

Restorative Measures In Schools Survey, 2011

Executive Summary

The Safe and Healthy Learners Unit at the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has been promoting the use of restorative measures as a promising and best practice for over a decade, through training grants, evaluation, workshops and technical assistance. In spring, 2011, a survey was conducted of elementary, middle, secondary school and alternative learning center principals about the use of restorative measures as part of the disciplinary options of the school.

This report summarizes the findings of the survey. Findings of the survey conducted include:

- Schools practice group conferencing slightly more frequently than circles;
- Principals seem to use restorative measures in *addition* to suspension more often than using restorative measures *instead of* suspension;
- School staff members were primarily reported as the circle keepers in schools;
- A majority of principals reported using circles or group conferencing to address bullying behavior in their schools, followed by name-calling and fighting;
- Some principals work with community-based restorative justice and mediation agencies to provide restorative conferences and circles in school or for school rule violations;
- The percentages of principals reporting using either conferencing or the circle process was higher for the principals who had attended a 2-4 day training;
- Adult-facilitated mediation seems to be more popular than peer-mediation in schools;
- In schools where explicit school policies on restorative measures are found, the practice of restorative measures in those schools appear to subsequently increase;
- Using a circle or conference as an alternative to suspension or in addition to suspension is a decision made primarily by principals.

“Restorative measures representing both a philosophy and a process that acknowledges that when a person does harm, it affects the people they hurt, the community and the person him/herself. When using restorative measures, an attempt is made to repair the harm caused by one person to another and to the community so that order is restored for everyone” (Anderson,

The survey included twenty-one questions and a total of 417 elementary, middle and high school principals returned the survey.

Introduction and Background

The Minnesota Department of Education encourages the use of restorative measures, both as a prevention strategy and as a means of holding students accountable for harm and rule violations. MDE published *Restorative Measures: Respecting Everyone's Ability to Repair Harm in 1997*, provided five years of grant funds (1998-2003) to implement and evaluate restorative process and promote the use of restorative measures as a promising and best practice through workshops and technical assistance, eleven annual four-day seminars and a four-day circle training. In an attempt to measure the impact of these initiatives on schools statewide, the Safe and Healthy Learners Unit conducted a survey of elementary, middle, secondary school and alternative learning center principals about the use of restorative measures as part of the disciplinary options of the school. Following is a summary of the results of this survey.

For the purposes of this study, restorative measures is defined as “measures representing both a philosophy and a process that acknowledges that when a person does harm, it affects the people they hurt, the community and the person him/herself. When using restorative measures, an attempt is made to repair the harm caused by one person to another and to the community so that order is restored for everyone” (Anderson, 1997). “A school using restorative measures may utilize proactive processes that enhance teaching and learning and reactive processes for responding to harm, rule violations and wrong doing” (Thorsborne and Vinegrad, 2003).

“We had repeated bullying incidents on the playground perpetrated by a small group of kids. Each class of fifth graders came to the gym where the phy(sical) ed(ucation) teacher and I conducted a circle with the classroom teacher. As each student used the talking piece, they were able to explain to the kids who were causing the problems how they felt about what they were doing. We also discussed what the expectations are for student to student and student to adult interactions- respect, appropriate, responsible, etc.

The severe behavior has stopped, I think because students were empowered to let the kids who were bullying know how they felt about it- it was out in the open- a great place to be. Victims also realized they were not alone- so isolation was no longer an issue either. Parents responded very well to this intervention- and suspension was not used as a result.”

