Good intentions are not enough: The science of implementing high quality restorative practices in schools

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Additional authors: Kathleen Clawson, Jenifer Gerewitz, & Josh Korth

Rutgers University
Our time together today

Dr. Anne Gregory (15 minutes)
- Racial discipline gap
- Importance of measuring the implementation of Restorative Practice (RP) in schools
- Racial discipline gap and RP implementation study
- 5 minutes of Q and A

Alycia Davis (15 minutes)
- *RP-Observable* - a systematic observational tool of RP circles
- 5 minutes of Q and A

5-10 minute larger discussion
Small scale study

• Do classrooms with high frequency implementation of Restorative Practices (RP) have positive teacher-student relationships among all racial and ethnic groups as seen through:

1) student experience of their teachers as respectful?

2) infrequent use of teacher-issued referrals for misconduct/defiance across racial and ethnic groups?
Secondary School Suspension Rates*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Asian/PI</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972-73</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data from the U.S. Department of Education’s 2009-10 Civil Rights Data Collection
Figure from Losen, D. & Martinez, T. (2013) Out of School & Off Track: The overuse of Suspensions in American Middle and High Schools.

* Based on non-duplicated student counts.
Latino students

• A national study of 10\textsuperscript{th} graders showed that:

  – Latino 10\textsuperscript{th} graders were \textit{twice} as likely as White students to be issued an out-of-school suspension.

  • Findings accounted for student- and teacher-reported misbehavior (Finn & Servoss, 2013).
Individual student characteristics

Most likely to get disciplined:
• male, with a disability, lower achievement
• Lower socioeconomic status

But notwithstanding these characteristics...

racial disparities still exist
Race remains a predictor of the gap...
The Texas longitudinal study recently reported:

“Multivariate analyses, which enabled researchers to control for 83 different variables in isolating the effect of race alone on disciplinary actions, found that African-American students had a 31 percent higher likelihood of a school discretionary action, compared to otherwise identical white and Hispanic students” (Fabelo et al., 2011).
Racial gap is not the same across all reasons for discipline

A statewide Texas study showed that:

• “Within the ninth-grade school year, African-American students had about a 23 percent lower likelihood of facing a mandatory school disciplinary action...compared to otherwise identical white students.”

• “Within the ninth-grade year, African-American students had about a 31 percent higher likelihood of a discretionary school disciplinary action, compared to the rate for otherwise identical white students” (p. 45, Fabelo et al., 2011).
Frequent and Disparate Use of Suspension for Minor Offenses under Disruption/Defiance Compared with Serious Offenses by Race

Source: Figure from Civil Rights Letter to Governor Brown, Their analyses from CALPADS data from CDOE, 2011-12.
Teachers and African American students

• Compared to White students, African American students tend to experience less support and more unfair treatment from their teachers.

• Teachers have more negative perceptions of African American students.
  – Seen as more defiant and disruptive
  – Issued harsher disciplinary consequences

  (Bradshaw, Mitchell, O’Brennan, & Leaf, 2010; Fabelo et al., 2011; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Horner, Fireman, & Wang, 2010; Thompson, 2012; Wald & Kurlaender, 2003)
Theorizing about RP and the racial discipline gap

• RP’s focus on developing an authoritative climate in the classroom may elicit trusting teacher-student interactions in which students of all racial and ethnic groups feel supported and treated fairly:
  
  — Sensitivity to individual student perspectives and the collective voice of students,
  
  — Consistent and fair accountability for jointly-developed classroom rules
    
    • may reduce the likelihood that students in marginalized groups will be excluded from the classroom for discipline reasons.
Small scale study

• Do classrooms with high frequency implementation of RP have positive teacher-student relationships among all racial and ethnic groups as seen through:

  1) student experience of their teachers as respectful?

  2) infrequent use of teacher-issued referrals for misconduct/defiance across racial and ethnic groups?
Study sites

• Two diverse high schools in first year of SaferSanerSchools RP implementation.

