsibility for each other. When an individual breaks a school rule, there are consequences. In the judicial system, this is often referred to by the slogan, "do the crime,

do the time." Likewise, in education, discipline matrices were created for suitable retribution of offenses. For instance, a student that used curse words might be given a detention. A student that disrupted class might be given In-School Suspension (ISS) and a student that hit another student might be given Out-of-School Suspension (OSS). Frequency and intensity are commonly part of this matrix that gives a duration of consequences. A sample discipline matrix is provided in Appendix A. Unfortunately, this has led to an increase in exclusionary consequences and a diminished sense of community, not to mention, a lack of trust in the system. This fractured system, or "broken heart" not only negatively impacts students in the school, but adults working in the school (faculty and staff) and with the school (parents and community members) as well.

Public schools are at a cross-roads. The accountability system currently in place requires schools to ensure the academic success of all students attending. Current accountability practices, such as zero-tolerance policies, are only ensuring that students are out of the classroom. Zero-tolerance policies have not reduced school violence or discipline issues and, in some cases, have increased existing problems and undermined the development of a healthy learning environment (Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Skiba, 2014). With drop-out rates hovering around 30% across the nation and a noticeable incline in the number of youth being processed through the juvenile justice system, something has to change. Similar to the justice system (which coincidentally turned to the concept of Restorative Justice as an answer), the education system is in need of an alternative to strictly punitive and exclusionary practices.

The current system for discipline is ineffective, flawed, and according to the data, harmful to students, particularly minority males. Hrynkow (2010) argued that what is needed is a shift away from punishment centered on retribution towards restorative discipline. In order to facilitate a shift in ideology, it is important for a campaign to begin that strives for awareness, understanding, and action. The current campaign for this shift involves the concept of Restorative Discipline in the education system. While I find the use of the words "restorative" and "discipline" contradictory, I am in agreement with the practices. As reported from Wood (2014), the National Association of School Psychologists determined that schools can prevent student misconduct and promote strong relationships by implementing restorative discipline models focusing on four goals: generating self-discipline among the school community, preventing misconduct, correcting misconduct, and remediating persistent misconduct.

Wood (2014) also stated that to achieve these goals, an effective restorative discipline model creates a culturally receptive educational environment that fosters meaningful relationships and promotes confidence, emotional health, and responsible citizens. Morrison and Vaandering (2012) called for a shift from a "rules-based institution to a relationship-based institution" (p. 145). A critical look into educational systems, along with a philosophical shift towards the restoration of relationships could lead to true community in schools.

There is also a shift needed from a school leadership standpoint. Morrison and Vaandering (2012) go on to say that teachers and administrators need to possess a willingness to "disturb the traditional dynamic of schools" (p. 140). Ogilvie and Fuller (2017) noted that restorative justice pedagogy as an approach offers the potential to

transform classrooms into safe and caring environments. Trust is fostered when time and space are allowed in order for administrators, staff, and students to talk with and listen to each other on a regular basis. In doing so, the school is intentionally creating a listening culture (Brown, 2015). A major strength and distinctive feature of Restorative Discipline is its emphasis on the relationships between and with students, families, and school staff when conflicts occur (i.e. behavior problems). The effort is intended not just to resolve the issue, but also to repair the relationships between the individuals involved (Dunlap, 2013).

Shifting the paradigm only occur if the adults in the school are willing to challenge and change their mindset. Schools are organized as systems for efficiency and order. We must look at the current systems in place and ask how they impact relationships. It also requires taking a step back and asking, "How can we change the current metrics in place so that we put a face and name to those that are impacted most by our policies?" In this way, we are creating space for a restorative system to overlap systems of efficiency and order. This culture of care is based on community building and dialogue. This model for restorative systems was shown earlier as Figure 2.

This change in schools is only sustainable with support from school administration. School leaders are in a unique position to be pivotal partners in the dynamic relationship between introducing students to the larger community and keeping the community and families in touch with the school.

While there is no doubt quantitative data are useful and powerful as a predictor of successful implementation, storytelling introduces the work as a different metric than one of numbers. Stories help to identify with the individuals involved. They allow listeners

or readers to experience the same emotions that the participants might have experienced. There are many stories that need to be heard from various stakeholders, such as students, teachers, administrators, and parents. In this study, stories capture these voices. Restorative practices are powerful within the ecologies of knowing because they can begin with individuals and make an impact in the school. The power, however, is in the ability for these stories to provide an opportunity for restorative practices to transfer from school to the home and from the home to the broader community.

Delimitations

Delimitations include the fact that the scope of the study is confined to a small pool of principals within my current school district. While this greatly limited the number of potential candidates for the study, I was only seeking two to three other participants as research partners and the pool contained over fifty potential candidates. The reason behind the small sample is that there are only a few principals who are committed and trained in restorative practices. Thus, a purposeful selection process was needed to identify my research partners (see Appendix B for detailed questions and criteria). Given the demand of a busy schedule as principals, the proximity for conversations and participation in a circle of research partners played a large role in this decision. In an attempt to limit the perception of coercion, only principals were considered for the study as research partners; no assistant principals were asked to participate. The research and analysis associated with this work was an excellent opportunity for constructivist meaning making, not only for myself and my research partners, but also for the larger academic community with an ever-growing interest in the literature surrounding the role of school leaders seeking to implement and sustain restorative practices in schools.

Organization of the study

The remainder of the study is organized into chapters and includes appendices and a reference section. Chapter 2 focuses on a review of the literature regarding the journey of restorative practices over the past thirty years. Particularly, the review of literature gives more insight and context to the list of terms associated with restorative practices. Chapter 3 outlines the research design and methods used for the study, including participant selection and sampling procedures, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis, and limitations. An analysis of the data and discussion of the findings can be found in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 was added to be explicit in connecting previous research and theory to the findings. Finally, Chapter 6 contains implications, suggestions, recommendations for future research, and a conclusion for the study. A glossary of terms (Appendix C) is used to clarify concepts or terms found in the document. Other appendices include consent forms, questions used for the conversations and the circle of research partners, sample respect agreements, a table of findings, and steps for implementation.

II. EXPLORING THE RESTORATIVE LANDSCAPE: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE SURROUNDING RESTORATIVE SYSTEMS

> A being whose activities are associated with others has a social environment. What he does and what he can do depend upon the expectations, demands, approvals, and condemnations of others. A being connected with other beings cannot perform his own activities without taking the activities of others into account. For they are the indispensable conditions of the realization of his tendencies (pp. 10-11).
>
> -John Dewey

A review of the literature grounds us in the history and concepts surrounding restorative practices. First, the research surrounding discipline procedures in education, including influences from the judicial system and the practice of exclusionary discipline is discussed. Next, we look at the history of restorative practices in the systems world. After reviewing the systems world, restorative dialogue and restorative relationships are reviewed as part of the life world. Finally, a more explicit description of the continuum of restorative practices with specific examples of restorative systems is provided so that readers are better able to relate to the terminology being used.

Discipline Practices in Education

Since the 1980s, schools across the nation have seen a dramatic rise in the rate of exclusionary practices. Common exclusionary practices in education are the use of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension. This coupled with removals from home campuses to district alternative education programs (DAEP) and expulsions to juvenile justice alternative education programs (JJAEP) have resulted in the creation of hostile learning environments and increases in drop-out rates (Hantzopoulos, 2013). Evans and Didlick-Davis (2012) report that zero-tolerance policies have led to “the creation of a school-to-prison pipeline where low-income and minority students are disproportionately

subjected to extreme disciplinary measures" (p.1). According to a 2011 longitudinal study entitled Breaking Schools' Rules written in collaboration with the council of State Governments Justice Center and The Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University, about 54% of all students in grades seven through twelve experienced in-school suspension and 31% experienced out-of-school suspension. Only 3% were mandatory suspensions or expulsions, with the remainder being made at the discretion of school administrators. African-American and Hispanic male students had disproportionate violations recorded, 83% of the African-American population received a discretionary violation and 74% of Hispanic males received discretionary violations compared to white peers at 59%. Almost three quarters of the students receiving special education services were suspended or expelled at least once. About 31% of students who were suspended were also retained and 10% of students suspended or expelled dropped out of school. These numbers presented paint a bleak picture of the trust given to an educational system that is in place for "all" to receive a fair and just education. Perhaps more alarming is the link between school suspensions and the juvenile justice system. One out of every seven students interacted with the juvenile justice system. A student suspended or expelled was three times more likely to be in contact with juvenile justice within one year. Given these statistics, the reader is now able to see why the label of "school-to-prison pipeline" has been created.

A student that is out of class, even for a day, is missing instruction and the opportunity to learn. A student that is suspended for multiple days gets further and further behind academically for each day that they are not in the classroom. When the student does return to the classroom, it is possible that relationships are strained between students

and/or between the student and the teacher, depending on the origin of the suspension. If the origin was a dispute between classmates, there is often still a grudge towards the other student, an anxiety, or a fear for being in the same room. If the teacher wrote the referral that led to a suspension, there can be bitterness between the two, especially if the student felt he or she was unfairly given a referral in the first place. Likewise, from the teacher end, it is possible that the teacher feels like a harsher consequence should have been given and they might be disappointed that the student is returning to the classroom so soon. Regardless, this is a less than ideal environment for learning. Returning to the classroom behind because the student has not had the benefit of direct teaching only compounds the problem. This usually manifests into a student acting out as a coping mechanism to save face among peers. This behavior typically results in another discipline referral and more time out of the classroom, creating a vicious cycle, which only leads to the student falling farther and farther behind academically.

Reyneke (2015) argued that the discipline concept has the dimensions of control and order at its essence while aiming to create an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Punishment (exclusionary punitive discipline) is seen as an acceptable part of school discipline systems, but should be used as a last resort and only used in a trusting relationship. A school's punitive response to a situation can create a climate of fear and lead to both anger and resentment (Kohn, 2000). Illogical punishment only fuels the anger of troubled youth and make them more uncontrollable, especially students considered at-risk who have experienced past rejection and abuse. Thus, the goal of punishment techniques should be to contribute to the development of children in becoming responsible citizens, rather than outcasts of society (Brendtro et al., 2002).

Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (2014) posited that the focus on youth is centered on controlling behavior, rather than on developing strengths and assets. They asserted that educational institutes look at Native Americans' "circle of courage" as a model to both teach and inspire the values that we seek in our youth by meeting the needs of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity.

Morrison and Vaandering (2012) discussed how restorative justice is different from other discipline policies because "rather than focusing on external sanctioning systems (rewards and punishments) as a motivational lever, restorative justice focuses on the motivational lever of relational ecologies, embedded in the value base of internal sanctioning systems" (p. 140). Restorative justice also focuses on social and emotional engagement, which are key components to building community. Relationships are emphasized, in particular, reconnecting people to each other and to the community.

School administrators are scrambling to find a solution to the revolving door of recidivism for misbehavior in schools. At the root of this argument is the destruction of community within the school and continual breakdown of relationships. Whether it be relationships between students, students and adults, or even adult to adult, schools have lacked the tools to repair broken relationships with a systemic approach. Restorative practices address the reparation of the relationships that have been damaged. Often this can be done so that a student is not given an exclusionary consequence.

Schools must be safe, however, it may be beneficial for school administrators to follow Noddings' Concept of Care model for compassion and understanding as a more purposeful approach. Restorative practices give an ethical alternative to exclusionary discipline by giving value to student voice and community building (Buckmaster, 2016).

Restorative in the SystemsWorld

Restorative justice. The concepts of restorative justice and restorative practices have been mentioned as possible alternatives to exclusionary punishment. It is important to more clearly define exactly what the concept of "restorative" entails. Restorative practices actually derive from the concept or philosophy of restorative justice. Howard Zehr, a criminologist, is best known as the father of restorative justice and is cited often for his books, *Changing Lenses* and *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*. His work with restorative justice dates back to the 1970's when he worked with victim-offender mediation, but is perhaps rooted in his time as a student at Morehouse College. In his books, Zehr describes a shift within the justice system from a punitive, retributive model to one of restoration. The focus of the shift is on repairing the harm, rather than providing a consequence. "Restorative justice requires that we address victims' harms and needs, hold offenders accountable to put right those harms, and involve victims, offenders, and communities in this process" (Zehr, 2002, p. 25). Another way of looking at this is that restorative justice focuses on three central concepts: harm, accountability, and engagement (Zehr, 1997). This is a completely different approach from traditional justice in that the victim and community are part of the process and the goal is for the offender to be re-integrated back into the community with support. Crime involves injuries that need healing. The injuries represent harm in four basic dimensions: 1) to the victim; 2) to the interpersonal relationship; 3) to the offender; and 4) to the community. When using a restorative justice approach, there are generally five guiding questions:

1) Who has been hurt?
2) What are their needs?

3) Whose obligations are these?

4) Who has a stake in this situation?

5) What is the appropriate process to involve stakeholders in an effort to put things right?

By way of meta-analysis, Latimer, Dowden, and Muise (2005) concluded that restorative approaches were significantly more effective in achieving victim-offender satisfaction, low levels of recidivism, and high levels of compliance. In similar fashion, Rodriguez (2007) and Hayes (2005) found that in the juvenile justice system, restorative practices such as victim-offender mediation decreased recidivism for offenders. Wachtel (2003) concluded that restorative justice is a way of life and a guide to the way we should act in all contexts. Seeing such promising results led educators to borrow practices from the fields of juvenile justice, social work, and counseling. This transfer to the field of education resulted in a new name, restorative practices.

Restorative practices in education. Not wanting the stigma of being attached to the justice system, many educators prefer to refer to restorative justice as simply restorative practices. Wachtel (2003) who is the founder of the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) defines restorative practices as "any response to wrongdoing which falls within the parameters defined by our social control window as both supportive and limit-setting" (p. 84). An expansion on Wachtel's social discipline window (Figure 5) is documented in in the conceptual framework portion.

Before describing specific restorative practices, it is important to look at the philosophy guiding the practices. Pavelka (2013) condensed the guiding questions of restorative justice and core values of restorative practices down to three principles:

1) Repair harm - offenders are held accountable for their actions and encouraged to make positive changes in their behavior;
2) Reduce risk - promotes the community's capacity to manage behavior; and
3) Empower community - the school and external community take an active role in responsibility for the restorative response by collectively addressing the impact of the offender and reparation. Students are empowered as active participants in the resolution process.

Gonzales (2012) suggested that the practice of restorative justice empowers individuals and communities through building healthy relationships. Specific to schools, Gonzalez (2012) contended that restorative practices allow the school community to be empowered, by providing flexibility to address, confront, and resolve conflict. It is thought to be a benefit because students are able to have a voice in the process, while also being asked to accept responsibility for their actions. Administrators are given flexibility for consequences, while still being allowed to maintain necessary authority to keep schools safe. While restorative practices are a new concept to most in the field of education, studies thus far have shown positive results. Evans, Lester, and Anfara (2013) concluded that a majority of their research on restorative practices in schools showed that the practice led to positive outcomes, including a safer environment, decreases in expulsions and suspensions, and helping students resolve conflict and make things right. The seven principles proposed to guide practices in education are:

1) Meeting the needs of the offender, victim, and community;

2) Providing accountability and support to the offender;

3) Repairing harm and making things right;

4) Viewing conflict as a learning opportunity;

5) Building healthy learning communities;

6) Restoring relationships; and

7) Addressing power imbalances.

The seven principles listed above contain much of the same language as Wachtel's (2003) six principles for using restorative practices:

1) Foster awareness;

2) Avoid scolding or lecturing;

3) Involve offenders actively;

4) Accept ambiguity;

5) Separate the deed from the doer;

6) See every instance of wrongdoing and conflict as an opportunity for learning.

This framework for restorative practices that is shaped around community and a shift from "power over" to "power with" to handle issues of harm is discussed by Boyes-Watson & Pranis (2015). Acknowledging that every person possesses gifts that offer positive power is an important first step. The school should be an environment of shared power, rather than power of authority. A system that nurtures and honors the gifts of students so that they feel as if they belong in the school community.

Restorative practices as social control? Although much of the literature supports a move to restorative practices in schools as an alternative to punitive and

exclusionary consequences, there is also literature that supports a cautious approach to implementation. Lustick (2016, 2017) cautioned that restorative practices can serve to reinforce social control, while issues of race and prejudice go undiscussed. There is increasing pressure for schools to address and reduce issues of disparity among students of color that are being suspended. Having students participate in restorative conferences as an alternative to suspension might reduce suspensions from a quantitative standpoint, but not address the root issues behind misbehavior, conflict, or harm if they are not being conducted in the spirit of the lifeworld. The option to participate in a conference as opposed to being suspended may be viewed as a method for compliance, rather than care. Restorative practices must include the building of trust with the inclusion of diverse community opinions and values, in addition to reparative and restorative aspects, such as restorative conferences. Inclusion ensures that issues like race, prejudice, and bias are not being reinforced through institutional processes disguised as restorative practices. In this way we can guarantee that restorative practices are truly conducted "with" students rather than done "to" students.

Restorative in the Lifeworld

Community. Restorative practices engage students in supportive processes where they can take responsibility for their behavior. Restorative practices also include proactive processes that build relationships that include community participation and community benefit (Strang & Braithwaite, 2001; Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Mirsky, L., 2011). When restorative justice was circulating as an approach to use in the justice field, advocates argued that because of the personal nature of crime, a personal process was needed as a result. Restorative practices are seen as a social science that studies how to

build social capital and achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision making (Reyneke, 2015). The circle approach, used by Native tribes in both North America and Canada, as well as the Maori tribe from New Zealand, was seen as a model. "The basic principles of restorative justice require a fundamental shift in the power related to who controls and owns crime in society — a shift from the state to the individual citizen and local communities" (Umbreit, 1994, p. 162). Humans cannot be viewed as autonomous beings, but must be understood by their connection to each other and to their environment.

Everyone contributes to the well-being of the community (Pranis, 2005). As a result, “harm to one is harm to all. Good for one is good for all” (Pranis, 2005, p. 26). The communal nature of restorative justice is evident in McCold’s (1996) definition of restorative justice where he stressed that all parties with a stake must come together to resolve how to deal with the aftermath of the offense. Life is interconnected and interdependent, mutual responsibility exists to ensure well-being (Vaandering, 2011). Sawatsky (2008) sees restorative justice as a peaceful method to break the power that violence has on the world. Social transformation begins with social action.

Schools are large organizations comprised of many components. Organizations have their own culture and set of values in addition to a mission and vision statement. It is important for organizational leaders to look at organizational values through the lens of the community. “Transformational leadership may steer schooling in a way that fosters a sense of community, responsibility to all of our students, and an inclusionary mindset in those we lead, while at the same time setting up structures and making efforts to intentionally interrupt the exclusionary core values within the institution itself”

(Buckmaster, 2016). Boulton and Mirsky (2006) claimed that the impetus for major change in a school was the fact that "circles are embedded in our culture" (p. 90). They conveyed the positive impact of restorative practices on the staff, the students, and even the parents in building community.

Student Voice. Student voice is an important component to restorative practices. Too many times the voice of the oppressed is silent. We learn from Freire (1970) that dialogics is an instrument that can free the oppressed through cooperation, unity, organization and cultural synthesis. This is a new perspective for students that normally feel the school as an organization is oppressive and restricts student voice through discipline strategies that use coercion and consequences to gain compliance. Drewery and Kecskemeti (2010) reported an attitude of challenging relations of power and taking responsibility for shaping the relationship. Vaandering (2011) pointed to the inherent power dynamic within schools, in that teachers' identities as authorities in the classroom stands as a potential barrier. Senge et al. (2000) proclaimed that without uncovering underlying beliefs and values, practices will continue in an organization that no one agrees with.

Student voice is a powerful dimension of restorative practices. Students want a voice in decisions that influence their world. Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) found that involving students in decision making can lead to a positive transformation in terms of student to teacher relationships, improvements in pedagogy, and students developing a greater sense of belonging to the school community. Students want to be heard and when there is conflict, students want to be able to tell their own story of what is happening and how they view the event. In conflicts with teachers, students want to be able to tell their

version of the story, a story where sometimes the adult or the organization has created conditions for conflict to occur.

Storytelling. Storytelling is a powerful form of communication. The importance of dialogue and student voice have been introduced as critical components to restorative practices. Likewise, the use of storytelling is potentially just as critical when it comes to shifting a paradigm within schools from a retributive and punitive system to one that is restorative. Storytelling is a form of education that has existed for many centuries. Boyd (2009) insisted that humans have the capacity to create and transmit oral stories and while listening to stories, humans experience feelings. In doing so, humans maintain a sense of community and instill moral values.

Simpkinson (1993) revealed that storytelling tends to ignite a healing and accountability process in the listener as well as the teller. Armour (2013) proclaimed that storytelling is a way to personalize the experience and for students to challenge judgmental attitudes that otherwise reflect ingrained cultural stereotypes. In families and communities, storytelling is a way to preserve culture, pass on values, and educate while entertaining. Fernandez-Llamazares and Cabeza (2018) clarified that storytelling can lead to enhanced understanding of diverse values. Stories can be used to develop understanding, relate to feelings, and link meaning.

Stories are also powerful forms of persuasion. Pinkerton (2003) portrayed storytelling as an art form. Storytelling has several uses, including the ability to turn negative incidents into positive learning experiences, the ability to improve systems, and the functionality to be used as a communication method for problem solving.

Restorative Systems

Restorative dialogue. Restorative justice is "an invitation for dialogue and exploration" (Zehr, 2002, p. 10). According to Schirch & Camp (2007), “dialogue is a process for talking about tension-filled topics” (p. 5). Within these discussions, the aim is to build relationships between people. “School-wide restorative practices (SWRPs) are intentionally designed to create safe spaces for caring dialogue, where students and adults alike speak honestly and openly with each other” (Brown, 2017, p. 53). Dialogue should not be confused with conversation, discussion, or debate.

The focus of dialogue is listening for understanding. Given this brief description of dialogue and its purpose, dialogue is a natural fit for restorative practices. Typically, dialogue is used in restorative conferences, where the stakes are as high as the tensions and emotions of the participants. Usually a skilled facilitator should be used for the dialogue process. Braithwaite (2001) concluded that the hidden curriculum in circles gives participants the literacy skills to live in a civil society, the ability to listen for learning, and the skill to accommodate the perspectives of others while setting their own goals. He also said that there is an increasing need for both human capital (the skills of people) and social capital (social skills for interacting with others).

Communication skills are highlighted in this ability to interact with others. Noddings (2012) noted the importance of communication and relationship building in this process: “Dialogue is fundamental in building relations of care and trust” (p. 775). Dialogue is a central tool to understanding others’ viewpoints. Dialogue makes it possible to relate to people who are different from yourself. Dialogue is a process that allows for

understanding of others in order to reduce conflict and tension. It creates cooperation and sets the groundwork for future interactions.

Given that dialogue is central to restorative practices, and that verbal communication is a complex process, it also raises concerns. Specifically, there is little mention in restorative literature about how to include students with significant intellectual disabilities and/or substantial behavior issues (Lee, 2013). As noted by Snow (2013), students with deficits in oral language competence can have difficulty with circles and conferences. Snow recommended that the communication and interpersonal skills necessary for effective dialogue must be taught and scaffolded based on student need. Dubin (2015) concurred that students must have the skill of being able to speak to one another about something they do not agree on, without resorting to name calling or getting into fights. If the individual's communication skills are not considered, it is possible that the restorative process will produce high anxiety and not be effective.

There is research to support the importance of dialogue. Matusov (2011) explained that dialogue is necessary anytime there is a gap in mutual understanding between people. The Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1986) viewed dialogue as an essential condition for being in the world. He argued that dialogue is not merely a tool, but a living source of insight and renewal that is an ongoing social process of meaning making. He expressed that dialogue is both an external and internal process of understanding the meaning and intention of words from a speaker to a listener. Mishra (2015) noted that Bakhtin's use of dialogue can be effective in creating voice in the democratic classroom. Take Bakhtin's example of truth for instance. Bakhtin (1984) recounted that "truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual

person, it is born between people collectively searching for the truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction" (p. 110). This quote could also serve as statement of support for Vygotsky's social constructivist theory. Vygotsky (1978) believed that knowledge was constructed through dialogue and interaction with others. This concept of social constructivism and how it relates to restorative practices is addressed as part of the conceptual framework in chapter three.

Restorative relationships. Often, Braithwaite (1989) and his reintegrative shaming theory is used as a framework for restorative justice and reducing recidivism in the criminal justice field. The theory revolves around the use of shame as a positive enforcer. Specifically, Braithwaite emphasized that the offender must be treated with respect as to feel that they are still valued as a person, but the harm that was caused by the offender's actions must be repaired. The role of community in helping the offender reintegrate back into the community is important. It is this focus on community that links restorative relationships with building communities.

Landscape of Restorative Systems

Restorative justice is more than just a reform; it includes responses, processes and practices that change school culture, improve academic achievement, empower students to take responsibility for their actions and solve problems without resorting to violence (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Hopkins, 2004, 2011). The first key to implementing restorative practices is a shift in mindset from a punitive approach to a restorative approach. Many of the practices named as "restorative" have a quality of mediating and resolving conflict. Restoration is not only about resolving conflict; it is about maintaining the basic values of a diverse and civil society, including generosity, care, and respect for

difference (Drewery & Kecskemeti, 2010). This starts with a dedicated effort from the school community to create a culture of trust among the adults and students. There also needs to be a sense of belonging. In this shift, school must teach values rather than rules. The core value of the school must be respect and the focus of the school must be on building positive relationships. It is only with this focus on relationships that a community of shared values can exist.

Social discipline window. A common framework for understanding restorative practices comes from Wachtel's (2003) Social Discipline Window. The Social Discipline Window features a quadrant design with trust and support being one axis and control through discipline being the other. The restorative quadrant requires a high degree of control or discipline with the support from the community to help the offender be successful. Without the discipline component, it is a permissive quadrant and without the support and nurture component, it is a punitive quadrant. The fundamental hypothesis is that students are more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to or for them. Below is an adaptation of Vaandering's (2010) rendition of Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel's (2010) social discipline window.

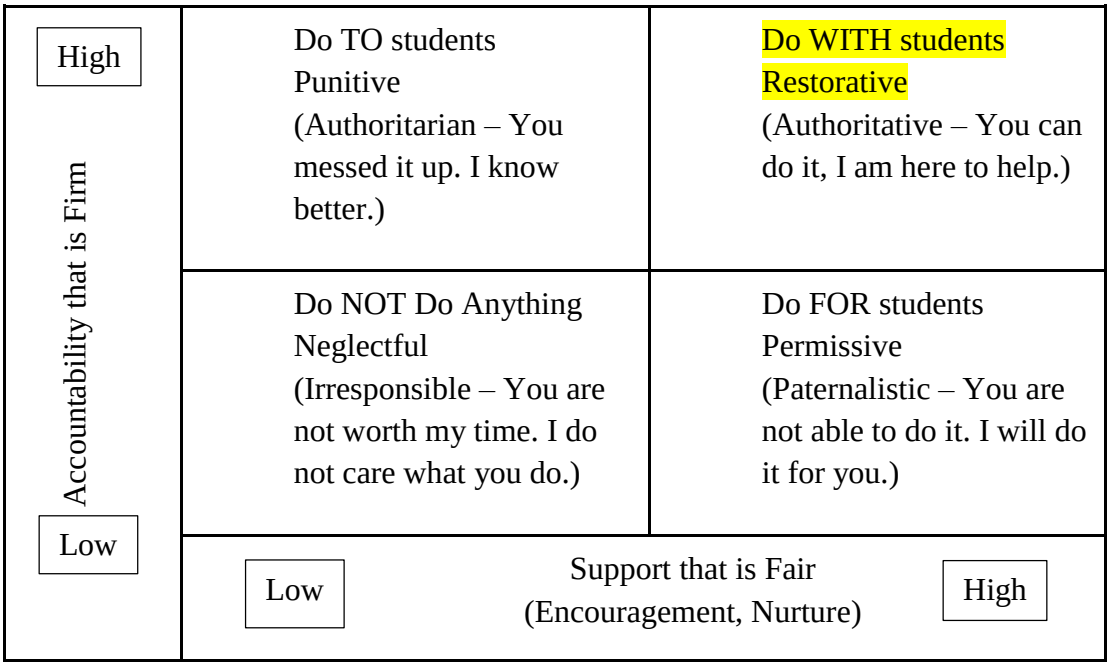


Figure 5. Social Discipline Window. Adapted from D. Vaandering (2010), and B. Costello, J. Wachtel, & T. Wachtel (2009).