The survey included twenty-one questions on circles, group conferencing, mediation, school policy and training. It was sent out to a list of all school principals in the State of Minnesota provided by the “Disciplinary Incident Reporting System” (DIRS), a web-based data system all principals used. A total of 417 principals returned the survey, of which 363 surveys were completed while the rest were partially completed. Seventy- two respondents of the total of 417 principals marked both male and female when responding to the demographic question, and therefore were excluded from the demographic analysis; however, their responses were incorporated in the remaining survey analysis. In terms of demographic makeup, the final group of principals who responded was approximately two-thirds male (60 percent), White (91 percent), and were mostly in elementary schools (54 percent). (See Table 1)

Of the 417 respondents, 277 (or about 66 percent) reported using restorative measures to repair harm and address rule violations in their school. Prior to this survey the last measure of the use of restorative measures came from the 2008-2009 Safe and Drug Free School (SDFS) End of the Year Report. In that report, from a total of 175 districts, thirty percent reported using restorative measures in elementary schools, thirty-nine percent said that they used it in middle or junior high schools, and thirty-eight percent of the districts reported applying such measures in their senior high schools.

Table 1

Principals' Sex	<i>n</i>	%
Female	146	42.3%
Male	199	57.7%
Total	345	100%

Circles VS Group Conferencing

The Restorative Measures Survey asked principals about their use of

“Boys and fathers involved in a bullying situation were brought in to help understand the significance of the bullying and to lay ground work for future prevention in the larger school setting.”

circles to repair harm and group conferencing. Of three hundred and ten responses, eleven percent said that they *always* or *almost always* used circles as part of the discipline process in their school;

half of the respondents reported that they sometimes use circles, and thirty-nine percent never use such practices. On the other hand, principals seem to be more likely to implement group conferencing as a discipline option at their school, with fourteen percent of the 295 respondents reporting using it always or almost always, sixty-one percent reported using it sometimes and a quarter reported never using group conferencing in their schools. (See Table 2)

Table 1: Use of circles and conferences as part of schools' discipline

	Always /Almost Always	Sometimes	Never
• Circles	11.3%	50.0%	38.7%
• Conferences	13.9%	61.0%	25.1%

Table 2: Use of Restorative Practices (RP) in general in addition to OR instead of suspension in schools

	Always /Almost Always	Sometimes	Never
• RP INSTEAD of suspension	8.6%	46.1%	45.4%
• RP in ADDITION to suspension	10%	56.3%	33.7%

The survey had also asked questions regarding suspension and restorative measures. Principals were asked whether they used circles to repair harm or group conferencing in place of suspension. Of the 280 respondents to this question, 46.1 percent said that they sometimes used these measures in place of suspension, whereas 45.4 percent said that they never used it

and only 8.6 percent said that they always or almost always used conferencing or circles in place of suspension. Similarly, when asked if circles or group conferencing were used in addition to suspension, 56.3 percent of 279 respondents said that they sometime did so, 33.7 percent said that they never did, and 10 percent said they almost always or always used circles or group conferencing in addition to suspension in their schools. (See Table 3)

Who Facilitates?

Circle keepers could be a member of the school staff, a community member, from a community agency or a police or probation officer; however, school staff members were primarily reported as the circle keepers in schools (86 percent). Similarly, ninety-one percent chose the same category when reporting who conference group facilitators were. Almost a quarter of the respondents to this question took advantage of non-school resources as circle-keepers, while a fifth said that a non-staff or non-student member facilitated conferences in their schools. These numbers may imply that seeking specialized external assistance

or collaborating with community agencies on matters related to restorative practices is a valid option for school administrators and principals.

When principals were specifically asked if they themselves were the facilitators of a circle or a conference, a majority (about 68 percent) said that they did. Likewise, about eighty nine percent of the respondents to a similar question on group conferencing reported facilitating group conferences to repair harm in school.

Additionally, these percentages increase slightly when narrowing our target group to only principals who have received some level of training in restorative measures. Eighty-six percent of trained principals who have responded to the above mentioned question said that they do use circle process to repair harm or address rule violation in school, a significant increase of eighteen percentage points compared to their untrained counterparts. Similarly, trained

Figure 1: Do trained principals use restorative measures to repair harm and address rule violations in our school?

