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Restorative Circles Training Through Video Modules: A Case Design with a Teacher from the Midwest

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Restorative Circles Training Through Video Modules: A Case Design with a

Teacher from the Midwest

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Restorative Circles Training Through Video Modules: A Case Design with a Teacher from the Midwest

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Schools have been employing zero-tolerance policies for decades without knowing the true consequences these disciplinary procedures have on students, especially culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. Restorative Practices are a useful tool that can be implemented as an alternative disciplinary method. The current study focuses on restorative circles, which has shown evidence for improving school climate and teacher-student relationships, as well as reducing inappropriate disciplinary practices. Restorative circles mend relationships and bring the school community closer together. The purpose of the current study was to provide restorative circles training via online video modules to one elementary school teacher in the Midwest. Percentage of questions answered correctly on the pre- and post-survey was used to determine growth in participant's knowledge of restorative circles. Pre- and post- classroom disruptive behavior ratings were compared to determine if there was a reduction in disruptive behavior. The results of the study found teacher knowledge of restorative circles did increase from pre- to post-test. Additionally, disruptive classroom behavior increased from the pre- to post- data collection. Limitations and considerations for futures studies are discussed.

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Table 1. Percentage of Classroom Disruptive Behavior.....29

Restorative Circles Training Through Video Modules: A Case Design with a Teacher from the Midwest

The most popular disciplinary strategies used by school districts across America today are zero tolerance policies. These policies include suspension and expulsion as a means of maintaining control over the student body, while simultaneously attempting to prevent misconducts from occurring in the future. Zero-tolerance policies were first implemented to eliminate bringing drugs and weapons to school and to decrease school violence (Jain et al., 2014). As this goal may have been noble to begin with, these punitive policies have been proven to have a negative impact on school climate and have had a drastic adverse influence on academic performance and school dropout rates, especially for minority populations (Huang & Cornell, 2018; Noltemeyer et al., 2015). There have been various research studies conducted to examine the relationship among zero tolerance disciplinary policies and school climate, student perception towards school, academic outcomes, as well as the risks involved for the students who receive suspensions and/or expulsions. A study conducted by Huang & Anyon (2020) found that middle and high school students who had experienced an in-school-suspension (ISS) or an out-of-school-suspension (OSS) had a poor perception of school-climate and viewed going to school as a negative experience. In comparison, the students who had never received an ISS or OSS, viewed school-climate and the school experience in more positive regards.

The United States Department of Education reported that during the 2013/14 school year, there were 2.8 million students who had received at least one out of school suspensions (OSS), with 1.1 million of these students being Black (US Department of

Education, 2016). This trend of disproportionate disciplinary procedures towards minority groups is commonly found in the literature. Black students are suspended and expelled from school at a rate two to three times higher than that of their white peers, often for the same infractions (Yang et al., 2018). Further, CLD students with disabilities are at risk for experiencing disproportionate disciplinary practices. A report by Losen et al. (2015) analyzed suspension and expulsion data from the 2011/2012 school year; it was found that Black and Latino males with disabilities are at the highest risk for receiving a suspension. Moreover, Black females with disabilities are more likely to be suspended than white males with disabilities at the elementary and high school levels. The disproportionality among disciplinary practices results in a phenomenon called the school-to-prison pipeline. This is where students, particularly students of color and of low socioeconomic status, are funneled into the juvenile system due to suspension and expulsion. Research has shown that students who are suspended from school tend to experience isolation and disconnectedness from the school community and academic failure, putting students at an unnecessary risk of experiencing the school-to-prison pipeline phenomenon (Boccanfuso & Kuhnfield, 2011; Cassalla, 2003; Schiff, 2013). The purpose of the current study is to provide restorative circles training via online video modules to one elementary teacher. Restorative circles can be implemented in the classroom setting to decrease the use of zero-tolerance policies: particularly on culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. The goal is to utilize effective practices that keep all students engaged and involved in the school community.

Over the past few decades, researchers have been examining the effects of Restorative Justice in schools as an alternative procedure to zero tolerance policies.

Restorative Justice aims to hold offenders accountable for their actions, while focusing on restoring relationships. The primary goal of Restorative Justice is mending harm, creating positive environments, and building strong relationships by taking on a humanistic viewpoint (Rideout et al., 2010). Restorative Justice's humanistic approach is effective because it acknowledges that all human beings are capable of doing others harm, while simultaneously offering support to both the offender and victim that assist in forgiveness and affirming the value of all people involved. Restorative Justice is a relatively new disciplinary procedure within the United States, even so, there is a growing body of literature that demonstrates Restorative Justice's effectiveness in schools. Restorative Justice is referred to as an umbrella term for a multitude of Restorative Practice approaches that are can be utilized within schools.