Continuum of restorative practices. Restorative practices range from one end of the continuum to the other based on the level of dialogue being used (informal to formal). Figure 6 shows the continuum of restorative practices from informal to formal conversations.

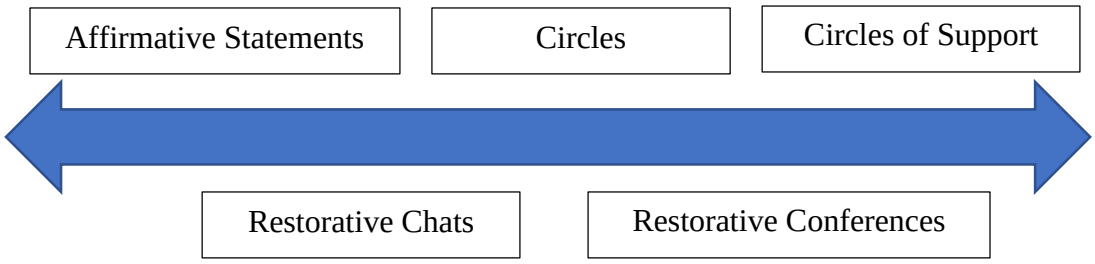


Figure 6. Restorative Practices on Informal to Formal Conversation Continuum. Adapted from 'Restorative Practices Continuum,' by B. Costello, J. Wachtel, & T. Wachtel, 2009, p. 12.

These restorative practices can also be framed in regards to the Response to Intervention triangle. The tiers of support educators are familiar with for academics, can also serve as tiers of support and differentiation for behavior and relationships. Mirsky (2011) and Morrison and Vaandering (2012) related the tiers of support to restorative practices. Figure 7 is an adaptation of the Hierarchy of Restorative Responses from Mansfield, Fowler, and Rainbolt (2018).

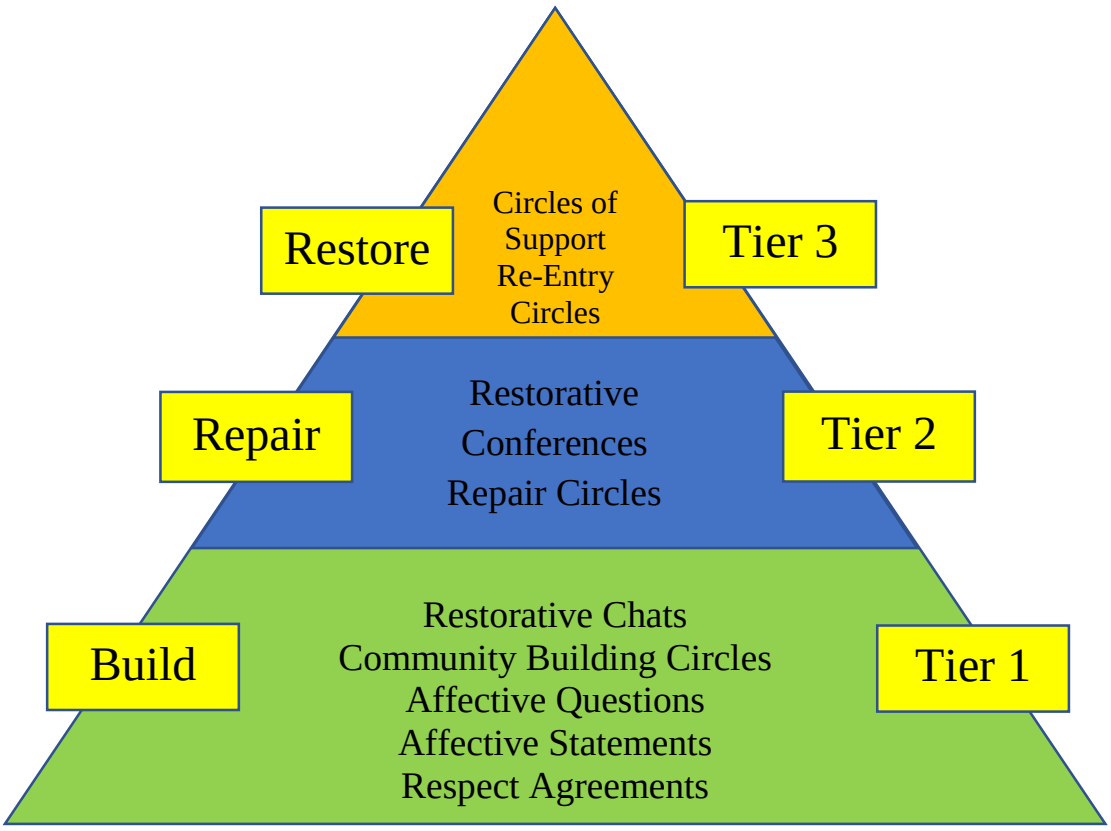


Figure 7. Restorative Practices Applied to the RTI Triangle. Adapted from 'Hierarchy of Restorative Responses', K.C. Mansfield, B. Fowler, and S. Rainbolt, 2018, p. 311.

Mansfield et. al. (2018) portrayed these tiers in more detail. The first tier of practices and approaches are universal elements experienced by all students. The second tier of interventions focuses on repairing relationships or harm. The third tier is the most

intensive intervention and focuses on repairing and restoring a relationship along with re-integrating an individual back to the community. Thus, building, repairing, and restoring relationships is not only a focus for individuals within the organization, but the organization itself.

What follows below are nine common restorative practices and a brief description of each that were found in the literature and in my data collection.

Respect agreements. Respect agreements are social contracts developed between teachers and students to decide how the class will function. These respect agreements often state the values that govern the classroom. Respect agreements should be specific as to how students treat each other, the teacher and the classroom, as well as how the teacher treats students. These should be agreed upon by all parties, signed, and used as a reference for examining behavior in the classroom.

Community building practices. Community building practices can also be referred to as ice breakers or team building activities. These can be either questions asked individually or to the whole classroom. They typically ask participants to be vulnerable and disclose information about themselves that is not readily apparent. Activities or games that force students to interact and work together can be purposeful, only when the intent of learning is grounded in the spirit of the lifeworld. The purpose of the community building practices is for students and adults to learn more about each other and begin the process of establishing trust and community within the classroom or organization.

Affective statements. Affective statements are expressions of feeling. Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel (2009) claimed that "understanding and using such statements can foster an immediate change in the dynamic between teacher and student" (p. 12). It is

important to be specific with affective statements and use them to express both pleasant and unpleasant feelings. For instance, “I feel” or “I am” statements are able to relate on a personal level that generic commands cannot. An example of an affective statement in the classroom might be “I feel disrespected when you talk over me while I am talking and do not wait for your turn.” Affective statements are a non-threatening way to begin conversations without confrontation.

Affective questions. Affective questions seek to understand the emotions and thought that led to an undesirable behavior. Affective questions also probe into the sequence of thought both before and after the event. Individuals are asked to think of harm that has been caused to others and how to be accountable and accept responsibility in making things right. This can be done verbally or through a written reflection. Listed below is a common sequence of affective questions:

1) What happened?
2) What were you thinking at the time or what were you feeling at the time?
3) What are you thinking or feeling now?
4) Who has been affected by your actions? In what way have they been affected?
5) How can you make things right with those that have been affected by your actions?

By asking this sequence of questions, there is greater understanding on the part of the person asking the questions. This is quite different from an administrator simply reading a discipline referral and assigning a consequence? With affective questions, the student is able to relate how certain events or emotions led to their actions. The student is

able to reflect on the impact of that decision and who was affected. Finally, the student is able to accept responsibility for their actions and be an active part of resolving the conflict they helped to create. In doing this, often relationships that were harmed can be repaired. It is important to note that this same sequence of questions can also be asked by adults to adults or students to students.

Ron Claassen (2008) asserted that to resolve wrongdoing, three things must happen:

1) The wrong or injustice must be acknowledged;

2) Equity needs to be restored; and

3) Future intentions need to be addressed

This is the philosophy driving the five affective questions.

Restorative chats. Restorative chats are short conversations that address harm caused. It is not a formal conference. Often restorative chats use a combination of affective statements and questions to bring about quick resolution. This is a technique that can be used by teachers, administrators, or students to quickly reinforce expectations and norms of respect in the school culture. Wachtel (2003) believed that the more informal conferences can be used, the less formal restorative rituals need to be used.

Circles. Circles are a technique that has been used for many centuries. It was first used in the United States and is still used by Native American tribes for ceremonies and conflict resolution. It is not unique to the United States though. In fact, most researchers feel it dates back to Maori traditions in New Zealand. Circles have also been linked to aboriginal communities in Canada, African tribal customs, and Afghani practices of conflict resolution. The idea behind the circle is that all members in the circle are given

an equal voice. Van Ness and Strong (2010) claimed the purpose for the circle format is to convey experientially the climate necessary for restorative dialogue including respect for differences as well as deep and heartfelt listening.

The circles are symbolic of community and lead to a concept referred to as "gracious space" (Hughes, 2004). Within gracious space there is a spirit of learning through dialogue. Circles can vary as to size and depth of conversations. Some are used as a check-in procedure. Circles can also be used to clarify group norms. It is imperative in circles for the members to agree to created values. Those not abiding by the values should be removed from the circle. A talking piece is used to respect each members voice in the circle. You are not allowed to speak unless you have the talking piece. A facilitator often begins the circle by reiterating the values of the circle and purpose. This is followed by questions surrounding a focus area. Circles can be used to build community or to repair harm. Circles can also be used to solve problems or generate ideas within the community. Circles are often concluded with commitments from the members.

Restorative conferences. Restorative conferences use circles with the specific intent to repair relationships. In restorative justice literature, these conferences are often referred to as Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM) and involves both the victim and the offender. The conferences are very formal and involve setting norms and using a talking piece. Friends can also be a part of this circle. Generally, a trained facilitator is used in this process. This is a very time consuming process, but often effective in coming to an agreed upon plan moving forward.

Restorative Circles or Family Group Conferencing (FGC). Restorative Circles are similar to Restorative Conferences with the exception that friends and family

members are also invited. In the Restorative Justice literature, this is referred to as Family Group Conferencing (FGC). A talking piece is used in a circle style format. Each member of the circle is allowed to speak about the harm that has been brought about as a result of the incident involving the individual/s involved. Each member is also asked to share what is needed to repair the harm that was caused and what they are committed to do moving forward in order to support the individuals involved.

Circles of support. Circles of support are most often used when re-integrating someone who causes harm back into the community. This involves the creation of an intentional community or audience specific to the needs of the individual. Members of the circle include the family or a trusted friend of the focus member as well as resources within the school and community that can not only help the offender, but the family of the offender as well. Often a mentor, along with teachers, administrators, and counselors are on hand to show support for the student and also let the student know what each individuals' responsibilities include and how they are accountable to the circle. It is through this process that a plan for success is derived with each member of the circle taking on roles and responsibilities. Each member of the circle is also held accountable for the success of the student and multiple circles are called to ensure the plan is being followed.

Summary

Schools such as CSF Buxmont in Pennsylvania provide a milieu of restorative practices at their school for at-risk youth. Mirsky and Wachtel (2007) found a direct correlation between the number of weeks students were exposed to a restorative program

and the percent of students who were re-offenders within the court system. In addition to improving behavior, CSF Buxmont students also showed improvement in attitude.

Restorative practices have evolved as they moved from the fields of social work and juvenile justice to education. This chapter highlights that restorative practices have the unique ability to bring the lifeworld into the systems that currently dictate education and society. There is no denial that both legal and educational systems use of discipline in the past have led to exclusionary practices to the detriment of all students who have "broken the rules", but particularly students of color and students with disabilities. Restorative practices center on a relational set of practices that range from informal to formal depending on the perceived severity of harm to self or others. Several examples of restorative practices have been mentioned as ways to build, repair, and restore relationships. Chapter three focuses on method used to collect data and the framework for analysis used to decipher meaning and findings.

III. RESTORATIVE CONVERSATIONS AS METHOD

> Any kind of dialogue means that you don't have inferiors and superiors all in the same conversation. You have people who have had different experiences. You have people who know more about one thing and others know more about something else. But you respect each other's experiences and you aren't trying to use the dialogue to hornswoggle people into accepting your views. Dialogue is impossible if you don't have genuine respect (p. 274).
>
> -Myles Horton

Introduction

This chapter explains the approach and rationale used when conducting the research. This includes selecting the type of design, the researcher's ontology, research partners, data collection techniques, data analysis procedures, methods for trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and limitations. A qualitative study was chosen to analyze and tell the story of three principals in a suburban district in Texas who are implementing restorative practices.

This study captured voices in the form of stories to gain perspective from different points of view, using the stories of students, teachers, administration, parents, and community members as units of analysis. In addition, the journey of restorative practices implementation was also documented through auto-ethnography and as a participant observer. In doing so, stories are used to move from literature and theory to application and practice, which is documented through the findings found in chapter four. With the sharing of stories and the process of social constructivism, I then circle back to how the stories support theory and add to the literature in chapter five.

Approach and Rationale

Ontology. I believe that I have been called to work in education. As Dewey (1916) told us, "Nothing is more tragic than failure to discover one's true business in life, or to find that one has drifted or been forced by circumstance into an uncongenial calling." No other organization has the ability to transform a human life like institutions for learning. In particular, I feel that middle school students are often overlooked and forgotten. It is such a difficult time in life, as the body and mind have such rapid transformations. It is also an impressionable time for youths as they prepare for the duties of adulthood.

I am a white male in my forties. I grew up in a small rural town. My faith is foremost in my value system. This is followed closely by the love and support of family and friends. I believe that we should care about and love each other as commanded by Jesus Christ. Thus, I firmly believe in leading a life that begs the question (1 Peter 3:15).

As a principal within the school system, I consider myself a servant leader. I realize that I have direct impact on the climate and culture of the school. I have the ability to change policies and procedures. I also have input over employment decisions. I feel that I was called to serve in education to make a difference in the lives of adolescents.

As a citizen in the community, I consider myself a change agent grounded in social justice. I align well with the social constructivist theory and I am a supporter of an asset-based community development approach. I hope to expand my work with restorative practices from the school setting to the community.

I disclose this information with the intent of being transparent and honest in my background, intentions, and bias prior to entering this research.

Research Design

When planning to research a phenomenon, it is important to keep in mind the goal of your research. Merriam (2009) stated that "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). Interpretivist research assumes that reality is socially constructed, that is, there is no single, observable reality. Researchers do not "find" knowledge, they construct it (Merriam, 2009, pp. 8-9).

It has already been identified that a social constructivist framework is used to guide the analysis of each principal's personal journey in implementing restorative practices and the use of restorative dialogue. As conversations took place with my research partners, learning and the construction of knowledge was taking place. When my research partners were able to read and reflect not only on their own responses, but on other research partners' responses, learning and construction of knowledge took place. The final circle was a classic description of social constructivism as ideas, suggestions, and reframing occurred through both listening and contributing to the conversation. Qualitative research is a detailed description of the process at work, understanding how individuals make sense of their experience in isolation and with others. Qualitative research allows for a comprehensive understanding of the topic being studied (Roberts, 2010).

Storytelling, Story Making, and Story Weaving as Research Method

Storytelling is one example of a research method used to both collect and report data from an individual about one or more personal experiences. Storytelling was

specifically used in the design of the questions being asked during conversations. Likewise, storytelling was also used to present the data.

Story making is the social construction of a new story or event with others that can be used as an action step. In my research I tend to think of this as learning from each other. Throughout the course of this study, there was constant learning that took place between myself and my research partners. As they experienced success and struggle and shared those examples through stories, we were able to relate and shape our own stories moving forward.

I also prefer the method of story weaving as it is a delicate process of layering multiple stories within theory and practice. Much like a loom, multiple stories (accounts and perceptions) of an event run concurrent with each other. An example of the data collection story loom can be found in Appendix D. Ultimately, these stories culminate in a final product that has shape, dimension, and color. The final product has an emotional connection for those that interact with it both directly and indirectly. Story weaving synthesized and categorized the data so that the story flowed with and from all of the conversations that took place over the course of the research. In using these three terms as method, it is consistent with the ecologies of knowing at the self, organization, and community levels. Figure 8 shows this congruence.

Figure 8. Research method embedded within the Ecologies of Knowing.

Research Partners

Criterion sampling. For this study, two principals within the same school district were chosen as research partners. The decision to conduct research in my own district was made because of the lack of time that principals have. I chose to use myself as a participant because I fit the given criteria and felt that it would be a great opportunity for an auto-ethnographic study. Given the fact that I am also a principal, the time available for travelling and conducting conversations was limited. Since a social constructivist framework was being used, I felt that it would be a unique opportunity for colleagues in the same district to learn together. Based on the number of respondents that showed an interest in learning more about restorative practices, this research could potentially be used to guide the expansion of restorative practices within the district.

An email survey (Appendix E) was sent out to principals in the district asking for willing participants that have attended some form of training for restorative practices and are implementing at some level on their campus. I used criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) as a strategy to narrow the list of respondents based on availability for conversations and participation in a circle of research partners. Of the 53 principals in the district, there were eight responses. Two candidates were selected based on specific qualifiers such as level of training in restorative practices, level of implementation on campus, and leadership in training others on campus. Specific questions were asked to support the criterion (Appendix B). Both research partners were given an informed consent form (Appendix F) that had been approved by IRB.

Significance of research partners. My research partners were chosen for two primary purposes. Both have recently attended training for restorative practices. Both are currently in their first year of implementing restorative practices on their respective campuses. While I am not in my first year of implementing restorative practices on my campus, this was the first year that I had staff undergo training for restorative practices and thus it is my first year of staff implementation of restorative practices.

While I received much interest from other principals in the district and would have preferred to have an elementary principal as a research partner to span all three levels, none of the elementary principals responded that they had training in restorative practices. Out of 53 principals, only three in the district responded that they have received specific training in restorative practices. Two principals for alternative schools were scheduled for training during the school year and several others indicated that they wanted to attend training at some point in time this school year or during the summer.

Thus, the two principals selected satisfied the criteria put into place for selection of a sitting principal in the same school district that had received training in restorative practices and was implementing restorative practices (RP) at their campus.

There is a growing awareness that change is needed in the way that we build community within our schools and how we handle discipline issues, but there has been little movement to seek a new philosophy for action. In this manner, I feel that these principals are pioneers for the journey into restorative practices for the district and have much to offer in regards to research of the work that is being done for implementation from the lens of a principal as school leader.

Data Collection Techniques

Autoethnography and participant observer. Merriam (2009) tells us that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. More specifically, auto-ethnography is the study of one's lived experience with and within their local ecology (Patton, 2002). Patton goes on to say that auto-ethnography displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural (p. 85). In this way, as the researcher, I am able to move between the ecologies of self and organization, as well as self and community. I am positioned in a unique space for both participation and observation and critically positioned to help make meaning of these lived experiences. My training and shared experiences facilitate the construction of stories as we weave a collective experience that better informs the literature, theory and world of restorative practices for schools in a Central Texas community.

Being the principal of a school undergoing adoption of restorative practices allows for understanding from all viewpoints. The capturing of the learning that takes

place through interactions and observations throughout this process is critical to understanding. Duncan (2004) noted, "the essential difference between ethnography and auto-ethnography is that in an auto-ethnography, the researcher is not trying to become an insider in the research setting. He or she, in fact, is the insider" (p. 30). As such, being a participant observer does not come without critique. As Rasmussen (2011) pointed out, "the researcher is no longer disguised as the objective and neutral observer documenting true human action. Instead, s/he accepts her/himself as a subjective being, embraces this idea, and uses it as an opportunity to create a dialogue with readers" (p. 70). In order to minimize validity concerns, the researcher plans to follow Wolcott's advice to "satisfy readers with sufficient detail about how you obtained the data you actually used" (2009, p. 86.)

I am in a beautiful situation to be the storyteller. The story of a principal is often told by others, but rarely penned by the principal. I feel it is a unique opportunity to teach others from the role of a "pedagogic principal" as specified by Evans (1999). Most outside my school community do not know the work that it takes to build a community of learners, both inside and outside of the school house. Most do not know the work that is put in by a principal to educate teachers on various practices that contribute not only to academic gains, but also positive impacts on the culture and climate of the school. This is an extraordinary opportunity to be in a position to collect observables and data from multiple perspectives within the school.

As a principal, I am a learner, but I am so much more. I am a leader, a visionary, a teacher, a mentor, and a father to others. These roles impact me on a personal level. I have just as many days of struggle as I do of success. I also realize that as the leader of an

organization, I facilitate the learning of others within the education profession. I do this not only at my school and in my district, but across the state and nation, when I interact and share stories through conferences and social media. I value the ownership and commitment of the position in knowing that I impact an entire community with the decisions that are made each day. I feel the stress of parents raising adolescents and empathize, raising two teenage boys of my own. I also celebrate the individual milestones and journey of each student as they leave middle school and move on to high school and into adult life. Therefore, the focus of this research is not on speaking *for* those being researched, but rather weaving a story *with* them. I am grateful to document the journey of a school from my own perspective as well as the perspective of my research partners, as transformation takes place through the implementation and use of restorative practices.

Conversations. Patton (2002) communicated that "interviews yield direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge" (p. 4). Interviews can often produce a story that others can relate to, providing a deeper emotional and conceptual understanding of an event. Interviews as the primary method of qualitative research in phenomenological studies serves three purposes according to Seidman (2013). The first purpose of interviewing is to focus on the human experience and the meaning of the experience. Seidman refers to this experience as being transitory, meaning that the experience can change rapidly in a short amount of time from preceding the experience, duration of experience, and aftermath of the experience. It was important to capture information during all three phases in order to understand movement in thoughts or feelings and capture the essence of the experience. This was done by giving time for reflection and implementation between conversations.

A second purpose for interviews is to more accurately capture the participant's point of view, particularly the reconstruction of an experience. The third purpose of an interview is to focus on the "lived experience." The interview follow-up should get the participant to reflect back on the experience so as to re-create the mindset during the actual phenomenon. Van Manen (1990), reiterated, "The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence" (p. 36).

Thus, the word conversation is used purposefully as a research term rather than interview. The term "conversations" is used instead of "interviews" because the language of interviews is too formal and does not fit within restorative dialogue when building community. This is similar to the research from Guajardo and Guajardo (2013) on the power of plática, a multi-dimensional conversation shaped by listening, storytelling, and story making. The purpose of the conversation is to create a safe place for the research partner to tell their story.

An initial conversation took place with the selected research partners using Conversation Guide 1 (Appendix G). The conversations were equitable to semi-structured interviews, in that they addressed questions through a pre-developed guide. If the conversation brought up additional questions, then I felt at liberty to pursue those stories as well.

The conversations took place at the individual campuses of each research partner and allowed for a relaxed setting and audio recording to take place. The first conversation centered on the oral history of the research partner, including their ontology, entry into education, journey into school leadership, introduction to restorative practices, and how it

impacted their thoughts and practices. It also gave me an opportunity to build trust with my research partner as I was invited into their office for the interview.

The second conversation took place after transcriptions from the first conversations were sent back to the research partners to check for accuracy and allow time for reflection. Conversation Guide 2 (Appendix H) was used to conduct the second conversation in a setting similar to the first, although this conversation allowed us to walk the school as well. My research partners were able to show examples of what and where restorative practices were taking place within the school. The focus of the second conversation was on the journey of implementing restorative practices at the self and organizational level. Storytelling allowed the researcher to collect the total experience of the participants through the phenomenon of restorative practices as well as capture what was recreated by the participants through reflection about their experiences.

Circle of research partners. Rather than use the term "focus group", the phrase "circle of research partners" is used to represent the final piece of data collection. The circle took place after transcription and verification of the second conversations had taken place. We met at a campus in the district that was offsite for all three of us, so that we would not be distracted by work and could concentrate on the purpose of the research. The meeting location was strategic in that I wanted the principals to have a sense of community as we interacted and observed in a "community" school setting.

The structure for the circle was based on a circle methodology following the Community Learning Exchange (CLE) model as described in Ruder (2010). Questions used to guide conversation within the circle are included in Appendix I, entitled Circle of Research Partners Format Guide. Within the CLE model, community among participants

is enhanced through story sharing and active listening. This was certainly the case with my research partners.

Guajardo, Guajardo, Janson, & Militello (2016) asserted that community is where people come together with the intent to build, teach, and learn with each other. The focus of the circle was on what my research partners have learned about themselves and from each other through this research process of conversations and in the circle. Specifically, what have they experienced and learned regarding leading a restorative initiative, overcoming obstacles, sustaining and building momentum, and how to make restorative practices a lifestyle that impacts community. Much discussion centered on defining restorative leadership, the requirements of being labeled a restorative school, involvement of the community, and how to live restorative practices in all realms of the ecologies of knowing.

Framework for Analysis

This study examined the learning that took place during the journey of three principals who have learned about restorative practices, embraced the philosophy, and implemented restorative practices on their campus. The story loom (Appendix D) is used as a framework for analysis encompassing each research question as well as the ecologies of knowing and the review of literature is used for mining the conversations and the circle between the three research partners.

This study frames data collection within the three ecologies of knowing: self, organization, and community. “These three ecologies organize our thinking and learning experiences from the micro, meso and macro levels, in which we experience life” (Guajardo et. al., 2016, p. 27). Ironically, the locations of the conversations and the circle

also can be framed in the ecologies. The first conversation was very personal and took place in a personal office of the research partners. The second conversation took place within the school or organization and was not confined to the office. The final circle took place at a school in the community.

A social constructivist theory lens was used to search for the understanding and meaning making of each principal's journey with restorative practices as recorded through the conversations and the circle of research partners. In addition, the ecologies of learning format was used to chart the journeys and influences at different levels (self, organization, and community).

Movement between levels was expected and confirmed when stories and discussion of restorative practices, such as circles or conferences took place. Conversations and storytelling allowed me to specifically delve into meaning making before, during, and after specific events that were brought up by my research partners and for others involved in the interaction. Patton (2002) expressed that social constructivism is understanding how one's own experiences and background affect what one understands and how one acts in the world (p. 546). This was consistent with my research partners moving through the ecologies from self to organization and finally to community.

Based on over nine hours of audio recordings and over 100 pages of transcripts, as well as observational notes, the data were mined for themes and patterns using coding. For this study, the data from my reflection on the conversations, as well as the transcripts of both the conversations and the circle of research partners were reduced inductively. Wolcott (2009) told us that data must be reduced through analysis and interpretation.

Content analysis of the transcriptions, specifically the frequency of words, phrases or subject matter allowed for the data to be chunked into categories or themes for ease in reporting the findings (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). These themes were compared research already completed in the field of restorative practices, synthesized, and condensed into findings based on the ecologies of knowing from twelve to six major themes.

Collective Meaning Making

The analysis of the findings which follows in chapter four contains a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the narrative of each participant. Geertz termed thick description as a method to describe the behavior, actions, or words in context of the event itself. In doing so, I was able to gain insight as to what led each principal to seek training for restorative practices, how their understanding influenced practice for self, how they used their position as the school leader to influence the organization, and the impact of using restorative practices on community. In this way, the experience is consistent with the ecologies of knowing.

Narrative analysis is using stories or narratives to make sense of our experiences (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). The stories that were collected over different periods of time from the conversations and circle allowed for evidence of growth and learning in regards to the restorative vocabulary and language that was being used. Storytelling was dissected for specific dialogue to support moments of transition between ecologies. Story making was used to support implementation and sustainability of restorative practices on campus, and story weaving was used in the circle process of continuous learning and support.

Interpretation of the data also included making sense of the participants' experience through this study. The storytelling of the transformational journey in both the conversations and the circle of research partners was used and compared in order for the other research partners to find meaning within their own journey, such as a visual example of learning. Through this comparison and analysis, common elements arose that provided a guide for awareness, understanding, implementation and sustainability of restorative systems in education and inclusion of the community. The research questions that guided this work were asked indirectly during the course of the conversations and the circle, but were expanded upon, based on the data from all three interactions. In this way, the data from the conversations and circle, the literature reviewed, and personal experience triangulated the validity of the findings.