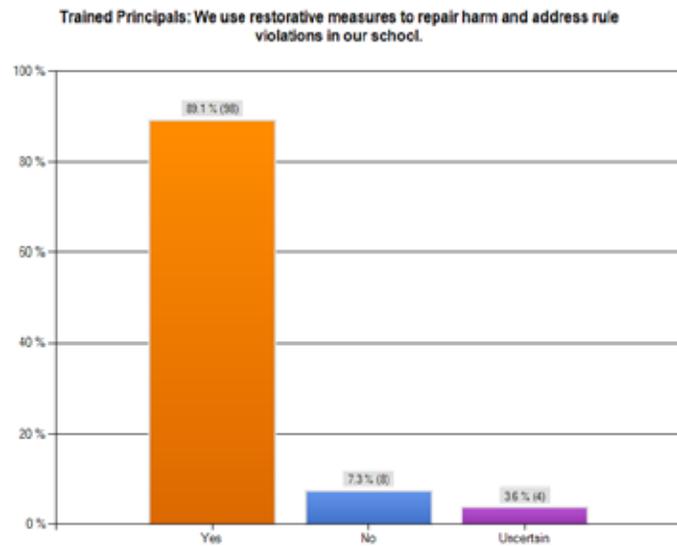
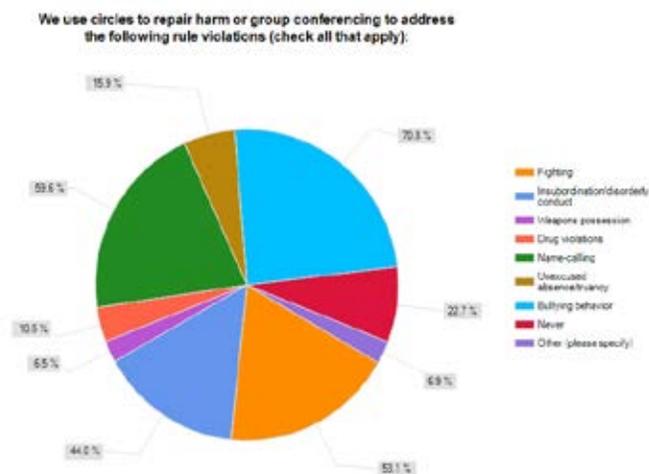


Figure 2: We use circles for...



principals who reported facilitating group conferences in their schools for the same purpose increased by nine percentage points (98 percent compared to the previous 89 percent). This could indicate a positive relationship between receiving training and facilitating circles or group conferences. (See Figure 1)

When to “Circle Up”?

A majority of principals (about 71 percent of the 277 respondents) reported using circles or group conferencing to address bullying behavior in their schools. Name-calling and fighting were the next two most popular issues addressed by restorative processes. Principals were less likely to report using restorative measures for issues of vandalism, harassment, theft, gossiping and neighborhood disagreements; these smaller percentages could be explained by the infrequent occurrence of some of these incidents in schools, as compared to bullying or fighting. (See Figure 2)

Mediation: Who, When and Where

According to the SDFS Report, thirty-seven percent of elementary schools in the district reported using peer mediation interventions, thirty-four percent in Middle/Junior High School and thirty percent in Senior High Schools, a percentage that has been more or less consistent over the course of the previous three years.

An example of a student and staff mediation session: *“Young staff member felt that she was being sexually harassed by an 18-year-old student. We worked with student, his family and the staff member. Final process was mediation with staff member and student. (It was) very effective in this case because of numerous misunderstandings, and mis-cues. Boundaries were put in place from both sides and observed throughout the school year.”*

The Restorative Measures Survey also provides some context to these numbers. Approximately a third of the respondents reported using peer mediation services sometimes. However, sixty-one percent of the same group of respondents said that they never used this process in their schools. In contrast, of the 376 responding to utilizing adult mediators to facilitate conflict resolution at their schools, a significantly larger percentage (42.8 percent) reported using adult mediators on a more regular basis. This could indicate that school principals either trust adults more with the responsibilities of mediating conflict, or that student mediators are excluded because of the assumption that *“it (i.e. mediation) involved too much time and removed students from class too frequently.”* Another possible explanation could be that schools might not have an established mediation program at their schools and/or are unable to afford the expenses of recruiting external mediators to their schools.