Restorative Justice originated in the juvenile criminal justice system in New Zealand during the 1970s. New Zealand decided to transform their justice system from a punitive to a restorative approach (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Nese et al., 2020). A probation officer, Mark Yantzi, facilitated the first victim-offender mediation between two teenagers and the victims of their vandalism crimes. This led to victim-offender mediation programs being implemented throughout North America and Europe (Wachtel, 2016). These programs later became known as Restorative Justice or Restorative Practices. Over time, this mediation process expanded to be used at a variety of agencies (e.g., juvenile systems, schools, universities, workplaces, and correctional facilities) with the community members, families, and friends becoming more engaged along with offenders and victims. Restorative Practices can be implemented in school systems to build a framework that holds students accountable for their indiscretions through a

problem-solving model which includes open communication, mutual respect amongst all parties, and reintegration into the community for offenders. There are many subtypes of Restorative Practices that can be implemented in schools, including peer-offender mediation conferences, group conferences, and a variety of circles that can be used as restorative, community-building, or peacemaking circles (Fronius et al., 2016).

The most commonly Restorative Practices used in schools include Conferences and Circles, both of which can be used to address problem behavior, mend-harm, and bring the school community closer together. However, there are some differences between circles and conferences. Circles can be used to address a harmful behavior, but Circles can also be utilized to form and build relationships between staff and students. Circles can be implemented as a preventative framework for problem behavior; whereas Conferences are almost always used to address severe harm that has been committed in which a group of people meet and decide how to repair the harm. Conferencing has a formal process which involves a referral, contacting the participants, holding the conference, deciding next steps, and providing post-conference support (McGrath, 2022). For the purpose of this paper, only Restorative Circles will be discussed.

Restorative Circles

Restorative circles provide a safe space for all participants to speak freely and authentically. Restorative circles are about mending harm and rebuilding trust. In a school setting, restorative circles usually involve everyone in the classroom, establishing a community among the members (Wang & Lee, 2019). The circle structure is based on Native American practices. Restorative circles include a *Circle Keeper* whose intended job is to guide the participants in the circle, maintain peace among participants, and be

open and honest themselves to build trust and form genuine relationships with those in the circle (Chicago Public Office of Social and Emotional Learning, 2017). To be successful, each member of the circle must feel equal to all members, as equality among all is an important value of Restorative Practices. All information discussed during circle meeting is private and confidential, which builds trust among members. According to Chicago Public Office of Social and Emotional Learning (2017) each circle contains a talking piece that is passed around. The circle member who holds the piece is the only one allowed to talk, while the other members are invited to actively listen until the piece is passed to them, ensuring that all members have an equal opportunity to share. Each circle group creates their own values and guidelines that are to be followed during each meeting (Chicago Public Office of Social and Emotional Learning, 2017).

Circles can be implemented as an alternative to zero-tolerance policy. During circles, offenders and victims can engage with one another in a safe environment that allows for equal opportunities for sharing. Restorative circles are designed to allow participants to share their perspective of an altercation and how it affected them (Wang & Lee, 2019). Holding restorative circles in a classroom provides an opportunity for the offender, victim, classmates, and teachers to discuss the incident, talk through each members' experience, and problem-solve solutions intended to make amends and move forward. Wang and Lee (2019) conducted a study to determine how educators at a large urban district used responsive circles. Responsive circles are used in response to a moderately serious altercation, students sit in a circle and discuss the conflict at hand. School staff attended two professional development trainings in person and were shown how to implement responsive circles. The researchers observed how educators

implemented circles, performed an assessment of each responsive circle, and conducted interviews with the staff (Wang & Lee, 2019). Results revealed that responsive circles were implemented to address a wide range of issues (e.g., classroom disruptions, unresolved conflicts) in classrooms, detention and in-school-suspension rooms, and classes that were brought together. Students who shared strong connections with their circle leader prior to circles being implemented were more engaged and more willing to actively participate. During interviews, most educators reported a smaller number of circle members greatly increased participation among members (Wang & Lee, 2019). Beyond this, researchers found that about 70% of the educators who were interviewed found responsive circles to have a positive impact on students and on school climate.

Minneapolis Public Schools received a grant that allowed for intensive, in person, training and coaching in Restorative Practices such as circles, classroom management, and behavioral management (Riestenberg, 2003). Two K-8 schools, Nellie Stone Johnson Elementary and Ramsey International Fine Arts Center, showed implementing restorative circles had a significant impact on suspension numbers from the 2001-2002 to the 2002-2003 school years. Nellie Stone Johnson saw a 63% reduction rate in suspensions, while Ramsey saw a 45% reduction rate (Riestenberg, 2003). Other schools that have implemented Restorative Practices have found similar results. West Philadelphia High School implemented restorative circles and saw a 52% decrease in aggressive behaviors in the 2007-2008 school year, and a 40% decrease in aggressive behavior the following school year. Their suspension rates also decreased by 50% (Lewis, 2009; Schiff, 2013).

