Evaluation of the Use of Restorative Practices to Reduce School Truancy and Suspensions

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Executive Summary

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Prepared by: The Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University

Prepared for: State Court of Administrative Office, Michigan Supreme Court

Program Overview

The Michigan Supreme Court State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) provides grant funding to support the provision of restorative practices (RP) in schools as part of the Community Dispute Resolution Program (CDRP). The school-based RP model is used to address disciplinary issues and increase the amount of time students spend in the classroom through reduced truancy and suspensions, with the long-term hope that the program will help prevent youth from becoming involved with the criminal justice system. The CDRP funds mediation centers that develop a model of RP services, and provide the necessary expertise and staff to implement RP services in schools. The centers provide each school with a full- or part-time staff member, who works directly with students and school staff by conducting on-site mediations or "circles" for individuals who are referred to the program. Through the RP services, participants learn how to resolve the conflict and work together to create a written agreement indicating how the situation will be resolved and avoided in the future.

Study Purposes and Methods

The primary purpose of this study is to evaluate the impact of restorative practices (RP) on truancy and suspensions for high school students. Other purposes include assessing stakeholder satisfaction, service use, and implementation. Impact of RP services was examined through the comparison of attendance and disciplinary outcome measures between students in schools with established RP programs and a statistically-matched group of students from schools with new RP programs. Students' experiences with RP were assessed through surveys of stakeholders (student-participants and parents/guardians). Use and program-reported outcomes were assessed through an analysis of data from the state case management system for RP services. Implementation was assessed though school site visits (including teacher and staff focus groups) and interviews with CDRP center staff, as well as a literature review that examined research on RP effectiveness. All data collection and analysis involved six schools in three different regions (rural, suburban, urban), each served by a different CDRP center.

Results

Implementation

All of the participating centers are using established approaches (circles, mediations) to provide RP services at their associated schools.

Our review of existing literature finds established support for most RP practices with a variety of settings and outcomes (Appendix A).

A limitation of the study is that one school in one region had not implemented a full range of RP services prior to the study, despite being identified as a school that had existing RP services prior to the study, removing the possibility of finding a school-level impact.

Reaction

Students report having a positive experience with RP services.

90%+ of students felt they were treated fairly, had a chance to express themselves, and were satisfied with the agreement generated during RP.

83% of students said they would use the RP services again.

75%+ of students reported no reoccurrence of conflict during the follow-up period and that they were on better terms with the other party involved in the conflict.

Parents are not familiar with RP; the few who do know about RP are often skeptical.

59% of parents were not aware their child's school offered RP services.

13% of parents reported that their child had experienced RP—a very small sample.

48% of parents with children who experienced RP were satisfied with the outcome. Parent comments included concerns about effectiveness and fairness.

Reach

Referrals were relatively flat with a small increase over the two-year period.
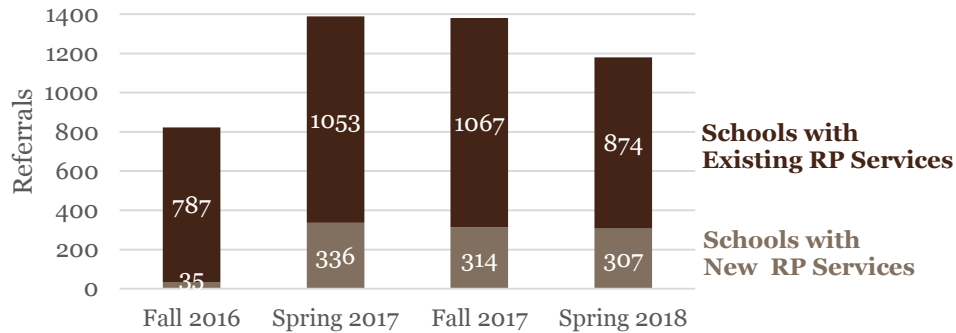
Figure E-1. Case Referrals for Schools with Existing and New RP Services

Schools with established RP services prior to the study had more referrals overall than schools that began implementing RP as part of the grant. Schools with new RP services began using the services quickly during the second semester of the first year of the study; however, their referral rates were mostly flat during the 2017-18 school year.

RP is used most frequently with younger students.
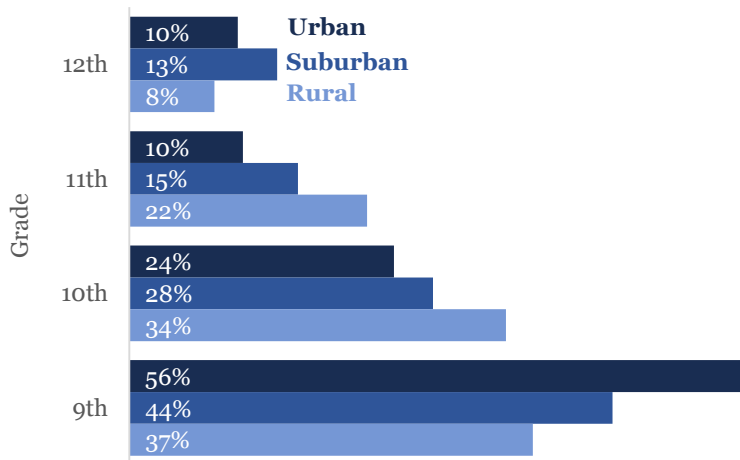
Figure E-2. Portion of Grade Using RP by Region (**Urban**, **Suburban**, and **Rural**)

There are some similarities across regions in terms of who tends to use RP services. In all schools and environments, RP referrals and use are most common among younger students in the lower grades.

Black or multiracial students are overrepresented in RP referrals.
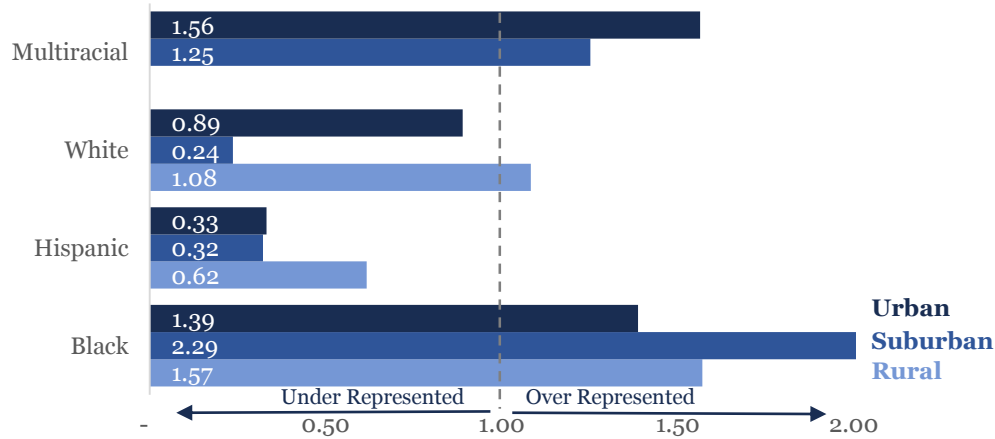
Figure E-3. Ratio of RP Users to Enrollment by Racial and Ethnic Categories by Region (**Urban**, **Suburban**, and **Rural**)

The ratio of RP users to the school population by demographic group shows that Black and multiracial students receive a disproportionate number of RP referrals. This disparity is likely a reflection of the widely-observed historical finding that African American and other non-White students are more likely to be suspended or face other disciplinary measures.[1]

RP use by sex is different in each regional environment.
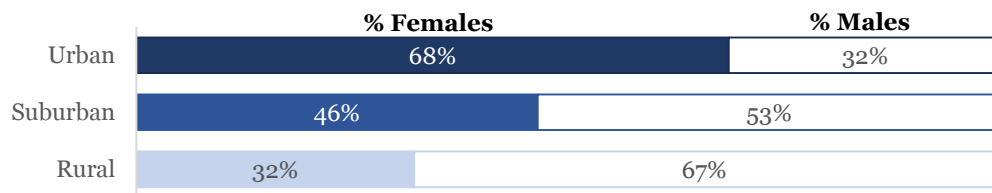
Figure E-4. RP Use by Region and Sex

Males constitute most RP referrals in the rural region. Females are the dominant RP-referrals in the urban environment.

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[1] Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Paterson, 2002 & US Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014

RP is most commonly used for moderate incidents related to academic/policy violations, verbal arguments, truancy, and fighting.

Incident Type	Percentage
Policy/academic violation	32%
Verbal argument	26%
Truancy	15%
Fighting	11%
Gossip/Rumor	7%
Threat/Harass	4%
Taunt/Tease	3%
Social media incident	2%
Other	1%
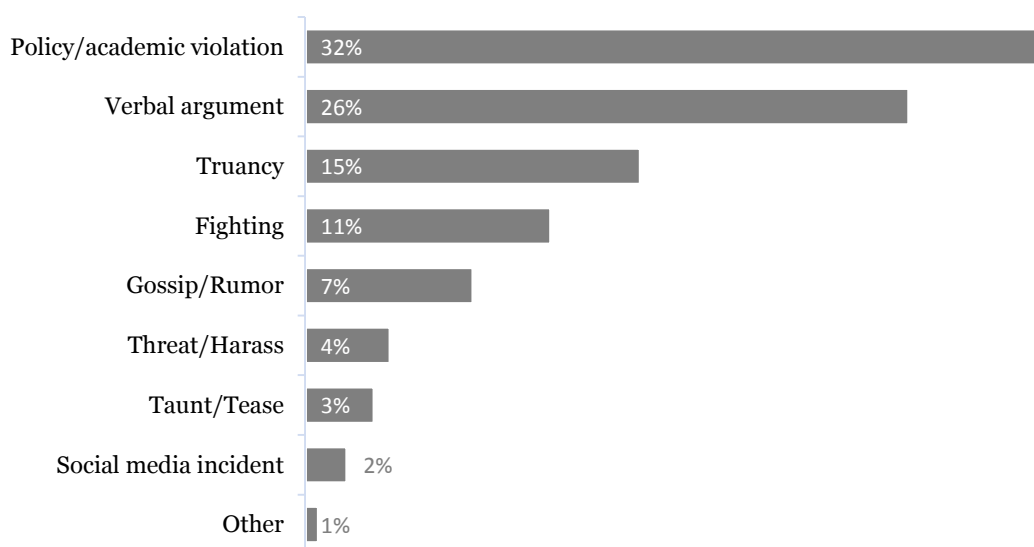
Figure E-5. Primary Incident Type for RP Referrals

RP is seldom used for incidents involving social media, despite some anecdotal reports that conflict driven by social media is a substantial problem.

Impact

RP had a positive impact on disciplinary outcomes and attendance in some settings.

In the urban schools, RP was associated with a reduction in suspension days, absent days, and tardy periods.

0.24 fewer days of suspension per-student school-wide (Year 1 average, urban region); the equivalent of approximately 340 fewer suspension-days at the school

2.4 fewer days of absences per student (Year 1 average, urban region)

16 fewer reported tardy periods per student (Year 1 average, urban region)

The impact of RP in the suburban and rural regions was not as clear.

Out-of-School suspensions are the most common disciplinary consequence avoided through RP.
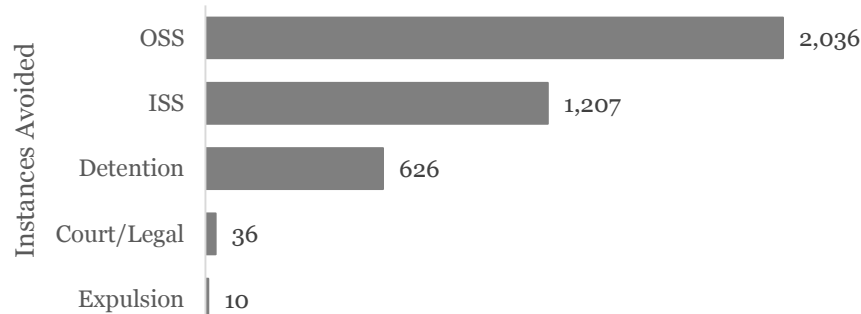
ISS = in-school suspension OSS = out-of-school suspension

Figure E-6. Discipline Avoided by Type and Number of Incidents 2016-2018

Over the two-year period across all six schools 3,915 instances of formal disciplinary actions were avoided (e.g., expulsion, court/legal actions, suspension, or detention) because of RP services. During the two-year study, there were 55 instances where the length of out-of-school suspension was reduced by an average of 5.1 fewer days.

Most agreements (8 out of 10) created during RP were being upheld.

Figure E-7. Status of RP Agreements at Follow-Up

The most frequently upheld agreements were related to physical fights. Agreements formed during RP services related to truancy or incidents of taunting and harassment were the least likely to be upheld.

Introduction

The Evaluation Center conducted a process and outcome evaluation of the restorative practices (RP) supported in Michigan schools by the Community Dispute Resolution Program (CDRP) for the Michigan Supreme Court State Court Administrative Office (SCAO).

Program Summary

The SCAO provides grant funding to support the provision of restorative practices (RP) as part of the CDRP. The original focus of the legislation that created the CDRP was to promote the use of mediation and other RP as an alternative to court for resolving some dispute cases. Services were provided to willing participants for no-cost through CDRP centers—nonprofit organizations employing mediators and other staff experienced with RP—with a goal of reducing court caseloads and achieving better outcomes.

More recently, the program was expanded to provide support for RP in schools. Under the school-based model, RP is used to address disciplinary issues and reduce the use of punishments that exclude youth from the classroom. The SCAO's stated goals[2] for RP in the schools is to reduce truancy and suspension, while hopefully preventing youth from becoming involved with the criminal justice system over the long-run.

In the public-school setting SCAO provides select grant funding to support services in some schools, while responsibility for the direct provision of services is ultimately lies with the CDRP centers and partner schools. The CDRP centers each develop and operate their own model of RP services, and provide the necessary expertise and staff in the schools where they operate. Typically, CDRP centers provide each school with a full- or part-time staff member, who works directly with students and staff in the building by conducting mediations or "circles" for individuals who are referred to the program by school teachers and staff. The RP services result in agreements between the parties involved in the conflict or situation on how to resolve the problem and avoid it in the future, with specific actions or requirements for each individual. For example, two students might agree not to contact each other on social media in the future and to make amends with each other and the class that they disrupted.

The role of teachers and staff at the school is typically to engage with the program by completing training and referring students to RP services. In some instances, teachers or staff may also participate in mediations or circles if they were more directly involved in the situation. Schools do not receive direct funding for RP and do not usually offer RP services directly, but instead support and collaborate with the staff from the centers. Ultimately, schools usually hope to benefit from RP through reduced overall conflict and fewer student days lost to suspension or other discipline.

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[2] Based on objectives published in the original evaluation RFP: Michigan Supreme Court. (2016). *An Evaluation of the Use of Restorative Practices to Reduce School Truancy and Suspensions: Request for Proposals*. Lansing, MI: State Court Administrative Office.

In some cases, schools themselves have funded CDRP centers to provide services if they did not have funding from SCAO or other outside sources.

Evaluation Summary

This section provides a brief summary of the evaluation purpose, scope, and methods. More details on the evaluation background (see Appendix A) and specifics of the research and analysis methodologies used in the evaluation (see Appendix B) can be found in the Appendices.

Background

The primary purpose of this evaluation was to determine the impact of the CDRP and the use of restorative practice services in schools at select pilot sites across Michigan. The scope of the evaluation included all aspects of school-based RP, including how services are implemented in participating schools, the experiences and views of program stakeholders (centers, schools, teachers, parents, and students), and the impact on short- and long-term outcomes. Although the evaluation is intended to provide a general assessment of RP services delivered in Michigan schools, it was not possible to include all school buildings that have received funding in the past; instead, a sample of participants were recruited for the study, with requirements in place to help ensure that the group would be generally representative of the different types of high school environments throughout the state.