Another example of a student and student mediation case: *“Two students were arguing in the lunchroom. This caused a major disruption. One student had to be physically restrained. The following day the more aggressive student was still angry and planning to fight. I know if I didn't have both girls agree to mediation there was going to be a fight. Reluctantly the aggressive student agreed. A counselor and the assistant principal took 90 minutes to mediate the girls.”*

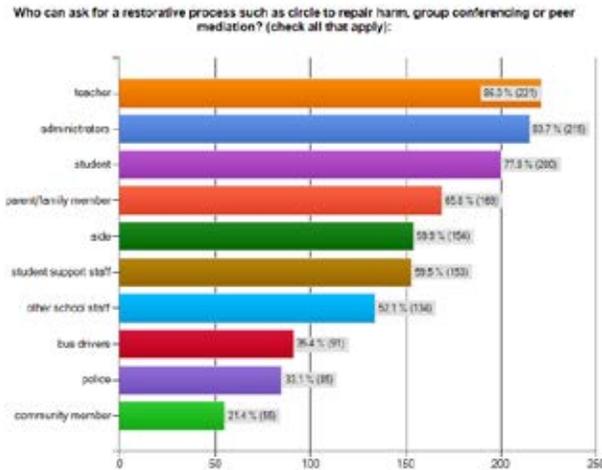
Moreover, of the 93 principals who have reported not using restorative measures to repair harm and address rule violations in our school, fifty-nine percent said that they never used peer mediation to address conflict between students at the school, a little over a third reported using peer mediation sometimes, and 5.4 percent almost always used this measure. However, when this group was asked about adult mediation, fifteen percent said that they never used adult mediation, about 40 percent sometimes did use this measure, 28 percent almost always did, and 17 percent reported always using adult mediation to facilitate conflict resolution at the school.

Restorative Measures in District Policies

According to this survey, including restorative measures in the written policies of a district is rare: Seven percent of the respondents reported having restorative measures in school policies. Seventy-three percent reported that their district has no written policy allowing for restorative measures--group conferencing or circles to repair harm--as an alternative to suspension/expulsion or recommends they be used in addition to suspension/expulsion. Twenty percent of principals were uncertain about their district policy and restorative measures. In the schools that do have these measures imbedded in their policies, restorative measures were more likely to be used as an alternative discipline option (about 96 percent). This could indicate that having a school policy that explicitly states the school's position on restorative measures do encourage principals to adopt such practices.

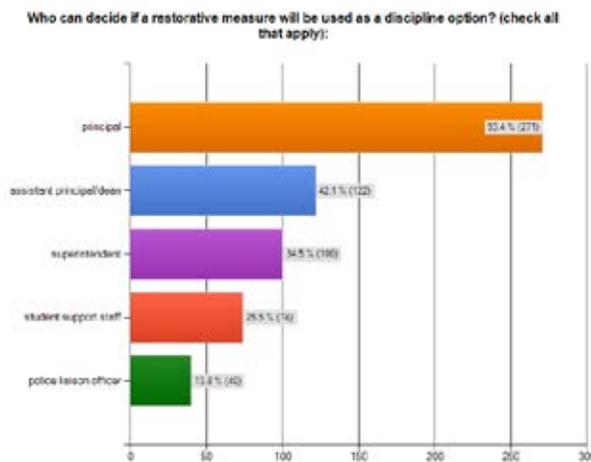
“The Duluth School Board and administrative team believe that a self-disciplined, respect filled, restorative culture attaining the aims of high student achievement, a safe and welcoming environment, and effective and efficient systems is essential. Principal discretion to the enforcement of policy will be used when age and development/ability are factors to behavioral issues. Principals may choose to use restorative processes and procedures. The application and use of restorative process is at the discretion of the superintendent.”