Edward H. White Middle School implemented Restorative Discipline (RD) practices during the 2011-2012 school year. The goal was to use RD as an alternative

disciplinary procedure over a three-year implementation period. Many Ed White Middle School's students are culturally and ethnically diverse. Of the student body, the largest percentage of students were Hispanic (55.56%), followed by African American (25.46%) (Armour, 2014). An evaluation of the second-year implementation (2013- 2014 school year) of RD was conducted to determine the effects Restorative Practices had on suspension rates, school climate, and teacher experiences. Restorative circles were conducted three times a week with the sixth and seventh grade students. During the two-year implementation period, the results showed a 75% decrease in in-school-suspensions for conduct violations and 45% decrease in half-day in-school-suspensions for sixth grade students (Armour, 2014). Teachers reported less need for implementing restorative disciplinary procedures during year two as their classrooms were calmer, and they were better equipped to handle classroom disruptions. Teachers also noted that performing restorative discipline procedures, such as circles, was challenging yet rewarding because teachers had a chance to get to know their students on a deeper, individual level and were able to learn how their personal experiences have influenced their behavior (Armour, 2014).

School Climate and Teacher Perception

Previous research has shown that a positive school climate is directly related to positive outcomes for students such as academic achievement, positive behaviors, and a sense of community within the school; research has also shown positive school climate to be related to a reduction in school violence, bullying, and abuse of illegal substances (Cornell, Shukla, & Konold, 2016; Cornell & Huang, 2016; Huang & Anyon, 2020; Huang, Cornell, & Knold, 2015). Huang and Anyon (2020) examined the relationship

between student perception of school climate and schools' disciplinary procedures. Data collected from 30,799 middle and high school students found that students who had received an OSS reported lower levels of school bonding and felt less engaged with the school community. Students who received an ISS reported lower levels of school safety. Students who had prior experience with restorative practices had a better perception of school climate in comparison to the students who received an OSS (Huang & Anyon, 2020). Further research conducted by Gregory and Colleagues (2016) found restorative circles to be an effective tool in improving school climate. In their study, teachers, administrators, and staff from two large high schools were trained in implementing Restorative Practices via in person trainings. Students at each respective high school completed pre- and post- surveys to indicate the level of respect each student felt their teachers had for them. Results showed that implementing Restorative Practices at a high rate was associated with greater teacher respect as reported by students (Gregory et al., 2016). Additionally, teachers who implemented Restorative Practices at a high rate issued less office referrals to Latino and Black students.

Furthermore, there have been limited studies conducted to investigate teacher perception of Restorative Practices and their ability to implement these practices with fidelity. Rainbolt and Colleagues (2019) sent an online survey to teachers during the 2015-2016 school year at a large high school in the mid-Atlantic area who had been implementing Restorative Practices since 2010. The purpose of the survey was to determine how teachers were trained to implement Restorative Practices and their personal perceptions and opinions towards Restorative Practice. Results revealed that when rating teacher-student relationships on a one to five likert-scale, the respondents'

average rating was 4.51, indicating that respondents collectively agreed that teacher-student relationships were very respectful (Rainbolt et al., 2019). Seventy-eight percent of respondents reported that Restorative Practices have had a positive impact on forming meaning relationships between teachers and students. Faculty members rated restorative circles as one of the most effective restorative tools they could implement in the classroom.

Current Study

Research has shown that implementing restorative circles in schools as an alternative disciplinary procedure results in effectively combatting disproportionate targeting of minority students, builds strong teacher-student relationships, and improves school climate. Data from previous studies reinforce the notion that Restorative Practices can be used as an effective tool in lowering disciplinary rates and making students feel more engaged with the school community. However, there are gaps within the literature that need to be addressed. To the investigator's knowledge, there has been no previous studies in which staff members have been trained via online video modules. The current study expands current literature by utilizing this training method. Furthermore, studies above have exhibited that utilizing Restorative Practices can decrease the use of zero-tolerance policies; however, in many cases it is still unknown whether disruptive behavior is decreased or if Restorative Practices are being conducted at a high rate. The current study sought to address this question. This study explored one participant's perceptions of disruptive classroom behavior before and after the implementation restorative circles. One faculty member at an elementary school in the Midwest was the focus on this study. Two central research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: Does training faculty to implement restorative circles improve teacher knowledge of restorative circles?

