

# Restorative Practices in Baltimore City Schools:



**Research Updates and Implementation Guide**

**September 2020**

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Deborah Thompson Eisenberg, Esq., Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and Anastasia W. Smith, Esq. from the Center for Dispute Resolution, University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law, conducted a review of recent restorative practices research, law, and policy developments, and drafted this Report for OSI-Baltimore.

The Johns Hopkins University Institute for Education (JHU) conducted the study of the implementation of restorative practices (RP) in the fourteen schools selected as intensive learning site RP schools. Portions of the JHU study are included in this report, and the complete study is included in Appendix A.

Finally, we acknowledge and express gratitude to Baltimore City Public Schools' Board of School Commissioners, the CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools, Dr. Sonja Santelises, as well as the numerous teachers, students, administrators, school and central office staff, and community partners who are working tirelessly to make Baltimore City Public Schools a restorative practices district.

# Executive Summary

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“Restorative Practices have the potential to change an entire generation of children.” (*Baltimore City Elementary/Middle School Principal*)

Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) and other school districts across the United States are implementing restorative practices (RP) to improve school climate by building meaningful relationships in school communities, reframing school discipline, and supporting student safety, well-being, and success. This transformational approach centers student voice and agency, and enhances students’ engagement and participation in their own learning. The Center for Dispute Resolution at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law and Open Society Institute – Baltimore (OSI) collaborated to create *The Restorative Practices in Baltimore City Public Schools: Research Updates and Implementation Guide*. The purpose of the report is to:

- Consolidate existing work describing the use of RP in public schools in Baltimore, across Maryland, and in other parts of the country;
- Evaluate progress made by Baltimore City in early implementation of its district-wide restorative practices initiative;
- Help other districts across the country learn from Baltimore’s successes and challenges and provide a blueprint to follow as they implement restorative practices in their own unique contexts.

## **What are Restorative Practices?**

Restorative practices (RP) have been adopted in many Western cultures from indigenous practices of Native Americans, Maori, ethnic groups in Africa, and others. According to the International Institute of Restorative Practices, the unifying hypothesis of RP is that “human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things *with* them, rather than *to* them or *for* them.” (Wachtel, 2016, p.3)

As such, restorative practices in schools provide a vehicle for creating positive school communities by strengthening relationships and assisting stakeholders in working together to make decisions, resolve problems, and engage in teaching and learning (Vaandering, 2010). [See a video on RP here.](#) Restorative practices invite educators to shift from more punitive disciplinary practices, to approaches that seek to resolve problems that emerge among school community stakeholders. When harm occurs in a restorative school, all affected parties are given an opportunity to voice their concerns, and collaboratively develop a plan of action to resolve the

matter. This community building process promotes accountability, reinforces community norms, and *restores* the school community in a proactive, supportive way (Fronius, 2019, p. 10).

### **Restorative Practices in Baltimore City Public Schools**

In January 2018, City Schools selected fourteen schools to become RP intensive learning sites (RP schools) to receive intensive RP training and coaching over a one year period, with less intensive RP training and coaching for a second school year. The RP schools would serve as incubators to inform the implementation of the practice throughout the district. The Open Society Institute-Baltimore (OSI), together with other community partners, collaborated with City Schools in its efforts to build a fully restorative school district over time. The integration of restorative practices is part of City Schools' Blueprint for Success.<sup>1</sup>

To inform the launch of the RP schools, OSI-Baltimore and partners published a *Restorative Practices Report* (OSI, 2018) ("OSI Report").<sup>2</sup> The OSI Report included an overview of the emerging literature about restorative practices, prepared by the Johns Hopkins University Institute of Education Policy (JHU). The report also obtained feedback from approximately 400 stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, school staff, parents, students, school police, and external community stakeholders, and set forth robust implementation recommendations compiled from stakeholder feedback. [See the full report here](#). Other useful materials, including [RP videos](#) and a [Restorative Practices Lesson Plan Guide](#) were also created by OSI to assist teachers in implementing this transformative practice.

### **Study of Restorative Practices Schools**

Baltimore City's RP schools began implementing restorative practices and receiving intensive coaching and training in school year 2018/2019. At the request of OSI-Baltimore, [JHU conducted a review of the implementation status](#) in the RP schools and released a report in October 2019, after the first full year of adopting the practice. JHU found promising results at these early stages, as well as areas for continued improvement.

Overall, JHU found that since the implementation of restorative practices in the RP schools:

- Suspensions decreased in the RP schools by an impressive 44% in one year;
- The vast majority of school staff reported that restorative practices improved school climate and strengthened relationships among and between teachers and students;

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<sup>1</sup> Blueprint for Success, <https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/blueprint>.

<sup>2</sup> Baltimore City Public Schools Restorative Practices Report: <https://www.osibaltimore.org/wp-content/uploads/RP-plan-and-appendix-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>

- Schools are pursuing the goal of “whole-school” restorative practices and have integrated training and restorative processes - especially proactive circles to build community – into the school day.



Figure 1: Findings from Implementation Status Report at Pilot Restorative Schools

### Restorative Practices Developments in Maryland

In 2017, the Maryland General Assembly appointed the Maryland Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices. After eighteen months of study, the Commission issued an extensive report to the Maryland Governor and legislature (Maryland Commission, 2018).<sup>3</sup> The Commission urged school districts to implement “restorative approaches to building and sustaining a positive learning environment” (Maryland Commission, 2018, p. 7). The Commission’s work led to clarification in Maryland law that the underlying purpose of school discipline is not to punish and exclude students. Rather, conflicts and harmful incidents present opportunities for educators to teach students social-emotional skills and reinforce community behavioral norms.

<sup>3</sup>

<https://www.law.umaryland.edu/media/SOL/pdfs/Programs/ADR/STPP%20%20RP%20Commission%20Final%20Report.pdf>

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) also has shown a commitment to measures which improve school climate, promote effective discipline, and foster academic growth. In 2018, the Maryland State Board of Education convened its own Task Force on Student Discipline Regulation. The Task Force identified restorative approaches as one of the best practices for student discipline and recommended that districts “provide training and adequate resources to ensure that programs are implemented with fidelity.” (MSDE Task Force, 2018).

### **Recent Research**

Emerging research and first-hand experience continue to support the shift away from zero tolerance<sup>4</sup> exclusionary discipline toward a restorative approach that combines preventative community-building measures with a rehabilitative disciplinary framework. (Fronius et al., 2019; Schiff, 2013). Qualitative case studies, recent randomized controlled trials, and feedback from the schools recognize the importance of positive relationships between adults and students in improving school climate and creating an atmosphere conducive for learning (Wang & Degol, 2016). Emerging studies, including new randomized, controlled trials, continue to confirm the positive outcomes of restorative approaches in schools. The research shows that restorative approaches are associated with decreases in harmful exclusionary discipline and improvements in school climate. Research also provides insights into best practices as well as some of the challenges of RP implementation.

Grounded in the rather fundamental principle that strong relationships improve the learning environment, schools that incorporate restorative approaches with fidelity report a wide range of positive outcomes, including improved school climate, dramatic reductions in suspensions, greater teacher job satisfaction, and more respectful, less disruptive student behavior (*See infra* Part VI). Studies have shown that restorative approaches dramatically reduce student misconduct and the use of exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions (Gregory et al, 2020, p. 9).

### **Lessons Learned and Recommendations**

This report recommends next steps for successful implementation of restorative practices based on the experiences thus far in the Baltimore City RP schools and the growing body of evidence about the benefits, challenges, and best practices for successful implementation of a restorative approach. These recommendations include implementing whole-school approaches, ensuring leadership buy-in, involving students and parents in RP planning and implementation, communicating a strong and consistent vision, and providing continuous training and coaching.

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<sup>4</sup> Zero tolerance refers to school discipline policies and practices that require predetermined consequences, typically severe, punitive and exclusionary, in response to student misbehavior regardless of the context or rationale for the behavior.



# I. What Are Restorative Practices?

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“Students and even adults need an outlet to be able to decompress from what they have experienced over the weekend or even on the journey to and from school. Having a morning circle gives them that space and lets everyone see each other as humans, not teacher and student, not student and officer, just real people.”

*(Baltimore City Schools Police Officer)*

## **Restorative Practices: Guiding Values and Philosophy**

Restorative practices (RP) in schools encourage efforts to strengthen relationships within the school, and, when harm occurs, allow those affected to develop a collaborative solution. Schools have embraced restorative measures to improve school climate (Fronius, 2019, p. 10) and reform the harmful consequences of excessively punitive and exclusionary school discipline (Vaandering, 2010).

The fundamental unifying hypothesis of restorative practices is that “human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things *with* them, rather than *to* them or *for* them” (Wachtel, 2016, p.3).

A restorative approach to school conflict in the United States evolved from concepts of justice practiced in certain indigenous communities, which emphasize the importance of relationships, fairness, shared decision making, and healing when harm occurs (Gregory, 2020, p. 7). Put simply, when a member of a community “harms” another, that injury requires a repair, or “restoration,” of the communal relationship (Fronius, 2019, p. 5).

Restorative practices are a holistic set of principles and values, grounded in a distinct set of tools and techniques. A restorative school “incorporates the values of respect, dignity, and mutual concern, based on the core belief that all people are worthy of being honored and valued” (Gregory, 2020, p. 7). The primary focus is the use of proactive measures, such as daily classroom circles. These foundational practices strengthen relationships throughout the school community, foster a positive learning environment, and integrate productive conflict resolution processes.