Respect Agreement

As a participant observer in the research, I used specific examples from my campus in the study. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for all students, staff, and parents referred to in the study. This same process was used for the other principals in the study through informed consent (Appendix F). The research partners' school, and any specific students, staff, or parents referred to in the study were also given pseudonyms. These considerations were discussed and articulated prior to research beginning in the form of a respect agreement (Appendix J).

Reader Generalizability

Given the small sample size of three used in the study, the findings may not be generalized for the district as a whole or for other school districts. However, this study was conducted on living restorative practices and is true to the philosophy in language,

practice, and method. This study was put forth for the purpose of engaging the reader in a stories that might connect on different levels. In this way, although there might not be the ability for broad generalizability, there is a case for reader generalizability.

Chapter four focuses on introducing the reader to the research partners and the findings from the conversations and circle. The findings are presented through thematic storytelling to capture the experience of the research partners as restorative leaders and give insight to mindset, barriers, practices, and future action.

IV. STORYTELLING AND STORY MAKING AS RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

> Dialogue cannot exist in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself (p. 70).
>
> - Paulo Freire

This chapter explores the data collected from the study of my research partners, three principals implementing restorative practices on their respective campuses. I give a brief overview of each participant and their school and then identify the common themes found through the conversations and any observations that took place. I aligned these findings based on the original research questions.

1. What levels of awareness, readiness, and competence are needed to prepare a school leader for implementation of a restorative system?
2. How does the climate and culture of an educational organization impact a school leader's ability to implement and sustain a restorative system?
3. How can storytelling be employed as action, method and pedagogy for restorative leadership?

All quotes and citations that appear come from the data set and were collected with the research partners in the course of the research. Therefore, no citations are used in this chapter relating to specific quotes from principals (such as personal communication, date) in order to keep the document flowing. Also, I immerse myself as both researcher and participant in the findings, as one of the three principals.

Note to Reader

It is important for the reader to know that my findings are written both in first and third person as I take on the role of participant and interviewer. I give credit for this format to Rasmussen (2011) after reading the way she reported her findings and seeing the similarities in our dissertations. It appears at times that my research partners might have been in the same room at the same time to reflect and answer questions, when in reality this might not have been the case. Through story weaving, I was able to blend conversations around the themes and findings. This was done for improved flow in reading and to reduce redundancy in reporting each participant's response.

Setting the Scene

This research was conducted in my own district to study the readiness and support for restorative practices in a suburban population outside a large urban setting that has seen rapid growth and change in demographics. Over the past fifteen years, 2003-2018, the district has seen a surge of over 13,000 students enter the district pushing the total number of students served to over 48,500. The population demographic, although still a White majority, has decreased from 60% to 41%, while the Hispanic population has climbed from 21% to 30%, the Asian population increased from 9% to 16%, the Black population has decreased slightly, but stayed around 9%, and the category of two or more races is now at 4%. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students has remained around 23%. I have served in the district for 11 years and have been able to witness much of this growth and shift in population. Over the past ten years, the rates of students receiving ISS, OSS, and the DAEP as consequences for discipline infractions has also risen disproportionately for minorities. While causes for these rises in exclusionary

consequences have not been determined, there is a growing need to look for alternatives for the ways that school build school culture and address student discipline.

Interestingly, all three of the research partners that are principals began in an urban district. All three worked in the same urban district less than ten miles away. That district had the following demographic shift over the same time frame. The Hispanic population was the majority and increased from 53% to 58%, the White population decreased from 30% to 27%, the Black population decreased from 14% to 8%, the Asian population increased from 3% to 4% and the category of two or more races is now at 3%. The overall population increased from 78,000 to 82,700. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students decreased from 56% to 53%.

Story of Mr. Hope: Principal #1. Mr. Hope has been a principal for 14 years in the district. He has spent his educational career in secondary schools at the middle and high school level. This is his fourth year as a principal at a high school in the district. Prior to that, he was a science teacher, coach, and assistant principal before being a middle school principal in the district for 10 years. He has been in education for a total of 28 years. His current campus demographics do not match the district demographics. The African American population is 15%, Hispanic population 45%, White population 31%, Asian population 5%, and two or more races is at 4%. Students coded as economically disadvantaged are at 38%.

Mr. Hope identifies as an African American male. When I interviewed Mr. Hope, he came across as very thoughtful in how he responded to each question. Mr. Hope expressed that he centers himself on integrity, specifically honesty. He speaks from the heart and while it might not be a popular style with others, speaks his truth.

I tell parents this all the time. I may not do what you want me to do, I may not give you what you are asking for, I may not be the easiest person to get along with, I may be the most difficult person you have ever known. One thing you can never accuse me of though, is lying. I might be an SOB, but I will never ever be a lying SOB.

Depending on the question, Mr. Hope can show enthusiasm in his response, in similar fashion to a preacher addressing his congregation. He takes a humble approach to being a principal.

In the bigger picture, life is too short to complain. Life is too short to think that you are in power. You are not. You are given a responsibility. You handle it until it is time to give it to someone else. How can you run your life as if you are king and then when you lose it, you are ready to restore everybody you just slammed? Why do not you practice restorative even while you are king? Do not be corrupt while you are in power and upright when you are gone. You change what you can, what you can't you adjust the next day and keep moving.

Mr. Hope has a passion for kids and the job that he does. Most of all, he embodies hope for the next generation, which is why I have named him Mr. Hope.

"*I take the job as a right. I take it as a privilege. I take it as an opportunity that I have been granted, a gift that has been given. I am excited every single day that I get to make a difference in some kid's life. We have to find a way to help change who they are and inspire them into*

who they truly can be. That is the part of why I am where I am. All I want to do is inspire kids."

Mr. Hope came to education through alternative certification from the science and research field. He revealed that he knew he wanted to be an administrator immediately upon entry so that he could make the greatest impact on kids that he could. His desire as a principal is to serve his students and help them realize

"that they are not a victim of their circumstances. I want to help them understand that there is no such thing as I can't if you think you can. I want to give them hope to know that they can become whatever they choose, all they have to do is want it."

Story of Mrs. Justice: Principal #2. Mrs. Justice is entering her second year as a principal in the district at the middle school level. Her educational career has also been at the secondary level between middle school and high school. Prior to becoming a principal, she served as a credit recovery teacher, a theater teacher at both the high school and middle school levels, and as an assistant principal. She has been in education for a total of 12 years. Her campus demographics are 43% White, 26% Hispanic, 21% Asian, 6% African American and 4% two or more races. Students coded as economically disadvantaged are at 26%.

Mrs. Justice identifies as a White female. When interviewing Mrs. Justice, she came across as jovial and enthusiastic as both a leader and a learner. She is eager to share her story of her childhood and the difficulties that she encountered growing up. Mrs. Justice always knew that she wanted to be in education and thought she would work with students with disabilities because of her upbringing and own learning disability.

"I was kicked out of kindergarten because I refused to speak. I would only sing, because I wanted life to be a musical."

Her passion for the arts opened the door for her entry into education.

"I actually danced professionally right up until college. I was also acting and singing, doing musical theater. At one point, I was going to be a triple major with art history, special education, and theater."

Eventually she chose to stick with being a theater teacher, but her flare for theatrics and dance come out when she enters a room.

I have named her Mrs. Justice because of her core beliefs and desire for social justice.

"I was diagnosed with a reading disability when I was six, originally I was diagnosed with ADD. I could not really read until fourth grade. Later in life I discovered that it was actually a visual perception disorder."

She also has a duty to social justice because of growing up with an uncle that had Down Syndrome.

"I would listen to stories my dad would tell of how his brother was not allowed to go to school and how parents would not let their kids play with my dad or uncle because they thought Down Syndrome was contagious."

Mrs. Justice also has unique perspective on transiency,

"we were moving all the time. My father was very affluent when I was younger and I had a lot of acceptance from people with a similar socio-economic background. That changed significantly as my family went through struggles."

These experiences helped shape the leader that she has now become,

"because of my uncle, because of my academic and personal struggles, I was always seriously influenced by the ideas of social justice. I think all of that really influenced me going into teaching and the kind of initiatives I am leading now."

Mrs. Justice is very self-reflective in her work and how she can create an environment for students to be successful. She is not afraid to ask difficult questions to others, even if that means asking herself to answer the same difficult question. She has a passion for equity and for change that impacts students from difficult backgrounds.

"Not everyone likes a Texas Education Code course. I loved it. It is just so fascinating how the history of the legal system reflects the history and culture of the school and how they really work in tandem. These hidden cultures are influencing everything that we are doing today. All of that drives me to see equity in education. Giving kids who struggle a second chance and a new opportunity to succeed is why I went into administration."

Story of Mr. Passion: Principal #3. Mr. Passion is in his fourth year as a principal in the district at the middle school level. He has served at the middle school level his entire educational career. Prior to being a principal, Mr. Passion served as a leadership, video production, and broadcast journalism teacher as well as being a coach. He also served as an assistant principal. Mr. Passion has been in education for a total of 17 years. His campus demographics are very similar to the makeup of the district. The White population makes up 48% of the population, 29% Hispanic, 9% African American, 9% Asian, and 5% two or more races. Students coded as economically disadvantaged are at 17%.

Mr. Passion identifies as a White male. He is confident as an individual, but also very quiet. When he speaks it is with purpose, but there is also a comedic edge that comes through in his personality. He would rather lead with his actions than his words.

> *"I believe that I was put on this earth to serve others. I am very critical of myself and push myself and those around me to be better today than they were yesterday."*

He came to education through alternative certification. Around the one-year anniversary of 9/11, he felt a need to serve my country. His wife was against him joining the military, so he decided to teach and serve our country, by serving our youth. Already having a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Organizational Communication, Mr. Passion added to his graduate coursework with classes in curriculum and instruction as well as school administration. Mr. Passion wanted to be in a leadership role all along. He had served in a leadership capacity with each organization that he had worked at prior to his

entry into education and felt it was a natural transition for him to move into administration from teaching and coaching.

I have named him Mr. Passion because of his eagerness to bring about change in educational systems.

> *"We are working with a broken system. It hasn't evolved since inception with some of the discipline practices. The priority set for education by society is atrocious. We are raising our own kids to navigate this system, but in a sense we are raising children that are not our own and cannot fully help them navigate this system because we have one hand tied behind our backs."*

Mr. Passion's goal as a leader is to help students

> *"see the value in education. Education and a love for learning will open doors for whatever students want to do in the future. I want students to be able to think and take action. Most of all, I want students to be good citizens and to serve others."*

Presentation of Findings

Based on the conversations, observations, and previous body of literature, six findings emerged. These findings are presented in alignment with the ecologies of self, organization, and community. Under each finding, observations, stories or quotes from conversations are presented as evidence of validation. Appendix K gives a table of the findings. The table serves as a guide for organizing the stories and findings from the conversations with the three principals. However, I found it more representative and

helpful to use a circular depiction of the findings embedded with the Ecologies of Knowing (Figure 9) to navigate the findings.

It is also important to remember that I am an active participant in the research. As an auto-ethnography, this allows my own experiences and previous learning as a school leader implementing restorative practices to be reflected on as well. What follows are the common findings after being synthesized.

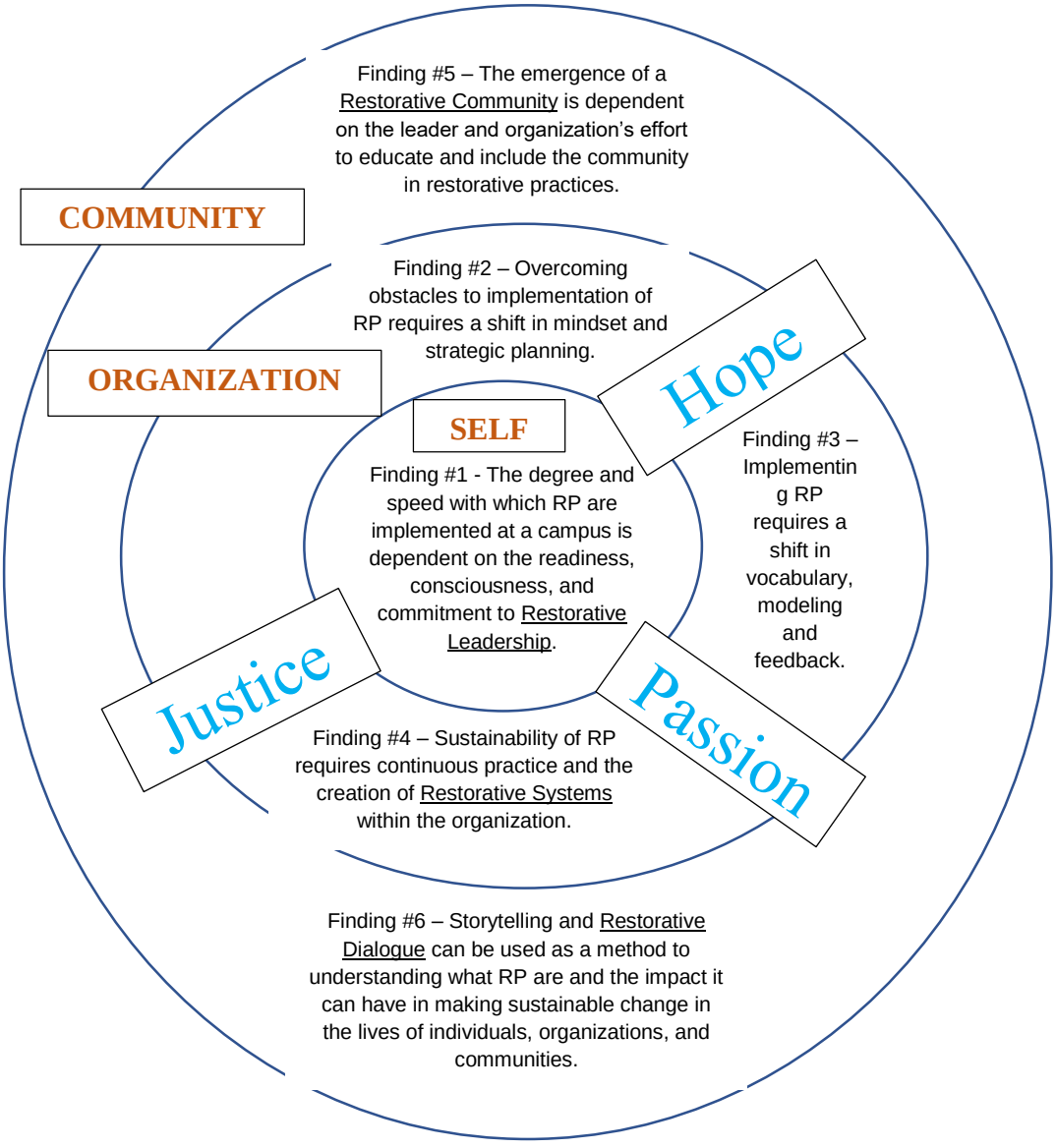


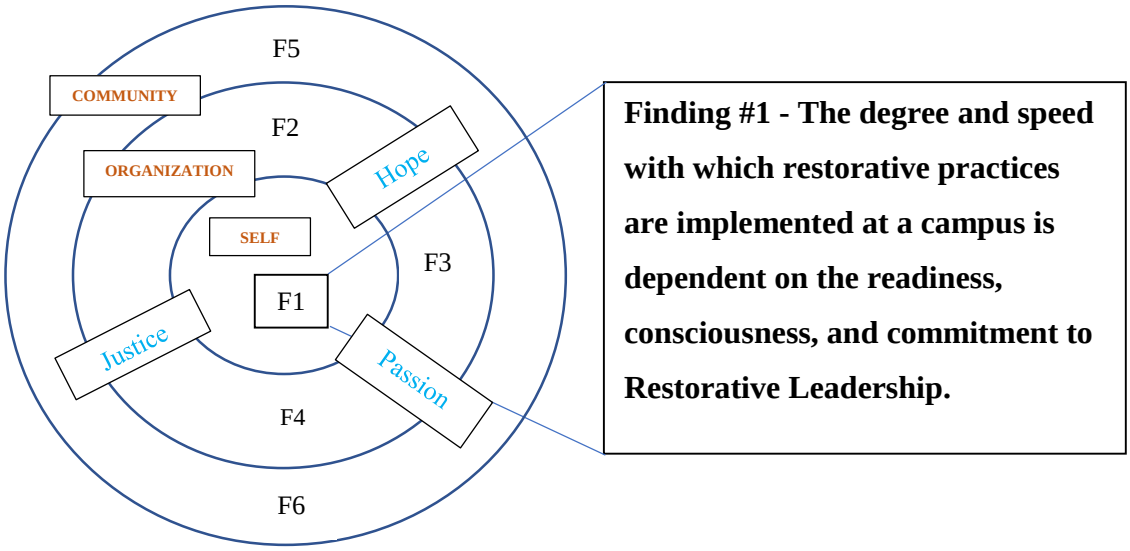
Figure 9: Findings embedded within the Ecologies of Knowing

Profile of a Restorative Leader

When looking at the data through the lens of the ecologies of knowing, it was important to start with self. What I found through the research and the conversations was that if a school leader does not start with self, the change that they are trying to make will not take hold in the other levels of the ecologies. My research supports that the most important ingredient for successful implementation of restorative practices in a school is to have the full support of administration. I think that this is true of any initiative being tried at the campus or district level. If the principal does not have complete "buy-in" then there is no hope in persuading the rest of the faculty to have the same level of commitment. A willingness to commit to an initiative is often driven by alignment with core values and a commitment to the students that being served. A commitment to restorative practices also derives from frustration over traditional methods of handling discipline in the school and a shift in mindset. This commitment is further validated through the practice of restorative and the resulting impact on self and others.

As I read over my notes and the transcripts, the idea of restorative leadership kept coming to mind. However, defining a restorative leader is difficult to put into words at first glance. Through the observations and conversations that took place, several necessary elements became evident for a school leader to become a restorative leader. These elements include a look at core values to determine readiness, a conscious awareness driven by a shift in mindset, and a commitment to action.

Finding #1



Core values influence Restorative Leaders: Readiness. There is much debate over whether leaders are born or grown. My personal belief is that with a growth mindset, anyone can learn. That being said, there are certain traits or factors that influence the restorative leaders in this study that seem to blend seamlessly with restorative practices.

Mr. Passion is centered by his faith. It drives his desire to care about and serve others. It confirms his belief in treating others respectfully, regardless of the situation. His faith also provides the drive to push himself to be better each day. Mr. Hope is also driven by his faith, but is centered by the trait of integrity. Integrity for him includes

> *"honesty, treating people with respect, and being the same person that you are when the lights go off as the person you are when the lights are on."*

Mrs. Justice is driven by the ideas of social justice. She has experienced her own academic struggles as both a child and adult and this has helped her to relate to the struggles of both children and parents of children with disabilities. Her background with

Special Olympics has guided her in her vision for a more equitable system. Mrs. Justice is also driven by her life experiences growing up affluent, only to become impoverished. She has first-hand knowledge of moving to multiple schools and the different ways students are treated based on socio-economic status.

These core values are powerful factors that influence and drive restorative leaders to be committed to their school community and see the value in understanding the story of individuals, whether they are students, teachers, or parents. These core values drive restorative leaders to take the time necessary to understand the situation, work through the situation, and use a situation, not only as a teachable moment, but also as an opportunity to build, support and restore community within the school.

A shift in mindset: Consciousness. All three restorative leaders were enticed by restorative practices because they had been practicing traditional discipline for years without seeing the benefits of true change in behavior.

There was no evidence to support that punitive consequences impacted changes in behavior. Mr. Passion sums it up best when he announced,

> *"We have all felt the frustration of sending a student home, knowing that when he/she returned, the problem would remain and it was just a matter of time before we sent that student home again. Students being out of school impacts their academics and self-worth. It goes against our moral fiber to send students home when we would much rather be welcoming them through the school doors."*

However, a shift in mindset had to occur before these school leaders could break free from the traditional punitive system in schools and embrace restorative practices as an alternative.

When restorative practices were first mentioned to my research partners, there was some skepticism. They were not sure if this was just another flavor of the month discipline program or if it was just a philosophical approach. They had heard about the idea of restorative practices and it sparked interest, but they were unsure of how it could be implemented at the campus level and if it would produce the desired results.

The needed shift in mindset came to fruition during training, when the philosophy of restorative was confirmed by core beliefs. Mrs. Justice commented,

> *"As people talked about it, it definitely spoke to my passion for social justice. For me, it is always, how am I going to implement it at my school? That is what I struggled with."*

For Mr. Hope it was more about actualizing a plan.

> *"I went to a three-day training. The first day I was there, it made me realize that restorative could work at our school. The second day, I started strategizing how to bring it to my campus. The third day, I bounced my ideas off the trainer, and decided that I was going to try it."*

Mr. Passion had a similar viewpoint,

> *"I knew that once I experienced restorative I needed to make a change in the way that discipline was handled at my school. It was not until a couple of years later though, that I realized that my handling of discipline in a restorative manner was still reactionary. The focus on relationships and*

community building as a whole-school approach could be the difference maker as a proactive approach."

Through dialogue with the research partners, Mr. Passion realized that there was more to restorative practices than just repairing relationships and that restorative practices could become a whole school approach to discipline.

"It has completely changed my thought process as a school leader in two ways. First, restorative is a conflict management system. Every time we have conflict, my first response is restorative in the form of a chat, conference, or circle. It does not matter if the issue is student related, teacher related, parent related, or community related, my first instinct is how can I use a circle or conference for this situation?

The second way that it has impacted me is the community building piece. I had been through training for Capturing Kids Hearts and knew the value in being vulnerable with your peers and students and truly getting to know and understand each other. I had never viewed it as a whole school approach though. I guess I figured it was up to each individual teacher to use the approach or not use the approach of getting to know each other in the classroom and had never really considered its function for using to get to know co-workers. It was not until I started looking at climate surveys and having conversations with students and teachers that I realized, we really do not know much about each other. Students did not even know each other's names. Students also reported that they did not feel that the teachers knew anything about them outside of the classroom. That is when

I realized that circles are an easy way to address the social and emotional needs of both students and teachers and build community at the same time."

This model of being proactive and reactive with community building and the reparation and restoration of relationships was exactly what Mrs. Justice was searching for,

"I was trying to figure out what would work, so that we were a little more proactive and not so reactive."

Mr. Hope realized that he had restorative practices taking place on campus, but not the vocabulary or philosophy behind it.

"I started asking questions and started realizing that the things we are doing on this campus are really in line with that practice. We seek to allow students to repair their behavior, to repair their relationship, before we just kind of write them off."

It was clear that once each school leader believed that restorative practices was the right approach for their campus, teaching and implementing restorative practices with the staff was the next step.

A deliberate approach to implementation of restorative practices: Commitment to action. Just because a leader believes that restorative practices will work for his or her campus does not mean that it automatically happens. At the secondary level, all three principals faced the task of retooling a large number of adults on campus with this same shift in mindset. It is not an overnight process and requires the school leader to have grit, or dedication and commitment, in order to make this vision a reality.

Mr. Hope tested it out with other adults on campus as a trial run.

"I actually went through with my assistant principals (AP's) first, to try and get them to open up. The ground rules were such that people felt vulnerable to be open and there were so many tears shed in that room that day. It was crazy because you are talking about adults that never showed any emotion before. They were in tears talking about their feelings and how we could make the school a better place. I realized it was powerful, but the trust was there, and that is one thing that we had to accomplish with our staff. If the trust is not there, then you are going to get superficial, surface-level participation. So the relationships that we have with our staff is critical so that the conversations can be authentic and genuine, rather than face-time conversations."

Mrs. Justice processed all the questions that might arise before deciding on a plan for implementation.

"Restorative speaks to me, but how do you get teachers doing it? Teacher ownership is the biggest obstacle. I think that from an administrator lens, you tend to see kids when they are in crisis. You tend to know all the pieces that the classroom teacher does not necessarily know. It is easier for you to accept that approach and I think it is much more difficult for a teacher. So when thinking about implementation, questions arise. How am I going to sell this to teachers? Is this the best time for implementation? Can they handle the change? What other cultural barriers are standing in my way? For instance, we still haven't directly tackled unconscious bias on this

campus and unconscious bias is a huge part of it. You have to choose a place to start. It is like which came first, the chicken or the egg? Are we going to conquer unconscious bias or start with restorative practices and let teachers get to know their kids and hopefully, be able to have a direct conversation about unconscious bias later?"

Mr. Passion reflected on the approaches that each campus uses for implementation.

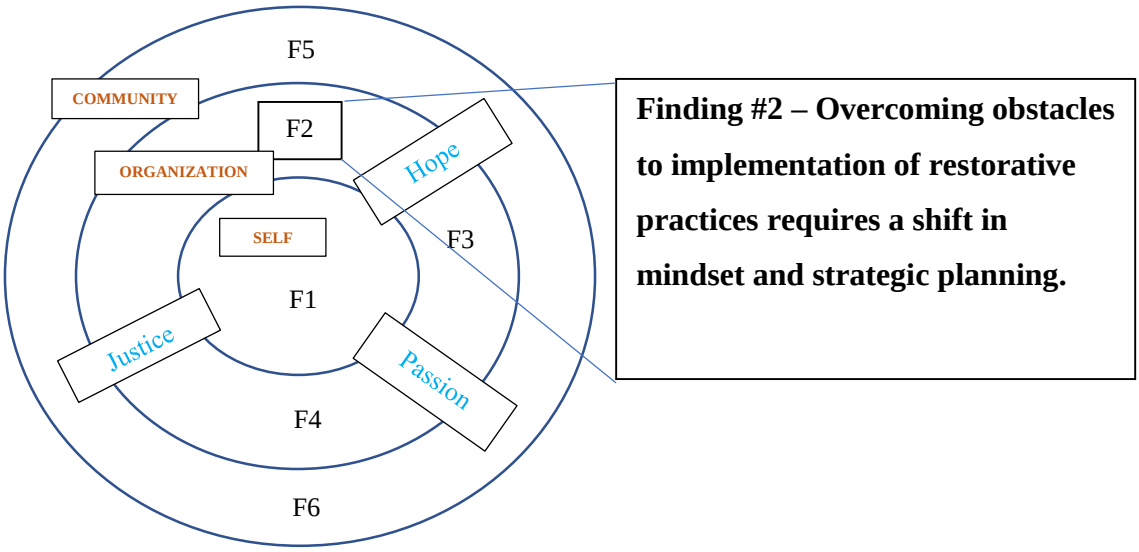
"Restorative practices is unique to each campus community. It is not a cookie cutter approach, rather a menu of choices. The benefit of this approach is that it is flexible enough to meet the needs of each school at their level of readiness and has the capability to expand with increased readiness. I think for me, the question was not if restorative will work at my school, because I had already experienced success with restorative as an administrator repairing and restoring relationships; the question was how to facilitate a conversation of understanding as to why a change was needed in the way that teachers build, repair, and restore relationships as part of their classroom and our school community."

Action Steps for the Creation of a Restorative Organization

Once a school leader has accepted the understanding and philosophy of restorative practices and is committed to action, a shift must occur from personal understanding and practice to implementing it at the school level. Despite obstacles encountered, a restorative leader can move the organization forward by strategically

planning for a shift in mindset and implementation, continuous practice with reflection, and the creation of restorative systems for sustainability.

Finding #2



Defining the "why?" Anytime a student is asked to change a behavior, more than likely, the first response is "why?" Adults in general, and adults at schools, are no different. In order for school leaders to embark on a restorative journey, they first need to answer the question, "Why?" How they present restorative to their staff is crucial in answering questions for the other adults on campus as to why a change in philosophy and actions is necessary. Three methods of presentation are described.

Present the data. One perspective offered by Mrs. Justice is to present the research. Not only is there evidence to support that using restorative practices decreases the number of discipline referrals on campus, but also the number of suspensions. The argument can also be made that based on attendance data, students who are not missing class tend to perform better academically. Mrs. Justice also pointed out that the growing

interest in brain-based learning and neuroscience can help teachers support the shift to restorative.