Research Question 2: After the training and implementation of restorative circles, was there a change in classroom disruptive behavior?

It was hypothesized that faculty will have an improved knowledge of what a restorative circle is and how it can be used after viewing the training videos. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that the percentage of disruptive classroom behavior will decrease after implementation of multiple restorative circles.

Method

Participants and Setting

The participant in this study included one sixth-grade teacher at an elementary school located in the Midwest. There are approximately 300 students enrolled at this elementary school. The student population is 55% male and 45% female, with 23% of students receiving free and reduced lunch assistance. The participant's sixth-grade class has 21 students. The students ages ranged from 11 to 12 years old.

Dependent Variable

Two measures were used to assess the effectiveness of the online restorative circles training modules. The first measure determined the participant's knowledge of restorative circles pre- and post- restorative circles training. The second measure determined percentage of classroom disruptive behavior pre- and post- training modules. Finally, at the conclusion of the study, participant was asked to indicate the number of times a restorative circle was conducted since viewing the final training video.

Measures

The participant was provided with six 15-to-20-minute training videos on the various steps of implementing restorative circles in the classroom delivered via Google Drive. The participant was asked to complete the Restorative Circles Knowledge pre/post-test which measured general knowledge regarding what a restorative circle is, when and why it would be implemented, and the responsibilities of the Circle Keeper (See Appendix A). The survey contains eight multiple-choice questions and two open-ended questions. This survey was created by the author based on the information provided in the training videos.

The Direct Behavior Rating (DBR) Form: 3 Standard Questions (Chafoules et al., 2010) was adapted to measure class wide disruptive behaviors (See Appendix B) for a one-week period pre and post implementation of restorative circles. DBR is flexible and has shown evidence for good psychometric properties (Briesch et al., 2012; Chafoules et al., 2013; Christ et al., 2010). The teacher observed the entire class's behavior throughout each school day from Monday to Friday. At the end of each school day, the teacher indicated on a number line the percentage of total time 50% or more of the class was exhibiting the target behavior.

Within the literature, restorative circles are most commonly conducted for more serious behaviors, such as bullying, threatening, physically aggressive behavior, or substance use on school grounds; however, the most common behavioral infractions students display in the classroom are minor disruptive behaviors, such as blurting out, not following teacher directions, talking to peers, etc. The fact that minor classroom disruptions are what teachers manage most of their work day is the rationale for collecting disruptive behaviors. This study looks to investigate whether restorative circles

may influence everyday behavioral infractions. Disruptive behavior is defined as student action that interrupts regular school or classroom activity. For example: out of seat, fidgeting, playing with objects, acting aggressively, talking/yelling about things that are unrelated to classroom instruction (Chafoules et al., 2009). At the conclusion of the study, the teacher was asked to indicate the number of restorative circles she had conducted.

Materials

The primary investigator created the six training videos using materials found in Berkowitz's (2017) handbook: *Cultivating Restorative School Communities*, Solano County Office of Education: Tier 1 MTSS Restorative Circles (See Appendix C). Additional materials were used from the Chicago Public Schools' handbook on how to implement Restorative Practices in a school setting. For this study, the investigator used materials particularly related to the implementation of restorative circles (Chicago Public Office of Social and Emotional Learning, 2017). The investigator directly observed the implementation of one restorative circle conducted by the teacher using the Circle Planning Guide to determine treatment integrity.

Independent Variable

One teacher was trained to conduct a restorative circle in the following manner. The training videos followed the steps from Berkowitz (2017) circle implementation guide. The first training video used research evidence to explain why zero-tolerance policies should not be employed in schools, provide statistics surrounding the disproportionate use of these policies, and contain information regarding specific behaviors that warrant conducting a restorative circle in the classroom. Staff should

implement a restorative circle in place of any behavior that would warrant an office referral, suspension, or expulsion. Examples include disrespect towards teacher, bullying another student, cheating on an exam, inappropriate language, conflict between students, fighting, vandalism, possession of illegal substances, threats to adults or students, obscene pictures, etc. This list is not exhaustive, and it is at teacher's discretion when circles are implemented.

Understanding the role of the Circle Keeper is incredibly important for conducting a successful restorative circle. The second training video explained what the roles of the Circle Keeper are and what they are not. It is the Circle Keeper's duty to make sure everyone in the circle feels welcomed and that each circle member respects one another. The Circle Keeper is not intended to be an authoritative figure, but rather a guide to helping the students unravel a difficult conversation to bring understanding and forgiveness to light. It is important that the Circle Keeper have questions prepared for the group that encourage circle members participation. There were several examples given on questions Circle Keepers can ask. The job of a Circle Keeper is not to control the narrative of the group or be a mediator, but rather an enforcer of the agreed upon values set by all circle members.