[See RP video overview here.](#)

## Characteristics of a Restorative Learning Environment

# Restorative Practices in schools are designed to...

1

Increase accountability, community safety and competency development  
(Ashley & Burke, 2009)

4

Reverse negative academic effects of zero tolerance  
(Rumberger & Losen, 2016)

3

School culture change and strengthened relationships  
(Shaw, 2007)

2

Reduce racial disparities in student discipline  
(Rumberger & Losen, 2016)

5

Reduce contact between police and students  
(Petrosino, Guckenburg, & Fronius, 2012)



The Maryland Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices defined a “restorative approach to positive school climate and discipline” as one that “combines a relationship-focused mindset using distinctive tools that create a school climate and culture that is inherently just, racially equitable, and conducive to learning for all students.” (Maryland Commission, 2018, p. 45). Most restorative schools integrate proactive daily, ongoing communication techniques (circles and affective statements) and responsive reparative processes (restorative circles and conferences) to produce the following outcomes:

- School culture change and strengthened relationships (Shaw, 2007);
- Healthy, productive responses to conflict that increase connections between and among members of the school community;
- Sense of belonging, safety and social responsibility in the school community;
- Trauma-responsive and physically and emotionally safe school environments for students, staff, and families;
- Accountability, community safety, and competency development (Ashley & Burke, 2009);
- A reduction in contact between police and students on school discipline issues (Petrosino, Guckenburg, & Fronius, 2012).

Restorative models have been used to reform overly punitive “zero tolerance” disciplinary policies, which default to exclusionary punishment for even the most minor infractions. Studies have shown that zero tolerance and punitive approaches to school discipline are ineffective and harmful (Maryland Commission, 2018, pp. 20-23). In addition, exclusionary punishments like suspensions have been applied disproportionately to Black and Brown students and students with disabilities (APA Task Force, 2008).

The restorative approach to discipline is more reflective, inclusive, and rehabilitative. The goal is to hold students accountable in a way that will help them internalize behavioral expectations and prevent reoccurrence. In addition, a restorative process helps to give voice to those impacted by an incident, giving them a sense of empowerment in resolving the conflict and articulating their needs. Finally, the goal in a restorative disciplinary process is to resolve the underlying conflict by repairing the harm done and reintegrating everyone involved back into the school community or classroom with shared expectations about how to move forward in a positive way.

## Restorative Tools and Techniques



5

Most restorative schools adopt a common collection of activities and techniques to build relationships and address harm and misconduct. The primary focus is the use of proactive measures, such as daily classroom circle discussions and constructive communication techniques ([see example here](#)). These foundational practices strengthen relationships throughout the school community, foster a positive learning environment, and integrate productive conflict resolution processes. In addition to proactive community building strategies, restorative schools use a range of restorative tools to respond to conflicts and unacceptable behavior. While circles and

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<sup>5</sup> This diagram was adapted from IIRP’s restorative practices continuum

conferences are processes that are used most often in a restorative school, other measures consistent with restorative principles also may be adopted, such as peer mediation, mindfulness, and social emotional learning programs.

### **CIRCLE DIALOGUE AND COMMUNITY BUILDING**

Circles are a powerful tool to facilitate group dialogue and build a sense of community. In a typical circle process, all participants form a circle, usually sitting in chairs or on the floor, without any desks. The circle facilitator presents a question or [circle prompt](#), and all participants are given the opportunity to respond. Everyone then takes turns sharing perspectives on the question. Sometimes facilitators will pass around a “talking piece” of the group’s choice to remind everyone that the person holding the “talking piece” has the floor and everyone else should listen respectfully. Participants are given the option to pass and simply listen to others’ responses.

Used regularly, circles benefit not only individual participants, but the entire school community. Classroom circles can promote critical thinking and analytical skills, empathy, and socio-emotional competence. Circles foster a sense of voice, belonging, and respect, helping to develop a strong sense of trust and community within the classroom. Teachers also may use circles to integrate instructional content, providing a more engaged and interactive way for all students to participate. Circles may also be used to address minor conflicts or misconduct, helping those involved to resolve the issue and develop a collaborative plan to repair any harm done.

Best practices for use of community circles within schools include adhering to a consistent schedule, facilitating the circles with fidelity, and designing circles so that all members may participate successfully. A restorative school does not just limit circles to interactions with students. Restorative schools often use circle processes to facilitate conversation at faculty and staff meetings, with parents, and in other contexts.

### **COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES**

#### ***Affective Statements***

Affective statements are “expressions related to feelings and emotions that can be used for specific positive and negative feedback.” (Maryland Commission, 2018, p. 46) An affective statement gives educators an “in-the-moment” communication technique to reinforce positive behavior and redirect negative behavior. Often in the form of an “I-statement,” an educator would share how the behavior in question affects them, an explanation why, and a call to action. For example, a teacher might say, “When you spoke to John that way, I felt disappointed, because I really want everyone in our classroom to feel included as part of our class community.

How can we make sure our classroom is an inclusive space for everyone?" This informal communication tool builds empathy and provides immediate feedback about the impact of one's conduct, encouraging students to repeat positive behaviors and rethink and stop negative behaviors. One study found that teachers whom students perceive as frequently using affective statements had fewer disciplinary referrals of Black and Brown students, as compared with teachers who were less communicative about emotions (Gregory & Clawson, 2016).

### ***Affective and Restorative Questions***

Affective, or Restorative, Questions are posed when challenging behavior or harm has occurred. This inquiry explores the perspectives of those involved, the impact of the behavior, and the steps which need to be taken to "make things right" or repair the harm. Restorative questions encourage a dialogue and take a problem-solving approach to addressing negative behavior. Restorative conversations are designed to occur informally, immediately after an incident has occurred. The restorative questions, developed by the International Institute for Restorative Practices, can also be used during planned, informal circles.

#### ***Questions to respond to challenging behavior:***

- What happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who has been affected? In what way?
- What do you think you need to do to make things right?

#### ***Questions to give voice to those harmed by another's actions:***

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

## **RESTORATIVE DISCIPLINE TO REPAIR HARM AND REINFORCE BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS**

### ***Formal Restorative Conferences***

In contrast to informal restorative conversations, formal restorative conferences are "structured, facilitated meetings that bring together all individuals involved in an incident, together with any supporters (including parents or guardians) or relevant school staff" (Maryland Commission,

2018 p. 48). These conferences typically involve more serious infractions and require advanced preparation.

Restorative conferences are conducted by a trained, neutral conference facilitator who does not have a direct stake in the matter at hand. In Baltimore City, the non-profit organization Restorative Response Baltimore provides restorative conferencing services in schools, communities, and in criminal/juvenile justice contexts. During the restorative conference, all invited parties are given the opportunity to share their perspectives on the situation, and those who caused the harm have an opportunity to take responsibility and make amends. Collectively, the group creates a plan for moving forward to repair the harm. Restorative conferences should always be voluntary processes and require agreement to participate by all involved.

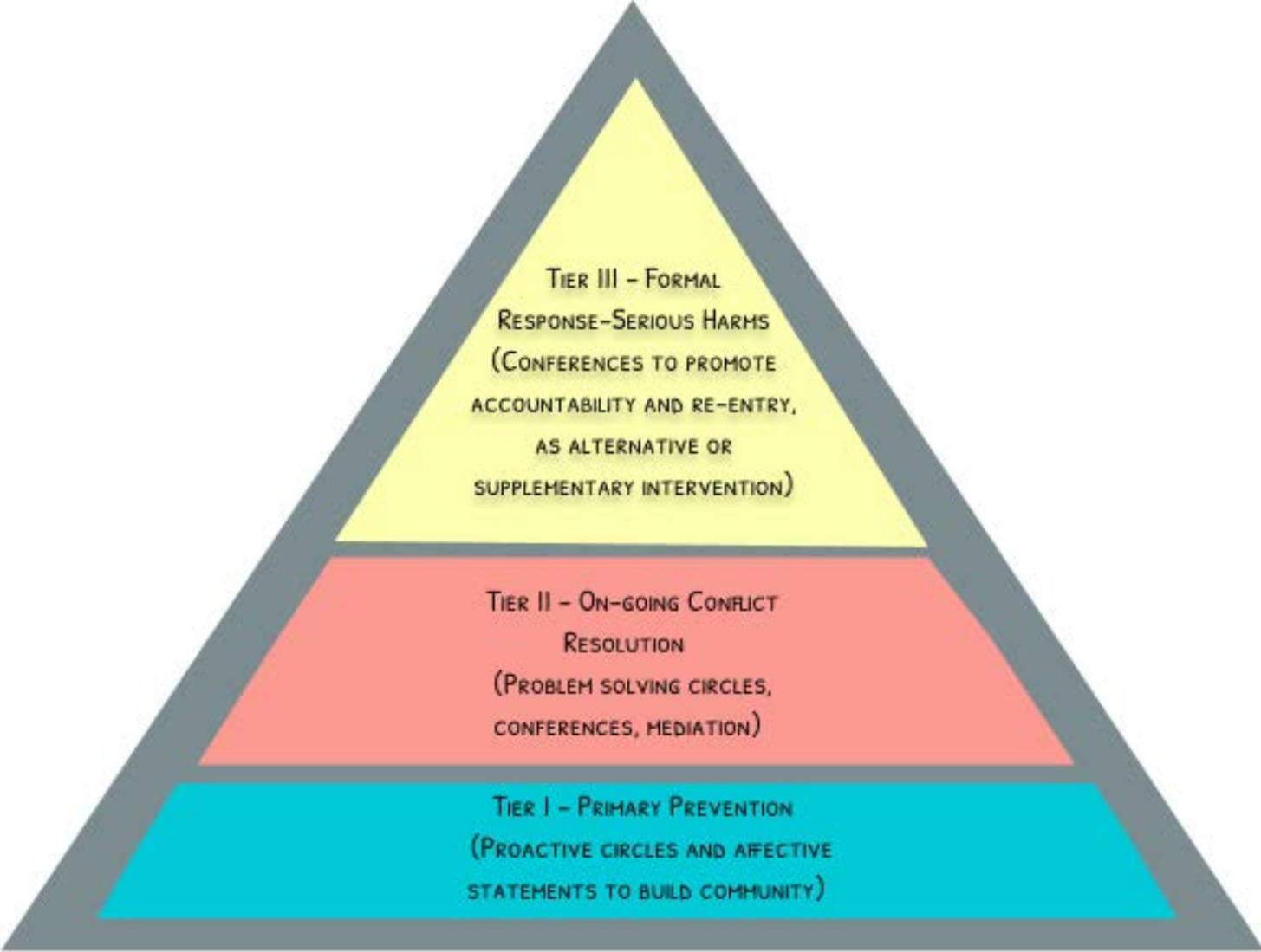
## **Whole-School Implementation**

Often introduced as an alternative to suspension, it is recommended that restorative practices be implemented as a “whole-school approach.” With whole-school implementation, all staff in a school attend intensive RP trainings to learn the theory underlying the practice as well as specific skills to help build positive relationships with students and one another – which in turn builds a positive school community. In the training, school-based personnel are encouraged to involve students in the conflict resolution process, rather than simply imposing discipline on students or solving problems for students. This approach shifts the adult role from that of “sole authority” to a role that is more akin to facilitator in the teaching and learning process.