> *"One thing that I think helps others make the shift in norms is showing the data and explaining the neuroscience behind restorative. When you are trying to sell your faculty on change, you've got minds that are going to say, 'tell me about the science behind it or show me the data' behind it."*

Explain the shift in mindset from punitive to restorative. Perhaps the biggest hurdle to overcome is staff mindset about discipline. Traditionally, discipline is about issuing consequences or punishment for a behavior. For some students this is effective and they do not repeat the behavior. For others, despite the consequence or punishment, the behavior continues. The shift by staff must also include a shift in cultural norms. Cultural norms for the organization can be defined as what is acceptable and what is not. A majority of the teachers at the schools studied are white. A large population of the students receiving punitive consequences are students of color. Mrs. Justice raises the question of whether or not schools have done enough to teach about implicit bias. Mr. Hope has worked with his staff on changing the level of acceptance for particular behaviors, such as the way students talk and treat each other. Mr. Passion has established a contact with his staff referred to as the Standards of Professionalism so that staff are clear on how adult behavior can model what is acceptable for students.

When looking to implement restorative practices, there has to be a shift in the organizational norms of how to respond to behavior. The shift is both proactive and reactive in terms of building an environment of trust and responding in a similar manner to restore trust. This can often be difficult for teachers to shift from a punitive to

restorative mindset because of growing up in a punitive system and only working in a punitive system in the past. This discussion is specified by each leader.

For Mrs. Justice, the "why" is about changing behavior as a focus.

"Everything becomes about 'how do you change behavior?' Not how you accept it or how you process the referral. I think the idea that we can shape behavior and honestly behavior of adults as much as students is a really empowering thing. I think we talk about what we control versus what we do not control. We talk about social and emotional concerns. If you are not an administrator that believes the point of discipline is to change behavior, then you can't embrace restorative practices. I do not think any of us who practice it, thinks restorative means taking the place of consequences because it does not. It means, I have to look at any situation through the lens of 'how do I change the behavior?' I have to believe in the possibility that I can change any behavior whether that behavior is discipline related or honestly academic."

Mr. Hope agreed with Mrs. Justice in regards to explaining the shift,

"It is about changing behavior. The important piece of restorative is that you can talk about the behaviors, behaviors that we can change so that we are not back in the office. With students we can talk about behaviors that allow us to become an asset on our campus, an asset to our classmates, and how we can impact the lives of others in a positive way. Restorative lends itself to helping our kids help themselves. If we believe that our kids

can change and teach them to believe in themselves. There is nothing that they cannot attain."

Mr. Passion agreed that the focus on changing behavior is important, but emphasized that it is really about a shift away from a punitive mindset towards discipline.

"I still have teachers that speak and think from a punitive mindset because that is all they have ever known. They want to know why a student is allowed back in their classroom after disruptive behavior. I have to flip it on them and say, 'How can we look at this situation from a restorative lens? What is the issue? What did the student do and how might you have contributed to the issue? What could the student have done differently and what could you have done differently? Have you taken the time to have a conversation with the student involved or others that are being impacted by the situation? What needs to happen to make things right?' By asking these questions just like we would with students it has helped teachers be more reflective and has truly made a difference. Often, teachers do not realize that the way they respond to a student, teach their class, or spotlight behavior, is often the catalyst for the behavior they are looking to extinguish."

Mr. Hope agrees with Mr. Passion. It is explaining how a punitive system alone does not produce the desired results.

"Before 2007, it was all about punitive punishment. I was suspending kids nine days for 3 referrals. We were giving discipline, but we weren't serving the kids. By the time they got back to school, they were so far

behind they were just in a cycle. I also realized it is not about how many days they get, it is about how effective the strategies are in changing their behaviors. You have to have the commitment that we are going to be better."

The hardest concept for teachers to understand about restorative is the shift from consequences to accountability. Accountability in regards to restorative are the steps taken by individuals to take ownership of mistakes and action to make things right. Mr. Passion clarified,

"Restorative holds students accountable. From a punitive mindset, students were just given consequences for their behavior. Your consequence is a detention, or ISS, or OSS. Students were never truly held accountable for their actions. When a student takes ownership in what they did, that is the first step. When a student is allowed to make things right with those that were impacted by their behavior; that is accountability."

Mr. Hope further commented,

"It is all about making sure you do what is right by your teacher, make amends for whatever relationship you busted up, make amends for how you are going to respond to one another, even if it is just no longer being disrespectful and giving that person their space, and you respecting your own space. It is about restoring a kid's confidence in themselves and giving them their dignity while we discipline them."

Personal reflection and storytelling. While shifting the focus from consequences to changing behaviors is one way to answer, "Why?" Mr. Passion conveyed restorative in a different light.

> *"Restorative practices are about keeping balance in relationships and creating a culture of respect. It is about building a functional community."*

His approach is to tell the story of his own journey in making the shift from punitive to restorative, why restorative makes sense, and the endless cycle of punitive consequences and students getter further disconnected from the school and community each time they are sent out of the classroom.

> *"It is more about building a community that accepts the fact that individuals will make mistakes. When they do make a mistake, they will need to take ownership of the mistake and be expected to take action to make things right in order to be accepted back into the community. When this has been accomplished, we have to move forward without lingering resentment or bitterness towards each other.*
>
> *As an administrator, I have found this works as well for adults as it does for students. Teachers do not like principals with a punitive mindset. I talk with them about consequences for tardies with students and ask them if the consequences for adults that are late to work are the same. I ask them about consequences for late work and ask them if the consequences for adults that fail to turn in attendance or grades on time is the same. I ask about the consequences for students that show disrespect and ask if the consequences for adults that show disrespect is the same. Teachers want*

grace and respect when they make a mistake, I have to show them that students want the same. Just as a teacher can learn from a mistake with punitive consequences, so can a student. Accountability is still in place and expected, but it does not have to come from a punitive mindset."

Explaining the "what?" After the "why?" is presented and explained to faculty members, it is time to explain the "what?" This is important in explaining exactly what restorative practices are and what implementation will look like on campus. It is important to first define the philosophy of restorative practices before describing what they look like in practice.

Defining restorative practices. Restorative practices are not a new concept, but it is a new term in relation to the field of education. Here are how different institutions have defined restorative practices. The Colorado Restorative Justice Council defines restorative practices as a set of practices on a campus that build community and promote healthy relationships among educators and students in order to teach the social-emotional and conflict-resolution skills necessary to reduce conflict (Denver School-Based Restorative Practices Partnership).

The Institute for Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue at the University of Texas defines restorative practices as a relational approach to building school climate and addressing student behavior that fosters belonging over exclusion, social engagement over control, and meaningful accountability over punishment.

The International Institute for Restorative Practices in Pennsylvania defines restorative practices as an emerging social science that studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities.

Finally, Oakland University's School of Education defines restorative practices as an approach to build classroom culture based on community and mutual responsibility and to provide a safe space for students to share their thinking in a respectful, meaningful way. Any restorative practice is restorative when it builds connections and creates space for honesty.

Based on these definitions, the common themes associated with restorative practices include building community through healthy, trusting relationships that address conflict through social engagement and a strong sense of accountability.

A whole-school relational approach model. When addressing the question of "what will restorative practices look like on campus?" it is important that restorative practices should be considered as a whole school approach. It is important for those that have never participated in restorative practices on a school campus to realize that there are actually two separate cycles that make up restorative systems.

The first is community building. This cycle has building and sustaining healthy relationships as its fundamental purpose. The second cycle has repairing and restoring these relationships as its fundamental purpose. There is an overlap space between the two cycles. This critical area of exiting and re-entering balance is what Hughes (2004) refers to as gracious space. This intersection occurs when a relationship is thrown out of balance in cycle one. If it is ever to come back into balance, it must go through the second phase of repairing and restoring. Together these two cycles represent school-wide restorative practices.

Figure 2 depicts restorative systems as encompassing the systemsworld and lifeworld as well as the intersection in between. Figure 10 attempts to expand the

concentric circles to embody this dissertation. It includes the building of relationships in the lifeworld, but places restorative practices in the systemsworld that allows repairing and restoring relationships to be part of policy. In addition, it recognizes that both systems must be based on the values and action of the community, that leads to creating and sustaining a restorative culture.

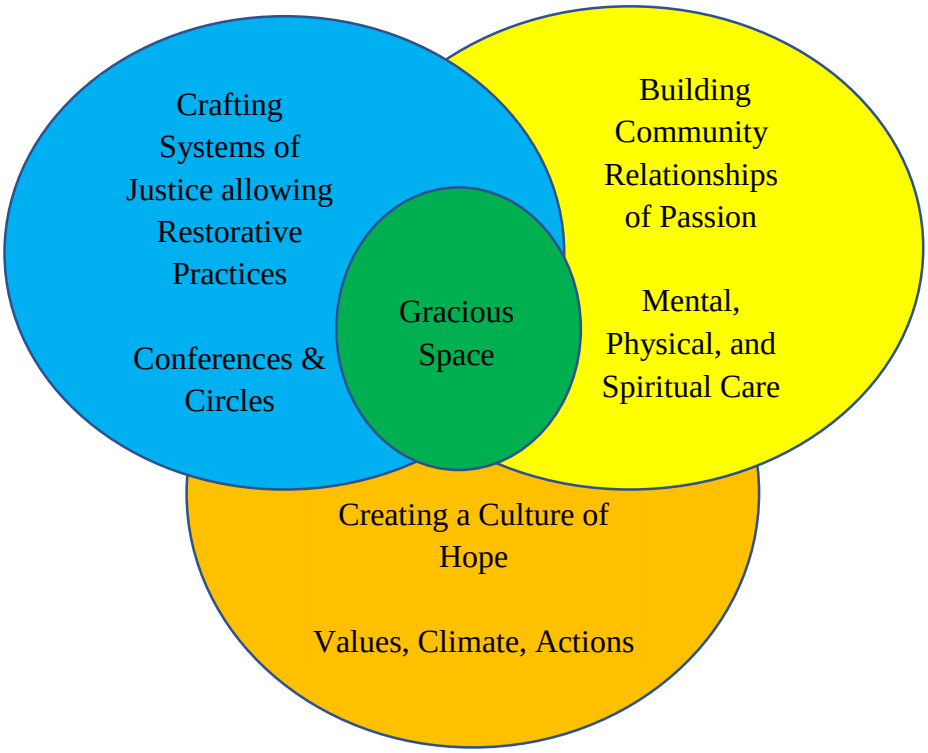


Figure 10: Restorative Practices as converging circles.

A "circles of support" model. It is also helpful to present restorative practices in comparison to a model that adults might already be familiar with. Schools tend to use the Response to Intervention (RTI) triangle as a visual example of tiers of intervention. This is typically looked at from an academic lens. Restorative practices can also be viewed in this same triangle, but most scholars would say that RP falls on the behavioral side of the triangle, similar to Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). An example of this model was presented in chapter two as Figure 7. What makes this finding unique is

that circles have the ability to work on both sides of the triangle at the same time. Academic circles can be used as an instructional strategy for engagement of students in a variety of ways. The extra benefit of using circles as an instructional strategy is that they still incorporate the elements of community building at the same time. Upon reflection, it makes more sense to change the shape of the RTI triangle into Circles of Support. This new model is based on the Ecologies of Knowing with an educational focus. A proposed model can be found in Figure 11.

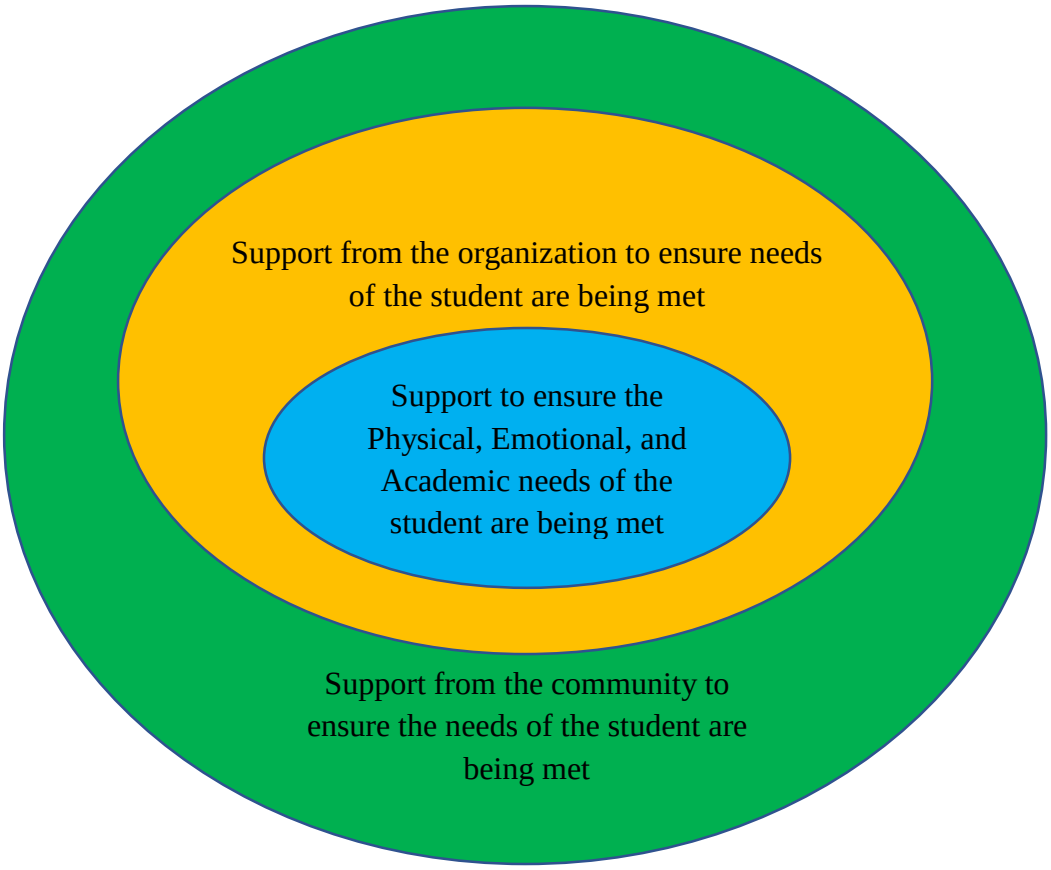


Figure 11: RTI Circles of Support embedded in the Ecologies of Knowing.

Showing the "how?" After the "Why?" and the "What?" have been presented, it is time to focus on the "How?" Restorative Practices are a relational approach that

requires conversation. The concept of restorative cannot truly be understood through reading alone. It is necessary to experience and practice the various forms of restorative practices before one can understand, implement, and commit to restorative practices at the organizational level. Some practices require minimal resources regarding training, such as respect agreements, community building circles, affirmative statements, and restorative chats. However, these practices do require a large investment in terms of time and practice to shift the mindset from an organization grounded in deficit thinking to an organization grounded in restorative action. Other restorative practices require both a high degree of training and practice, such as repair circles, restorative conferences, and circles of support or re-entry circles. These require investments and commitment in the areas of training, time, and personnel.

Investments in training. School leaders need to understand that implementation of restorative practices requires a financial investment for training. There are several ways to pay for this training, but the money for training typically comes from the school, the district, a state or federal grant, or from community sponsorship, such as the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). The typical cost of training can range from a low of $125 per person to $1150 per person depending on the trainer, the depth of restorative practices exposed to, the number of days for training and the cost of travel.

It is important that teachers truly understand the basic concepts of restorative practices before they can hope to embrace them. This can only be done through formal training conducted by educators that have experienced restorative firsthand and can speak to the impact that it has made. Part of the training for teachers is having them experience community building circles. Mr. Passion declared,

"Change is hard. Especially when that change is asking an adult to be vulnerable in front of kids. Teachers are control freaks for the most part and want everything planned out nice and neat. The reality is that learning is a messy process. I learned from studying Knowles that adults need to be involved and experience the process as part of the learning. Adults have to see how it applies to their own life and impacts their job. As you struggle with something new, you learn. For some, it is a complete mind-shift to embrace restorative and it can only be done after experiencing it for themselves."

The resource of time and personnel can be a contributing cause for failure to implement or sustain restorative practices. Tier 2 and Tier 3 restorative practices require time in order to have productive conversations which lead to healing and restoration of relationships. These can be facilitated by an administrator or lead teacher, but ideally a restorative coordinator should be considered.

Planning for success. As important as it is for the leader to believe in restorative, it is just as important for the school leader to have a plan for how to implement restorative in the school. This includes a timeline for implementation. Most change initiatives take two to three years for systemic change to occur in reference to embedding practices (Karp & Breslin, 2001). However, it can take between four and five years for cultural change to occur (Blood and Thorsborne, 2005).

After accepting restorative as individuals, all three school leaders chose to start with their fellow administrators before branching out to teachers. Mr. Passion sent his assistant principals to training so that they could better understand and support a

restorative philosophy. Mr. Hope practiced his restorative circle on his assistant principals before deciding to expand to his staff. Likewise, Mrs. Justice started with formal training for herself, her assistant principals, and a counselor before determining which teachers to start with.

> *"It is easier for an administrator to accept a restorative approach and I think it is much more difficult for a teacher. I do not want to force it. I do not want anyone doing it that does not want to do it. You can't force it. People that struggle with relationships with kids are going to continue to struggle, whether they have been trained in restorative or not. I do not want it to be a checkbox for compliance. That is a waste of everybody's time"*

Once the school leaders felt momentum by having their assistant principals on board, it was time to determine how to implement and expand into the rest of the school. Most school leaders choose to start small with a core group of adults that are open-minded about change and see how restorative is received. Some trainers or principals that have implemented restorative practices suggest starting with a particular grade level or department and building up to whole faculty implementation.

Mrs. Justice decided that she would train a small group of teachers in year one and let them lead the restorative efforts on her campus. She planned opportunities for this restorative group of teachers to share their experiences with the rest of the staff in order to build excitement for other teachers that would want training as well. In year two, she plans to train half of her staff, and then the remaining half in year three.

Mr. Passion had a much slower timeline for whole campus implementation. After training his assistant principals, he waited for three years to see how staff would respond to restorative practices being used to repair and restore relationships. Seeing positive momentum, he chose to train his entire staff at one time, rather than implementing with specific teachers over another three years. The focus of the training for staff was Tier 1 practices and community building circles. He did not make the practices mandatory, but did ask for a commitment from each staff member to at least be intentional and try at least one community building Tier 1 restorative practice. In year two, he hopes to implement a social and emotional curriculum during advisory that will incorporate restorative practices. He has plans to offer training each year for new teachers and those that request more training.

Mr. Hope followed a similar path to that of Mr. Passion, but without formal training for his assistant principals or staff. He trained his assistant principals and staff in community building and repair circles with specific focus on using them in two ways. The first was for assistant principals to use restorative conferences with students who came to the office with serious infractions that involved harm to others, such as fights and disrespect to teachers. These were also to be used with students and parents when students faced suspension or committed a mandatory offense which required a removal to the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP). The second use was for teachers to use circles during after-school detentions. In year two, Mr. Hope wants to have formal training for his staff and expand the use of Tier One practices in the classroom to build community.

Answering the "who and when?" Teacher ownership is a huge obstacle for implementation. It is important to understand your faculty as a school leader in order to determine who implements the process and when to begin. These points were mentioned in determining how to plan for success for implementation.

Who? After training in the summer, Mrs. Justice selected a small group from her campus that she wanted to take to a conference. She also strategically picked the area that she wanted to start with. She chose six teachers from 6th grade, a special education teacher, and a counselor and took them to a conference that included formal training in circles.

> *"I tried to do a mix of people. People that I knew it would speak to their heart right away and then people that I thought were going to struggle a little bit more. After the training, it was important to get their perspective. How do you think the faculty will receive this? How would you present this information to teachers? They took it and ran with it."*

Mr. Passion started with formal training for his assistant principals and focused on the repair and restore piece of restorative practices. After three years, he then chose to have his entire faculty formally trained in community building circles.

> *"I felt like if I was going to do it, we were going to go all in. My staff is particular about things like training. They do not want to be left out. I felt like it was important for everyone to be trained at the same time so that we could all be on the same page."*

Mr. Hope was the only school leader that chose to introduce circles to his entire staff without trainers. He conducted the circle training based on his own training that he

received during the summer. Mr. Hope focused mainly on the components of the circle process with his staff, but expanded the training with his AP's to include the purpose and process for restorative conferences.

When? All three school leaders chose to begin implementation soon after receiving formal training. In response to how soon or when restorative should be implemented, Mr. Passion responded,

> *"I think that teachers hear about circles or experience circles and immediately reject them because of the time element. There is a feeling that time for academics can't be sacrificed for restorative community building or the repairing of relationships. This is such nonsense! We have created a monster in the education field with the era of academic accountability. So much so, that we now have kids dealing with stress and pressure to perform because of the standardized tests. As professional educators, our core responsibility is to prepare students for life. Restorative practices are life skills that every student and adult should have knowledge of and the ability to use in all areas of life. Until a student has their needs met, and feels as if they belong in the school, you will not see true academic success. On the contrary, take care of these needs, and students are primed to excel! There is no time like the present to begin!"*

Mr. Hope eloquently verbalized,

> *"If we can rehabilitate a criminal, why can't you abilitate a child? If we can teach these children how to care and realize that there is more to life than their own selfish desires, then we have a great opportunity to help*

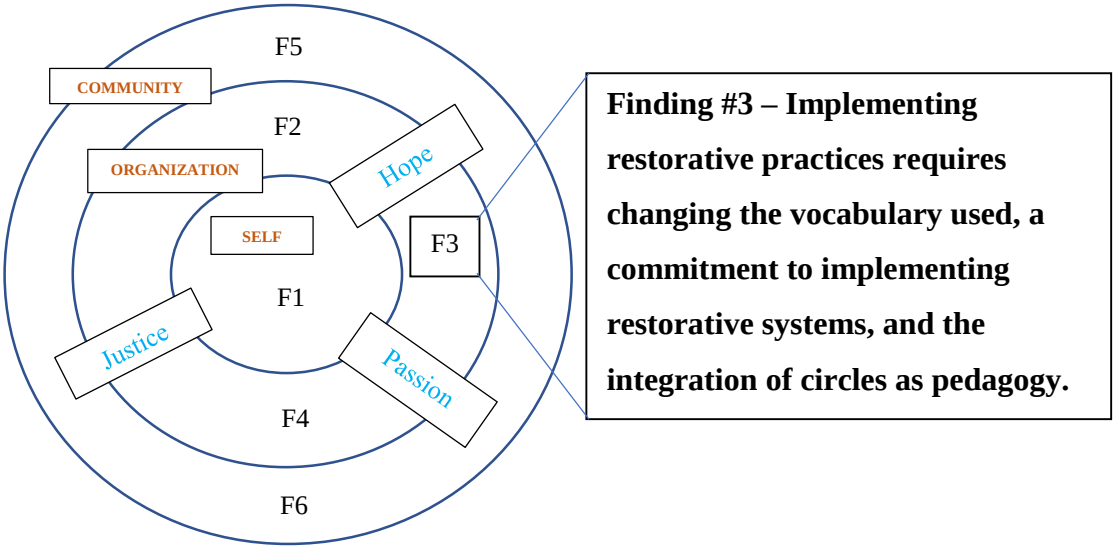
them make a difference in the world they live in. You can be one of two things in life: an asset to the tax base or a burden."

Mrs. Justice chose to be more deliberate in her exploration of restorative practices. She visited several campuses after training and consulted with her team before determining next steps. Ultimately, she knew that restorative was something that could not wait another year.

"I had a short window for change to occur. I had momentum with a core team and they really pushed to start the process."

There is never a perfect time for change and no leader ever has the perfect format or plan to get 100% buy-in, but waiting for the perfect time and perfect plan will never lead to implementation. The answer to "when?" is now! Restorative leaders can start to use and implement restorative practices on campus as individuals, if nothing else. However, if the goal of the school leader is to implement in their school, it is necessary to define the "why?" show the "how?" and answer the "who? and when?" After answering these questions, school leaders can start to implement restorative practices school-wide as a change effort on campus.

Finding #3



Changing the vocabulary used on campus. The vocabulary that is used is important for restorative because it lends itself to the mindset in place. For instance, when hearing the word "consequence" what comes to mind? Some might say that consequence has a punitive connotation associated with punishment. However, when hearing the word "accountability" what comes to mind? It is generally not associated with punishment. It is generally associated with character, integrity, or responsibility. This is key for getting out of a punitive mindset and into a restorative mindset.

Mr. Passion is adamant about using the correct vocabulary associated with restorative practices.

> *"First of all, you need to say restorative practices, because that is what they are. Restorative discipline is an oxymoron to have restorative and discipline together when they have different aims. I stopped using the word consequences and started using words like responsibility, accountability, and ownership. I am not going to give a kid consequences,*

but they are going to be accountable for their actions, they are going to be accountable for their words. They will have ownership in it, in how to make things right. I think much of the language used is connected to the mindset. If you use certain words, like consequences it can lead to a punitive mindset?"

Mrs. Justice agreed that vocabulary does play an important role and questions her own use of the term consequences.

"I am already questioning myself, because I do like the word consequences. There are consequences in life, but I need to stop and think if that is an unintentional bias that I might have. Ultimately I was raised in a traditional system. I was successful in a traditional system. That is why I became a principal, so am I reacting in that way? I do not know that I would have questioned myself if it hadn't been for restorative training. The language does matter. Restorative Practices connect so much to unintentional bias it is not even funny, along with deficit thinking and student first language. Not saying an autistic student, but a student with autism."

Mr. Passion goes on to say,

"I pay attention to the word "restorative" in terms of how it is used in context. I find it in scripture, songs, quotes, etc. One of my favorite songs by Zach Williams says, 'I've got a heart overflowing 'cause I've been restored, there ain't nothing gonna steal my joy!' This sums up what I want for myself and others."

Implementation of Restorative Systems for building, repairing, and restoring healthy relationships. Implementation of restorative systems on campus means understanding both the proactive cycle of building and maintaining relationships, along with the response cycle or repairing and restoring relationships.

A restorative approach to building relationships. A major element for the sustainability of restorative practices involves the way that the school approaches building relationships. At Mr. Passion's school, he believes that everyone should be equipped with the same tools to make this happen.

> *"Everyone has been trained on circles, respect agreements, and restorative chats. I think that these community building practices are an easy way for teachers to be involved in restorative. I would love for us to really look at the different levels of support that students need from a restorative lens and expand our use of restorative on campus to other areas."*

Mrs. Justice used a slightly different approach in that she only trained a few of her teachers to use circles in the classroom. However, her campus has taken on a restorative mindset in regards to building relationships in combination with her efforts through Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS).

> *"We try to make school fun. What was PBIS, but early restorative practices. When we were planning last summer, we talked about being positive. We are doing positive referrals and individual enforcers. Little things like being in the hallways and greeting students at the door make a difference with relationships."*

Circles. Circles are most commonly used to build student relationships. Given that Mr. Passion has more experience and is seeing them used more widely on his campus than the other principals, much of the conversation on circles is driven by Mr. Passion. He expressed why he thinks circles are so beneficial.

> *"Students seem to love circles. They ask for it from teachers because at the middle school level they love to talk and they love to learn about each other. That is why I feel social media is so popular. It is a platform that allows students to tell their story or give their opinion to their peers. Peers then have the opportunity to respond whether they liked it or not. I think classrooms can create a similar platform in a much safer environment because we can monitor where that discussion goes and keep it focused in a positive light. Circles in the classroom also let students know that the teacher has an opinion on things that are important to them. It allows for them to get to know the teacher on a more personal level and see that they are human. The classes seem to be more unified because the circle conversations form bonds."*

Circles can be easy to implement into the classroom and are not as time consuming as teachers might think. For instance, Mr. Passion gives three quick examples of questions that could be used in the classroom that would not take much time, but give the teacher and others good information about the students for that day.

> *"You could start with a quick check on how everyone is doing. This could be a thumbs-up/thumbs-down round. Or you could do something a little more fun, like tell me how you are feeling through weather, for instance,*

sunny, cloudy, or rainy. Depending on how in-depth you want to get, you could ask them to explain why."