The third training video covered how to appropriately begin a restorative circle intervention. When a conflict occurs, the teacher will bring each student involved in the dispute into a room at an appropriate time (e.g., lunch break, after or before school) or conduct the circle in the classroom if appropriate. The students should be seated in a circle. The first step in a restorative circle is to introduce the purpose of the circle so that participants are made aware of what this is about and what to expect. The Circle Keeper

(i.e., teacher) can make a statement such as, “Thank you for meeting with one another today. We are here to discuss the conflict that took place in class.” The training video will also demonstrate how to implement the second step of a restorative circle; the Circle Keeper is to make a circle introduction such as, “We have come together today to learn more about one another and be together in a way which will make our school community (or our class group) stronger, closer, and safer” (Berkowitz, 2017, p. 32). The purpose of this is to create a safe space where everyone will come together to share and listen to each group members’ individual perspectives of the situation. In addition, the third training video introduced the third step of implementation: values and guidelines. This allows the circle members to choose the values they wish to enforce during circle time. Guidelines should emphasize the importance of respecting one another, speaking from the heart, actively listening, and trusting each group member.

The fourth training video introduced the fourth step of implementing a restorative circle, which is to open the circle with an inspirational quote or poem. The investigator provided explicit examples of poems and quotes that can be used; however, the circle leader may choose their own circle opening. Next, the participant was informed about fifth step, introducing the talking piece. The talking piece that will be passed around to each member. The purpose of the talking piece is to create an environment that values speaking and listening equally. The talking piece should be a meaningful token to the circle members. The investigator provided examples of what the token piece could be; however, the decision regarding what the talking piece is should be made by the circle group. The Circle Keeper explains that the member holding the talking piece is the only one allowed to speak, but that individual can pass on speaking if they choose. The talking

piece will be passed to each member of the circle, giving everyone an equal chance to share and listen to each members' perspective.

The fifth training video covered the sixth step of implementation, which explained how to conduct a short check-in for each circle member. The purpose of this is to allow members to share how they are feeling mentally, emotionally, and physically. The Circle Keeper can say, "Name one word describing how you are feeling." This step then transitions into the seventh and most important step of the circle. This the main activity, where group members discuss the conflict that occurred. During this time, each member (e.g., victims, offenders, other students affected) will be allowed to explain the situation from their own point of view. The Circle Keeper can ask students questions such as: "What happened and what were you thinking and feeling at the time?" "Who has been effected and how?" "What about this is/has been hardest for you?" and "What needs to happen to make things as right as possible moving forward?" (Berkowitz, 2017, p. 40). Allow each member to express their feelings and perceptions of the event. Then, work as a group to come up with a solution to the problem.

The sixth training video discussed the finals (eighth and ninth) steps of implementing restorative circles which include check out and how to end the circle. Following the discussion, the group members are to reflect and check-out. The purpose of this is to allow group members to express how they are feeling now that they have openly shared their personal experiences. The Circle Keeper may suggest that each member share one word to express how they feel, but only if each member wants to. The Circle Keeper may encourage each member to take three deep breathes while he/she thanks them for participating in the circle. Closing the circle can also include a circle member

reading a poem or quote to end the circle. Finally, this training video provided strategies that address what to do when circles become challenging.

Procedures

Prior to the start of the study, the participant and investigator met for one hour to go over the perimeters of the study. During this meeting, an overview of the study was provided. Then, the pre/post-test measures were explained to the participant. One week prior to the start of the current study, the participant was sent the Qualtrics link to the Restorative Circles Knowledge Survey. Additionally, the participant was asked to complete the DBR scale at the end of each school day, Monday-Friday, one week prior to being sent the training videos. Once the pre-test data was collected, the researcher shared all six training videos with the participant via Google Drive. The participant was given one month to view the videos before a check-in was conducted to see how many videos the participant had watched up to that point. After it was confirmed that the participant had viewed each training video, the investigator provided the participant with a Restorative Circles Handbook Guide, which includes an assortment of resources covered in each training video.

At the conclusion of the current study, a Qualtrics link was sent out to the participant asking them to complete the Restorative Circles Knowledge Survey for the second time. The DBR form was also given to the participant to fill out the percentage of disruptive behavior for a one-week period. Additionally, the participant was asked to indicate the number of restorative circles they conducted since the viewing finally training video. The teacher conducted two restorative circles during the four-month timeframe. The teacher conducted both circles with the primary goal of building

community within the classroom and checking in on students. The first circle was run early in the fall semester, the second circle was conducted right before Winter break.