When the entire school implements restorative practices, time for restorative circles is built into the school schedule with sufficient frequency to enable students and teachers to get to know one another and build relationships. When using RP to resolve student conflicts, all parties in the dispute sit in a circle to talk through what occurred. Each party is asked what can be done to resolve the matter. A written document memorializes the agreed upon recommendations and the adult facilitator checks in with students at a later date to ensure that the recommendations have been followed.

A restorative approach provides a holistic, tiered infrastructure of prevention, support, and response. Tier I consists of primary prevention measures to foster a positive school climate, including community-building circles and affective communication techniques. The secondary tier includes circles or conferences to respond to conflicts and minor behavioral incidents. The third, more formal level of response targets serious behavioral infractions. This targeted response is used either as an alternative or supplement to exclusionary punishment or as a reengagement tool for students who are returning to the classroom following drop out, experience in the juvenile justice system, or other extenuating circumstances.

This tiered approach—combining foundational preventative community-building with targeted responses to conflict and unacceptable behavior—has been shown to be most effective (Kidde & Alfred, 2011; Morrison, Thorsborne & Blood, 2005).



Some school districts use this tiered restorative approach in connection with their Positive Behavioral and Intervention Support program, which similarly combines a continuum of preventative positive behavioral incentives with more formal responsive interventions (Maryland Commission, 2018, pp. 55-57).

## II. Building a Restorative School District in Baltimore City

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“School climate is not a kid question – kids are just showing the chaos the adults are modeling.”  
(*External Stakeholder*)

### A Blueprint for Student Success

In 2016, Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools), with the support of its School Board and CEO, made an ambitious pledge to implement restorative practices in the daily work of all of its schools and programs over a five-year period. Restorative practices equip everyone in the school community—teachers, administrators, school staff, students and their families—with strategies that build “open, respectful communication to reduce conflict and repair harm.”<sup>6</sup> Cementing this pledge, City Schools included implementation of restorative practices as part of its strategic [Blueprint for Success](#).

### “Intensive Learning Site” RP schools

City Schools adopted a cohort model to the districtwide implementation of restorative practices. The first cohort consisted of fourteen schools that the district designated as “intensive learning sites” to receive training and coaching in restorative practices beginning in the 2018-19 academic year. Each school in the cohort created an individualized implementation plan in collaboration with City Schools personnel and OSI-funded restorative practitioners, including the Positive Schools Center<sup>7</sup>.

At the time City Schools committed to districtwide adoption of restorative practices, many schools had already received some training in restorative practices, which provided a sizeable core of teachers and principals with varying degrees of knowledge about RP. A growing body of central office staff also received restorative practices training, including school social workers, the Office of Differentiated Learning, and the entire school police force. In June, 2017, OSI-Baltimore sponsored a three-day comprehensive RP training attended by area community

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/restorative-practices>.

<sup>7</sup> With a strong focus on equity and restorative practices, the University of Maryland School of Social Work’s Positive Schools Center partners with public schools, City agencies, and community-based organizations to mediate conflict, help create safe and supportive environments, and encourage alternatives to punitive consequences.



partners and practitioners, designed to ensure that an adequate cadre of providers existed to meet the increased restorative practices training and coaching needs of City Schools.

To inform and support the implementation of RP, OSI-Baltimore, City Schools, and numerous partners convened a series of feedback sessions with stakeholder groups. These sessions collected input from approximately 400 individuals, including students, teachers, families, principals, school police, school-based staff, instructional leadership, executive directors, restorative practitioners, and external stakeholders.

In 2018, OSI-Baltimore and partners published the [\*Restorative Practices Report\*](#) (OSI, 2018) that included an overview of restorative practices research at the time, which was prepared by the Johns Hopkins Institute of Education Policy. The OSI report also synthesized feedback shared by stakeholders. Based on this research and stakeholder perspectives, the report offered a robust set of recommendations and practical tools to guide the implementation of restorative practices in City Schools.

## Guiding Implementation Principles

The 2018 OSI *Restorative Practices Report* set forth the following principles and recommendations to guide the initial years of implementation:

1. Implement whole-school approaches where all adults in a school community are trained in restorative practices and on-going coaching and support are provided. At least one school-based staff person must also be trained as a restorative practices trainer so that each school can sustain the practice over time.
2. Shifting the attitudes and sensibilities of all school and district personnel may require three to five years. Baltimore City Schools should operate under this timeline in which training must be embedded in school-based and city-wide professional development calendars.
3. Restorative practices should be woven into everything that is done in a school. It should not be used solely as a conflict resolution tool, as 80% of restorative practices should focus on proactive community building. Restorative practices may also be used for instruction and student re-entry following sustained absences, such as incarceration or suspensions, to welcome students back to school. Additionally, these practices can and should be combined with complementary existing practices.
4. Implementation of restorative practices will require school and district leadership to be properly trained and to communicate to all a strong and consistent restorative vision.

Time must be devoted to align the practice with City Schools Blueprint for Success and other district mandates and practices.

5. Restorative practices should be introduced to students before being used in school. Students should be fully engaged as thought partners in the implementation process which may include being trained to lead circles.
6. Schools implementing restorative practices should familiarize parents with RP through meetings, materials, and when feasible, training.

Baltimore City was on the forefront among Maryland school districts in committing to restorative practices, but it is not alone in making this transition. In fact, Maryland law now explicitly requires discipline that is restorative, educational, and rehabilitative in nature (Md. Code Ann., Educ. § 7-306(d)(2)(iii)).

The growth of restorative approaches throughout Maryland, described in the next section, confirms that City Schools RP implementation efforts are moving in the right direction.

# III. Restorative Developments throughout Maryland

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“Fighting was all we knew about growing up.” *(Parent)*

As Baltimore implemented restorative practices in its intensive learning sites, Maryland laws also changed, helping to create a strong legal base for the implementation of RP statewide. This section summarizes some of the statewide developments since the launch of City Schools’ restorative practices initiative.

## Maryland Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices

In 2017, the Maryland General Assembly appointed the Maryland Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices, chaired by the Center for Dispute Resolution at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law. The interdisciplinary group of educators, scholars, agency representatives, elected officials, advocates, and conflict resolution experts studied disciplinary practices in Maryland and the potential of restorative approaches to foster positive school climate most conducive to learning.

After eighteen months of study, the Commission issued an extensive report to the Maryland Governor and legislature (Maryland Commission, 2018).<sup>8</sup> The Commission found that school discipline practices in Maryland exhibited troubling patterns. In particular, Maryland school discipline and arrest data demonstrated an overreliance on suspensions and other exclusionary discipline. In addition, suspension patterns showed a disproportionate impact on students with disabilities and students of color. The Commission reviewed the extensive empirical literature showing that overreliance on suspensions is ineffective and harmful for students and school outcomes.

The Commission also summarized the implementation of restorative practices by City Schools and other districts across Maryland. The Commission’s report analyzed studies showing the promise of restorative practices in reducing student misbehavior, fostering positive learning climates, and deterring the “school-to-prison pipeline.” (Maryland Commission, 2018, p. 7).

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<sup>8</sup><https://www.law.umaryland.edu/media/SOL/pdfs/Programs/ADR/STPP%20%20RP%20Commission%20Final%20Report.pdf>

The Commission urged school districts to implement “restorative approaches to building and sustaining a positive learning environment” (Maryland Commission, 2018, at 7). The Commission recommended additional teacher education; transparent discipline data; greater state support and evaluation of restorative approaches; and the leveraging of resources to support school districts in their implementation of restorative initiatives (Maryland Commission, 2018, pp. 79-86).

## Maryland Law Requires a Learning Approach to Discipline

The Commission’s work led to clarification in Maryland law that the core purpose of school discipline is not to punish and exclude students. Rather, conflicts and harmful incidents present opportunities for educators and students to create responsive, and relational school communities in which students master social-emotional skills and community behavioral norms are strengthened.

Maryland law explicitly requires that disciplinary regulations adopted by county<sup>9</sup> boards of education “shall state that the primary purpose of any disciplinary measure is **rehabilitative, restorative, and educational.**” (Md. Code Ann., Educ. § 7-306(d)(2)(iii)) (emphasis added).

Maryland law instructs districts to implement restorative approaches to discipline. *Id.* § 7-306(a).

Maryland law defines restorative approaches as, “a relationship-focused student discipline model” that:

1. Is preventive and proactive;
2. Emphasizes building strong relationships and setting clear behavioral expectations that contribute to the well-being of the school community;
3. In response to behavior that violates the clear behavioral expectations that contribute to the well-being of the school community, focuses on accountability for any harm done by the problem behavior; and
4. Addresses ways to repair the relationships affected by the problem behavior with the voluntary participation of an individual who was harmed.

Maryland law gives districts the flexibility to use restorative approaches that are best for them, which may include:

1. Conflict resolution;
2. Mediation;
3. Peer mediation;
4. Circle processes;

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<sup>9</sup> Baltimore City is treated as a “county” for this purpose.