The subject of the study were centers and schools selected via an open and competitive process, with potential participants solicited via RPD during August 2016. RP service delivery, data collection, and assessment took place during a period of approximately two-years, which captured activities during both the 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic periods. This evaluation represents the first study to assess the impact of RP services that are school-based and supported by the SCAO.

The evaluation was conducted externally and independently of the SCAO by The Evaluation Center (EC) at Western Michigan University, which worked closely with the three CDRP centers and six schools that participated in the study. Funding for the evaluation study was provided by the SCAO, and included the cost of the evaluation, grant awards to the three CDRP centers that provided RP services at the schools, and small stipends to each school to cover direct costs associated with data collection and staff interactions with the evaluation team (provided through their contracts with the centers).

Methods

Multiple approaches were used within the larger evaluation project to assess different aspects of the program and to address four broad evaluation questions that are each associated with aspects of the success of RP service delivery. Table 1 summarizes the main evaluation components, key evaluation questions, goals and outcomes, data sources, and general analysis methodologies used in the study. In each instance, the evaluation has attempted to incorporate the most rigorous methodological approach that is reasonably possible, given the cost and operational constraints of the study.

Table 1. Evaluation Components, Outcome Measures, and Data Sources

Evaluation Component	Evaluation Questions	Goal or Outcome Measure	Data Source	Analysis Type/ Purpose
Process	Implementation: Did schools provide PR services in a consistent and appropriate manner?	Consistent deployment of RP services	School stakeholder questionnaire or interviews	Descriptive/Non-comparative (i.e., feedback for SCAO and schools) for program improvement
	Reaction: How did stakeholders react to the program?	Student satisfaction	Student questionnaire	
		Parent satisfaction	Parent questionnaire	
		Awareness		
Process and Outcome	Reach: What was the reach of the program?	Referrals and use of services	State RP database[3]	Descriptive referrals and utilization of services
		Demographics of RP users		
Outcome	Impact: To what extent did the program impact student outcomes?	Disciplinary outcomes (suspensions, detentions)	State RP database School records	Descriptive Quantitative, comparative analysis using a non-random statistically-matched design
		Attendance/Engagement Outcomes (absences, tardy)		
		Status of Agreements at Follow-Up	State RP database	Descriptive

[3] The State RP database is a general phrased used to reference the MADTrac© software application.

Sample: Selection of Participating Schools

The process of selecting schools to participate in the study was intended to create groups that would provide the conditions of a natural experiment, while also being generally representative of the different types of school environments found throughout the state. Working with MI-SCAO staff, a list of requirements and general RFP was provided to dispute resolution centers with a goal of selecting 3-4 pairs of schools that meet the following minimum requirements:

- Two school buildings serving at least grades 9-12 must be involved

- One school building must have established RP services

- The other school building must NOT have offered services during the past two years and be willing to add RP services during the study period

- Both buildings should have similar student population demographics and serve similar communities

    - Free & reduced lunch rates within 10%

    - Enrollment sizes are within +/-15%

    - Offer RP to the same grades

    - Be demographically similar

- Schools leadership must support participation and be willing to participate in an advisory group and allow access to teachers and staff involved with RP

- Schools must be willing and able to provide de-identified student data

Ultimately, three dispute resolution centers providing services to two schools (six total) were selected for the study sample. Each pair of schools is located in a different geographic environment, which corresponds with a different cultural, socioeconomic, and political environment found within the state. For the purposes of this study, we refer to these regions as follows:

- Rural – These schools serve students located in small, non-metropolitan counties located outside the typical commuting distance of major job centers. Both have relatively small and homogenous student populations.

- Suburban – This pair of schools is located in a suburban county outside of Michigan's largest metropolitan area. The locations might be described as "inner-ring" or early-generation suburbs, and both serve large and diverse student populations.

- Urban – These schools both serve the core urban population of a mid-sized city. Poverty and other academic risk factors are higher in these schools.

The relationship between the SCAO, the CDRP centers, and the schools in the study is illustrated in Figure 1.
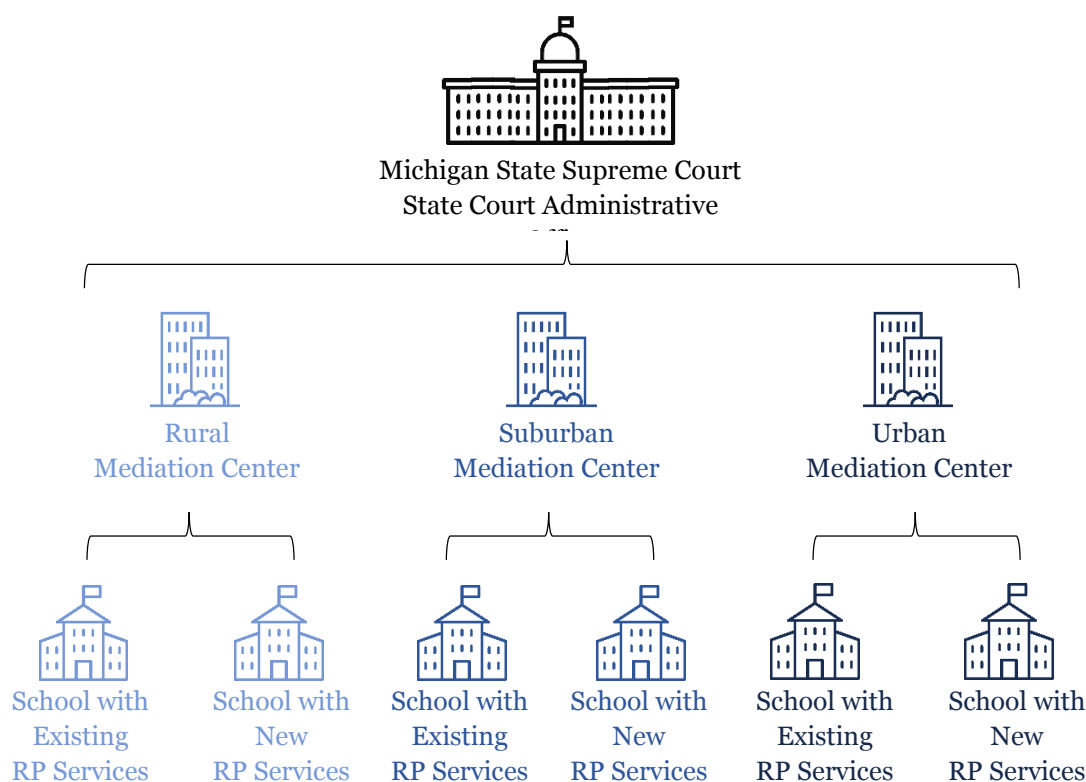
Figure 1. Relationship of Entities in Study

A table summarizing the size and demographic traits of the schools used in this study is provided in Appendix D. Note that some information has been altered to protect the identity of the communities in the study.

Limitations

Like all evaluations, the assessment design and process were constrained by several limitations, which are acknowledged below. These limitations do not invalidate the study findings but can provide context regarding the strength of evidence.

Overall

- Results are based on a sample of school environments where RP services are delivered. It was not possible to involve all schools that currently have RP services, or all centers that provide RP services, in the study. However, the study sample is intended to be representative of a range of Michigan school environments.

- In the rural region, it was determined after the evaluation had started that the school with pre-existing services did not actually operate a full range of RP services prior to the evaluation—only a more limited set of mediations that focused on truancy issues. Therefore, outcome differences in this region cannot be clearly attributed to the impact of

established RP services. Both regions essentially started offering disciplinary RP on a similar timeline.

School Data

- All schools in the study were asked to provide the same individual level student data; however, the availability of each requested variable differed somewhat across schools. For example, some schools provided data on a semester basis, while others provided data on an academic year basis.
- Measurement of some demographic variables (e.g., race and ethnicity) and outcomes (e.g., attendance) vary across participating schools. For example, some schools record more or fewer categories of student race and ethnicity. The attendance variable is reported differently across schools; some simply reported the number of full days absent for each student, while others provided detail on the number of courses missed during the day, which was then used to calculate an average of days missed.
- Some minor data variables used for the matching process were not tracked by all schools: homelessness and students for whom English was a second or non-primary language.

Case Management Database

- The MADTrac© case management database system records all instances of students participating in RP. However, it may exclude instances where individuals receive informal services or other benefits provided by the CDRP centers at the schools.

Satisfaction Surveys

- Measurement of stakeholder satisfaction outcomes are based on self-reported data derived from surveys.

- One school (in the suburban region) did not properly distribute the parent and guardian survey instrument; therefore, the results presented for that survey do not reflect the full potential sample of respondents.

- There were not a sufficient number of responses from parents who participated in RP services with their child to include information from this survey in the final report.

Evaluation Results

Implementation: Did Schools Provide RP Services in a Consistent and Appropriate Manner?

The centers are providing the schools with established, mainstream approaches to RP; however, some details in how schools promote RP, train staff, and refer students vary and may impact implementation.

Overview

- All of the participating centers and associated schools are using established approaches (circles, mediations) to provide RP services.

- The centers control RP service implementation, which helps maintain consistency.

- Details regarding how and when students are referred to RP varied across schools, which likely impacts implementation.

- In the rural region, it was determined that the school with existing RP services did not actually operate a full range of RP services prior to the grant—only a limited set of medications that focused on truancy issues, which negatively impacted the validity of the impact analysis (see the "Limitations" and "Impact" sections for further discussion).

Findings

Site Visit Methods

In order to directly understand the implementation of RP at each site, the evaluation team visited both schools in each region during spring of 2017. Evaluation activities conducted during these visits included meeting and interviewing the directors of each center that provides RP services; conducting focus groups with teachers and school staff who are directly or indirectly involved with RP; and meeting with the RP staff from the centers who provide or supervise the provision of RP services in the schools. To include those whose schedules prevented attendance at the meetings, questionnaires were distributed to teachers who did not participate in the focus groups in order to offer a wider opportunity for those who could not attend to share their views on the new or existing RP services at the school. Finally, as part of the visit we asked RP staff to share stories about RP use and successes, which are summarized in Appendix F.

Program Characteristics

Table 2 summarizes the main program and implementation characteristics for each of the schools, organized by region and status as a "new" or "existing" program school. With one exception, the two schools within each region use the same RP approach. Access to RP occurs through referrals, which in most schools are made by administrative staff and teachers. Less frequently, police or security officers, mental health workers, and other students can make referrals. Training on how RP works and on how to make referrals was universally recognized as being needed; however, at the time of the site visits only two schools had actively provided training, while the others had plans for future trainings.

Table 2. Summary of RP Implementation Characteristics by Region and School

Region	Urban		Suburban		Rural	
Status of RP Services at School	**Existing**	**New**	**Existing**	**New**	**Existing**	**New**
RP Service Type	Circles / Conferences		Mediation; *Peer Mediation*	Mediation	Mediation	
Sources of Referrals	Admin referrals	Admin referrals	Admin referrals	Admin referrals	Admin referrals	Admin referrals
	Teacher referrals	Teacher referrals	Teacher referrals	Teacher referrals		Teacher referrals
	Student referrals	Police referrals	Security referrals	All in-school-suspensions can get referral		Minimal self-referrals
	Mental health service referrals	Student referrals	Self-referrals			
RP Training for Staff (as of site visit)	Annual teacher training	Planned for future	Teacher and security staff training	Planned as part of prof development	Asst. Principal was trained; planned for teachers	Planned for upcoming prof develop

Challenges and Suggestions

During the site visits, staff and teachers were also asked about challenges that potentially impact the school's implementation and use of RP. The responses ranged from broad issues related to education and discipline, to specific things that needed to be done within their program or building. The following list summarizes the themes that arose during these discussions. In order to preserve the confidentiality of the individuals who provided these comments within their own school environments, the region and school type (new or existing program) are not listed.

- **Training.** Teachers and administrators widely agreed that they all needed to better understand the RP services, as well as when and why students should be referred.

- **Integration of RP into the existing school structure and resources.** At some schools, discussion of integration was around basic resources, like setting up a better room for RP. In other contexts, teachers and administrators wanted more clarity on the roles of various staff and their responsibility for student discipline.

- **Follow-up.** Several comments focused on improving follow-up with students after RP, including better processes for making sure they keep their agreements, as well as the idea of holding special RP sessions for students who have had reoccurring problems during the year.

- **Expansion of service offerings and coverage.** Several participants indicated a desire for more RP staff; most schools are only staffed part-time by staff who conduct circles or mediations. Others mentioned that expanding RP to parties beyond teens would be beneficial: RP in elementary schools to introduce the concept earlier, and services for adult community members, to address conflict that spills over or affects conflicts within the school.

Reaction: How Did Stakeholders React to the Program?

Most students were satisfied with their RP experience and thought it would solve the problem for good. Few parents know about RP; those who do are satisfied with the services but also skeptical about their effectiveness.

Overview

- Most students reacted positively to the program and indicated that it was helpful and that they would use the services again.

- Most parents (59%) are not aware of RP services in the schools.

- Almost two-thirds (64%) of parents were satisfied with the RP services but less than half (48%) reported being satisfied with the outcome of the RP.

- Parents with children who had experience with RP services note changes in their child and felt that they followed agreements; however, they were also skeptical that RP would resolve the conflict.

Findings

Student Questionnaire

A total of 859 students who participated in restorative programming completed a questionnaire about their experience and were asked to provide suggestions for improvement. Basic demographic questions were also asked to determine whether perceptions varied across program types or individual characteristics. Based on the data provided from the case management system, we estimate that 51% of unique student-participants completed a questionnaire.[4]

Student Reaction

Figure 2 summarizes the responses collected from all students who participated in RP. A large majority of RP participants responded "yes" to all of the questions, which indicates satisfaction with the program and/or a positive, self-reported, program outcome. The strongest affirmative responses were to the questions "I had a chance to say what I needed to say" (98%) and "I was treated fairly" (96%).

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[4] Based on 859 student survey responses and an estimate of 1,675 non-duplicate student IDs listed in the RP service cases. It is not possible to confirm the exact number of surveys actually delivered by staff at each school.

The lowest rates of affirmative responses occurred with the questions "a person who was harmed received a sincere apology" (66%) and "the conflict has not occurred since RP" (75%). Although not as strong as the responses to other items, these questions were still affirmed by strong majorities of student survey respondents.

The reason why only two-thirds of students felt a sincere apology was given is not certain. Although apologies are a common aspect of RP agreements, an apology may not be part of the agreement in all situations.[5] Alternately, it may be that participants did not feel that the apology they received or gave was sincere. The lower portion of students who affirmed that the conflict had not reoccurred indicates that RP services are not always effective at permanently resolving conflict.

The majority of students are satisfied with the RP services.

Item	%
I had a chance to say what I needed to say	97%
I was treated fairly	94%
Everyone helped make the agreement	91%
I know I can resolve problems peacefully	91%
I felt others listened to me	90%
I am satisfied with the agreement	90%
I will handle conflict differently than before	89%
I know an adult at school to go to	89%
I know how the conflict made others feel	89%
I can better communicate when conflict happens	88%
Everyone is following the agreement	87%
Everyone took responsibility for their part	86%
I better understand the other person's side of the story	86%
I would participate again	83%
I think the agreement will solve the problem for good	82%
The plan repaired the harm done	80%
I am on better terms with the people who were involved	78%
The conflict has not occurred since RP	75%
The person harmed received a sincere apology	66%

Figure 2. Affirmative Student Responses Across All Regions

[5] Stinchcomb, J., Bazemore, G., & Riestenberg, N. (2006). Beyond zero tolerance. *Youth Violence & Juvenile Justice, 4*(2), 123–147.

To assess whether or not individual traits or program characteristics had an impact on participant reactions, the questionnaire responses were also examined by region and by demographic groupings; however, no meaningful differences stand out. When examined by region, there were some notable differences in participant responses: specifically, the portion of affirmative responses was lower on many questions for participants from the rural region—suggesting there is room for improvement in services provided in the rural region. Figure 3 summarizes those questions where the responses were different by +/- 5% points and statistically significant.[6]

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[6] Based on a standard of $p < 0.05$ applied to an ANOVA analysis of the proportional scores across regions.