• Small sample of mostly White teachers ($N = 29$)

• Student sample ($N = 412$):

![Bar chart showing percentages of different groups in the sample]

- **54%**: Hispanic, African American, American Indian, Mixed from these groups
- **46%**: Asian, White
Discipline Referral Data

In the 2010-2011 school year, close to a third of Hispanic and African American students (34%, 38%, respectively) compared to 5% and 11% of Asian and White students (respectively) were issued referrals for misconduct/defiance.
Measuring RP Implementation

Students answered all items on a five-point scale, rating the degree to which the teacher engaged in the particular RP approach (i.e., not at all, rarely, sometimes, often, and always).

- The Affective Statements Scale (3 items, alpha = .59) included “My teacher is respectful when talking about feelings.”

- The Restorative Questions Scale (4 items, alpha = .81) included, “When someone misbehaves, my teacher responds to negative behaviors by asking students questions about what happened, who has been harmed and how the harm can be repaired.”

- The Proactive Circles Scale (4 items, alpha = .75) included, “My teacher uses circles to provide opportunities for students to share feelings, ideas and experiences.”

- The Fair Process Scale (4 items, alpha = .73) included, “Asks students for their thoughts and ideas when decisions need to be made that affect the class.”

- The Responsive Circles Scale (6 items, alpha = .72) included, “My teacher uses circles to respond to behavior problems and repair harm caused by misbehavior.”

- The Management of Shame Scale (4 items, alpha = .71) included, “My teacher acknowledges the feelings of students when they have misbehaved.”

- IIRP student RP scales
Teacher ratings

- Teachers RP implementation on parallel scales:
  - Affective Statements Scale, (8 items, alpha = .80),
  - Restorative Questions Scale (7 items, alpha = .90),
  - Proactive Circles Scale (8 items, alpha = .59),
  - Fair Process Scale (6 items, alpha = .93),
  - Responsive Circles Scale (10 items, alpha = .76),
  - Management of Shame Scale (7 items, alpha = .93).

- IIRP staff RP scales
Experience of RP implementation similar across student race and ethnicity

All differences ns
Measuring quality of teacher-student relationships

- **Teacher Respect scale**
  - On the student survey
  - 4-point likert scale, “not at all true” to “very true.”
  - They indicated whether the teacher:
    - “liked them,”
    - “interrupted them when they had something to say” (rev. scored),
    - “did not enjoy having them in class” (rev. scored),
    - “never listened to their side” (rev. scored).

- **School discipline records:**
  - “Misconduct/defiance” discipline referrals included disrespect, insubordination, profanity/ obscenity, misconduct, and disorderly conduct.
Hypothesis 1

• The relationship between RP implementation and teacher respect would not vary by student race/ethnicity
HLM Analysis with Student-Reported Teacher Respect as Level-1 Outcome

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Model 1 Estimate (SE)</th>
<th>Model 2 Estimate (SE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1 Student-level predictors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (1: Hispanic/Black; 0: Asian/White) β₁ᵢ</td>
<td>-.02 (.05)</td>
<td>-.02 (.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Cooperationᵢⱼ β₂ᵢ</td>
<td>.20** (.06)</td>
<td>.19** (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2 Teacher-level predictors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student report_RP_Implementⱼ γ₀₁</td>
<td></td>
<td>.12** (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher report_RP_Implementⱼ γ₀₂</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.05 (.03)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

• Students reporting greater implementation of the RP elements tended to perceive those teachers as more respectful.

• We also found that the link between RP implementation and teacher respect was the same for Asian/White versus Hispanic/African-Amer., Amer. Indian groups.
Hypothesis 2

RP Implementation \( \rightarrow \) Low racial discipline gap
Regression Models for Number of Defiance referrals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White/Asian Referrals</th>
<th>Afr-Amer/Hispanic Referrals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>R²</strong></td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.18*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standardized Betas</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teacher-reported RP</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Student-reported RP</td>
<td>-.34+</td>
<td>-.44*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teachers above \((n = 16)\) and below \((n = 13)\) the mean on student-perceived RP implementation and their misconduct/defiance referrals.
Summary of study

• Teachers who were perceived by their students as frequently implementing many of the RP practices tended to have better relationships with their students, compared to infrequent implementers of RP.