Any question related to favorites is great for gathering information and making connections. The three principals talk about circle questions and how similar they are to common ice breakers. A great example is "What is your favorite (anything)?" It could be ice cream, music artist, song, baseball team, college, activity outside of school, way to relax, vacation, or video game. The complexity is completely up to the teacher. Mr. Passion explained,

"During these easy rounds, students start to build connections with each other. They start to realize that they have things in common with each other. They learn more about the actual person as opposed to what they thought they knew about the person or how they had stereotyped them."

As the circle builds trust and security, the facilitator can begin to ask more serious questions. Mr. Passion elaborated on this deeper level.

"It takes time before the group will share openly, but eventually you can get into questions such as, 'Tell me about a time you were treated unfairly, a time you treated someone else unfairly, a time you were sad, your biggest worry or fear, greatest stressor in life.' When you get to this level you can start having true community as students start helping each other through their issues by sharing similar examples or how they handled a similar situation. It is a beautiful process to watch."

Mrs. Justice echoes the statement about how powerful circles are in regards to building relationships.

"The teachers that do circles are so much more positive and better connected with kids. There is more trust and it limits little misunderstandings."

Mr. Hope also sees that circles are powerful. He is using them as part of after-school detention.

"Teachers were very fulfilled. They felt like they got a chance to get to know a group of kids, some that they did not know before. Kids realize that teachers just want them to make better decisions and teachers realize that these kids are really not bad kids, they just made a mistake. The circles have allowed them to see kids in a different way."

Setting expectations. Another restorative system that can be instilled on campus is how student expectations are set. Mr. Passion clarified how this is accomplished on his campus.

"We use the practice of creating respect agreements. This is very similar to something I learned in Capturing Kids' Hearts called a Social Contract, where the teacher and students create the expectations or norms for the class. We use the term respect agreement rather than classroom rules or treatment agreement, because we are very purposeful with our vocabulary. The difference between a respect agreement and a social contract is how it is broken into different categories of responsibility or accountability for each partner in different situations. We break it into six areas of impact for the classroom: How the teacher will be treated by students, how the students will be treated by the teacher, how students will

be treated by each other, how the classroom space will be treated by all, how guests (including substitute teachers and parents) will be treated by all, and how classroom supplies and technology will be treated by all."

A template for respect agreements can be found in Appendix L.

Mr. Hope has a slightly different take in regards to setting expectations. At his school they use an acronym to reinforce characteristics that students should strive for on a daily basis. This is a common practice for schools that have had Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) training.

"We use restorative practices to reinforce the characteristics we are trying to build. We want the kids to become productive citizens. We want a tax base, not a tax burden. I want kids becoming successful citizens in life. Circling to teach each letter or our acronym is strategic for understanding exactly what we expect from our students and teachers. We need integrative circles coupled with classroom norms."

Mrs. Justice feels that those expectations start with the systems the school designs for students and adult modeling.

"If kids do not come through the doorway feeling welcome to the school, then we are setting them up for failure. If teachers do not model appropriate behavior and relationships, then we are setting them up for failure. If kids come to the office and all of a sudden we are punitive, then I am setting them up for failure. It's huge, you are retraining a culture and that does not happen overnight."

A combination approach of the ideas from Mrs. Justice and Mr. Hope is also used by Mr. Passion.

> *"We have students read our creed every morning. Included in the creed is our acronym of CARE. Restorative is built in. The R stands for Relationships. We say, 'I will build, repair, and restore healthy relationships' during that part. I think this is a good reminder of what we stand for on a daily basis."*

A restorative approach to conflict. Restorative practices are not a cookie cutter approach. It looks different at each campus because each campus has its own unique needs within its culture. What does not often differ, however, is the goal for restorative when dealing with conflict. Mr. Hope thinks that restorative practices are a model for teaching students and adults to deal with conflict through dialogue.

> *"To me, it has solidified that restorative is a great way to attack issues on campus. This is a great way to help resolve issues, a great way to mediate situations. A great way to make both parties really consider their actions without blame, and take ownership of their own actions, rather than trying to justify actions. Part of our restorative piece is that we have to learn to let go of all our preconceived notions and have honest, open listening. When we do that, then we have true dialogue. Restorative gives people an equal voice. We all deserve the right to be heard. We do not have to agree with each other, but at least we should hear each other out."*

In terms of restorative, conflict can be defined in several ways, but is most commonly characterized in schools as physical or emotional conflict. This most often

occurs between students that have a disagreement, but can also be used to diffuse conflict between a student and adult. Depending on the level of disagreement, there are different restorative approaches that can be used. These include restorative chats, restorative conferences, and circles of support.

Restorative chats. Restorative chats are quick conversations with the goal of reflecting on a behavior in order to make different decisions and move forward. They are designed to take place anywhere on campus and reduce the need for a student to be sent to the office. Mrs. Justice uses this approach as an administrator, but also has teachers lead this practice on her campus.

> *"I have teachers lead restorative chats where they ask the five basic questions:*
>
> 1) *What happened?*
> 2) *What were you feeling at the time?*
> 3) *How are you feeling now?*
> 4) *Who has been impacted by this and how have they been impacted?*
> 5) *What ideas do you have to make things right between you and those that were impacted?*
>
> *The teachers really like the questions and especially like that the questions make students reflect on how their actions affected the other person or others who witnessed it, that idea of building empathy."*

Mr. Passion feels that restorative chats are useful for quick diffusion as well.

"Restorative chats are very similar to the questions asked from Capturing Kids Hearts (CKH).

1) What are you doing?

2) What should you be doing?

3) Are you doing it?

4) What are you going to do about it?

5) What happens if you do not?

I think the beauty of restorative is that it can take on elements of other programs and enhances them. In this instance, the CKH questions are effective in redirecting behavior, but do not go to the depth of the restorative questions. The restorative questions really make the student think about the impact to others as well as the accountability in making things right. I think it is really dependent on the situation which questions you might use, but I always love to end conversations with 'what are we going to do to make things right?' It just leaves such a positive feel."

Restorative conferences and restorative circles. Restorative conferences can look similar to restorative chats, but are usually a level higher in terms of intensity of the action that might have led to the restorative conference. Within the conference, the same restorative chat questions can be asked, but it is a more formalized process within a classroom or office setting, with just those individuals that were impacted by the situation. Mr. Passion described the way his administrative team runs restorative conferences.

"We have been using restorative practices to repair and restore relationships in the form of restorative conferences for several years. These are used with students that have issues with each other and also student to teacher conflicts and teacher to teacher conflicts. We usually start with the individuals to get each side of the story and if we feel that they are not a threat to each other or to themselves we hold a restorative conference. Sometimes we wait a day or two so that both parties are in a restorative mindset and we are not just forcing them together. It is truly about understanding perspective and being accountable. We will typically use the rules of the circle with a talking piece. We go through the same questions as a restorative chat so that each person can get perspective from the other as to what was going through their mind and how they were feeling at the time of the incident. It is not uncommon for individuals to realize that they contributed to a situation, where previously they just blamed the other individual involved. The power of the restorative conference is in the resolution, how will they make things right between each other and what is the action plan moving forward. There is also an accountability piece in regards to what will happen if they do not hold up their end of the agreement."

Restorative circles are also used when dealing with conflict among a group. Mr. Passion distinguished between the difference in terminology.

"We use a restorative circle when it involves more than two individuals. When dealing with multiple people it is important to use more of the circle

elements. A talking piece is very important as well as the norms of the circle. The norms are typically laid out by the administrator, but we do ask for agreement from all the individuals present before we begin. I usually start by asking the individuals to fill out a notecard individually listing their goal for the circle. What do they hope to accomplish or what do they want to see before walking out the door? I use these to direct the conversation and dialogue between individuals as well as norm setting. For instance, if an individual says they want "peace" I will use that when they are speaking. If the language they are using is not peaceful, I call them out on it and ask how that is contributing to their goal. The circle works similar to the conference with use of the same questions. It takes longer because of the number of individuals. It is important to give the individuals notecards or paper to write on so they can jot down thoughts or ideas rather than blurting out. It is even more critical for the facilitator to direct the dialogue so that everyone is heard from. It is kind of like refereeing. There is no how-to manual, you learn from doing them over and over. No circle will be the same and expect the unexpected.

It is critical to unpack the baggage. Many times it is not the current situation that led to the conflict, it is something that has happened in the past that someone is still holding on to and the latest incident just brought it to the surface. Until you reach the root of the conflict, you will not be able to fully repair and restore the relationship. The ending is critical as well. After we figure out how to make things right, I ask that everyone

make a commitment, like 'what can you commit to moving forward?' Every individual has to make a commitment because that is the accountability piece. Being able to write these commitments down is helpful should you ever have the same individuals again. It can be the launching point. Restorative circles are not always successful, but we have had great results. Even when they are not, they lessen the degree of conflict in the future between those that were in conflict. Although it has been rare, we might see the same individual, with perhaps the same issue, but it is usually conflict with a different individual."

Circles of support. Another form of restorative circles are circles of support. This usually occurs when there is a situation with a high level of intensity. A circle of support usually involves not only the student, but their parent/s, possibly community members that have an interest in the student or are representative of an agency, along with administration. Principals reported on three specific examples of when circles of support could be used: a student struggling in multiple areas of life, the removal of a student to the DAEP, and the re-entry of a student that was enrolled in a mental health clinic.

When a student is struggling not only in school, but also at home and in the community, it is the perfect time to use a circle of support. Mr. Passion described this situation.

"We used a circle of support with a student who was very smart, but just did not care. He was struggling in his classes. We were worried about him because after talking with his parents, we heard that he had a similar affect at home. We had a circle of support for the student with his parents,

a coach from our school, a neighbor, a community coach, and his brother. We wanted the student to know that he was surrounded by people that cared for him. Each of us made a commitment in terms of what we could do to support him, but we were also going to hold him accountable for his action plan as well. Slowly but surely, we saw positive signs of improvement."

A different scenario involves discipline. Sometimes principals have discretion in determining a consequence, but sometimes a removal from the school is mandatory. Mr. Passion specified,

"When making a shift to restorative, there is sometimes a tension between the use of traditional exclusionary consequences and restorative. For instance, sometimes a student does something where it is mandatory for the student to be removed from the school. I often have internal conflict about how restorative can be applied in these situations. Usually we do a re-entry circle of support to connect the student back to the school when they get back from the DAEP."

At Mr. Hope's campus he does a circle of support for students that are being removed from the campus, prior to their removal as well as a re-entry circle upon their return.

"We are looking at discipline differently. If we have to send a kid to the DAEP, we are doing a restorative circle of support within the removal conference between the kid's parents and us to try and connect with the kid before they leave. Then we let them know when they get back that we

are waiting on them to continue this relationship, we want it to continue. There is no policy that says I can't love a kid. If I do not have a choice in the discipline they get, then we try to restore before we send them and also when they return."

A final scenario involves a circle of support for students returning from a mental health clinic. Mr. Passion described this circle of support.

"Again, we try to have as many people present in the circle as possible that will lend support to the student in the transition back to our campus. This includes parents and family members, but also the teachers that the student will have and community support if we can find it. An action plan is created to help the student feel supported, let the student know that they are valued and welcomed back into the school, but also to detail the expectations for the student if they are reverting and need help."

Restorative practices with adults. Mr. Hope reminds us that as important as it is to repair and restore relationships with our students, it is also critical to repair and restore relationships with the adults on campus.

"We have to restore our teachers too. We can't get in a situation where we get angry and want to tear them down. They make mistakes. We have to find a way to give them their pride back, their confidence back."

For instance, there was discussion on what to do if an administrator has to write a teacher a memo. Mr. Hope expanded his position,

"That memo is meant to improve, not to destroy. If that memo is meant to destroy then I am not being restorative, I am just trying to move people and that is a problem."

Mrs. Justice responded,

"I think owning up to your staff has the same output. Apologizing, that is part of restorative, but it has to be genuine. This is modeling for adults that it is okay to admit when you are wrong. It is modeling that accountability that we are seeking in others."

All three administrators use restorative conferences with adults on campus when there is conflict with another adult. As a restorative campus, restorative alternatives should be used to support anyone on campus, whether it be students or adults that have harm in a relationship. Mr. Passion reflected,

"We can't have adults with grudges. It is not healthy for them and it impacts students. We work hard to try and restore that relationship so it does not impact teaching or students."

Integration of circles as pedagogy. The driving concepts that make circles powerful as a pedagogical practice include voice, engagement, and active listening. Depending on the type of circle, there is typically action as a result of the circle. This is interesting because the reverberation of the circle, much like ripples in a pond, can be widespread and yet potentially never known to the facilitator or other members of the group. The driving concepts of the circle align with Vygotsky's Theory of Social Constructivism, which states that individual's construction of knowledge is a result of the

social context and interactions with others. Put simply, we learn through dialogue with others: sharing, listening, and reflecting.

Modeling of circles by leadership. As a restorative leader, it is important to model restorative practices and circle as pedagogy as often as possible. Within the organization, this can be applied in different ways, but the easiest way is to transform the structure of meetings on campus.

Many principals have administrative meetings with a core team of people on campus that impact the organization in different ways. These can include: the assistant principal/s, counselor/s, administrative assistant, registrar, school nurse, head custodian, and the school resource officer/s. These administrative meetings can be run as circles. The circle should use a talking piece and give everyone an opportunity for input and voice in discussion and decisions impacting the school campus. They should include the building of community or maintenance of relationships. Finally, the use of circles in these meetings can be used to repair and restore relationships between adults and ensure that everyone is committed to the decisions being made as a team.

This same circle format can be used for teacher professional learning community (PLC) meetings, student support team (SST) meetings, leadership meetings and faculty meetings. Mr. Hope uses circles to address the climate survey on his campus.

> *"We looked at our survey and every piece of the survey that was negative, we made it a circle and we talked about how to improve it. And about 90% of the way we do things this year is a direct result of those circle conversations."*

Mr. Passion has transformed meetings on his campus.

"Every meeting held on my campus encourages the use of the circle as pedagogy. It starts with sitting in a circle and using the elements of it. We use a talking piece because it reminds us that everyone has a voice and when that person has the talking piece, everyone else should be focused on active listening. We open meetings with celebrations to build community, we close each meeting with commitments so that we are accountable to each other. In between, we encourage active dialogue. We should not be meeting just to disseminate information that can be sent through email. We are meeting so that we can have active dialogue and voices can be heard. Our time together should be spent with purpose. A good agenda with thoughtful circle questions will open up a whole new world of conversation, understanding, and commitment."

Mrs. Justice understands the difference that circles have made to her leadership meetings.

"Leading meetings as circles has been meaningful. It has been powerful in that a lot of people have come away from the circles really affected. When things are not going well in the school, they are telling me about it in the circle and not telling each other down the hallway. It also helps to diffuse issues rather than them creating a divide. Running leadership meetings as a restorative circle also forces me to shut up and be an active listener. When we are referring to discipline decisions, the discussion is much more student focused. I think everything is viewed with more wrap around support than it was before. It is not about the act and the consequence and

processing the referral. It is about the act and the referral and the counselor, and the outside support that you can bring in to help this student and meet their needs."

Mrs. Justice feels that you have to model being a restorative leader by making yourself vulnerable, just as you are asking your teachers to be vulnerable by doing circles.

"You have to be willing to be vulnerable and I think sometimes as leaders we do not want to be vulnerable because we are supposed to look like we have it together and have all the answers. I think the biggest challenge for me has been leading my leadership meetings as restorative circles and I have to sit there and be quiet and realize I am not leading the circle. I have to listen to every single thing they are saying. It has absolutely been the biggest change for my leadership and in the culture of the school."

Mr. Passion makes the case for modeling circles throughout the year.

"It should not just be at the beginning of the year. Why is it not part of your practice to where you are constantly learning more about each other? I try to do this with my faculty every time we meet, bringing a little bit of community building in so that you are able to learn more about each other. My hope is that by modeling it for teachers, they will see how easy it truly is and in turn, use these community building circles in the classroom."

Use of academic circles by teachers. Circles as pedagogy can be used by teachers in the classroom. Examples of building community through classroom circles have

already been shared. Mr. Hope and Mr. Passion revealed how classroom circles can be used to set expectations or norms for the classroom. Mr. Passion makes the case for the use of circles as pedagogy in the classroom as well.

> *"We have had staff circles featured on how to do academic circles. This has been very interesting because teachers are coming up with ways to use circles for academics that I never would have thought of. For instance, using circles to review for exams and at the same time acknowledging some of the social and emotional components. Sample questions could be, "what area do you feel least prepared for? What confusion do you still have? How are you studying for the test?" This is also great feedback for the teacher to see what students feel they are prepared for and not prepared for."*

Mr. Passion also told how academic circles can be used after a test.

> *"Circles can also be done after a test, the questions just differ. 'What did you not feel prepared for? What part of the test was confusing? What do you plan to do differently in preparation for the next test?' It is this last question that we are really trying to build on in terms of goal setting. I am so excited because a few teachers are having the students keep a journal to write down their answers and set goals. After the next exam, teachers can have the students go back to their journal and goals to see if they did what they said they were going to do and how it impacted their test score."*

Other conversations centered on small group circles. Mr. Passion clarified,

"Teachers are familiar with stations, but I challenged them to use student leaders with circle questions within in the stations. It actually is a benefit to the teacher because there is so much more discussion taking place and as a social constructivist I feel that this is an environment where students will thrive!"

Academic circles can also be used as daily discussion over a topic. Mr. Passion explained the integration.

"Socratic seminars or circles have been used in academics for years. The pedagogy behind the circle can strengthen the voice of others, the dialogue taking place, and the active listening among participants."

All three principals agreed that student voice is important and circles are a pedagogical method that could be employed to increase student voice in the classroom, along with increasing active listening and respect for ideas.

Other uses for circles on campus. As the principals discussed the uses of circles, other examples were cited, such as counseling circles and detention circles.

Mrs. Justice described how counselors can use the pedagogy of the circle for small groups.

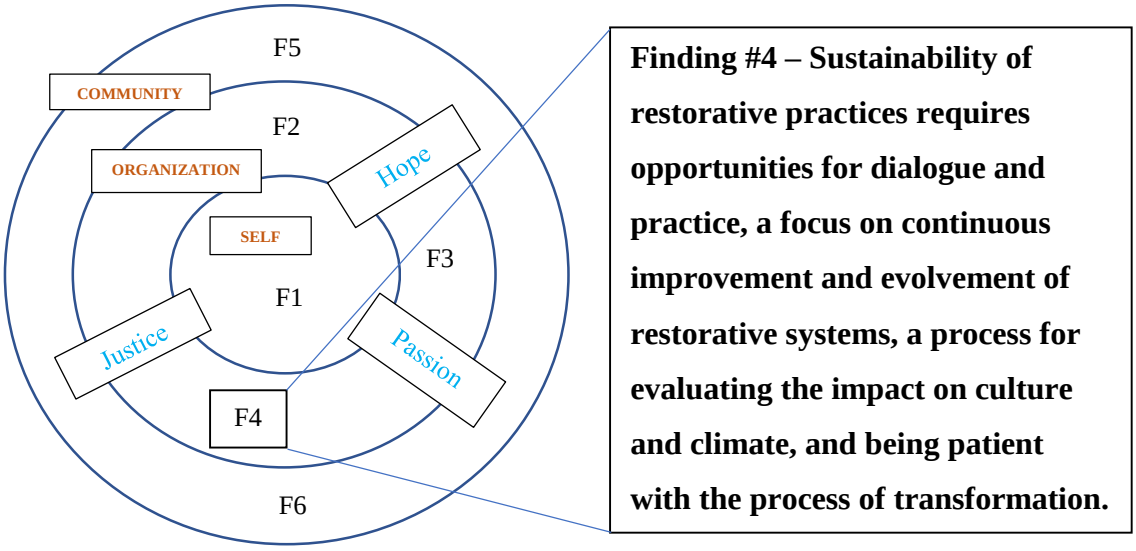
"Our counselor is now using the circle structure for small group sessions. She said it fits in perfect for counseling because everyone has a voice and all are focused on listening. The questions are the real key to the depth of the counseling session. It takes a little while to build trust, but most counseling sessions are built around students facing the same issue, so it

does not take long to realize they have that in common. It is beneficial and therapeutic for students to share their story with others in a safe setting."

Mr. Hope is using circles to facilitate his afterschool detentions. All teachers are required to facilitate one day of after-school detention.

"Detentions were a mess, people saying, 'be quiet, do not talk, sit down' and they are getting frustrated with kids. You can turn it around and have a circle and start talking about behaviors that led us here. Discuss behaviors that we can do to make sure we do not come back here. Discuss behaviors we can have to become an asset to our campus, an asset to our classmates, and how we can impact the lives of five people between now and the end of the semester in a positive way. It is going well, we do not have a lot of repeaters."

Finding #4



Opportunities for practice and dialogue. Mr. Hope felt that sustainability was a result of practice.

"We need to practice with fidelity. We need to make it a part of our DNA on this campus. We need to make it one of our discipline processes that we use to change student behavior, but at the same time keep the students connected to this community and this culture. For the vast majority it has worked, we do not have a lot of repeaters. It has been amazing. You have to practice what you brand. It becomes what you do. It is not only what you are, it is who you are. I mean that is what really lets people know what kind of campus you are."

Those sentiments are echoed by Mrs. Justice.

"I think sustainability happens with practice."

Mr. Passion agreed with both Mr. Hope and Mrs. Justice regarding practice.

"I think that practice is the key for teachers as well. They are so concerned that a circle is going to go bad that they have a fear of trying it. They do not want to give up class time, but on the flipside say there isn't enough time during advisory and complain about behaviors that might be corrected through circles."

Restorative dialogue is a key component of restorative practices. Within this dialogue, comes the opportunity to learn from one another, as presented by the idea of constructivism. Just as students can learn from each other during circles, adults can also learn from the interactions with both students and other adults. Mrs. Justice noticed this happening as discussions took place.

"I definitely learn from you, Mr. Passion, and I also learn from Mr. Hope and from other people, we almost need a circle for ourselves. We need a

forum or setting that you can commit to meeting three times a year or quarterly so that we can just share what we are doing. I do think it has to look different at every campus because every campus culture is different. You have to be willing to adapt and step back and analyze, 'are my systems working?' Then you have to bring your faculty into that conversation."

Mr. Passion noted the opportunities for adults to engage in dialogue.

"It is important to give adults time to talk about themselves as well as important issues. Just like students, the principal can't always dominate conversation in meetings. We need to model social constructivism and best practice and let teachers dialogue to process what is being said. We try to have teachers break into smaller circles within the larger circle for discussion on different topics during meetings."

A focus on continuous improvement through re-culturalization and evolvement of Restorative Systems. In order to sustain restorative systems on a campus, it is important to keep a focus on continuous improvement. After reflecting, on this process of improvement, it is really making changes to the culture or re-culturalization of the organization. This includes making adjustments to current practices in order to maximize efficiency and effectiveness, but also includes being courageous to add new restorative strategies and practices to the campus repertoire as well. All three restorative leaders realize that it is an ongoing process to reach the level of implementation on their campus that they are seeking.

Mr. Hope articulated the continuous improvement he is seeking for his campus.

"I think we are in the first stage. I think at the end of the year we will look at the effectiveness of it and how can we improve it. We will go to more training in the summer and do more professional development when we get back in August. There is no one-month implementation. There are going to be dips. There are going to be highlights, but if you make it through those phases, it becomes standard and now we just focus on how to improve the questions in the circle to make it more meaningful for what the kids are doing. Do we have certain categories of reflection that we want the kids to go through based on what mistakes they make or do we want to include the adult that they made the mistakes with? To me that is the true part of rebuilding relationships when the teacher makes the shift from looking at the student as one that they are tired of dealing with to maybe this is a good kid and there is something wrong in his life right now."

Mr. Hope goes on to explain what he wants to improve on for year two of implementation.

"One thing we probably need to do to improve our system for students is to require them to do circles once a week, twice a week, while they are in deferred adjudication so they can keep their mind focused on what they are supposed to do. Circles need to get to the point where they are peer led. Maybe these circles led by peers that have been through something similar will encourage other students that feel like there is no other solution."

Mr. Passion commented that it sounded like the

"circles could take the form of support groups or a model for mentoring other students."

Mrs. Justice also reflected on her goal for improvement.

"We are spending this year to focus on building community. I think we need to get all the Tier 1 practices implemented and then get more formal training in both circles and conferences. I would like to see us use it in the office more. Next year will be about formalizing circles and conferences and communicating with parents. I think in year three we can start to do some community work."

Mr. Passion felt like the work needed to be put in on the ground level. His emphasis for the coming year is going to be on teachers utilizing restorative practices more in the classrooms.

"I am hoping to work with a team of teachers this summer to build a curriculum of questions so that they can see how easy it is to ask community building, non-threatening questions so that students get to know the process, get to know each other, and start to build those connections between each other. I also want to have a helpful guide to limit the negatives that can occur within a circle. It is a hard decision to make as a restorative leader whether or not to force teachers to do circle conversations. Teachers will do a better job if they believe in it enough to try it, yet at the same time, sometimes we have to be pushed outside our

comfort zone. I really want to see us doing them three times a week next year."

As the three principals engaged in conversation, the discussion kept coming back to the commitment of campus leadership to keep modeling, training, and encouraging dialogue.

Mr. Hope felt passionate about building restorative practices into the professional development plan.

"Campus leadership has to be committed. Too often times, we give a training for a topic or initiative, but we never come back to it, yet we expect you to remember it and implement it. Like any good professional development, it has to be on-going training. It needs constant attention, reflection, and refinement. In order to be a restorative campus, restorative practices have to not only be a philosophy, but practices that become the way you do business. Teachers have to drive this. Administrators are going to come and go."

Mr. Passion echoed this statement.

"Sustainability is only as good as the systems in place. If the campus leader is the only person that thinks circles are effective, that system will leave as soon as the campus leader leaves. Teachers need the opportunity to create circles to discuss issues on their own. They need the ability to create the questions as well. Similar to instructional systems, you have to document what you are doing, look at the data, and reflect on what is working and what needs to be improved."

In regards to documenting the process, Mr. Hope offered this suggestion,

"We are trying to do a bank of circle questions, so no matter what you have, we have ideas from across the campus. So if a teacher is struggling with certain areas and they want to use those for circle opportunities, they can choose from a bank of questions that might fit their situation."

Mrs. Justice included what her campus is doing to document restorative and help teachers at the same time.

"We have a google doc. Any time someone is leading a circle, my teachers log all their circle questions into a Google Doc so that we have them for future use."

Mr. Passion reflected on how he wanted to use the ideas from his colleagues and expand on them.

"I love what Mr. Hope and Mrs. Justice are doing! I want to restructure our detentions as well, but I am thinking about the students that go to ISS. Unfortunately, we still use ISS for some students who are not receptive to restorative or need time to cool off because they are a possible danger to themselves or someone else. I think the students who go to ISS should be invited into an advisory circle to work on getting to the root of their behavior. It could be like a combination of the two, where it is a detention, but it is also a counseling session. I could invite the counselor to be a part of it and maybe some teachers as well. It could turn into a circle of support before students get to the normal point of a circle of support."

Evaluating the impact on culture and climate. Restorative practices, like any other initiative, are only as good as the planning, training, and continuous practice required to implement with fidelity. When done with intent and purpose, restorative practices have the ability to greatly improve the culture and climate of the school.

Mrs. Justice expounded on the impact that a shift in mindset, combined with implementation of restorative practices has had on her campus.

> *"It has been huge for us in regards to improving culture and climate. It has had a humanizing effect. Kids see teachers as humans. Teachers see kids as humans, instead of teachers versus kids, and that is huge. And the idea that all of our needs are the same and teachers need the positive reinforcement just as much as the kids. None of that changes, kids are going through hard times just like adults. It has helped with ownership. The impact on repeat offenders has been the biggest thing, but it is much deeper than the number of referrals. From my list of top five offenders, only one is a top offender this year. I think that that suggests that some behaviors have changed and there has to be a reason for that. I think that is powerful data in and of itself. Stories are data. Anecdotal evidence is data. It is meaningful data that connect people emotionally. If you are going to get a commitment out of people, you have to connect to them emotionally. You have to connect to them as a human. You have to recognize that they have feelings and they come with their own stories. I think the more concrete examples you have, the better."*

It should be noted that the word offender is very much from the systems world. There should be a change in the vocabulary to reflect restorative systems at work.