The number of students that indicated affirmative responses was significantly different across the regions.

Everyone helped make the agreement
95% 90% 80%

I know an adult at school to go to
95% 86% 80%

I am satisfied with the agreement
94% 89% 78%

I know how the conflict made others feel
94% 86% 82%

I felt others listened to me
92% 90% 81%

I would participate again
92% 79% 62%

I will handle conflict differently now
92% 90% 72%

I can better communicate when conflict happens
92% 88% 77%

Everyone took responsibility for their part
92% 84% 77%

The plan repaired the harm for the wrong done
87% 76% 62%

I think the agreement will solve the problem
85% 82% 66%

I am on better terms with those involved
84% 74% 76%

The conflict has not occurred since
83% 71% 61%

The person received a sincere apology
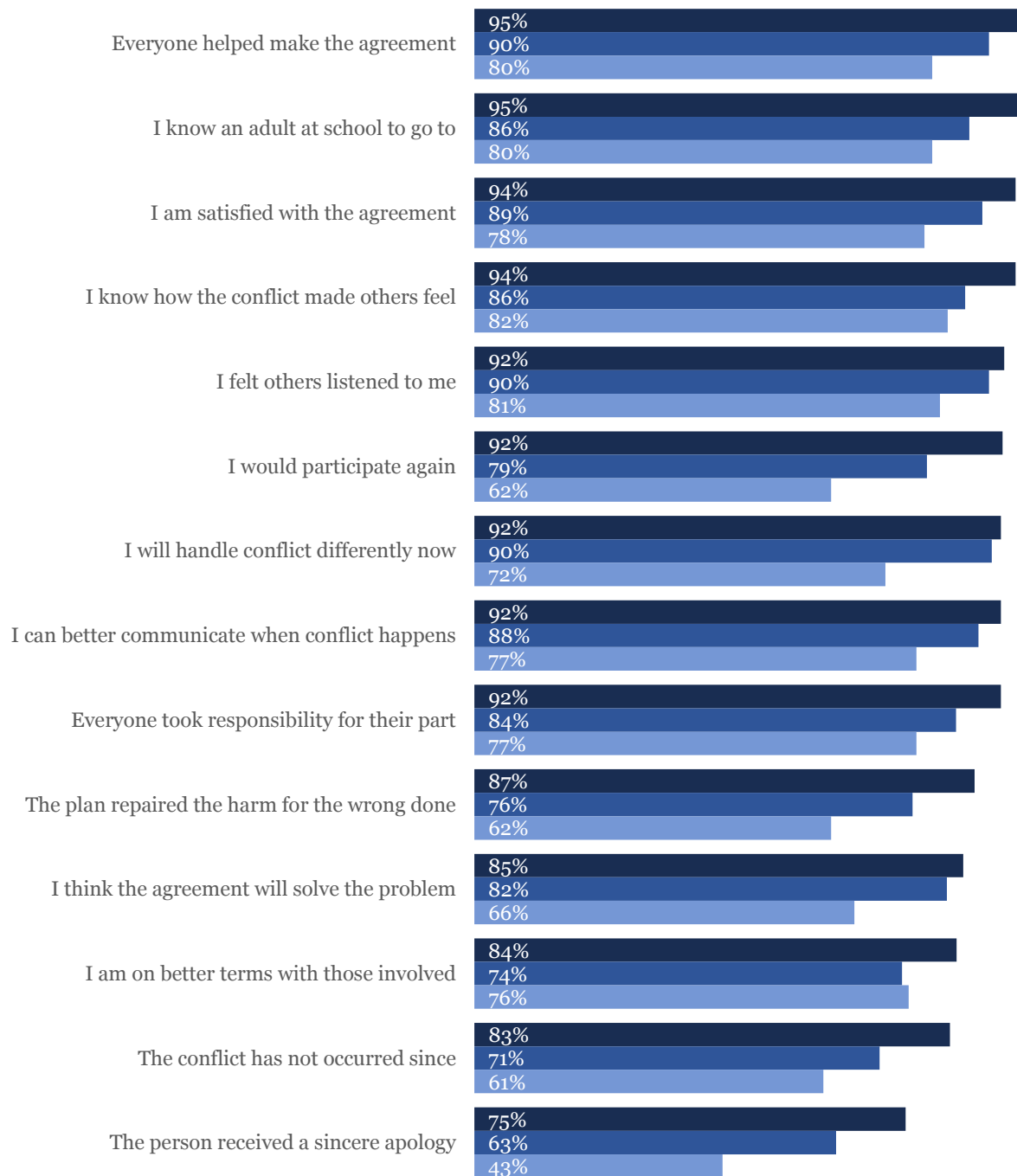75% 63% 43%

Figure 3. Affirmative Student Responses by Region (**Urban**, **Suburban**, and **Rural**)

The majority of students, about 60 percent, who completed the questionnaire did not provide qualitative comments on their experience or what might make the RP services better. Among those who did provide a response, most were short and simple: "I don't know" (or "IDK") and

variants of "it is fine as is" were the most common. However, a few students did provide more in-depth suggestions. Common suggestions referenced the facilitation of RP and participants of RP, a list of the most common themes that emerged are described below.

Suggestions for Facilitation of RP

- More Comfortable Environment: Commonly mentioned suggestions focused on creating a more comfortable environment for students. Examples include "provide snacks," using a "bigger room" or "better room," having "comfortable chairs", and "air or fans in the room."

- More Time to Talk: Students wanted more time to talk during the sessions, both with the facilitator and with one another.

- Facilitation and Mediation Skills: Some students believed that mediators needed to improve their skills. Students specifically suggested that staff should talk more as part of the RP process.

- Involve Everyone in RP: Several students suggested that the RP would work better if everyone involved in the conflict participated in the RP services.

Suggestions for Participants

- Respect Other Participants: Some students expressed concerns that the discussions were not always respectful. Students sited participants talking over one another as a sign of disrespect and emphasized the importance of listening to one another and making eye contact.

- Maintaining Agreements: Respondents noted that RP only helps if participants follow through on their agreements. For example, one student complained that "after every circle people break the contract and nothing happens to them like they say."

Parent Questionnaire

215 parents provided insight on their awareness and/or their perception of RP services via an online questionnaire. Only 13 percent of parents (n = 27) indicated that their child participated in RP services. Given such a small sample size these results should be interpreted with extreme caution, since they are less likely to be representative of all parents with children who have been through RP. The questionnaire can be viewed in Appendix C.

Parent Reaction

Most of the parents who responded to the survey (59% or n = 127) were not aware of any RP services offered by their child's school, and only a small portion of parents (13% or n = 27) indicated that their child had participated in RP.

Figure 4 illustrates the reactions of parents of children who had participated in RP services. Parents responses indicated mixed perceptions of RP services. On the plus side, a majority of the parents indicated that they now communicate more with their child about school and that they would recommend the services to other parents. For example, one parent said, "my child is more apt to discuss a conflict or something that would have normally bothered them." Similarly, another parent said that their child "feels more confident reporting issues to teachers or other school administrators."

However, less than half (37% or n = 10) of parents reported being satisfied with the overall outcome of the RP and only a third (19% or n = 5) indicated that they believed the problem or conflict would be resolved by the process. An area of concern was situations involving bullying. For example, one parent said that their child was bullied for utilizing restorative programming. Another parent stated that "no child will complain about bullying again if they know nothing will be done, which is effectively what restorative justice does." Parents also described their children's experience in the RP services to be traumatizing. One parent described the experience as "revictimizing" their child. Another parent said their child was forced to discuss personal issues such as anxiety and depression in front of the those involved in the conflict.

Parental perceptions of RP were not all negative; however, it is concerning that those who had negative reactions were particularly strong and specific in their responses. It should also be noted that there is academic debate about RP's effectiveness for addressing bullying.[7]

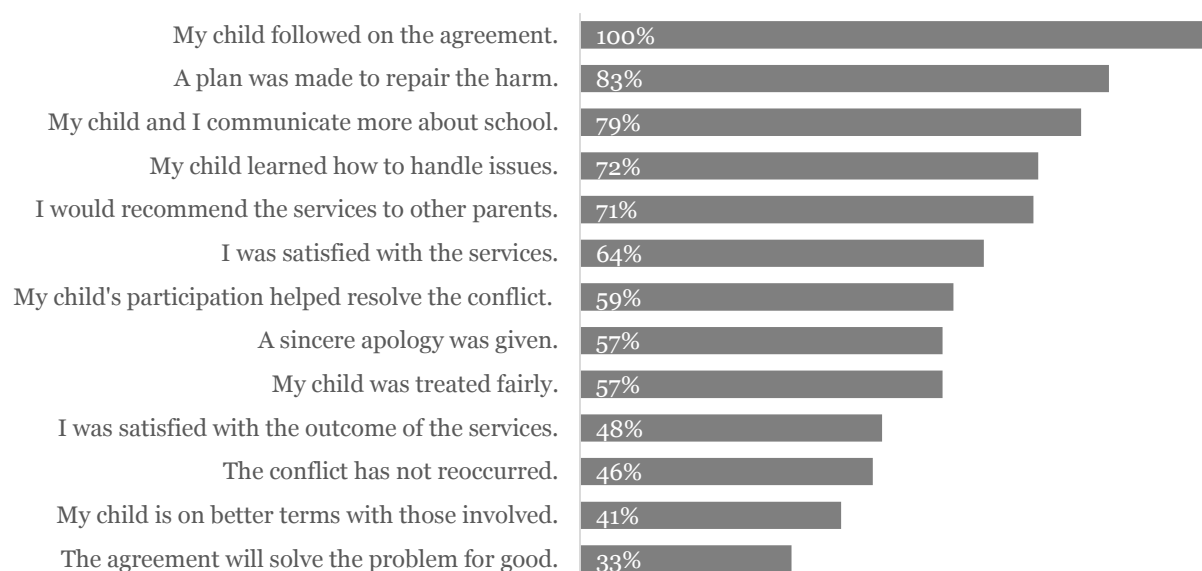**Parents expressed a mix of positive and negative reactions to restorative justice programming.**

Figure 4: Perceptions of Parents with Children Who Participated in RP

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[7] Fronius, Persson, Guckenburg, Hurley, & Petrosino, 2016 & Morrison, 2006

Reach: What was the Reach of the Program?

RP service use varies widely across time and individual demographics.

Overview

- There were large variations in the number of RP referrals made during different times of the year; with most referrals per month being made in the beginning of each semester and gradually tapering down throughout the semester.

- Surprisingly, total RP use did not substantially grow during the two-year study, despite the adoption of new services by half of the participating schools.

- Use of RP services is most prevalent in the lower high school grades (9th & 10th).

- Students who identify as Black or multi-racial are more likely to be involved with RP than other students

Findings

MI RP State Database

The reach and use of the RP services is measured through the records kept by the program staff at each of the schools and entered into a state-wide case management system database. All data presented in this section reflects RP service referrals and use by high school (Grade 9-12) students only (although several schools also serve lower grades and offer RP services to younger students as well).

Referrals

The number of total referrals increased across the two-year study period.

A count of total referrals, by semester, is summarized in Figure 5. Total referrals varied widely by month with the most referrals occurring at gradually tapering down. The total referrals were flat-to-declining over the two-year period.
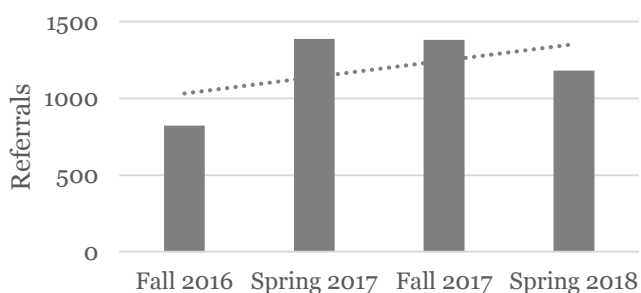

Figure 5. Case Referrals Over Time Across Regions

Schools with existing services used RP the most; schools with new RP services began using RP rapidly, but their rate of use did not increase later in the study.
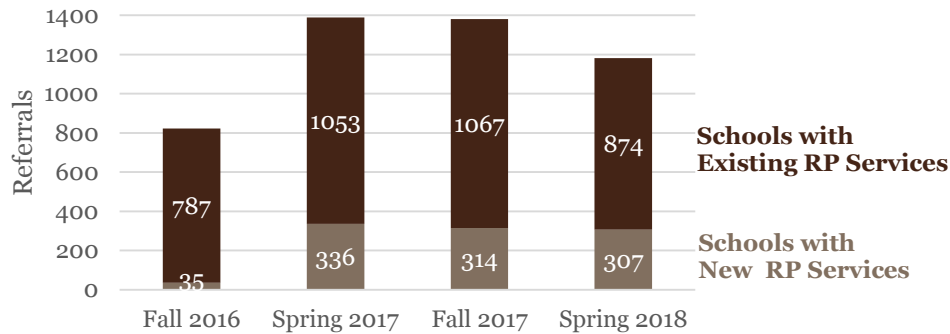

Figure 6. Case Referrals for Schools with Existing and New RP Services

Schools with established RP services prior to the study had more referrals overall than schools that began implementing RP as part of the grant (Figure 6). Schools with new RP services began quickly using RP once services began in Spring 2017; however, it does not appear that their referral rates increased substantially during later semesters.

The suburban schools have more referrals than other regions due to enrollment. The suburban school with existing RP services reported five times as many referrals as the school with new RP services.
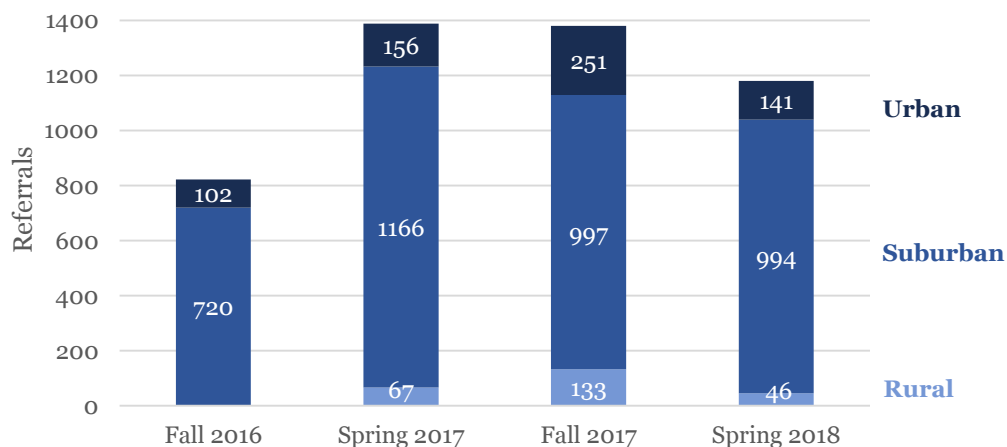

Figure 7. Case Referrals by Region (**Urban**, **Suburban**, and **Rural**)

Over the two-year period, RJ was used 4,773 times across the six schools in the study. When examined on the regional level, it is clear that monthly referrals are much higher in the suburban region (Figure 7). Although both suburban schools have large enrollments, the difference is largely

driven by one school—the "existing" school—in the suburban region, which reported five times more referrals than the other school in the suburban region. It should also be noted that, in addition to a larger enrollment, this particular school also employs two full-time staff for handling RP, as well as offering peer mediations, which are not used in any other school or region in the study.

Use

Use of RP is demographically diverse, though there are some service patterns. In all schools and environments, RP referrals and use are most common among the lower grades and younger ages (Figure 8).