Research Design

A case study design was used in which one participant was trained, and pretest and posttest data were analyzed to evaluate differences in classroom disruptive behavior and measure the knowledge of restorative circles gained. Percentage of questions answered correctly on the pre- and post-survey was used to determine growth in participant's knowledge of restorative circles. Pre- and post- classroom disruptive behavior ratings were compared to determine if there was a reduction in disruptive behavior.

Results

The primary investigator directly observed the teacher conduct the second restorative circle. The class gathered in the back of the classroom where 17 students and one adult participated in the circle. The investigator collected treatment integrity data on the nine steps of conducting a restorative circle; during the observation, eight out of the nine steps were directly observed.

First, the Circle Keeper (i.e., teacher) explained the purpose of holding the circle was to check-in with students now that the semester was ending. Next, the Circle Keeper introduced circle by conveying why she wanted to check-in with students. She explained that it was important that she receive feedback from them on how the semester went, what students thought went well, and future improvements that could be implemented next semester. The third step in conducting a restorative circle is the establishment of core values and guidelines. The Circle Keeper reminded students of expectations,

including actively listening, making eye contact, and having patience for one another while they are talking. Following the reminder of established values and guidelines, the Circle Keeper opened the circle by asking students to take three deep breathes. Then, the talking piece, which was a Rubik's Cube, was introduced. The Circle Keeper emphasized the purpose of the talking piece and reminded students that only the person holding the talking piece is allowed to talk. The class selected the Rubik's Cube as the talking piece because it is the class's favorite fidget toy. She also reminded students of how to actively listen to their classmates.

The Circle Keeper performed the check-in with students by asking them to use a color to describe how they are feeling in that moment. Students' descriptions ranged from blue, to red, to purple, and neon green. Discussion rounds followed the check-in. During this time, the Circle Keeper presented three questions to the students: 1) How has the last several weeks been going for the class? 2) What are your goals for next semester? 3) What would you like to see differently next semester? Students were encouraged to answer any and all questions prompted by the circle teacher. First, the talking piece was passed around and everyone in the circle had an opportunity to answer the questions. After the talking piece had made it all the way around the circle, the teacher asked for additional comments and reflections on the semester. Students raised their hands, and the talking piece was passed around to whomever had their hand raised. In response to the Circle Keepers original question, some general themes emerged. Several students reported that they enjoy engaging with their teacher in discussions of non-academic subjects. They enjoy the calm down time after math. The class also favors the question of the day. Students reported that reading was becoming more difficult. Some students

explained having heightened anxiety when called on to read in front of the class. Other students reported that they feel disappointed in themselves if they answer a question wrong and are worried about their classmates judging or thinking poorly of them for answering a question incorrectly. Other comments included better behavior during specials and more collaboration among students during small group work time.

Throughout the discussion round, students patiently waited for their turn to speak. Students disagreed with one another appropriately and provided explanation for why their feelings on a certain topic differed from that of their classmates. Students made suggestions for possible improvements that could be made for next semester. During this time, the Circle Keeper did not try to steer the conversation in anyway, but rather allowed the students to express their feelings, opinions, and suggestions. The Circle Keeper acknowledged students by looking at them while they were speaking and shaking her head. The Circle Keeper also took notes during the discussion so she could remember student comments and make instructional changes based on student feedback.

When it was time to close the circle, the Circle Keeper told the students she appreciated all their comments and suggestions. She thanked the students for being open and honest. After discussion rounds, a reflection of the circle is the next step in conducting a circle. This step was not directly observed. Finally, the closing of the circle took place by having students safely and gently high-five each other and thank one another for the open dialogue.

The circle took place at the end of the school day. Once students were dismissed for the day, the teacher and investigator had an opportunity to discuss the circle. Although only two circles were conducted, the teacher had multiple discussions with her

class of how the circle will look, including setting up the expectations, values, and guidelines of the circle. The teacher stated valuable lessons her class has learned through their deep discussions in preparation of the first circle and throughout the two completed circles. The teacher emphasized her thoughts on how the circles have helped students disagree appropriately, while learning to converse about difficult subject matters in which students having differing opinions. The investigator observed this through the circle by the way students would make statements such as, “I disagree because...” “Lisa makes a good point, but in my experience...” “I feel that...” The teacher reports a great improvement on the way the students speak to one another from the first to second circle. After the first circle, students began noticing how much they interrupt each other in various subjects throughout the school day. They would ask the teacher if they could use the talking piece during class discussions because, “...we interrupt each other so much. We need the reminder of the talking piece.” Furthermore, the teacher stated the greatest lesson learned through the two circles (and that she feels will continue to improve as more circles are conducted) is how students learn to be a part of a discussion without being the center of it. They are evolving their active listening skills, seeing the perspectives of others, and expressing their own feelings.