5. Restorative conferences;
6. Social emotional learning;
7. Trauma-informed care;
8. Positive behavioral intervention supports; and
9. Rehabilitation.

*Id.* § 7-306(a)(2)

Each district's disciplinary regulations "shall provide for educational and behavioral interventions, restorative approaches, counseling, and student and parent conferencing" (*id.* § 7-306(d)(2)(i)), and "shall provide alternative programs." (*Id.* § 7-306(d)(2)(ii)).

Maryland law prohibits the suspension or expulsion of children in pre-kindergarten through second grade, unless required by federal law or in the case of an imminent threat of serious harm to other students or staff that cannot be reduced or eliminated through interventions and supports (*Id.* § 7-305.1). For example, suspensions must be used for firearms violations and safety threats. For these youngest students, the law requires a restorative response to disciplinary incidents, providing: "The school system shall remedy the impact of a student's behavior through appropriate intervention methods that may include restorative practices." (*Id.* § 7-305.1(d)).

School administrators may use suspensions and expulsions as a disciplinary intervention for students in grades 3-12 when appropriate. Nevertheless, Maryland law's instruction that school discipline shall be "educational, restorative, and rehabilitative" in nature suggests that exclusionary discipline should be used as a last resort, reserved for situations in which safety is at risk or for violations of the law, such as possession of firearms or controlled substances or distribution thereof, as well as bodily harm and threats to safety.

## **Maryland State Department of Education**

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has shown a commitment to measures which improve school climate, promote effective discipline, and foster academic growth. In 2014, the State Board of Education approved *The Maryland Guidelines for a State Code of Discipline*. MSDE participated as a member of the Maryland Commission that recommended the adoption of restorative approaches in schools.

In 2018, the Maryland State Board of Education convened its own Task Force on Student Discipline Regulation. The Task Force identified restorative approaches as one of the "best practices" for student discipline and recommended that districts "provide training and adequate resources to ensure that programs are implemented with fidelity."

Consistent with Maryland law, MSDE encourages schools to incorporate restorative frameworks and provides technical support to local districts implementing restorative approaches. MSDE offers a root cause analysis template so that systems and schools can be purposeful and strategic with restorative interventions.<sup>10</sup>

Given these statewide developments supporting the implementation of restorative approaches in schools, City Schools should continue and renew its efforts to building a restorative district. The next section provides a snapshot of the implementation progress in the RP schools.

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<sup>10</sup> MSDE's root cause analysis tool can be found here:  
<http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DSFSS/SSSP/DisproportionateDiscipline/RootCauseAnalysis.pdf>

## IV. Where Are We Now? Study of City Schools' Restorative Schools

"I believe that building positive relationships is the single most impactful thing an urban teacher can do. Positive school climates let students know that the adults are there to help them and push them to be their best." (OSI-Baltimore Survey Participant)

### Restorative Practices Implementation Status Report

At the request of OSI-Baltimore, the Institute for Education Policy at Johns Hopkins University (JHU) studied the status of restorative practices implementation in the Baltimore City intensive learning site RP schools (JHU, 2018).

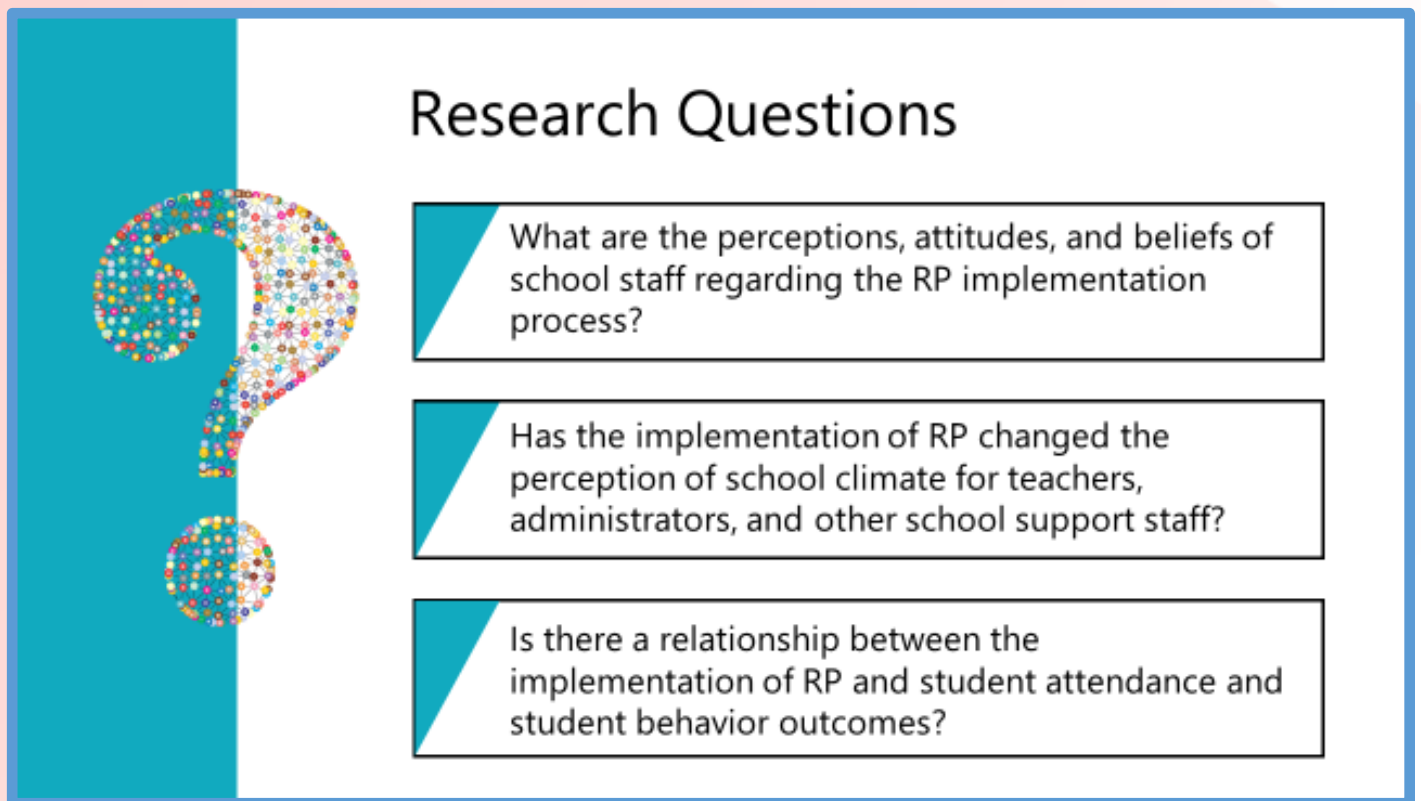


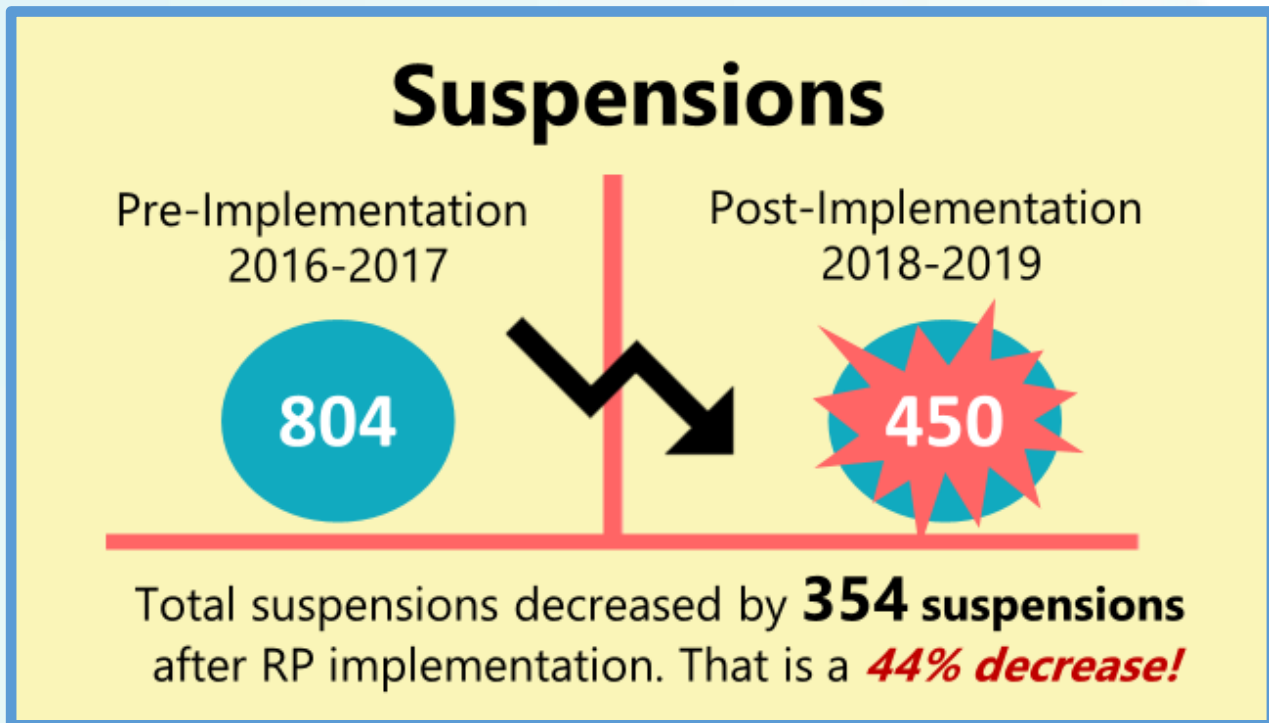
Figure 2: Restorative Practices Implementation Research Questions

The research assessed three areas: 1) the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of school staff regarding the status of the restorative practices implementation process; 2) whether the implementation of restorative practices affected staff perception of school climate; and 3) the impact of restorative practices implementation on school attendance and disciplinary outcomes.