RP services are used with younger students in lower grades.
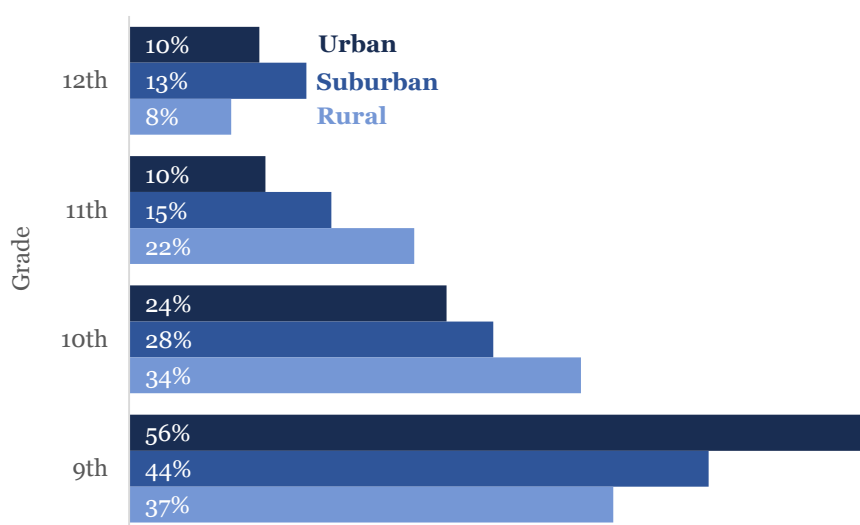

Figure 8. Portion of Grade Using RP by Region (**Urban**, **Suburban**, and **Rural**)

Use by sex seems to vary by regional environment: males are more likely to use RP in rural and suburban environments, whereas females were higher users of RP in the urban environment (Figure 9).

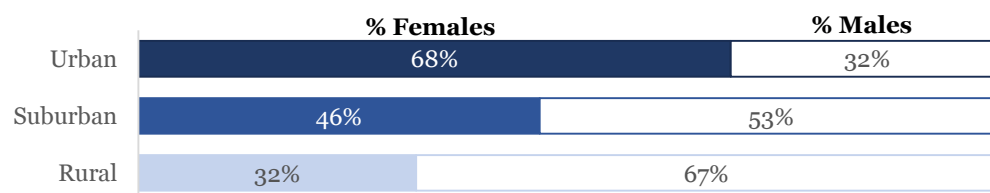**Use of RP services by sex varies across regions.**

Figure 9. RP Use by Region and Sex

Use of RP by race and ethnic classification tends to be highest for Black students in the urban and suburban areas (64% & 81% of referrals, respectively), and White students in the rural region (90% of referrals). However, when compared to actual 2017-18 enrollment figures, the ratio of RP users to the school population by demographic group shows that Black and multiracial students receive a disproportionate portion of RP referrals (Figure 10). In the rural region, the disproportionate referrals to students classified under the "other" race and ethnicity category reflects a unique concentration of Native American students in the region. These results likely reflect the widely-observed finding that African American and other non-White students are more likely to be suspended or face other disciplinary measures than White students for the same offenses,[8] which then leads to more RP referrals.

RP services are provided to a disproportionate number of students that identify as Black and multiracial.
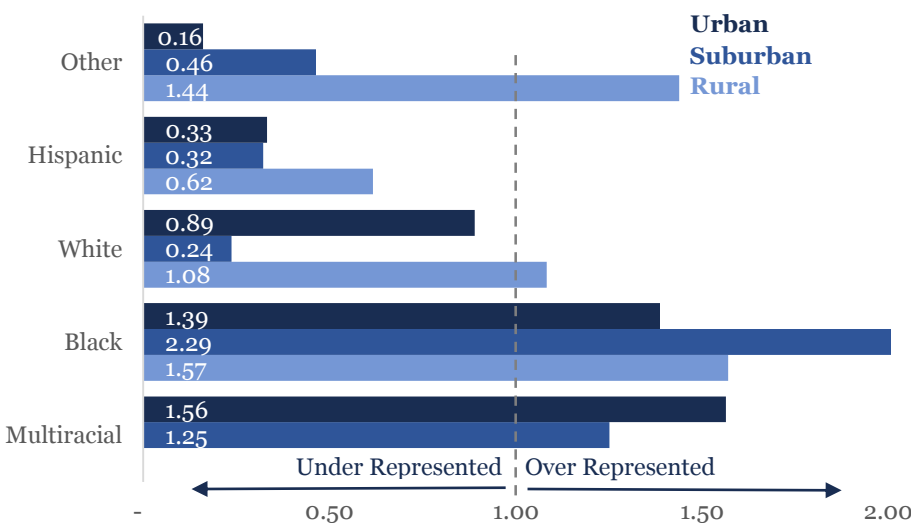
Figure 10. Ratio of RP Users to Enrollment by Racial and Ethnic Categories by Region (**Urban**, **Suburban**, and **Rural**)

Although RP may be used for almost any type of incident, the data suggest that it is most frequently used to address behaviors in a moderate range of severity such as policy/academic violations,[9] verbal arguments, and truancy (Figure 11). In general, the most severe incidents, such as those involving weapons or narcotics, do not appear as frequently on the RP referrals list.

[8] Skiba, et al., 2002 & US Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014

[9] It was not possible to get a comprehensive list of school code violations; however, discussions with teachers and staff indicated that typical violations include events such as use of cell phones during improper times, dress code violations, and breaking classroom behavioral rules. These violations do not usually involve conflict with other students.

RP is most commonly used for behaviors related to academic/policy violations, verbal arguments, truancy, and fighting.

Policy/academic violation   32%
Verbal argument   26%
Truancy   15%
Fighting   11%
Gossip/Rumor   7%
Threat/Harass   4%
Taunt/Tease   3%
Social media incident   2%
Other   1%

Figure 11. Primary Incident Type for RP Referrals

Impact: To What Extent did the Program Impact Student Outcomes?

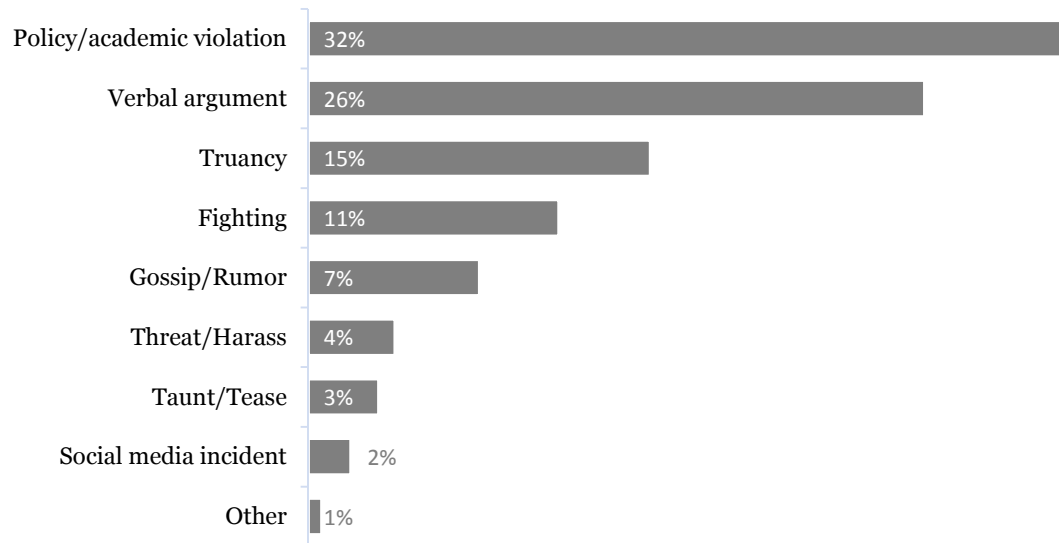*RP may impact student suspensions and attendance rates in some settings.*

Overview

- RP services in the urban region are associated with a significant impact on both discipline (suspensions) and absenteeism.

- In the rural region, there is some evidence that mediations have impacted student attendance, but not disciplinary outcomes.

- In the suburban region, RP was not associated with a positive impact on any of the measured disciplinary or attendance outcomes.

- During the study, thousands of incidents were handled through RP, with reported reductions in the severity or duration of formal discipline enacted for participating students.

Findings

Evidence on student impact is derived from two main sources: a quasi-experimental, comparative analysis of school data, and an analysis of data from the case management database system that is used to track all RP services provided with State funding. The data from the participating schools is used to estimate the broad impact of RP services on schools, as measured by impact on all students in a RP environment relative to a non-RP environment. Data from the case management system is used to calculate the direct, reported impact for students who actually received RP services during the study.

School Data

To assess the size and significance of the impact of RP in schools, data on individual students were collected from each school within each region (urban, suburban, and rural). The data was requested for the purpose of measuring outcomes theoretically related to RP (i.e., disciplinary outcomes, attendance), and to measure demographic traits, which were used in the analysis to ensure that differences in outcomes were related to the presence of RP services and not inter-school differences in student populations.

To promote similarity between the groups criteria[10] were set for study participation. Schools were selected in pairs and had to 1) be within the same geographic region, 2) have similar rates of poverty (as measured by free and reduced lunch eligibility), and 3) have demographically similar student populations (e.g., similar levels of minority racial and ethnicity distributions). To account for differences that still exist between the students and schools, a statistical process known as propensity score matching was used to create a comparison group that is functionally identical to the group that had been receiving RP services. A propensity score is a measure of the probability that each individual would be a member of the treatment group (i.e., student in the school with existing RP services). Propensity scores were used to identify students at the school with new RP services that had characteristics similar to students at the school with existing RP services to form a comparison group (e.g. student at the school with new services served as the comparison group) (Figure 12). More information on this matching process and the baseline characteristics of each school are included in Appendix B.
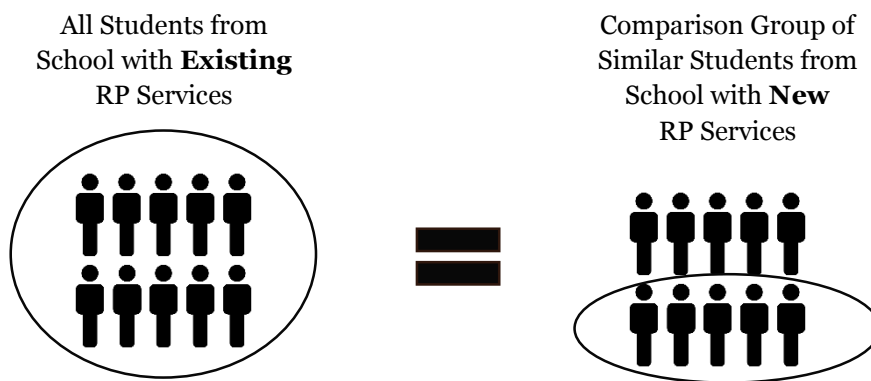
Figure 12. Visual Representation of Propensity Score Matching

Once the comparison group was created, simple means were calculated and compared for each group for outcome variables. The success of restorative justice programming is measured by impacts on student outcomes related to discipline and school engagement—two factors that can be impacted when a student faces conflict in the school environment. To measure the impact on students, two major categories of outcome were examined: disciplinary outcomes (suspensions, detentions) and attendance/engagement outcomes (absences from school, times tardy to class). For there to be a treatment effect, it was expected that the average outcome measure for students at the school with existing RP services should show a positive and statistically significant difference from the comparison group. Any effect is hypothesized to appear during the first year of the study, when services had been active at the school with existing services but were not yet fully established for the school with new RP services. This section provides only a brief summary of analysis and results; a detailed, technical description of the data and analysis procedure is provided in the appendix.

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[10] A full listing of the school participation criteria is provided in the Appendix.

Disciplinary and Attendance/Engagement

The results summarized in this section vary between regions, based on data availability. In some cases, indicators are omitted from the analysis in one region and included in another based-on data availability at one or more individual schools. For example, some schools were able to provide certain outcome measures by semester, while other schools could only offer annual calculations.

Urban School Region

Table 3 compares the outcome results for the school with existing RP services in the urban region versus the comparison group drawn from the other regional school. On all four major outcome measures that were examined, suspensions, absences, course tardiness, and disciplinary incidents the data indicate that there are statistically significant impacts for students in the RP school. **Students in the school with existing RP services had fewer average suspension days, days absent, and reported tardy periods than the comparison group of similar students.** The lower level of disciplinary outcomes also occurred in the context of slightly higher average levels of incidents.

Table 3. Summary of Outcome Impacts from the Urban School Analysis

Outcome Measure	RP School	Comparison Group	Difference	Stat Sig. (p<0.05)
2016-17 All Year (Sem. 1-2)				
Suspension days	0.11	0.31	-0.20	Yes
Absent days	5.67	7.00	-1.33	Yes
Tardy periods reported	21.43	38.43	-17.00	Yes
Incidents	0.55	0.33	0.22	Yes
2017-18 All Year (Sem. 1-2)				
Suspension days	0.21	0.48	-0.27	Yes
Absent days	18.85	22.33	-3.48	Yes
Tardy periods reported	33.53	48.46	-14.93	Yes
Incidents	0.84	0.49	0.35	Yes

Suburban School Region

Unlike the rural and urban regions, the results for the suburban region do not indicate a consistent, positive impact from the provision of RP services. As shown in Table 4, **existing RP services were not shown to positively impact suspensions.** The school with existing RP services has a higher average suspension rate than the comparison group of students. Of greater

concern is the large variations in the data, which suggests that the measurement standards and data quality may not be comparable between these two schools. Based on conversations with center staff and school Principle, it was revealed that a change in how attendance is recorded occurred at the school with existing services during 2017-18, which created a dramatic increase in the number of reported absences. The new attendance policy enacted a "zero tolerance" approach to late arrivals, with instances that might be considered late or tardy recorded as an absence in their internal records.

Table 4. Summary of outcome impacts from the suburban region analysis

Outcome Measure	RP School	Comparison Group	Difference	Stat Sig. (p<0.05)
2016-17 Academic Year				
Suspensions (Sem 1)	0.89	0.56	0.33	Yes
Suspensions (Sem 2)	1.79	0.27	1.52	Yes
Absent days (Full year)	22.72	25.00	-2.28	Yes
2017-18 Academic Year				
Suspensions (Sem1)	2.88	0.51	2.37	Yes
Suspensions (Sem2)	3.69	0.37	3.32	Yes
Absent days (Full year)	51.20	11.80	39.40	Yes

Rural School Region

As shown in Table 5, during the 2016-17 academic year, the **students at the school with existing services experienced fewer suspensions, on average, than the comparison group.** There was no clear impact on absences at the school with existing RP. During 2016-17, the average days absent were higher in the school with existing RP services than for the comparison group during both semesters. During 2017-18, the average days absent were lower in the school with existing RP services during the first semester, while there was no significant difference in the second semester. Similarly, the average number of tardy occasions was not significantly different during 2016-17 but was lower during 2017-18.

Table 5. Summary of outcome impacts from the rural region analysis.

Outcome Measure	RP School	Comparison Group	Difference	Stat Sig. (p<0.05)
2016-17 Academic Year				
Suspensions (Full year)	0.05	1.22	-1.17	Yes
Absences (Sem 1)	5.76	4.86	0.90	Yes
Absences (Sem 2)	6.41	4.61	1.8	Yes
Tardy (Full year)	3.59	3.86	-0.27	No
Incidents (Full year)	0.31	1.10	-0.79	Yes
2017-18 Academic Year				
Suspensions (Full year)	0.09	0.88	-0.79	Yes
Absences (Sem 1)	5.71	6.99	-1.28	Yes
Absences (Sem 2)	6.16	6.22	-0.06	No
Tardy (Full year)	2.08	4.26	-2.18	Yes
Incidents (Full year)	0.271	1.39	-1.12	Yes

Although the data do reveal a statistically significant difference in the average number of suspensions at the school with existing services relative to the comparison group, **it is unlikely that the difference in suspension rates is associated with RP services.** As mentioned in the limitations section, the school with existing services did not offer a full range of RP prior to the study—only mediation services focused on truancy. Both the school with existing services and the school from which the comparison group was drawn began instituting their full range of RP services at around the same time, thereby eliminating the possibility of isolating any impact on disciplinary outcomes.