Based on previous research, it was hypothesized that the participant would improve her knowledge of restorative circles after viewing the six training videos. A pre- and post-test was created and distributed through Qualtrics to measure the participant’s general knowledge of restorative circles. The measure contained nine multiple choice questions and two open-ended opinion-based questions. The two open-ended questions presented on the survey asked specifically what the participant wanted to learn (pre-test)

and what the participant did learn (post-test). To which, on the pre-test, respondent stated she wanted to “Gain new strategies to help with community building and conflict resolution.” The participant stated on the post-test that she “...learned restorative circles are able to reduce suspensions and restore relationships between students and staff.” The second open-ended question asked for the participant’s opinion of the training delivery method (e.g., online video modules), to which the participant responded “So far, it has been satisfactory” (pre-test) and “Easy to understand and complete” (post-test). The teacher incorrectly answered two multiple-choice questions on the pre-test, but answered all multiple-choice questions correctly on the post-test, indicating an increase in basic understanding of restorative circles from pre- to post-test with a score improvement of 82% to 100% accuracy.

It was hypothesized that restorative circles would decrease classroom disruptive behaviors. Direct Behavior Rating was completed by the teacher one week prior to sharing the training videos and seven weeks after the last training video was viewed. Pre- to post- data indicates that students had an average of 22% disruptive behavior pre-test and 32% disruptive behavior post-test, as reported by the teacher (See Table 1).

Discussion

These results indicate that the teacher rated the class more disruptive on the post-test measure. There were only two restorative circles conducting during the entirety of the study; therefore, it is unlikely that two circles would influence a reduction in classroom disruptive behavior. There are several variables that could have influenced the increase in disruptive behavior as rated by the teacher, including the semester coming to an end with Winter Break just around the corner, classroom management styles being adjusted, and

environmental variables such as student sleep, hunger, and other basic physical needs that could contribute to a higher engagement in disruptive behavior.

Historically, school systems have relied on zero-tolerance policies to manage and eliminate inappropriate behavior, specifically at the middle and high school levels. These efforts have shown to have many negative results for students, including isolation from the school community and a higher likeliness of engaging in illegal behavior outside of school (Lodi et al., 2022). Restorative practices offer an effective way to appropriately respond to student behavior in a culturally responsible manner. Restorative circles aim to improve peer relations by cultivating a safe environment to engage in peaceful conflict resolution, which is a valuable skill that students should learn while in school.

Restorative circles can also be used to cultivate a school community; as it was used in this study. The original intention of the proposed study was to train teachers to implement restorative circles as an alternative method to zero tolerance policies; however, in the current study, the results indicate that the teacher was able to use the knowledge acquired through watching the training videos to implement restorative circles in the classroom.

Although there was a limited number of circles conducted, the students learned restorative values. These values include promoting a sense of belonging in the classroom, actively listening to fellow peers, and taking a different perspective. The teacher did gain knowledge of restorative circles from watching the training and has stated she plans to continue implementing them monthly as a check in/community building circle. She also indicated that she would conduct a circle if a more severe behavior occurred in her class.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations to the current study, including the type of sampling used; convenience sampling of one participant was employed, so the results cannot be generalized across individuals or settings. There was a total of two restorative circles ran throughout the entirety of the study. With such a small number of circles administered, the relationship between restorative circles and disruptive behavior cannot be determined as correlational. Additionally, there was no reliability conducted on the training videos the investigator created. Furthermore, the teacher noted a challenge of the circle as an elementary teacher is finding the time in the day to conduct a circle, as the class's schedule is full from the beginning to end of day. This is a barrier to restorative circles at this level of education. Schools are under pressure to be continuously engaging in academic tasks, that it may feel like a burden to find time to implement restorative circles (Guckenburg et al., 2015).

Future studies should investigate training a larger number of faculty members on restorative practices using online training modules to determine how the training impacts teacher ability to implement the intervention, especially compared to in-person training methods. Although the findings from the current study suggest that the participant gained knowledge from the online training videos, implementation fidelity was not investigated; therefore, as fidelity is essential in any evidenced-based intervention, future studies may look to address this component. Best practices of professional development indicate that trainings are most effective when the skill development contains theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and coaching (Showers & Joyce, 1980). Future professional development using this training model should consider the importance of follow-up after the training videos have been viewed. Researchers should incorporate explicit

demonstrations of conducting restorative circles with a class and provide in-person role playing activities among trainees. Continuous practice and corrective feedback are warranted for teachers to become fluent in the implementation of restorative circles.

Future studies may also consider investigating the difference in cognitive maturity among students in which restorative practices are implemented with. The current study implemented restorative circles with sixth-grade students at an elementary school; however, the research is lacking in the effectiveness of implementation at the elementary level and if there are differences in how restorative practices influence student behavior at various educational levels.