To analyze these questions, JHU compared annual school disciplinary and attendance data from the Maryland School Report Card, individual school profiles, and the Maryland State Department of Education over a three-year period, from *before* the implementation of restorative practices in the 2016-17 school year to *after* implementation in the 2018-19 school year. In addition, JHU administered a Restorative Practices Implementation Survey to teachers, administrators, and support staff in the RP schools.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Dramatic Decrease in Suspensions***

After the implementation of restorative practices, suspensions in the RP schools fell by a dramatic 44%—from 804 total suspensions in the 2016-17 school year to 450 suspensions in 2018-19 (JHU, 2018, p. 13).



**Figure 3: Decreased Total Suspensions in Pilot Restorative Schools**

<sup>11</sup> The survey was modeled on a restorative justice survey used in previous research (Guckenbunrg et al., 2016). A copy of the *Restorative Practices Implementation Report* prepared by the Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy is attached as Appendix A.



While the study does not prove that restorative practices alone caused this decline in suspensions, the researchers concluded that the findings suggest “a potential relationship between the implementation of RP at these schools and a reduction in the number of student suspensions.” (JHU, 2019, p.14).

The decrease in suspension rates in the RP schools is consistent with other research, including a randomized, controlled trial, that restorative interventions reduce suspension rates (Augustine et al., 2018).

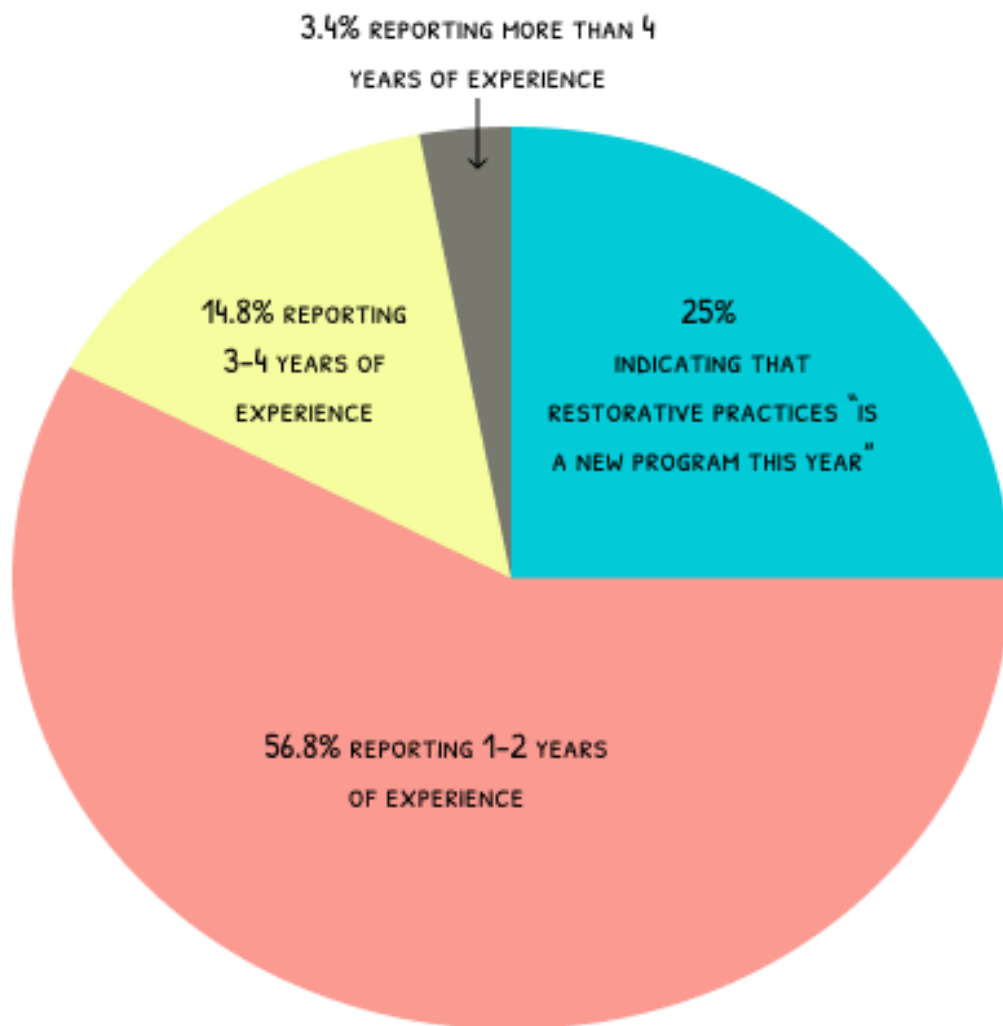
### ***No Impact on Attendance Rates***

While the rate of suspensions showed dramatic improvement, the attendance rate at the RP schools decreased slightly during the study period, with a mean attendance rate of 90.3% in 2016-17, 89.4% in 2017-18, and 88.4% in 2018-19. Again, this does not show a causal relationship, but suggests that presently it is not having much of an effect on student attendance. Attendance data should continue to be monitored as RP can take 3-5 years to fully take hold and for the benefits to be evident.

## Restorative Practices Survey Results

Although the sample size was small (94 respondents), the results of a survey of school staff at the RP schools provide valuable insights about the respondents' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs regarding the status and impact of restorative practices implementation in their schools. The survey respondents consisted of teachers (64.9% of respondents), administrators (16%), other instructional staff (12.8%), guidance counselors (4.3%), and other support staff (2.1%).

For most of the respondents, restorative practices implementation at their school was in its earliest stages—between 0-2 years of use—with



The survey results highlight both areas of progress and on-going challenges in these nascent stages of restorative practices implementation.

## PROGRESS

### *“Whole-School” Model of Restorative Practices*

Existing research recommends the “whole-school model” as the most promising approach to restorative practices (Guckenburg et al., 2015). The whole-school model “establishes common values and norms, promotes a sense of belonging to the school community, and builds trusting relationships, leaving fewer students in crisis” (JHU, 2018, p. 5). The vast majority of respondents (86.5%) indicated that their school used a whole-school model.

### *Schools Using Preventative Restorative Tools*



Figure 4: Use of Restorative Circles

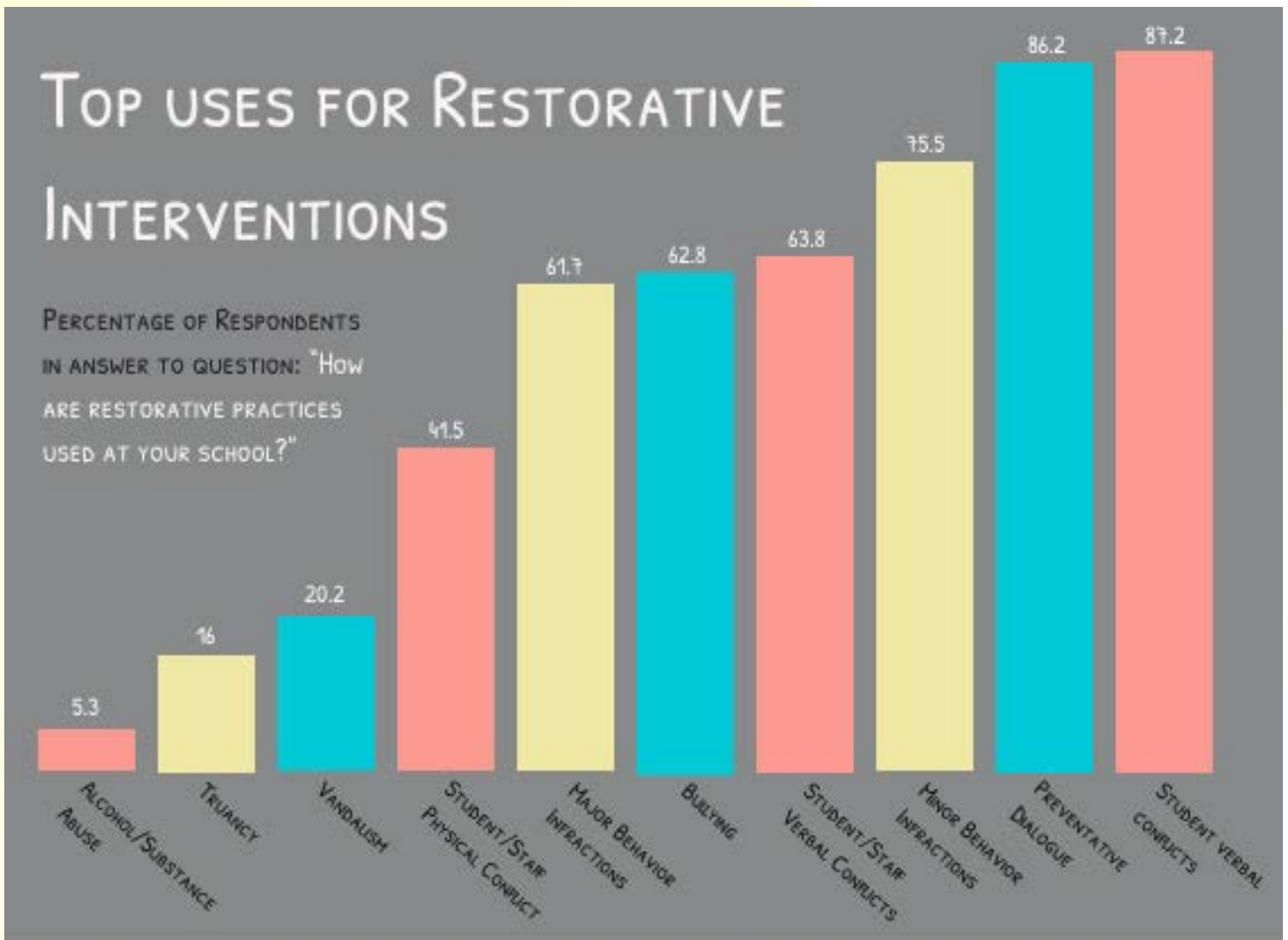
The respondents reported that the restorative tools they most commonly used at their school were preventative, community-building processes, such as restorative circles (84%), proactive circles (63.8%), and communication techniques, such as affective statements (64.9%), and restorative questions (81.9%).