Case Management Data

In addition to using the data from the case management system database to assess the reach and usage level of RP services in the school, an analysis was also conducted to examine the changes in disciplinary outcomes that were reported by the professional RP staff who worked directly with students. For each instance that a RP service was provided, information was recorded about the student(s) involved in the incident, the nature of the incident, and both potential and actual disciplinary consequences. Additionally, when a post-RP follow-up was conducted, the staff also recorded whether or not the student(s) had kept the agreement or followed the plan that was developed as part of the program.

Results

One way that RP can reduce suspension and detention rates at schools is by creating alternate ways of resolving conflict and disciplining the involved parties. According to RP program records, **during the two-year period there were 3,915 instances where a formal disciplinary action—expulsion, court/legal actions, suspension, or detention—was avoided by substituting an informal disciplinary action instead.** The most commonly avoided consequences were out-of-school suspension (OSS) and in-school-suspension (ISS), and the most common substitute actions were warnings—which are also typically accompanied by specific actions that the involved parties agree to in the hope of resolving the conflict (Figure 13).

Out-of-School suspensions are the most common disciplinary consequence avoided through RP.
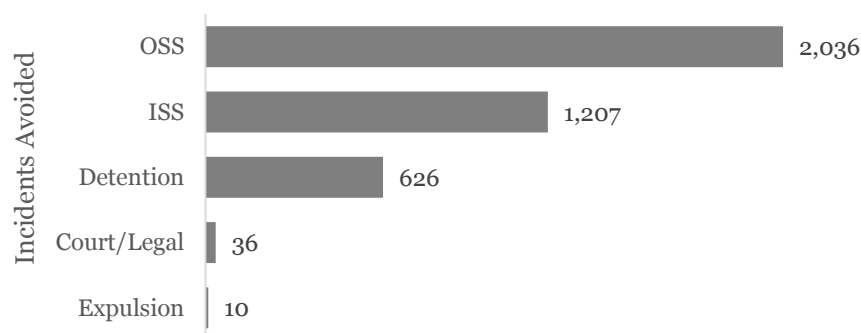
ISS = in-school suspension   OSS = out-of-school suspension

Figure 13. Discipline Avoided by Type and Number of Incidents 2016-2018

Another way that RP impacts outcomes is through agreements that reduce the duration of discipline; however, **RP rarely resulted in a simple reduction in suspension length.** During the entire study, there were 55 instances where an out-of-school suspensions was reduced, representing only about 2.6 percent of cases where a student had faced out-of-school suspension. For in-school suspension, there were only 11 instances where the term was reduced, representing under 1 percent of these cases. Still, the reductions were substantial, an average of 5.1 fewer days of out-of-school suspension, and a reduction of 1.8 days of in-school suspension.

An important part of RP is that all participants adhere to any agreement generated during the process and, hopefully, do not experience a reoccurrence of the original conflict. After each RP service event, program staff at the schools are expected to follow-up regarding whether or not the participants have upheld the terms of any agreement developed as part of the RP.

Approximately 8 of 10 participants were still upholding their agreements when the post-RP follow-up was conducted

Figure 14. Status of RP Agreements at Follow-Up

Most agreements (80%) were being upheld at the time of post-RP follow up (Figure 14). The rate that agreements were upheld was examined across several other factors (e.g., sex, race/ethnicity) to determine whether RP may be more effective under certain conditions or with specific demographic groups. No substantial differences were identified. However, it does appear that the type of conflict may play a role in the success of RP. Agreements related to threats and harassment, or truancy situations were not as frequently upheld at follow-up, relative to other disciplinary situations (Figure 15). **Overall the majority of agreements are kept, at least until the time of follow-up.**[11]

Agreements for threats and harassment, or truancy problems, are less likely to be upheld.
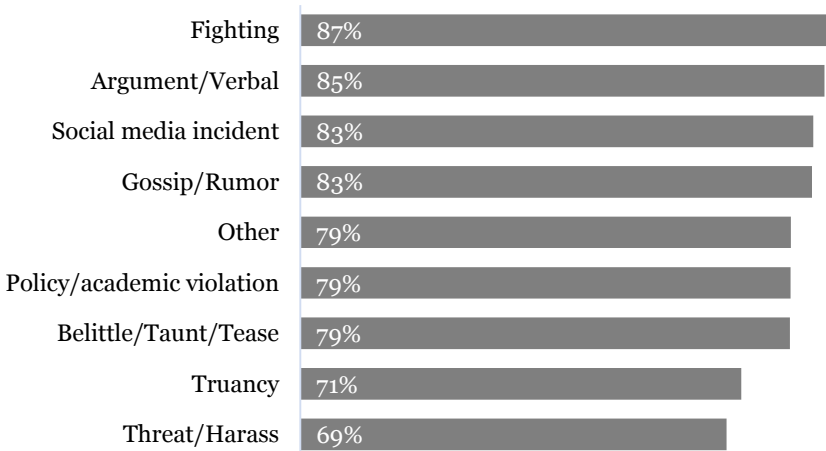
Figure 15. Portion of Agreements Upheld at Follow-up, by Dispute Type

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[11] Standard reported practice is for follow-ups to be conducted 4-6 weeks after the RP service is conducted, however, the case management system data does not record the specific date when follow-up is conducted.

The reasons why agreements addressing truancy or threats/harassment are less frequently upheld is unclear. Upholding a truancy agreement may, in some cases, be influenced by factors outside the individual student's control, such as family or transportation issues. The disciplinary category of threats and harassment may include incidents of bullying, which some research has found RP is not always appropriate or less effective in addressing.[12]

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[12] Fronius, et al., 2016; Molnar-Main, 2014

Discussion and Conclusions

Is the Investment in RP in the Schools a Good Idea?

Although not an evaluation question, this is the core question of concern for the SCAO, as well as for schools that make the effort to support RP services. In light of recent legislation (2016 MI Act 361 EBH 5619)[13] calling for expansion of the use RP services across Michigan schools, it is understood that many school boards may be considering whether RP services are effective and whether they are worthwhile to offer in their own schools.

Yes, there is evidence that RP does work. This is based on a combination of the significant impact in the urban region and the findings from the case management database, which shows the direct effect on RP participants. The lacking or inconsistent findings in the rural and suburban regions are limited to the impact analysis and reflect an unfortunate situation of poorly matched environments and inconsistent implementation. It is true that the scale of impact on a school- or community-wide basis may be small; however, the direct effect for participants is larger. Expectations should be tempered regarding the size of impact and how easily it can be implemented.

Could RP Services be Successfully Implemented Anywhere?

Possibly. During the study, RP services were successfully put into place in three relatively different environments. However, differences in the details of how schools implement RP in their own context could impact the speed of adoption and success of services. For example, at one school staff were not all "on board" with RP in the same way, and directed all referrals to go through administration versus encouraging teachers to work directly with RP staff. This may have limited adoption and use of RP (which did not increase at the schools with new services as originally anticipated).

At another school, policies that are theoretically opposed to the philosophy of RP were enacted. A "zero tolerance" attendance policy was enacted, which also came with an automatic suspension penalty after a certain number of absences. This approach is the opposite of RP. A restorative approach would suggest that conflicts related to attendance should be handled through a process without arbitrary disciplinary measures, and instead work to create individual-level agreements on how to solve attendance problems.

Other issues arose during the study as well. Most of the schools with new services were slow to add training on RP for teachers. None of the schools with new services conducted any RP training within the first year. The lesson here is that even the well intentioned schools that received funding for RP as part of the study still sometimes took actions that were counter to fully embracing RP—such as poor policies or slow adoption. Similar issues will likely occur if RP use is widely pushed to schools that have not fully bought into the concept of RP. Given inevitable

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[13] http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2015-2016/publicact/pdf/2016-PA-0361.pdf

challenges to widespread implementation, external monitoring and professional development on the concept of restorative approaches should be supported in order to discourage decisions or polices that may be counter to successful RP.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Schools

- **Increased support of RP Services:** Staff members from each region suggested that there be increased access to restorative programming. In schools, with part-time restorative programming, staff suggested having services available full-time. In schools with full-time programming, staff suggested having additional "rooms"—i.e., additional restorative programming staff.

- **Provide teachers with more training on restorative practices:** All of the staff and teachers felt that they (and their peers) needed to know more about RP in general, as well as about referrals and RP programming work at their school. During initial visits to the schools at the end of the first year of the study, only two schools with existing RP services —and no schools with new RP services—had offered training. Although all schools planned to offer RP training to teachers and staff, it would be more effective to offer training right away when beginning an RP program, or at the beginning of each school year.

- **Increase options for RP referrals:** Teachers or administrators may not always be aware of conflict when it first happens, and/or may not always make an immediate referral to RP. One suggestion (made by several teachers) is to create a way for students to be able to make anonymous suggestions regarding peers who are having a conflict and might benefit from services.

- **Share information as openly as possible:** To the extent possible, make teachers aware of students who have had a conflict and are subject to an agreement that was developed during RP. A conflict or RP referral that involves only one teacher or that happens outside of class, may not be known in other classrooms. Being aware of prior conflict may allow teachers to intervene more quickly in the event that the problem reoccurs.

Recommendations for the SCAO

- **The need for RP services is highest amongst younger age groups:** The data show that the prevalence of RP-appropriate incidents and associated referrals was highest amongst 9th grade students and declined steadily with age and grade. Conversations with school and center staff indicated that younger students have the most conflict; as students age, they either have less conflict, or the conflict may escalate to incidents that are not referred to RP because of the severity (e.g., weapons, drug and alcohol violations). There would likely be strong demand for RP funding at the middle school level if it were broadly offered.

- **RP may not have a direct impact on juvenile court or criminal court outcomes.** The limited data available on conflicts that would directly result in criminal charges or referral to the courts suggest that these instances are rarely referred to RP. Most RP referrals occurred following incidents that might be classified as "mid-level" issues, which involve policy violations, harassment, arguments, or fighting. Incidents of violence, weapons use, or drug violations may be subject to rules that require specific actions by the schools or may simply not be viewed as appropriate for RP referral. A direct impact on juvenile court scenarios may not be an appropriate outcome expectation; however, a there may be a possibility of longer-term reductions.

Future Evaluation Recommendations

- **Tighten school participation rules to ensure a fair comparison of RP and non-RP environments:** One limitation of this study was that two of the schools may have had unobserved and unmeasured environmental differences. For example, although the two suburban schools have similar free/reduced-price lunch statistics, it appeared that one school served a district that had been wealthier in the recent past or had greater community support than the other school. During the visit, issues of high staff turnover were also mentioned at one of the schools—a trait that is extremely difficult to measure using existing educational databases.

  The site visit process also revealed that one of the schools with existing services was not implementing the same, complete set of RP services prior to the start of the study (they had offered mediations primarily targeting truancy, and not other disciplinary situations). These differences reduced the ability of the analysis to find the hypothesized impact on truancy and suspensions. Future evaluations should take further steps to limit environmental or implementation variance at the school level. One option would be to compare schools in the same district, with only one school using RP services over a multi-year period. This would allow for greater confidence in the comparability of the data and school environments, while also allowing an examination of additional multi-year outcomes.

- **Evaluation is warranted for programs serving lower grades and younger age groups:** This study was limited to examining the impact of RP on high school students (grades 9-12). Strong use of RP by younger high school students (and by grade 7-8 students in some of the school buildings), confirms that these students use, and likely benefit from, RP. Future evaluations should focus on identifying the impact of RP on younger students.

- **Data quality and consistency of measurement is necessary to allow confidence in results:** Greater confidence can be given to evaluation results that take steps to minimize sources of bias and variance. The impact results that are consistent with expectations and in which the authors place the greatest confidence are those from the urban region of this study, which benefitted from using two schools serving the same community and using the same district-level database for recording consistent student-level data. In the future, using school pairings where data comes from a singular, consistent source would be preferable.

Appendices

Appendix A: Evaluation Background

Purpose/use: This evaluation was conducted to provide the Michigan Supreme Court, State Court Administrative Office (SCAO), with an assessment of the implementation and impact of restorative practices that are implemented as part of the Community Dispute Resolution Program.

Scope: The evaluation examines only the implementation and impact of RP services provided in Michigan schools and targeting students in grades 9-12.

Stakeholder engagement: This evaluation study sought to capture the full range of experiences relevant to all stakeholder involved in, or with an interest in, RP services. A combination of surveys, interviews, focus groups, an advisory panel, and analysis of administrative data were used to gauge perspectives and impacts for the following stakeholder groups:

- High school (grade 9-12) students
- Parents of high school students
- School administrators
- School staff
- Teachers
- Dispute resolution centers (i.e., providers of RP services)
- Michigan Court System (e.g., SCAO & Prosecuting Attorneys Association)

Responsiveness to culture and context: The provision of RP services takes place within a wide range of contexts—socioeconomic, cultural, and locational. Although no study can fully capture the entire range of contexts under which RP is provided in Michigan, the evaluation took steps to ensure that a broad range of contexts were captured, and the effects of cultural factors was examined in the final analysis. To maximize the representativeness of the study, a purposeful approach to school recruitment was taken, with requirements that no more than two participant buildings could come from three regional types—rural suburban, and urban—with each region being located in a different part of the state. Other factors considered in both recruitment and analysis stages include race/ethnicity, sex, and socioeconomic status. Finally, broad stakeholder engagement efforts were conducted to capture information from a wide range of individuals involved with RP.

Budget: This study was supported through a competitive grant award of $49,814 provided by the SCAO.

Evaluation team: The key staff for the evaluation are Dr. Brad Watts, Assistant Director of the Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University and Principle Investigator (PI) for the study.

Dr. Kelly Robertson, a Research Associate at the Evaluation Center, served as c0-PI for the study. Project support was also provided by Evaluation Center administrative staff and graduate students, who worked under the supervision of Drs. Watts and Robertson.

Literature Review

Restorative justice refers to a social movement to institutionalize peaceful, collective, and non-punitive approaches to addressing conflict and harm (Fronius, Persson, Guckenburg, Hurley, & Petrosino, 2016). The intent of restorative justice is to promote accountability, community safety, and address the underlying social and emotional conditions that lead to conflict (Ashley & Burke, 2009; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). The concept of restorative justice originated in pre-modern native cultures of the South Pacific and Americas, which were concerned with whether harm was done to relationships, rather than if an act was right or wrong (Fronius et al., 2016).

The implementation of restorative justice into practice is referred to restorative practice—a term used throughout this report. Restorative practice employs a reintegrative shaming process that prioritizes repairing relationships, over the need for assigning blame and isolating offenders, as well as on acceptance or reintegration of offenders back into the community (Braithwaite, 1989, 2004). Through a restorative practice, offenders are held accountable for the harm caused by repairing for the hurt or damage according to a plan they create with those impacted by the harm (Fronius et al., 2016). The offender's involvement in the process has been shown to increased perceptions of fairness, which is thought to encourage acceptance of sanctions and greater adherence to laws (Tyler, Sherman, Strang, Barnes, & Woods, 2007).

A retributive approach to justice—which is often used within the United States' criminal justice and educational systems—employs exclusionary and negative shaming processes that result in offenders

Goals of Restorative Justice:

1. **Accountability:** Offenders held accountable for the harm done, not the act that caused the harm, and must repair the hurt or damage caused.

2. **Community safety:** Restorative strategies keep communities safe by providing opportunities for relationship building and empower individuals to take responsibility for the wellbeing of other community members.

3. **Competency Development:** Restorative approaches seek to increase the pro-social skills of offenders and address underlying factors that lead to delinquent behavior.

(Ashley & Burke, 2009)

Common Components of Restorative Practices:

1. Restitution: Offenders held accountable for harm done, not act that caused the harm.
2. Resolution: A collective plan to repair hurt or damage is created that is mutually agreed upon by the offender and those who were harmed.
3. Reconciliation: The offender is accepted back into the larger community.