Figure 3: Who asks?



decide in that matter, while almost 14 percent reported that police liaisons could play that role.

Figure 4: Who decides?



decide in that matter, while almost 14 percent reported that police liaisons could play that role. (See Figure 4) Hence, it seems to be the case that the decision to use restorative measures in schools rests primarily with principals, as with other disciplinary issues.

Who Asks? Who decides?

A vast majority (221 or 86 percent) of the 257 respondents to the question on who could ask for a restorative measure process said that teachers could do so, followed by administrators (83.7 percent), students (77.8 percent), parents or members of the family (65.8 percent). (See Figure 3) On the other hand, ninety-three percent of 290 respondents reported that principals decided whether a restorative measure is to be used as a discipline option in schools; thirty-four percent said that superintendents could decide in that matter, while almost 14 percent reported that police liaisons could play that role.

RM Trainings

The survey shows that of the four hundred and seventeen respondents, one hundred and eleven respondents (26.6 percent) reported to have some level of training in restorative measures. These trainings were on a variety of restorative

measures related topics such as: circle training, group conferencing training, restorative schools grant training, training of trainers for circles or conferences, 1-2 day conflict resolution training, five day June Seminar/Restorative Measures (MDE), five day seminar on restorative Justice Department of Correction (DOC), and other types of training. Of that particular group, an overwhelming majority (about 89 percent) of the respondents reported implementing restorative measures to repair harm and address rule violations in their respective schools. In the meantime, eight principals (approximately 7 percent) of the 111 principals in this trained group said that their schools do not use restorative measures as a disciplinary option in school. These percentages may illustrate that an extremely high level of implementation is due, in part, to training.

Limitations

Because of the fact that the survey was voluntarily submitted, and principals had the option to opt out and/or skip questions throughout the survey, and thus resulting in a rather low response rate (about 38%), it is unrealistic to assume that the results of this survey results are in fact representative of the entire population of principals in the State of Minnesota. We also cannot

prove with confidence that applying restorative practices in response to disciplinary incidents have increased in their schools, nor can we conclude any causal relationships between the different variables and our desired outcomes. Nonetheless, the survey highlights important issues that might be worth taking into consideration by restorative practitioners and advocates, particularly within school settings, such as the impact of training and policy on implementation, as well as collaboration with outside agencies.

Restorative Measures Potential Benefits

Introducing new and different approaches to discipline in schools and repairing relationships often require a significant level of persistence and determination. Following is a brief review of restorative measures in schools evaluation nationally and internationally.

From 1998-2001, MDE conducted a three-year evaluation of implementation and use of restorative measures—circle to repair harm and to provide social emotional learning and community building in the classroom. The findings were promising and indicated that:

- Consistent application of restorative principles and practices— behavior management approaches and circles to repair harm— resulted in significant yearly reduction of behavior referrals and suspensions in one elementary school.
- A problem-solving resource room for at-risk students resulted in increased academic achievement in a high school.
- Teacher in-services on behavior management resulted in higher professional satisfaction.
- Teacher training resulted in high levels of teacher application in the classroom—in five elementary buildings, 50-70 percent of teachers use circles, behavior management skills and classroom management techniques. (In-School Behavior Intervention Grants Final Report, MDE, 2001).

The In-School Behavior Intervention (ISBI) grants were followed by the Restorative Schools Grants 2001-2003, designed to provide statewide training and evaluation on restorative measures. The evaluation of the second round of grants also showed reductions in behavior referrals. Two schools trained staff to use classroom circles daily. Both schools had strong administrative support and staff leadership, and used restorative circle to repair harm as a discipline intervention. The outcomes regarding suspensions are striking:

	01-02	02-03	% Change
Nellie Stone Johnson	800	292	63% reduction
Ramsey Fine Arts	272	149	45% reduction