A majority of respondents (59.6%) indicated that they use restorative conferences as needed to respond to student misconduct and conflicts. Some respondents indicated that they use restorative practices with families (39.4%)—an area for potential growth over time.

### *Responsive Uses of Restorative Practices*

Respondents indicated that they are using restorative practices to respond to a range of harmful behavior and conflicts in their schools. Restorative interventions are being used most commonly for student verbal conflicts (87.2%), general preventative dialogue (86.2%), and minor non-physical behavior infractions (75.5%).

Schools are also using restorative responses to address student/staff verbal conflicts (63.8%), bullying (62.8%), major behavior infractions (61.7%), student/staff physical conflict (41.5%), vandalism (20.2%), truancy (16%), alcohol/substance abuse infractions (5.3%), and other (5.3%). The graph below shows the types of incidents for which City Schools are using restorative processes most often.



**Table 1: Percentage of Respondents in answer to question: "How are restorative practices used at your school?"<sup>1</sup>**

### Positive Impacts of Restorative Practices

A majority of respondents reported that restorative practices improved overall school climate and increased levels of respect among and between students and school staff. Specifically, 27.7% of respondents agreed that restorative practices resulted in “much improved” and 44.7% in “somewhat improved” school climate, with 17% reporting that school climate was “about the same” and 3.2% reporting “somewhat worse” school climate. Respondents also perceive improvements in the levels of respect among students, between students and staff, and among staff.

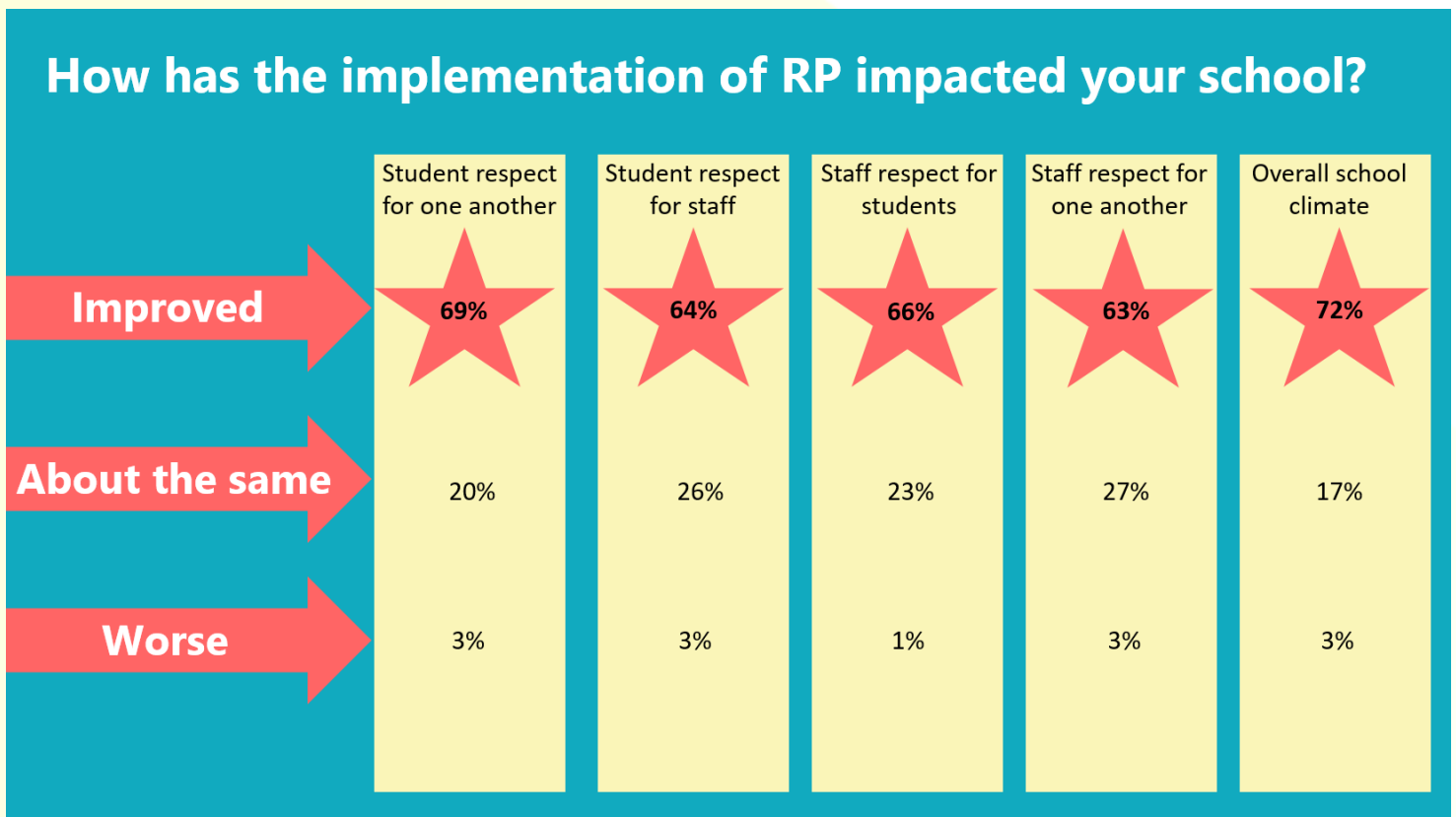


Table 2: Respondent responses to question about how restorative practices affected school climate and levels of respect among students and school staff

### IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

About half (47.2%) of respondents reported that they believed that restorative practices had been fully implemented in their schools. When asked for details about that perception, they indicated that:

- Restorative practices were integrated into daily schedules
- Meaningful daily circles were happening throughout their school
- Most teachers at their school had “bought in” to the process

Although this indicates good progress over a one-year period, 21.3% of respondents reported that their school had not fully implemented restorative practices, and 31.5% indicated it was “too early to tell.” The common theme expressed by those who believed that their school had not achieved full implementation included lack of full buy-in from teachers, staff, and students. In addition, they reported the use of some restorative components (especially daily circles) but not yet whole-school implementation. The research indicates that 3-5 years is required for full, whole school implementation of the practice. Additionally, the researchers concluded: “Given that buy-in was mentioned as both a success and challenge, this finding suggests more training may be necessary to generate investment in the whole-school model of restorative practices” (JHU, 2018, p. 12, citing Blood & Thorsborne, 2005).

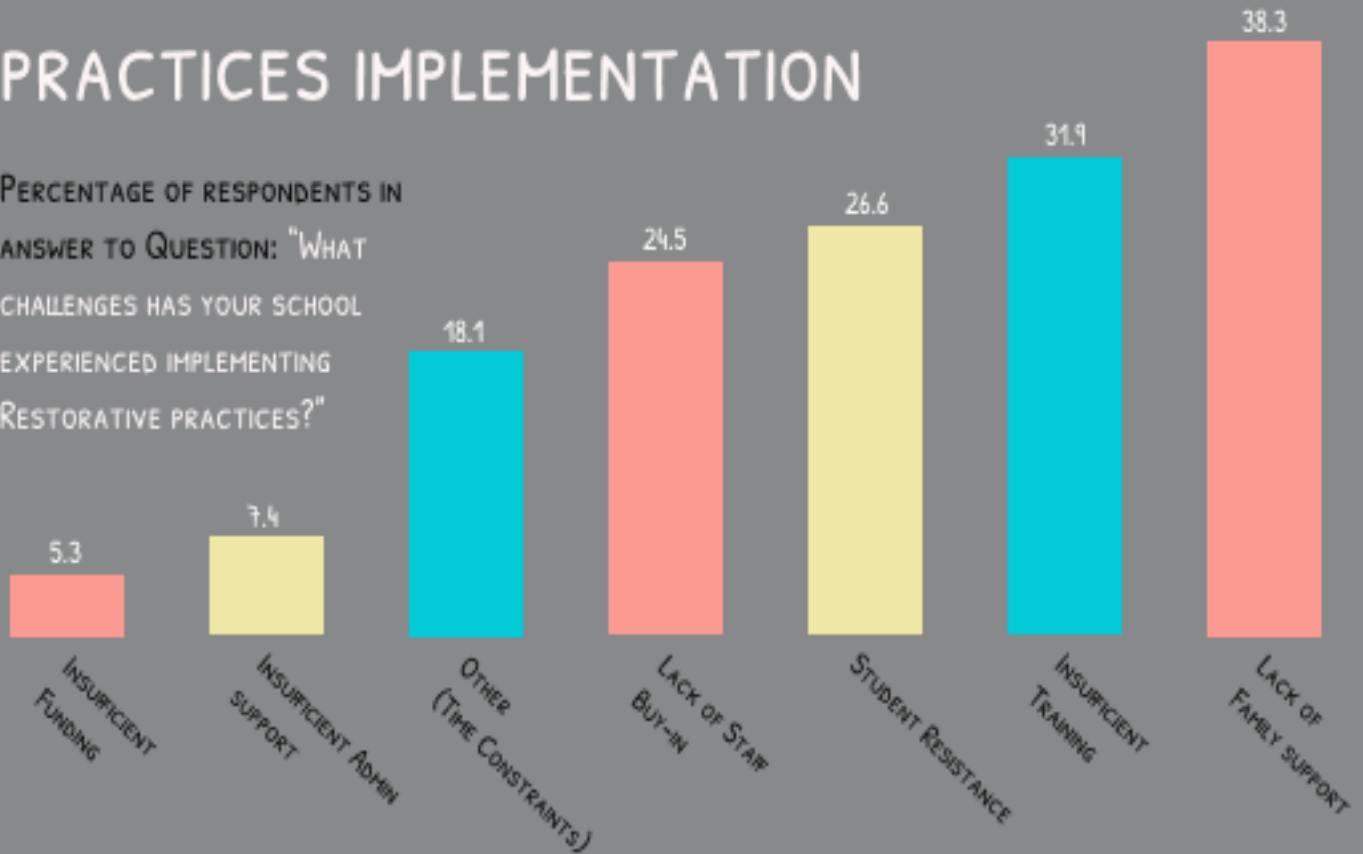
### **IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES**

Respondents at the RP schools identified multiple challenges their school has experienced in the implementation of restorative practices. These include lack of support from students’ families (38.3%), insufficient training (31.9%), student resistance (26.6%), lack of staff buy-in (24.5%), lack of administrative support (7.4%), insufficient funding (5.3%), and other (18.1%). The most cited response falling into the “other” category was “the difficulty incorporating RP into an already compact teaching schedule.”