In addition, the literature is unclear on the most effective consequences to utilize with restorative practices. Although there is considerable research to suggest that the implementation of restorative practices decreases office disciplinary referrals and disrupts the school-to-prison pipeline, it is unclear whether student behavior is actually changing. Community service may be a possible solution, such as having offenders work in the cafeteria or work with the school janitor for an afternoon. Furthermore, forming connections with local community partners to have offenders do volunteer work may be a possible solution. Further research should look to address this question.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated the possible positive impacts restorative circles can have when implemented at any educational level (i.e., K-12). Despite the challenges presented in this study, the teacher was able to implement community building circles as a preventative framework in which the students learned how to communicate their feelings and emotions regarding their daily classroom routines. While future research will need to

investigate the effects restorative circles have on classroom disruptive behavior at the elementary level, the current research supports video training as a viable method for sharing information efficiently as a mode of professional development.

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Table 1. Percentage of Classroom Disruptive Behavior

Pre-Test	Direct Behavior Rating Score	Post-Test	Direct Behavior Rating Score
9/26/22	30%	12/5/22	20%
9/27/22	10%	12/6/22	10%
9/28/22	30%	12/7/22	50%
9/29/22	20%	12/8/22	40%
9/30/22	20%	12/9/22	40%

Appendix A. Restorative Circles Knowledge Survey

Q1

...

This purpose of this test is to examine your knowledge of restorative circles before and after viewing the training videos. Please answer each question to the best of your ability.

Q2

I give my consent to have my responses included in this research study

- Yes
- No

Q3

When should you use a Restorative Circle?

- For any behavior the teacher perceives a need to discuss more in depth
- Disruptive behavior
- Talking back
- Fighting

Q4

What are the benefits of Restorative Practices?

- Creates a sense of belonging to the school community for the students, build/strengthen relationships, and promotes social and listening skills
- Improves students grades
- Prevents the use of zero-tolerance policies
- Improves students behaviors

Q5

What is the responsibility of the Circle Keeper?

- To teach the group of right and wrong
- Influence the direction of the conversation
- Introduce questions to the group that empower difficult discussions
- Offer advice regarding the conflict

Q6

What's is the first thing the Circle Keeper should do before starting a restorative circle after Values and Guidelines have been established?

- State the reason for the circle being held
- State the purpose of the circle being held
- Remind members of the established values and guidelines
- Make the circle opening statement

Q7

What is NOT the goal of Restorative Circles?

- Allow participants to share their perspective of an altercation and how impacted them
- Provides an opportunity for offenders and victims to work together to problem solve solutions
- Provide an opportunity for the offender to make amends and move forward
- Blame or team-up on individuals who have done wrong

Q8

What are some examples of techniques that could be used for opening or closing a circle?

- Shared values and guidelines
- Introduce the talking peice
- State the purpose of the circle
- Poems, deep-breathing exercises, quotes

Q9

What could you try if a few students are doing all of the talking during a circle?

- Tell the students to let other people have a chance to speak
- Have all students make or bring their own talking pieces that are meaningful to them on their culture and ask them to speak about it in the circle
- Let the few students continue to speak, because if they don't no one else will
- Create a rule that only certain students can speak

Q10

What is one thing you hope to learn from watching these training videos?

Q11

What is your opinion of the delivery model of this training?

Appendix C. Circle Planning Guide

Circle Planning Guide

1. What is the purpose or goal of your circle? (ex. Community building, check-in, address specific classroom issue, curriculum/content...etc.)

2. Circle Introduction: [How will you introduce and convey the reason for the circle to the participants?]

3. Establish core guidelines: (What are the core guidelines you would like to introduce to the participants? What additional questions will you ask to create shared guidelines and values? Do you have them written on a poster board for all to see?)

4. Circle Opening (How will you open the circle? A poem, quote, song, breathing, story...?)

5. Introduction of Talking Piece. [What object are you using and Why?]

6. Check-In [What question will you ask for the initial check-in round? ex. On a scale of 1-10, today I am a]

7. Discussion Rounds [What needs to be addressed in the circle? What questions will you ask? How many rounds will you facilitate?]

To consider: Are the questions you are asking high or low risk?
Does the question directly or indirectly address the goal and purpose for the circle?
What are some potential challenges that may surface? How will you handle them?

8. Reflection/Check out [What question do you want to present to bring closure to the circle? ex. how are people feeling right now? How did we do following our circle guidelines?, What is one take away you are carrying with you from our circle today?]

9. Closing [How will you close the circle, celebrate the participation of the circle members? poem, quote, song, breathing, story...?]

(Berkowitz, 2017)