Mr. Hope reiterated the impact that restorative conferences between students have made to the climate.

> *"When kids fight, we do a circle with those kids to try and resolve it so that they can make things right and move forward. This has really helped prevent recurrences between students. At two fights on our campus, we have a discretionary removal. How many kids you think fight twice? Not many at all."*

Mr. Hope went on to explain his deferred adjudication model to the other principals.

> *"If a student has a discretionary issue that would normally lead to removal. We typically default to removing that kid to the DAEP for 30 days, in terms of a removal conference, but we defer it as long as they meet the expectations that we set upon them for the campus. In other words, we give them an opportunity to stay on campus and to correct their mistake, right their wrong, and become the student that we really feel they can become and really want to become themselves. Of the kids on deferred adjudication, 95% are typically successful and only a few violate it within the first 30 days and have to be sent. I tell a kid all the time, if you are going to violate it, violate in day 1- 5. If you can make it 10 days and then you violate it, you are not thinking straight, only because you made it two weeks doing the right things, why go back now. If you make it 25 days,*

why be dumb and mess it up the last five. I mean, let's think about what you are doing. This process has been very successful in reducing the number of students that we are sending to the DAEP compared to past years when we would just send them to get them off campus."

Mr. Passion commented on this idea.

"I like the idea that if you get into two fights you go ahead and have the DAEP conference with the student and parents and try to correct behavior through the behavior contract and weekly circles to hold them accountable over the next six weeks. That seems like a proactive step to help students who resort to violence rather than dialogue. I might even do it after the first fight. We started doing restorative conferences with every single aggressive action. That includes verbal aggression as well as physical. The restorative conferences have really paid off in limiting recidivism and changing the dynamic of our campus."

Mr. Hope echoed the impact to his campus.

"I think that the staff has seen we have some great kids. It has really paid dividends for our campus to look at our kids differently. Just to walk in and look at the walls you would not know. To look at the kids, you would not know, but when you see how we handle differences that arise or disagreements that arise, then people will understand that as a campus this is what we practice. This is how teachers handle their students, how kids work with each other, how we as administrators work with our kids

and how we as administrators work with our teachers. You would not know what the practices are until you are exposed to them."

Being patient with the process and transformation. With any change effort, the process is expected to take three to five years. Knowing this up front allows room for small growth and requires patience. Educators often seek immediate results for their efforts. The reality is that as educators, we often do not see the impact of our efforts until much later in a student's life. This same understanding and patience is required when implementing restorative systems.

It is important to celebrate each small win. Mr. Passion incorporates celebrations into each circle.

"Celebrations are important. They speak to grit and perseverance. The first time you try restorative, you might not see the results you are seeking, but hearing a success story encourages you to try again. It is important for teachers to hear these success stories from their peers."

Mr. Hope agrees,

"The process works when it is done correctly. The process does not work sometimes when it is done correctly. You just have to keep doing it in order to make it yours. As the teachers become more confident, they can really model it for the kids, so the kids can learn how to do it for others."

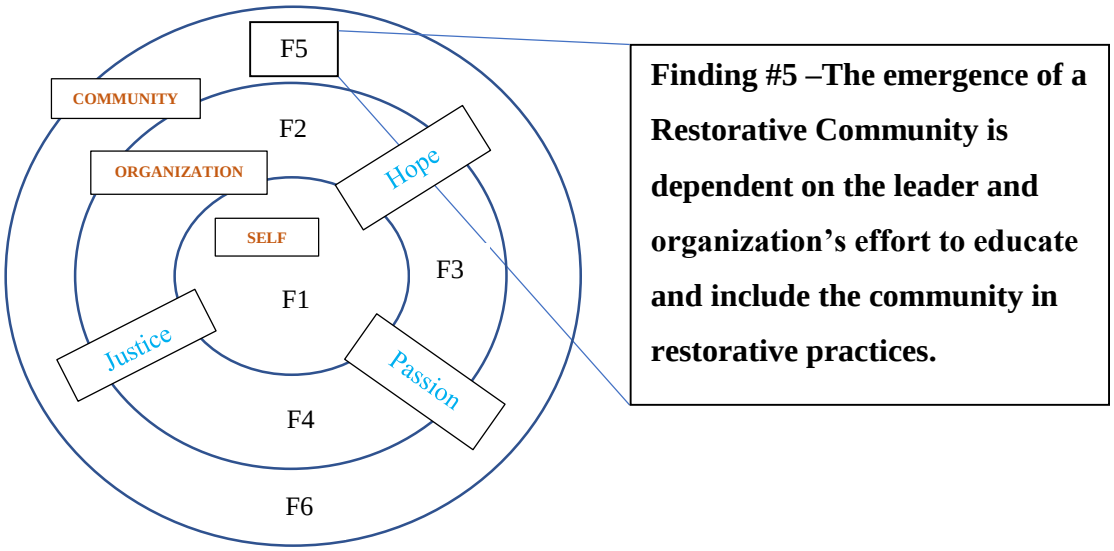
Emergence of a Restorative Community

When organizations have systems in place that encourage and value taking the time to create opportunities where the community is invited to learn about restorative practices and participate in the process, the shift from a restorative organization to a

restorative community is possible. The following is an excerpt from Peter Block (2008) speaking about the Restorative Community:

> Restoration comes from the choice to value possibility and relatedness over problems, self-interest, and the rest of the stuck community's agenda. It hinges on the accountability chosen by citizens and their willingness to connect with each other around promises they make to each other.

Finding #5



Education of the community regarding restorative practices. Restorative practices should not be isolated to the school. Parents and the community have to be informed of the efforts happening at the school in order to gain support. This means that communication must come from the school leader explaining the purpose of restorative systems and how they are being used in the school. This can happen at PTA meetings, school events, emails sent to parents, or posts put on the school website or principal blog.

All three restorative leaders were at different levels of education for parents. Mr. Hope reflected on his lack of educating parents, but the importance of doing so.

"We have not formally talked with parents about restorative. That is one piece that we have to get to next year. Part of the growth process will be to include them. They know we do restorative circles for detention, but not how it actually works. We need to push that out there for them so they get a taste of how it actually works and what we are trying to do."

Mrs. Justice has started conversations with her community.

"I have started the conversation with Parent Teacher Association (PTA). I think that parents will struggle with bully situations and understanding why you put the students in the same room together for a conference. It's going to require more education for sure. I probably need to have several parent coffees next year. It would be nice to bring in community resources to those coffees."

Mr. Passion highlighted how he educates parents on restorative practices.

"It is critical that the community understand what we are doing with restorative. I actually had some people move into our community and tell the registrar that they did so because of our discipline philosophy. The way that I have communicated restorative with the community is by including as much as possible in my weekly blog. It goes out to all parents and to anyone else that signed up to receive it. I try to include principles of restorative along with community building in some sort of fashion each week. This year was the first time I talked more in-depth about it at Back

to School Night. I also regularly mention it at PTA meetings and with my Site Based Advisory Council (SBAC) so they can hopefully explain the basics of it if asked what we do."

Inclusion of the community as partners in restorative practices. Community members should be invited to participate in this process as well. Encourage parents and community members to volunteer to be restorative facilitators on your campus, just as they would volunteer to come in for career day, be mentors, or help with other school activities. It is encouraged to use the resources of the community to participate in circles of support for students and families that are struggling. This can be financial support, food or clothing support, housing support, transportation support, mentorship, counseling, or spiritual support. These are all areas of support that can be filled by a community if they are aware that a need exists. These experiences can also build community as stories are shared. Mr. Passion stated that this is a goal for future years.

"It can build a bond within the community that says, 'In my community you matter and we take care of each other.' That would be the ultimate goal for me."

Mrs. Justice asserted that,

"Having a restorative mindset of including the community to meet a student's needs, made me aware that we do not have enough community resources. There is a need for community support. There are just so many issues tied into dealing with students these days. Mental health, school safety, attachment disorder are all issues that we are facing with our students. Kids who are from a background of poverty and do not have

adult interaction is a factor. How often do we ask how the community can help us tackle these issues that we might not be equipped to handle at the school level? We need to involve the community as resources."

Partnerships with the community are desired and necessary. They are often included in Campus Improvement Plans (CIP) and District Improvement Plans (DIP). However, it is rare to see restorative mentioned as a strategy to involve community as a resource or solution for issues that might be manifesting at school. Perhaps in doing so, not only will the school environment improve, but it might also work as a model to take back to the community as a relational solutions approach for broader community issues as well.

Using restorative in the community. Once restorative becomes a lifestyle, it is able to filter into the community level. In combination with restorative leadership, it can be a powerful mechanism for community change efforts. The impact to community comes not only through the work being done at the individual level, but also through the systems that are being put into place at the organizational level.

It is important to reflect back on the ecologies of knowing: self, organization, and community. The data have unveiled the importance of starting with the restorative leader and building systems to support implementation at the organizational level. Implementation at the community level is thus far, lacking. Mr. Hope felt that the inclusion of community and transference of restorative practices into the community would be the ultimate accomplishment.

"Maybe the circle questions themselves have to be refined so they can grow in the seriousness of their thought in regards to how students see

themselves both in the world and this school, and how they are going to prepare their lives for their future. There can be more in-depth conversations about their impact on this world. We are trying to make them think about being citizens and being contributors, not just causing havoc. Let's go from the school to the community. How can you make a difference in the community that you live in? Do you have neighbors that are afraid of you when you come outside because you always look like you are mad at the world? Or are you trying to reach out and do community service?"

Mrs. Justice also sees the connection between self and community.

"I think it is helpful in your personal life. If you are going to reach out and have a partnership with parents, they need to know what restorative practices are too, because it might be something they choose to use. Especially when you are connecting with community resources. Let's just all be on the same page. It is a people first philosophy that promotes positive relationships. This is how you are really going to build that community beyond your school community."

Mr. Passion also feels strongly about taking the next step with restorative. He feels that the emergence into the community happens naturally when embracing the tenants of restorative and realizes that it applies in all spheres of influence.

"I recently applied it with my baseball team that I coached in the community. We had baseball practice and the manager was talking to the kids saying, 'we have to be a better team, better teammates. You know

when the umpire makes a bad call, you can't be calling him out.' I was sitting there thinking, 'Is he talking about the kids or is he talking about me?' Maybe I had a little disagreement with the umpire myself and got warned about maybe being kicked out of the game. This guy did not make the right call. He really did not make the right call! But, I took the time to make myself vulnerable to the team and say, 'You know what guys, I screwed up in the game. I was not being a good role model because I had my own issues with the umpire and I feel like I let you down in terms of being a good role model and I do not want to do that. So my commitment moving forward is that I am going to keep my composure and do things in a different way.' They all made a commitment to keep their composure and help each other keep it together during games. For me, that is what restorative is like at the community level. I can just imagine each of our teachers and students carrying this philosophy into their communities as well, and it just gives me a feeling of excitement, that this is how we truly change the world that we are living in."

Using Stories to Show the Depth and Power of Restorative Practices

Stories are powerful forms of communication and influence on others. It is recommended that successful stories of restorative practices be shared as often as possible. Successful stories help encourage participants that have had a negative experience to not give up on the practice. Successful stories form connections and bonds between participants and also serve as a resource for future use or reference. Similar situations can employ similar strategies to get similar outcomes. Storytelling is also a way

for participants to not only have a voice, but serve as a call to action. Each time a participant tells a story and leads someone else to action, they have potentially become a story maker. This process can serve two purposes: to grow and to sustain.

The influence of restorative dialogue can serve people at all stages of development: becoming restorative leaders, planning, implementing, and sustaining restorative organizations, and building restorative communities. Mrs. Justice tells us that

> *"Teachers sharing their stories and experiences creates that shift in the mindset and culture of the school. They talk about the power of it."*

Storytelling is a way for participants to not only have a voice, but feel empowerment and support.

Mr. Passion asked how the other leaders were documenting the stories coming from students, teachers, administrators, and parents.

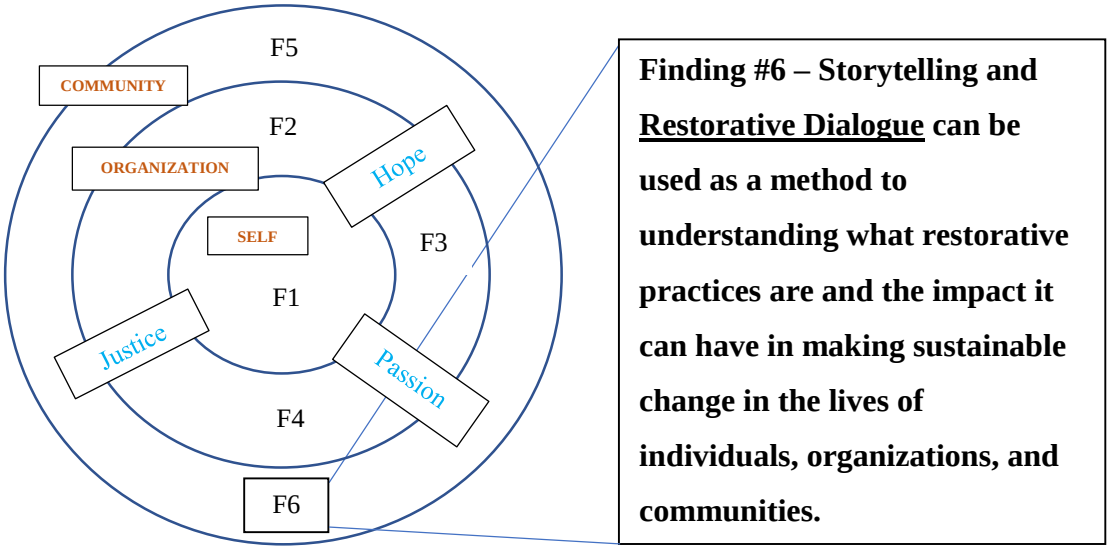
> *"We have to start collecting our stories. Those stories will be motivators for others to either start or continue with restorative practices."*

Mrs. Justice had a suggestion for the collection and dissemination of stories.

> *"Sometimes having students give testimony is effective. I do little film segments. The kids talk, and the teachers are so moved. They talk about their experiences and how this has made life better for them. This would be a great way to showcase some of the work that we are doing."*

The following stories were collected from the three restorative leaders that promote the benefits of restorative practices that build, repair and restore relationships in schools and inspire action to continue this work.

Finding #6



Restorative stories to build family. Stories are a common way to build connections and the feeling of family. Below are two stories that Mr. Passion tells that are passed on from teachers on his campus that are using restorative circles as a way to build community in the classroom.

We are family. Mr. Passion tells a story of how restorative in the classroom, leads to a feeling of family.

> *"One of my favorite stories comes from one of my coaches that uses circles often. She uses circles with her sports teams and classes. There were two female athletes. They did not like each other and were always stirring up drama between friend groups. This is somewhat typical middle school girl drama, but to the extreme. They just really could not stay nice to each other for more than a day or two. Since they were both in Athletics, the coach told them they were going to need to get along because*

we are a family, and they were sisters, and she was not listening to the drama anymore, period, or they would both be removed from the program.

When they sat down to talk, neither could tell the coach what the true problem was. They had to unpack the timeline of why they did not like each other. After a ton of tears, they realized that they really loved each other and really just wanted to be friends with each other and it was more about hurt feelings than hatred. The reason one would talk about the other to a group of girls was not that she was mad at her, it was because her feelings were hurt because the girl was not being her friend or sitting by her or including her, like she was including other students. The girl who felt left out was very hurt, and she could not understand why the other girl did not like her and want to be around her. Both girls felt the exact same way and mirrored behaviors to 'get back at' the other. They both felt hurt because they did not understand why the other one did not want to be best friends. The restorative ended with a lot of laughing and a lesson in how far a little communication can go to prevent misunderstandings.

The power came, though, when they then participated in a circle with both friend groups included and were able to stop the extended conflict. They understood that they needed to let friends know how they really felt and stop guessing, assuming, or gossiping. It was powerful for the girls in the group to see and hear this transformation and everyone was able to better get along, instead of feeling like they had to choose sides between two friends."

Wait, I am adopted too. Mr. Passion also tells a story from one of his art teachers that uses circles on a consistent basis in the classroom to build family.

> *"My art teacher does circles once a week to build a sense of community. In one of her periods, she discovered through sharing personal stories that she had four students in the same class that were adopted. The discovery of this shared experience really helped these four kids create a strong bond.*
>
> *The two girls became very close friends outside of class, hanging out on the weekends together. The two boys also became good friends. They always asked to sit together in class, and the teacher would see them walking and talking together around campus. One of the boys really struggled with making new friendships after his closest friend moved away the previous summer.*
>
> *Finding out that others had similar stories and the same shared experiences as him really helped him to feel connected, understood, and accepted. The formation of these bonds and friendships would not have been possible if we did not do the weekly circles to build trust with each other. Students would not have felt comfortable enough to tell their story of adoption. It is just amazing to see what a difference it made in the student's lives because we took the time to give them a voice and be able to share their story with others."*

Restorative stories as visual method. Stories can also present a visual of the method behind restorative practices. This might be in the form of body language or symbolism.

No hablo español. Mrs. Justice has a story that speaks to both the change in mindset that a restorative leader has as well as the impact restorative has on systems in the school.

> *"I had a student named Luis, who is new to the country. Luis speaks mainly Spanish. One day he had stormed off from the classroom and it really scared the teacher. He was mad at somebody, but would not articulate why he was mad and he left the portable and the teacher could not find him for a few minutes, so that scared her. Obviously, we want to know where our kids are. He was just so mad and he would not open up about it. We finally got him into the assistant principal's office and I was there with our ESL teacher too. We got him to open up and it turned out that a friend, Antonio, had hurt his feelings. Antonio was one of the few friends he had, because he was new to the country. He just talked about how he felt so lonely. Like in Puerto Rico, he always had someone he could talk to.*
>
> *We see the emotions coming out, Luis is having a release. So I asked, 'What would you tell your friend?' He shared what he thought and then I asked if it would be okay if we brought Antonio in? I know Antonio is a caring guy and he was like 'sure.' So we did and we brought Antonio in with Luis and we did a restorative conference. They both shared, they both*

cried, they both hugged it out at the end. I was leading the questions in English. Both boys later said that they understood the questions, so that was not a barrier. They both then answered in their native language.

It was great because my assistant principal speaks Spanish and my ESL teacher speaks Spanish, so they were understanding and guiding and asking some follow-up questions here and there. They all thought I knew what they were saying and even said, 'We did not know you understood that much Spanish.' And I said I did not. I just followed the model and watched the body language. So they repaired the relationship and they are friends again and now he does not walk out of class. Luis has a plan if he gets upset and Antonio helps him with the plan. That was one of my first conferences and it worked out beautifully.

It had an impact on everyone in the room. We easily could have given this kid a punitive consequence for walking out of the classroom. Why not stick him in ISS, why not give him a detention? That was a safety violation. But to do that to a kid who was already, who was clearly demoralized, he was clearly just struggling to connect, he was not emotionally regulated, he needed to know that his friends were standing by him and that we was not alone. Luis needed to know that from all of us in the room, not just his friend.

So in terms of actually changing his behavior, I think a punitive consequence would have just ticked him off more. He would have sat there alone and become more lonely and become more depressed. And I think it

would have happened again. By walking out he was just saying, 'I do not know how to deal with this emotion.' I feel like we gave him a way to process it in a healthy way and then we got to make his friend a part of the solution. I was so thankful that Antonio was mature enough to take that on for him too. Sometimes the person that you are trying to restore with is not there themselves.

The AP and ESL teacher had never actually seen a restorative conference take place. Since then, the AP is doing more and more conferences herself. So that modeling and seeing results was important for her buy-in. And then the ESL teacher, it gave her a point of reference. So I can say, 'Remember when we were talking to Luis or do you want to try a conference like we did with Luis?' Just kind of another tool for her, but I also feel it empowered the students to solve their own problems instead of an adult solving it for them.

I was super proud to watch their body language and how it all worked out. Honestly, afterwards, I was like, 'I cannot believe that just worked and it worked in a different language.' I was just kind of in a state of disbelief. Like wait, it is not supposed to be that easy, I know it is a struggle. And it has been as we have done others, absolutely, but it was so awesome that there was something that was that effective and that empowering for everybody. I was just kind of in shock afterwards."

When you get teed off. Mr. Hope uses symbolic representation through his talking pieces when conducting circles. This story is a reminder of how powerful visual aids can be as reminders for both students and adults.

> *"I use golf tees as my talking pieces. One is broke and one is whole. They represent an analogy between the game of golf and life. They are also representative of your attitude and a new start. In golf, you are allowed to use a new tee for every hole. You have the choice to use a broken tee or a new tee. A new tee is going to give you the best odds at success.*
>
> *Your attitude is your tee. Some days it is going to be broken. If you come back to school the next day with that same broken attitude, your odds of success are going to be slim. If you come to school the next day with the attitude of a new tee, your odds of success are much higher. I had one student tell me, 'Mr. Hope, I am a new tee. I am not a broken tee. I am tired of being broken. I am new.' I cannot tell you how happy it made me to hear her say that, because at that point she truly got it. It was if her life flashed before her and she could see that she had been using a broken tee for a long time."*

Restorative stories as a method to resolve student and teacher conflict. Restorative conferences can be used in a variety of ways. Often they are used to solve conflict between peers. However, there are often situations where a student and teacher need to have a relationship repaired before they can move forward in a productive way. Below are two examples of how student and teacher relationships can be repaired through a restorative chat or conference.

Robert and the flying pencil. Mrs. Justice tells a story of how easy it is to use a restorative chat as a way to get to the root of the issue.

"Today I had a really quick chat. There was a kid, Robert, sent down to the office and he did not even say anything when he came in. The teacher sent him out of his room for throwing a colored pencil at another kid and apparently the way he threw it was 'very aggressive' according to the teacher. Robert walked in and sat down at the desk in the front office and did not say a word until eventually the teacher came in and told me what happened. I walked up to him and I just said, 'what did you do?' I did not even go through the whole chat, I just asked, 'How are you going to make it right?' Robert answered that he would apologize. I said, 'apologize yes absolutely, but did it disrupt class? Did you take time away from the teacher?' He answered 'yes' to both questions. 'So how are you going to give time back to the teacher?'

It was really funny, because the teacher was standing there at this point, not knowing what to say. They worked it out, and that was it. It was done. It did not need to be a referral, it did not need to be a detention, it did not need to be ISS. He now has a commitment to the teacher to go in and do his work during tutorials. It was a good experience because the teacher realized that his effort in class was more the issue. He was more frustrated that Robert was not completing his work and throwing the colored pencil was the last straw. And the kid realized that he had not been living up to his

potential. He knew better. At the end of the day, did this need to be a referral? I mean it was a colored pencil, let's move on people."

Daniel and the teacher's den. Mr. Passion started doing restorative conferences as a way to repair and restore relationships.

"One of my first restorative conferences was between a student and a teacher. I had grown tired of seeing the same kid, Daniel, in the office during the same period, from the same teacher, Ms. Rochester. I had already used punitive consequences such as ISS and OSS with this particular student and it did not make a difference. I met with Danny and asked him what was going on. I told him to be honest and he opened up about why he was acting the way he was acting and why he felt the way that he did. I asked him if he could do me a favor and tell that same story when I brought the teacher in. Danny was hesitant, but after letting him know that he would not get in trouble for saying it, he agreed. I went to go speak with Ms. Rochester. I asked her the same question as the student and asked if she would be willing to share her story with Danny if I brought them together. She agreed. I asked a second question that I felt was perhaps even more important. I asked if she would listen to Danny while he told his story without being defensive.

I brought the two together and held a restorative conference, where the student and teacher were both allowed to tell their story. What we realized was that both Danny and Ms. Rochester entered that class period each day with a chip on their shoulder about the other. It caused anxiety and stress

for both parties. They both felt on edge, defensive, and ready to not lose face in front of the class. In a sense, it was like gearing up to do battle each day. Each just waiting for the other to make the first move, so they could start the battle. We talked about accountability and what both the student and teacher were doing that set the other off, was perceived as disrespect, and led to the cycle of arguments.

We also talked about what each could do differently, made some compromises, and also some non-negotiables. At the end of the conference, both Danny and Ms. Rochester were able to smile at each other for the first time in a long time and shake hands. Ms. Rochester later thanked me for doing the restorative conference. It was the first time she had ever been a part of a conversation that included the student voice. She said she had no idea that what she was doing was actually setting Danny off, until he pointed it out to her. She also realized that she had not been able to turn the page and was resentful towards Danny each day he entered the class. He had no opportunity for success as long as she felt that way.

Danny felt like he could breathe again. He did not have to put on a show for his classmates to save face. He did not have to walk through the door feeling resentment and bitterness towards the teacher. He felt like he could just be a student in the class, which he actually really liked. The situation improved. There were still disagreements from time to time, but they each had an understanding from the restorative conference that they could go back to as a starting point for repairing the relationship. That was

when I realized that restorative was not just about working with students. I could also repair and restore relationships between students and adults."

Restorative stories as a method to resolve conflict and enable peace between peers. Restorative conferences are powerful. Retelling the story of a successful restorative conference can often give hope to others that lack faith in restorative practices. Testimonials are powerful. Below are two stories that exemplify that restorative conferences are designed as methods to resolve conflict and restore peace.

Story of Tracy and Rohan. When asked about his most successful restorative conference, Mr. Hope told the story of Tracy and Rohan.

"Tracy has been with us for four years. She has always had the last word. Always wanted to get angry. Always wanted to defend herself. Tracy would argue with a fence post if she thought the fence post looked at her wrong. I mean she was the defender of everything Tracy. Last Spring, she got into it with Rohan's sister and so Rohan stepped up for his sister and said, 'if you touch my sister it is going to be whatever.' You probably know how that went. It was constant bickering, posturing, and threatening. We got past that, but when we first got back this Fall, I grabbed both of them. I said, 'we are done. Summer is finished. Y'all are seniors now. I want you focused on the right thing.'

The first day of school, they both had a class together and it blew up. Purposefully, I ran their restorative conference. And I took in my broken tee and I took my regular tee as my talking pieces. And by the end of our discussion, Rohan realized he was broken because he was waiting for an

opportunity to say something to Tracy. Tracy realized she was broken because although she said she was done with it, she was waiting for the opportunity to get it started again. You talk about a success story. Within that circle they both came to the agreement that this school was big enough for both of them to survive in, without being concerned about one another.

They have not had one cross word or one inappropriate interaction since that day. They both have flourished and have actually encouraged other kids to make better choices. And when I can hear somebody talking about a broken tee down the hall (because certain voices carry) and I recognize that voice and she has three girls standing in front of her and she is breaking it down about how they are broken and how they need to really focus on being whole and starting new because what they are doing is not going to help them. I said, 'oh my goodness. Child, you can run my circles for me.' That is an awesome success story.

The other student, Rohan, decided to get his focus. He is the only professional cricket player in this district. He plays for the National 19 and under cricket team for the United States. And he is focused on his life now. He is so quiet, you would not even know he goes to this school. He is just focused on himself and his future without worrying about the other things, because life is too short to concern yourself with something that does not make a difference, like the opinion of a child who would really like to turn up the temperature of your water. It is not going to pay you one dividend. We have some great stories, but the biggest would be the story of Tracy and

Rohan, because they were hot and at it in the Spring. The DAEP was their next landing point. Either one of them could serve as a model student on this campus now."

Story of Stella, Bianca, and Destiny. Stories are a way to connect and fill the missing space between systems and relationships. Powerful stories lead to curiosity for understanding. This understanding leads to inquiry and study. Study leads to action. As a school leader, there are instances that occur that impact the rest of your life. For Mr. Passion, the story of Stella, Bianca, and Destiny serves as a reminder that restorative works on situations that might feel beyond repair.

"One day, I received notice that an angry parent was in the front office. Like any good principal, I sent the assistant principal to deal with her. The assistant principal reported shortly afterward that she was even more upset and would not leave until she spoke with me. I braced myself for the storm that was coming. I listened to understand and asked clarifying questions. Basically, the mom said that her eighth-grade daughter did not want to come to school today because of yet another incident with a particular girl at school the previous day. She said that the girl was threatening her daughter, calling her names, and also trying to harass her younger daughter as she walked home from school. The mom was in tears, partly because she was mad and partly because she was scared and did not know what to do to help her daughter.