Research and experience shows that creating and sustaining a whole-school restorative school climate takes time, training, and on-going commitment of adequate resources and support (Gregory & Evans, 2020). A restorative approach is not simply a program one takes off the shelf. It takes time and effort to transform the attitudes and behavior of educators and students from ingrained punitive models to a restorative framework that solicits student engagement in maintaining behavioral expectations.

# CHALLENGES TO FULL RESTORATIVE PRACTICES IMPLEMENTATION

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS IN ANSWER TO QUESTION: "WHAT CHALLENGES HAS YOUR SCHOOL EXPERIENCED IMPLEMENTING RESTORATIVE PRACTICES?"



**Table 3: Responses to Question "What challenges has your school experienced implementing Restorative Practices?"**

## LESSONS FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION STATUS REPORT

The study of the reported experiences of the RP schools after the initial year of implementation shows promising progress, including dramatically lower suspensions and educator perception of improved school climate. Although not a controlled study that proves causation, the findings are consistent with research that school staff who are strong implementers of restorative components have better relationships with students (Gregory et al., 2016) and a randomized controlled trial that confirmed that restorative practices cause reduced suspensions (Augustine et al., 2018).

The next section puts the study of the implementation in the RP schools in the broader context of emerging research about restorative practices.

# V. Steps to Implementation

## Success: Lessons from Recent Research

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“It is clear that schools are mirroring the criminal justice system by becoming harsher toward student misbehavior despite decreases in delinquency. Moreover, Black students consistently are disciplined more frequently and more severely than others for the same behaviors, much in the same way that Black criminals are subjected to harsher criminal punishments than other offenders” (Payne, 2013).

Emerging research has supported school district reforms that shift away from “zero tolerance” exclusionary discipline toward a restorative approach that combines preventative community-building measures with a rehabilitative disciplinary framework (Fronius et al., 2019; Schiff, 2013). Qualitative case studies, emerging randomized controlled trials, and feedback from schools recognize the importance of positive relationships between adults and students in improving school climate and creating an atmosphere conducive for learning (Wang & Degol, 2016).

It is difficult to generalize across studies about restorative approaches because school districts use different “restorative” definitions and frameworks. Schools vary in the training they have received and the specific range of tools and processes they use. Many schools have not achieved fidelity to “whole-school” restorative models that incorporate both proactive community-building and responsive reparative interventions.

Despite these limitations, emerging studies, including new randomized, controlled trials, continue to confirm positive outcomes of restorative approaches in schools. The research shows that restorative approaches are associated with decreases in harmful exclusionary discipline and improvements in school climate. Research also provides insights into best practices and challenges of implementation.

### Effectiveness of Restorative Approaches

#### *Reduced Suspensions*

Research from school case studies, district-wide correlational studies, and controlled experimental trials “convincingly demonstrate” that schools that implement restorative practices experience decreases in out-of-school suspensions (Gregory & Evans, 2020, p. 9; Fronius et al.,



2019). This is consistent with JHU's findings in its status review of Baltimore's pilot restorative schools.

A recent randomized controlled study funded by the National Institute of Justice in Pittsburgh Public Schools confirmed the causal relationship between restorative practices and lower suspension rates (Augustine et al, 2018). The Pittsburgh study compared outcomes at twenty-two restorative program schools with twenty-two schools that did not have a restorative program. The majority of staff at the restorative schools (between 44% and 69%) reported using the restorative tools of affective statements, proactive circles, conferences, and responsive circles "often" or "always."

After two years of implementation, the Pittsburgh study found that the number of suspensions and days lost to suspension decreased significantly in the restorative schools (36% decline) as compared to the control group (18% decrease). Importantly, students in the restorative schools were less likely to be suspended repeatedly as compared to students in the control group. However, the middle schools (grades 6-8) did not experience fewer suspensions. The researchers noted that it could be more challenging for restorative practices to positively affect middle school students in a two-year timeframe (Augustine et al., 2018, p. xv).

### ***Reducing Disparities in Suspensions***

One of the goals of restorative approaches is to promote equitable disciplinary practices that do not discriminate against Black and Brown students and students with disabilities. Research has shown some promise in this regard, but outcomes have been mixed. Some large district correlational case studies have found narrowed racial disparities in suspensions (Hashim et al., 2018; Jain et al., 2014). The Pittsburgh experiment found steep declines in suspensions among Black and low-income students. The declines were primarily in elementary schools. Other studies have found reduced suspensions for various racial and ethnic groups, but the narrowing of the disparities as compared to white students was small (Gregory & Clawson, 2016).

### ***Promising Results on School Climate***

Like the Baltimore restorative schools, many educators and students at schools that have implemented restorative practices, report improved school climate, including strengthened relationships and social and emotional skills (Gregory & Evans, 2020, p. 11).

The Pittsburgh randomized controlled trial found that restorative practices had positive impacts on the perception of the teaching and learning conditions at their schools as compared to perceptions of teachers in the control schools (Augustine et al, 2018). School staff in the restorative schools also reported that they had stronger relationships with their students because of restorative practices.

Two other randomized controlled trials offered mixed results about school climate in restorative schools. An experimental study at forty secondary schools in England found that, three years after implementation, students in the restorative schools reported less victimization from bullying than students in the non-restorative schools (Bonell et al., 2018). However, an experimental study in fourteen Maine middle schools found no significant differences in students' reported levels of school connectedness, positive peer relationships, and bullying victimization between the restorative schools and control group (Acosta et al., 2019).

## **“Mis-Implementation” Pitfalls**

Anne Gregory and Katherine Evans posit that implementation may have mixed results due to “mis-implementation” of various restorative models (Gregory & Evans, 2020). Based on the empirical literature and their own extensive practice-based observations, they offer five “mis-implementation models” that highlight how the launch of restorative practices “can falter and undermine the potential for nurturing positive change” (p. 12). These include:

### ***Mandated top-down mis-implementation model***

The imposition of mandates that schools become restorative without involving stakeholders in the process of developing the program is inconsistent with restorative values of voice and collaborative decision-making. Restorative programs must be “jointly developed, iteratively improved, and clearly communicated and instituted” (Gregory & Evans, 2020). Prior to implementation, districts need to assess readiness and lay the groundwork for stakeholder participation and buy-in in the process.

### ***Narrow mis-implementation model***

Districts that focus solely on using restorative strategies to change student behavior, without the proactive community-building components, are not likely to be successful. Schools should strive for whole school restorative practices. Restorative practices focus on building a positive school culture by involving *everyone* and by using the practices consistently in proactive and responsive ways—not simply when students require a disciplinary intervention.

### ***Colorblind and power blind mis-implementation model***

Gregory and Evans advise that restorative practices should intentionally address issues of racial justice, oppression, power, and voice. If not incorporated, restorative practices may perpetuate and reinforce patterns of inequality (Lustick, 2017; Knight & Wadhwa, 2014).

### ***“Train and hope” mis-implementation model***

Too many districts provide a few days of restorative practices training with little to no on-going follow-up, coaching, and continued training. Isolated trainings without continued opportunities for practice—which some have dubbed the “train and hope” approach—are not likely to transform school culture to a restorative learning environment.

### ***Under-resourced, short-term mis-implementation model***

A restorative approach is not a “quick fix” or an “off-the-shelf” program. Successful implementation takes time, commitment, resources, and on-going support. One longitudinal study found that it took four years to reach full implementation of a restorative approach (Gonzalez, 2018, p. 218). Schools need long-term implementation plans as well as sustained commitment and supportive resources. Without such sustained support, under-resourced and short-term restorative initiatives are likely to “result in minimal buy-in, inconsistent practices, and teacher frustration and burn-out” (Gregory & Evans, 2020, p. 12).

### ***Lack of leadership buy-in mis-implementation model***

One mis-implementation that the authors do not address but that was raised repeatedly in the [2018 OSI Restorative Practices report](#), is lack of leadership buy-in. This can apply to both individual school leaders, as well as district leaders. School and district leaders are in the unique position to set priorities, schedule sufficient time on professional development calendars, and monitor and support the implementation of the practice. Both research and stakeholder comments reflect the critical importance of district leaders learning about, modeling, and monitoring the implementation of restorative practices in schools and central offices if the practice is to be successfully embedded into daily school and district-level interactions.

The next section explores recommendations for next steps in the ongoing journey to restorative school districts.

# VI. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

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“We don’t know what other kids are going through in life, so it [restorative practices] helps other students understand this.” *(5th grade Baltimore City student)*

Based on the progress in Baltimore’s RP schools and the growing body of research about the benefits of restorative approaches, school districts across the country should begin and continue their journeys towards creating restorative districts.

This Section recommends next steps for successful implementation of restorative practices based on the experiences so far in the Baltimore City RP schools and the growing body of evidence about the benefits, challenges, and best practices for successful implementation of restorative approaches to building school communities.