• This was seen in the degree to which students felt respected by their teachers and teachers’ use of disruption/defiance disciplinary referrals.

• *High frequency/quality* RP implementation has promise for narrowing the racial discipline gap.

• Accepted for publication in a special issue of the *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation* (JEPC) on Restorative Justice and School Consultation: Current Science and Practice
Questions?

Comments?

(Five minutes)
Observing the RP Circle Process

Anne Gregory, Ph.D.
Jennifer Gerewitz
Kathleen Clawson
Alycia Davis
Joshua Korth
Circle Clip (1)

- *The Worst School I’ve Ever Been To*
- Video loaned by IIRP and produced by Safer Saner Schools
RP-Observe

• Why do we need a systematic, reliable and valid observation tool of RP?
• Measures quality of implementation
  – helps observers and trainers reliably rate the quality of circles
• Sheds light on why program may or may not be working
  – Id strengths and challenges in circles
RP-Observe

- *RP-Observe* is designed for observers to record the quality of the following two IIRP Elements of Restorative Practices
  - Proactive Circle
  - Responsive Circle
- RP-Observe has mainly been tested on Proactive Circles
How do raters use the RP-Observe manual?

Coding sheet

• In the manual, for each dimension, there are examples of observable low-range (1, 2), mid-range (3, 4, 5), and high-range behavior (6, 7).

• Examples and indicators of certain behaviors are used as a guideline to decide how to rate a dimension.

• Coders are encouraged to be objective and to only code observable behaviors.
RP-Obs-serve Constructs

- **Structure**
  - Circle rules

- **Support**
  - Positive teacher-student and student-student interactions
  - Teacher and student responsiveness

- **Student Voice**
  - Relevancy
  - Autonomy
  - Risk-taking
  - Problem-Solving
Circle Structure

Structure → Circle rules
Circle Rules

• “Circle Rules” are used to provide an indication of behavior management within the circle.

• Comprised of: Clear circle rules, Fairness and consistency, and Response to rule breaking.
Circle Support

- Positive teacher-student and student-student interactions
- Teacher and student responsiveness
Student Responsiveness

- Student responsiveness used to provide a measure of empathic and accepting behavior amongst students.
- Comprised of: Empathic responses and Acceptance
Student Responsiveness Example

• Rating = 4 (mid-range)
• Few empathic responses observed
• Students generally take turns and listen to one another
• Students display some interest in other students
• Students engage in polite exchanges
Student Voice

- Relevancy
- Autonomy
- Risk-taking
- Problem-Solving
Autonomy

- Autonomy measures the degree to which students have ownership in the circle process
- Comprised of: Student ownership of the process, Teacher use of power, and Authentic choice
Autonomy Example

• Rating = 2 (low range)
• Teacher chooses circle topic independently of students
• Rigid circle agenda
• Rigid circle rules
• Teacher leads process completely
Student Voice

- Relevancy
- Autonomy
- Risk-taking
- Problem-Solving
Risk-taking

• Risk-taking measures the level of student disclosure present during the circle process

• Comprised of: Appropriate personal disclosure
Risk-taking Example

- Rating = 5 (high end of mid range)
- A single student discloses personal information that may be sensitive in nature
- Other students disclose low risk content (e.g. academic goals)
- Teacher asks questions about student opinions
Technical Notes for RP-Observe

• Initial testing of reliability and validity
  – 15 video segments, 10-20 minute duration
• Most dimensions show adequate inter-rater reliability and validity
  – Autonomy and Student Responsiveness (exceptions)
• Additional testing is required with a larger sample of RP circles.
Concluding Statements

• Initial promise of RP-Observe in reliable and systematic measurement of RP circle quality
• More research needed to strengthen and further adapt RP-Observe
  – Pilot for training purposes
Thank you

Thank you to Atlantic Philanthropies and the NoVo Foundation for the support of this research.

In addition, we would also like to thank Ted Wachtel and John Bailie at IIRP.