(Fronius et al., 2016; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012)

being stigmatized, isolated, and having control imposed over their lives (e.g., jail, prison, suspension, expulsion). Restorative justice has been employed in the criminal justice and educational systems as an effective alternative to exclusionary and punitive approaches (American Psychological Association Task Force, 2008; Bouffard, Cooper, & Bergseth, 2016; Bradshaw, Rosenborough, & Umbreit, 2006; Poulson, 2003; Schiff & Blazemore, 2012; Suvall, 2009). For example, use of restorative approaches within the criminal justice system has been associated with better outcomes for both victims and offenders, such as increased perception of fairness, satisfaction with case outcomes, offender compliance, and reduced rates of recidivism (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2007, 2012; Bradshaw et al., 2006, Bouffard et al., 2016; Hays, 2005; Latimer, Dowden, & Muise, 2005; Leonard & Kenny, 2011; Poulson, 2003; Rodriguez, 2007).

Why are School-Based Restorative Justice Interventions Important?

Restorative approaches were first implemented in schools during the 1990s, as an alternative to exclusionary disciplinary policies such as zero tolerance, which mandate suspensions and expulsions to address behavioral issues (Calhoun & Daniels, 2008; Gonzalez, 2012). Research has found that exclusionary zero tolerance type policies lead to more suspensions, school dropouts, and deviant behavior (American Psychological Association Task Force, 2008; Balfanz, Vyrnes, & Fox, 2014; Hemphill, Toumbourou, Herrenkohl, McMorris, & Catalano, 2006). Exclusionary and punitive practices are thought to perpetuate and worsen problem issues. Suspension and expulsion isolate students and serve as a missed opportunity for learning or repair for harm done (Suvall, 2009). Additionally, use of suspension and expulsions increase the amount of time students spend outside of the classroom, which is associated with poor academic performance and decreased likelihood of high school completion (Balfanz, et al., 2014; Raffaele-Mendez, 2003; Skiba & Rausch, 2006). For example, a study by Balfanz, et al., (2014) which found students that were suspended in the ninth grade were twice as likely to drop out of high school.

Restorative approaches have been used in schools to reduce conflict, keep kids in school, and address concerns about historical disparities in punishment and their long-term impacts. It is well established that African American and other non-White students are more likely to be suspended or face other disciplinary measures than White students for the same offenses (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Paterson, 2002 & US Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014). Restorative practices have been used to reduce historical racial and ethnic disparities in the school and juvenile criminal justice system (Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2016; Gonzalez, 2012; Jain, Bassey, Brown, & Kalra, 2014; Simson, 2012). Restorative practices provide students and staff an opportunity for learning and capacity strengthening that can reduce conflict by addressing the root cause of issues—repairing relationships between those involved in conflict (Fronius et al., 2016; Gregory et al., 2016; Simson, 2012). For example, improved relationships between teachers and students through use of restorative approaches in the classroom have been associated with a reduction in the racial disparities in the application of exclusionary punishment and related negative consequences (Gregory, et al., 2016).

Restorative justice can help to decrease exclusionary behavior (such as suspensions and expulsions) and harmful behavior in school (Fronius et al., 2016). Studies have found a 20 and 90 percent reduction in school suspensions and office referrals after the implementation of RP interventions (Armour, 2013; Baker, 2009; Davis, 2014; Mirksy, 2003; Stinchomb, Bazemore, &

Riestenberg, 2006; Sumner, Silverman, & Frampton, 2010). Literature also suggests restorative justice interventions in schools have a positive impact on academic achievement, student behavior, student time in the classroom, student connectedness, student and staff relationships, and school environment (Jain, et al., 2014; Karp & Breslin, 2001; McCluskey, Lloyd, Kane, Riddell, Stead, & Weedon, 2008; Mirksy, 2003; Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, 2004). Studies have typically found a 25-60 percent reduction in the rate of absences after the implementation of multi-year RP interventions (Baker, 2009; Jain, et al., 2014; Mirsky, 2003; Stinchomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006). Jain and colleague (2014) also found an association between RP interventions and improved short- and long-term academic achievement such as reading level and increased graduation rates for high school and four-year education.

What is Restorative Justice in Schools?

Restorative justice programming varies widely across schools—resulting from differing understandings of restorative justice and best practices (Fronius et al., 2016). Common types of restorative practices implemented in schools are describe in Table A1 (Ashley & Burke, 2009; Fronius et al., 2016; Gregory, et al., 2016). Programming can be implemented school-wide through training of staff and students and/or as a supplemental approach used to respond to conflict as it arises. While programming may look slightly different across locations, all programs tend to embody the basic tenants of restorative justice which includes holding offenders accountable for the harm caused, implementing a mutually agreed up on plan to address that harm, and acceptance of the offender back into the community (Fronius et al., 2016; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012).

Table A1. Common Types of School-based Restorative Programming

Type	Description	Who is involved	Used in response to:
Formal restorative or peacemaking circles	A facilitator brings individuals together to discuss an issue or resolve a conflict. The facilitator encourages parties involved or impacted by a conflict to share their perspectives through safe and open communication.	• Trained mediator • A few people to a large group • Staff and/or students	• Issues that impact a group of people such as students or staff • Moderately serious incidents
Informal restorative circles/ Restorative discussions	A trained facilitator helps individuals discuss a conflict or issue of concern. These circles may happen in response to an event or be offered regularly.	• Trained mediator • A few people to a large group • Staff, students, and/or parents	• Minor student worries or incidents • Often proactive/ preventative • Student challenges or parental worries
Restorative mediation or conferencing	A trained mediator brings together parties involved or impacted by a conflict to develop an appropriate response to the conflict. Often mediation or conferencing is more of a scripted process as there is a larger focus on accountability.	• Trained mediator • A few people to a large group • Teachers, students, staff, or parents	• Serious conflict or indicants • Reactive • Try to prevent suspension or expulsion
Peer mediation or jury	Students are trained to help other students resolve differences. Peer mediation is intended to empower peer mediators to become leaders and build conflict resolution skills.	• Trained student mediator • Supervision by a trained mediator • A few people to a large group • Students	• Minor to moderate conflict • Reactive

The most common approaches to implementing restorative justice in schools are mediation conferences or larger group meetings, often referred to as circles. Participants typically include victims, offenders, and a facilitator; however, larger circles may also be attended by other individuals impacted by the conflict, such as students or teachers from the same classroom where the conflict originally occurred. Interventions typically involve direct communication between the victim and offender or community members that serve as a proxy for the victim (Bouffard et al., 2016). Indirect mediation, which is led by a neutral third-party, facilitates the process without direct contact between the victim and offender (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2007, 2012). Mediation

conferences and circles begin with attendees explaining the situation from their point of view before working to develop a collaborative plan to redress the harm caused. Restorative plans often include restorative sanctions which in the schools setting often include community service, apologies, or behavioral change agreements. Offenders are encouraged to comply with such agreements in exchange for an incentive such as avoiding or reducing time spent in suspension or detention (Stinchcomb, et al., 2006).

Most school-based restorative justice programs have been found to be successful to some degree across settings (e.g., public, private, or alternative schools; urban or suburban environments; and school or district wide implementation) (Fronius et al., 2016). There is evidence to suggest that circles, conferences, and peer mediation—the most common forms of RP—have positive outcomes related to student behavior, time spent in the classroom, and school environment (Ashley & Burke, 2009; Fronius, et al., 2016). Bouffard and colleagues (2016) compared different RP models and found that no matter what the approach—direct, indirect, formal, or informal—all are associated with a reduced risk for juvenile recidivism. Therefore, Bouffard et al., (2016) suggest that is may be possible to use less intensive RP approaches (i.e., indirect mediation) for younger offenders or those without a criminal history while still maintaining positive outcomes, and reserve more intensive versions of RP for older youth who have repeated histories of disruptive behavior. All RP approaches have been shown to work best when integrated into the wider school- or district-culture (American Psychological Association, 2008; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012; The Advancement Project, 2014).

It is difficult to compare results of studies within or across different RP approaches. Difficulties specific to comparing research results within the RP context are related to confounding impact of the various terms used to refer to RP, various definitions for RP, and various understandings of what constitutes best practice (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Further, existing RP studies tend to be less rigorous, meaning they tend to employ methods that limit trust in their results or do not allow for generalizability of results across RP interventions; common issues related to rigor within the body of RP research include exclusively descriptive studies, data collection focused on participant satisfaction and perception, lack of comparison groups, and small sample sizes (Fronius et al., 2016). Therefore, as with all research, the conclusions of much of the literature need to be interpreted with some caution.

Challenges of Implementing Restorative Justice Programs in Schools

Although there has been growth in the adoption of restorative justice approaches in K-12 schools, its use is far from universal. This section highlights some of the major barriers to school-based restorative justice programs.

Resource requirements. RP approaches entail significant costs not associated with traditional approaches, such as staff time and buy-in, training, and resources. RP works best when integrated at the school- or district-level, so that appropriate practices are ingrained in the culture and reflected in policies and procedures (American Psychological Association, 2008; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012; The Advancement Project, 2014). Successful adoption and integration of restorative justice practices requires getting staff on-board and trained, which can take years and usually requires sustained funding (Ashley & Burke, 2009; Evans & Lester, 2013; Fronius, et al.,

2016; González, 2012; and Karp & Breslin, 2001). It is recommended that teachers, RP staff, and all other school stakeholders receive one to two consecutive days of RP training and 20-40 hours of coaching per year (Jain et al., 2014). Research suggests that shifts in attitudes in favor of restorative justice approaches may take one to five years for school-wide change (Evans & Lester, 2013; Karp & Breslin, 2001). Obtaining funding for sustained implementation of restorative programming can be challenging, as most funding is dedicated to establishing buy-in, build funding, and collecting data (Fronius, et al., 2016). It is suggested that support should be set aside to sustain existing programming and for continued training for staff and administrators (The Advancement Project, 2014). Given these requirements, it is not surprising that many schools are either unable or unwilling to commit to using a RP.

Tension with existing processes: It can be challenging for schools to move from zero tolerance type policies to restorative approaches, as a matter of habit, conflicting principals of the approaches, and required level of behavioral change, as well as the demand for additional upfront resources and time (Ashley & Burke, 2009; Fronius et al., 2016; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012; Sumner et al., 2010; Suvall, 2009). Restorative practices can also be more difficult in the short-term for students because in addition to being held accountable for their actions, students must think about, address, and act to repair the harm done (Ashley & Burke, 2009).

Challenges around the use of shaming. Holding offenders accountable for actions, inherently implies a shaming process. A restorative approach seeks to evoke a reintegrative shaming process that "acknowledges the impact of the wrongdoing on both the offender and those who were harmed" (Fronius et al., 2016, p.5). The process of reintegrative shaming seeks to foster empathy, understanding, and hope for healing across individuals in order to achieve reconciliation and reacceptance of the offender into the community (Braithwaite, 2004; Watchtel, 1999). Reintegrative shaming involves "treating the wrongdoer respectfully and empathically as a good person who has done a bad act and making special effort to show the wrongdoer how valued [they are] after the wrongful act has been confronted…" (Vaandering, 2010, p. 163). "I do not like what you are doing, but I like who you are so let me walk with you as you solve this problem" (Wachtel, 1999, p. 2) is an example of a statement that demonstrates how this might be accomplished. Approaches often used in the United States tend to evoke a negative or stigmatized shame by assigning blame for the act that caused the harm, sending negative message about their self-worth, and isolating the offender from the community (Vaandering, 2010). Given the fine line between reintegrative and negative shaming, schools must be extremely careful to ensure that the correct approach is actually being implemented by teachers and staff, particularly if there is not a well-trained facilitator available on-site.

Not always appropriate for situations involving bullying. There is debate as to whether restorative justice services should be used to address bullying in schools. Some studies suggest that using a restorative approach to address bullying is more effective than traditional punitive disciplinary approaches because RP focuses on repairing relationships (Ashley & Burke, 2009; Christensen, 2009; Howard, Grigg, Pozzoli, Tippett, Sadeghi, & Thompson, 2010; Morrison, 2006; Molnar-Main, 2014). However, other researchers note that because bullying results from power imbalances, victims are often in a vulnerable position and may not feel comfortable facing their abuser and the potential for retaliation (Morrison, 2006). Therefore it is suggested that RP

not be used for all cases of bullying and that there be well-trained adult facilitators involved in cases of bullying to navigate these power dynamics and identify effective resolutions (Fronius, et al., 2016; Molnar-Main, 2014).

Appendix B: Evaluation Methods

Evaluation methods are described for each evaluation question.

An overview of evaluation methods can be viewed in Table 1 in the main report body.

Implementation: Did schools provide PR services in a consistent and appropriate manner?

Outcomes Measure: The outcome measure for this evaluation question was the degree to which RP services were delivered in a consistent manner and whether these approaches align with best practices.

Data Sources/Collection Methods: Data sources and collection methods included school stakeholder questionnaires, site visits, focus groups and interviews, and a literature review focused on school-based RP services.

Instruments: A copy of the school stakeholder questionnaire, site visit protocol, and school staff focus group protocol are located in Appendix C.

Timeline: All site visits, questionnaires, and interviews or focus groups were completed in May 2017.

Analysis Methods: The analysis is descriptive and based on site visit notes, questionnaire responses, as well as a review of how the RP service models compare with the literature.

Limitations: At each school we were able to speak with a minimum of four school staff and/or RP staff. The number and type of stakeholders the evaluation team was able to interview at each school varied between the six sites, but always included a key school leader (e.g., principal or assistant/vice principal) and some teachers and staff directly involved in implementing the RP. At some schools, informal focus group sessions took place involving teachers and other non-administrators/non-RP staff members. Additionally, 13 school staff who could not attend the site group interviews completed an online questionnaire.

Reaction Methods: How did stakeholders react to the program?

Student Satisfaction

Outcomes Measure: Student satisfaction was self-reported, as measured through multiple RP participant survey items.

Data Sources/Collection Methods: Paper satisfaction questionnaires were provided by RP staff on-site at each of the schools. All participants were asked to complete a survey after the conclusion of an RP service. Pre-paid return envelopes were provided for each questionnaire to ensure confidentiality for students and mailed directly to the evaluation team.

Instruments: An example copy of the participating student questionnaire is located in Appendix C.

Sample and description: All students that participated in RP services at each of the six schools were asked to complete a questionnaire. In total, 859 completed surveys were received during the study which is an estimated response return rate of 51%, calculated based on an estimate of 1,675 non-duplicate student IDs.

Timeline: The questionnaires we available for students to complete throughout the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years—September 2016 until June 2018.

Analysis: Questionnaire responses were entered into an Excel sheet and simple counts and descriptive analysis was conducted. Student responses were described across regions.

Limitations: Reaction is measured based on self-reported survey results and not an unbiased, observable measure. The actual response rate is unknown; surveys were handed out by program staff and it is not possible to confirm the full number of surveys delivered or whether the surveys were consistently delivered to all participants as requested.

Parent Satisfaction & Awareness

Outcomes Measure: Parental satisfaction and awareness of RP services was measured through multiple self-report survey items.

Data Sources/Collection Methods: An online survey covering awareness of RP and satisfaction with RP service was conducted for all parents at each of the six schools in the study.

Instruments: A copy of the general parent questionnaire is located in Appendix C.

Sample and description: The intended sample was all parents of students in grades 9-12 at each of the schools in the study. A total of 215 parents from five of the six participating schools responded to the surveys. One school which agreed to distribute the survey to parents did not follow-through; therefore, parents from one of the suburban schools are not represented in the results.

Data collection procedures: Invitations to participate were delivered by the administration at each school—this was done to protect the privacy of families and was also based on the assumption the parents would be more likely to respond to a request

from the school. The evaluator developed the survey instrument and provided a link to the survey web site, which was customized to each school.

Timeline: The survey was conducted electronically during January-March 2018.

Analysis Type/Purpose: Questionnaire responses were entered into an Excel sheet and simple counts and descriptive analysis was conducted. Since the sample size was so small, responses were compared across regions.