In 2002, the School Mediation Center’s (SMC) conducted evaluation on their use of group conferences in Boulder, Colorado schools. SMC handled twenty-two cases (20 conferences), where 95 percent of the cases the offender completed the agreement. Such conferences involved the victim, the offender, and the affected community and all participants’ satisfaction levels were gauged. Ninety seven percent expressed their satisfaction with the facilitators, indicating their effectiveness and fairness and ninety six were satisfied with the outcome; ninety

two percent thought that the process helped to create a safer school; ninety one percent said it helped hold the offenders accountable, and a hundred percent reported that it resulted in a fair and just outcome. (Ierley and Ivker, 2002)

Cole Middle School in Oakland, California served as an experimental site for the implementation and evaluation of Restorative Measures from 2005/06 through 2008/09 school years. The school had a history of suspending about thirty percent of its student population. When Cole adopted RJ approaches, these rates decreased to about 10 percent. More importantly, students who were suspended more than once made up more than half of the suspensions (60 percent) in 2006/07. That percentage dropped by forty percent in the following school year. Furthermore, the school not only managed to reduce its suspension rate, but also succeeded in achieving significant reduction in repeat suspensions. This reduction in suspension incidents and thus decrease in the number of days students were out of school had a major effect on school funding. In terms of daily attendance funding, Cole Middle School lost only \$262 in 2007/08, in comparison to \$9,775 it lost in the previous school year. Additionally, the school's California State Tests increased by seventy four points, after applying RJ measures consistently for two consecutive school years (from 2007/08 to 2008/09). (Kidde and Alfred, 2011)

The International Institute of Restorative Practices in 2009 summarized their evaluation of six schools in Pennsylvania that implemented restorative practices. The schools were located in urban and rural districts, in communities that ranged from moderately affluent to very poor. The evaluation consistently showed that implementation of restorative practices across the whole school resulted in reduction of disruptive behavior, violent acts such as fighting and assault, cafeteria violations, disciplinary referrals to the office, as well as sanctions such as time out, detention and out of school suspension. For instance, in West Philadelphia High School, "Assaults on students dropped from 46 to 18; assaults on teachers dropped from 25 to 6; and disorderly conduct dropped from 23 to 12." (Lewis, 2009)

The United Nations and its agencies have worked extensively on restorative justice advocacy and implementation in the criminal justice field and in education. UNESCO's Asia Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education (APNIEVE), UNESCO Office in Brasilia, the UNESCO Institute of Comparative Human Rights at the University of Connecticut, as well as it's Associated Schools Project Network all advocate the use of restorative processes for youth in class-rooms and schools in general. (Sia, 2010)

Internationally, restorative practices are applied in schools in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, Britain, Scotland, Ireland, Brazil and other Western and Central Europe countries, in addition to various experimental projects in South East Asia. In Canada, schools that have applied restorative practices (the Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities (SSCSC) projects), are expected to have a continuous decrease in the number of discipline incidents reported, less students out of school, better grades and a healthier environment for students, teachers, staff and parents. This approach does not only target behaviors that are characterized as criminal, but rather focuses on any behavior that might have affect individuals, classrooms, or the entire school negatively. (www.sacsc.ca/Special_Program.htm) in Sia 2010).

In conclusion, the survey highlights the following:

- Schools practice group conferencing as a restorative measure tool slightly more frequently than circles;
- Adult mediation seems to be more popular than peer-mediation in schools;
- Schools seem to use restorative measures in addition to suspension more than substituting suspension all together;
- Imbedding restorative measures in school policies appears to significantly increase the probability of practicing restorative measures in schools;
- Trained principals are more likely to use restorative measures in their schools, compared to their untrained counterparts;
- Principals in general seem to be the decision-makers when it comes to implementing restorative measures in schools.

More importantly, it is vital to acknowledging the fact that restorative measures are recognized and adopted internationally, due to its flexibility and adaption to different cultures and within diverse environments, as well as its capability to provide a constructive feasible alternative solution to conflict resolution (Sia, 2010). Continued evaluation of restorative measures applications in schools indicate its effectiveness in reducing suspension and in providing a discipline process that has a high satisfaction for participants.

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