## Lessons from Baltimore City

The 2018 OSI *Restorative Practices Report* set forth the following principles and recommendations which served as a reliable guide to whole school implementation of restorative practices:

1. Implement whole-school approaches where all adults in a school community are trained in restorative practices and on-going coaching and support are provided. At least one school-based staff person must also be trained as a restorative practices trainer so that each school can sustain the practice over time.
2. Shifting the attitudes and sensibilities of all school and district personnel may require three to five years. Baltimore City Schools should operate under this timeline in which training must be embedded in school-based and city-wide professional development calendars.
3. Restorative practices should be woven into everything that is done in a school. It should not be used solely as a conflict resolution tool, as 80% of restorative practices should focus on proactive community building. Restorative practices may also be used for instruction and student re-entry following sustained absences, such as incarceration or suspensions, to welcome students back to school. Additionally, these practices can and should be combined with complementary existing practices.
4. Implementation of restorative practices will require school and district leadership to be properly trained and to communicate to all a strong and consistent restorative vision.

Time must be devoted to align the practice with City Schools Blueprint for Success and other district mandates and practices.

5. Restorative practices should be introduced to students before being used in school. Students should be fully engaged as thought partners in the implementation process which may include being trained to lead circles.
6. Schools implementing restorative practices should familiarize parents with RP through meetings, materials, and when feasible, training.

## Lessons from the Research

### *Assess Readiness for a Restorative Approach*

Whole-school implementation is the gold standard in adopting restorative practices (Guckenbug, 2016), yet many schools lack a sufficient foundation. The first step of successful implementation is not implementation at all—it involves a thoughtful assessment of a school’s current capacity and readiness to embrace a holistic restorative approach (Gregory et al., 2019; Gregory & Hitchman, 2019).

Several tools for assessing readiness have been developed, and more are evolving as new research is published. Links to implementation planning tools are provided in the Resources section of this report. As noted above, MSDE also has offered a root cause analysis as one tool to identify reasons for disproportionate discipline.

### *Leaders Should Take the Lead in Modeling and Supporting Restorative Practices*

Creating, celebrating, and sustaining a vision of a restorative school community demands critical leadership commitment (Anyon, 2016). Successful restorative leaders both embrace and model restorative practices—“talking the talk and walking the walk.” Leaders should emphasize and demonstrate through their communication and work with staff and students that the school’s use of restorative practices is grounded in “values of respect, dignity, and mutual concern for all members of the learning community” (Gregory & Evans, 2020, p. 14).

A commitment to a restorative approach must be comprehensive in nature. It should be integrated into policies and procedures, decision-making processes, and staff and parent interactions as well (Lieberman & Katz, 2017, pp. 14-15).

Implementation also requires an on-going commitment of resources—money, time, staff, and space—to embrace restorative practices. Leaders should budget for initial and on-going training, coaching, and continual growth and support and should also address structural and scheduling issues to create dedicated time and support for circles, conferences, and professional development.

### ***Build Buy-In and Set Reasonable Expectations***

Even when everyone agrees that change is necessary, shifting to a restorative mindset requires patience, consistent practice, and time. Developing restorative skills, adjusting embedded disciplinary attitudes and habits, and seeing positive results takes time. In addition to school staff, families and students should be part of the process so they understand the purpose of the restorative initiative.

Three key factors have been shown to help with buy-in:

1. Staff and Community Involvement
2. Sharing Data and Impact
3. Setting Reasonable Expectations

### ***Continue to Practice and Build Capacity***

Successful implementation requires strong organizational leadership with a commitment to ensuring that restorative practices are, in fact, practiced consistently (Anyon, 2016). Establishing new systems for monitoring and accountability in restorative practices should be a priority. Implementation lags when staff divert their attention to other pressing needs and reflexively revert to old habits (Anyon, Nicotera & Veeh, 2016).

Providing opportunities for ongoing coaching and active learning for staff is also key to effective professional development (Mayworm et al., 2016). A few tools for monitoring implementation fidelity are included in the Resources section.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the challenges of adopting restorative practices in school districts across the United States, the possibilities for changing the culture and climate of our schools, offices and programs, and thereby the trajectories of our students' lives, make RP implementation efforts entirely worthwhile.

# Restorative Practices Resources

"We must wrap the students and staff in a culture that cares." (*OSI-Baltimore Focus Group Participant*)

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## Research and Reports

- **Baltimore City Schools Restorative Practices Report,**  
<https://www.osibaltimore.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/RP-plan-and-appendix-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>  
A guiding document for Baltimore City Schools' implementation of restorative practices, including a research review by the Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy, feedback from nearly 400 stakeholders, and a robust list of recommendations. This report also contains resources to assist other districts.
- **Restorative Practices and the School-to-Prison Pipeline: Lessons from Baltimore City,**  
<http://www.osibaltimore.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/School-to-Prison-and-RP-presentation.pdf>  
A presentation which outlines impacts of race and poverty on school discipline, strategies used in Baltimore City to reduce the school-to-prison pipeline, the history of restorative practices in Baltimore City schools, and a brief overview of restorative practices.
- **Can Restorative Practices Improve School Climate and Curb Suspensions? An Evaluation of the Impact of Restorative Practices in a Mid-Sized Urban School District.**  
[https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2840.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2840.html)  
A randomized control trial of restorative practices implementation in 22 Pittsburgh Public Schools by the RAND Corporation. The students show that restorative practices improve school climate and reduce suspensions and discipline disparities.

## Videos

Videos created by OSI-Baltimore grantee, Teachers Democracy Project, which show various types of circles used in Baltimore City Schools, including instructional circles, community building circles, ESOL circles, check-in circles, and school-wide restorative circles. We have also included a video guide to help teachers improve their practice.

- **Restorative Practices Video Guide**  
<https://www.osibaltimore.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Restorative-Practices-Video-Guide-FINAL.pdf>
- **Kindergarten Circle, Baybrook Elementary School**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=2&v=N8r1D-Nb764&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=N8r1D-Nb764&feature=emb_title)

- **3rd Grade Check-In Circle, Alexander Hamilton Elementary School**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OjbyZ1ErYE&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OjbyZ1ErYE&feature=emb_title)
- **4<sup>th</sup> Grade ESOL Check-In Circle, Moravia Park Elementary School**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9bNZad\\_y5s&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9bNZad_y5s&feature=emb_title)
- **6<sup>th</sup> Grade Check-In Circle, Hampstead Hill Academy, 2018**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndIX\\_zmfEkk&t=6s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndIX_zmfEkk&t=6s)
- **8<sup>th</sup> Grade Instructional Circle, City Springs Elementary School, 2018**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=2&v=z-bnY-xZf60&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=z-bnY-xZf60&feature=emb_title)
- **Middle School Assembly, Hampstead Hill Middle School Circle**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSj7t9mMeyc&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSj7t9mMeyc&feature=emb_logo)
- **Restoring Schools, Teachers Democracy Project (2017):**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pitlbc7WszE&feature=youtu.be>

## Implementation Guides

- **Implementation and Resource Guide,**  
<https://www.osibaltimore.org/wp-content/uploads/City-Schools-Restorative-Practices-Implementation-and-Resource-Guide.pdf>  
 A guide created by Baltimore City Schools which provides certified restorative practice trainers and other service providers a set of resources to aid in the implementation of school-based restorative practices. The guide also includes Baltimore City Schools' Restorative Practices Assessment tool.
- **Restorative Practices Lesson Plan Guide,**  
<http://www.osibaltimore.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Merged-RP-Lesson-Plan-Guide-FINAL.pdf>  
 A guide created by Baltimore City restorative practices teachers in partnership with OSI-Baltimore. It consists of a series of sample lesson plans, activities, supplemental materials, and circle prompts.
- **Restorative Practices Book List,**  
<http://www.osibaltimore.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/RP-Book-List.pdf>



A curated list of high-interest books for teachers to use in their classrooms to provoke circle discussion and analysis.

➤ **Restorative Practices Video List,**

<http://www.osibaltimore.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/RP-Video-List.pdf>

A curated list of high-interest videos for teachers to use in their classrooms to provoke circle discussion and analysis.

## Other Resources

### Research and Reports

- Durham, R. Bettencourt, A., & Connolly, F. (2014) **Measuring School Climate: Using Existing Data Tools on Climate and Effectiveness to Inform School Organizational Health.** <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED553169.pdf>
- Green, A. E., Willging, C. E., Zamarin, K., Dehaiman, L. M., Ruiloba, P. (2018). **Cultivating healing by implementing restorative practices for youth: Protocol for a cluster randomized trial.** *International Journal of Educational Research*, 93, 168–17
- Muhammad, A. (2019). ***The Restorative Journey: The theory & application of restorative practices. Book One.*** Middletown, DE: Akoben.
- Payne, A. A., & Welch, K. (2013). **Restorative justice in schools.** *Youth & Society*, 47(4), 539–564. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118x12473125>
- Roland, Karen & Rideout, Glenn & Salinitri, Geri & Frey, Marc. (2012). **Development and use of a restorative justice ideology instrument: Assessing beliefs.** *Contemporary Justice Review*. 15. 10.1080/10282580.2012.734574.

### Videos

- **Restorative Welcome and Re-entry Circle, Oakland Unified School District (2013):** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSJ2GPiptvc>
- **Restorative Justice in Oakland Schools: Tier One. Community Building Circle; Oakland Unified School District (2012):** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdKhcQrLD1w>

- **Using Dialogue Circles to Support Classroom Management, Edutopia (2014)**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=2&v=qTr4v0eYigM&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=qTr4v0eYigM&feature=emb_title)
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- **Restorative Justice Implementation Guide: A Whole School Approach** <http://www.osibaltimore.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Oakland-Impl-Guide.pdf>
- **Restorative Justice Partnership Resource Page** (implementation guide, frequently asked questions, and a number of useful webinars) <https://rjpartnership.org/resources/>
- **Restorative Resources Educator Tool Kit**, <https://www.restorativeresources.org/educator-toolkit.html>
- **Restorative Practices Whole-School Implementation Guide**, SFUSD Student, Family, Community Support Department, Berkowitz, Kerri, <https://www.healthiersf.org/RestorativePractices/Resources/documents/SFUSD%20Whole%20School%20Implementation%20Guide%20final.pdf>
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