The mom went on to say that her daughter and the other student have been fighting on and off since sixth grade. Her daughter and the other

student have both had consequences in the past, have spoken with the assistant principal and counselor, and nothing has seemed to stop the girls from picking at each other. She will not let her daughter stay at home as requested, but knows that something must change. Something must be done so her daughter does not come to school unable to concentrate on anything other than the thought of 'what do I do next?' when I see the other student. She does not want her fighting and does not want her suspended. I assured mom that I would try my best to get to the bottom of it and would call her back by the end of the day to let her know where we were at with the situation.

I brought in the two students that were having conflict and asked if there was anyone else that needed to be at the table in order to work through this situation. The girls both agreed that a third girl should be brought into the circle. Before beginning the restorative conference, note cards were handed out to each member at the table. It was voiced that everyone will write down the values or norms that you would like to have and also what you hope to accomplish by the end of the conference. Words such as 'honesty, truth, whole-story, no yelling, and peace' appeared on many of the note cards. The note cards would serve as norms for the circle after everyone agreed to them.

A speaking piece was introduced to the group and it was explained that you cannot talk unless you have the speaking piece. It was made clear that if you could not follow this rule or the norms, you would be asked to leave

the circle. I served as the facilitator for the group and started probing into both the immediate cause for conflict as well as the history of conflict between the three. As the girls started telling their story a bigger picture of understanding began to unfold. The girls truly did have issues ranging from sixth to eighth grade. The sad part is that at one point all three girls agreed that they were friends. Misunderstandings, rumors, and boyfriends began to divide the girls.

Conversations were reduced to glares in the hallways, third party accusations, and screaming at each other when confronted. At one point, I asked if they had ever been in a safe place to have dialogue. The girls said that they had never been put together to talk. They had been to the assistant principal numerous times over the past three years, each time individually, and told to 'drop it' or 'stop talking about the other person.' The girls were put on a stay-away agreement that basically said the same thing, but was now formalized so that more severe consequences could take place. This led to the students serving time in an in-school suspension room for the disruptions caused during the instructional day and even suspension.

I probed into how certain events or words made the girls feel. I also wanted to know how it made them feel to learn what their actions were doing to the other. Ironically, the girls all pretty much had the same answer. They were all anxious and to a small degree scared to come to school because they did not know what would happen next. As the facilitator, it was important to ask questions that allowed for true feelings

to be expressed and responsibility for actions that had occurred in the past. Once these feelings were discussed and explored from all perspectives, we were able to move on to the restorative piece.

As a means to restore the relationship, each member of the circle was asked how they could make things right with the other. Each girl wanted to apologize for actions taken in the past. However, I did not let them apologize at that point. An important part of the meeting for closure was asking each girl for a commitment as to how they could move forward. The girls each pledged to not listen to others, refrain from involving others, refrain from negative talk and actions and agreed to meet in a safe place to discuss any problems they might have in the future.

At this point I explained the format that I felt apologies should follow. The format looks like this: "Name of the Person (because it was a personal offense), I feel … for my actions of … (shows responsibility for actions). I now know … (what was learned from the other student / demonstration of active listening skills). In the future, I will … (commitment for the future that incorporates new skills learned).

The meeting lasted close to three hours and when the girls left I had the feeling that it had been successful, but was curious to know whether it had actually made a difference or not. These girls had unpacked every issue that they had had with each other over the course of the last three years. I called the parents and informed them of what had taken place and let them know that I felt we were headed in the right direction.

I continued to check in with the three students over the next few days to monitor attitude. The response that I received from the girls was very positive. This was first evident by the smile on their faces and further validated by their words. The girls reported no problems. I brought the girls in after a period of six weeks and asked a few follow-up questions. One of the questions was, 'What do you think would have happened had we not had a restorative conference?' One girl said that she felt they would have kept right on fighting through high school. Another said that she had previously talked with her mom about transferring to a different school and that is probably what would have happened. The third girl stated that she probably would have been sent to the alternative school for fighting. I asked what was most important about having the conference.

The girls felt that the learning that had taken place was most important. They never knew how the other person felt and had assumptions that were unfounded. The girls also realized that how they had handled issues in the past were ineffective and only served to escalate the problem rather than de-escalating it. The girls learned that it was better to talk about it in a safe place where each could get the truth about what was really going on. My final question was whether or not they would recommend a restorative conference to a friend. Each felt the process was very useful and one girl brought a friend in the next week that was having similar issues.

As a principal, I could not have been more proud of the accomplishment of the restorative conference. It was very time consuming

and to be honest a little stressful. However, the results spoke for themselves. Three students with a history of making incident reports, signing stay-away agreements, being separated in the hallways and classrooms, and coming to school upset were now coming to school with smiles and did not return to the office for the rest of the year. Two years of ineffective practices versus three hours of one very effective practice seems like a victory for restorative conferences.

The impact of the restorative conference on Stella, Bianca, and Destiny is powerful. As I mentioned, all three students were interviewed six weeks after the conference about how it impacted their lives. Each was quick to say that the restorative conference had put an end to the fighting that had been taking place over the last two years. Each also said that participation in the conference lowered the stress felt at school and allowed them to focus on other things. Each girl also commented that they would recommend this practice to friends who were struggling with similar conflicts. Most importantly, each girl realized that there were areas in their own life that needed improvement and were able to take some ownership and responsibility for their role in the conflict that persisted for so long.

I received a follow-up phone call from the angry parent that started this process. She was very thankful for my help. She commented that she had her "happy girl" back. This one conference also impacted others indirectly. Teachers, fellow students, brothers and sisters at home, parents, and neighbors were all impacted by the negative situation of the girls

fighting. In the same way, all the above mentioned parties were also impacted by the resolution and peace of the conference. I am sure that there are naysayers regarding restorative practices, but you will not be able to convince these girls and their families that one conference did not have a lasting impact on their lives. It only makes me wonder how many other students are dealing with similar issues where the relationship could be restored and we could bring back the smiles that have disappeared both in the school, at home, and in the community."

Shifting the Conversation

Through the year, it became obvious to the restorative leaders that they were changed as leaders on campus in terms of the way they now think about situations. Mr. Hope summarized the conversations on a move from a traditional school to a restorative school.

"What I learned about restorative is that every incident does not have to result in a 'punitive' measure. We should be able to help the students resolve their issues and restore their confidence in themselves and the system in which they operate in on a daily basis. I do not want our students to be defined by their mistakes, but rather watch the miraculous growth they achieve by owning their mistakes and making better choices going forward."

Mrs. Justice claimed,

"If you can make that shift in your mind by stopping and asking yourself, 'How can I restore this?' Whatever this is. Then I think that is when you become a restorative leader."

Mr. Passion agreed,

"Restorative is a mindset and lifestyle. It has changed me as a school leader and as a person. Every time I feel that I am out of balance or have conflict with a relationship, I go to restorative to put that balance back in place. At school it does not matter if it is a student issue, teacher issue, parent issue, or community issue, my first instinct is how can I do a circle and repair this relationship."

As previously stated in this chapter, restorative practices look different depending on the needs at each campus. It is a slow process, but worthwhile. It takes a restorative leader who is willing to commit to seeing the school through the change cycle. Restorative systems are necessary within the school both for implementation and sustainability. Transcendence and involvement of the community is crucial for developing a restorative community. Perhaps most important, however, is to keep the stories alive, as they represent change in a system that once had only one ending. Stories put all participants on equal footing. There are no experts with stories. A child's experience with restorative is just as powerful as an adult's experience. Stories make space for us to have critical conversations that are difficult to begin. Stories connect us, much as the fibers of a quilt. As the fibers and stories are weaved together, they allow us to connect on multiple levels of complexity, while grounding us with the realities of life. These restorative stories are tools that give us permission to reimagine different endings

for ourselves, our schools, and our communities. In Figure 12, I visually represent the learning from my own experience and the synthesis of the data collected through the conversations and circle with my research partners. I feel that is sums up what a Restorative Culture of Care should look like. Chapter five further connects the data to theory and the literature. Chapter six provides closing discussion, implications, and suggestions for future research.

Figure 12: Restorative Culture of Care.

V. THEORY AND PRACTICE OF A RESTORATIVE CULTURE

> There are many ways in which student voice can have a positive impact on the educational challenges we face. When students believe their voices matter, they are more likely to be invested and engaged in their schools. When students believe teachers are listening to them, mutual trust and respect are likely to flourish. When students believe they are being heard and influencing decisions, schools become more relevant to students' lives and are more likely to be seen as serving their needs (p. 3).
>
> -Russell Quaglia and Michael Corso

Chapter five provides a link between the current review of literature and theory that supports the findings from the data collected and presented in chapter four. Common themes that were found include the stages for implementation, use of a common language, establishing a culture of care, allowing time for change to take effect, and the building of community through storytelling. Social constructivist theory and storytelling as method are confirmed as viable options for studying, making meaning, and informing restorative practices.

When deciding how to construct this chapter, I felt it important to link the original research questions with the findings and literature. Within each question and finding, there is support found through the research conducted and data collected. What results is a more thorough synthesis from theory to application. This chapter can be helpful when making sense of the study in regards to implementation.

Research Question #1- What levels of awareness, readiness, and competence are needed to prepare a school leader for implementation of a restorative system?

A school leader needs to be prepared prior to implementation of restorative systems.

Finding #1 - The degree and speed with which restorative practices are implemented at a campus is dependent on the readiness, consciousness, and commitment to Restorative Leadership. The terminology from the finding varies slightly when describing the components of a restorative leader that are needed in relation to how quickly and deeply restorative practices can be implemented. However, the research shows that true support for this statement comes from the analysis. By using the ecologies of learning as a framework for analysis, it was evident that the restorative leaders were able to move between ecologies as they grew in comfort with the concept and practicality of restorative practices on their campus. Restorative leaders had to start with understanding the concept and making sure it aligned with their core values and how to two interconnect with education. Consciousness or awareness relates to the needed shift in mindset between a punitive system and a restorative system. Finally, the readiness or commitment relates to an awareness, a vision, and an action plan for how to implement restorative systems.

Shift in mindset. This shift in mindset from more of an assertive model or punitive model that focuses on rules and adults being in charge to a culture of care or discipline with dignity model is supported in the literature as change in philosophy for education. Noddings (2005) proposed a culture of care that centered on developing character, critical thinking and caring for self and others. This model is supported through restorative practices. Accountability is part of character. With restorative practices, each person is asked to have accountability for their role in the situation and are tasked with how to make things right. Critical thinking comes with active listening and reflection in order to understand another's viewpoint. Finally, the trait of empathy is taught with

restorative practices when students are asked to reflect on who has been impacted and how they might have been impacted. The process gets students to not only think about themselves, but about others as well. When students are trying to make things right with others, they are typically apologizing or asking for forgiveness, which demonstrates a caring attitude.

Discipline with dignity is referenced by Mr. Hope, "It is about restoring a kid's confidence in themselves and giving them their dignity while we discipline them." This is supported by Curwin, Mendler, and Mendler (2018) in their book discipline with dignity where they explain that student behavior should be improved by building relationships as opposed to rewards and punishments.

> We realized that many troubled students would not accept simply doing as they were told and would be more likely to comply if they were included in the decisions that affect their lives. We advocate for involving them in developing school and classroom rules and consequences rather than imposing rewards and punishments upon them (p. 2).

Commitment to Action. Commitment is a key piece to action on the part of the restorative leader. "Commitment and accountability are forever paired, for they do not exist without each other. Accountability is the willingness to care for the well-being of the whole; commitment is the willingness to make a promise with no expectation in return" (Block, 2008, p. 71). Restorative leaders have to believe in the philosophy and system enough to feel that it is what is best for the campus and push forward with an action plan that is feasible and appropriate for the campus, with intentions of making improvements to expand in following years.

Research Question #2 - How does the climate and culture of an educational organization impact a school leader's ability to implement and sustain a restorative system?

The key to this question is the type of environment necessary for implementation and sustainability. Sullivan (2007) called for the creation of an environment that included student participation in policies. This can only occur with a positive and open climate and culture that is built on the fundamentals of restorative in regards to building and sustaining relationships and repairing and restoring those relationships when they are out of balance. This is also confirmed by several researchers (Braithwaite 2001; Hrynkow, 2010; Vaandering, 2012; Wood, 2014; Brown, 2015; and Ogilvie & Fuller, 2017).

I feel that the two actually work hand in hand. The implementation of restorative practices helps improve the climate and culture. However, it is only with a restorative climate and culture in place that restorative systems will be sustained. One of the keys to establishing and maintaining this culture is overcoming obstacles.

Finding #2 – Overcoming obstacles to implementation of RP requires a shift in mindset and strategic planning. The obstacles found in the study are consistent with barriers found in other studies (Morrison et. al., 2005; Varnham, 2005; Morrsion, 2007; McCluskey et al., 2008; Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009; Rasmussen, 2011). These common barriers included finding the time to implement restorative classes into the school day, resistance from the outside, resistance from within, and difficulty grasping the philosophy of restorative. My research found similar barriers with time and difficulty making the shift in mindset, along with the barrier of trust.

Building trust. Building trust is the key to building relationships. Cavanagh (2009) stressed that, "Relationships were the key to a successful school and a key motivator for students" (p. 71). By answering the questions of why restorative is needed, defining what restorative practices are, how restorative practices will be implemented, who works on implementation, and when these practices take place, barriers such as trust can be overcome.

<u>Finding #3</u> – Implementing restorative practices requires changing the vocabulary used, a commitment to implementing restorative systems, and the integration of circles as pedagogy. There were several components identified as part of this finding that speak to the type of climate and culture that must be developed in order for restorative practices to be not only implemented, but also sustained.

Changing the vocabulary. One important element for implementation is to change the vocabulary. Being mindful in word choice is powerful in regards to transformation. Mr. Passion noted, "language is connected to the mindset." His recommendation was to stop using words such as punishment and consequences and start using restorative words such as "responsibility, accountability, and ownership." Morrison et. al. (2005) supported the use of a common language when implementing restorative practices. There is transformative power within the language. Block (2008) stated that "All transformation is linguistic. A shift in speaking and listening is the essence of transformation. If we want a change in culture, the work is to change the conversation" (p. 15).

Circles as pedagogy. The integration of circles as pedagogy within the school is also listed as an action step for implementing restorative systems. Ruder (2010) identified that:

> Circles offer an alternative to contemporary meeting processes that often rely on hierarchy, win-lose positioning, and victim/rescuer approaches to relationships and problem solving. Circles bring people together in a way that creates trust, intimacy, goodwill, belonging, generosity, mutuality, and reciprocity. Circles create a sacred space that lifts barriers between people, opening fresh possibilities for connection, collaboration, and mutual understanding (p. 121).

Circles are effective for allowing individual voices and a venue for social constructivism to take place. According to the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence at the University of California, storytelling and circles fit the five criteria for effective pedagogy: 1) joint productive activity; 2) language development; 3) contextualization; 4) complex thinking; and 5) instructional conversation.

If pedagogy can be defined as the study of how knowledge and skills are exchange in the educational context, then circles fit as a pedagogical practice. "Conferencing or circles create a collective opportunity to reflect on the behavior and its consequences, seeking a resolution that repairs harm and reconnects marginalized stakeholders. At its best, the restorative approach transforms a student violation into an opportunity for learning" (Karp & Breslin, 2001, p. 268-269).

<u>Finding #4</u> – Sustainability of restorative practices requires opportunities for dialogue and practice, a focus on continuous improvement and evolvement of

restorative systems, a process for evaluating the impact on culture and climate, and being patient with the process of transformation. Implementation is important for restorative practices, but sustainability practices are the key to longevity. This means that systems of support must be installed for staff that need help making the shift to restorative and continuous improvement must be a focus.

Opportunities for practice. All three principals indicated that opportunities for practice were core to sustaining restorative practices. Opportunities to model are crucial for helping teachers understand how to use restorative practices. Kevin Curtis in *Restorative Discipline Practices* (Lang et. al., 2016). Recommended several strategies for implementation including: starting small, trust the process, create as many experiences for your staff as possible, do not force restorative, but present opportunities, model what it can look like, be strategic, make it a part of your fabric (share testimonies, share struggles, send out articles, have PD) circle with your staff, and conduct meetings in circles. When looking at his recommendations, he solidifies the research of modeling and sharing as often as possible in order to build trust and create buy-in.

Being Patient. It is also important to realize that implementing restorative systems takes time. While immediate results might be visible, it is important to realize that it takes time for processes and practices to become part of the culture of the school. Karp & Breshin (2001) emphasized that it takes one to three years, while Blood & Thorsborne (2005) indicated that depending on level of implementation, it is possible to see changes before three years, but it will take four to five years for full implementation and culture change.

As restorative leaders' and teachers' readiness increases, restorative systems will continue to improve and evolve. The process of continuous improvement can only occur when evaluation of current systems occurs and changes are made.

Incorporating Student Voice. One example of continuous improvement can be a focus on student voice. Learning is not a linear process. When new information is presented it is beneficial to have discussion. This discussion leads to connection of current ideas to new ideas. "Seeking to understand students' points of view is essential to constructivist education. The more we study the learning process, the more we understand how fundamental this principle is" (Brooks & Brooks, 1999, p. 60). Cavanagh (2009) underscored that students should be able to participate and engage in circles and restorative conversations by middle school.

<u>Finding #5</u> – The emergence of a <u>Restorative Community</u> is dependent on the leader and organization's effort to educate and include the community in restorative practices. Inclusion of the community is crucial for understanding. If the goal of the restorative leader is to truly extend restorative practices throughout all three ecologies, then the community must be invited into the process. "Leadership begins with the understanding that every gathering is an opportunity to deepen accountability and commitment through engagement" (Block, 2008, p. 87).

Inclusion of the community. Deal and Peterson (1999) discuss the need to involve community when reshaping the culture of the school:

> Building a cohesive school community means shaping a culture that reaches out and touches everyone: students, teachers, staff, administrators, parents, and community. Symbolic bonds need to connect across the school's perimeter. They

need to incorporate all constituents in a shared effort to both achieve results and to create an institution that produces widespread faith, hope, and confidence.

It is only through education and inclusion that we can expand the scope of restorative practices from the school to the community. Once parents understand and are included in the process, they take on an increased sense of ownership. Block (2008) maintained that "The social fabric of community is formed from an expanding shared sense of belonging" (p. 9). Just as restorative practices seek to build, repair and restore healthy relationships in the school, restorative leaders should also have this same goal with the school community.

Research Question #3 - How can storytelling be employed as action, method and pedagogy for restorative leadership?

Storytelling was identified in chapter four as both method and as action. McKnight & Block, (2010) detailed the power and necessity of storytelling to build community:

> A culture is built through stories we tell and what we choose to talk about – our narrative. A primary function of family, neighborhood, or community is to create its story. Telling the story gives body to the collective. Communities become competent when people tell stories that link to their gifts (p. 95).

<u>Finding #6</u> – Storytelling and <u>Restorative Dialogue</u> can be used as method for understanding what Restorative Practices are and the impact it can have in making sustainable change in the lives of individuals, organizations, and communities.

Stories are the process that I use to move from literature and theory to application and

practice. With the sharing of stories and the process of social constructivism, readers are able to understand the concept of restorative and how it applied in schools.

Use of Social Constructivism

Throughout the study, social constructivism is viewed through the lens of storytelling and conversation. With each interaction, learning is taking place. The beauty of restorative practices is that it centers on everyone having a voice and active listening. These conditions are perfect for social constructivism to flourish. Circles and restorative conferences seem to fit this description best. When looking at the stories that were shared from teachers or principals, they all have one thing in common, learning. In each story, the participants learned something about themselves that they might not have previously seen in themselves as well as something new about the person they had an issue with. The same goes for the students in group circles. New understanding through restorative dialogue perfectly defines social constructivism.

Restorative Practices as a Lifestyle

When reflecting on the impact that restorative practices had on myself and my research partners, I feel that using the ecologies of knowing model was a great way to understand impact. While restorative practices might start as a personal philosophy, as interactions occur with other people in other environments, there is a natural tendency for the restorative philosophy to filter to others. In the case of someone that is in a leadership role, that ability to spread a philosophy is ripe with opportunity. The process in which it is distributed to others is validated through social constructivism. As a restorative leader has purposeful conversations with others, whether they be students, teachers, or parents, the process of meaning making and understanding takes root. When there are

opportunities for experiential learning, that shared understanding of the process starts to sprout. As these people tell others about restorative practices, understanding blooms and spreads.

VI. THE IMPLICATIONS AND CLOSING CIRCLE TO RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

> Leadership is about creating opportunities for conversation. Talk may be cheap, but genuine dialogue is priceless. Your leadership voice shows itself in every conversation, interaction, and thought exchange, both verbal and written. It takes free-spirited conversation to generate smart ideas, influence others, and creatively solve problems. The quality of the conversations you facilitate shapes the quality of your interpersonal relationships, and ultimately, the organizational culture. It all happens through conversation (p. 8).
>
> -Dr. Ada Gonzalez

This chapter presents a summary of the study conducted and important conclusions drawn from the data, reflection, and experiences. I now discuss implications, overcoming barriers to implementation, suggestions for restorative practices including a proposed implementation plan, and recommendations for future research, culminated with a call to action.

Implications

The implications that arise from this study were not necessarily surprising for someone that has been studying restorative practices for some time now. However, I feel that they are of great benefit for someone that is new to the restorative journey and is wanting to wrap their mind around not only the process of restorative and how it can be applied in the school setting, but also as a method for implementation and maintenance of a restorative system. I also feel this study is important for the work that shows the benefit of reframing contexts through the ecologies of self, organization, and community.

The role of a Restorative Leader. A school leader must accept restorative practices as aligning with their core values in order to successfully implement RP in the

school setting. The only skills that are needed to begin RP are an open mind and the ability to commit to action. Level two for a restorative leader is an action plan that explains the philosophy of RP to both staff and students, facilitates consistent modeling of restorative practices, and allows for continuous opportunities for learning more about RP. Finally, an incorporation of restorative practices into the current school practices, or abandonment of systems that do not align is necessary for full implementation and sustainability. This includes making RP a part of school policy and procedures, thus incorporating the lifeworld into the systemsworld.

Relationships are central to Restorative Practices. Restorative practices are a central part of building relationships on a school campus, not only between students, but between faculty/staff/administrators and students and between all adults in the organization. Dr. Armour defines restorative practices as a relational approach to building school climate (Lang et. al., 2016). The climate and culture is directly impacted by the acceptance of restorative practices on campus as a means of not only building community, but repairing and restoring relationships when they are damaged. This acceptance and practice then leads to a revision of punitive policies and inclusion of restorative practices as "the way we do things" thus leading to the sustainability of restorative systems. It all begins and ends with relationships.

Storytelling employed as action, method and pedagogy. Storytelling is a critical component for school leaders as they make the shift in mindset from a traditionally punitive system to a restorative system. This shift in mindset can occur through social constructivism as principals share and hear stories and engage in personal testimony of the changes created through the implementation and use of restorative

practices in schools. Storytelling can also be used as a method for data collection in both qualitative and quantitative studies. Finally, storytelling and restorative practices can be used as pedagogy for teaching restorative systems.

Overcoming Barriers to Implementation

Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel (2009) tell us that to overcome resistance, three ingredients are necessary: 1) a perceived need for change; 2) a vision for what is possible; and 3) a practical approach for change. These three ingredients sum up what is needed for buy-in, which is necessary for successful implementation. Buy-in is dependent on three similar factors: trust established, a shift in mindset over control and punishment, and the use of time.

Trust. Restorative practices must become part of the school culture. In order for this to happen, it must align with values held by both school leaders and teachers. A succinct vision that includes proper training and time built in for conversations, practice, and reflection must be incorporated into the first year of implementation. Trust is huge. Not only trust that restorative is an effective approach, but trust that it is okay to be vulnerable in front of your peers and students. Being in a circle and being vulnerable to the judgment of peers can be uncomfortable. However, it is in this discomfort that comfort can be found as others share their opinions or experiences. Trust is also needed if control is to be transferred from adult authority in the classroom to student voice and shared control. There must also be trust that a lack of a punitive consequences does not mean that a student is getting off easy or not learning a lesson. There must be trust that accountability and making things right will have a positive impact on the individuals

involved, which leads to mutual understanding and decreased anxiety and a skillset to prevent future issues from occurring.

Shift in mindset. Perhaps the hardest obstacle to overcome is a shift in mindset. It will not be difficult for students to make this shift, it will be very difficult for adults. For many of us, all we are familiar with is a punitive system for education and society. It is difficult for teachers, administrators, and even parents to accept this new concept. It is imperative that restorative leaders strategize about how to convince other adults to give restorative practices an opportunity to succeed. As acknowledged in chapter four, it is critical to start with the "why?" It is important to share data and statistics, literature findings, and most importantly, stories of transformation. There is no greater persuasive tactic than storytelling. It is also important to give adults opportunities to experience restorative practices. Once witness to the power of a restorative practice such as a circle or restorative conference, it is more likely that a shift in mindset occurs.

Use of time. Finally, there must be acceptance that it takes time for the shift to occur. Circles and conferences are time consuming. Time will need to be shifted as social and emotional learning becomes a priority over academics. As more and more time and attention is devoted to school safety, it is imperative that schools account for more than perimeter defenses and adults with guns. School shootings are on the rise and the commonality centers on lack of belonging, ability to express frustration in a productive manner, and a lack of responsiveness by schools and the community to identify, understand, and help individuals in need. The time spent on restorative practices is time well spent to ensure both students and teachers are being supported emotionally so that they are able to meet the demands and pressure that they face each day. Time is also

needed in terms of support for teachers regarding training and conferencing as well as those that facilitate the conferences (typically an administrator unless a restorative facilitator is on campus). Finally, there must also be a sense of patience as the school becomes comfortable with this shift in practices. Just as it takes time to establish trust, it also takes time to establish systems and time to allow for proper training. Schools should expect a minimum of three years for processes to start becoming part of the system.

Suggestions for the Field of Restorative Practices

Proposal to change the vocabulary associated with restorative practices.

Through the research, it becomes apparent that a change in vocabulary associated with restorative practices is needed. This includes new language and a common terminology. Restorative practices should be the common language used when referring to the education field. As emphasized through the findings, restorative justice does not have a place in the education field and is more appropriate in the criminal justice field. The term restorative discipline should be abandoned. The term discipline itself should focus more on accountability than consequences and should be measured by the ability to make the situation right and not have a repeat occurrence. A common language is often the foundation for a cohesive community. It is important for a campus to consider this common language and terminology when discussing expectations, practices, and responses. Below are five terms for consideration as new language and common terminology when studying the field of restorative practices in education.

Restorative leadership. I would like to propose the term restorative leadership as a means to establish a pipeline within the school community. This is nothing more than the teaching of restorative practices to other stakeholders: students, parents, faculty, staff,

and community members. Usually it is taught through experience, but can also be shared through observation and reading of restorative literature. Most importantly, restorative leadership incorporates storytelling as pedagogy. It encourages, supports, and nourishes our beliefs and purpose in restorative practices as a way to improve our school community. It also incorporates the belief that we must move from being simple storytellers to story makers. In other words, we create experiences so that others can tell their story. This creation of story makers is a marker of restorative leadership.

Restorative organization. An organization can be using restorative practices, but that does not make them a restorative organization. A restorative organization has restorative engrained in the culture. It is a way of doing things regarding building, repairing, and restoring relationships. This does not have to be an educational institution, it could be any organization as long as a relational approach using restorative methods is valued, taught to employees and students, and refined and sustained through systemic improvements.

Restorative systems. Restorative systems are systems developed to sustain restorative practices within the organization. Systems are best established through written procedures that everyone within the organization accepts as policy. It is also a guide for how to implement or solve issues that arise within the organization. In reference to restorative, systems should be put into place regarding the implementation of restorative, the training of staff members, the training of students, and procedures to follow when things do not go as expected. The documentation of efforts improves efficiency, effectiveness, and clarity for all that interact with that organization as to how things are done.