Limitations: The sample size is relatively small: only 215 surveys were completed and of those, only 13 percent (n = 27) of parents indicated that their child had participated in RP services. As a result, it was not possible to provide results by region or school. Additionally, parental satisfaction and perceptions of their child's RP experience are based on an extremely small sample.

Reach Methods: What was the reach of the program?

Outcomes Measure: Reach of RP services was measured using data from the case management system used to track RP service cases at all participating schools.

Data Sources/Collection Methods: All data was collected in a system called MADTrac©, which is a case management software application that has been developed for the CDRP centers by the State. Use of MADTrac© is mandatory for dispute resolution centers receiving money from CDRP. Data is input by dispute resolution center staff or RP staff as referred to in the report.

Instruments: The data provided from MADTrac© included the following fields:

- Case #
- Student #
- # Served
- Referral Date
- Disposition Date
- School
- County
- Race
- Sex
- Age
- Grade
- Have IEP

- Dispute Subtype
- Referral Staff
- # of Sessions
- Total Minutes
- Initial Consequence
- # of Hours-Initial
- Final Consequence
- # of Hours-Final
- Avoided due to RP
- # of Hours-Avoided
- Service Provided
- Avoided Discipline

- Program Code
- Conflict Between
- Incident Description
- Comment
- Monetary Rest
- Payment Desc
- # of Work Hours
- Work Desc
- # of Serv Hours
- Service Desc
- Agreement Comp

Sample size and description: The sample includes all students who received RP services at any of the six participating schools during the study period (2016-17 & 2017-18).

Data collection procedures: Data is entered into the MADTrac© system by RP staff at three points in time for each incident: 1) when students are referred for services, 2) right after services are delivered, and 3) follow-up 30 days after the incident. The SCAO office pulled the data from MADTrac© and provided it to the evaluation team.

Timeline: Data is entered into MADTrac© on an ongoing basis. SCAO provided the evaluation team with final data from MADTrac© in July 2018.

Analysis: Descriptive statistics (i.e., counts and percentages) on referrals and use were examined at the school level and across regions.

Limitations: The MADTrac© database contains information only on students who have formally participated in RP. Students who received informal counseling or other benefits from RP services or CDRP center staff may not be recorded.

Impact Methods: To what extent did the program impact student outcomes?

Disciplinary and Attendance/Engagement Outcomes

Outcomes Measure: The outcome measures for the impact analysis were indicators of attendance (absences, tardies) and disciplinary records (suspension days, detentions) as recorded and reported by the schools.

Data Sources/Collection Methods: Data consisted of individual-level student data recorded by each of the schools in their records (or the school district if the school is part of a district-wide data collection system). All information is recorded by the schools and reported to the evaluation team at the end of each academic year during the study.

Instruments: Data requested from each school included the following. Items in bold were identified as high priority:

- **Student ID or similar for matching/tracking**
- **Gender**
- **Age**
- **Race / Ethnicity (may be separate codes)**
- Homeless status
- **Free and reduced lunch status**
- Ability/Disability Status or Specialized Learning Plan
- Single-Parent Household
- Native English Speaker

Student records data (repeated by student on semester or year basis)

- **Semester or year**
- **Enrollment status**
- **Grade level**
- Referred to RJ services (y/n)
- Received RJ services (y/n)
- **GPA**
- **Disciplinary incidents**
- **Detentions**
- **Suspensions**
- **Absences (total days)**
- Absences (excused days)
- Absences (unexcused days)
- Partial absences (missing partial day; total days)
- Late/tardy (total days)
- Write-ups or other formal discipline
- **Expulsion status**
- Awards or recognitions

Sample size and description: The sample included all students in grades 9-12 at each of the six schools, regardless of whether they had participated in RP services or not.

Analysis methods discussion:

The purpose of using propensity score matching is to create a comparison group that is equivalent to the school with existing service group. To demonstrate this, the tables that follow (Appendix Tables A2–A4) provide a comparison between the demographics of the school with existing services and the comparison group created from the population of the matched students (through use of propensity scores) from the school with new RP services in the same region. Note that for each region, the table lists the school with existing services twice: the demographics based on a raw total of all students for which data is available, and the second a smaller matched sub-set of students. The reduction in the number of students included in the analysis is a result of individuals being excluded due to one or more missing data points for the variables included in the propensity score analysis.

As seen in each of the tables, differences in the traits measured by the available demographic variables between the existing service school and the new service school disappear, or are greatly diminished, in the weighted comparison groups. Through the process of propensity score matching, the matched groups have become functionally equivalent, based on observable characteristics; therefore, it is possible to assume that differences in outcomes are most likely related to the known difference in conditions (existing implementation of RP services) instead of socioeconomic variance.

The rural region posed the greatest challenge for generating an appropriate match. As shown in Table A2, the post-matching demographics are not as well aligned as the other

regions. This is a result of both the small overall size of the existing school, and underlying demographic differences between the two schools.

Table A2. Rural Region School and Matched Group 2016-17 Demographic Comparison

Demographic Variable	Exiting Service School	New Service School	Matched Existing Service School	Matched Comparison Group
Female	49%	50%	49%	40%
Age (mean yrs.)	15.6	16.7	15.6	15.7
Race/Ethnicity				
Black	2%	2%	2%	5%
White	74%	93%	74%	71%
Hispanic/Latino	1%	2%	1%	14%
Other races	23%	3%	23%	10%
Free or reduced-price lunch	43%	34%	43%	50%
Disability	11%	14%	11%	17%
GPA (mean scale)	2.5	2.9	2.5	2.2
N	162	457	145	145

In the suburban region, the propensity score matching process succeeded at creating a matched comparison group that is nearly identical to the existing service school group, as measured by the available demographic variables (Table A3). For every variable, the proportion of students in the two groups is within +/- 1 percentage points. Analysis in the suburban region was helped by the substantial number of students at both schools, as well as the consistency of the data variables, which are both recorded by the same district-wide system.

Table A3. Suburban Region School and Matched Group 2016-17 Demographic Comparison

Demographic Variable	Exiting Service School	New Service School	Matched Existing Service School	Matched Comparison Group
Female	50%	50%	50%	50%
Age (mean yrs.)	17.1	16.7	17.1	17.1
Race/Ethnicity				
Black	79%	11%	79%	78%
White	14%	76%	14%	13%
Hispanic/Latino	1%	2%	1%	3%
Other races	3%	9%	3%	3%
Multi-racial	4%	1%	3%	2%
Free or reduced-price lunch	63%	56%	63%	64%
Disability	18%	11%	18%	22%
English 2nd language	1%	31%	1%	1%
GPA (mean scale)	2.0	2.7	2.0	2.0
N (weighted)	1,008	1,520	848	848

The propensity score matching process also provided a good demographic match between groups in the urban region (Table A4). Unlike in other regions, the new service school is substantially smaller than the existing service school, which resulted in a larger number of duplicate matches being required to achieve a balanced match. Still, on most measures the demographic variables are within 1-2 percentage points across the groups. It should be noted that the authors have a high level of confidence in the alignment and comparability of the urban data, due to the fact that it is collected at the district level, meaning that the methods of collecting and measuring each indicator are identical across both schools in the region.

Table A4. Urban Region School and Matched Group 2016-17 Demographic Comparison

Demographic Variable	Exiting Service School	New Service School	Matched Existing Service School	Matched Comparison Group
Female	49%	44%	49%	50%
Age (avg yrs.)	16.1	16.4	16.1	16.0
Race / Ethnicity				
White	23%	14%	23%	21%
Black	43%	59%	43%	43%
Hispanic	15%	9%	15%	15%
Multi-racial	9%	8%	9%	9%
Free or reduced lunch	82%	86%	82%	82%
Homeless	1%	1%	1%	1%
Disability status	15%	23%	15%	16%
Single parent household	40%	35%	40%	41%
GPA (avg scale)	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.3
N (weighted)	1,537	613	1,420	1,420

Data collection procedures: Data was requested and obtained directly from each of the schools in the rural and suburban region and from the district in the urban region.

Timeline: Data was obtained from each school or school district twice—at the end of the 2016-2017 academic year and 2017-2018 academic year.

Final comparative analysis: Once the comparison group was created out of individuals who were matched to the school with existing services group, simple means were calculated and compared for each group. The outcome measures were compared within each region (urban, major suburban, and rural) between the existing school (which began providing RP prior to the study) and the matched comparison group to test the hypothesis that the established presence of RP services has an impact on attendance and disciplinary outcomes.

Limitations: All schools in the study were asked to provide the same individual level student data; however, the availability of each requested variable differed somewhat across schools. For example, some schools provided data on a semester basis, while others provided data on an academic year basis. Also, some minor data variables used

for the matching process were not tracked by all schools: homelessness and students for whom English was a second or non-primary language.

Measurement of some demographic variables (e.g., race and ethnicity) and outcomes (e.g., attendance) vary across participating schools. For example, some schools record more or fewer categories of student race and ethnicity. The attendance variable is reported differently across schools; some simply reported the number of full days absent for each student, while others provided detail on the number of courses missed during the day, which was then used to calculate an average of days missed.

As discussed in the limitations section at the beginning of this report, the greatest limitation to the impact analysis was that the rural region had not actually begun fully implementing a full range of RP services prior to the start of the study. Because of this situation, any difference in outcomes in the rural region cannot be theoretically attributed to the established presence of RP.

Status of Agreements at Follow-Up

Outcomes Measure: The upholding of agreements is measured by RP program staff during a follow-up that is conducted with each student-participant approximately 4-6 weeks after completion of the RP. Adherence to the terms of the agreement is assessed by the staff member and entered into the database.

Data Sources/Collection Methods: Data measuring agreement-upholding were taken directly from the MADTrac© case management software application, which has been developed for the CDRP centers to track and report on RP services. Use of MADTrac© is mandatory for dispute resolution centers receiving money from CDRP. Data is input by dispute resolution center staff or RP staff as referred to in the report.

Sample and description: All students who participated in RP services are recorded in the database.

Timeline: Data is entered into MADTrac© on an ongoing basis. SCAO provided the evaluation team with data from MADTrac© in July 2018.

Analysis: Descriptive statistics were calculated on whether agreements were upheld were examined at the state level.

Limitations: The MADTrac© database contains information only on students who have formally participated in RP. Students who received informal counseling or other benefits from RP services or CDRP center staff may not be recorded.

Appendix C: Data Collection Instruments

Site Visit Protocol

Purpose: To directly collect qualitative information on the implementation of RP services from key stakeholders who are involved in providing services or referring students.

Audience/Population: Stakeholders involved in implementation of RP at the school.

Implementation: The evaluation team visited each of the three centers and six schools during in May 2016. The visits included a main meeting, which consisted of a discussion with center directors and school staff. The meetings were operated as a focus group, with the following questions guiding the discussion.

Questions

1. What restorative justice services has the Center implemented at each of the schools?
   a. Student services
   b. Restorative justice training? To what extent? (school wide)

2. How is the program implemented? Walk us through a typical scenario so we can see the whole process
   a. How choose which intervention types of students? Ever put offenders with low recidivism risk factors in less resource intensive interventions?

3. Difference in implementation between schools?

4. What's working particularly well?

5. What are the challenges to implementation?

6. What are the areas for improvement? On Centers part? On schools' part?

7. How do you fund this program? Do you get financial support from places other than the state? [Principal] – Email? Have time with?

8. Are there other services being offered in the school or community that could be impacting out of classroom time? Or academic outcomes?
   a. Of youth that attend the high school, have any attended elementary or middle school programs where RJ implemented?

School Staff Focus Group Protocol

Purpose: To directly collect qualitative information on the implementation of RP services from teachers and staff involved in the programming at each of the schools.

Audience/Population: Teachers, RP staff (ex. Center Directors), and school administrative staff directly involved with RP as approvers, trainees, providers of referrals.

Implementation: Interviews and informal focus groups were conducted as part of the school site visits that occurred during May 2016. The format used was based on the availability schedule of various staff at each of the schools, and included one-on-one interviews, small group discussions, and larger focus groups.

Questions

1. How do you use the restorative justice services and how does it turn out for you?

2. When and why do you refer students to the restorative justice programming?

3. Do you see any changes because of the restorative justice services?

4. How do the restorative justice services add value to your school? / Do you think the restorative justice services are positively benefiting students? / Staff and administrators?
   a. Students getting less time out of the classroom
   b. Students getting better educational outcomes (grades)
   c. Student relationships better with students? With staff?

5. Impacts on a broader sense on how to handle conflict? Sort of just case by case – not think about it until it gets to that point?
   a. Do you think there has been an impact on school climate in terms of how students and staff think about addressing issues?

6. What's working well? And why?

7. What could be improved? And why? From the Centers/delivery/support? On school's end?

8. Are there other *things* going on that could be impacting student outcomes in term of reduced time out of the classroom? Grades?

School Staff Questionnaire

Purpose: This questionnaire was offered as another way for teachers and staff to provide feedback on their perceptions of the RP service implementation. The focus was primarily on qualitative, open-ended questions that were intended to give those who were unable to attend a focus group or interview a chance to provide broad feedback.

Population: School staff who are involved with RP but who were unable to attend the May 2016 school focus groups.

Implementation: Provided in May-June 2016 via electronic survey that was passed on by school administrative staff. The survey was primarily relevant at existing schools where RP services had been in-place for some time, giving a larger group of teachers and staff experience with the services.

Response Rates: A total of 13 surveys were returned by teachers and school staff, representing three existing schools across all three regions.

Introduction: Western Michigan University's Evaluation Center was contract by the Michigan State Supreme Court Administrative Office to evaluate their school-based restorative justice services. The Evaluation Center is implementing this questionnaire to learn how staff view the restorative justice services offered at their school. In particular, we are interested in learning how the restorative justice services impact students and the wider school community, as well as how the restorative justice services can be improved.

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1. What school do you work at?
   a. [choice list]

2. What role do you play in the school?
   a. Teacher
   b. Administrator
   c. Staff member
   d. Other: _____

3. To what degree do you have experience with the restorative justice services at your school? (Please select all that apply)
   - ☐ a) I am not aware of the restorative justice services offered at my school *[If selected, skip to thank you page]*
   - ☐ b) I am aware of the restorative justice services but have not directly participated in them
   - ☐ c) Students I have interacted with have attended the restorative justice services
   - ☐ d) I have referred students to the restorative justice services
   - ☐ e) I have participated in the restorative justice services

☐   f) I have attended a training on restorative justice practices through my school

4. When do you refer students to the restorative justice programming? And when do you not? [Text box] *[Appear if "I have referred students to the restorative justice services" is selected in question 2]*

5. What changes, if any, do you see in the students or your school as a result of the restorative justice services? [Text box]

6. How could the restorative justice services be improved? [Text box]

Participating Student Questionnaire

Purpose: To collect feedback from participants regarding their satisfaction with the RP services and self-reported post-service outcomes.

Audience/Population: All students who participated in a RP service at any of the study schools.

Implementation: The survey was conducted via paper survey forms, which were handed out to student-participants by RP program staff, who were based at the school. It was requested that the forms be handed out to participants after final completion of their RP experience.

The forms were printed by the evaluator and provided to each school-site. Pre-paid return envelopes were provided for sending the surveys directly to the evaluator. This was done to reassure the students of the confidentiality of their response, as well as to eliminate the burden of collecting and sending surveys for the school and center staff.

Response: In total, 859 completed surveys were received during the study. We estimate that this represents a return rate of around 51%, based on a non-duplicate count of student IDs listed in the case management system. The rate can only be estimated, since RP staff did not keep a count of the actual number of survey forms delivered to students.

The next page provides an example of the items used in the questionnaire. Note that this does not include the customization for the programs at each school site.

What do we want to know?
We want to hear about your recent experience with a circle or focus group at your school.

Who will see my responses?
Only staff at Western Michigan University. No one from the program or school will see your answers.