Restorative dialogue. Restorative dialogue is a concept that warrants further research as it utilizes the transformative power of language. There is much discussion about conversation and dialogue. Restorative dialogue could be considered purposeful conversation. This means that the conversation was used to promote either community building or maintenance, or used to repair or restore a relationship. Armour (2013) asserted that restorative dialogue should contain four key features: suspending opinion, listening to self and others, seeing the whole person, and speaking with an authentic voice.

Restorative community. A restorative community is a community that is not only educated on and knowledgeable of restorative practices, but are also supportive and participate in the process. It is the responsibility of the restorative organization to educate the community and help them to understand what restorative practices are. Once educated, it is the responsibility of the organization to invite the community into the organization as partners in the process. Finally, once a community is equipped with restorative practices, they are able to utilize restorative outside the initial organization and help spread its use to other organizations.

New metrics for viewing students. When looking at the success of schools, the commonly used metrics of grades, attendance, standardized test scores, and discipline referrals should be replaced by individual stories. When a school understands an individual's story they are better able to support that individual's needs. This suggestion was validated by Mrs. Justice when she expressed,

"it is much deeper than the number of referrals. Stories are data."

We see student faces each day as they walk through the building. If schools were a video game, there might be an icon to click on above the character that gives all the information needed. Unfortunately, we do not have that information readily available. That does not mean that we cannot access it though. We access this information through soliciting student voice and engagement in dialogue. With trust comes disclosure. When students feel comfortable enough to disclose what is happening in their lives, we have a much better indication of how we might be able to help, should the need arise.

The role of teachers in restorative practices. There is very little mention of the role or commitment of teachers in restorative practices. There are recommendations for training teachers in the various practices and there are descriptions of those practices, but often teachers are seen as barriers or obstacles to the implementation process. Much attention is given to the principal and the importance of a clear vision or goals when it comes to the implementation process or plan. I think it is important to note that without the teachers implementing restorative practices, it is not possible to change the culture. Administrators are far outnumbered in regards to the number of students and amount of time they interact with students on campus. While they might be effective at dealing with Tier 2 or Tier 3 students, the percentage of students in this category are few compared to Tier 1, which are impacted each and every day by classroom teachers. Cavanagh (2009) recommended five strategies for commitment from teachers within restorative systems. These include: 1) building relationships with students; 2) changing pedagogy to incorporate student voice; 3) coaching and supporting colleagues; 4) engaging in restorative conversations; and 5) using circles.

This does not seem unreasonable and fits with the recommendations that are being made. I think that training a team of teachers on these five commitments so that they can lead other teachers might be a good way to combat resistance, along with the explanations given in finding two from chapter four.

Proposed Implementation Plan

Many educators that are intrigued by the idea and philosophy of restorative practices get stuck when it comes to a plan for implementation on their campus. While restorative can work in isolation or on islands within the organization, sustainability requires that restorative because a system and part of the culture of that organization. If not, restorative practices in place will walk out the door with the person that is leaving and a void will be left, rather than the next person filling the void that was left and maintaining momentum. The following implementation plan is based on the research conducted, personal experience, review of existing implementation plans, and conversations with other restorative leaders and can also be found as steps in Appendix M.

Step 1: Get principal buy-in. As was found in chapter four, the first step, and the most important person to be trained is the campus principal. If the principal is not committed to the philosophy of restorative practices, then the implementation process will fail. It is recommended that the principal attend an administrator training so that they are able to see the value in both sides of the restorative systems from a proactive and responsive lens.

Step 2: Train other school leaders. The second step in the process is to identify leaders in the school and create a support team. It is impossible for the principal alone to

make a drastic shift in culture and mindset without the help of a team on campus that is just as dedicated. Ideally, a restorative facilitator is part of this team to help with this transformation, but many districts do not have the financial means for this position to exist. Your team might consist of assistant principals, counselors, department chairs, team leaders, or just individuals who are influential on campus and open-minded to change initiatives. It is suggested that the team attend training together so that everyone has heard the same information, had a similar experience, and plans for implementation can be developed. The benefit of attending training together is so the team can use social constructivist theory to process the new information together for meaning making.

Step 3: Have a clear vision for what restorative practices will look like on campus. It is important to be realistic about the desired goals with implementing restorative practices. Restorative Leaders should have discussions with the support team or change leaders who will help with implementation. Be precise on what that the vision looks like, and the end goals as to what levels of saturation there will be in three to five years. This is important when working with staff to help them understand the "why?" and then explaining the "how?" in regards to how the process will be implemented.

Step 4: Develop a timeline and plan for implementation. This is perhaps the most crucial step in the implementation plan. Knowing the capability of the staff and what steps to take, along with the anticipated timeframe, accelerates or hinders your long-range plan for implementation. Keep in mind that effective implementation of a major initiative takes 3-5 years. With that in mind, it is usually better to start small with where there is buy-in and the most impact can be felt. There are different ways to look at implementation. Some leaders might choose to focus only on the philosophy and

affective language aspects of restorative. Some leaders might choose to focus only on relationship building of adults on campus through circles, while others might choose to only focus on the relationship of students through circles. Still other leaders might choose to start with the restorative or responsive side of restorative systems and focus on accountability and making things right where there has been harm. These leaders might choose to start with using circles or conferences to repair and restore relationships. Finally, some leaders might choose a small team to implement restorative practices, while others might decide to go with a school-wide approach. Regardless of which approach is taken, action is the key. Be sure as a leader to include regular checks for understanding and personnel support in your plan. Leaders should also consider what opportunities for data collection can be included in the timeline. Data collections can range from pure quantitative numbers of discipline data, to survey data, to collection of stories from teachers, students, and community members. The only wrong approach is to not have a plan and to not take any action when there is knowledge of the power of restorative practices.

Step 5: Train appropriate staff members according to the timeline and plan. This might vary from school to school. As mentioned above, some schools choose to start with their administrative team only and focus on the restorative aspects of conferencing after an incident has occurred. Others might choose to start by training a select few that can serve as pilots for implementation. Some schools might choose to start with a particular grade level and then expand each year. Finally, some schools might choose to train everyone on campus. Regardless of the approach, making sure that the appropriate

members receive the appropriate training is important for the successful of implementation of restorative practices for that year.

Step 6: Regularly share stories of celebration and struggle. The purpose of storytelling is to learn through the experiences of others, both in what works and what is not working. This allows others to feel comfortable with the process and not be discouraged if a circle or conference did not go as planned. This should be done as often as possible, but a minimum of twice a semester. I also encourage restorative leaders to model the circle process during regular faculty meetings. The use of celebrations and commitments solidify restorative systems in the organization.

Step 7: Have resources available for those that need support. Some teachers and administrators will need support. This support can look very different. It might come in the form of observing someone else leading a circle or conference. It might be support in the form of someone joining to help facilitate a circle or conference. Support can also come in the form of helpful resources, whether it be a list of commonly used questions, a template for conferences, or a listing of articles, books, or websites that give more details about restorative practices. Finally, one-on-one discussions for understanding can be important in leading to productive outcomes. In keeping with the ecologies, it is important to start with self. As we do with struggling students it is important to scaffold support by meeting people where they are at in the process and differentiate support where needed.

Step 8: Collect data and plan for improvements. It is important to collect data of what is working and what is not working. Without the data, it is hard to provide support in needed areas or make changes if needed. Data can come in the form of a

survey or note-taking from conversations with individuals on campus. Ideally it is a combination of both with the quantitative data given as an at-a-glance overview of where the staff is in regards to feelings, implementation, and impact. The qualitative data serve as more in-depth knowledge of specific circumstances and practices. This also helps to know what type of support might be required. Document the journey of transformation through timelines, pictures, written stories, audio conversations, or video.

Step 9: Involve other stakeholders in the process. Restorative leadership requires passing this knowledge and practice on to others. This most certainly includes students that will be part of the process, but also parents. As mentioned in chapter four, the community has to be educated and invited to participate in restorative practices. This can be through direct teaching, involvement in circles or conferences, or simply through the sharing of specific stories. As identified in previous chapters, the only way to establish a restorative community is by educating the community and inviting them to participate in restorative practices. Stories of your experiences and what transformations have taken place in the school help with the transition from merely being a restorative organization to a restorative community. The goal is to move from being a story teller to a creator of story makers.

Recommendations for Future Research

It is impossible nor desirable to cover all perspectives in a single research study. This is my first attempt at restorative research. I hope to contribute to the literature again in the future. There are several areas that I came across in the literature that interest me as focuses for future research and should be considered by other researchers in the field as well.

Longitudinal quantitative data. Research on restorative implementation is critical in order for the practice to be sustained and expanded. As restorative practices spreads across the nation in educational institutions it is imperative that research continue to be collected on the effectiveness of implementation. The education field is constantly bombarded with new initiatives and best practices. Longitudinal studies can look at the effectiveness of restorative practices and narrow to specific practices which carry maximum impact. This can include referral data, but should focus more on the accountability assignment for students. In other words, are restorative methods being used to limit the number of students assigned punitive consequences that require students to be out of their classroom and community, such as ISS, OSS, and assignment to the DAEP. Referral data alone are subjective based on the criteria for writing a referral. This can vary depending on the school, district, and/or school/district leaders. Recidivism rates should also be highlighted as a key component of restorative because not only does restorative repair and restore relationships to decrease potential repeat occurrences with the same individuals, it also focuses on teaching strategies for increasing individual capacity for resolving conflict.

As important as it is to have qualitative research and make sure that stories are shared, it is also important to start having quantitative studies done as well. Unfortunately, as impactful as stories are to building emotional connection, at the end of the day decision makers look at quantitative data. This not only includes central office members such as the superintendent and chief financial officer, but also school board members and state legislators. These individuals are important for two obvious reasons: policy formation and funding. Without the support of these individuals, restorative

practices will not be allowed to thrive and will be dependent on the establishment of restorative leadership at each individual campus.

The role of the restorative leader. In analyzing the data, the theme of restorative leader kept surfacing. I think this would be an intriguing area for future research. There is much research surrounding the recruitment, development, and retention of school leaders. School districts are investing in ideas such as sustainability through social capital to fill a growing need for qualified school leaders. The thinking is that by training those within the organization, not only is depth created for sustainability, but loyalty is established as well. It would be interesting to see what districts are doing with restorative leaders. How do they recruit, develop, and retain these leaders? What methods do restorative leaders use to impact the organization and community through their investment and shared experiences with others? Researchers should not only document the journey of implementation, but also the journey of sustainability that these restorative leaders forge. This includes the attitudes and ideals required, vision and planning strategies, practices tried and embedded, training provided, communication to educate and invite stakeholders, and policy revisions made. If transformation of school and community culture begins with the restorative leader, then this research could be influential for future change efforts.

Story weaving as research method. Storytelling is one example of a research method used to both collect and report data. I prefer the term story weaving as it is a delicate process of layering multiple stories within theory and practice. Much like a loom, multiple stories (accounts and perceptions) of an event run concurrent with each other. Ultimately, these stories culminate in a final product that has shape, dimension, and

color. The final product has an emotional connection for those that interact with it both directly and indirectly. Therefore, going back to the story of Stella, Bianca, and Destiny which was presented in chapter four, it is easy to see how the units of analysis could take shape as the story unfolds.

At the micro-level, the students are the unit of analysis. Stella, Bianca, and Destiny each had a unique perspective of what was happening at the self-level. They each have a different story about what was happening and feelings about the series of events and the people involved. At the organizational level, school policies and the culture of the staff can be analyzed. In this instance, the prior actions of the school regarding stay-away agreements, the responses of administrators, counselors, and teachers could be analyzed. The lack of conflict resolution and community building availability is also a systems issue at the organization level. At the community level, there is the interaction of the parent. Her concerns and feelings both pre- and post- intervention. What were the concerns or perceptions from the parents of the other students? Another part of community is how other students and teachers were impacted by both the tension and calmness of the three students during stages of conflict and during stages of peace after the restorative conference. As stories come to life through the research conducted, the units for analysis could follow the three levels within the Ecologies of Knowing model.

Story weaving comes into play when considering all of these units of analysis, plus others from this situation. Consider others that might have been impacted by the girls fighting: teachers, friends, siblings, parents, and neighbors. Just as they might have been impacted negatively before the conference, they might have similarly been impacted in a positive way after the conference. The power of the conference and the resulting

impact cannot be simply measured from one unit of analysis for accurate depiction. I think that this could be a complete picture of a single event from multiple angles that shows the dynamic relationship between ecologies and participants.

Critical race theory. Another focus for future research should be from the critical lens. Although there are elements of critical pedagogy in my literature review and references in my findings, it was not a focus area. That does not detract from the reality that power dynamics are in play in educational institutions and cannot be overlooked as to the role that they play when looking at policy and practice. It is my hope that with the implementation of restorative practices and the data collected, school leaders, as well as legislators, will revisit and revise policies and practices that are contradictory to restorative practices and marginalize the voice of minority populations of both students and teachers in schools.

Conclusion and a Call for Action

My goal in completing this dissertation is to tell the powerful story of transformation of a punitive administrator to a restorative leader. Restorative practices are not just something done with students or a way to respond to an event at school. Restorative has become a way of life and has allowed me to see connections in all other realms of society. My mission in implementing restorative at my school was to create sustainable change, not only for myself, but for my school, and my community. I do this because I truly care about the building, repairing, and restoring of healthy relationships.

Often in education, we adopt an outside-in model. Meaning that we take practices from outside the education field and adapt them for the school. Restorative practices is no different in that it originated in the juvenile justice and social work fields. It is my hope

though, that through teaching restorative practices to students and teachers, we can have an inside-out movement to impact the organization and community. I feel that rather than having society impact the school and dictate conversations and consequences, restorative is an opportunity to create a new understanding. It is a skillset and philosophy of care that can be passed on through restorative leadership. It is my goal that students and teachers that have been impacted by restorative carry it with them and impact others in their lives and community through the power of storytelling and story making until a change can be felt in the community at-large.

I close this dissertation with one of my favorite quotes from James Baldwin. It was used to close every faculty meeting by my mentor Dr. Deb Brennan and I continue to carry on that tradition today as principal of my own school. It is an important reminder of why we work in education and why each day truly makes a difference in the lives of students.

"For these are all our children, and we will profit by or pay for what they become."

APPENDIX SECTION

Appendix A

Sample School Discipline Matrix

Type of Incident	Reason Code	Action Code
1. Tardies	Excessive Tardies	Follow Tardy Policy
2. Failure to attend D-Hall	Failure to attend D-Hall	Lunch Detention (example: # of missed scheduled detentions + 1) or Saturday Detention (half day)
3. Bus referral	Bus Violation	First Offense: warning or Lunch Detention Second Offense: up to 10 days removal from bus Third Offense: minimum 10 day removal from bus
4. Inappropriate Language : "slipping"	Profanity/Inappropriate Language	First Offense: 2-5 days Lunch detention Second Offense: 5 days Lunch Detention or half Saturday Detention Third Offense: Full Saturday or 1 day ISS
5. Inappropriate Language: Used in anger or to demean another person	Profanity/Inappropriate Language Threats/Intimidation	1-3 Days of ISS or 1 day Out-of- School Suspension
6. Inappropriate Language: Used toward a teacher or other staff member	Profanity/Inappropriate Language Threats/Intimidation	1-3 days Out-of-School Suspension
7. Off-Task Behavior in Classroom (talking, out of seat, etc.)	Disrupting School Environment/Educational Process	First Offense: 2-5 days Lunch Detention Second Offense: 3-5 days ISS for the period during which the offense occurred Third Offense: Full Saturday or 1-3 days ISS
8. Non-Compliance with School Staff Directives	Refusal to Comply	First Offense: 2-5 days Lunch Detention

		Second Offense: 3-5 days ISS for the period during which the offense occurred Third Offense: Full Saturday or 1-3 days ISS **If severe, Out-of-School Suspension or possible RROC placement**
9. Physical playing	Horseplay	.5-3 days ISS
10. Pushing another student out of anger/frustration/ intimidation	Aggressive Action or Threats/Intimidation	1-3 days Out-of-School Suspension (will depend on level of injury)
11. Fighting	Aggressive Action	2-3 days Out-of-School Suspension and/or SRO involvement and/or RROC placement (will depend on level of injury)
12. Skipping Class	Leaving School Grounds/Unexcused Absence from Class	First Offense: 2-10 days Lunch Detention Second Offense: Full Saturday Detention Third Offense: 1-3 days ISS **Main purpose to make-up time missed in instruction**
13. Computer Violation	Violation of Computer Acceptable Use Policy	First Offense: 2 week removal of ALL computer privileges Second Offense: Permanent removal of ALL computer privileges
14. (A)Stealing (B) Property Damage	(A)Theft/Possession/Sale of another's property (B) Damage to Property of Others	Restitution and 1-3 days ISS and/or SRO involvement ** If severe, possible Out-of-School Suspension and RROC placement**
15. Bullying and Harassment **Administrator will determine whether issue fits here or in Aggressive Action based on nature and extent of problem**	Bullying/Harassment	First Offense: 2-10 days Lunch Detention Second Offense: 1-3 days ISS Third Offense: 1-3 days Out-of-School Suspension **If severe and pervasive, possible RROC placement**

With all discipline situations, there are many perspectives. Administrators will give all students their due process rights and will use their discretion in assigning consequences based upon results of the investigation.

Appendix B

Informal Questions for Participant Selection

1. Have you ever attended training for restorative practices?
2. Who sponsored the training and how long ago was it?
3. What are your likes and/or dislikes about restorative practices?
4. What have you personally implemented regarding restorative practices at your school?
5. How do you see restorative practices expanding at your campus or in your personal life?

Appendix C

Glossary of Terms

These terms contain operational definitions used frequently throughout the study. Knowing these terms is essential to seeing the transition from a traditional system to a restorative system.

Ecologies of Knowing – a dynamic framework referenced by Figure 1. Three embedded concentric circles with the layers of self, organization, and community.

Restorative Justice – a theory in the justice system that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior. It allows for the voice of both offender and victim to be heard and seeks to reintegrate the offender back into the community with support.

Exclusionary Discipline – any discipline which results in the removal of a student from the classroom.

Punitive Discipline – any discipline viewed as punishment or retribution for breaking the student code of conduct.

Restorative Discipline – defined from the Institute for Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue as a relational approach to building school climate and addressing student behavior that fosters belonging over exclusion, social engagement over control, and meaningful accountability over punishment.

Restorative Practices – an approach that uses a range of methods and strategies to resolve conflict, hold members accountable, and build community.

Restorative Dialogue – communication with a focus on a safe space to speak honestly and listen to others with the intent to understand and repair harm that arises from conflict

Storytelling – the social and cultural act of sharing narratives with the intent to entertain, enlighten, or educate.

Systems World – a communication structure composed of organizational systems often steeped in power dynamics, rules, and hierarchical leadership.

Life World – a communication structure composed of cultural systems for family and communities that is based on values and customs.

Restorative Systems – a communication structure resting within organizations that allows for restorative practices and community building to occur.

Restorative Conferences – a type of restorative practice that centers on restoring the relationship between two people in conflict.

Circles – a native custom of gathering in a circle where power is shared, for the purpose of building trust and understanding, resolving conflict, and committing to action.

Community – a group of individuals that have built relationships, thus interacting and making connections based on shared common interests or goals.

Appendix D

Preliminary Analysis Framework – Story Loom

	Research Question 1	Research Question 2	Research Question 3	Literature Connection	Reflection/Stories
Conversation #1					
Conversation # 2					
Circle of Partners # 3					

Appendix E

Email Survey for Participant Selection

Recruitment Email Message

To:

From: researcher

BCC: email addresses of potential research partners in the district

Subject: Research Participation Invitation: A Principal's Journey in Implementing Restorative Practices

This email message is an approved request for participation in research that has been approved or declared exempt by the Texas State Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The purpose of this project is to tell a principal's story of implementing restorative practices at their campus. The anticipated value of this project will be create excitement about implementation of restorative practices through the stories that are shared. A second value would be the creation of action items necessary for implementation and sustainability for principals who would like to join the restorative movement in education. I am looking specifically for principals that have received some type of training with restorative practices and are at any stage of implementation on your campus. I would like to keep the research specific to our district and I cannot think of better people to partner with for my research. If you agree to participate and are selected for the research project, a confidentiality statement will be signed and pseudonyms will be used for your name and school. The big question you might be asking is how much time will be required? I will do a formal interview with you that will last roughly one hour. A follow-up interview will take place within 3-4 weeks and will last for another

hour. Finally, principals selected will meet together to share their journey and talk about ways to support each other and expand the movement to the rest of the district. This focus group will last anywhere between 1-3 hours. So basically you do not have to do anything to prepare, it is just sharing your story. Participation is voluntary and you are welcome to cease participating at any time. The added incentive for participation is that you get to spend extra time with me.

To participate in this research or ask questions about this research please contact me by phone or by email.

This project was approved by the Texas State IRB. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB chair or to the IRB administrator.

Appendix F

Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT

Original Study Title: Living Restorative Practices: A principal's journey in educational transformation

Principal Investigator: **Co-Investigator/Faculty Advisor:**

This consent form will give you the information you will need to understand why this research study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. It will also describe what you will need to do to participate as well as any known risks, inconveniences or discomforts that you may have while participating. We encourage you to ask questions at any time. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and it will be a record of your agreement to participate. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

- **PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND**

You are invited to participate in a research study to learn more about your journey as a principal implementing restorative practices. The information gathered will be used to create excitement about implementation of restorative practices through the stories that are shared. A second value would be the creation of action items necessary for implementation and sustainability for principals who would like to join the restorative movement in education. This will be accomplished through two individual interviews, and a focus group discussion. You are being asked to participate because you are a principal in the district, have attended a previous training on restorative practices, and are currently implementing restorative practices on your campus.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you agree to be in this study, you will participate in the following:

- An individual interview about your journey into restorative practices.
- A follow-up individual interview about your implementation efforts.
- Attending a focus group with the rest of the participants.

We will set up a time for you to meet one of the investigators at a mutually agreed upon location. You will first complete list process and duration (i.e the survey and then participate in the interview for a total of 45 minutes of participation.)

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in two interviews: before Nov 17 and a second interview before Jan. 31. Each interview will last

approximately one hour. During the interviews, you will be asked to describe your personal journey with restorative practices and influences from your journey on the organizational and community levels. You will also be asked how RP has changed or challenged your leadership style and/or skills. The interview will be audio-recorded and the researcher may take notes as well.

I will invite all 3 members of the study to meet together to discuss their journey with restorative practices. The discussion topics include (interest in RP, training, successes, obstacles, processes for implementation and sustainability, support for others, expansion opportunities). A member of the research team will help guide the discussion. To protect the privacy of focus group members, all transcripts will be coded with pseudonyms and we ask that you not discuss what is discussed in the focus group with anyone else. The focus group will last between one and three hours and we will audiotape the discussion to make sure that it is recorded accurately

- **DURATION OF RESEARCH PARTICIPATION:**

The research will last from November 2017 through June 2018.

- **RISKS/DISCOMFORTS**

There are no physical risks associated with this study. In the unlikely event that some of the interview questions make you uncomfortable or upset, you are always free to decline to answer or to stop your participation at any time.

BENEFITS/ALTERNATIVES

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information that you provide will possibly create new understanding and motivation to continue RP in your school. The information gathered might also help other school administrators to learn more about restorative practices and hopefully successfully implement and sustain RP on their campus.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private and confidential. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The members of the research team and the Texas State University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) may access the data. The ORC monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

Your name will not be used in any written reports or publications which result from this research. Data will be kept for three years (per federal regulations) after the study is completed and then destroyed.

- **PAYMENT/COMPENSATION**

You will not be paid for your participation in this study.

- **PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY**

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw from it at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

- **QUESTIONS**

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this study, you may contact the Principal Investigator.

This project was approved by the Texas State. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB Chair or to the IRB Regulatory.

DOCUMENTATION OF CONSENT

I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement and possible risks have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand I can withdraw at any time.

Printed Name of Study Participant	**Signature** of Study Participant Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date

Appendix G

Draft Interview Guide 1

1. Tell me about your background growing up. What are your core beliefs and what influenced you to recognize these beliefs as your core?
2. Tell me about your entry into education.
3. Talk about your journey into school leadership.
4. How were you introduced to the concept of restorative practices?
5. Where or how did you receive training?
6. What were your thoughts on the training?
7. How has it impacted your thoughts or practices as a school leader?
8. In what ways would you say you have lived restorative practices?

Appendix H

Draft Interview Guide 2

1. Tell me about the first time you tried a restorative practice in your school.
2. What was the impact to you and/or those you were in conversation with?
3. How have you grown in your personal understanding of restorative practices?
4. How have you implemented or expanded restorative practices on your campus?
5. Tell me about some successes that you have had implementing restorative practices.
6. Tell me about some struggles that you have had implementing restorative practices.
7. How has it impacted your school culture and climate?
8. What changes have you seen in your students and faculty that have experienced restorative practices?
9. What support or training is offered to your staff?
10. How has restorative practices been communicated to your students and families?
11. How do you sustain your implementation efforts?
12. How do you negotiate the tension between policy and procedures with practice?

Appendix I

Circle of Research Partners Format Guide

1. You have been able to read the research partners responses to Conversation #2. What were you able to learn from others through your reading?
2. How are you able to use restorative practices at the personal, organizational, and community ecologies in your life?
3. What levels of awareness, readiness, and competence are needed to prepare a school leader for implementation of a restorative system?
4. How would you define the term restorative leadership and do you feel that you are a restorative leader?
5. How does the climate, culture, and political nature of an educational organization impact a school leader's ability to implement and sustain a restorative system?
6. How do you share your new language or practices with stakeholders?
7. What further training would you like to receive for restorative practices?
8. What commitment can you make to expanding restorative practices in your daily life?
9. What commitment can you make to expanding restorative practices within the district and beyond for public education reform?
10. How can storytelling be employed as action, method and pedagogy for restorative leadership?

Appendix J

Respect Agreement between Research Partners

The below Respect Agreement will be constructed between the researcher and selected partners. This respect agreement will ensure boundaries, expectations, and commitments from all parties.

The basic quadrants to be filled in are as follows:

Expectations of respect from Partners to Researcher	Expectations of respect from Researcher to Partners
Expectations of respect between Research Partners	Values and Commitment to the Work

Appendix K

Table of Findings

	Sources of Evidence (Research Partners, Observations, Literature)				
Ecologies of Knowing	Mrs. Justice	Mr. Hope	Mr. Passion	Observations	Literature
Self	Finding #1 - The degree and speed with which restorative practices are implemented at a campus is dependent on the readiness, consciousness, and commitment to Restorative Leadership.				
Organization/Systems	Finding #2 – Overcoming obstacles to implementation of restorative practices requires a shift in mindset and strategic planning.				
	Finding #3 – Implementing restorative practices requires changing the vocabulary used, a commitment to implementing restorative systems, and the integration of circles as pedagogy.				
	Finding #4 – Sustainability of restorative practices requires opportunities for dialogue and practice, a focus on continuous improvement and evolvement of Restorative Systems, a process for evaluating the impact on culture and climate, and being patient with the process of transformation.				
Community	Finding #5 – The emergence of a Restorative Community is dependent on the leader and organization's effort to educate and include the community in restorative practices.				
	Finding #6 – Storytelling and Restorative Dialogue can be used as method for understanding what restorative practices are and the impact it can have in making sustainable change in the lives of individuals, organizations, and communities.				

Appendix L

Sample Respect Agreement

Respect Agreement Template

How do students show respect to each other?	How does the teacher show respect to the students?
How do students show respect to the teacher?	How do we all respect the classroom?
How do we show respect to guests/subs in our classroom?	How do we respect technology in our classroom?

Signatures:

Appendix M

Suggested Implementation Plan

Step 1	Get principal buy-in.
Step 2	Train other school leaders.
Step 3	Have a clear vision for what Restorative Practices will look like on campus.
Step 4	Develop a timeline and plan for implementation.
Step 5	Train appropriate staff members according to the timeline and plan.
Step 6	Regularly share stories of celebration and struggle.
Step 7	Have resources available for those that need support.
Step 8	Collect data and plan for improvements.
Step 9	Involve other stakeholders in the process.

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