1. What did you participate in at school?

☐ Circles   ☐ Focus group or support group

2. Please answer the following about the circle or focus group.

	Yes	No		Yes	No
I would participate again.	○	○	Everyone helped make the agreement.	○	○
I was treated fairly.	○	○	I am satisfied with the agreement.	○	○
I had a chance to say what I needed to say.	○	○	I think the agreement will solve the problem for good.	○	○
I felt others listened to me.	○	○	Everyone is following the agreement.	○	○
I better understand the other person's side of the story.	○	○	I learned how to better communicate when conflict happens.	○	○
I am on better terms with the people who were involved in the conflict.	○	○	I know an adult at school that can help fix my problems with others.	○	○
Everyone took responsibility for their part in the conflict.	○	○	I know I can resolve problems peacefully.	○	○
I know how the conflict made others feel.	○	○	I will handle conflict differently than before.	○	○

3. What happened as a result of the circle or focus group?

	Yes	No
The plan repaired the harm or to made up for the wrong done.	○	○
Detention or suspension was avoided.	○	○
The days of detention or suspension was reduced.	○	○
An agreement was made to avoid an expulsion.	○	○
A person who was harmed received a sincere apology.	○	○
The conflict has not occurred since the circle or focus group.	○	○
Court or legal actions were avoided.	○	○
Other:		

4. Please tell us about yourself:

Grade _____

Age _____

Gender _____

Race(s)/ethnicity(ies)

☐ Asian
☐ Black or AA
☐ Hispanic/Latino
☐ Native American
☐ Pacific Islander
☐ White
☐ Other_____

Thank You!
Please put in included envelope, seal, and place in a mail box or return to the staff at your school.

5. What would make the circle or focus group better?

General Parent Questionnaire

Purpose: To measure parent awareness of the availability of RP services in the schools and to collect feedback on the perceptions of parents regarding the usefulness and impact of RP on their children.

Audience/Population: The parents of all high school children attending any of the schools involved in the study.

Implementation: Based on the parent's responses to an early sorting question, the online survey provided a different set of questions based on their familiarity with RP services.

The survey was conducted electronically during January-March 2018. Invitations to participate were delivered by the administration at each school—this was done to protect the privacy of families and was also based on the assumption the parents would be more likely to respond to a request from the school. The evaluator developed the survey instrument and provided a link to the survey web site, which was customized to each school.

Response: A total of 215 parents from five of the six participating schools responded to the surveys.

One school agreed to participate and indicated that the survey would be most effective if delivered via computers provided during parent-teacher conferences. The school did not follow-through in providing the survey, therefore, parents from one school (in the suburban region) are not represented in the final results.

The text below provides a listing of the items used in the survey, but does not display the customization and graphics, nor the branching logic, used in the electronic questionnaire.

Parent and Guardian Survey on School Restorative Practices

This survey is being conducted to learn about your views on restorative justice services being offered in your child's school. These services include mediation, conference circles, and/or peer focus groups. Restorative justice services are intended to teach problem solving, reduce conflict, and provide more effective discipline in the school.

What do we want to learn?

We want to find out if you are aware of these services. If your child (or children) participated in a

restorative justice service, we want to hear about the experience. Your response will help to determine if this is an effective and useful approach.

Who will see your responses?

Your individual response will be kept confidential from your child's school. To ensure the anonymity of all respondents, the results are being collected and summarized by Western Michigan University's Evaluation Center.

If you have questions about this survey, please contact XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Please click 'NEXT' to begin the survey.

Are you aware that your child's school offers "restorative justice" services (such as mediation, circles, peer focus groups, or conferences) in some instances as an alternative to traditional disciplinary action? Yes – No [branch point]

Did your child or children participate in restorative justice services provided by the school?

No - Yes, one or more of my children participated - Not sure

What activities did your child participate in? If you have more than one child who has participated or if your child has attended multiple services, please respond only for the most recent experience. (Select all that apply)

[activities list custom]

Please answer the following about the restorative justice services. If you have more than one child who has participated or if your child has attended multiple sessions, please respond only for the most recent experience. Yes – No – Don't know/NA

a) Were you satisfied with the services your child recently participated in?

b) Would you recommend participation in the services to other parents with students facing conflict?

c) Do you think the agreement made in the conference or mediation will solve the problem for good?

d) Has your child followed through on their part of the agreement?

e) Was your child treated fairly?

f) Were you satisfied with the outcome?

g) Is your child now on better terms with the others involved in the conflict or issue?

h) Did your child's participation in the services help them resolve the conflict?

i) Did your child learn how to handle issues or conflict?

j) Do you and your child communicate more about issues at school?

Have you noticed any changes in the behavior of your child since participating in the restorative justice services at school? Please describe. [open end]

What happened to your child as a result of participating in the restorative justice services at school? If you have more than one child who has participated or if your child has attended multiple sessions, please respond only for the most recent experience. Yes – No - Don't know or not applicable

a) A plan was made to repair the harm or to make up for the wrong done.

b) An agreement was made to improve attendance and/or reduce tardiness.

c) A person who was harmed received a sincere apology.

d) The conflict has not reoccurred.

e) Detention or suspension was avoided.

f) The days of detention or suspension were reduced.

g) An agreement was made to avoid expulsion.

h) Court or legal actions were avoided.

i) Other (Please specify):

Please tell us a bit about your child or children. If you have more than one child in the school, please answer for the individual who most recently participated in a restorative justice program at the school.

Grade?

Age?

Gender?

Race / Ethnicity (select all that apply) [choice list]

Is there anything else that you would like to share regarding your child's experience with restorative justice services? [open end]

Thank you! Select the 'NEXT' button below to exit the survey.

Appendix D: School Profiles

School Building Demographics: Fall 2017-18 Totals

	Rural		Suburban		Urban	
	Existing Services	New Services	Existing Services	New Services	Existing Services	New Services
Building enrollment in grade 9-12	163	441	860	1,480	1,435	548
Nonwhite student building share (all grades)	11%	10%	87%	24%*	76%	85%
Free & reduced lunch rates (grade 9-12)	53%	38%	79%	68%	71%	72%

Source: State of Michigan, Center for Educational Performance and Information

* Note: School has a large population of students classified as white but identifying as middle eastern descent

Appendix E: Student Suggestions for Improvement

Suggestions Regarding Facilitation

The following table shows student suggestions on how to improve the facilitation of RP services.

Theme	N (# of students)	Example Responses
Snacks should be provided during RJ	19	Food. Everything is better with food. :)
More time to talk	15	"More talking because I feel like I didn't really get to talk as much as I wanted to." "Making sure everyone gets their point across"
More direct communication with one another	11	"Let us talk to each other"
Improve staff mediation skills	10	"Stricter less naive mediator" [Reference to peer led medication] "Try to understand the disputants and where they are coming from to properly handle the situation."
Better room and facilities	9	"Bigger room"/"Better room" "Comfortable chairs so the people in the circle feel comfortable and can be able to speak" "Air in the room or fans"
Everyone involved should participate in the RJ	7	"One way the focus group could become better would be if everyone involved could be there in the group."
Staff should talk more	6	"If everyone participated during mediation (mediators)." "They don't ask a lot of questions"
Only use RJ if necessary	5	"If there's no problem let us just leave, because people get in there that have no problems and lose out in class."

Suggestions Regarding Interactions

The following table shows student suggestions on how to improve student interactions during RP services.

Theme	N	Example Responses
Participants should treat one another with respect	21	"Only one person talk" "It's not bad but just try to keep everybody calm if it gets loud." "Have people talk nicely."/ "Try to get along"
Participants should follow-through on agreements	6	"The circles are pretty good, but I feel like after every circle people break the contract and nothing happens to them like they say."
Participants should listen to one another	6	"Listening skills, no phones in circle, eye contact"

Appendix F: Student Success Stories

All student success stories were submitted by dispute resolution center staff—therefore, the evaluation team cannot confirm the accuracy of these stories. Stories have been slightly modified for consistency of language and to conceal the identity of the school and students.

Story 1: School with Existing RP Services in the Rural Region

Help Failing Student Reengage with School

At our school referrals come directly from staff. This includes cafeteria staff, secretaries, teachers and administration. This allowed a variety of situations to come to the RP staff members attention and to identify potential opportunities to use mediation techniques. West is a junior who had some problems with discipline early in the school year related to substance abuse. West was also was underperforming and failing three classes. A library staff member came to the RP staff with their concerns about West's academic performance. The RP staff member met with West and found out he was passionate about cooking and wanted a career in culinary arts. Since West's high school does not have a culinary arts program, the RP staff member connected him with a program in another school district. West's underperformance in his classes made his entry into the culinary program contingent upon him improving his attendance and grades. In order to get into the culinary program, West made a plan to do the following: 1) talk with the school counselor and principal; 2) improve his attendance and disciplinary record; 3) pass all his classes and meet requirements for graduation; and 4) take the necessary steps to sign up for the program. Wayland carried through on his plan and currently has the option to attend a culinary arts program at a nearby high school or to take a different technical course as he chooses. During this time the RP staff, monitored his success to help address any roadblocks that came up along the way.

Students Apologize After Prank Gone Too Far

Julia, Tim, and Jared got into a conflict outside of school. The school administration wanted to prevent the conflict from getting dragged into school. Tim and Julia were hanging out and decided to call and prank Jared. Julia pretended to be a girl Jared knew but he quickly realized it was not the girl she was pretending to be. When Jared asking Julia who it was, she would not identify herself, so Jared became irritated and said he would call the police and hung up. Then Tim called Jared and pretended to be another student—Jared assumed the person calling him was Clint, someone he had a bad relationship with. Jared was annoyed with the prank and said he wanted to meet Tim (who he thought was a student named Clint) in the park in a half hour. Soon after, Jared's father came home. After Jared's father heard the story, he told Jared that he was not allowed to go the park. Jared's father then ended up calling both Julia and Tim's parents, as well as the school about the incident. The students were referred to RP services. The RP staff first met with and interviewed the students separately. Then the RP staff member brought all the students together. Tim and Julia apologized to Jared and said they understood how this type of prank could lead to more serious problems. During the mediation the students started a friendly conversation about unrelated topics and seemed to be getting along.

Story 2: School with New RP Services in Rural Region

Barriers to Student's Attendance Addressed

One of the first mediations conducted at our school was with Madison and her father regarding truancy, as Madison had not been to school for almost a month. Through the conversation it was revealed that Madison was suffers from anxiety and was upset about being at a new school, having had to switch schools because of her parents' divorce. Through the mediation process, RP staff talked to Madison about the possibility of returning to her previous school. Eventually, it was determined that attending her current school was the only feasible option. While working on a plan for Madison to return to school the RP staff learned that part of the reason, she was not attending school was that her best friend, who lives with her, was also not attending school. Through the restorative practice, RP staff were able to restore both students back to school. RP staff see Madison on a regular basis, as she stops in to provide updates on her attendance. Madison also stops by when she is struggling with attendance and RP staff work with Madison so she can return to class. Since starting RP services, Madison's attendance and grades have improved.

Story 3: Schools with Existing RP Services in Suburban Region

Student Build Communication Skills and Independently Solves Conflict

The most memorable student an RP staff member worked with was named Claire. Claire benefited from the use of restorative justice circles, as well as the restorative principles she was able to learn and apply to her life. Claire was first referred to RP services by an assistant principal after getting into a verbal argument with a friend during class. Despite being resistant to the process at first, Claire allowed herself to open up during the circle and told her friend she was not being as supportive as Claire needed her to be. Claire then disclosed some issues at home she had not previously shared. Claire's friend was receptive. At the end of a teary circle, the girls came to an understanding and the argument was forgiven.

The second time Claire used RP services it was because of an altercation with another student. It soon became clear to the RP staff that Claire's subsequent altercations with other student stemmed from issues of trust and anxiety she was struggling with that the RP staff could not help her solve. The RP staff member referred Claire to additional school resources and worked with her throughout the school year. The RP staff member witnessed positive behavioral changes in Claire over the time she would regularly check-in with staff. For example, Claire went to the RP staff member as a preventative measure before issues with other student became a problem. The RP staff member encouraged Claire to use the principles she had learned from circles — listening, understanding, respect, and explaining her perspective — to talk with a classmate with whom she had been experiencing tension. Claire explained to the other student why she was frustrated and respectfully requested what she needed from him. At the next check-in, Claire told the staff member she was able to successfully address the situation on her own. Claire finished out the year well, equipped with the communication skills she learned through restorative justice and the confidence gained from applying them in her personal life.

Story 4: Schools with New RP Services in the Suburban Region

Students Realizes Anger is Because of Past Trauma

Tommy had very bad anger issues. Tommy kept getting into trouble for fighting, acting silly, being rude and disrespectful. RP staff sat down to do a circle with Tommy and another student for fighting. As the Circle ensued, Tommy stated that his actions were because he can't control his anger. When asked what's happened to make him so angry, he related that he had had a parent die just a year ago and had experienced a lot of changes in his life since then. As Tommy talked, he told the other student that his actions were not because of him or anyone else for that matter. By the end of the circle Tommy was apologetic, crying, and spoke of the fact that he wasn't going to keep fighting because other people were not his problem, he was. The other student was visibly moved with compassion for Tommy and fought back tears of his own. RP services gave Tommy the opportunity to right his wrongs, process his own actions and take responsibility for them, and assure the other student that he would be safe and left alone. During a follow up with RP staff, Tommy reported doing a lot better. More importantly, some of Tommy's teachers said his class outburst changed as well.

Story 5: School with New RP Services in the Urban Region

Student Encouraged to Think of Legal Implications of Streaking

During a follow up visit with RP staff, Robbie stated that he was preparing to get "famous." Robbie told RP staff that he was going to streak during a professional basketball game. The RP staff then suggest that Robbie speak with someone regarding the legal implications of his idea. The school's police officer was joined the conversation and helped Robbie understand the legal risks of such a plan. Two days later, Robbie told the RP staff that he thought about the conversation he had with her and the police officer and decided against doing the "get famous quick plan."

Social Media Conflict Ends in Friendship

Two groups of students were involved in a social media conflict. The conflict was creating for one student involved in the conflict. The RP staff performed a mediation between both the student groups and was able to allow the parties to communicate their differences without the conflict escalating into a fight. The students created an agreement in which they drafted, were able to reflect on each other's perspectives, and ultimately became friends. Throughout the semester the students stopped by the RP office to thank staff and let them know how things were progressing.

Story 6: School with Existing PR Services in the Urban Region

Problem Students Helps Other Students Solve Conflict

Trisha constantly argued with everyone: her classmates, teachers, and administrators. Trisha had a sharp tongue and a negative attitude. Trisha's temper surfaced quickly when told to do something she did not want to, or not do something she wanted to do. Trisha frequently found herself in the principal's office for violating some policy or for inciting unsafe conditions. The principal referred Trisha to peer mediation or RJ conferences to either avoid or reduce suspension. Needless to say, Trisha and RP staff had many conversations. At the end of her junior year, Trisha started coming around the mediation room to work through issues as they arose. Then in her senior year, Trisha signed up to be a mediator. Most of Trisha's teachers were skeptical to say the least. Initially administration rejected Trisha's application, yet Trisha put together a solid argument for the principal on why she should be a mediator. The principal granted Trisha's request for a probationary period. As the year moved forward, Trisha started seeing how she looked to adults when she got into disputes with other students. It was a real eye opener for her. Trisha stopped arguing with her teachers and choose to speak to them in a calm mature manner. Trisha chose her words carefully and accepted the answer received whether she liked it or not. More importantly, Trisha started helping classmates work through conflicts in class. Trisha's class participation improved dramatically, and her grades reflected same. Teachers let RP staff know just how mature Trisha had become since becoming a mediator. Even the principal remarked on how Trisha changed and seemed like a completely different person. Trisha is now in college. And, from what RP staff heard, doing very well. Trisha told RP staff that having the peer mediation credential helped her obtain the offer for a seat at the college.

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